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Satire on Mankind: The Nature of the Beast

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SATIRE ON MANKIND:
THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

by
Thomas Patrick Tierney

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of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
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PREFACE

Satire has proved enormously difficult to define. From the early etymological confusions with the mythological "satyr" to the numerous books and articles of modern scholars, the one problem which has probably taken up most space is that of definition. If there is any consensus at all among students of satire, it is that satire is perilously difficult to define. Warren Tallman observes that "Attempts to define satire as a form are sure to fail if only because English literature has always been 'magnificently disheveled.'"¹ Robert C. Elliott concurs:

No strict definition can encompass the complexity of a word which signifies, on one hand, a kind of literature, and on the other, a spirit or tone which expresses itself in many literary genres.²

Even the formal verse satires of Horace, Juvenal and Persius furnish exceptions to every generalization.³ It is no wonder, then, that a sound, full lexical definition of the word has been hard to come by. Elliott concludes that "Clearly, the concept 'satire' is what Wittgenstein calls 'a concept with blurred edges.'"⁴

¹ "Swift's Fool: A Comment upon Satire in Gulliver's Travels," Dalhousie Review, 40 (1961), 475.

² "The Definition of Satire: A Note on Method," Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, 11 (1962), 19.

³ Elliott, p. 20.

⁴ Elliott, p. 23.

Elliott goes on to propose a method of identifying satire. First, we must look at a number of satires about which there is no question, then decide whether work x has resemblances enough to them to warrant being included in the category of satire. This is not a factual question, he says, but a question of decision: "are the resemblances of this work to various kinds of satire sufficient so that we are warranted in including it in the category?--or in extending the category to take it in."⁵

In "Satire: The Inadequacy of Recent Definitions," Leonard Feinberg shares Elliott's reluctant conclusion about the definition of satire: we can only familiarize ourselves with the canon of satires and examine new works to see if they fit.⁶ I would add that, of course, such an activity would be much easier to perform if that canon were clearly and sufficiently categorized, its various components isolated and identified. There is, naturally, danger attendant upon such attempts to classify, as Feinberg points out:

There is genuine psychological pleasure in making--or seeing--categories. One gets the illusion of order, simplicity, neatness. There is no such gratification in admitting that satire is often (as its name originally implied) a mixture of heterogeneous, incongruous, overlapping elements, in form and content. This fact happens to be true, but the acknowledgement of it is disconcerting.⁷

⁵ Elliott, p. 23.

⁶ "Satire: The Inadequacy of Recent Definitions," Genre, 1 (1968), 31.

⁷ Feinberg, p. 36.

Satire, he adds, "is not a pure genre or mode and it cannot be forced into any precise category. Satire often mixes materials and forms."⁸ While this is certainly true, we should still attempt to isolate and analyze its component parts. In other words, we should not be quite so ready to shrug our shoulders or throw up our hands in dismay. Philip Pinkus and Howard Weinbrot, in both precept and example, offer some tempered hope.

In a review of his Introduction to Satire, Feinberg is taken to task by Philip Pinkus for his failure to demonstrate a definition: "Mr. Feinberg writes 274 pages to demonstrate the Protean nature of satire without defining precisely what satire is. The result is an Introduction to Satire that successfully buries all distinction between satire and other genres."⁹ Pinkus adds the following:

His point is that satire appears in such a variety of forms that there is no characteristic shape or framework to warrant precise definition. He rightly gives the example of Alvin Kernan's recent book, The Plot of Satire, as an attempt at precise definition that failed. But it could be argued that we are more justified today in trying to define satire than tragedy. Satire is here and now. It is a living part of our literary world, so much so that when we use the term we do not look over our shoulder self-consciously at some Aristotelian fiat to see if we are using the term correctly. It is our term.¹⁰

In a couple of significant articles, which I'll comment on later, Pinkus offers his own definition of satire.

⁸ Feinberg, p. 36.

⁹ "An Impossible Task," Satire Newsletter, 5 (Spring 1968), 164.

¹⁰ Pinkus, p. 124.

Howard Weinbrot favors an attempt at classifying satire but from a slightly different angle than most recent scholars have taken. He offers a summary of recent "definitions" of satire:

Many recent discussions of satire imply that satire is a monolithic genre, one that can be characterized by means of a capsule-description or mini-definition. These generally tell us that there are 'standard procedures of satire'; or that 'satire consists of' certain traits; or 'satire is a work so organized that' specified things happen; or 'satire is the genre most preoccupied with' a few selected themes; or, 'the satiric form is anything that' includes what the critic observes that it should include.¹¹

Weinbrot disagrees with the whole approach of these:

Such comments, however, are unfaithful to the complexity of satiric forms from, say, 1660 to 1750. It would be more 'Augustan' to abandon a synoptic view of satire in favor of the discrimination of Augustan satires.¹²

What he is calling for, then, is a discrimination among various kinds or types of satire. The conclusion of Weinbrot's essay will suffice to indicate the broad types he considers:

These rough discriminations between comic and punitive, apocalyptic or revelatory, and satiric and epistolary formal verse satires can only be a beginning for more intense inquiry into the varied Augustan modes of satire. I hope that it will also contribute to the decline of the largely unhistorical synoptic definition.¹³

In the following study, I will not attempt to formulate an all-inclusive definition of satire. Instead, I will attempt a discrimination of one kind or type of satire, one small segment of satire: the satire on mankind. Satirizing mankind is but one satiric activity. My purpose

¹¹ "On the Discrimination of Augustan Satires," in Proceedings of the Modern Language Association Neoclassicism Conferences, 1967-68, ed. Paul J. Korshin (New York: AMS Press, 1970), p. 5.

¹² Weinbrot, p. 5.

¹³ Weinbrot, p. 9.

here is to delimit "satire on mankind."

Terminology surrounding satire has proliferated. Recent critical literature reveals numerous kinds of satire. There are social and moral satire, political satire, heroic, particular, personal, revelatory, and apocalyptic satire, Christian and religious satire, satire of infusion, satire per se, epigrammatic satire, and possibility satire, to name only a few. The list could easily be extended. This profusion has probably done more to confuse than to clarify the issues. I will be creating no new terminology. The term "satire on mankind" already exists. I hope that as a result of the following discussion we will be able to use that term with more precision.

Once we have a good idea of what exactly a satire on mankind is, we may, following Elliott's procedure, examine other works to determine if they rightfully should be labeled as such, if they belong in the category.

The firm establishment of what satire on mankind is and the acknowledgement I am seeking for it here may also make some small contribution towards an eventual definition of "satire" itself--if such an elusive construct is in fact possible. Satires on mankind exist, they are satire, and they do need to be reckoned with. They need to be taken account of in any attempt at an overall, full-scale definition of satire. Many proclamations about satire simply do not take the satire on mankind into consideration; and, as a result, such definitions must perforce be incomplete.

VITA

Thomas Patrick Tierney, the son of Ada Murphy Tierney and the late Thomas Aquinas Tierney, was born April 29, 1944 in Lincoln, Illinois.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO A LITERARY TYPE

During the mid-seventeenth and through the early part of the eighteenth century, a subgenre, kind or mode of satire enjoyed a slight rise in popularity, that is, came to be employed more frequently. I refer to what in this study will generally be called the satire on mankind.¹ Though the activity of satirizing mankind has probably been with us from the time man first emerged as a sentient creature with certain critical abilities, and though it appears within our very earliest literature and has continued up through the first eighty years in the twentieth century, it was not until the latter part of the seventeenth century that it received any particular attention as a distinct literary activity. To this date, there still has been no comprehensive study of satires on mankind and, particularly, little or no discussion of them as literary artifices or constructs, that is, as literature.

Indeed, one critic maintains that there can be no such thing as a true literary satire on mankind, for that would be entering the realm of "philosophy."² For now, I will just say that there are reasons for

¹This label has the advantage of being slightly shorter than "satire against mankind" and, while perhaps still not acceptable to those who would prefer the feminist "genkind," does have historical justification in that it was used. It obviously includes both men and women whereas "satire on man" might be mistaken as merely the counterpart to certain extant satires on women.

²Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., Swift and the Satirist's Art (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 30.

satires on mankind often not looking like literature, or even satire. They may seem unduly straightforward or even beyond the bounds of what some scholars would like to call satire. This may help to account for the relatively little critical attention they have received. Nevertheless, literary works which call themselves satires on mankind are extant. There is a fairly substantial body of literary works by both major and minor satirists (as well as a few by writers we do not customarily think of as satirists) which shares a number of characteristics that enable us legitimately and conveniently to label them as satires on mankind. Such satires may differ among themselves in tone, in philosophical input, bias or background, and in emphases; and yet they do maintain sufficient crucial resemblances to enable us to see that they are in fact members of a single type, group, or class. Labeling is, of course, not an end in itself. Several advantages may accrue from locating and identifying the characteristics of satire on mankind, not the least of which might be, as I have said, some minor adjustments in our attempts at defining that elusive entity "satire" itself.

Several facets of the tradition have been studied, notably by A.O. Lovejoy who, naturally, is interested in the range of ideas contained within them; by George Boas, who isolates for careful inspection one of the major strategies; and by Bertrand Goldgar, who analyzes the angry responses that satires on mankind provoked.³ In an article on

³ George Boas, The Happy Beast in French Thought of the Seventeenth Century (1933; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1966). Bertrand Goldgar, "Satires on Man and 'The Dignity of Human Nature,'" PMLA, 80 (1965) 535-41.

Swift, Ernest Tuveson discusses a crucial rhetorical implication of the satire on mankind: the attack on the reader.⁴ Dustin H. Griffin's Satires Against Man is basically a study of Rochester's canon of poems, though it does provide valuable information on the religious and philosophical backgrounds of the tradition as well as a lengthy reading of Rochester's "Satyr Against Mankind."⁵ In recent years, articles have appeared which have labeled specific works as satires on mankind (Part I of Hudibras, The Fable of the Bees, and Gulliver's Travels for example), and yet there has been no detailed study of this strain of satire. The purpose of this study, then, is to delimit the satire on mankind, to remark its characteristics and strategies, to observe how it manifests itself in various genres, to examine some of the theoretical issues involved in satirizing all mankind, to discuss it as literature, and to chart its persistence and its modifications right up to our own day.

A.O. Lovejoy, in his Reflections on Human Nature, fits satires on mankind into the general history of attitudes towards human nature. Speaking of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Lovejoy comments as follows:

⁴ "Swift: The View from within the Satire," in The Satirist's Art, ed. H. James Jensen and Malvin R. Zirker, Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), pp. 55-85.

⁵ Satires Against Man: the Poems of Rochester (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973). See especially chapters four and five. Griffin offers, for example, an enlightening discussion of the "long tradition of human self-disparagement." (158) He discovers, as backgrounds to Rochester's poem, "three heterodox traditions of abasement, with classical roots, that flowered in the late Renaissance and seventeenth century as skepticism, theriophily, and sensationalism" (162). He includes not just philosophical and satirical but religious denunciations of man as well.

The earlier part of this period was the time in which the unfavorable general appraisal of man may be said to have reached, if not its climax, at any rate its most frequent and most notable expression outside the writings of theologians. The theologians, Protestant and Catholic, continued, of course, to dilate upon the theme; and their writings were probably more copious, and pretty certainly were read by a larger fraction of the public, than in any previous period. But the theme of man's irrationality and especially of his inner corruption was no longer a speciality of divines; it became for a time one of the favorite topics of secular literature. For the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, were, among other things, the great age of satire; and many of the examples of this genre were by implication, and some of them explicitly, satires on man in general, not merely on peculiar individuals or exceptional types.⁶

Lovejoy cites Boileau's Eighth satire as typical and then provides a small list of practitioners:

This general vein of satire, earlier exemplified by Machiavelli in his Asino d'Oro, is continued by La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyere, Oldham, Mme. Deshoulières, Pope, Swift, Gay, Francis Fawkes, Robert Gould, the Earl of Rochester, Henry Brooke, Shenstone, and Goldsmith.⁷

Lovejoy's list is but a partial one, as will be indicated in the following survey and even more in my third chapter.

Before I attempt a definition of this petit genre and discuss some of the theoretical issues involved, it might prove helpful to examine several specimens as an introduction to the type. This will show the reader the literary type we are dealing with, remind him of those satires on mankind he may already have encountered and perhaps introduce him to some unfamiliar ones. This will be an abbreviated glance at the canon, but it should prove sufficient to serve as a basis of my discussion. Not all of those I will be outlining here call themselves satires on mankind, but all are solid, though not necessarily homogeneous examples

⁶Reflections on Human Nature (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1961), p, 15.

⁷Lovejoy, p. 16.

of the type.

Boileau's Satire VIII (De l'homme) and Rochester's "Satyr Against Mankind" are the best known examples. Their notoriety is slightly ironic, and reveals the lack of critical attention given to the genre, since among the works I will be dealing with, the observations which Boileau and Rochester make about the human race seem relatively mild.

The first thing we must note about Boileau's Eighth satire (1668) is that it is in the form of an epistle written to one Dr. Morel of the Sorbonne. Boileau summons up imaginary objections to his own position, not merely from the doctor but also from some other speakers about whom we are not given much information. Boileau dispatches these objections quickly. Through Boileau's skillful manipulation of these imaginary speakers, the impression evoked, at least on the surface, is that a dialogue or even a symposium is going on, that serious intellectual give and take is occurring, with Boileau's own position obviously coming out on top. But we have to remember that Boileau is doing all the dealing here and is not above performing sleight of words.

The thrust of Boileau's Eighth satire, and of numerous satires on mankind after his, is apparent in the first four lines:

De tous les animaux qui s'élèvent dans l'air,
Qui marchent sur la terre, ou nagent dans la mer,
De Paris au Perou, du Japon jusqu'à Rome,
Le plus sot animal, à mon avis, c'est l'homme.⁸

There are a couple things to note about this startling opening. First of all, if we are to have a satire on mankind, there must be some

⁸Oeuvres I: Satires, le lutrin (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1969), pp. 83-90. All future citations are to this edition.

indication that all men are being satirized. Here, in four lines, Boileau supplies two such indications. "L'homme" obviously refers to le genre humain; and, in addition, he creates a panoramic effect by his global references to geography in line three. The English reader immediately thinks of Dr. Johnson's opening of "The Vanity of Human Wishes," "Let observation with extensive view / Survey mankind from China to Peru."

It is also apparent in these first lines that Boileau is going to be employing a strategy which George Boas has called theriophily.⁹ This is a strategy in which man is compared and contrasted with animals, and, in spite of his claim to reason, comes out the worse. Here, Boileau asserts, man is not worse than just one or two animals, but worse than those that fly, that walk on land and those that reside in the sea--that is, for all practical purposes, all animals. And the remainder of the poem is devoted to proving the assertion of line four.

But the Doctor will argue that

L'homme de la nature est le chef et le roi:
Bois, prés, champs, animaux, tout est pour son usage,
Et lui seul a, dis tu, la raison en partage.

Today, on the evidence of the first two lines here, we might convict the Doctor of speciesism, "a prejudice or attitude of bias toward the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species."¹⁰ At the very least, there are two points of interest

⁹ Boas, p. 1. I will be discussing this strategy in more detail in chapter three.

¹⁰ Peter Singer, Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals (New York: New York Review Book, 1975), p. 7. Singer acknowledges his indebtedness for the term to Richard Ryder.

here, two characteristic approaches. Man's pride is brought out, his self-centeredness, his anthropocentrism, his feeling that all exists solely for his use. In addition, the Doctor puts forth the traditional argument we will encounter again and again that man, after all, has reason and is automatically superior. For the time being, Boileau implicitly concedes the first two lines of this passage by not commenting on them. But he's not going to forget them, not going to let the Doctor (or man) get away with that, as becomes apparent fifty lines later in the poem. Making a concession to mankind and then rudely or abruptly taking it away becomes a standard strategy in many satires on mankind.

Boileau, in fact, employs it immediately. The Doctor has put forth the customary argument that man alone has reason. In the next line, the narrator or Boileau concedes that "Il est vrai de tout temps, la raison fut son lot." But here there is no delay before the concession is snatched away, for the very next line takes another startling turn, "Mais de là je conclus que l'homme est le plus sot." Here Boileau sets the tone for future answers to man's claim of rationality. Considering the evidence, what man does to his own kind for example, man is even more culpable since he has reason to assist him.

The Doctor will probably consider all these assertions as merely ridiculous remarks designed to startle the reader into laughing. Surely, the Doctor will think, the narrator is being hyperbolic here; one could not seriously propose these things:

Ce propos, diras-tu, sont bons dans la satire,
Pour égayer d'abord un lecteur qui veut rire:
Mais il faut les prouver.

And, of course, proving them is exactly what Boileau sets about doing.

In documenting his case, Boileau presents a catalogue of the evils indigenous to man: he is flighty, fickle, doesn't know what is good for him and is contradictory. Boileau asks the rhetorical question, what is wisdom? The reader is sure by now, however, that whatever his answer, the quality will not be found in men. The definition provided is that wisdom is "une égalité d'ame / Que rien ne peut troubler, qu'aucun désir n'enflamme, / Qui marche en ses conseils à pas plus mesurés / Qu'un doyen au palais ne monte les degrés." For illustration, Boileau again resorts to an animal comparison, citing the constant and prudent ants who know when to gather and store their necessities and when to relax. One never finds them "Paresseuse au printemps, en hiver diligente...." But, and this is the qualification the reader knows is coming, men are not like the ants at all:

Mais l'homme, sans arrêt dans sa course insensée,
 Voltige incessamment de pensée en pensée:
 Son coeur, toujours flottant entre mille embarras,
 Ne sait ni ce qu'il veut ni ce qu'il ne veut pas.

Despite all his vacillation, man deludes himself into thinking that

Lui seul de la nature est la base et l'appui,
 Et le dixieme ciel ne tourne que pour lui.
 De tous les animaux, il est, dit-il, le maitre.--
 Qui pourrait le nier, poursuis-tu.

"Moi, peut-être," Boileau is quick to respond. Those who would make such assertions do so without examining whether it is the bear who fears the human passing by his cave or if it is the other way around and without checking to see if lions would respect an edict put out by herdsmen demanding that they settle elsewhere. Boileau goes to extremes here to make it apparent that man's influence in the animal sphere is not what he supposes it to be. This, of course, is Boileau's delayed response to

the lines cited earlier to the effect that man is the master, commander, king of all nature, including animals, and that all exist solely for his use.

This sham would-be master, this "king of the animals," how many masters does he have? Boileau's answer merely adds items to the growing catalogue of man's evils:

L'ambition, l'amour, l'avarice, ou la haine,
Tiennent comme un forçat son esprit à la chaîne.

But maybe, says Boileau, we should look at man in his best light. He is, for example, the only social animal:

Lui seul, vivant, dit-on, dans l'enceinte des villes,
Fait voir d'honnêtes mœurs, des coutumes civiles,
Se fait des gouverneurs, des magistrats, des rois,
Observe une police, obéit à des lois.

As the reader suspects, however, this best light will not shine brightly or for long. Boileau concedes, "Il est vrai," but again quickly reneges and turns it against man. Animals excel man even here; they live without noise, debates, court cases. They live in peace with one another "sous les pures lois de la simple équité." One does not find bears warring with bears, lions against lions. The faults enumerated against man earlier are relatively harmless if we consider what this contrast with the animal kingdom brings forth:

L'homme seul, l'homme seul, en sa fureur extrême,
Met un brutal honneur à s'égorger soi-même.

This, too, is an argument repeatedly encountered in satires on mankind. Man is paradoxically the brute; he is the only animal to kill wantonly his fellow kind, to prey on his own kind.

But is not man's learning something to be proud of? Man's ingenuity has allowed him to measure the skies; his learning embraces all

things. Boileau is not above putting a ridiculous question in the mouth of his imaginary objector: do animals have universities? The answer is that naturally they do not have formal education; but, then, they don't have some of the corruptions which come from the educated professions. They do not, for example, have to put up with a doctor among them who will poison the woods with "son art assassin." Besides, Boileau asks, is knowledge really the criterion we use to judge human beings by?

The answer to this question is equally obvious to the reader and is provided by yet another imaginary character the narrator inserts into his letter to the Doctor. A father advises his son on how to get ahead in the world, and the advice has nothing whatsoever to do with formal education. It is, of course, to acquire money in any way one can, even if one has to be cruel to others to do so: "Va par tes cruautés mériter la fortune." Money, you see, has a transforming power, for

Quiconque est riche est tout: sans sagesse il est sage;
 Il a, sans rien savoir, la science en partage;
 Il a l'esprit, le coeur, le mérite, le rang,
 La vertu, la valeur, la dignité, le sang;
 Il est aimé des grands, il est chéri des belles.

It can even turn ugliness into beauty, so great is its power; but, likewise, poverty can turn everything ugly or frightful: "L'or même à la laideur donne un teint de beauté: / Mais tout devient affreux avec la pauvreté."

Since the world operates on principles like these, Doctor Morel, who was a Dean of Theology, need not expect to be rewarded for working arduously on the Bible, for attempting to clear up difficult passages. At most, he can expect only a "Thank you." The best advice Boileau has for the good Doctor is as follows:

Mets-toi chez un banquier, ou bien chez un notaire:
Laisse là saint Thomas s'accorder avec Scot;
Et conclus avec moi qu'un docteur n'est qu'un sot.

Following this direct attack on the Doctor, Boileau allows him to appear, at least for a minute, as more rational than Boileau himself. The Doctor is tempted to respond in kind, to strike back by attacking the poet's profession, but he refuses to pursue that and wants to get back to the heart of the discussion:

Mais, sans perdre en discours le temps hors de saison,
L'homme, venez au fait, n'a-t-il pas la raison?
N'est-ce pas son flambeau, son pilote fidèle?

And the "yes, but" formula is operative again. Yes, Boileau concedes, all this may be true, but it is not of much assistance to man. An Ass, who by the way will have the last word, is much better off than man:

Un âne, pour le moins, instruit par la nature,
A l'instinct qui le guide obéit sans murmure. . . .

And "Sans avoir la raison, il marche sur sa route," but man, the only creature who has reason to assist and to enlighten him, "dans tout ce qu'il fait n'a ni raison ni sens." In addition, man's mind or moods vacillate wildly. This is another charge that will recur often in satires on mankind. Fear is yet another part of the indictment. Men are "afraid of their own shadows," afraid of what their own imaginations conceive. Animals, on the other hand, aren't superstitious and don't worship idols the way man does.

Boileau cleverly has the imaginary interlocutor sum up what Boileau himself has been saying:

Quoi! me prouvez-vous par ce discours profane
Que l'homme, qu'un docteur est au-dessous d'un âne?
Un âne, le jouet de tous les animaux,
Un stupide animal, sujet a mille maux;
Dont le nom seul en soi comprend une satire!

Of course, this will just reinforce Boileau's own point, make it that much more outrageous. Man is not just worse than some animals but worse than one of the reputedly lowest animals, whose very name alone comprises a satire. In his own response to the imagined Doctor's response, Boileau tries to force us to look at things from a different perspective:

--Oui, d'un âne: et qu'a-t-il qui nous excite à rire?
 Nous nous moquons de lui: mais s'il pouvait un jour,
 Docteur, sur nos défauts s'exprimer à son tour;
 Si, pour nous reformer, le ciel prudent et sage
 De la parole enfin lui permettait l'usage;
 Qu'il pût dire tout haut ce qu'il se dit tout bas;
 Ah! docteur, entre nous, que ne dirait-il pas?

Boileau may be claiming here rather covertly that his statements about mankind are intended to help reform man. The implication is that knowing the truth about itself might help mankind to change. Note that Boileau says "pour nous reformer," for the satirist on mankind speaking in his own human voice can hardly claim exemption from the status of being a member of mankind. In the "Avertissement de l'edition de 1668" entitled "Le Libraire Au Lecteur," which prefaces the Ninth satire, we find the following:

L'auteur, après avoir écrit contre tous les hommes en général, a cru qu'il ne pouvait mieux finir qu'en écrivant contre lui-même, et que c'était le plus beau champ de satire qu'il pût trouver.
 (p. 91)

The forced inclusion of the author's self in a satire on mankind, as well as this statement, may take the edge off those assertions of the superior, supercilious satirist looking down on others and judging from his pedestal. The satirist still claims to know the truth, but that is not much consolation since he is a member of the offending race, and he might almost be happier not knowing. He is definitely not a fool among knaves.

At any rate, what would this Ass say if he landed in the middle of Paris and were to see all the goings on there, the tumult, the insanity, the injustice of it all? It is easy to infer what his conclusion would be. Boileau gives the Ass the last word:

Oh! que si l'âne alors, à bon droit misanthrope,
 Pouvait trouver la voix qu'il eut au temps d'Esopé;
 De tous côtés, docteur, voyant les hommes fous,
 Qu'il dirait de bon coeur, sans en être jaloux,
 Content de ses chardons, et secouant la tête:
 Ma foi, non plus que nous, l'homme n'est qu'une bête!

Here we see from the animal perspective. The impartial observer, the animal, is not jealous of man, for he is content with his own lot. Nonetheless, he rightfully hates mankind. The equation of the last line, that man is paradoxically nothing but a beast, is one that we will encounter repeatedly in satires on mankind. So ends Boileau's extensive satire on mankind.

John Oldham's imitation of Boileau's Eighth appeared fourteen years later in 1682.¹¹ "The Eighth Satire of Monsieur Boileau, Imitated" anglicizes many of the particular references to persons and places of the original but maintains its essential arguments and conclusions. The animal comparison, the panoramic statement and the basic arguments are apparent from the very start. Oldham's loose translation begins with the same startling opening:

Of all the creatures in the world that be,
 Beast, fish, or fowl, that go, or swim, or fly
 Throughout the globe from London to Japan,
 The arrantest fool in my opinion's man.

¹¹ Poems of John Oldham, ed. Bonamy Dobree (London: Centaur Press, 1960), pp. 203-15. All citations are to this edition.

The imaginary interlocutor again puts forth the standard claims for mankind:

'Man is,' you cry, 'Lord of the Universe;
For him was this fair frame of nature made,
And all the creatures for his use and aid;
To him alone, of all the living kind,
Has bounteous Heaven the reasoning gift assigned.'

But the narrator replies with the typical response:

True, sir, that reason ever was his lot,
But thence I argue man the greater sot.

Reason is a "false guide," and man's mind vacillates wildly:

Tossed by a thousand gusts of wavering doubt,
His restless mind still rolls from thought to thought.

Oldham retains Boileau's insistence that man see himself accurately.

Here he used direct denigration by flat, outright assertion, and he includes himself by using the pronoun "our":

This is our image just: such is that vain,
That foolish, fickle, motley creature, man.

Once again, man's pride and anthropocentrism are subjected to attack:

Yet, pleased with idle whimsies of his brain,
And puffed with pride, this haughty thing would fain
Be thought himself the only stay and prop,
That holds the mighty frame of nature up;
The skies and stars his properties must seem,
And turnspit angels tread the spheres for him;
Of all the creatures he's the lord, he cries.

Of course, this "boasted monarch of the world" does not receive much respect from the fiercer animals, and in fact he is the one who fears them. Man is not only a master, he is a subject. To what? Lust for money and power, love, hate "and twenty passions more" enslave him.

As in Boileau, the narrator says, let's consider man in his best light. He is the social animal, but this leads to the predictable

response that man is the only animal to prey on his own kind:

Whoever saw the wolves, that he can say,
Like more inhuman us, so bent on prey,
To rob their fellow wolves upon the way?
Whoever saw church and fanatic bear,
Like savage mankind one another tear?

.
'Tis man, 'tis man alone, that worst of brutes,
Who first brought up the trade of cutting throats,
Did honour first, that barbarous term, devise,
Unknown to all the gentler savages.

Again, we see the wordplay. Humans are more "inhuman" and the "worst of brutes," while animals are "the gentler savages."

Man's pretensions to knowledge are quickly deflated, and the formula for getting on in the world is simply: "Boggle at nothing to increase thy store." The narrator rejects the claim that reason is anything special:

The ass, whom nature reason has denied,
Content with instinct for his surer guide,
Still follows that, and wiselier does proceed.

.
Of reason void, he sees, and gains his end,
While man, who does to that false light pretend,
Wildly gropes on, and in broad day is blind.

Men, unlike animals, fear "Chimeras of their own devising," and "With scaring phantoms pall the sweets of life." In addition, men are superstitious and worship idols.

Oldham's conclusion follows that of Boileau. Despite all the limitations listed above, the imaginary objector is still unable to see how one can say that man is beneath an Ass, "Whose very name all satire does comprise?" If Heaven should give this Ass, the lowest of animals, the power of speech "to check proud man," what might it say after spending an hour or so in Fleet-street or the Strand and observing the antic behavior of the "two-legged herd?" The ass would no doubt reach

the same inescapable conclusion, though not as powerfully stated as in Boileau, that "Good faith, man is a beast as much as we."

The Earl of Rochester's "A Satyr again Reason and Mankind" (1676) is the single best known satire on mankind. Boileau's lines are delicate in places and the flow of his verse may seem to meliorate what he has to say; but in fact his assertions are ultimately more strongly negative than those of the notorious Rochester, though at first glance it does not appear as if this will be the case. Rochester's poem also begins with what is obviously designed to be a startling statement:

Were I (who to my cost already am
One of those strange, prodigious creatures, man)
A spirit free to choose, for my own share,
What case of flesh and blood I pleased to wear,
I'd be a dog, a monkey, or a bear,
Or anything but that vain animal
Who is so proud of being rational.¹²

Already we see the use of animals and the attack on pride and reason. The narrator wishes he were "anything" rather than a man. As the title suggests, Rochester intends to attack man's claim to reason. Man prides himself on being reasonable at the cost of shunning a surer guide:

And before certain instinct, will prefer
Reason, which fifty times for one does err.

Reason, that honorific attribute which man has traditionally used to distinguish himself from the rest of creation, is but "an ignis fatuus in the mind. . . ." Man's mind, which should be a consolation to him, is anything but that to the misguided follower of reason:

¹² The Complete Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, ed. David M. Vieth (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 94-101. All citations are to this edition.

Whilst the misguided follower climbs with pain
 Mountains of whimses, heaped in his own brain;
 Stumbling from thought to thought, falls headlong down
 Into doubt's boundless sea, where, like to drown,
 Books bear him up awhile, and make him try
 To swim with bladders of philosophy.

The individual chasing this elusive reason comes to understand through age and experience that "all his life he has been in the wrong."

Rochester leaves him in a dramatic posture:

Huddled in dirt the reasoning engine lies,
 Who was so proud, so witty, and so wise.

Man might have had happiness and enjoyment, but

His wisdom did his happiness destroy,
 Aiming to know that world he should enjoy.

Rather than being a consolation, then, reason becomes a hindrance to man.

Rochester tries to give the appearance, as did Boileau, that a logical debate is taking place. He, too, makes use of an imaginary opponent who has come to take him to task. Rochester places a direct attack on himself into the mouth of his imaginary opponent. One has to have a "degenerate" mind to even write a satire on mankind:

What rage ferments in your degenerate mind
 To make you rail at reason and mankind?

The interlocutor then launches his own defense of man:

Blest, glorious man! to whom alone kind heaven
 An everlasting soul has freely given,
 Whom his great Maker took such care to make
 And this fair frame in shining reason dressed
 To dignify his nature above beast.

Man is the only creature with a soul and the only one made in God's image and likeness; and God gave man reason "to dignify his nature above beast." Such statements, the reader knows, will not go long unchallenged, but for now the imaginary interlocutor goes on to elaborate

some of the properties of reason:

Reason, by whose aspiring influence
 We take a flight beyond material sense,
 Dive into mysteries, then soaring pierce
 The flaming limits of the universe,
 Search heaven and hell, find out what's acted there,
 And give the world true grounds of hope and fear.

At this point an incensed Rochester, able to take no more of this presumption, interrupts. The fact that he is writing satire on mankind does not preclude the insertion of personal satire into his composition as well (as I will argue later, particular satire and satire on mankind are not necessarily antipathetic). So, he tells the intruder that we have read all this drivel in the works of Ingelo, Partrick and Sibbes.

Now that he has good reason to be furious, Rochester can counter-attack mercilessly, which he does. First, he offers his own description of reason:

This supernatural gift, that makes a mite
 Think he's the image of the infinite,
 Comparing his short life, void of all rest,
 To the eternal and the ever blest.

Hidden in the midst of this attack on reason and man's overweening pride is some additional material that will be used in numerous satires on mankind: the charge that man's lifespan is ephemeral and the assertion that this brief life is "void of all rest." Rochester also diminishes man directly here by calling him a "mite."

While Rochester has said some harsh things about reason and noted some of its undesirable consequences, he still does not engage in an all-out attack on it. He qualifies his earlier remarks, seemingly backs off from his earlier position. Not all reason is bad. It need not be a burden on man, and man is apparently capable of it:

Thus, whilst against false reasoning I inveigh,
I own right reason, which I would obey.

Right reason "distinguishes by sense,"¹³ "gives us rules of good and ill from thence," and "bounds desires with a reforming will / To keep 'em more in vigor, not to kill." Finally, he tells the reverend intruder, "Your reason hinders, mine helps to enjoy."

Realizing he has backed off considerably from his earlier position on reason, Rochester, nonetheless, insists he will remain adamant in his attitude towards mankind:

Thus I think reason righted, but for man,
I'll ne'er recant; defend him if you can.
For all his pride and his philosophy,
'Tis evident beasts are, in their degree,
As wise at least, and better far than he.

Again, the satirist has resorted to an animal comparison, but Rochester has no romanticized attitude towards animals, as does, for example, Mme Deshoulières in a couple of poems I will be discussing later. Beasts are "in their degree" better than man. Still, Rochester does not argue that their degree is equal to or higher than that of man.

Rochester has two basic arguments as evidence for this assertion. First, man has decidedly less wisdom. A yardstick is provided for measuring this wisdom:

Those creatures are the wisest who attain
By surest means, the ends at which they aim.

Thus, the dog that finds and kills his food better than the politician

¹³ Rochester's sensory-based "right reason" represents a radical departure from earlier definitions. See Robert Hoopes, Right Reason in the English Renaissance (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

(he mentions Sir Thomas Meres as a particular example) performs his political functions is in fact wiser. From this single example, he concludes ironically, "You see how far man's wisdom here extends."

If man lacks wisdom, perhaps human nature in some way makes up for it:

Look next if human nature makes amends:
Whose principles most generous are, and just,
And to whose morals you would sooner trust.
Be judge yourself, I'll bring it to the test.

His not very scientific test brings forth the result that animals are "better far" than man, the second argument mentioned above. I'll show you, Rochester says, how "generous" and "just" those principles of human nature are:

Which is the basest creature, man or beast?
Birds feed on birds, beasts on each other prey,
But savage man alone does man betray.

Rochester knows that man is not the only animal to prey on his own kind. Birds do it. There is a difference, however. Animals have to kill for food; and, at least, they do it openly, being armed by nature for just such a task:

Pressed by necessity, they kill for food;
Man undoes man to do himself no good.
With teeth and claws by nature armed, they hunt
Nature's allowance, to supply their want.
But man, with smiles, embraces, friendship, praise,
Inhumanly his fellow's life betrays;
With voluntary pains works his distress,
Not through necessity, but wantonness.

Man's act is one of betrayal; humans "inhumanly" (read "humanly") their fellow's lives betray, and they do this wantonly. In the next twenty lines or so, Rochester explains to us why man acts so savagely.

Man's motivation for these human deeds, and even the source of

many of those deeds he may pride himself on, those acts which make him appear human, is Fear. Animals are not so basely motivated:

For hunger or for love they fight and tear,
 Whilst wretched man is still in arms for fear.
 For fear he arms, and is of arms afraid,
 By fear to fear successively betrayed.

Many of man's most cherished qualities and traits have fear as their underlying source:

Base fear, the source whence his best passions came:
 His boasted honor, and his dear-bought fame;
 That lust of power, to which he's such a slave
 And for the which alone he dares be brave.

It is not only these aggressive qualities which spring from fear but the gentler ones as well: his generosity, affability and kindness.

Look to the bottom of his vast design,
 Wherein man's wisdom, power, and glory join:
 The good he acts, the ill he does endure,
 'Tis all from Fear, to make himself secure.

Even what good man does proceeds from fear. Fear naturally leads one into dishonesty, for to be honest requires bravery--or stupidity.

Rochester tells what the individual must do to survive in this world:

And honesty's against all common sense:
 Men must be knaves, 'tis in their own defence.
 Mankind's dishonest; if you think it fair
 Amongst known cheats toplay upon the square,
 You'll be undone.
 Nor can weak truth your reputation save:
 The knaves will all agree to call you knave.
 Wronged shall he live, insulted o'er oppressed,
 Who dares be less a villain than the rest.

Fools among knaves, as Swift was well aware, do not have a particularly high survival rate. Now if this is the best way to survive in society, possibly the only way, the system seems to perpetuate itself. Evil causes evil. The violent do bear it away; and a good offense (in every sense of that word) is the best defense. The quality of life, and

therefore its value, are markedly diminished here. I will be discussing the contribution such material makes in satirizing mankind in chapter three.

Rochester closes this section of his argument on human nature by asserting that "most men" (not all, that is) "are cowards, all men should be knaves." The only difference among men that he can see is in their degree of infamy or villainy:

The difference lies, as far as I can see,
Not in the thing itself, but the degree,
And all the subject matter of debate
Is only: Who's a knave of the first rate?

All men are similar, then, in that they are all knaves, but some are more proficient in knavery than others.

But, to show the reader I'm not too fanatical, says the narrator, if you can show me any one of the following three, I'll take it all back: a just man in court, an upright statesman, a churchman who "on God relies."

If upon earth there dwell such God-like men,
I'll here recant my paradox to them,
Adore those shrines of virtue, homage pay,
And, with the rabble world, their laws obey.

He implies, of course, that we will not find such exemplars; but he adds that even if we can, we still have to concede that men are not far from beasts:

If such there be, yet grant me this at least:
Man differs more from man, than man from beast.

Hence, men are not all alike, or depicted as being uniformly evil or dull or stupid or knavish (which, as we will see, is the procedure for most satirists on mankind). If there are God-like men, then there is

still a greater difference between them and the rabble than there is between man and animal. Even in the unlikely event that such paragons exist, men are still not all that far from the beasts, are not so superior as they like to imagine. Dustin H. Griffin, however, thinks the following a more likely reading:

the difference between (1) God-like men and (3) the rabble is greater than the difference between (1) God-like men and (2) beasts; in other words, that beasts--generous, just, trustworthy, wise in their humble way--come closer to the ideal of God-like man than does the rabble.¹⁴

Griffin adds the following:

This more radical reading sharpens the satirical point. Rochester embarrasses proud man by showing how the beasts, traditionally man's irrational inferior, in fact measure up to man's own professed moral ideals better than he himself does.¹⁵

But Griffin does not take into consideration here the similarity in wording between Rochester's concluding lines and certain passages in Montaigne and Charron. While discussing the ingenuity of various animals in Raymond Sebond, Montaigne writes of an elephant:

But this beast hath in many other effects, such affinity with man's sufficiency, that would I particularly trace out what experience hath taught, I should easily get an affirmation of what I so ordinarily maintaine, which is, that there is more difference found betweene such and such a man, than betweene such a beast and such a man.¹⁶

Charron claims that animals possess most of the faculties of man, though to a lesser degree:

¹⁴ Griffin, p. 243.

¹⁵ Griffin, p. 243.

¹⁶ Essays, trans. John Florio (London: J.M. Dent, 1910), II, 159.

we must confesse that beasts doe reason, have the use of discourse and judgement, but more weakly and imperfectly than man; they are inferiour unto men in this, not because they have no part therein at all; they are inferiour unto men, as amongst men some are inferiour unto others; and even so amongst beasts there is such a difference: but yet there is a greater difference betweene men; for (as shall be said hereafter) there is a greater distance betweene a man and a man, than a man and a beast.¹⁷

Charron repeats his assertion and expands upon it tellingly a bit later:

In the soules of men there is a farre greater difference, for it is not only greater without comparison betwixt a man and a man, than betwixt a beast and a beast: but there is a greater difference betwixt a man and a man, than a man and a beast; for an excellent beast comes neerer to a man of the basest sort and degree, than that man to another great and excellent personage.¹⁸

I see no reason to assume that Rochester was offering any more than the more conventional sentiment as formulated here by Charron.

That all men are not alike suggests that some are better than others, some are possessed of less knavery than others. In relation to the interlocutor, Rochester obviously places himself in the superior category throughout the poem. He concedes right reason to himself and the possibility of it presumably to others but attacks wrong reason in his opponent, the defender of mankind. The fact that Rochester places himself in the superior category and dissociates himself from the onerous one may in part account for what is presumed to be the bitterness of his statements here. But that he admits the possibility of right reason mitigates this tone somewhat.

There are other suggestions that Rochester is not writing a satire

¹⁷ Of Wisdom, trans. Samson Leonard (c. 1606; Amsterdam: Da Capo Press, 1971), p. 108.

¹⁸ Charron, p. 162.

on mankind of the harshest variety. In general, satires on mankind are uncompromising. Yet, Rochester admits of the possibility, however slight, of finding a paragon in one of the three professions he had listed. Griffin comments on this:

Rochester clearly expects the conditions for his recantation to go unfulfilled, but we should recognize that the ostensible conditionality fits into the pattern of consistent refusal to make definitive moral statements without some subsequent qualification, retraction, or partial contradiction.¹⁹

Furthermore, doubt, which is the only intelligent response to the universe in many satires on mankind, is depicted as a negative trait here (the misguided follower of reason "falls headlong down / Into doubt's boundless sea . . ."). Happiness and enjoyment are also possible in the world of the poem, provided pride in reason does not turn the individual into a wretch: "His wisdom did his happiness destroy, / Aiming to know that world he should enjoy." In addition, Mother Nature is nurturing and provides what man requires. And we should remember that placing man in close propinquity to the beasts, as Rochester does in the concluding assertion, is not, within the frame of the poem, all that harsh a position for man, since animals have been depicted earlier in the poem as acting in accordance with the precepts of nature; and this, in Rochester's own definition, means that they live wisely.

Thus, despite his harsh opening, Rochester seems to back off from that extreme position and sobers in his conclusion to an assertion that

¹⁹ Griffin, p. 241.

in spite of its paradoxical nature is not in fact radical at all. Having failed to confess his own culpability or his own participation in mankind, Rochester is unable to continue with his sweeping denunciations of mankind. As a result, his conclusion, while more logical than his opening, of necessity appears rather lame. He has, in essence, reduced the force of his attack.

That readers have failed to note this is due, no doubt, to the notorious personal character of Rochester himself, to hyperactive, ever-alert defense sensors which magnify any threat to the reader's self esteem, to a reaction to the harsh tone and hyperbole early in the poem, or simply to a lack of familiarity with the genre. Nonetheless, viewed within the range of other satires on man, from the context of like satires, Rochester's does not loom so darkly, does not seem so arrogantly misanthropic, so blasphemously passionate in its denunciation of mankind as has been previously thought.²⁰

These three poems, the eponymous satires on mankind by Boileau and Rochester plus Oldham's imitation, are lengthy verse satires, but satires on man come in assorted shapes and sizes. Not all satirists on mankind construct imaginary "logical" debates about the issues, nor expatiate to the extent that Boileau and Rochester do. A glance at several shorter examples of the type will allow us to see how the same spirit and the same basic charges against man are managed in miniature

²⁰ For an opposing view, note Griffin's final remarks on the poem, which, he says, will continue to be read for "its unbridled vehemence and energy, its unsettling pessimism about the possibilities for knowledge and virtue, its presentation of a mind unable to establish for itself a firm and secure place in the universe. (p. 245)

form, to see how the satirist handles the self-imposed assignment of attacking the species in less space. The next four poems to be discussed are sonnets, but there are shorter verse forms, as well, of course, as prose satires on mankind of various lengths. We will be examining some of these in chapter three.

In an article on Rochester, S.F. Crocker notes that "Striking expressions of the leading idea of the 'Satire on Mankind' are to be found in three extremely significant sonnets by Des Barreaux."²¹

Jacques Vallée, Seigneur Des Barreaux (1599-1673) wrote satires on mankind of an emphatic sort, close in tone to that we have come to associate with Rochester.

The first two sonnets Crocker refers to bear a relevant epigraph from Pliny, "Homine Nullum Animal Aut Miserius Aut Superbius."²² The first sonnet begins by pointing out some of the pleasant things man believes about himself. As numerous satirists on mankind have enjoyed pointing out, man likes to think he is the master of the world and of its creatures. Man's very appearance, he thinks, gives forth a burst of glory and dignity:

Maistre sans contredit de ce globe habité,
Ayant assujetty toute autre creature,
C'est l'Homme qui fait voir, en sa noble figure,
Un précieux éclat de gloire et dignité.

But wait a minute, says Des Barreaux, let's not flatter ourselves. For

²¹ "Rochester's Satire Against Mankind," West Virginia University Philological Papers, 3 (1937), 71.

²² Compared to man, no animal is either as wretched or as proud. Frederic Lachevre, Disciples et Successeurs de Theophile de Viau (Geneve: Slatkine Reprints, 1968), p. 243.

once, let's try to tell the truth about ourselves. What is this thing called man, this well-formed animal, this little king of all nature, this chef-d'oeuvre of God, made in his own image and possessed of reason?

Mais ne nous flattons point et disons vérité,
 Cet animal formé d'admirable structure,
 Ce petit Roytelet de toute la nature,
 Ce chef-d'oeuvre dernier de la Divinité,

Que fait cet Homme ayant la raison pour partage,
 Et qui du Dieu vivant est la vivante image?

The final four lines mark a significant change in tone. Des Barreaux forces man to confront some of the unpleasant physical facts of man's existence. These must be included in an overall picture of man, and they are generally left out of discussion of what man is. The tone is such that Des Barreaux seems to relish discomfiting his audience. He is aware, though, that he too falls into the category attacked, for he includes himself and his reader in the word "nous" in line five. Des Barreaux gladly fills in the missing parts in the composite picture of man:

Toujours moucher, cracher, eternuer, tousser,
 Se lever, se coucher, dormir, manger et boire,
 Et puis roter, dormir, peter, chier, pisser:
 Oh! le brave animal que l'Homme, ô voire, voire.

Look at him, look at him, he repeats. See him as he is! Des Barreaux attacks any unduly optimistic or idealistic depictions of man. He satirizes man's pretensions to being such a glorious creation by balancing some of the positive things, rather undercutting them, by dramatic assertions of some of his more earthly traits. The attack on man's presumption, his anthropocentrism, his reason, his pride, by

calling forth his lower physical nature becomes a standard tactic for satires on mankind. Man's pride in spite of his wretchedness (as the epigraph here has announced) is a source of constant bewilderment to the satirist.

The second sonnet, also from the 1667 collection, does not surprise the reader by withholding its attack until the concluding sestet but lets him know immediately that man is being attacked:

L'Homme a dit en son coeur sot et audacieux,
Je suis maistre absolu de la terre habitable,
Des plus fiers animaux je suis victorieux, ²³
Et ma raison sur tous me rend considérable.

Once again man proclaims himself master of the world, boasts of his conquest of even the fierce animals, and claims that his reason gives him preeminence. The reader, however, is certain that such assertions will not be allowed to stand. Man is not looking at himself very accurately, is not seeing himself clearly. Des Barreaux is not so much interested in denying those traditional claims of, for example, man's mastery of the natural world and the rest of creation, as numerous satirists on man have done; rather, he insists that man be acutely aware of his ills and the negative things about him in his overall estimation of himself. Generally, this involves reducing what the satirist sees as man's pride in either his physical or intellectual self or both. As in the first sonnet, Des Barreaux says, just look at yourself:

Que pour te regarder tu prens de mauvais yeux,
Animal fasteux autant que misérable!
Connois les propres maux, et plus judicieux
Ne te vante point tant d'estre si raisonnable.

²³ Lachevre, p. 244.

Be more judicious in your assessments of yourself; this is essentially what all satirists on mankind are asking. Know your ills, Des Barreaux says, and do not pride yourself on being so reasonable, for reason brings us numerous stresses and unhappy thoughts. Though Des Barreaux does not employ an animal comparison at this point, he easily could have, because the negative concomitants of reason that he lists here are often used by the satirists as part of man's lot which the other animals do not have to contend with. The rest of the animal kingdom are not bothered by the following "gifts" of reason:

Le regret du passé, la peur de l'avenir,
 Le chagrin du présent, penser qu'il faut finir,
 Qui nous livre en vivant les assauts le plus rudes,

Les crimes que commet le fer et le poison,
 Les larmes, les soupirs, et les inquiétudes,
 Ce sont les beaux présents que te fait la raison.

Reason is nothing to be proud of, then, for it brings more ill than good. Reason is attacked further in the third sonnet Lachevre includes, the epigraph of which is "La Raison Fait Le Malheur De L'Homme."

This third sonnet (1653), which antedates the other two, leaves no doubt what the subject is to be. Man's lot is not what it is reputed to be:

Ce n'est qu'un vent furtif que le bien de nos jours,
 Qu'une fumée en l'air, un songe peu durable;
 Nostre vie est un rien, à un point comparable,
 Si nous considérons ce qui dure toujours.²⁴

The good in our lives is insignificant, smoke in the air, a dream which doesn't last. Our life is nothing and lasts but briefly, especially when considered sub specie aeternitatis. Furthermore, man adds to the

²⁴ Lachevre, p. 245.

list of his miseries by manufacturing some of his own, in addition to those presumably built into the human condition by the creator. Man himself is responsible for many of his problems:

L'Homme se rend encor luy mesme misérable,
Ce peu de temps duquel il abrège ses jours
Par mille passions, par mille vains discours,
Tant la sotte raison le rend irraisonnable.

Again reason is denigrated; paradoxically, it renders man unreasonable.

The final six lines reveal a change in tactics from the more direct attack on man. Des Barreaux employs the traditional animal comparison:

Plus heureuses cent fois sont les bestes sauvages,
Cent fois sont plus heureux les oyscaux aux bocages
Qui vivent pour le moins leur âge doucement.

Better to have been born one of these savage beasts or birds, who survive quite well without discourse and reason:

Ha! que naistre comme eux ne nous fait la Nature,
Sans discours ny raison, vivant à l'avanture,
Nostre mal ne nous vient que de l'entendement.

All our ills, all the bad that happens to us (or at least that part for which we are responsible) come to us from the understanding. Our one major attribute, which we boast about as our distinguishing trait that elevates us over the rest of creation, brings us nothing but pain and discomfort.

Lachevre located a sonnet by Saint-Evremond similar to the one by Des Barreaux just discussed: "Ce sonnet est à rapprocher de celui de Saint-Evremond, Ce dernier est moins brutal que Des Barreaux, mais ce n'est qu'une nuance."²⁵ Saint-Evremond's sonnet addresses Nature directly, points out the insufficiency of man's middle state, and makes

²⁵ Lachevre, p. 330.

a request for either of two possible ways to ameliorate man's problems.

First he asks Nature why man's state is such as it is:

Nature, enseigne-moi par quel bizarre effort,
Notre âme hors de nous est quelquefois ravie?
Dis-nous comme à nos corps elle-même asservie
S'agite, s'assoupit, se réveille, s'endort.

In the second stanza Saint-Evremond introduces a comparison with animals. Even the least or lowest animals are happier in their lot than man:

Les moindres animaux, plus heureux dans leur sort,
Vivent innocemment sans crainte et sans envie;
Exempts de mille soins qui traversent la vie,
Et de mille frayeurs que nous donne la mort.

Animals are not subject to the passions and cares which plague mankind.

Man, on the other hand, occupies a middling and unenviable position.

He has too little wisdom and intelligence to achieve the clarity of insight that the angels possess but yet has too much mental turmoil to enjoy life as animals do. Saint-Evremond's depiction of the pastoral life of the animals is not accurate, but the reader is not expected to pay any attention to real animals since the assertions are presented only for their impact on man.

As Des Barreaux wanted man to see himself clearly and exactly as he is, so Saint-Evremond displays an interest in man knowing himself and what is good and bad for him:

Un mélange incertain d'esprit et de matière,
Nous fait vivre avec trop, ou trop peu de lumière,
Pour savoir justement et nos biens et nos maux.

Saint-Evremond requests, essentially, a change in man's position in the great chain of being. He pictures man in an untenable middle state and asks of Nature a transfer either up or down on the scale. Either is

preferable to the current position of mankind:

Change l'état douteux dans lequel tu nous ranges,
Nature, élève-nous à la clarté des Anges,
Ou nous abaisse au sens des simples animaux.

Such is the unsatisfactory nature of man, then, according to Saint-Evremond.

Samuel Butler also engaged in a direct attack on mankind in "Satire upon the Weakness and Misery of Man."²⁶ In this poem man is evil almost by instinct:

Our universal Inclination
Tends to the worst of our Creation,
As if the Stars conspir'd t' imprint
In our whole Species, by Instinct,
A fatal Brand, and Signature
Of nothing else, but the Impure.

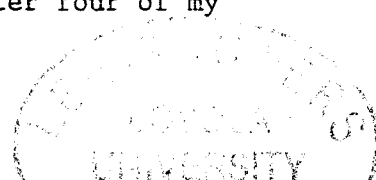
Man seems to be constituted "Of nothing else, but the Impure."

Butler does not compare man to animals; man is instead compared to earlier man:

So, being born and bred up near
Our earthy gross Relations here,
Far from the ancient nobler Place
Of all our high paternal Race,
We now degenerate, and grow
As barbarous, and mean, and low,
As modern Grecians are, and worse,
To their brave nobler Ancestors.
Yet, as no Barbarousness beside
Is half so barbarous as Pride,
Nor any prouder Insolence
Than that, which has the least Pretence,
We are so wretched, to profess
A Glory in our Wretchedness.

The offense is, again, pride. Butler, though, is not attacking all men

²⁶ Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose, ed. Rene Lamar (Cambridge: University Press, 1928), pp. 34-39. All citations are to this edition. Butler's Hudibras is discussed in chapter four of my study here.



of all times. Here he is addressing his contemporary audience, the men of his own times, though he does move on to attack the species in later passages.

Man, Butler asserts, is himself responsible for his degenerate state. Man performs atrocities upon and infects his own kind:

All this is nothing to the Evils,
Which Men, and their confed'rate Devils
Inflict, to aggravate the Curse
On their own hated Kind, much worse;
As if by Nature th' had been serv'd
More gently, than their Fate deserv'd,
Take pains (in Justice) to invent,
And study their own Punishment;
That, as their Crimes should greater grow,
So might their own Inflictions too.
Hence bloody Wars at first began,
The artificial Plague of Man,
That from his own Invention rise,
To scourge his own Iniquities.

Man has only himself to blame for war; it was his own invention and not foisted on him from above. But man is obstinately perverse and destroys even those gifts that are given to him:

. . . there is no good,
Kind Nature ere on Man bestow'd,
But he can easily divert
To his own Misery and Hurt.

Man converts law and equity and wealth, things which should be good in themselves, into plagues--and even misuses what should be his chief treasure, his mind:

On hypothetic Dreams and Visions
Grounds everlasting Disquisitions,
And raises endless Controversies
On vulgar Theorems and Hearsays.

This misuse of his mind is also a charge that recurs continually in satires on mankind.

The verse satires surveyed here, even though some do not label themselves as such, are all examples of the satire on mankind. They form a basis or core of satires on mankind. This brief survey has shown some of the range of materials verse satires on mankind employ as well as some variety in tone and strategy. The reader should now have several examples of the genre firmly in mind. In chapter three when I elaborate on the strategies employed by such satires, I will naturally be providing additional examples, which will also give some indication of the chronological range of satires on mankind.

What are some of the properties or ingredients which may be distilled from this abbreviated survey of satires on mankind? Not all of the following are essential characteristics, but all occur with some frequency in that particular kind of satire:

1. first of all, a definite indicator of some sort that, in fact, all mankind is being referred to: such indicators may be the words "mankind" and "man" or, in French, "l'homme" used generically. The word "all" in front of such terms as "human beings" or "earthlings" is yet another indicator, as are the words "everyone" and "species." The object of attack is a trait or characteristic common to all men and therefore not a foible, abuse or corruption that might distinguish a good man from a bad one. The object is instead a defining characteristic that distinguishes one species from another. The same expansive effect may be reinforced by a panoramic statement of a variety similar to Dr. Johnson's "Let observation with extensive view / Survey mankind from China to Peru" or Oldham's "Throughout the globe from London to Japan. . . ." The use of characters representative of various ranks,

positions, races, and countries may contribute to the impression that all humans are being referred to. The teeming satiric scene, so well described by Kernan, may do the same.²⁷ Finally, the use of the inclusive pronouns listed below under 2 and 3 may be indications that the species, homo sapiens, is itself being attacked.

2. an attack on the reader: in Boileau a particular reader is attacked first, but all readers are presumed human and duly designated by the term "mankind" and are consequently victims of the satire.²⁸ This may be apparent immediately from the start (as in Boileau), it may be introduced later, or the satirist may leave it to dawn on the reader that he, too, is a part of the offending category. The satirist on mankind may occasionally resort to use of the pronoun "you" to implicate the reader, but "you" makes it appear as if he is dissociating himself from the human race, which seldom occurs in satires on mankind.

3. the attacker himself incriminated: if he is attacking all mankind, the satirist must concede, whether overtly or not, that he too is

²⁷ "The scene of satire is always disorderly and crowded, packed to the very point of bursting. The deformed faces of depravity, stupidity, greed, venality, ignorance, and maliciousness group closely together for a moment. . . ." Alvin Kernan, The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 7.

²⁸ Ralph W. Rader makes this point in connection with Book Four of Gulliver's Travels: ". . . Swift seeks to vex and not at all to divert the reader by making him at once the witness and (through his participation in human nature) the object of attack. . . ." "The Concept of Genre and Eighteenth-Century Studies," in New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Literature, ed. Phillip Harth (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 104.

guilty of whatever he charges men to be guilty of. The satirist on man often acknowledges this by use of the pronouns "we" and "us." That he often candidly admits his culpability places him on a level with the readers he has attacked and, hence, undercuts their natural response of "who in the hell does he think he is?" Occasionally, the satirist on mankind will assume a more Juvenalian pose and exult in the fact that he (and perhaps a few perspicacious friends) are aware of those unpleasant truths and are thus slightly superior to those who are not possessed of such knowledge. Nonetheless, these knowledgeable few are still incriminated if, in fact, the work is a satire on mankind.

Numbers 1 through 3 here constitute a distinction between satire on mankind and other kinds of satire, and display a unique arrangement of a literary author-work-reader complex, not just for satire but for any literary production. As I shall be arguing later, satirists on mankind are generally not reluctant to give clear indications that the focus of their attack is upon mankind itself. Swift and others were well aware that general satire is easy to deflect towards one's neighbors. The satirist on man with his blanket attack on the species does not allow his uneasy readers so easy an escape.²⁹

In addition, satires on mankind direct certain specific kinds of charges at mankind. Likewise, they refrain from making some charges. Satirists on mankind, for example, seldom if ever accuse mankind of

²⁹ Tuveson, however, writes that "readers of the 'satires on man' could accept the rhetorical strictures without feeling much personal uneasiness." (p. 78) I will be examining the place of the reader in more detail in chapter two.

being liars--that might be too easy for men to dismiss by merely saying that the poet himself is consequently a liar by his own admission.

4. an attack on man's pride: his egocentrism or anthropocentrism, his feeling that the universe and all its resources and creatures were created solely for him. Man is the king, the magistrate, of all nature, or so he thinks. That such a perception is being made by humans who are not disinterested judges in this case must not be forgotten.

5. an attack of man's pride in Reason, that quality man had used to define himself, to set himself off from other creatures. When in satires on mankind reason is allowed man at all, it is generally "wrong" reason or used as a further indictment against him. Since he has reason to assist him, there is even less excuse for all his sins and follies. Furthermore, man's slight intellectual capacities make him presumptuous. With his inordinate pride and his puny intellect, man will presume to scan the skies and measure even the creator himself.

6. a list of various and sundry accusations, perhaps a catalogue or, at the very least, a series of other charges: these will differ slightly from satirist to satirist. Boileau, for example, says that men do not possess true wisdom, that they vacillate and don't know what they do or do not want, and are subject to a host of passions they can not control, such as ambition, love, greed, and hate. These charges may or may not be revealed through animal comparisons.

Just as satires on mankind launch certain charges, so do they employ certain specific kinds of strategies, ways of embodying these charges.

7. an outside observer providing an "objective" perspective: at

the end of Boileau's Eighth satire, a reputedly stupid animal berates man. Since, to get an impartial observer, it is necessary to go beyond the immediate country (men and women of all countries being the victims) and kind, the impartial observer is often an animal or insect (the less valued by mankind the better to "get at" him) or a visitor from another planet. These strategies will be discussed in detail in chapter three.

8. animal comparison: Boas's term, theriophily, may not be an apt one considering the attitudes of the satirists. The satirist on mankind is often indifferent to animals, at least in his literary productions. Animals are included only for the reflections they may be able to cast on the victims of the satire, that is, on humankind. In fact, sometimes the animals are denigrated first and then man is asserted to be the same as or appreciably worse than they. Therefore, the term animal comparison (comparison, of course, being understood to include contrast as well) might be more accurate. At any rate, the single most important assertion under this heading would be that man is the only animal that preys on his own kind. (This, by the way, is not zoologically true, but since, as I have claimed, satirists on mankind are not as much interested in animals as in hurting man, this assertion gets used repeatedly.)

9. an equation that man=beast: this often includes ironies or paradoxes, such as "man is more brutal than the brutes" or "brutes are more humane than humans." This equation is, of course, related to number 8 in subject matter, but this play with language constitutes, I think, a separate but minor thread all its own. Wycherley and Mark Twain, among a host of others, make use of this.

In addition, satires on mankind employ specific kinds of imagery.

10. images of diminishment: satires on mankind naturally share with other kinds of satire the use of imagery to debase its objects. Man is thus often depicted as merely a bubble, a wisp of wind, a bladder, a little king, a mite, a reed, an ass, and so on.

Not all ten of these characteristics are to be found in every satire on mankind, but they all do appear regularly in that particular kind of satire. I will not be attempting to place the charges or ideas embodied in satires on mankind within a religious or philosophical context (the reader is referred to the excellent studies by A.O. Lovejoy, Griffin and others for that) but merely to demonstrate their use as materials in satires on mankind, that is, in their appearance and manipulation in a literary work. We need now to consider further the nature of these literary productions which embody the characteristics I have just elaborated.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

We need to inquire further into the nature of the literary works embodying the characteristics enumerated in the last chapter. What exactly are they, and what do they seem to be doing?

Satires on mankind are first of all, I am claiming, satire. As I noted in my preface, no attempt at defining satire has proven satisfactory. When we use the word "satire," we are employing a word which has had numerous significations throughout its history. A survey of some of its definitions from its first appearance in English to the end of the eighteenth century will bear this out. Some of these definitions specify the verse form, while others designate the proper objects of the satire. Later definitions will point to the various components of satire.

Alvin Kernan cites Barclay's statement in The Ship of Fools (1509) that 'This present Boke myght have been callyd nat inconvenyently the Satyr (that is to say) the reprehencion of foulysshnes,' and remarks, "Here, then, at the beginning of the century we have the relatively simple view which equates satire with any attack on foolishness."¹ Kernan adds that Thomas Langley's 1570 definition is typical for the times:

¹ The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 54.

A satire is a Poesie, rebuking vices sharpely, not regarding anye persones. . . . /It/ is very railing, onely ordained to rebuke vice. . . . The Satires had their name of uplandyshe Goddes, that were rude, lassivious and wanton of behavior.²

Kernan summarizes the typical Elizabethan definition of satire:

The Elizabethan definition of satire as it appears in formal pronouncements amounts to little more than, 'a poem in which the author playing the part of the satyr attacks vice in the crude, elliptic, harsh language which befits his assumed character and his low subject matter.' Decorum is the guiding principle, and the definition turns on the connection of satyr with satire.³

Puttenham, in The Arte of English Poesie (1589), echoes the belief that the satirist is related to the mythical satyr and adds that vicious men as well as vice are the proper objects of satire:

And the first and most bitter invective against vice and vicious men was the Satyre: which to th'intent their bitternesse should breede none ill will . . . they made wise as if the gods of the woods, whom they called Satyres or Silvanes, should appeare and recite those verses of rebuke. . . .⁴

A brief 1604 definition merely calls satire "a nipping and scoffing verse."⁵ A year later, Casaubon, as Howard Weinbrot notes, was calling attention to two different types of satire:

Isaac Casaubon's famous De Satyrica Graecorum poesi, & Romanorum satira (Paris, 1605), includes a long discussion of Horace's two different kinds of satire. Some satires, he says, are critical and written 'for marking, laughing at and sharply criticizing men filled with vice.'; others, however, are didactic and hope chiefly 'to teach virtue and to inspire love of it.'⁶

² Kernan, p. 55.

³ Kernan, p. 62.

⁴ Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G. Gregory Smith (Oxford: University Press, 1904), II, 32.

⁵ Robert Cawdrey, A Table Alphabetical of Hard Usual English Words, ed. Robert A. Peters (1604; Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1966).

⁶ The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Imitation and Satire (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 129-30.

Dryden, as we will see, will call for "modern" satire to fulfill both of these functions in the same literary work. A 1670 dictionary of "hard Words" also distinguishes two kinds of satire:

Satyre (satyra) a kind of Poetry, whereof there seems to have been two kinds; the one more ancient, which consisted only in variety of Verses; the other more modern, containing an open reprehension of mens Vices, without respect of persons.⁷

A distinction is made between satire and lampoon. This same dictionary calls the lampoon "a libel in verse." Eighty-five years later Dr. Johnson will still be making the same distinction. In 1676 Coles defines satire as simply "an invective poem," while "invective" is defined as "a railing, reproaching biting and bitter speech."⁸

In A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire (1693) Dryden, following Casaubon's lead, denounces the false etymological connection between satire and satyr.⁹ And he explains the correct derivation of the word:

Satura . . . is an adjective, and relates to the word lanx, which is understood; and this lanx, in English a charger, or large platter, was yearly filled with all sorts of fruits, which were offered to the gods at their festivals.¹⁰

He conjectures that we call the works of Ennius, Lucilius, and Horace satires, "because they are full of various matters, and are also written

⁷ Thomas Blount, Glossographia: or a Dictionary of Hard Words (London: 1670).

⁸ Elisha Coles, An English Dictionary . . . (London: 1676).

⁹ Essays of John Dryden, ed. W.P. Ker (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961), II, 45.

¹⁰ Dryden, p. 54.

on various subjects."¹¹

Dryden observes, then, that the general meaning of the word "satire" is broad: "If we take Satire in the general signification of the word, as it is used in all modern languages, for an invective, it is certain that it is almost as old as verse. . . ."¹² He discusses this general meaning in greater detail later:

the word satire is of a more general signification in Latin than in French, or English. For amongst the Romans it was not only used for those discourses which decried vice, or exposed folly, but for others also, where virtue was recommended. But in our modern languages we apply it only to invective poems, where the very name of Satire is formidable to those persons who would appear to the world what they are not in themselves; for in English, to say satire, is to mean reflection, as we use that word in the worst sense; or as the French call it, more properly, medisance.¹³

Dryden alone gives us ample justification for allowing wide leeway in our usage of the word "satire," for avoiding too narrow a conception of it. He does have, however, his own prescription for modern satire.

Dryden believes that satire is a natural product of all civilizations, so that we need not be overly concerned about its early history or where it first emerged, for "scoffs and revilings are of the growth of all nations."¹⁴ Thus, in time, satire would spring up everywhere. As he says of Roman satire, "which sort of poem, though we had not

¹¹ Dryden, p. 55.

¹² Dryden, p. 44.

¹³ Dryden, p. 67.

¹⁴ Dryden, p. 45.

derived from Rome, yet nature teaches it mankind in all ages, and in every country."¹⁵

Kernan summarizes Dryden's position: "The historical movement of satire is, then, from crude scoffs and revilings to polished literary forms which have as their distinguishing marks the qualities of 'wit and morality.'"¹⁶ Casaubon had said that moral doctrine and urbanity or wit are the two things which make up Roman satire. Dryden comments, "but of the two, that which is most essential to this poem, and is, as it were, the very soul which animates it, is the scourging of vice, and exhortation to virtue."¹⁷

For Dryden, satire ultimately has a high purpose, a high mission. "Satire is of the nature of moral philosophy, as being instructive...."¹⁸ Moreover, "satire is undoubtedly a species of heroic poetry."¹⁹ A satire should be unified, and "The poet is bound, and that ex officio, to give his reader some one precept of moral virtue, and to caution him against some one particular vice or folly."²⁰ Other virtues and vices may be mentioned, "But he is chiefly to inculcate one virtue, and insist on that."²¹ This is Dryden's basic stipulation as to what modern satire

¹⁵ Dryden, p. 100.

¹⁶ Alvin B. Kernan, The Plot of Satire (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 7.

¹⁷ Dryden, p. 75.

¹⁸ Dryden, p. 75.

¹⁹ Dryden, p. 108.

²⁰ Dryden, p. 104.

²¹ Dryden, p. 104.

should be doing. We need to remember that it is not a description of what satire has been doing consistently but Dryden's prescription. He adds later, "Of the best and finest manner of Satire . . . 'tis that sharp, well-mannered way of laughing a folly out of countenance...."²²

Jeremy Collier laments the way his contemporaries use the word:

Satyr amongst the Latins, is, in a large sense, applicable to all Discourses that recommend Vertue, and explode Vice: But the Word, as it is now commonly used with us, only signifies a stinging piece of Poetry, to lash and expose the Vices of Men.²³

The verse satire, at least, was thus perceived for an extended period of time to be a poem which should both attack and praise. Howard Weinbrot says of this blame-praise pattern:

We have seen, then, that the concept of formal verse satire as incorporating attack upon a particular vice and praise of its opposite virtue was well-known at least from the publication of Dacier's essay on satire (1687) to the final volume of Warton's History of English Poetry (1781).²⁴

Shortly after 1700 Tom Brown reiterates the same belief, "Satyr is designed to expose Vice and encourage Vertue. . . ."²⁵ In actual practice, some verse satires adhere to this principle, and others do not.

A 1702 dictionary maintains simply that satire is "a Kind of Poetry sharply inveighing against vice and vicious persons."²⁶

²² Dryden, p. 105.

²³ Weinbrot, p. 61.

²⁴ Weinbrot, p. 74.

²⁵ Quoted in Paul J. Korshin, From Concord to Dissent (Menston, England: The Scholar Press, 1973), p. 146.

²⁶ J.K., A New English Dictionary; Or, a Compleat Collection of the Most Proper and Significant Words . . . (London: 1702).

The sixth edition of The New World of Words . . . (1706) defines it as "a Word that signifies all manner of Discourse, wherein any Person is reprov'd; but commonly taken for a Poem, that sharply and wittily rebukes Vice, and reflects upon the vicious; a Lampon."²⁷ B.N. Defoe's 1735 definition seems derived from these last two: "a kind of Poetry, sharply inveighing against Vice and vicious Persons, a Lampon; also all manner of Discourse wherein any Person is sharply reprov'd."²⁸ The thirteenth edition of An Universal Etymological English Dictionary . . . (1749) furnishes exactly the same definition.²⁹ The lampoon had generally been distinguished from satire but here they are equated.

In 1744 Corbyn Morris differentiated among raillery, satire, and ridicule:

Hence the Aim of Raillery, is to please you, by some little Embarrassment of a Person; Of Satire, to scourge Vice, and to deliver it up to your just Detestation; And of Ridicule, to set an Object in a mean and ludicrous Light, so as to expose it to your Derision and Contempt.³⁰

Of the three, satire has the most serious mission, for "Raillery, is a genteel poignant Attack of slight Foibles and Oddities; Satire a witty

²⁷ Edward Phillips, The New World of Words: Or Universal English Dictionary . . . 6th ed. (London: 1706).

²⁸ A Compleat English Dictionary (Westminster: 1735).

²⁹ N. Bailey, An Universal Etymological English Dictionary . . . 13th ed. (London: 1749).

³⁰ Corbyn Morris, An Essay towards Fixing the True Standards of Wit, Humour, Raillery, Satire, and Ridicule (1744), Series one, No. 4 (The Augustan Reprint Society, 1947), p. 37.

and severe Attack of mischievous Habits and Vices."³¹ If raillery goes too far, it will end up being malicious and rude, "But Satire, the more deep and severe the Sting of it is, will be the more excellent; Its intention being entirely to root out and destroy the Vice."³² Ridicule, on the other hand,

is justly employ'd, not upon the Vices, but the Foibles or Mean-nesses of Persons, And also upon the Improprieties of other Sub-jects. . . . It being evident that Immoralities and Vice are too detestable for Ridicule, and are therefore properly the Subject of Satire; Whereas Foibles and Meannesses are too harmless for Satire, and deserve only to be treated with Ridicule.³³

In 1790 Thomas Sheridan still defines "satire" as "A poem in which wickedness or folly are censured."³⁴ In 1791 Walker provides the same exact definition, still insisting upon the verse form and the same subjects.³⁵

These various definitions, spanning almost three hundred years, show considerable variety. Some allow for prose forms, while others would restrict the word to poetry. Some allow for personal satire; some do not. The first definition of the OED bears in on these issues:

A poem, or in modern use sometimes a prose composition, in which prevailing vices or follies are held up to ridicule. Sometimes, less correctly, applied to a composition in verse or prose intended to ridicule a particular person or class of persons, a lampoon.

³¹ Morris, p. 50.

³² Morris, p. 50.

³³ Morris, pp. 52-3.

³⁴ A Complete Dictionary of the English Language . . . 3rd ed. (London: 1790), II.

³⁵ John Walker, A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary, ed. R.C. Alston (1791; Menston, England: The Scholar Press, 1968).

The NED notes that "satire" entered the English language in 1509, and that its meanings have steadily multiplied since then: "Not only have the ways in which we use it increased, but the kurion onoma or soul of the word has shown a progressive change from a specific, narrow meaning to an abstract, broad one." In the twentieth century the word signifies, according to the NED, formal verse satire, any verse with satiric intent, a formal genre (either verse or prose) possessing uniform characteristics, or not a formal genre but something "identifiable by its motive and spirit alone."

The variety of all these definitions we have just surveyed, even without reference to the variegated mass of works which they purport to describe, suggests the complexity of the word. This variety may also illustrate the mixed platter, the jumble, or the richness of the province which is satire. One may attempt to classify or define that medley known as satire from any of a number of angles, probably no one of which is quite sufficient alone. I will be discussing shortly, as my angle of approach, classification by the number of victims. Given satire's etymology, given the various forms it takes, its various victims and the multifarious methods of practicing satirists, "satire" is certainly a large and flexible enough entity to subsume or contain satires on mankind. I am claiming that the satire on mankind is legitimately one portion of this diffuse literary cluster. As a starting point we need to search for any similarities among these various definitions or among the various kinds of satire.

The common denominator of the various definitions of "satire" is, as has often been noted, attack. Alvin B. Kernan, for example,

writes,

Satire has been identified in many different ways, but it seems to me that literary tradition has selected and called satire only those works which have as their primary and consistent motive an attack upon someone or something. In short, aggression lies at the heart of satire.³⁶

Satire is one kind of verbal aggression. It is a verbal mode of expressing disaffection with an idea, a person, a group, and pushed to its extreme, with everything. It differs from such nonverbal expressions as the punch in the mouth, the burning of books, the bombing of nations or the destruction of the world via whatever technological means are available at a given time. Satire, at times, is the verbal equivalent of, or substitution for, a physical act which may range from a playful nudge to an all-out physical attack. We need to remember the physical bases in the etymologies of "insult," "sarcasm," and "excoriate." Lucilius defined his poems as facta saeva or "savage actions."³⁷ And Meredith called the laughter of satire "a blow in the back or the face."³⁸ But, as I said, satire may be a substitution for physical attack. In a most apposite and suggestive essay, Kernan writes,

The art of satire, I would now like to suggest, might profitably, or at least interestingly, be approached as one instance of the way in which man has learned to control aggression and manage it to useful ends. There are a number of points at which that art is remarkably similar to the aggression-inhibiting and -controlling devices of the animal world.³⁹

³⁶ Alvin B. Kernan, "Aggression and Satire: Art Considered as a Form of Biological Adaptation" in Literary Theory and Structure, ed. Frank Brady et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 117.

³⁷ Ulrich Knoche, Roman Satire, trans., Edwin S. Ramage (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), p. 42.

³⁸ George Meredith, "An Essay on Comedy" in Comedy, ed. Wylie Sypher (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), p. 47.

³⁹ Kernan, "Aggression," p. 121.

Kernan cites a remark made by Anna Freud: "My father said that the first man to use abusive words instead of his fists was the founder of civilization."⁴⁰ Despite its sometimes unsavory associations and the negativity surrounding it, the attack of satire, then, may be a civilized response to the ways of the world. I would add that although it may sometimes lead to physical retaliation, it does not invite such a response. In this way it differs from the direct curse or namecalling which is most often an invitation to escalate a confrontation from the verbal to the physical level.

Nonetheless, satire is a weapon, its bullets words, which, despite the childish "sticks and stones" incantation, can and do hurt. What has happened immediately prior to the iteration of "sticks and stones," of course, is that one has been injured with words. Like handguns, satire is accessible to all and can be used for any purpose. It can be fired in any direction. It is so versatile a weapon that it can not only fire single shots and be put on automatic for general massacre but it may attempt to blow up the entire world and even the heavens.

The direction of satire is not determined for the satirist. It may serve any cause. It is not solely or even necessarily conservative, as some critics used to claim. To this extent satire is neutral; words as weapons may be employed by anyone for any purpose or cause. The satirist charges it, deploys it. As Kernan has written, "Theoretically, there is no reason why satirists cannot attack any person, attitude, or

⁴⁰ Kernan, "Aggression," p. 128.

way of life which happens to amuse or displease them. The range of actual satire supports this conclusion."⁴¹

As a verbal means of displaying aggression, then, satire's object is to injure, maim, destroy, or merely fire the warning shot (as a deterrent to the perpetrator or as an alarm to innocent citizenry, should there be any). The satirist's motives may or may not be honorable. Though satire shares the similarities noted above with the world of action, it is instead a literary activity. As such it may be indulged in for any of a host of reasons. It may occasionally just be sour grapes. The satirist may merely be venting his mortido. He may be taking inordinate joy in distressing others. But, as with most other literary constructions, the author's motives may not be relevant at all to the reader. I have maintained that satire is purposive, but whether the motives that called it into being are discreditable or unsavory is, as far as I am concerned, beside the point. I am interested here in the literary product.

Satire differs from other verbal disapprobation in that it is a literary construct rather than, for example, straight philosophical prose, although its concerns may be philosophical. As a literary construct, it involves writer, narrator (or character propounding the satire), the satiric victim or victims, and reader or audience. In addition, various literary traditions and conventions come into play. The satirist may use, misuse, adapt, reject, or diverge from these as he pleases. Edward W. Rosenheim has refused to concede that satires on mankind belong under the generic heading of satire. He asserts that

⁴¹ Kernan, Plot, p. 21.

"the essence of the satiric procedure is attack, and the attack launched impartially against everyone is no attack at all."⁴² In addition, these satires on mankind can be distinguished from satire by their ultimate effect, "which is basically didactic--and, in fact, philosophic. For they consider, albeit unfavorably, the timeless nature of man and his world."⁴³ Finally, he adds,

to consider universal propositions, in whatever light, is not mere 'attack,' but, if it is to be effective, philosophic inquiry. A true 'satire against mankind'--on the assumption that it transcends particular men or groups of men yet strives to speak the truth--would lie beyond our definition of satire.⁴⁴

But as literary constructs and part of a literary tradition although a minor one, satires on mankind involve the audience in a way that is different from reading a philosophical tract. Moreover, satires on man are no more compelled "to speak the truth" than other types of satire or, for that matter, other types of literature. Distortion, exaggeration, and slanting have long been employed by satirists of all kinds.

Satirizing mankind is a distinct, purposive literary activity. The satire on mankind is a kind, or perhaps petit genre or subtype, of satire. In isolating satire on mankind for study, one arrives at what is basically a tri-partite classification of satire based on the number of victims. Thus, in using this angle of approach to the subject, one finds particular or personal satire, general satire, and satire on mankind.

⁴² Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., Swift and the Satirist's Art (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 29.

⁴³ Rosenheim, p. 30.

⁴⁴ Rosenheim, p. 30.

The word "satire" is and has been used to describe satire that is aimed at a particular person or idea or group of ideas, satire that is aimed at many people (all men, e.g., who wear maroon slacks, white belt, and white shoes--in the U.S. the figure could be hundreds or thousands, even hundreds of thousands, but certainly not all), and, finally, satire that satirizes all mankind. The first of these is personal or particular satire; the second, general satire; and the last, the type we are most concerned with here.

Particular or personal satire is directed at specific identifiable objects, Richard M. Nixon or the John Birch Society, for example. Particular or personal satire names names. The most forceful elucidation of particular satire is that by Edward W. Rosenheim. His working definition of satire, wrought for an investigation of the works of Swift, is as follows:

All satire is not only an attack; it is an attack upon discernible, historically authentic particulars. The 'dupes' or victims of punitive satire are not mere fictions. They, or the objects which they represent, must be, or have been plainly existent in the world of reality; they must, that is, possess genuine historic identity. The reader must be capable of pointing to the world of reality, past or present, and identifying the individual or group, institution, custom, belief, or idea which is under attack by the satirist.⁴⁵

Restated a few pages later, his definition looks like this: "satire consists of an attack by means of a manifest fiction upon discernible historic particulars."⁴⁶ Such a definition would seem to militate against or even preclude satires on mankind, and we have already noted

⁴⁵ Rosenheim, p. 25.

⁴⁶ Rosenheim, p. 31.

some of his remarks on that type. For now, Bertrand Goldgar's response to this will suffice:

Without questioning his definition of satire, which is intended as a critical tool rather than as historical description, I think it worth recalling that attacks on human nature or the human species as such were thought in Swift's day to be well within the satiric genre.⁴⁷

In fairness to Rosenheim, we must remember that he is dealing with Swift and that Swift had spoken out against satire that indicts all, as a couple of well-known passages from A Tale of a Tub demonstrate:

But Satyr being levelled at all, is never resented for an offence by any, since every individual Person makes bold to understand it of others, and very wisely removes his particular Part of the Burthen upon the shoulders of the World, which are broad enough, and able to bear it.⁴⁸

And again referring to this kind of satire, Swift writes: "'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."⁴⁹ Nonetheless, as we will see, this did not prevent Swift from writing satire on mankind occasionally. It also seems to me that these quotes from Swift are even more applicable to Addison's general satire than to the satire on mankind. For the victim, it is much easier to exclude oneself from a portion of "at least a Thousand," than it is to exclude oneself from mankind.

⁴⁷ "Satires on Man and 'The Dignity of Human Nature,'" PMLA, 80 (1965), 535.

⁴⁸ Jonathan Swift: Selected Prose and Poetry, ed. Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr. (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1959), p. 41.

⁴⁹ Swift, p. 42.

At any rate, a strong backlash developed against personal attacks upon individuals. Lashing the vice but sparing the name became the decent, humane thing to do. Strong sentiments supporting this approach were voiced in the Spectator. The Spectator, in essence, is advocating general satire: In #16, for example, Addison maintains that he is against attacks upon individual persons:

If I attack the Vicious, I shall only set upon them in a Body; and will not be provoked by the worst Usage I can receive from others, to make an Example of any particular Criminal. In short, I have so much of a Drawcansir in me, that I shall pass over a single Foe to charge whole Armies.

Again in Spectator 34 he promises "never to draw a faulty Character which does not fit at least a Thousand People." Later, in #355, he pushes the idea of anti-personal satire to its limit. He makes the refusal to write it a virtue:

If a Man has any Talent in Writing, it shews a good Mind to forbear answering Calumnies and Reproaches in the same Spirit of Bitterness with which they are offered: But when a Man has been at some Pains in making suitable Returns to an Enemy, and has the Instruments of Revenge in his Hands, to let drop his Wrath, and stifle his Resentments, seems to have something in it Great and Heroical.

If one does write it, one shouldn't publish it. Furthermore, as we have already noted, throughout the eighteenth century satire was generally differentiated from the lampoon in much the way Dr. Johnson distinguished the two: "Proper satire is distinguished, by the generality of the reflections, from a lampoon which is aimed against a particular person."

On the other hand, there were those who expressed dissatisfaction with the amiable, toothless satire of the sort recommended by the Spectator: General satire was simply not effective. It was, as we've

just seen Swift noting, too easy to deflect general satire onto one's neighbors, or to see one's neighbor's face in the mirror rather than one's own. Pope observed that he would prefer writing less personal more general satire but that the latter simply does not work:

I would indeed do it with more restrictions, & less personally; it is more agreeable to my nature, which those who know it not are greatly mistaken in: But General Satire in Times of General Vice has no force, & is no Punishment: People have ceas'd to be ashamed of it when so many are joind with them; and tis only by hunting One or two from the Herd that any Examples can be made. If a man writ all his Life against the Collective Body of the Banditti, or against Lawyers, would it do the least Good, or lessen the Body? But if some are hung up, or pilloryed, it may prevent others. And in my low Station, with no other Power than this, I hope to deter, if not to reform.⁵⁰

In preparing this letter for publication, as James Sutherland notes, Pope offers additional evidence for preferring, or needing, personal rather than general satire:

To reform and not to chastise, I am afraid is impossible, and that the best Precepts, as well as the best Laws, would prove of small use, if there were no Examples to inforce them. To attack Vices in the abstract, without touching Persons, may be safe fighting indeed, but it is fighting with Shadows. General propositions are obscure, misty, and uncertain, compar'd with plain, full, and home examples. . . . The only sign by which I found my writings ever did any good, or had any weight, has been that they raised the anger of bad men. And my greatest comfort, and encouragement to proceed, has been to see that those who have no shame, and no fear, of any thing else, have appear'd touch'd by my Satires.⁵¹

People are no longer ashamed when so many others join in the same faults as them, though I suspect one can be ashamed for one's whole kind. Yet,

⁵⁰ The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, ed. George Sherburn, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 423.

⁵¹ English Satire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 158.

personal satire is not incompatible with satire on mankind, and the personal examples Pope wants pilloried might well be brought out for exposure in a satire on mankind, as specific instances going towards proving the satirist's argument. A few examples may not carry much weight argumentatively, but they do add concreteness to the generalizations being proffered. The satire on man differs from general satire not just in the broadness or extent of its generalizations and in the kind of satiric indictments it makes but also in the fact that it willingly resorts to the use of personal satire. Individuals will occasionally be named as egregious examples of the charges against man.

Pope's remarks lamenting the ineffectiveness of satire that is not personal plus the similar observations of Swift might be placed alongside the following more optimistic opinion about general satire reaching its victims: "For gen'ral Satire will all Vices fit, / And ev'ry Fool or Knave will think he's hit."⁵² But the first line here seems inaccurate and the second naive and unduly optimistic.

The spectrum of number of victims I have been offering would have at its narrowest end satire against a single victim and at its widest satire against all mankind, with general satire somewhere in between. One other type needs to be mentioned. The satire on the Times or the Age, sometimes referred to as the "now-a-days" topos,⁵³ appears to be close to the satire on man, although there are some important differ-

⁵² The Satirist: In Imitation of the Fourth Satire of the First Book of Horace (London: 1733).

⁵³ A.R. Heiserman, Skelton and Satire (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 94.

ences. The complaint against the times may allow for more individual exceptions to its charges. It often harkens back to a Golden Age or at least the "good old days." It argues that things ought to be other than what they currently are. It may imply that the current deteriorated state of things is remediable. The same approach may emerge as an attack on all moderns, on the modern world. In eighteenth-century literature one encounters occasional attacks upon the "world," but judging from the contexts it seems to me that what is designated by the word "world" in such cases is generally something equivalent to what we mean by "high society" or the haut monde.

The third basic kind of satire (elicited by the approach of using the number of victims), and our primary interest here, is the satire on mankind. The term itself has often been used indiscriminately or rather broadly, as Bertrand Goldgar has pointed out:

It is important to note that in the early eighteenth century the distinction was often blurred; any work, whether philosophic, theological, or imaginative, which painted a dark picture of human nature might be called a 'satire on man.'⁵⁴

As we will see in chapter four, the term has been used likewise in the twentieth century. One of the purposes of the present study is to see if we can establish some criteria, based on the satires themselves, which will allow us to use the critical term "satire on mankind" with more precision.

Satires on mankind also provoked numerous unfavorable responses in the eighteenth century: "While other forms of satire were still flourishing and meeting with critical approval, satiric indictments of

⁵⁴ Goldgar, p. 535.

mankind as a whole were censured as libels on the 'dignity of human nature.'"⁵⁵ Bertrand Goldgar has ably surveyed these adverse reactions. He isolates three major charges which were typically made against the type:

- (1) satire on man debases the dignity of human nature; (2) it is inefficacious, and actually destroys incitements to virtue; and (3) it is the product of a malign and discontented mind.⁵⁶

We need to look at a couple of these.

Addison, we will remember, promises "never to draw a faulty Character which does not fit at least a Thousand People" but continues "or to publish a single Paper, that is not written in the Spirit of Benevolence, and with a love to Mankind." Here we have two differences between satire on mankind and general satire: general satire is more selective in its victims and is, purportedly at least, written with a different spirit. Addison offers further evidence that the two must be differentiated. In Spectator 209 he reacts strongly against the satire on mankind. After finding fault with the anti-feminist satires of Juvenal and Boileau, he proceeds:

Such levelling Satyrs are of no use to the World, and for this reason I have often wondered how the French Author above mentioned, who was a Man of exquisite Judgment, and a Lover of Virtue, could think Human Nature a proper Subject for Satyr in another of his celebrated Pieces, which is called The Satyr upon Man. What vice or Frailty can a Discourse correct, which censures the whole Species alike, and endeavours to shew by some Superficial Strokes of Wit, that Brutes are the most excellent Creatures of the two? A Satyr should expose nothing but what is corrigible, and make a due Discrimination between those who are, and those who are not the proper Objects of it.

⁵⁵ Goldgar, p. 535.

⁵⁶ Goldgar, p. 536.

Of course the vice or frailty that Boileau and other satirists on man expose is human pride. The satirist sets out deliberately to debunk exaggerated ideas of the "dignity of human nature." I will be responding shortly to Addison's claim that satire must attack only what is corrigible.

One of the basic charges against satires on man, then, was that they debased human nature. The Tatler, for example, writes as follows of certain "modish French authors":

Their business is to deprecate human nature and consider it under its worst appearances. They give mean interpretations and base motives to the worthiest actions; they resolve virtue and vice into constitution. In short, they endeavour to make no distinction between man and man, or between the species of men and that of brutes. (#108)

Later these same authors are referred to as

shallow and despicable pretenders to knowledge who endeavour to give man dark and uncomfortable prospects of his being, and destroy those principles which are the support, happiness, and glory of all public societies, as well as private persons.

According to Hughes in Spectator 210, there are dangers in attempting to discomfit man in such a way:

I am fully perswaded that one of the best Springs of generous and worthy Actions, is the having generous and worthy Thoughts of our selves. Whoever has a mean Opinion of the Dignity of his Nature, will act in no higher a Rank than he has allotted himself in his own Estimation.

Hughes continues in this same vein in Spectator 537:

It is very disingenuous to level the best of Mankind with the worse, and for the Faults of Particulars to degrade the whole Species. Such methods tend not only to remove a Man's good Opinion of others, but to destroy that Reverence for himself, which is a great Guard of Innocence, and a Spring of Virtue.

But as an antidote to this pernicious way of looking at man, we have religion: "And whoever believes the Immortality of the Soul, will not

need a better Argument for the Dignity of his Nature, nor a stronger Incitement to Actions suitable to it."

How do we respond to this charge? The satirist on mankind does make assertions which seem to degrade human nature. The satirist does seem to want to "give man dark and uncomfortable prospects of his being." I suppose we need to inquire for what purposes the satirist is bringing forth these charges. We should remember, however, that preachers as well as satirists have often differed about the best methods for effecting their purposes. Some prefer vinegar, and some sugar. Some prefer to shame their victims, to rub their noses into the dirt, to disgust them with themselves. Others favor flattery as the most efficient way to amend the audience or victims. Addison and Hughes here have been indicating that their particular temperaments lead them to prefer the more pleasant method. Satirists on mankind generally prefer the less palatable approach.

A second prominent charge brought against satires on mankind is that they are simply not effective. We have already seen Pope, Swift, and Rosenheim claim that, in essence, an "attack launched impartially against everyone is no attack at all." We might ask what it means for satire to be effective. None of the major satirists had any illusions about their satire effecting major changes in their victims. In order even to try to assess their effectiveness we first have to decide exactly what it is that they are doing or trying to accomplish. We need, then, to examine these satires a little more closely.

The satire on mankind is at the opposite end of the spectrum from individual satire. It attacks something about mankind, all men, the

human race, the species. As such it differs from personal satire, which is aimed at a specific individual or individuals, and from general satire, which may purport to attack dozens or thousands but never a single individual and never the entire human race. The satire on man casts aspersions of various sorts on all mankind.

Satire on mankind shares the following with other satire--that is, with particular and general satire:

- the intent to attack via words
- the numerous conventional rhetorical devices satirists have employed against their victims
- the multiple forms and techniques available for the satirist's use
- a concern for using appropriate strategies to "get at," to penetrate to, to "nail" the victim
- an imagery of debasement
- a spectrum of tones varying from light to bleak, but still satirical
- the ability to appear incidentally in works not primarily satiric or to appear as discrete self-contained works.

To me these similarities are crucial enough to qualify the satire on man as satire. But, on the other hand, satire on mankind appears different from what some consider satire for three primary reasons:

- it may appear unduly rhetorical rather than fictional; its bald, negative assertions may not appear, particularly in the verse satires, to be borne in upon, as Rosenheim says, a "manifest fiction"

- its direct or implied attack on the reader destroys the reader's expectation of enjoying the discomfiture of other victims

- what it is attacking may not be corrigible. The satirist on man does not offer positive alternatives. His offerings may be dismissed as misanthropic ravings. He is not the benevolent misanthrope type, whose wide currency Thomas R. Preston has revealed.⁵⁷ His motives may not be honorable.

⁵⁷ Not in Timon's Manner: Feeling, Misanthropy, and Satire in Eighteenth-Century England (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1975).

Some critics have felt uneasy about including direct invective within the realm of satire. Indirection is one of their criteria for satire. This causes them to look askance at many verse satires on man which forthrightly attack the species. David Worcester, for example, writes, "Satire is the engine of anger, rather than the direct expression of anger. Before our sympathy is won, we must be freed from the distress of witnessing naked rage and bluster."⁵⁸ Of course the satirist on man may not be particularly interested in winning our sympathy. Worcester distinguishes between gross invective or abuse and satiric invective: "This gross invective, or abuse, is distinguished from satiric invective by direct, intense sincerity of expression. Satiric invective shows detachment, indirection, and complexity in the author's attitude."⁵⁹ Worcester does concede that there are some exceptions to this.⁶⁰

Feinberg finds the direct approach less satisfying than the indirect:

Overdirect satire of hypocrisy, as in Moliere's Misanthrope, is sometimes more irritating--and consequently less satisfying--than a more subtle attack. The bitter pill needs sugarcoating, but no prescription exists for the precise amount.⁶¹

Again, the satirist on man, or any satirist for that matter, may very well want to irritate rather than to satisfy.

Kernan claims that "The satirist never seems to attack directly

⁵⁸ David Worcester, The Art of Satire (1940; New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), p. 18.

⁵⁹ Worcester, p. 19.

⁶⁰ Worcester, p. 20.

⁶¹ Leonard Feinberg, Introduction to Satire (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1967), p. 93.

but always pretends not to be doing what in fact he is doing."⁶² Kernan expands on this elsewhere:

we do not ordinarily allow the term 'satire' to be used for such crude forms of verbal aggression as cursing, denunciation, diatribe, invective, sarcasm, pasquinade. . . . To be true satire, verbal aggression must . . . be artfully managed, witty, indirect.⁶³

W.B. Carnochan maintains that "Irony is the indirection that converts criticism to satire."⁶⁴ And Ellen Leyburn confidently asserts that indirection is a sine qua non of satire: "Indirection as a basic necessity of good satire has been so ably set forth in recent criticism that there is no need to insist on it here except as it leads the satirist to choose allegory as a way of achieving fictionality."⁶⁵ Frye writes that "Satire demands at least a token fantasy. . . ."⁶⁶ He adds, "Two things, then, are essential to satire; one is wit or humor founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is an object of attack. Attack without humor, or pure denunciation, forms one of the boundaries of satire."⁶⁷

Thus, there is considerable critical pressure to regard direct

⁶² Kernan, Plot, p. 82.

⁶³ Kernan, "Aggression," p. 118.

⁶⁴ "Swift's Tale: On Satire, Negation, and the Uses of Irony," ECS, 5, No. 1 (Fall, 1971), 124.

⁶⁵ Ellen Douglas Leyburn, Satiric Allegory: Mirror of Man (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 7.

⁶⁶ Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 224.

⁶⁷ Frye, p. 224.

denunciation, such as one often encounters in satires on mankind, as something beyond or outside the realm of satire. Not all satires on man are primarily direct; but oftentimes, even within a fictional setting, Houyhnhnms or extraterrestrials or a misanthrope will spew forth directly at mankind. It seems to me that such direct assertions are merely another part of the satirist's arsenal, another tactic the satirist may utilize to attack his victim or victims with some vigor.

Another main reason that satire on mankind appears different from other satire is, as I have said, that it offers no positive alternatives. As such it differs from what has been described as the formal verse satire.⁶⁸ Satires on man may be what Howard Weinbrot has characterized as revelatory satire, which "is primarily concerned with depicting a grim situation rather than both attacking vice and presenting a clearly workable norm. Augustan formal verse satire, however, adopts the latter method."⁶⁹ Verse satires on mankind, however, appear to be, in fact, formal verse satires which do not conform to Dryden's or Mary Claire Randolph's strictures on the type. The satirist need not attack something which is corrigible, nor does he need to offer any positive alternatives. James Sutherland has made this point emphatically:

⁶⁸ Mary Claire Randolph, "The Structural Design of the Formal Verse Satire," PQ, 21 (1942), 368-84.

⁶⁹ "On the Discrimination of Augustan Satires," in Proceedings of the Modern Language Association Neoclassicism Conference, 1967-68, ed. Paul J. Korshin (New York: AMS Press, 1970), p. 6.

The satirist is destructive; he destroys what is already there (and what to many people appears to be functioning quite satisfactorily), and he does not necessarily offer to fill the vacuum that he has created. He is, as Mr. Kenneth Tynan remarked recently of Bernard Shaw, 'a demolition expert.' We are being grossly irrelevant, Mr. Tynan added, 'if we ask a demolition expert, when his work is done: But what have you created? . . . Shaw's genius was for intellectual slum-clearance, not for town-planning.'⁷⁰

In attacking various aspects of humanity which are unchanging, or seem so, the satirist on mankind need not construct anything. Apparently, we need to enquire exactly what it is that satires on man are doing.

What is it, then, that these literary productions, endowed with the characteristics we have enumerated, do? What do they perform? This is not an easy question to answer, since satires on man vary. They differ in what they emphasize, in tone, and in numerous other ways as well. They do all employ, however, an identifiable, characteristic range of charges and strategies.

Satires on mankind articulate a specific range of charges or indictments. Men are frequently depicted as short-lived, puny, fearful creatures filled with various passions over which they can not or will not exercise control, such as envy, malice, and hatred. Man lives in endless mental turmoil; his emotions vacillate wildly. Certain of the abstractions he cherishes, such as love, honor, justice, nobility and so on, do not, in fact, exist. He is subject to a million ills, the least of which can render him into little more than food for the worms.

In relation to other animals on this planet, man is both physically and psychologically inferior. Animals have the advantage over

⁷⁰ Sutherland, p. 1.

him in strength, speed, health, longevity and power of the senses. In addition, animals are exempt from the vices, fearful fantasies, superstitions, ambition, avarice, envy and so on of man. Man may, just may, have greater mental capacities than the animals, but these are no consolation to him and may be even further reason to indict him. What is worse, man is depicted as the only animal that preys on his own kind; this is the gravamen. Man is ultimately a beast and not nearly so high on the great chain of being as he would like to think; he is closer to the other animals than he is willing to admit.

The planet which man inhabits is infinitely small in relation to other planets and the universe as a whole. Man may be inferior to extraterrestrials in terms of life expectancy, size, intelligence, mental health, and technological advancement. Furthermore, man may not be the center of the creator's attention, and he is not capable of fathoming the creator's intentions. Man thus lives in uncertainty, though he does not recognize this. He is vulnerable, the victim of numerous dread "natural" disasters, plagues, earthquakes and the like. Though he likes to think of himself as a significant creature, he may not even be possessed of free will.

In short, satires on mankind put forth an array of assertions which point inevitably to the conclusion that all men, their lives and their actions are of little consequence.

Despite all this, the satirist on mankind adds, despite all his shortcomings and limitations, despite the overwhelming evidence leading ineluctably to the establishment of man's insignificance, he remains unaccountably proud. The satirist points out that there is obviously

an enormous lack of self knowledge here, a lack of realistic self-evaluation.

This is the primary charge that satires on mankind make: man's enormous pride in the face of all this evidence to the contrary. Man is a self-inflated balloon.

Satires on man differ in which of these charges they employ and in the number provided; but, in general, the charges I have just outlined are the standard ones which satires on mankind project. The question remains as to what, exactly, literary works employing these charges are in fact trying to accomplish.

Students of satire have long recognized the need to determine exactly who or what is being attacked. A major contribution of Edward W. Rosenheim's Swift and the Satirist's Art is the emphasis he places upon locating the precise object of the satiric attack, that is, the satiric victim. At whom, then, is the attack (employing the charges I indicated) directed? Who or what is the satiric victim of satires on mankind?

In one sense, as the term itself makes obvious, we all are. The assertions apply to every one who is a member of the species. We are asked in satires on mankind to consider propositions inimical to our very beings. Human nature itself seems at times to be under attack. In so far as human nature is being attacked, the faults singled out for attack are, for the most part, not corrigible, not amendable; and the argument that satire attacks only those things which are corrigible has been made extensively not only in the eighteenth century but in our own as well. I have already objected to this attitude, but the point is

that as a result of this belief satires on mankind may not be classified as satire at all.

As a result of the fact that all human beings are under attack here, a distinction arises between satires on mankind and other kinds of satire. Satires on mankind are unique in that, since all are being attacked, both satirist and reader are incriminated, are included among the victims of the attack. This has the effect of removing the satirist from his Juvenalian pedestal, where he was susceptible to the question, "who in the hell does he think he is?" The satirist, the speaker of the satire, is guilty of the charges he has brought forth against mankind.⁷¹ The reader is also indicted in such a process. He is brought into the work in a way he is not accustomed to, more intimately than he perhaps desires, for the charges applying to the species inevitably apply to him or her as well.⁷² Thus, on one level, the human condition

⁷¹ We need to distinguish this procedure from the satirist-satirized which Robert C. Elliott and Kernan discuss. They refer to the method whereby an author undercuts the message or assertions of his satiric speaker by, in turn, satirizing that speaker. This allows the author to dissociate himself from unpopular assertions, although I would contend that the mere discharge or release of such material into a literary work (even though it may be undercut by being put into the mouth of a fool, gravedigger or madman) will certainly alter the texture of that work. I am not so sure that satirizing the satirist will truly "release" the reader from taking those unpopular assertions seriously. It is difficult to calculate the ultimate effect of this kind of undercutting. As James Sutherland notes, "Satire . . . is often active below the level of consciousness, and may therefore work by delayed action." (p. 156)

⁷² Henry W. Sams calls such an attack on the reader "satire of the second person" and speaks of the way Swift "circumvents the rhetorical alliance" ("Swift's Satire of the Second Person," ELH, 26, 1959, p. 37). What Sams calls satire of the second person and what I refer to merely as satire of the reader occurs naturally as part of the satire on man. Each reader, being human, is automatically a victim. He plays a special though uncomfortable role in satires on mankind; he

and all human beings, including writer and reader, are indicted in satires on mankind.

But satires on mankind may operate on another level as well. Pride, as I said earlier, is crucial. All those negative assertions or charges directed towards mankind may be present as evidence in order to deflate, correct, balance or discredit overly optimistic evaluations of mankind. The satirist on mankind is trying to disenchant man with himself. The satire on mankind attacks man's pride, his anthropocentrism, his speciesism. Mankind's status is not so exalted as men like to think it is. The satirist, then, is involved in discrediting certain positive assertions about man. The substructure of the satirist's argument appears to be something like the following:

Man thinks he is this (the central feature of the universe, the King of Nature and the creation, inestimably above the animals, endowed with reason and an intellect which allows him to pierce the secrets not only of this planet but of the heavens and even the creator himself),

whereas in fact he is this (a pride-filled, puffed-up, frail animal, an uncertain, blind, wrong-reasoned, errant, tormented creature upon whom the creator has not been overly bountiful in bestowing creature comforts and about whose well-being the creator is not overly solicitous).

The satirist on man is therefore asking man to reevaluate himself. More precisely, he is attacking what he believes to be misguided, unduly optimistic assertions about the human species. The satirist's rationale may simply be that it is better or safer for humankind to appraise itself accurately, no matter how unpleasant the truth may be.

is not allowed the customary luxury satire offers of sitting back and watching some other poor Christian tossed into the ring.

What is interesting here is that, in contrast to that earlier set of charges I presented, not all humans are necessarily guilty of these overly pleasant assumptions about the species. Though all may, to some degree, be guilty of personal pride, not all are necessarily guilty of pride in humankind. On the one hand, since all are attacked, the reader, being a member of the species, can not feel superior in the manner Feinberg speaks of as being characteristic of satire: "Satire offers the reader the pleasures of superiority and safe release of aggressions."⁷³ On the other hand, the reader may not be guilty of pride in his species; and thus, even though the negative characteristics of the species are true for him or her as well, his lack of pride or his more accurate estimation of his kind may well place him slightly superior to others. Therefore, not all are necessarily culpable here. Moreover, some of the guilty ones may amend their unrealistic attitudes towards the species, so that the satire on mankind is, at this level, attacking something which may be corrigible after all, since to be guilty and know one's guilt is different from being guilty and ignorant and self-satisfied as well.

As a result of these different levels, reading a satire on mankind may be a slightly more complicated process than a first glance indicates. With its two-pronged attack, the reader is irrevocably involved on the one hand, and may or may not be on the other. The writer, satirist, work, victim, reader configuration for the satire on mankind is, accordingly, unique.

⁷³ Feinberg, p. 5.

The focus of the satire on mankind, then, is ultimately on man's pride, his anthropocentrism, his assignment of himself to an exalted position in the grand scheme of things. A.O. Lovejoy distinguishes this kind of pride from an individual pride which causes specific men to elevate themselves over other men:

But the pride to which such a typical writer as Pope, in the Essay on Man, most frequently refers is not primarily the pride of the individual human creature comparing himself with others of his species, but the generic pride of man as such. The featherless biped, it was observed, has a strange tendency to put himself in the center of the creation, to suppose himself separated by a vast gap from all other and 'irrational' creatures, to credit himself with the possession of virtues of which he is inherently incapable, and to attempt tasks, especially intellectual tasks, which he has in reality no power to accomplish.⁷⁴

Lovejoy goes on to discuss a number of considerations relevant to our topic here:

Upon his own planet, at least, man reigned supreme over the brute creation, infinitely removed in dignity from even the highest animals by his sole participation in the intellectual light of the divine Reason; all other terrestrial creatures existed solely for his use and benefit; upon the acts of will of individual men inexpressibly momentous issues depended; and the good which man was capable of attaining immeasurably transcended all that could be experienced in this temporal world of matter and sense. But there were certain ideas especially current (though not original with) the eighteenth century which forbade mankind to hold any such flattering opinion of itself; and it was these ideas which underlay many of the recurrent invectives against 'pride.'⁷⁵

If the satirist on mankind is doing anything more than shedding his own sicknesses in his work, as D.H. Lawrence says, or enjoying the ironies

⁷⁴ "'Pride' in Eighteenth-Century Thought," in The Augustan Age, ed. Ian Watt (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1968), p. 180.

⁷⁵ Lovejoy, p. 180.

and paradoxes he presents, he is perhaps calling for an adjustment of man's perception of himself, a lessening of this blind complacency. The satirist on mankind is attempting to discredit the propositions that man is the base and support of Nature, the raison d'etre of the cosmos, the supreme creation whose perspicacity enables him to comprehend the nature of this universe and even to pierce the skies to fathom the creator and his intentions.

In doing so, the satirist may be calling for a redefinition of man, asking man to consider carefully what he is and his tenuous position in the universe.

Donald Greene has defined pride as "the condition of having a higher estimate of one's importance in the scheme of things than the facts warrant."⁷⁶ What is the satirist's response to pride? The same as Pascal's, "S'il se vante, je l'abaisse." The satirist on mankind attempts to "put man in his place." This is part of defining and delimiting man. To decide exactly what man is, we do need to look at his negative traits. According to Charron, two prerequisites are necessary for achieving wisdom. One is to know oneself, and the other is to know the condition of man. The latter involves for Charron a careful look at man's limitations and defects, mental, physical, and emotional. This also means an examination of his place in the universe, which is not necessarily the one he customarily allots himself.

Satires on mankind fulfill the negative part of this process.

⁷⁶ "The Sin of Pride: A Sketch for a Literary Exploration," New Mexico Quarterly, 34 (1964), 9.

Some satires on man force a vision upon the reader of what, in essence, it means to be human. They force the reader to consider certain unsavory characteristics which, they maintain, are essential, accurate, objective descriptions which must be incorporated into any definition of man.

Satirists on mankind claim that man's flattering opinions of himself are inconsistent with observation. They claim, in a sense, to be "setting the record straight." Again, the satirist may exaggerate, and he may not consider the good things man is capable of. The satirist may assume that man is already too well acquainted with his better points and, therefore, is in need of considering the other side. The satirist may be performing what one of the characters in Cyrano de Bergerac's Voyage to the Moon says he has just done:

But I desired to correct that insolent pride with which fathers insult over the weakness of their offspring, and therefore I was obliged to act like those who straighten a crooked tree; they pull it to the other side so that between the two twistings it grows straight again.⁷⁷

The satirist on man may be giving this kind of a wrenching to mankind, which is already bent and twisted in its pride. Ultimately, satires on mankind exhort man to tread with less certainty and more humility on this sometimes fair planet. The satirist on man assumes that there is value in knowing man's low place and his limitations, just as Addison assumes there is value in observing the dignity of man. Addison attempts to inspire, the satirist on man to shame.

⁷⁷ Voyages to the Moon and the Sun, trans. Richard Aldington (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1923), p. 123.

Such considerations of the constitution and nature of man and his place in the universe are, of course, philosophical concerns. One scholar, we will recall, has claimed that a true satire on mankind belongs within the realm of philosophy rather than under the generic heading of satire. I would argue, instead, that satires on mankind while possibly embodying philosophical concerns, in common with much great literature, are, in fact, literary productions rather than serious philosophical inquiry. Satires on mankind, though they would sometimes like to appear as such, are not balanced inquiries searching for Truth. They do not, in general, weigh the pros and cons of the human condition and then attempt to determine exactly what the nature of man is and his place in the universe. Satires on mankind argue on the bias; they are slanted. When they do concede to mankind some positive quality, it is generally so that this can be taken away immediately or so that it can be overshadowed by something overwhelmingly negative.

Satires on mankind articulate a specific range of charges at man and do so via an identifiable, recognizable pattern of strategies. Part of the process of discovering exactly what man is, for example, is to place him accurately in relation to those "below" him and those above him on the great scale of being. Man presumes he is far superior to the animals, and his presumption extends towards the heavens and the creator whose intentions he thinks he can read. The relationship between man and god, from our vantage point, resists systematic classification. Satirists on man posit several alternative possibilities, alternatives to the standard, "authorized" explanations or versions.

Since the relationship of man to the universe is probably unknowable, our position, it is asserted, should be merely to avoid presumption and limit our debates to the proper study of mankind, man.

Thus, animal comparisons and animal perspectives along with extraterrestrial and cosmic perspectives become crucial elements of satires on mankind. These become essential strategies for "placing" man, for putting him in his place. Charges and strategies, with some interesting variations, represent a consistent strain right up to our own time. I hope to demonstrate this in chapter three. Since the topic which I have been asserting that satires on mankind address, the nature of man and his place in the universe, is a perennial one, satirizing mankind is as valid and necessary an activity today as it was three hundred or a thousand years ago. Though modernized and doctored for the times, the same essential charges and strategies are being employed today.

CHAPTER III

THE STRATEGIES

Bertrand Goldgar has written that "the literary tradition of satires on man reached its height in the Restoration and had neared its end before it met much critical attack."¹ Goldgar has isolated an era when the type was being written with some frequency, but the chronological range of the following examples reveals that the tradition by no means reached its end in the eighteenth century. Whether satires on mankind attempt to record an accurate or exaggerated depiction of the human animal, or deep, dark feelings we may all experience at times, or whether they are the result of the satirist searching for an even more outrageous windmill to assail, satires on mankind were written in ancient times and they are being written today. Moreover, their basic satiric charges and strategies have remained surprisingly consistent throughout the ages.

Satires on mankind employ a recognizable variety of strategies in order to force home a characteristic set of satiric indictments. They employ, in general, one or a combination of the following:

- a. direct assertions
- b. an animal perspective
- c. an extraterrestrial perspective
- d. a cosmic perspective.

¹ "Satires on Man and 'The Dignity of Human Nature,'" PMLA, 80 (1965), 535.

a. Direct assertions

The most basic approach is simply to make direct assertions. Even within this category there are sub-strategies which have proved particularly useful to satirists on man. In addition to direct statements that the species possesses undesirable traits x, y, and z, such satirists charge that certain cherished traits which man imagines himself to have do not exist in the real world; they formulate definitions of the species which are sufficiently unflattering to constitute satire; and they humiliate the species by outlining the progress of human life.

The direct statements employed by satirists on mankind assert that the human species has one or all of the undesirable traits I enumerated in the last chapter. The object of the attack is human nature, and it may be vulnerable through some facet of man's being which can be regarded as essential or definitive, such as his reason. Equally available to direct attack are man's physical limitations, especially his mortality. Authors following the direct line of attack find references to stink, vomit and excretory functions particularly useful in reminding man of his baser qualities. We have already seen an example of this in a sonnet by Des Barreaux (see p. 28). Alvin Kernan has described some of the raw physical properties of man which the satirist exposes. The satiric painter, he says,

seems to be fascinated by the flesh, particularly fat and the sagging graying skin. His subjects if they are young and healthy are always gross and seem to reek of sweat, while if they are old they are either bursting the seams of their clothes or horribly cadaverous. If the satirist is more delicate than in the examples mentioned above, his characters still seem always indecently

carnal; man is caught in his animal functions of eating, drinking, lusting, displaying his body, copulating, evacuating, scratching. He is riddled with hideous and deforming diseases, most often venereal: the bone-ache, falling hair, a decayed nose, ulcerous teeth, boils, scurf. Gross, sodden, rotting matter is the substance of the satiric scene.²

In an article entitled "The Augustan Nose," Philip Stevick focuses on one physical trait, man's smell, and makes a connection among man smelling, anti-rationalism, and the satire on mankind:

For dozens of writers in the Restoration and the eighteenth century, the image of man smelling (in both the transitive and intransitive senses) is a polemical and satirical weapon, an image capable of carrying great descriptive intimacy, great ingenuity of wit and comic virtuosity, and capable, in others as in Shaftesbury, of suggesting man's very humanness.³

Stevick adds that "the literary preoccupation with smell in the eighteenth century is a concrete realization of a pervasive anti-rationalism."⁴ In attacking man's pride in reason, the satire on mankind is often associated with such anti-rationalistic positions. As we have seen, the satirist on mankind tries to get man to look at himself carefully, to see his unsavory side. Calling man's attention to the physical reality of human smell is one way to help him achieve this perspective:

Thus, if bad smell is generally organic, if it serves to remind the person who experiences it of his essentially animal nature, then in those ages that are most aware of their own civilization, this reminder of man's animality is both potentially comic and philosophically useful, inducing, as it does, a proper perspective toward that contradictory humanness which is partly obscured by the forms and conventions of civilization.⁵

² The Cankered Muse (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 11.

³ "The Augustan Nose," UTQ, 34 (1965), 110.

⁴ Stevick, p. 110.

⁵ Stevick, p. 113.

Or the satirist may depict man's physical frame as being merely ridiculous: "The body is but a pair of pincers set over a bellows and a stewpan and the whole fixed upon stilts."⁶

Man's intellect is also attacked through direct assertions.

Reason, if it is a characteristic of man at all, is of no assistance to him. It is weak or distorted, subject to more powerful impulses.

A favorite way of satirizing mankind is denying that man possesses certain virtues, asserting that many of those supposed virtues on which men congratulate themselves are no part of man's nature. Thus, one finds satirists asserting that love, friendship, truth, honor, integrity, honesty do not exist; true examples of them are not to be found, though people often try to make it appear as if they do possess one or more of these qualities. Occasionally the satirist will concede that a quality exists but will deflate it by showing that it is based on some vice. Mandeville does this, and we have already seen Rochester assert that man's motivation for some of his seemingly brave deeds is really fear.

It is clear, however, that satirists are not attacking love, friendship, truth, honor, integrity, honesty. Abstract qualities do not make very manageable satiric victims. Instead, the satirist laments their absence from human life. The objects of attack in satires on mankind are men, the human race, and attacking man through his lack of virtues leads to a hostile assessment of the world man has

⁶ Samuel Butler (the later), The Notebooks, ed. Henry Festing Jones and A.T. Bartholomew (London: Jonathan Cape, 1926), XX,10.

made and inhabits. Attacking man through his lack of virtues leads to a second attack on man's pride embodied in the idea that the world is made for him. The lack of virtue eventuates in a world that is hostile to the individual, one in which he is always alone, always unsure of those about him, always ready to lash out, always suspicious that he is going to be had; it is a world in which he is always going to be afraid. Assertions that the world is in such a state reflect a diminished sense that man is a favored creature or even that his existence has much value.

When a satirist on mankind uses types of evils or types of corrupt men in his work, the effect is not an attack on the type itself but a demonstration of the corruption of the whole species through the type. The Church, courts, the government, all may provide embodiments of corruption; but their greater importance is found in the ramifications of their corruption into the society as a whole. The satirist is arguing that if courts, the church, and political leaders are all corrupt, then the corruption is one that infests the whole fabric of life. There is no escaping the influence of these elements; they affect the quality of life of the entire community. Life is therefore rendered less satisfactory, less just, less desirable; and the individual sees his pride in the accomplishments of his species (or what he has been seduced into understanding as the accomplishment of his species), rational government and rational society, their very humanity, turned to shame and disgust.

A world thus emptied of virtue and decency becomes itself a reflection on mankind. Men are not good enough and, hence, these

qualities do not manifest themselves in the world where he is in charge. Or, as an alternative, the existence of a world lacking in such qualities may be attributed to the creator or to Providence. If this latter approach is to be interpreted as satire on mankind, then the object of interest must emerge not as a theological examination of God's relationship to the world but instead as a confrontation between man's anthropocentrism and a stark reality which punctures human self-satisfaction with being the primary interest of divine providence. The satirist denies that the world can be accounted for by the benevolence which is assumed to be its motivation. Since one source for man's pride can be that he plays an exalted role in a grand and imposing world, he may be attacked on the ground that he plays no such role or on the ground that the world is neither grand nor imposing.

Another kind of direct assertion which may be employed against mankind takes the form of a definition of both man and life which leads to the conclusion that a creature who can be thus defined is corrupt or inept. These satiric definitions are sometimes a microcosm of the entire genre. Animal comparisons, direct assertions, and slanting are often employed. We also find many of the customary attacks on man's mentality, his pride and presumption, his sense of security. Satiric definitions are designed to undercut unduly optimistic opinions about mankind by their implied contrast with the definitions that a reader would normally have or expect--all of which would be flattering to man's ego. The humor of the satiric definition resides partly in the contrast between the definition and what the reader understands about the thing defined. The reader may recognize that the definition is

insufficient, but he will also be struck by the fact that it is closer to reality than he would like to admit. The same essential effect is achieved whether the definiendum is "life" or "man."

Satiric definitions of man go back at least as far as Plato, whose observation that man is a featherless biped diminishes man by what it obviously excludes. Definitions, sound definitions, include the essential and distinctive characteristics of the thing being defined. Plato's "definition" claims, then, that man is distinctive for being, in essence, a two-footed creature without having the luxury of feathers adorning his body. But the joke was carried further:

Plato having defined man to be a two-legged animal without feathers, Diogenes plucked a cock and brought it into the Academy, and said, "This is Plato's man." On which account this addition was made to the definition, "With broad flat nails."⁷

This is certainly a far cry from the grandiose terms in which man likes to think of himself.

Man is often treated as a mere member of the animal kingdom in such definitions. Alexander Hamilton makes a distinction similar to the one Swift makes by calling man "a reasoning rather than a reasonable animal."⁸ But this is a casual observation on Hamilton's part seemingly without any satiric purpose. It may be contrasted with the following purported definitions. In Pudd'nhead Wilson's New Calendar, Mark Twain

⁷ Herschel Baker, The Dignity of Man: Studies in the Persistence of An Idea (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), title page.

⁸ in Peter's Quotations: Ideas for our Time, ed. Laurence J. Peter (New York: Bantam, 1979), p. 319.

remarks that "Man is the only animal that blushes. Or needs to." Donald A. Laird characterizes man through one of his less ennobling physical propensities. For Laird, man is the only animal which spits."⁹ Man does not happen to be the only animal which spits, but Laird asserts that it is all that distinguishes man from the other animals. The point, I suppose, is that the only way man can be distinguished from the other species is by these irrelevant qualities, irrelevant because the classical definition of man is animal rationale.

More serious contrasts with animals, within these assertions which take the form of definitions, are centered in man's aggression towards his own species, a concern we have noted in numerous satires on mankind. Ambrose Bierce's definition of man alludes, in the midst of some other charges, to his belligerence. Man is

An animal so lost in rapturous contemplation of what he thinks he is as to overlook what he indubitably ought to be. His chief occupation is extermination of other animals and his own species, which, however, multiplies with such insistent rapidity as to infest the whole habitable earth and Canada.¹⁰

William James makes the traditional, though zoologically inaccurate, charge that man is the only animal to prey on his own species:

Man, biologically considered, and whatever else he may be into the bargain, is the most formidable of all beasts of prey, and, indeed, the only one that preys systematically on his own species.¹¹

⁹ "There is a Lot to Just Sitting or Standing," Scientific American (Nov. 1928).

¹⁰ The Collected Writings of Ambrose Bierce, ed. Clifton Fadiman (Secaucus, N.J.: The Citadel Press, 1946), p. 303.

¹¹ Memories and Studies (1941; Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 301.

H.G. Wells concedes one advantage to man, that of mental capacity; but, as we have seen in numerous satires on man, this presumed advantage is in fact not one at all. Man, for Wells,

is a brute, only more intelligent than the other brutes, a blind prey to impulses . . . victim to endless illusions, which make his mental existence a burden, and fills his life with barren toil and trouble.¹²

Superior intelligence does not necessarily mean superior use of it.

Other satiric definitions stress man's imperfections, stress the fact that he is a flawed creature. Instead of reiterating man's usual anthropomorphic claim to having been created in the image and likeness of the creator, Mark Twain calls man "A creature made at the end of the week's work when God was tired."¹³

Such satiric "definitions" exhibit a wide range in tone, just as do longer satires on mankind. Samuel Butler (1835-1902) remarks that "Man is but a perambulating tool-box and workshop, or office, fashioned for itself by a piece of very clever slime, as the result of long experience."¹⁴ Christopher Morley, in a light vein, defines "human being" as "An ingenious assembly of portable plumbing."¹⁵ Ian McHarg's definition, in contrast, is vitriolic: "Man is a blind, witless, low-

¹² Peter, p. 319.

¹³ in The Left Handed Dictionary, ed. Leonard Louis Levinson (New York: Collier, 1963), p. 136.

¹⁴ Butler, p. 10.

¹⁵ Human Being (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1934), pp. 76-77.

brow, anthropocentric clod who inflicts lesions upon the earth."¹⁶ And Philip Wylie's definition contains the forcefulness we have come to anticipate from him. Man is "the organ of the accumulated smut and sneakery of 10,000 generations of weaseling souls."¹⁷

In Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury, Jason III makes numerous comments which are satirical on mankind, a couple of which fit into the category of the purported definition:

Father said a man is the sum of his misfortunes. One day you'd think misfortune would get tired, but then time is your misfortune Father said. A gull on an invisible wire attached through space dragged. You carry the symbol of your frustration into eternity. Then the wings are bigger Father said only who can play a harp.¹⁸

Man is nothing, then, but the sum of his misfortunes. All-levelling Time is again brought to the fore. Man is nothing but a gull dragged through space by an invisible wire, which is time. Gull, of course, carries the additional meaning of dupe. Man is time's dupe as well. Finally, Jason III closes this passage with a cynical reference to the pedestrian visual representation of humans in heaven winged like angels and playing harps. Man, in Jason's estimation, is not meant for such a place--or, no such place would be congenial to man.

Jason III's later definition of man is more obviously satiric; in diminishing man, it renders him more ridiculous. Here man is not the sum of his misfortunes, which might possibly cast a tragic or heroic

¹⁶ Peter, p. 323.

¹⁷ Levinson, p. 136.

¹⁸ William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York: Modern Library, 1929), p. 129.

light upon him:

Man the sum of his climatic experiences Father said. Man the sum of what have you. A problem in impure properties carried tediously to an unvarying nil: stalemate of dust and desire.¹⁹

In this case Jason defines man as nothing but what his particular climate dictates and as the glorious sum of "what have you," that is, of nothing in particular of any significance. Created of impure properties, "progressing" tediously towards "an unvarying nil," man is nothing but a "stalemate of dust and desire." The powerful image of this final phrase suggests that man is but desire placed in a state of suspended animation by the dust of which he is also composed. The state may more accurately be described as suspended unanimation.

Satiric definitions of "life" may also be satires on mankind. Man is attacked indirectly by assertions that human life itself is distressful, of little value, or painful to the extent that it is not worth having. If life itself is not worth having, man has little to be proud of. The "gift" of life is not something that reveals a particular concern on the part of the creator for man. Man is not thereby rendered something special in the grand scheme of things. Calderon's definition of life as "A sentence that man has to serve for the crime of being born" illustrates this. One thinks immediately, I suppose, of Shakespeare's Macbeth asserting the pomposity, the ridiculous vanity, and the utter meaninglessness of life:

¹⁹ Faulkner, p. 153.

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (Macbeth, V,v.)

But not all satirical definitions of life are this furious. The later Samuel Butler says merely that "Life is one long process of getting tired."²⁰ Clifton Fadiman has described life as "A longish doze, interrupted by fits and starts of bewildered semialertness."²¹ And the poet Edna St. Vincent Millay argues that "It's not true that life is one damn thing after another--it's one damn thing over & over."²² Others find life merely problematical or, as John Gay's epitaph reveals, a jest: "Life is a jest; and all things show it, / I thought so once; but now I know it."²³ The equation of life and jest is heightened here by the claim of certainty or certification of the farcical nature of life from the other side of the pale, from beyond death.

Finally, asserting that life is absurd may serve the same functions I have discussed above, and asserting that the universe is absurd places man in a precarious, uncomfortable position in relation to the absurd universe. The very absurdity precludes the possibility that man is a central part of the creation, that there is a master plan, ordained for the security of man and with benign intentions. Placed in

²⁰ Butler, p. 3.

²¹ Levinson, p. 128.

²² Letters of Edna St. Vincent Millay, ed. Allan Ross Macdougall (N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1952), p. 240.

²³ John Gay: Poetry and Prose, ed. Vinton A. Dearing (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), I, 253.

a precarious position in an absurd universe, man would be hard put to retain his facile optimism, his blind assumption that all was created with his benefit in mind.

Such straightforward declamations against life and man are sometimes embellished with a particular kind of imagery which further diminishes the value of life and men. I refer to stage or theatrical imagery. We have already seen it in the passage from Shakespeare above. We find it in Rabelais as well, "The farce is finished. I go to seek a vast perhaps."²⁴ Life is farcical; it does not have the dignity of tragedy or the lightness of comedy. It is merely absurd. In a discussion of Fielding's satire, Ronald Paulson comments on the use of farce as a metaphor:

Farce then is a general metaphor for contemporary life, and the analogy between living and acting is a natural one in which to express a concern with either fashion or hypocrisy, the attempt to mask as what one is not.²⁵

Sir Walter Raleigh used stage imagery to satirize man in a poem entitled "On the Life of Man."

What is our life? a play of passion;
Our mirth the music of division;
Our mothers' wombs the tiring-houses be
Where we are dressed for this short comedy.
Heaven the judicious sharp spectator is,
That sits and marks still who doth act amiss;
Our graves that hide us from the searching sun

²⁴ attributed to Rabelais by Motteux in his Life of Rabelais.

²⁵ Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 85-6.

Are like drawn curtains when the play is done.
 Thus march we, playing, to our latest rest,
 Only we die in earnest--that's no jest.²⁶

Our mirth occurs only between the scenes or acts and is, therefore, infrequent. Life is a short Comedy. God is a sharp critic, and death is the final curtain. Such stage imagery is used often in satires on mankind, for it allows the satirist to call men players, actors, puppets, to claim that men are always acting, playing a part--that is to say, that they are somehow not real or genuine. This is reinforced here by the final line, "Only we die in earnest. . . ." In addition, the stage imagery allows the satirist to call man's life a farce, a comedy, or a tragedy. Poe carries the stage imagery beyond satire to reveal the terror of life by asserting that the end of it all is, as his title proclaims, "The Conqueror Worm."

Or, men may merely be puppets, with the insinuation that they are manipulated by unseen strings.²⁷ The cumulative effect of the stage or puppet imagery used to satirize the species seems to be that human beings are not alive and their concerns are not quite real, that at best they are shadows, reflections, players manipulated for reasons they do not understand. Their lives are "staged." Free will, in this context, is usually denied man, as, for example, it is in Twain's The

²⁶ "On the Life of Man" in The Norton Anthology of English Literature, ed. Robert M. Adams (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), I, 828-29.

²⁷ For a discussion of Swift's use of the puppet symbol, see John M. Bullitt, Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), pp. 170-81.

Mysterious Stranger. Such imagery, we notice, is applied to all humans, to the species, and no exceptions are claimed or allowed.

In yet another kind of imagery which works to diminish man's self-esteem, man or his life is nothing but a bubble. This becomes a common image used to suggest the fragility of man, his unsubstantial and inconsequential nature. For example, William Drummond (1585-1649) uses this image in "Madrigal I."

This life which seems so fair
 Is like a bubble blown up in the air
 By sporting children's breath,
 Who chase it everywhere,
 And strive who can most motion it bequeath;
 And though it sometime seem of its own might
 (Like to an eye of gold) to be fixed there,
 And firm to hover in that empty height,
 That only is because it is so light;
 But in that pomp it doth not long appear;
 For even when most admired, it in a thought,
 As swelled from nothing, doth dissolve in nought.²⁸

In a poem entitled "Sic Vita" (1657) Henry King also called attention to the unstable and inconsequential nature of man's condition:

Like to the falling of a star;
 Or as the flights of eagles are;
 Or like the fresh spring's gaudy hue;
 Or silver drops of morning dew;
 Or like a wind that chafes the flood;
 Or bubbles which on water stood;
 Even such is man, whose borrowed light
 Is straight called in, and paid to night.

The wind blows out; the bubble dies;
 The spring entombed in autumn lies;
 The dew dries up; the star is shot;
 The flight is past; and man forgot.²⁹

²⁸ "Madrigal I" in Seventeenth-Century English Minor Poets, ed. Anne Ferry (New York: Dell Pub., 1964), p. 167.

²⁹ "Sic Vita" in Seventeenth-Century English Minor Poets, ed. Anne Ferry (New York: Dell Pub., 1964), p. 31.

Life, like these other natural phenomena, is transient; and, what perhaps hurts worst of all, man is soon forgotten. The bubble image appears again in Robert Dodsley's "Song" (1745):

Man's a poor deluded bubble,
 Wand'ring in a mist of lies,
 Seeing false, or seeing double,
 Who wou'd trust to such weak eyes?
 Yet presuming on his senses,
 On he goes most wond'rous wise:
 Doubts of truth, believes pretences;
 Lost in error, lives and dies.³⁰

Man comes off here as essentially a fool, a poor, unseeing, deluded creature who does not know truth when he encounters it. His insufficient senses are attacked (as they often are in satires on man) as well as his pride.

A variation on the direct method of satirizing man through satiric definitions is the device of tracing the "progress" of man through life. This is essentially the "life is . . ." definition, but it specifies that life is a progress through a series of stages. This progress may be through a number of specified stages or may consist merely of the two mandatory stages of birth and death with little else intervening. One can be sure, however, that all stages will be equally distasteful or unacceptable. This is similar, then, to the satiric definition of life in that the implied construct is generally something like the following reductive statement: "the life of man is nothing but this, this, and this."

³⁰ "Song" in A Collection of English Poems: 1660-1800, ed. R.S. Crane (New York: Harper & Row, 1932), p. 665.

Charron indulged in this particular strategy on a couple of occasions. The following is a fairly extended example:

Our present life is but the entrance and end of a Tragedie, a perpetuall issue of errours, a web of unhappy adventures, a pursuit of divers miseries in chained together on all sides; there is nothing but evill that it distilleth, that it prepareth; one evill drives forward another evill, as one wave another; torment is ever present, and the shadow of what is good deceiveth us; blindnesse and want of sense possesseth the beginning of our life, the middle is ever in paine and travell, the end in sorrow; and beginning, middle, and end in error.³¹

All steps in the process are lamentable. In the midst of a long description of man and what he is, Charron again refers to this progress. Man is "uncleane seed in his beginning, a sponge of ordures, a sacke of miseries in his middle age, a stench and meat for wormes in his end."³² Man ends up smelling and as food for the "lower" animals. In a couplet he calls "Human Life" (1740), Matthew Prior offers his outline of human activity:

What trifling coil do we poor mortals keep;
Wake, eat, and drink, evacuate, and sleep.³³

Prior's is less intense than Charron's but does not reflect much more credit on mankind.

This tactic often presents life as nothing much but an extended process of decay--or, it asserts that what occurs within those two poles of life and death is insignificant or troublesome at the very

³¹ Peter Charron, Of Wisdome, trans. Samson Leonard c. 1606 (Amsterdam: Da Capo Press, 1971), p. 116.

³² Charron, p. 118.

³³ The Literary Works of Matthew Prior, ed. H. Bunker Wright and Monroe K. Spears (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), I, 687.

least. Issa's famous haiku on the subject portrays this:

From washing bowl
to washing bowl my journey--
and just rigmarole.

A darker version of the process of life can be located in Jason's association of life and disease in The Sound and the Fury: "Bad health is the primary reason of life. Created by disease, within putrefaction, into decay."³⁴ This is the inexorable compass of life, though what is in between is far more ominous in Jason Compson's view than in Issa's.

La Bruyere finds only three primary events in man's life:

Il n'y a pour l'homme que trois evenements:
naitre, vivre et mourir. Il ne se sent pas
naitre, il souffre à mourir, et il oublie de vivre.³⁵

In constructing satiric definitions and in utilizing this "progress" strategy, the satirist is guilty of slanting, of omitting relevant details. He leaves out any of the positive things which may occur in life, but the satirist is under no obligation to provide all the information on a given subject.

Yet another strategy for satirizing mankind, which is similar to the satiric definition and to the depiction of the "progress" of man's life in that a great deal of slanting or simplifying is involved, is the division of all life into two or possibly three categories, each of which is unattractive, reprehensible, unacceptable or odious. Laurence

³⁴ Faulkner, p. 53.

³⁵ La Bruyere, Les Caractères (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1965), p. 273.

J. Peter, for example, attacks man's pride by claiming that "There are two kinds of egotists: Those who admit it, and the rest of us."³⁶ Such an all-inclusive division allows for no exceptions. Woody Allen uses the same tactic in his movie Annie Hall. He divides all men into two kinds: the horrible and the miserable--the horrible are those with terminal diseases, cripples and so on, while the miserable are all the rest. Faulkner may be employing a variation on the same device when he has Jason (or perhaps Quentin, though the sentiments seem to be tapes from his father here) claim that there is not much difference between dead and live men:

any live man is better than any dead man but no live or dead man
is very much better than any other live or dead man. . . .³⁷

Once again we see the reduction of differences. You are one or the other, but there is not much difference.

This division of life or men into two or more categories which admit of no exceptions (the only way out is to simply deny their accuracy) is, then, another device ready for use in the arsenal of the satirist on mankind. The satirist on man, however, has numerous other strategies or resources available to him for use in his remonstrations against mankind. Perhaps the one strategy satirists have most often employed is the comparison of man to animals.

³⁶ Peter, p. 166.

³⁷ Faulkner, p. 125.

b. The Animal Perspective

The satirists on man have frequently made use of favorite prejudices and conclusions from non-satiric writers for a supply of material to refute or treat ironically; and with some frequency philosophical writers who attempted to delineate the nature of the human species and ascertain its place in the scale or chain of being have compared and contrasted man with the other creatures, often concluding that in the creation man was supreme. It was commonplace to position humanity below the angels and above the brute creation. Because it was commonplace, the grandiose assessment was readily available for attack. To the more disenchanted observer, man's traditional assumption of his supremacy is just another example of his overweening pride, his self-satisfaction. His blind assigning of himself to so predominant a place in the grand scheme of things is basically unrealistic, an overly complacent attitude towards himself, and an inflated self concept. The last and most important part of Charron's portrait of mankind focuses on presumption and pride. Charron finds man presumptuous not only in relation to animals but to other men and even the gods (the latter will be covered in section d.):

Beholde heere the last and leawdest line or liniament of this picture; it is the other part of that description given by Plinie; the plague of man, and the nurse of false and erroneous opinions, both publike and particular: and yet a vice both naturall and originall in man. Now this presumption must be considered diversly, and in all senses, high, low, collaterall, inward and outward, in respect of God, things high and celestiall; in regard of things base, as of beasts, man his companion, of himselfe, and all may be reduced to these two, To esteeme too much of himself, and not to esteeme sufficiently of another.³⁸

³⁸ Charron, p. 152.

Man, it seems, does not have a proper perspective of himself.

Man's supposed superiority over animals gives the satirist on mankind an object of attack which he can particularly relish, and several of them have employed the ironic observation that man's high assessment of his species can be explained by the fact that man himself has made it. If, however, man could be seen as others see him (animals for example) then the assessment might change. The new and more objective perspective may be accomplished by using animal characters to comment on the human scene directly, such as when Boileau has an ass observe that, "L'homme n'est qu'une bête." Or the commentator may compare and contrast man with the animals with more objectivity and insight than that which results in the usual panegyric on the species.

Part of the delight satirists on mankind take in using animals in this way stems from the fact that men have generally a low opinion of the "brutes." A readymade insult is therefore available when man is shown to be lower than what he considers the lowest. Man's low opinion of animals can be seen in speciesistic language, which operates like racist and sexist language. Presumption, which satirists on mankind aim directly at, is built into the language. Further, man is clearly touchy about his close relationship to animals. Note the embittered controversy still being waged over evolution or the fervor aroused by certain popular ethologists.³⁹

³⁹ The predominantly engineer-oriented Creationists are still involved in skirmishes over textbooks teaching evolution. The works of Konrad Lorenz, Robert Ardrey, Desmond Morris and other ethologists have brought forth numerous vitriolic responses.

There has been a great traditional use of animal imagery for purposes of debasing individual men. Animal imagery has frequently been employed against characters by likening them to animals and thus, presumably, lowering them to the level of the animals. Such a tactic is so commonplace that it hardly requires documentation; one well-known example is Smollett's Roderick Random. In the vocabulary of these attacks, to be likened to an animal is to be rendered less than human. In the animal comparisons so popular with satirists on mankind, however, animals are treated generally as being superior to man so that to be human is to be rendered less than animal. A.O. Lovejoy and George Boas describe the typical use of such ideas by conventional moralists:

The animals, or certain species of them, are first more or less idealized, and the virtues with which they are credited--temperance, chastity, parental devotion, industry, gratitude, etc.--are then held up as reproachful examples to mankind. It is in these cases usually implied that men might be, and should be, superior to the beasts in these particulars, but for the most part are not; the more shame to them, the moralist intimates, that they should in fact sink lower than the theoretically lower orders of creation!⁴⁰

Animals' lives are often depicted as idyllic. They are often romantically idealized, but even when they are in fact denigrated in satires on mankind, they still usually come out ahead of man.

In satires on mankind the assertions about animals are not intended to improve the readers' knowledge of animals. They are an implement for the purpose of attacking man. Since no serious remarks are intended about animals at all, to respond by saying, "Wait a minute; animals

⁴⁰ Primitivism & Related Ideas in Antiquity (1935; N.Y.: Octagon Books, 1980), p. 19.

aren't that way" is to quite miss the point. Thus, the term George Boas applies, theriophily, does not seem appropriate to satires on man, since what they are displaying is usually not a love of animals but a hatred of man or at least a solid disaffection with him.⁴¹ In a later work, Boas and Lovejoy offer a different name for this:

Such a recurrent phenomenon in the history of literature seems to need a name; we therefore, faute de mieux, propose to designate as 'animalitarianism' the tendency to represent the beasts--on one ground or another--as creatures on the whole more admirable, more normal, or more fortunate, than the human species.⁴²

I will simply be calling such material animal comparisons, or I will refer to the use of an animal perspective.

As I have said, satires on mankind in the form of animal comparisons have been extant from earliest times. As the following brief survey will also show, they are still being written today.* Though some of these are miniature satires on man, they still possess the essential characteristics of the genre.

The editor of a 1702 miscellany apparently thought the following passage from Menander worthy of his audience's consideration:

All Animals are happy, and much wiser than Man. And first, look here on this Ass, 'tis true, his Fortune is very hard, yet he seeks out no ill Fortune for himself, but bears that with Patience that Nature has thrown him into; but we, not content with those Evils, that Necessity imposes on us, voluntarily seek out, and sollicit abundance of Misfortunes we might avoid. If any one

⁴¹ George Boas, The Happy Beast in French Thought of the Seventeenth Century (1933; N.Y.: Octagon Books, 1966). This text is the classic treatment of the topic and contains one chapter specifically devoted to the satirists.

⁴² Lovejoy and Boas, p. 19.

happen to Sneeze, Superstition /sic/ gives us Pain: On a Word out of Joint, we are tortur'd with Anger. We are frighted at our very Dreams, and tremble at nocturnal Voices. Our Laws, Decrees, Contentions, Suits, and all these things are Evils, that we have industriously added to those which come by Nature to us.⁴³

The ass, whose lot is not pastoral, is still superior to man in that man creates problems for himself in addition to those carefully provided for him by Nature. Thus animals are happier and wiser than man. These become standard assertions for satirists on mankind.

The most important physical fact that satirists hurl at man is that of his mortality, his deterioration and death, and the slender thread which separates the living from the dead. Man is such a weak creature that an insignificant insect can destroy him. Men end up becoming food for the worms. Montaigne makes these points dramatically:

Touching strength, there is no Creature in the world, open to so many wrongs and injuries as a man: He need not a Whale, an Elephant, nor a Crocodile, nor any such other wilde beast, of which one alone is of power to defeat a great number of men: seely lice are able to make Silla give over his Dictatorship: The heart and life of a mighty and triumphant Emperor, is but the breakfast of a seely little Worme.⁴⁴

All men, even the very highest, are subject to this, as Hamlet emphasizes when telling where the dead Polonius is located. Polonius is at supper:

Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat

⁴³ Examen Miscellaneum. Consisting of Verse and Prose (London: B. L/intott/, 1702), pp. 186-87.

⁴⁴ Michel de Montaigne, Essays, trans. John Florio (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1910), II, 155.

ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and lean beggar is but variable service--two dishes, but to one table. That's the end.

He elaborates, "A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm" (IV,iii). Ambrose Bierce delights in presenting succinctly the same idea in his definition of "edible" in the Devil's Dictionary: "Good to eat, and wholesome to digest, as a worm to a toad, a toad to a snake, a snake to a pig, a pig to a man, and a man to a worm."⁴⁵ Hamlet adds some later reflections on the fate of mortals, agains using examples of the highest-ranking members of that species: "To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bunghole?" In his next speech he adds,

Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.
O, that that earth which kept the world in awe
Should patch a wall t'expel the winter's flaw! (V,i)

Such examples of the very greatest of men are not supplied as warnings merely to the powerful but to remind all men of their mortality.

Patrick Carey's "Nulla Fides" (c. 1650) contrasts man with two lowly members of the animal kingdom to demonstrate what a fragile, insignificant creature man is. The first stanza asserts that even so tiny a creature as a fly has no difficulty in destroying a human being:

For God's sake mark that fly:
See what a poor, weak, little thing it is.
When thou has marked, and scorned it, know that this,
This little, poor, weak fly
Has killed a pope; can make an emp'ror die.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Bierce, p. 228.

⁴⁶ in Six Centuries of Great Poetry, ed. Robert Penn Warren and Albert Erskine (New York: Dell Pub., 1955), pp. 254-55.

The second stanza asserts that a tiny spark of fire, seemingly so small, "Hast burnt whole towns; can burn a world entire." That inevitable symbol of man's mortality, the worm, dominates the third stanza:

That crawling worm there see:
Ponder how ugly, filthy, vile it is.
When thou has seen and loathed it, know that this,
This base worm thou dost see,
Has quite devoured thy parents; shall eat thee.

The claim that man is nothing but food for the animals becomes a commonplace in satires on mankind.

The final stanza is a summary which concludes that man and his world are nothing but trifling things:

Honor, the world, and man,
What trifles are they; since most true it is
That this poor fly, this little spark, this
So much abhorred worm, can
Honor destroy; burn worlds; devour up man.

Man and this world are so insignificant that seemingly insignificant things have the power to destroy them. Within his poem, Carey has moved in the demonstration of this from great people (pope and emperor), to the world, to "thee" specifically, that is, to the reader himself.

The animal perspective is to be found in prose works as well. Richard Aldington accurately labels the satire he finds in Cyrano de Bergerac's "Story of the Birds" (c. 1648) as satire on mankind: "The satire on mankind in the story of the birds is very happy and furnished Tom d'Urfey with an opera."⁴⁷ Satire on mankind can be located sporadically throughout Cyrano's Voyage to the Moon as well as the Voyage to

⁴⁷ Cyrano de Bergerac, Voyages to the Moon and the Sun, trans. Richard Aldington (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1923), p. 42.

the Sun, but the "Story of the Birds" is a discrete satire on man within the latter.

The narrator is captured by the birds, who intend to eat him, but a friendly magpie intercedes by observing

that it was a barbarous proceeding to put to death without trial an animal which to some extent approached their reasoning; they were ready to tear it to pieces, alleging that it would be very ridiculous to think that a completely naked animal, whom Nature herself had taken no care to furnish at its birth with the things necessary to preserve it, should be capable of reason like themselves. (241)

In this brief section, we see several typical charges against man. He may serve as food for animals. He has only a smattering of reasoning prowess, and Nature has not been bountiful in providing for him.

The birds who want to make an immediate repast of the man claim that man is nothing but a

bald beast, a plucked bird, a chimera built up of all kinds of natures, terrifying to everyone: Man, I say, so foolish and so vain that he convinces himself we were created only for him; . . . Man who maintains that we only reason by means of the senses and who has the weakest, slowest and falsest senses of any creature; Man whom Nature made like a monster, in order to create all things, but in whom she inspired the ambition of commanding all animals and exterminating them. (241)

Again, man's anthropocentrism, his sense of supremacy over other forms of creation is attacked, as well as his vanity and pride. His senses are depicted as the weakest of any creature.

The feeling exhibited by the birds is so strong against man that the narrator is advised not to admit that he is a man; thus, he concocts a story that he is in fact a monkey. A magpie, although he knows better, quite unreasonably favors keeping the man alive:

for although I am not ignorant that a man among living beings is a pest of which every civilized state ought to purge itself, yet when I remember I was brought up by them . . . I feel for you a tenderness which prevents me from inclining towards the juster party. (248)

Civilized creatures, then, should rightfully eradicate mankind. An indictment is even drawn up against the man.

Entitled "Pleading Made in the Parliament of Birds, the Chambers Assembled, Against An Animal Accused of Being a Man," the indictment makes it clear that the animals are, paradoxically, more human than the humans:

It would not be difficult for us to prevent the violence he might do by killing him. However, since the safety or the loss of every living thing concerns the republic of the living, it seems to me we should deserve to be born men, that is to say degraded from the reason and immortality we possess above them, if we resembled them in any of their injustices. (252)

Here animals make two traditional human claims: the possession of reason plus the inheritance of immortality. The indictment goes on to claim that "all creatures were produced by our common Mother to live together sociably." (253) But man disturbs what Nature had intended:

The first and fundamental law for the maintenance of a republic is equality; but man could not endure this eternally; he rushed upon us to devour us, he convinces himself that we were only made for his use. (253)

Man's anthropocentrism, his speciesism, makes him assume he is superior to the animal part of creation:

As an argument of his pretended superiority he cites the barbarity with which he massacres us and the little resistance he finds in overcoming our weakness, and yet he will not admit as his masters the eagles, condors, and griffins, by whom the strongest of them are overcome. (253)

Men are, in fact, cowards, "inclined to servitude," and they actually fear liberty (253). Nonetheless, "as a consequence of this ridiculous

chieftainship, he pleasantly arrogates to himself the right of life and death over us" (254). Furthermore,

he thinks the Sun was lighted to enable him to make war on us; he thinks Nature allows us to make excursions through the sky simply for him to draw favourable or unfavourable auspices from our flight, and that when God put entrails into our bodies His only purpose was to make a book from which man might learn the science of future things. (254)

Man's arrogance, his pride in this is "utterly insupportable." Still, that he holds such far-fetched opinions is no reason to condemn him to death: "since the poor beast has not the use of reason like ourselves, I excuse his errors in so far as they are produced by lack of understanding"(254). Errors of will, however, are unforgivable. Man, who kills his own kind, teaches animals to kill their own kind: "he debauches the natural disposition of hawks, falcons and vultures, by teaching them to massacre their kind. . . ." (254)

The case against man is so strong that even the defense counselor, normally a sympathetic bird, for the sake of his own soul's salvation refuses to speak in defense of "such a monster as man"(255). Naturally, with this kind of a defense, he is found guilty and given an appropriate sentence:

To annihilate me by a punishment which would serve to undeceive me by challenging the pretended empire of men over birds, they ordered that I should be given up to the anger of the weakest among them; which meant that they condemned me to be eaten by flies. (256)

Man's failure to know himself, to be aware of his limitations, his frail hold on life, and his failure to perceive his connection to the rest of creation are again highlighted here.

In attempting to console him about his ensuing death, the birds

claim that man has no soul: "since your soul is not immortal like ours, you may well suppose when you die that everything dies with you"(257). This, of course, is an ironic reversal of man's customary position that animals do not possess souls. In addition, the man will have the honor of becoming sustenance for the animals, in essence, bird food:

when you are eaten, as you will be, by our little birds, you will pass into their substance: yes, you will have the honour of contributing (even though blindly) to the intellectual operations of flies, and though you do not reason yourself, you will at least share in the glory of making them reason. (258)

But he is saved at the last minute when his cousin's parrot rescues him out of gratitude. The man, it seems, had once maintained that birds do reason and had released the parrot from its cage. With birds, at least, "a good action is never lost" (261).

A passage from the Voyage to the Moon is also relevant here. It attacks man's speciesism and anticipates some ideas that Mark Twain was to use later:

you think your soul immortal to the exclusion of that of beasts? My dear friend, without exaggeration your pride is very insolent! And, I beseech you, whence do you deduce this immortality to the prejudice of the Beasts? Is it because we are gifted with reason and they not? To begin with, I deny that and whenever you please I will prove to you that they reason like ourselves. But even if it were true that reason has been granted us as a prerogative and that it was a privilege reserved to our species alone, does that mean that God must enrich man with immortality when He has already squandered reason upon him? I suppose I should give, in that case, a pistole to a beggar because I gave him a crown yesterday? You yourself see the falsity of the argument and that, on the contrary, if I am just, I ought to give a crown to another rather than a pistole to the first, since the other has had nothing from me. We must conclude from this, my dear friend, that God, who is a thousand times more just than we are, will not have given everything to some and nothing to others. (152-53)

The attempt, again, is to render man less certain of his favored position in the universe, to make him less presumptuous.

In a lighter vein, Mme Deshoulières makes use of animal comparisons in a couple of poems, and her depictions of animals are fairly unrealistic. As the first line of "Les Moutons" (1671) illustrates, she portrays their lives as idyllic: "Hélas! petits Moutons, que vous êtes heureux!"⁴⁸ If Mme Deshoulières were talking only of sheep in the first line, there would be no need for the word "alas." Again, it does not really matter what is said about animals here, because something is being asserted about man.

Contrasts between the happy animal state and the less than desirable human state are pointed out directly by Mme Deshoulières:

L'ambition, l'honneur, l'intérêt, l'imposture,
 Qui font tant de maux parmi nous,
 Ne se rencontrent point chez vous.

She concedes that man does of course have reason, but she is not going to maintain that it does him any particular good: "Ce n'est pas un grand avantage." In fact, as is by now customary, it turns out to be a hindrance. And the poem concludes that the sheep are "plus heureux & plus sages que nous."

Many of the same attitudes turn up in another of Mme Deshoulières' poems, "La Solitude," which deals with the pleasant state of things in nature, in those secluded places where man has not intruded. Instinct is again to be preferred to reason:

En vain notre orgueil nous engage
 A ravaler l'instinct qui cans chaque saison,
 A la honte de la raison,
 Pour tous les animaux est un guide si sage.

⁴⁸ Both of Mme Deshoulières' poems are printed in Boas, pp. 147-152.

Why even to think of comparing man to animals is brazen effrontery:

De quel droit, de quel front est-ce que l'on compare
Ceux à qui la Nature a fait un coeur barbare,
Aux Ours, aux Sangliers, aux Loups?
Ils sont moins barbares que nous.

One recurring piece of evidence that satirists on mankind have cited is man's treatment of his own kind. Man will even turn against his own brother:

Combien avez-vous vu de fois
Le frère armé contre le frère
Faire taire du sang la forte & tendre voix.

Such is the simple, natural life of the animals according to Mme Deshoulières. We encounter a much more complex formulation of some of the same sentiments in my next example of a satire on mankind employing animal comparisons.

William Wycherley's "Upon the Impertinence of Knowledge, the Unreasonableness of Reason, and the Brutality of Humanity; proving the Animal Life the most Reasonable Life, since the most Natural, and most Innocent" (1704), which fades in quality quickly after the title but goes on for six more pages in one interminable stanza, is an extended comparison of man to animals centering around the disadvantages man's reason brings to him.⁴⁹

Wycherley begins by asking why man should claim that his reason places him above the beasts, why he claims it as his distinguishing trait and takes so much pride in it:

⁴⁹ The Complete Works of William Wycherley, ed. Montague Summers (Soho: The Nonesuch Press, 1924), III, 149-54.

Why shou'd Man's vain Pretence to Reason be,
 From Beast, his just Distinction? whom still we,
 More Guilty, and less Human, for it see;
 Who, for his Knowledge, and Humanity,
 Lives, deals with his own Kind, more Brutally,
 As for his Reason, more Unreasonably;
 Who for it, o'er his Passions, has less Pow'r,
 Is more a Beast, as is his Reason more.

Wycherley claims that men are more guilty and less human for having reason. This is ironical and paradoxical since man had conventionally been defined as the animal with reason. The New World of Words: Or Universal English Dictionary (6th ed. 1706), for example, defines man as "a Creature endu'd with Reason, as oppos'd to brute Beasts. . . ."50 So, reason makes man treat his own kind more brutally, less reasonably, less humanely. The brutishness or brutality of humans (and occasionally the humanity of animals) is a play on words, an irony or paradox, that is seen again and again in satires on man.

What, then, are the evils which attend man's reason? They are numerous, but most importantly reason interferes with three primary, crucial relationships man has: with his own kind, with animal kind, and even with God himself.

Animals are predators but spare their own kind, while man, thanks to reason, fears his fellow man:

They, who on others prey, their Kind will spare;
 Whilst Man, does Man more for his Reason fear.

As the Houyhnhnms were quick to realize, man has just enough reason to make him a frightening and destructive creature:

⁵⁰ Edward Phillips, The New World of Words: Or Universal English Dictionary. . . . 6th ed. (London: 1706).

Men, one another to each other find,
 More Brutal, for being of Human-kind;
 Beasts without Reason, may with Reason then,
 Be thought more just and sensible than Men,
 Who Foes to their own Kind have seldom been.

That men are brutal to their own kind is, as we have seen, a recurrent charge in satires on mankind.

Man can not only not get along with his own kind, but he places himself in an unnaturally superior position in relationship to animal kind. The same point is made several times throughout the poem:

By's Reason claims, o'er Brute Beasts, Pow'r, or Sway,
 By which, he yet is more a Beast than They.

In another contrast Wycherley says, "For in Brute Beasts, whom we despise, we see, / Their Will and Senses never disagree." The telling phrase is, of course, "whom we despise." We despise them because we think they are lower than we are; but, according to Wycherley, perhaps we shouldn't judge too hastily. We do not estimate ourselves properly in relation to animals; and, finally, we do the same in relationship to the Creator.

Reason thus intervenes in religion as well, a point Wycherley also makes several times in the poem. For one thing, man's reason makes him presumptuous. As a result of reason man tries to "make Things above Reason, yield to Sense, / Will judge his Maker, question Providence." As Pope noted, this is a singularly presumptuous thing for man to attempt. Finally, towards the end of the poem, Wycherley claims that reason will lead man to doubt:

Since he, but as he thinks, his Reason more,
 Doubts more his Maker's Being, and his Pow'r;
 Of Happiness here, and hereafter too,
 Deprives himself, by his vain Reason so.

In the end, then, reason may even damn him.

Besides adversely affecting our attitudes towards other men, animalkind, and God, reason brings yet other bad effects. It overpowers the senses and asserts an unnatural control over them. Reason needs to be grounded in the senses, but too often "Man's Reason does his want of Sense betray." Man finally opposes his senses, which had been overrun by Reason, to Nature, which is the "best Guide, that a Man of Sense can chuse, / For Reason's none, which against Nature goes." For men, then, reason gets in the way of nature. The same is not true, of course, for beasts:

Whilst Beasts, acknowledging but Nature's Law,
From their thick Sculls, no false Conclusions draw;
For want of Sense, of nothing stand in aw;
Themselves by Nature, more than Reason guide;
So from Acts Natural less led aside.

Furthermore, reason deters man from enjoying himself; it acts as a curb on his natural self. Reason increases man's doubts, cares, fears; the more reason he has, the less happiness. On the other hand, animals, not hindered by reason, are consequently happier than man:

Then Beasts, as happier, the wiser are,
In whom more strong all Appetites appear,
For Want of Reason, have no Guilt, Shame, Fear;
Whose want of Reason, Man must needs confess,
Makes their Joys more, their Cares, Fears, Troubles less,
So have, as less of Sense, more Happiness;
More Peace of Mind, in Body, more Delight;
In Sense, Love, Food, more Gust and Appetite.

While Wycherley's comparisons favor animals throughout the poem, he does not seem particularly fond of animals here and does not overly idealize their lot.

We come to an even wider departure from Mme Deshoulières' idealized, pastoral animals when we reach John Gay's Fable XLIX, "The Man

and the Flea" (1727).⁵¹ Here animals do not come off so well; they're not the orderly, natural creatures we find in so many poems of this type. Instead, they are bad, even to the point of possessing that most human of sins, pride:

Whether on earth, in air, or main
 Sure ev'ry thing alive is vain!
 Does not the hawk all his fowls survey,
 As destin'd only for his prey?

The crab and the snail are two others notable for their vanity. But, and here is the point, man just happens to be worse:

What dignity's in human nature,
 Says Man, the most conceited creature. . . .

Man, too, examines the entire world and assumes that all was made solely for his purpose:

. . . all these by heav'n designed
 As gifts to pleasure human kind,
 I cannot raise my worth too high;
 Of what vast consequence am I!

But, as we have now come to expect, man will get his comeuppance and, in this case, by the lowly, insignificant flea:

Not of th'importance you suppose,
 Replies a Flea upon his nose:
 Be humble, learn thyself to scan;
 Know, pride was never made for man.
 'Tis vanity that swells thy mind.
 What, heav'n and earth for thee design'd!
 For thee! made only for our need;
 That more important Fleas might feed.

Again man is asked to reassess his inflated appraisal of himself:

"learn thyself to scan." Again we see the attempt to destroy pride and anthropocentrism; and man is reduced to mere flea fodder. Once again,

⁵¹ Fables (Los Angeles: Augustan Reprint Society, 1967), pp. 167-169.

what is said about animals is unimportant here, because the message is stating something about man. Gay has merely changed the formula a bit. Man is not the opposite to animals here, just worse in degree.

As we noticed earlier, Jonathan Swift was well aware of the marvelous evasive powers which enable most readers of satire to dodge the satirist's charges. They bounce the ball back or see their neighbor's face in the mirror. It is less easy to remove oneself from the species, and Swift attacks the species through animal comparisons in "The Beasts Confession to the Priest . . ." (1732). In the preface to the poem Swift says he is chastizing man for not looking at himself objectively:

I have been long of Opinion, that there is not a more general and greater Mistake, or of worse Consequence through the Commerce of Mankind, than the wrong Judgments they are apt to entertain of their own talents.⁵²

Man is thus guilty of affectation; he claims or attributes to himself what he notoriously lacks. Swift, then, is calling for man to formulate a more accurate self-appraisal.

In the advertisement to the poem, Swift claims he is doing man an honor by comparing him to animals:

The following Poem is grounded upon the universal Folly in Mankind of mistaking their Talents; by which the Author doth a great Honour to his own Species, almost equalling them with certain Brutes; wherein, indeed, he is too partial, as he freely confesseth: And yet he hath gone as low as he well could, by specifying four Animals; the Wolf, the Ass, the Swine and the Ape; all equally mischievous, except the last, who outdoes them in the Article of Cunning: So great is the Pride of Man.

⁵² Swift: Poetical Works, ed. Herbert Davis (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 536-44.

Swift confesses that he can't really be logical about this, because he is prejudiced on the side of man. This is a delightful way of saying that man is in reality much lower than the animals. In addition, Swift adds that he has chosen four of the lowest animals so that man will have a better chance of measuring up to them. Unfortunately, man turns out to be lower than the low.

Swift's animals are not the simple, pastoral animals of Mme Deshoulières; they are closer to those of Gay. During a plague, the king of the brutes proclaims that all animals must confess their sins to a priest. Their confessions, too, reveal affectation in that each prides himself on qualities he notoriously lacks. We can see this in the Swine:

The Swine with contrite Heart allow'd,
His Shape and Beauty made him proud:
In Dyet was perhaps too nice,
But Gluttony was ne'er his Vice. . . .
His Vigilance might some displease;
'Tis true, he hated Sloth like Pease.

The Goat, traditionally associated with lechery, first denies that he has a beard:

The Goat advanc'd with decent Pace;
And, first excus'd his youthful Face;
Forgiveness begg'd, that he appear'd
('Twas Nature's Fault) without a Beard.
'Tis true, he was not much inclin'd
To fondness for the Female Kind.

These animals, then, are not particularly acute at looking at themselves. Now we get some instructions from Swift:

Apply the Tale, and you shall find
How just it suits with human Kind.
Some Faults we own: But, can you guess?
Why?--Virtues carry'd to Excess;
Wherewith our Vanity endows us,
Though neither Foe nor Friend allows us.

Swift next supplies us with appropriate examples of classes of men who are adept at mistaking their talents, who are, that is, exemplars of affectation:

The cringing Knave who seeks a Place
Without Success; thus tells his Case:
Why should he longer mince the Matter?
He fail'd, because he could not flatter. . . .

The Statesman tells you with a Sneer,
His Fault is to be too Sincere. . . .

The Sharper swore he hated Play,
Except to pass an Hour away:
And, well he might; for to his Cost,
By want of Skill, he always lost. . . .

In the final stanza, Swift reverses his tactics:

I own, the Moral not exact;
Besides, the Tale is false in Fact.

The reason the story is false, however, is not that what has been said about man is not true. Swift has given us a bit of false hope before finishing man off. Rather, what has been said about animals is untrue:

Creatures of ev'ry Kind but ours
Well comprehend their nat'ral Powers;
While We, whom Reason ought to sway,
Mistake our Talents ev'ry Day.

Swift closes by saying that Aesop probably intended to compliment mankind by claiming that "Beasts may degen'rate into Men."⁵³

⁵³ Swift has directed an even more devastating attack upon the species in Gulliver's Travels. This is not the place, however, for a consideration of that work as a satire on mankind. That particular topic invites extensive study, and it has already been covered to some extent by various scholars. Phillip Harth has called Gulliver's Travels "a satire on mankind in which each book contributes a separate item to a bill of particulars against humanity's racial pride," in "The Problem of Political Allegory in Gulliver's Travels," MP: A Supplement to Honor Arthur Friedman, 73 (May 1976), p. S47. The fullest examination has been by W.B. Carnochan, who concludes, "When we need a description of

Dr. Johnson's original Idler 22, which he later suppressed, is another example of a satire on mankind viewed through the animal perspective.⁵⁴ The modern editors suggest that its misanthropic tone is probably the reason he did not include it in the collected edition:

The parallels with the Fourth Voyage of Gulliver's Travels are obvious. Johnson's close affinities with Swift and his attempt to resist them (e.g. his strong aversion to "general satire," of which Mrs. Thrale speaks; his strange antipathy to Swift; his conscious attempts to cultivate "good-nature") help to explain both the writing of this essay and his suppression of it in the collected edition. (317)

In Idler 45 he reacts against those who would attack the species:

There is in many minds a kind of vanity exerted to the disadvantage of themselves; a desire to be praised for superior acuteness, discovered only in the degradation of their species, or censure of their country. (139)

Nonetheless, Johnson had done just that in Number 22.

This time the form is that of the prose essay rather than verse.

Dr. Johnson tells the story of a shepherd who through his long residence in the forest has learned to understand the speech of birds. The shepherd has overheard an old vulture instructing her young. In doing

the class in which Gulliver falls, we do well enough with the label, a 'satire on man.'" This is from Lemuel Gulliver's Mirror for Man (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1968), p. 165. James E. Gill has discussed in detail the animal comparisons of Book Four in "Beast Over Man: Theriophilic Paradox in Gulliver's 'Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms,'" SP, 67 (1970), 532-49. And Ernest Tuveson has examined Swift's ability to entrap his reader within the satire and found Swift superior to other satirists on man, in "Swift: The View from within the Satire" in The Satirist's Art, ed. H. James Jensen and Malvin R. Zirker, Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 55-85.

⁵⁴ The Idler and the Adventurer, ed. W.J. Bate, John M. Bullitt, and L.F. Powell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 317-20.

so, she provides an animal perspective on the human scene. We see the human race and its activities through her eyes. The charges brought forth are ones we have heard before and which by no means will end with Dr. Johnson.

In teaching her young about food, the old vulture mentions man. The young are anxious to know his whereabouts for "his flesh is surely the natural food of a vulture" (318). How, the young wonder, can one kill such a large creature. The mother vulture's response touches on a number of the issues we have encountered before in satires on man:

"We have not the strength of man," returned the mother, "and I am sometimes in doubt whether we have the subtlety; and the vultures would seldom feast upon his flesh, had not nature, that devoted him to our uses, infused into him a strange ferocity, which I have never observed in any other being that feeds upon the earth." (318-19)

Man, it is asserted, is made by Nature to serve as vulture food. Similar claims have been made by fleas, worms and other animals in satires on man. The creator has no elevated purpose in mind for man if he is nothing but food for the consumption of animals. Man even has a propensity for serving his own kind up for the vultures. He does this through war: "Two herds of men will often meet and shake the earth with noise, and fill the air with fire" (319). Many will be dismembered and mangled, all "for the convenience of the vulture" (319).

The pupils ask why men do not eat their prey. The wolf won't let a vulture touch what he has killed until he himself is finished with it, and "Is not man another kind of wolf?" (319) The mother replies that man "is the only beast who kills that which he does not devour, and this quality makes him so much a benefactor to our species" (319). The question arises as to why man indulges in all this manslaughter. The

mother says she can't answer that though she is "reckoned the most subtile bird of the mountain" (319). She tells them of a wise old vulture she used to visit when she was young. He "had fed year after year on the entrails of men," and, therefore, is presumably an expert on the subject of man (319). She tells her pupils what her old mentor had concluded about mankind:

His opinion was, that men had only the appearance of animal life, being really vegetables with a power of motion; and that as the boughs of an oak are dashed together by the storm, that swine may fatten upon the falling acorns, so men are by some unaccountable power driven one against another, till they lose their motion, that vultures may be fed. (319-20)

Some observers of the human scene, the wise one goes on, see an inkling of political activity among humans. Such observers believe that in every herd there is "one that gives directions to the rest, and seems to be more eminently delighted with a wide carnage" (320). This leader is seldom either the biggest or the swiftest, "but he shews by his eagerness and diligence that he is, more than any of the others, a friend to vultures" (320). The leaders among men, then, are obviously not to be trusted. The point of the whole, I suppose, is that the birds of prey, the vultures, find man a more insidious predator than they themselves are. Though man's viciousness is unaccountable from their point of view, they are content in that, since he does not consume his prey, dead men end up as nourishment for the vultures.

In a poem somewhat doubtfully attributed to Goldsmith, "The Logician Refuted" (1759), we find several hallmarks of a satire on mankind from the animal perspective: the "definition" of man, man's pretensions to reason, and the advocacy of instinct. First, Goldsmith

or, at least, the narrator of the poem attacks the classical definition of man:

Logicians have but ill defined
As Rational, the human kind.⁵⁵

Man is once more charged with pride and speciesism. In addition, he may not be the "apple" of the Creator's eye. The narrator maintains

That man and all his ways are vain;
And that this boasted lord of nature,
Is both a weak and erring creature.
That instinct is a surer guide,
Than reason-boasting mortals pride;
And that brute beasts are far before 'em,
Deus est anima brutorum.

Animals, of course, are the precise opposite of man:

No judges, fiddlers, dancing-masters,
No pick-pockets, or poetasters,
Are known to honest quadrupeds,
No single brute his fellows leads.
Brutes never meet in bloody fray,
Nor cut each others throats for pay.

Now we may want to question a couple of the poet's zoological assertions here; but, as I have maintained, the poet is saying something not about animals but about man.

The use of animal comparisons and contrasts has continued into the twentieth century. A couple of examples will, I hope, suffice. Edgar Lee Masters in "Schroeder the Fisherman" from the Spoon River Anthology does not idealize animals but says merely that they are rapacious in their own ways:

⁵⁵ Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith, ed. Arthur Friedman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), IV, 411-13.

I sat on the bank above Bernadotte
 And dropped crumbs in the water,
 Just to see the minnows bump each other,
 Until the strongest got the prize.
 Or I went to my little pasture,
 Where the peaceful swine were asleep in the wallow,
 Or nosing each other lovingly,
 And emptied a basket of yellow corn,
 And watched them push and squeal and bite,
 And trample each other to get the corn.
 And I saw how Christian Dallman's farm,
 Of more than three thousand acres,
 Swallowed the patch of Felix Schmidt,
 As a bass will swallow a minnow.
 And I say if there's anything in man--
 Spirit, or conscience, or breath of God
 That makes him different from fishes or hogs,
 I'd like to see it work!⁵⁶

In this poem it is the comparison which holds sway. There is a direct assertion that no difference exists between man and animals. Schroeder can see no differences among man and fishes and hogs. Man seemingly has no spirit, no conscience, no breath of God to distinguish him from the other representatives of the animal kingdom.

Mme de Stäel (1766-1817) is reputed to have said, "The more I see of man, the more I like dogs."⁵⁷ Ezra Pound, using the same two objects, arrives at a more tentative but ultimately, I think, similar conclusion. Pound's five-line "Meditatio" harbors no romantic attitude towards animals. Examining dogs, Pound finds them inferior to man:

When I carefully consider the curious habits of dogs
 I am compelled to conclude
 That man is the superior animal.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Edgar Lee Master, Spoon River Anthology (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 188.

⁵⁷ Peter, p. 323.

⁵⁸ Selected Poems of Ezra Pound (New York: New Directions, 1957), p. 34.

But before we get a chance to congratulate ourselves he adds,

When I consider the curious habits of man
I confess, my friend, I am puzzled.

Pound's position is obviously not far from that of Mme de Stael.

"When serpents bargain for the right to squirm" (1950) by e.e. cummings is a sonnet the first three quatrains of which are numerous dependent clauses beginning with the word "when." The general tenor of all these dependent clauses might be paraphrased as "when natural creatures and natural phenomena perform unnatural human acts." We can see this in the second quatrain:

when every thrush may sing no new moon in
if all screech-owls have not okayed his voice
--and any wave sings on the dotted line
or else an ocean is compelled to close.⁵⁹

The concluding couplet provides the grammatical completion of the sentence:

then we'll believe in that incredible
unanimal mankind(and not until).

Man is separated from the natural part of creation by the word "unanimal." Since it is highly unlikely or impossible for any of the dependent clauses will come true, the poet is saying that he can not believe in the species of which he is a member.

James Thurber has summed up a number of considerations that have been discussed in this section:

Man is born to the belief that he is superior to the lower animals, and . . . critical intelligence comes when he realizes that he is more similar than dissimilar. . . . He will not get

⁵⁹ Complete Poems: 1913-1962 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), p. 620.

anywhere until he realizes . . . that he is . . . less kindly than the dog, possessed of less dignity than the swan, and incapable of being as magnificent an angel as the black panther. I have become a little tired of the capitalization of man, his easy assumption of a dignity more apparent than real, and his faith in a high destiny for which he is not fitted by his long and bloody history.⁶⁰

We see Thurber in the twentieth century echo the observations we have been hearing all along in this section: man's unrealistic placement of himself as superior to the animals when in fact he is much closer to them than he would care to admit; his incapacity to realize that he is actually inferior to them in some ways; his pride in self; and his assumption of a high place in the grand scheme of things. As Ellen Douglas Leyburn has written, "Brute creation seems sometimes to exist as a satire on mankind."⁶¹

Before concluding this section, I want to call attention to one additional strategy. George Boas has pointed out a strategy which goes one step further than comparing man to animals, even the lowest form of animals: "We might mention here a type of literature which, not content with ranking beasts higher than men, ranks plants higher."⁶² He cites Innocent III's De Contemptu Mundi, Book I, chapter nine as an example. In his Voyage to the Moon, Cyrano de Bergerac uses the same device. He asserts that man's position in the universe, in God's eye, is of no

⁶⁰ Cited in Leonard Feinberg, The Satirist (New York: The Citadel Press, 1965), p. 275.

⁶¹ Satiric Allegory: Mirror of Man (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 57.

⁶² Boas, p. 19.

more importance than the life of a plant, a lowly cabbage even:

And to say that God loves man more than a cabbage is to tickle ourselves to make ourselves laugh; He is incapable of passion and therefore cannot love or hate anybody; and if He were capable of love He would rather feel tenderness for the cabbage you are holding (which cannot offend Him) than for a man when He already has before His eyes the wrongs the man is fated to commit.⁶³

He carries the argument further:

Since God, the common Father of all things, cherishes equally all His works, is it not reasonable that He should have shared His benefits equally between us and plants? True, we were born first, but in God's family there is no right of primogeniture. If then cabbages did not share with us the fief of immortality, doubtless they received some other advantage, the briefness of whose existence is compensated for by its grandeur.⁶⁴

Finally, man is told, "Remember then, O proudest of all animals, that although the cabbage you cut says not a word, it thinks none the less."⁶⁵ I suppose the same point I have been making about animals applies to cabbages as well: nothing is really being asserted about cabbages. They are present only for their use as an outrageous way of making man less sure of himself, less proud of himself.

The charges we have seen exhibited through use of the animal perspective are as follows:

1. man is the only animal to kill or prey on his own kind
2. man is anthropocentric and speciesistic; he foolishly thinks all was created solely for him, whereas animals may say the same since
3. man ends up as food for many animals

⁶³ Cyrano de Bergerac, p. 128.

⁶⁴ Cyrano de Bergerac, p. 129.

⁶⁵ Cyrano de Bergerac, p. 130.

4. man is physically inferior to many animals
5. man is temperamentally or psychologically inferior to many animals
6. man may have greater mental capacities, such as reason, but these are no consolation and may be even further reason to indict him
7. man is a beast (though it may not be fair to the beasts to label him one)
8. man is not as high on the grand scale of being as he would like to think; he is closer to the animals than he would like to admit
9. man may not be the focus of the Creator's undivided attention.⁶⁶

Most of these charges can be located in Montaigne and Charron and earlier classical sources, and we find many of them being reiterated today. The emphasis, as with other strategies for satirizing mankind, is on belittling man and by rendering him less sure of himself, asking him to undertake a reappraisal of himself and his place in the universe.

⁶⁶ In her irreverent twentieth-century version of an eighteenth-century novel, Fanny: Being the True History of the Adventures of Fanny Hackabout-Jones (New York: New American Library, 1980), Erica Jong reveals a familiarity with Swift and the satire on man. The narrator says that humans are "sub-equine and sub-canine" (p. 60). She has her fictional Swift make a claim of superiority for horses over humans which I have not seen elsewhere: "E'en the Droppings of a Horse are Golden Stones compar'd to a Man's brown and putrid Excrement! . . . And is this not because the Horse eats nought but the purest Grass and Hay, whilst we, who claim to be the Rational Race, eat largely dead and decaying Flesh? By a Creature's very Droppings shall ye know him!" (218) But these assertions seem purely comic rather than satiric.

c. The Extraterrestrial Perspective

If the satirist decides to attack man as a species, it may readily occur to him to compare and contrast man with representatives from the animal kingdom, as we have just seen. Man has probably always done this--noted wherein he is inferior to certain animals and where superior. But how else might the satirist go about making man feel his insignificance, his feebleness of body and intellect? The usefulness of an outside perspective commenting on the contemporary scene has long been known to the satirist. Montesquieu's Lettres Persanes is one well-known example. But the problem remains of how to get outside the human realm, since, on one level, all humans are being attacked. One solution, in addition to that of employing animals, is simply for the satirist to fabricate extraterrestrials to comment on the human scene or for use in comparisons and contrasts with earthlings.

To get this outside perspective, then, the satirist may decide to create one. Oliver Herford, in a poem entitled "Earth" (1898), does just this. He suggests what an outside observer might see were the planet to suffer destruction:

If this little world tonight
 Suddenly should fall through space
 In a hissing, headlong flight,
 Shriveling from off its face,
 As it falls into the sun,
 In an instant every trace
 Of the little crawling things--
 Ants, philosophers, and lice,
 Cattle, cockroaches, and kings,
 Beggars, millionaires, and mice,
 Men and maggots all as one
 As it falls into the sun. . . .
 Who can say but at the same
 Instant from some planet far

A child may watch us and exclaim:
 "See the pretty shooting star!"⁶⁷

In this brief poem we find a surprising number of the concerns we have been discussing in relation to the satire on mankind. The earth, relatively speaking, is a "little world." The possibility of its destruction is brought out. The possibility of other life out in space is posited. Such life may outlive or survive us; and, in fact, the destruction of the earth may appear merely diverting from that perspective. Thus, man's pride is again attacked, his pride of place in the universe and his pride in his petty accomplishments. The earth may not be the center of the cosmos; man may not be the sole, special creation of the Maker; and, finally, man is linked with, in fact, levelled with, other "little crawling things."

In another poem entitled "Earth," John Hall Wheelock makes use of a Martian observer of our planet:

"A planet doesn't explode of itself," said drily
 The Martian astronomer, gazing off into the air--
 "That they were able to do it is proof that highly
 Intelligent beings must have been living there."⁶⁸

The irony, of course, turns on the word "intelligent," and the whole point is to make one doubt the intelligence of human beings or to suggest that destruction is all man's intelligence is good for. The Houyhnhnms were apparently right to fear the modicum of human intellect which Gulliver possesses.

⁶⁷ in Mindscales: Poems for the Real World (New York: Dell Pub., 1971), p. 84.

⁶⁸ in Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry, Laurence Perrine, 4th ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 124.

Marjorie Hope Nicolson finds an early example of this theme in

Cicero's Somnium Scipionis:

In his dream Scipio beheld a vision which, beginning with Carthage, ended with a conception of the whole universe and realization of the comparative insignificance of this earth, a vast panorama of the 'Milky Circle' in which appear 'stars which we never see from the earth . . . all larger than we have ever imagined . . . indeed, the earth itself seemed to me so small that I was scornful of our empire, which covers only a single point, as it were, upon its surface.'⁶⁹

A slightly different device is to project earthlings out into space to one of the other planets. In some of the cosmic voyages Nicolson describes, the earthlings may not be worthy of this new location and be exiled from it "and sent back to earth until such time as they become worthy of return--a form of punishment that frequently recurs in modern voyages."⁷⁰

In numerous science-fiction movies of the 1950s which involved extraterrestrials coming to earth, the theme was often that though they appeared alien to us, they were a more advanced civilization and that because we had not even been able to handle the problem of making this earth a peaceful place, we were not yet worthy of making their acquaintance. They were beyond us technologically and emotionally, and we were not yet ready for what they could do for us.

If you are an earthling, there is no way out for you, at least in terms of the imaginative construct and its assertions. You can not

⁶⁹ Voyages to the Moon (New York: Macmillan, 1948), pp. 16-17.

⁷⁰ Nicolson, p. 17.

prove that such planets with sentient, intelligent life do not exist, though of course you can deny it--and, as Swift and psychologists remind us, the human capacity for denial is extraordinary.

The next two satires on man utilizing the extraterrestrial perspective which I will discuss are more extensive treatments of the topic. In both William Walsh's "Aesculapius . . ." and Voltaire's "Micromegas" extraterrestrials are brought down to earth.

William Walsh's "Aesculapius: Or, The Hospital of Fools. An Imitation of Lucian" is a humorous satire on mankind, close to what we would consider comedy.⁷¹ It contains none of the malice, misanthropy, or Juvenalian rage one has come to associate, however mistakenly, with the most prominent examples of satires on mankind.

This time the extraterrestrials are in fact two of the gods, Mercury and Aesculapius, who have just arrived on the scene, charged by Jupiter to assist mankind. The choice of Aesculapius, the god of medicine, may be a light allusion to what was seriously considered during the Renaissance as the medical purpose of satire. Mary Claire Randolph aptly sums up the earlier attitude:

To the Renaissance critic and satirist, satire is a scourge, a whip, a surgeon's scalpel, a cauterizing iron, a strong cathartic--all in one; its mission is to flay, to cut, to burn, to blister, and to purge; its object is now a culprit, a victim, a criminal, and now an ailing, submissive patient, a sick person

⁷¹ in The Works of Celebrated Authors, of Whose Writings there are but Small Remains (London: J. & R. Tonson and S. Draper, 1750), II, 210-25. All citations are to this edition. The work had also been included in a 1714 miscellany.

bursting with contagion; and the satirist himself is a whipper, a scourger, a barber-surgeon, an executioner, a 'doctour of physik.'⁷²

Mercury sums up their mission in his first proclamation:

Whereas daily Complaints are made by all the World, of the Innumerable Follies of Mankind, by reason of which they are neither happy themselves, nor will suffer others to be so: The great Jupiter, out of his fatherly Compassion to Mankind, has sent Aesculapius to apply Medicines to them. Whoever therefore there is, that is troubled with Folly of what kind soever, let him repair hither, and he shall be cured without any Fee. (210)

The disease they are to cure is Folly, a widespread if hardly terminal one. Even so, that Mercury, Aesculapius, and perhaps Jupiter himself are naive enough to think people will rush forward claiming to have the disease reveals that even the gods themselves may not be immune to folly. The response to the proclamation was, of course, predictable, though apparently not for Aesculapius:

What shou'd be the Meaning of this? Every particular Man complains of the Follies that are in the World; and when we come hither to apply Medicines to them, there is not one Man that offers himself to be cured. (210)

One of man's follies, then, is his inability to admit to having any follies. Mercury, seeing the lack of response to his proclamation, is now quick to advise Aesculapius that Folly is different from most other diseases. The difference is that men "can easily find the least Symptom of it in other People, yet there is no Man that perceives the greatest in himself" (211) His own suggestion is certainly no improve-

⁷² Mary Claire Randolph, "The Medical Concept in English Renaissance Satiric Theory," SP, 38 (1941), 125-57; rpt in Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Ronald Paulson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 135.

ment: if you have a friend or acquaintance who suffers from Folly, bring him to be cured. So, every man brings his neighbour but sees nothing wrong with himself:

See! see! What Crouds are getting together! Every Man seizes his next Neighbour, without any Deliberation at all; and they come willingly too, because every Man seems ready to accuse the other. (211)

One group of accusers all have something to do with marriage. Large numbers of those assembled are present on account of their marriages. When Aesculapius sees this, he decides that in marriage, one is automatically guilty of folly until proven innocent:

It were an endless Work to hear of every one who play'd the Fool in Marriage. To save Time, therefore, we will put up all the married People at a Venture; and if there be any one who can give us satisfactory Reasons, to prove that he did not play the Fool in it, we will let him out again. (216)

Of course, no one is able to do that.

Aesculapius observes that an even larger crowd has gathered to turn in their fellows. We will remember that Alvin Kernan has described the characteristic scene of satire as "always disorderly and crowded, packed to the very point of bursting. The deformed faces of depravity, stupidity, greed, venality, ignorance, and maliciousness group closely together for a moment. . . ." ⁷³ While the vices he lists here are a trifle severe to apply to Walsh's work, the scene is certainly filled with fools.

Aesculapius realizes that it is impossible for him to treat the members of such a mob individually, so he decides to reverse his

⁷³ Kernan, p. 7.

tactics and remove all the "healthy" specimens to cut down the size of the crowd. Therefore the crowd is asked to bring forth not fools but wise men. Mercury is quick to see the folly of this plan: "Art thou no better acquainted with the Nature of Mankind than this? Believe me, if we stay here till one Man accuses another of being wise, we may stay till the End of the World" (218). Once again, however, Mercury's own suggestion is equally foolish, "But if you would search for Wise Men, you must not ask Mens Opinion of one another, but take what every Man thinks of himself" (218). He accordingly asks those that are wise to "range themselves upon the Right Hand, and distinguish themselves from the rest" (218). There is, naturally, one massive movement toward the right. Every man but one moves to the "wise" side. This group of characters, all thinking themselves preeminently wise, is represented by three types: the poet, the statesman, and the Stoic philosopher. They are all quickly dispatched. It is the poet, though, who has leaped to the fore. When asked why he has so confidently placed himself first, he answers that "As much as a Man is above a Beast, so much is a Poet above another Man. It is we who converse with the Gods, and despise the rest of Mankind" (218). This is an interesting equation the poet has unwittingly set up. The reader may be expected, by a sort of reverse theriophily, to solve the equation like this: since, it turns out, poets are not above other men, men are not above beasts. And this is exactly the position which many satirists on mankind have taken.

The sole man who had not moved to the "wise" side stands laughing at the Stoic for trying to divorce himself from mankind:

Alas! Sir, who can forbear laughing, to see Men hope by their Pride and Vanity, to exempt themselves from those Infirmities, to which all Mankind are naturally subject. (222-23)

His attack on the Stoic and his presumption continues thus:

This contemplative Person, who has found out the Follies of all Mankind, has one of his own that he does not see, ten times more extravagant than any of theirs; Since there is no Folly, sure, so extravagant, as for one who labours under all the Frailties, and Weaknesses, and Infirmities of Mankind, to think himself in any-wise comparable to the Perfection of a God. (223)

Aesculapius, for once, has the perspicuity to see that the man attacks more than just the Stoic. What are you, then, he asks, "who dare accuse the Stoics of Folly, who accuse all the World beside?" (223)

The man's answer shows how he differs from all the others assembled there, from the rest of the crowd:

Alas? Sir, I am a Fool too, and am so well convinced of it, that you see I keep by myself on the left Side, when all the rest go to the Right; and were I not convinced myself, I have given sufficient Reason to convince any one else, by troubling myself with correcting the Follies of others, while I have so many Follies of my own that are un-corrected still. (223)

But if only the perfect were allowed to try to correct the flaws of others, no preacher would preach, no teacher teach, nor any writer write (including William Walsh).

Aesculapius asks the man if all men are alike. His response, while noting that the composition of all human beings contains an ample supply of folly, does not reveal the man to be a true misanthrope, a hater of mankind:

No, there are some who are called Wise and some who are called Fools, not but that the wisest Man has a sufficient Stock of Folly too. But the best Method I can propose to distinguish Mankind, is by calling those Men Wise, who know themselves to be Fools; and those Men Fools, who think themselves to be Wise. (223-24)

This is the Socratic position: in order to be wise, you have to know you are a fool. And that is the case of the one man represented as being wise here--he is admittedly a fool. This is a paradoxical situation; but the content of, or the assertion being made within the paradox, is satirical of mankind.

Aesculapius tells Mercury to report back to Jupiter:

You may tell him, that upon a full Survey of Mankind it appears, that every one has such a sufficient Share of Folly, that he has no Reason at all to complain of his Neighbours having more. That in Answer to those who think their Folly obstructs their Happiness, it is very plain, that the Happiness of Mankind is so complicated with this Folly, that it is impossible to cure them of the one, without endangering the other too. (224)

If the end of this passage sounds a bit like Mandeville, the following sounds even more so:

On the other Side, by taking away their Folly, we shou'd take away one of the most useful Qualities in the World, since it is very evident, that Mankind live upon the Follies of one another. (224)

Fools of various sorts and various professions make the world go round. Mandeville certainly would have agreed that Folly is good for the economy and, in fact, probably necessary.

One of the specific examples Aesculapius mentions in praise of folly brings us consciously back to the writer-reader relationship: "And were there not writing Fools, what would the reading Fools do for a Diversion?" (224-25) This may serve to remind the reader that he is one of those being assailed here and to announce to the reader that the satirist knows full well he is guilty himself, that he does not possess a "better-than-thou" attitude.

Aesculapius concludes that he and Mercury might just as well

leave things as they are:

So that upon the whole Matter, I think we had even as good leave the World as we find it. However, if he thinks there ought to be somewhat done in this Matter, after having made so much Noise about it; the most general Folly in Men being that of shewing Severity to other Peoples Faults, while they neglect those they commit themselves; He may order a solemn Proclamation to be made, That no Man shall have the Privilege of censuring the Follies of other People, till he can bring a Certificate, under the Hands of three judicious Neighbours, that he has none at all of his own. (225)

Jupiter's plan for medical assistance has failed; he has sent the god of medicine to cleanse mankind of Folly, but the strain has proved resistant to any treatment. All Aesculapius can do is make the rather lame concluding suggestion that Jupiter issue another edict, revealing once again Aesculapius's own ineptitude--or the hopelessness of attempting anything whatsoever to assist a resolutely folly-ridden mankind. The medical purpose of satire itself may be lightly satirized here. The god of medicine, sent to cleanse folly from mankind, has not surgically removed Vice (indeed was not even given that honorific if equally hopeless mission) but has been unable to treat even that persistent but less serious disease of folly.

The hospital, or place of confinement, for fools may be the world itself; or, looked at another way, we may all be outpatients. At any rate, there seems little doubt that "Aesculapius: Or, the Hospital of Fools" is in fact a satire on mankind. The generalizing words are here, "mankind," "men" used generically, "all," "no one," and so on. To flesh this out a bit, Walsh provides some stock types: old age-youth, profligate-miser, cuckold-cuckolder, old wife-young husband, and, finally, poet, statesman, and Stoic. All these are guilty of possessing Folly. The only exception, or seeming exception, is the man who is

admittedly a fool, which makes him a little wiser than his peers, but nonetheless a fool. All, then, are guilty, no one exempt; and yet the charges are not viewed seriously. The attack is not vicious, and we are allowed some laughter at all this, the bumbling gods included.

The second extended work I mentioned which makes use of extra-terrestrials to satirize mankind is Voltaire's Micromegas. Marjorie Hope Nicolson calls it Voltaire's "immortal satire on cosmic voyages."⁷⁴ She claims that "There are few earlier themes that he did not weave into this greatest of satires on the cosmic voyage and that he did not reduce to nonsense by devastating exaggeration."⁷⁵ I will contend that the thrust of the satire is not at the devices of the cosmic voyage but rather at man himself. In Micromegas we encounter many of the devices and charges previously enumerated; all seem to be firing directly towards mankind itself.

David L. Gobert sees the work not as satiric but as essentially comic. He claims that "Critics have traditionally believed that Voltaire stresses the smallness of man in Micromegas, and they have almost completely ignored what is implied in the other half of the work's title."⁷⁶ He cites Dorothy McGhee as "one of the most recent critics to reduce Micromegas to a condemnation of man."⁷⁷ I am

⁷⁴ Nicolson, p. 57.

⁷⁵ Nicolson, p. 214.

⁷⁶ "Comic in Micromegas as expressive of theme," Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, 37 (1965), 53.

⁷⁷ Gobert, p. 53.

interested in his word "reduce" here, as it seems to me symptomatic of numerous responses to literary works which are sharply critical of man or human nature. It is as if a work which contains adverse criticism of man is automatically less than a work which does not. At any rate, Gobert says he will focus on the comic resolution or neutering which results from the large-small duality: "This study is a demonstration of how 'large equals small' constitutes the comic theme on the levels of action and language."⁷⁸ Gobert's essay is ingenious and in places helpful, but he has to strain at times to make the events fit into his thesis.

The subtitle of Micromegas is Philosophic Story. The conte philosophique and the philosophical journey may contain or reflect any of a number of philosophical beliefs or support any of a number of diverse philosophical systems. And, the fictional portrayal of life on other planets can be used for numerous purposes--just one of which is satirizing man. As I have said, the genre of the conte philosophique is an established one, but we need to be more specific and say that this particular conte philosophique or cosmic voyage is indeed a satire on mankind. It employs the conventional charges we have been discussing and its aim seems to be to discomfit the reader and his species by discrediting some of their cherished assumptions.

As might be expected from the title, size is going to play an important part in Voltaire's attempt at diminishing man's pride in himself and his species. The images will be those which suggest the diminution of mankind. These will be applied directly to man through

⁷⁸ Gobert, p. 53.

attacks on his stature and indirectly through an attack on his habitat.

We are told, for example, at the very start of the story that the main character, Micromegas, "measures from head to foot twenty-four thousand paces (which make one-hundred-and-twenty thousand royal feet)."⁷⁹ Using the size of men as five feet and the earth nine thousand leagues in circumference, Voltaire concludes that "the globe which produced Mr. Micromegas must have exactly twenty-one million six hundred thousand times more circumference than our little earth" (413).

Voltaire is not going to stop here, however, for he employs the device of an intermediate planet and being between the superior Sirius and Micromegas and the inferior earth and earthlings. Micromegas sets out on a tour of the universe and arrives in Saturn. Saturnians are dwarfed by Micromegas but are still incomparably larger than men. Micromegas is provoked to smile when he sees the size of Saturn and its inhabitants, but the satire here is not directed at these extraterrestrials which Voltaire has created; instead, he has created these intermediary extraterrestrials and their planet to make the satire on man even more telling:

Although he was accustomed to see new things, he could not, on beholding the littleness of the globe and its inhabitants, refrain from that superior smile to which even the wisest men are sometimes subject. For Saturn, after all, is hardly more than nine hundred times bigger than the earth, and its citizens are dwarfs only about a thousand fathoms tall. (415)

Voltaire employs direct denigration upon earth and earthlings through-

⁷⁹ The Portable Voltaire, ed. Ben Ray Redman (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), p. 413. All citations are to this edition.

out the story. Thus, the earth is referred to as "our little ant-hill" (413), "our little mud-heap" (415), and the "molehill" (422). Mankind is referred to throughout by such terms as "maggots" and "invisible insects" (428). With Saturn and the Saturnian, however, Voltaire attacks something which, while far beneath his Sirian, is still superior to man. This has the effect of further diminishing man, making him appear even more insignificant.

The denigration of the planet earth is an indirect way of deflating man and his pride. That the earth is small and has no global importance in the universe is a reflection on man. This earth, far from being the center of the universe (as man had enjoyed believing for centuries), is, in Voltaire's fictional construct at least, merely one of the lesser, inhabited planets. Man and his planet have no special place in the creation; they occupy no central position.

Micromegas becomes friends with one of these Saturnians. He discovers that the Saturnians have "only" 72 senses but that they still find themselves "too limited" (417). And, despite the large number of emotions arising from 72 senses, they still find themselves often bored. Micromegas understands this because, though the Sirians have more senses than the Saturnians, they often find themselves in the same state:

"That I can quite understand," said Micromegas, "for although in our world we have nearly a thousand senses, we still have an indescribable vague yearning, an inexpressible restlessness, which warns us incessantly that we are of small account, and that there exist beings far more perfect. I have traveled a little, and I have seen mortals much below our level; I have also seen others far superior: but I have not seen any who have not more appetites than real needs, and more needs than contentment. One

day, maybe, I shall reach the country where nobody lacks anything, but up to now no one has given me definite news of that country." (417)

Saturnians, then, are far superior to humans, and Sirians are superior to Saturnians; but, as Micromegas has said, there are races who are even superior to the Sirians. The human race is considerably diminished under such a superterrestrial chain of beings; and, even were the human race able to improve itself to a level with these superior beings, there would still be no possibility of true happiness.

Voltaire has satirized man by denigrating his habitat, his physical stature and, next, his brief stint here on earth. The Saturnian laments the brevity of his life span, and Micromegas commiserates with him. The reader knows that whatever figures are used, they will undoubtedly not make the human race feel as if it is much subject to longevity. Such, of course, is the case, as the Saturnian makes clear:

We live for only five hundred complete revolutions of the sun. (That makes fifteen thousand years, or thereabouts, according to our reckoning.) As you can see, that means dying almost as soon as one is born. Our existence is a point, our duration a flash, our globe an atom. Hardly has one started to improve one's self a little than death arrives before one has any experience. For my part, I dare make no plans; I am like a drop of water in an immense ocean. I am ashamed, particularly before you, of the ridiculous figure I cut in this world. (417-18)

Voltaire, lest his reader should fail to make the connection, is quick to point out the figures in human terms. Here, again, a being inestimably grander than man has humbled himself before an even greater being (who, we recall, has already conceded that there are beings greater than himself). Micromegas immediately makes it clear that such humility is appropriate:

"If you were not a philosopher," returned Micromegas, "I should fear to distress you by telling you that our life is seven hundred times as long as yours, but you know too well that when a man has to return his body to the earth whence it sprang, to bring life again to nature in another form--which is called dying--it is precisely the same thing, when the time for this metamorphosis arrives, whether he has lived a day or an eternity. I have been in countries where the people lived a thousand times longer than my people, and they still grumbled. (418)

Man would be unhappy even if he did survive for thousands of years.

That advantage in age does, however, allow for greater mental development in the extraterrestrials. Micromegas, for example, when he was but a child, around 250 years old, solved fifty of Euclid's problems, that is, eighteen more than Pascal. Gobert interprets this to indicate that the intellectual accomplishments of Micromegas are not all that impressive: "Voltaire points out Micromegas's superiority over Pascal only to imply that, after all, this is not in reality unqualified praise of his hero."⁸⁰ Micromegas is imperfect; he does have faults. Such criticism, however, is not really aimed at Micromegas. His limitations reveal that even beings far superior to man are not perfect; therefore, man is even farther away from being a species which has anything to be vain about.

Voltaire pauses in his satire on man to acknowledge that there are some who are better able to comprehend the nature of things, who see things from a better perspective:

But everywhere there are persons who know how to accept their fate and thank the author of nature. He has spread over this universe variety in profusion, coupled with a kind of wonderful uniformity. For instance, all thinking beings are different, and yet at bottom

⁸⁰ Gobert, p. 55.

all resemble each other in their possession of the gifts of thought and aspiration. (418)

This will not be the bleakest sort of satire on mankind, which leaves man alone in an overwhelmingly hostile environment or makes him the hapless product of a demented or hostile creator. Voltaire asserts here that there is an overall plan to the universe. Things are in just proportion and in due degree, as Pope said--it is just that man has misplaced himself within this grand scheme. He has esteemed himself too highly. Micromegas addresses the Saturnian further on the subject:

I admire His wisdom in everything. I see differences everywhere, but everywhere also I see proportion. Your world is small, and so are its occupants; you have few sensations; your matter has few properties: all that is the work of Providence. (419)

The creator has chosen that some species be smaller and have fewer sensations than others.

Up until now, comparisons with the earth and earthlings have been implied (with the exception of those conversions from extraterrestrial to earthly measurements). The two superior beings decide to go on a philosophical journey, during the course of which, the reader is sure, the planet earth will be encountered and direct comparisons and contrasts will be presented.

As expected, our two space travelers soon see "a small glimmer: it was the earth, and it stirred the pity of the people coming from Jupiter" (421). The ocean seems merely a pond to them. They try to discover whether earth is inhabited, "but as their eyes and their hands were in nowise adapted to the diminutive beings which crawl here, they perceived nothing which might make them suspect that we and our colleagues, the other dwellers on this earth, have the honor to exist."

The planet itself receives some direct criticism. The earth

is so badly constructed and so irregular; it is of a form which to me seems ridiculous! . . . Do you not observe the shape of the globe, how flat it is at the poles, and how clumsily it turns round the sun, with result that the polar regions are waste places? What really makes me think there is no one on the earth is that I cannot imagine any sensible people wanting to live here. (423)

Through the use of a diamond as a magnifying glass, the Saturnian makes out something in the sea and places it on his thumbnail. It is a whale, and Micromegas begins laughing "at the extreme smallness of the inhabitants of our globe" (424). Next, they discover a ship loaded with a cargo of philosophers, though they are not able to perceive something as small as men at first. Here Voltaire interrupts his narrative and inserts a disclaimer:

I do not wish to offend here anyone's vanity, but I feel obliged to ask self-important persons to note with me that, if the average height of a man be taken as five feet, we do not cut a better figure on this earth than would an animal about one six-hundred-thousandth of an inch high on a ball ten feet in circumference. Imagine a being which could hold the earth in its hand and which had organs in proportion to ours--and it is very likely there would be a great number of these beings: then conceive, I ask you, what they would think of those battles which let a conqueror win a village only to lose it in the sequel. I do not doubt that if some captain of giant grenadiers ever reads this work, he will increase by at least two feet the height of his soldiers' forage-caps, but it will be in vain, I warn him: he and his will never be anything but infinitely little. (425-26)

This passage bears some examination. Is Voltaire singling out only self-important persons for attack, as he seems to be doing? Or those who find war heroic and glorious? I think he may be doing both of these as well as satirizing mankind here. What he says will perhaps offend self-important people more than humble people, but what he says is nonetheless true of all men, given the imaginative construct he

posits here. The latter part of the quotation may be viewed as a specific example of a kind of human activity that such larger supra-human creatures would look down on and view in its proper absurd perspective.

The two space travelers are finally able to see the human beings. They decide to examine "these insects" (427). With an ear trumpet made from a paring of one of Micromegas' fingernails, they are also able to hear the humans. With astonishment "They heard maggots talking tolerably good sense. . . ." (428) Micromegas addresses them:

Invisible insects who the Creator has pleased should be born in this abyss of the infinitely little, I thank Him for having deigned to let me discover secrets which seemed unfathomable. At my court, maybe, they would not condescend to look at you, but I despise no one, and I offer you my protection. (428)

It is only because Micromegas is tolerant that he would bother with men.

The humans do possess, to the amazement of the space travelers, some mental capacities, as is evidenced in their ability to calculate the size of the extraterrestrials. The correct calculation of his height brings forth a paean of praise from Micromegas:

"I see more than ever," he said, "that nothing must be judged by its apparent size. O God, who has given intelligence to beings which appear so contemptible, the infinitely small costs Thee as little effort as the infinitely great, and if there can possibly be creatures smaller than these, they may still have souls superior to those of the splendid animals I have seen in the sky, whose foot alone would cover the world to which I have come. (430)

There are animals, then, as large as our entire world. But Micromegas has moved from being a reasonably perspicacious creature to one suspiciously naive concerning human life. He avers that humans have found true happiness:

O intelligent atoms in whom the Eternal Being has been pleased to manifest His dexterity and His might, the joys you taste on your globe are doubtless very pure, for as you are so immaterial, and seem to be all spirit, your lives must be passed in Love and in Thought: that, indeed, is the true life of spirits. Nowhere yet have I found real happiness, but that you have found it here I cannot doubt. (430-31)

The reader, of course, is quite sure that Micromegas will shortly be disillusioned. Sure enough, one of the philosophers, "more frank than the rest," reveals to him that "apart from a small number of people who were little esteemed, the rest of the inhabitants of the world were a crowd of madmen, miscreants, and unfortunates" (431). This candid philosopher continues with some reflections on the makeup or constitution of man along with some observations on history:

If evil be a property of matter, . . . we have more matter than is necessary for the doing of much evil, and too much spirit if evil be a property of the spirit. Do you realize, for instance, that at this moment there are a hundred thousand madmen of our species wearing hats killing, or being killed by, a hundred thousand other animals wearing turbans, and that over almost all the face of the earth this has been the custom from time immemorial? (431)

In satires on mankind, war, massive aggression against one's own kind, is often treated as one of man's distinct characteristics.

The Sirian inquires about the cause of this slaughter "between such puny beasts" (431). The philosopher's answer, similar to the one given by Hamlet on a similar occasion, is that "The matter at issue . . . is some mud-heap as large as your heel" (431). At this the Sirian becomes incensed and wants to destroy all human life: "Such a riot of mad fury is inconceivable! I am tempted to take three steps and with three blows of my foot to crush out of existence this anthill of absurd cut-throats" (431). He is told not to bother, that they destroy them-

selves. "Know that, even when they have not drawn the sword, hunger, exhaustion, or debauchery carries them nearly all off" (432).

Not all humans are this low, though; presumably some are better occupied. The philosophers do not seem to kill people for money, so one is asked how they do occupy themselves:

"We dissect flies," answered the philosopher, "we measure lines, we gather mathematical data. We agree on the two or three points we understand, and we argue about the two or three thousand we do not." (432)

Man's slight mental prowess, then, is but ill employed.

In fact, all man's accomplishments are finite and limited, as is brought out pointedly in the last couple pages of the story after Micromegas asks about man's soul and how he forms his ideas. We are then provided with a brief catalogue of the responses of various philosophical systems to these questions. Of these responses, only one is given tentative approval by Micromegas. The follower of Locke does not place man at the center of the universe (as did the Leibnizian who preceded him). He is humble, not presumptuous, and aware of numerous possibilities which his mind is not able to fathom. But our satire against man, his activities, his pretensions, his ignorance of how ignorant he really is, is brought to a close by a Thomist,

a minute animalcule in a clerical hat who interrupted the other animalcule philosophers. He said he understood the whole mystery; that the explanation was to be found in the Summa of St. Thomas. He looked the two celestial inhabitants up and down, and asserted that their persons, worlds, suns, and stars were created solely for man. (435)

While there is direct satire against the Thomists, Voltaire is reacting against an anthropocentric position which man still endorses, for example, in his attitudes towards members of the animal kingdom.

The response of the space travelers to the Thomist's assertion is predictable: "At this speech the two travelers fell on top of each other, suffocating with that inextinguishable laughter which, according to Homer, is the lot of the gods" (435). They laugh so hard the Sirian drops the ship. It falls into one of his pockets but is easily recovered:

The Sirian picked the maggots up again and spoke to them once more with much kindness, although at the bottom of his heart he was rather angry that such infinitely small creatures should be possessed of an arrogance almost infinitely great. He promised to prepare for them a fine volume of philosophy, written very small so that they might be able to read it, and that in the volume they would find an explanation for everything. And to be sure, he did give them this book before he left them. They took it to Paris to the Academy of Science: but when the aged secretary opened it he found nothing but blank pages. "Ah!" said he. "I thought as much." (435)

Man's presumption is laid bare here; the limits of man's knowledge are brought forcefully to his attention.

The satire in Micromegas, then, does not seem addressed towards the conventions of the cosmic voyage; instead, it is directed squarely at man as a species. His habitat is depicted as unsatisfactory and diminutive in relation to other globes in the universe, his physical stature is revealed to be puny, his life span but a point, and his character as aggressive and stupifyingly proud and presumptuous. Voltaire concedes man some plusses. He possesses a smattering of intellect which, when used with humility and with some idea of its limitations, can be of some assistance to him. Furthermore, Voltaire implies a grand scheme or plan which, while perhaps not actually beneficent towards man, is at least not inimical. Voltaire's satire

here is not designed to maim man, merely to humble him. The extra-terrestrial dimension and Voltaire's ingenious uses of it have offered him a perspective from which to direct his shafts at the whole world of men.

d. The Cosmic Perspective

A fourth strategy for satirizing mankind is to examine man not from an extraterrestrial perspective, but from a cosmic one. Here man is made to seem insignificant in the universe, in the grand scheme of things. (We have already seen an example of this in Micromegas.) Again the attack is generally aimed at his pride, his self-assurance, his feelings of overwhelming importance. This time, however, the focus is on the woes that beset man rather than those he creates or is directly responsible for. Charron attacks man's presumption in believing that nature takes much interest in him and that the cosmos or universe is concerned about him:

Besides all this, man beleeveth that the heaven, the starres, all this great celestiall motion of the world, is only made for him. . . . And the poore miserable wretch is in the meane time ridiculous: he is heere beneath lodged in the last and worst stage of the world, most distant from the celestiall vault, in the sincke of the world, amongst the filth and lees thereof, with creatures of baser condition, made to receive all those excrements and ordures, which raine downe and fall from above upon his head; nay he lives not but by them, and to endure all those accidents that on all sides happen unto him; and yet he makes himselfe beleeve that he is the master and commander of all, that all creatures, yea those great luminous, incorruptible bodies, whereof he knowes not the least vertue, and which he is constrained with astonishment to admire, move not but for him, and to do him service. And because he beggeth (wretch that he is) his living, his maintenance, his commodities, from the beames, light and heate of the Sunne, from the raine and other distillations of heaven, and the aire, he sticks not to say, that he enjoyeth the heavens and the elements, as if all had been made, and still moove only for him. In this sense a gosling may say as much, and perhaps more justly and peremptorily.⁸¹

There are several ways for the satirist to deflate such presumption.

⁸¹ Charron, pp. 154-55.

The kinds of assertions I will be mentioning here may exist independently of satire. They may be used in other contexts and for other purposes. What I am presenting is material which a satirist on man may utilize to effect his attack on the species, to puncture man's presumption in believing that the cosmos has been created solely for him.

One way the satirist on mankind may accomplish this is simply to portray the universe as indifferent to man and his petty concerns. God, in such a case, would remain "eternally unaffected by the powers of the human species."⁸² Another way is to expose man as being totally alone in the universe, to assert that there is no Providence governing him, no benevolent deity looking on, no cosmic babysitter whose special charge is the care of man. Or, one might argue, look at the evidence, look at the state of this world, the seemingly gratuitous suffering millions must undergo, the plagues, the so-called "natural" disasters or "acts of God," the earthquakes (such as the one at Lisbon), the tornadoes and so on--now, if there is a Being looking down on the human scene, he, she, or it must of necessity be a malevolent one, a sadistic one or a crazy one. At the very least, the deity is imperfect in one way or another.

In satires on man, and perhaps only in satires on man, such attacks on God or the Creator are not directed at God. The satirist on man is writing to men, not presuming that God is his audience. God is not being addressed; men are. The satirist is using those assertions

⁸² Barry Schwartz, The New Humanism: Art in a Time of Change (New York: Praeger, 1974), p. 11.

about the creator to attack man's anthropocentrism and his bloated ego. This will become clear shortly, I hope, in my discussion of Venus on The Half-Shell.

Attacks on human nature, which had regularly been used to stress the enormous gulf between men and God, also lead naturally to attacks on the creator of human nature for the miserable job he had done. But satirists on mankind make use of such assertions only to call attention to the faulty product of the creation. Thus, when Woody Allen in Love and Death calls God "an underachiever," he is not attacking God but man, for mankind is the specimen Allen has examined and used as the basis for his judgment about God. As Hume pointed out in his Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, man and this world may be the production of a God worse than an underachiever:

This world, for aught he knows . . . was only the first rude essay of some infant Deity, who afterwards abandoned it, ashamed of his lame performance; it is the work only of some dependent, inferior Deity; and is the object of derision to his superiors: it is the production of old age and dotage in some superannuated Deity, and ever since his death, has run on at adventures. . . .

And the gods may be treated as being even worse than somewhat decrepit and incompetent. As Gloucester says, "As flies to wanton boys, are we to th'gods; / They kill us for their sport" (Lear, IV, i). Those plagues and natural disasters I mentioned earlier and even the physical fact of death are often used to document this charge. What I am referring to here, again, is a different activity from attacking certain human conceptions of the deity to point out the inadequacy of that particular human construct. The purpose of the satirist on man is not to find fault with the conceptions of God as perpetuated by specific

religions; he is attacking, as I have said repeatedly, man's over-estimation of himself and his place in the cosmos. In doing so, granted, he is utilizing material in his satires on mankind which might be put to different uses elsewhere.

To return to the ways the satirist might accomplish this task of "putting man in his place," we need to consider Mark Twain's tactic in The Mysterious Stranger. He uses the argument that God may be malevolent, but his argument takes another turn. His argument, baldly paraphrased, runs something like this: could there be such a nasty god who would perform or allow such horrible things to occur? Of course not; hence, there is no god and you are here alone. The effect here, of course, is ultimately similar to that of the second way I outlined above.

Yet another way for the satirist to attack mankind is to assert that man is a slave to outside influences or internal compulsions which are beyond his control. He has no free will. He is programmed from outside and, hence, at best a puppet or robot. This material, too, can be used in a satire on mankind for it reduces man to the status of a creature who is not in control of himself, who does not even determine what he likes, dislikes, does, believes and so on. Such assertions may be classified under this cosmic perspective because of the fact that man is programmed to be such, and presumably programmed by the creator. If such is the case, man has certainly no reason to be overly enamored of himself. The same strategy may be employed from the extraterrestrial perspective should superior beings from other planets somehow manipulate man in a similar way. Vonnegut's The Sirens of Titan may

offer an example of this. In that novel, the course of human events is manipulated so that humans will fabricate a spare part for the rocket ship of some superior extraterrestrials.

Some brief examples of this cosmic perspective aimed at diminishing man will, I hope, prove illustrative. Stephen Crane's "A Man Said to the Universe" portrays the that-out-there as merely indifferent to man and his petty concerns:

A man said to the universe:
 "Sir, I exist!"
 "However," replied the universe,
 "The fact has not created in me
 A sense of obligation."⁸³

In "The End of the World," Archibald MacLeish is a bit more severe:

Quite unexpectedly as Vasserot
 The armless ambidextrian was lighting
 A match between his great and second toe
 And Ralph the lion was engaged in biting
 The neck of Madame Sossman while the drum
 Pointed, and Teeny was about to cough
 In waltz-time swinging Jocko by the thumb--
 Quite unexpectedly the top blew off:

And there, there overhead, there, there, hung over
 Those thousands of white faces, those dazed eyes,
 There in the starless dark the poise, the hover,
 There with vast wings across the canceled skies,
 There in the sudden blackness the black pall ⁸⁴
 Of nothing, nothing, nothing--nothing at all.

MacLeish's poem achieves several things. The top does blow off. Man's activities are laughed at (note what important things are happening

⁸³ in The Scope of Satire, ed. Charles Sanders (Glenview, Il.: Scott, Foresman, 1971), p. 60.

⁸⁴ Sanders, p. 63.

when the top goes off), as are perhaps implicitly all those hopes of man that there is something governing him out there, some providence or design, and perhaps a life after death. What a grand irony, suggests MacLeish, if there is not. The poem's purpose? Perhaps merely to rattle us, to unsettle us, to force us to ask the question, "what if?" We will see something similar to the conclusion of MacLeish's poem, although reached by more intricate steps, when we examine Twain's The Mysterious Stranger.

I believe we can also read Swift's "Day of Judgment," at least in the version usually reprinted today, as a satire on mankind employing this cosmic perspective. Jove actually seems malicious towards mankind:

"Offending Race of Human Kind,
 By Nature, Reason, Learning, blind;
 You who thro' Frailty step'd aside,
 And you who never fell--thro' Pride;
 You who in different Sects have shamm'd,
 And come to see each other damn'd;
 (So some Folks told you, but they knew
 No more of Jove's Designs than you)
 The World's mad Business now is o'er,
 And I resent these Pranks no more.
 I to such Blockheads set my Wit!
 I damn such Fools!--Go, go, you're bit."⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Maurice Johnson, in "Test and Possible Occasion for Swift's 'Day of Judgment,'" PMLA, 86 (1971), 210-17, presents evidence that, judging from the variants, "there was a definite tendency to make the poem tell in a certain way--against dissenters. And as eighteenth-century commentary makes plain, this reflects the light in which the work was viewed" (213). I would only contend that whoever is responsible for the version we now generally see has incorporated elements which allow us to interpret it as a satire on mankind. As has been suggested earlier, particular and general satire are not necessarily incompatible. A satire on mankind may very well spring from (and contain references to) particular events and persons.

The first two lines of the quotation, which, incidentally, are missing from one other version of the poem that Johnson prints, seem all-encompassing enough. The "Race of Human Kind" is being attacked. Man is mentally and perhaps physically blind. Three different examples of human frailty follow immediately. The word "World" again supports a generalized interpretation. "Pranks" seems to refer to all three examples, not merely to members of sects. In my reading, then, the final couplet refers to the entire offending race. W.B. Carnochan likens this poem to Gulliver's Travels:

The brilliant 'Day of Judgement' is the nearest analogue in Swift's satire to the Travels. It is also, like them, a study in tactics: God takes the part of laughing satirist, frustrating the expectation of divine anger with colloquial derision; the satirist himself is implicated, as he is (I argue) in Gulliver.⁸⁶

As I have been contending, in satires on mankind the satirist is, on one level, inescapably implicated.

In Swift's poem we found the dispenser of "just desserts" downright rude to man. He can not even be bothered to damn them. Robert Frost takes a more serious approach in "Design." Examining evidence from the natural world, he decides that if there is a providence, some design, it must perforce be a malevolent one:

What but design of darkness to appall?--
If design govern in a thing so small.

Either there is no providence ordaining things, or if there is, it is an evil one. Once more, this is not an observation which will move man to dwell on his own magnificence.

⁸⁶ Lemuel Gulliver's Mirror for Man (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 200.

A more lengthy example, Mark Twain's The Mysterious Stranger, is a full-blown satire on mankind. In it we find a number of the devices and ploys by now familiar to us. Twain employs the animal comparisons and insists, for example, that the word "brutal" should never be applied to any human act. In the following he also attacks man's pride, his pretensions to reason, and his treatment of his fellow kind--all staple items of the satire on mankind:

"No, it was a human thing. You should not insult the brutes by such a misuse of that word; they have not deserved it," and he went on talking like that. "It is like your paltry race--always lying, always claiming virtues which it hasn't got, always denying them to the higher animals, which alone possess them. No brute ever does a cruel thing--that is the monopoly of those with the Moral Sense. When a brute inflicts pain he does it innocently; it is not wrong; for him there is no such thing as wrong. And he does not inflict pain for the pleasure of inflicting it--only man does that. Inspired by that mongrel Moral Sense of his! A sense whose function is to distinguish between right and wrong, with liberty to choose which of them he will do. Now what advantage can he get out of that? He is always choosing, and in nine cases out of ten he prefers the wrong. There shouldn't be any wrong; and without the Moral Sense there couldn't be any. And yet he is such an unreasoning creature that he is not able to perceive that the Moral Sense degrades him to the bottom layer of animated beings and is a shameful possession.⁸⁷

What are the individual's prospects in this vicious world? Well, "Only the mad can be happy, and not many of those. The few that imagine themselves kings or gods are happy, the rest are no happier than the sane" (p. 68). This is not too different from Swift's "perpetual Possession of being well Deceived."

Finally, Twain evokes man's insignificance in the universe. The

⁸⁷ Mark Twain's 'The Mysterious Stranger' and the Critics, ed. John S. Tuckey (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1968), p. 26. All citations are to this edition.

angel named Satan creates some finger-sized people to divert the boys he is talking to. But, annoyed by the noise of weeping and praying of this miniature society, he

reached out and took the heavy board seat of our swing and brought it down and mashed all those people into the earth just as if they had been flies, and went on talking just the same. (p. 9)

The creator obviously feels no compunction about summarily executing his creation.

At the end, The Mysterious Stranger seems to be an anti-theodicy. Frost had said if there is anything, it must be malevolent. Twain seems to be saying, if there is anything, it must be malevolent; hence, there is nothing. Examine the evidence. The ways of god to man can't be justified; hence there is no god:

A God who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who gave his angels painless lives, yet cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who mouths justice and invented hell--mouths mercy and invented hell--mouths Golden Rules, and forgiveness multiplied by seventy times seven, and invented hell; who mouths morals to other people and has none himself; who frowns upon crimes, yet commits them all; who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's acts upon man, instead of honorably placing it where it belongs, upon himself; and, finally, with altogether divine obtuseness, invites this poor, abused slave to worship him! (pp. 73-74)

How can you even imagine a god like this, he asks. And in the very end, Twain even takes man's life away from him:

There is no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell. It is all a dream--a grotesque and foolish dream. Nothing exists but you. And you are but a thought--a vagrant thought, a useless thought, a homeless thought, wandering forlorn among the empty eternities. (p. 74)

Twain here has perhaps pushed the satire on mankind as far as it can go. There is not much more to take away from man. The tone and the charged language do not allow man any dignity whatsoever, do not accord him any tragic heroism in his isolation.

Kilgore Trout's Venus on the Half-Shell (1975) is an example of a modern satire on mankind which employs the extraterrestrial and cosmic strategies while making many of the charges we have shown to be typical of satires on mankind. Venus on the Half-Shell achieved some popularity several years ago, especially among the young. Most of its readers probably did not realize that Trout, or whoever wrote the novel (Kilgore Trout is a character in Vonnegut's Breakfast of Champions), was making use of conventions which are, at the very least, several hundred years old.⁸⁸ The novel is decidedly a satire against mankind.

Trout makes use of the basic strategies we have discussed. This is evident even beginning with the epigraph: "Dedicated to the beasts and the stars. They don't worry about free will and immortality." The editor, himself an example of the fake editor as in Gulliver's Travels, informs us that Trout's work "has been praised for its high imagination and Swiftean satire" (6).

Trout begins by asserting, as Voltaire did in Micromegas, that inhabited space is much grander than man has imagined. The Space Wanderer, we are told, is a popular figure "throughout the ten billion inhabitable planets, and he is the hero of TV series on at least a

⁸⁸ Kilgore Trout, Venus on the Half-Shell (New York: Dell, 1975). All citations are to this source.

million, according to the latest count" (7). The existence of extra-terrestrial life would take from man his presumed special place in creation. He would no longer be the sole progeny of the creator; and if that other life is more intelligent than man, so much the worse.

Throughout the novel, human beings will be attacked in a number of ways. Trout writes, "Humans were badly flawed, flawed physically because of genetic mutations, flawed mentally and emotionally because of a flawed and mutating society" (114). One of the less serious physical charges against humans is that they are smelly. But Trout is not about to stop here; he also tells us why earthlings smell so bad:

But the octopoids of Algol, perhaps the most philosophical of all races, contended that it wasn't the food that caused the bad smell. Psychology affected physiology. Earthmen stank because their ethics stank. (24).

In this short passage man is attacked three ways: physically, ethically, and intellectually. He smells, his ethics stink, he is one of the lesser species of sentient life in the universe and certainly no the most capable of cerebration. Additional physical charges stress man's inferiority to other species, the insufficiency of his senses, and his mortality. Trout adds that man is sexually inferior to other species as well: "relatively speaking, Terrestrials were geldings" (189).

Earthlings are referred to as "an endangered species," (30) because they have practically destroyed their own planet. The planet is scheduled to be sanitized by a group who have been cleaning up the universe (32). Later Simon hears a long speech maintaining that life itself is an accidental disease:

"Our religion maintains that the stars, planets, and moons are living beings," she said. "These are the only forms of life big

enough and complex enough to interest the Creatrix. Biological life is an accidental by-product. You might say that it's a disease infecting the planets. Vegetable and animal life are bearable forms of the disease, like acne or athlete's foot.

"But when sentient life, beings with self-consciousness, evolve, they become a sort of deadly microbe." (67)

Thus, man is so small as to be beneath the concern of the Creatrix. Man is a deadly microbe, a parasite, stupid enough to destroy his own planet and eminently worthy of being "cleaned" off the earth.

The impetus for our interplanetary Gulliver, Simon Wagstaff, setting out in the first place is his quest to find the answer to the really overwhelming question that is so ingenuously phrased in Hemingway's Torrents of Spring, "What does it all mean?" Simon stands up, shakes his fist at the sky and asks the primal question: "Why are we created only to suffer and die?" (34) Simon asks his space ship to take him to heaven: "To his surprise, the computer screen flashed the Chinese equivalent of 'O.K.'" (37) Heaven is not quite what it is reputed to be, merely another planet (uninhabited until 2879 A.D.), nor, as we might by this time suspect, will be Creator be. Simon learns the Creator's motivations for creating the world:

It's this. The Creator has created this world solely to provide Himself with a show, to entertain Himself. Otherwise, He'd find eternity boring.

And He gets as much enjoyment from watching pain, suffering, and murder as He does from love. Perhaps more, since there is so much more hate and greed and murder than there is of love. Just as I enjoy watching through my telescope the struggles of those who are fighting to get to me, a sadistic pleasure, I admit, so He enjoys watching the comedies and tragedies of the beings He created. (149)

The assertion of a sadistic or merely an indifferent God serves to reduce man's importance in the cosmic scene:

Once you've admitted the premise that there is a Creator, no intelligent person can come to any other conclusion. Now, tell me, can you state honestly, from all you've observed, that the Creator regards his creatures, human or otherwise, as anything but actors in a drama? (149-50)

Here, again, we see the use of stage imagery to denigrate humans.

Simon the questor wants to know "the identity of the universe" (164). On the planet of the Clerun-Gowph, Simon will receive some answers to his primal questions. Naturally, these will not reflect much credit on mankind and the planet earth. Here Simon encounters Bingo, "the only survivor of the first creature created by It. . . ." (199) The sexless creator is called It. Simon discovers that "It went out to lunch one day and never came back. . . ." (200) Bingo explains the origins of life on the planets, including earth:

"Well, many billions of years ago we started to make a scientific survey of every planet in the world. We sent out scouting expeditions first. These didn't find any sign of life anywhere. But we were interested in geochemistry and all that kind of stuff, you know. So we sent out scientific expeditions. These built bases, the towers that you no doubt have run into. The teams stayed on these planets a long time--from your ephemeral viewpoint, anyway. They dumped their garbage and their excrement in the soupy primeval seas near the towers. These contained microbes and viruses which flourished in the seas. They started to evolve into higher creatures, and so the scientists hung around to observe their development."

He paused to drink another beer.

"Life on these planets was an accident."

Simon was shaken. He was the end of a process that started with a cockroach crap.

"That's as good a way to originate as any," Bingo said, as if he had read Simon's thoughts.

After a long silence, Simon said, "Why aren't there any towers on the planets in my galaxy?"

"The life there didn't look very promising," Bingo said.

(201)

The origins of man posited here are hardly honorific, are exactly the opposite of the special creation which man has imagined himself to be

the result of.

But Bingo had been joking with his last remark above. A giant computer had been built so the tower was not needed: "All we had to do was to ask the computer and it would tell us what we'd find before we studied a place" (202). How is this possible? The answer is that the world or universe is constructed on mechanistic principles similar to those Twain posits in The Mysterious Stranger. That all things are predetermined takes away from man even that bit of self-esteem he gets from thinking he makes up his own mind. It also represents a denial of man's free will. Bingo elaborates on this: "Once the universe is set up in a particular structure, everything from then on proceeds predictably. It's like rolling a bowling ball down the return trough" (202). This denial of human freedom means that life is programmed, but unfortunately man is not privy to the nature of the program. Simon asks him about the part chance plays, but Bingo claims that there is no such thing: "What seems Chance is merely ignorance of the part of the beholder" (202). Man simply does not know. Not only does he have nothing to be proud of, this lack of knowledge actually puts him into a precarious position, for he does not, as a result, know how to conduct himself properly in the world.

Simon asks the final question, the one that has puzzled man from the very start, "But why, then, did It create us!" (203) Bingo's answer, again, is designed to denigrate mankind, to make man feel worthless and unimportant in the cosmos:

"Look at the universe. Obviously, it was made by a scientist, otherwise it wouldn't be subject to scientific analysis. Our universe, and all the others It has created, are

scientific experiments. It is omniscient. But just to make things interesting, It being omnipotent, blanked out parts of Its mind. Thus, It won't know what's going to happen.

"That's why, I think, It did not come back after lunch. It erased even the memory of Its creation, and so It didn't even know It was due back for an important meeting with me. I heard reports that It was seen rolling around town acting somewhat confused. It alone knows where It is now, and perhaps not even It knows. Maybe. Anyway, in whatever universe It is, when this universe collapses into a big ball of fiery energy, It'll probably drop around and see how things worked out."

Simon rose from the chair and cried, "But why? Why? Why? Didn't It know what agony and sorrow It would cause sextillions upon sextillions of living beings to suffer? All for nothing?"

"Yes," Bingo said.

"But why?" Simon Wagstaff shouted. "Why? Why? Why?"

"Why not?" (203-04)

So ends the novel, on one of the more anti-climactic notes in literature. Again, the concern is a perennial one, the same question that theodicies address themselves to: how does one explain the evil and suffering in the world? The answer here is not the agnostic one of "we just don't know why." Instead the Creator is represented as one who indeed was well aware that he would be creating agony and suffering for all people and was doing it not to test them or for any high purpose whatsoever. He was proceeding not from infinite wisdom but merely from the whimsical "why not?"

The satire here is not aimed at just the Christian religion and its followers. Mankind as a whole is the true target. In particular, Trout attacks man's overestimation of his own importance and place in the universe by offering a cosmic perspective. In doing so Trout provides an indifferent creator of man, who is not particularly stable or reliable in the first place, a beginning for man which is accidental and partially a result of the offal of extraterrestrials, and a disposition of things on earth which is prearranged but of which humans

have no inkling. Physically, humans are short-lived and have a noisome odor. Their senses are less refined than those of dogs. Technologically, intellectually, and ethically, they are inferior to numerous extraterrestrial species. Religion is not the target here; the satiric victim is, as Trout writes, "Homo sap" and all his pretensions to grandeur. Kilgore Trout, then, has written an entertaining satire on mankind employing many of the staple devices, charges, and strategies we have observed in earlier satires on mankind.

Again, the kinds of assertions I have mentioned for possible use in attacks on mankind from this cosmic perspective may, of course, exist independently of satires on mankind and may be brought forth for purposes other than such satire. I offer them here as materials which satirists on man have utilized to achieve their particular purposes.

Such kinds of assertions within a satire on mankind serve to diminish man by allowing him a less desirable place in the grand scheme of things than he has previously thought, than he has claimed for himself. He has overestimated himself and his position, and the satirist on mankind refuses to allow him to get away with this. His pride, his sense of certainty and security, are stripped ruthlessly from him by the satirist's onslaught. Alvin Kernan has written, "The satirist's despair of man and society . . . extends to the very operation of the cosmos itself."⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Kernan, p. 20.

CHAPTER IV

SOME CONCLUSIONS

In the first three chapters I have attempted to delineate and delimit a subtype of satire, the satire on mankind. By analyzing several undisputed examples of the type, I have isolated certain distinguishing characteristics of the satire on mankind:

1. a twofold victim which on one level is the species and, on another, inflated definitions of mankind and those who hold such self-flattering misconceptions of the true nature of the species;
2. a satirist who, on one level, is as culpable as his victims since he is a member of the species being attacked;
3. a reader who is also inescapably involved for the same reason. The reader is thus placed in a significantly different position from his customary one in reading satire. He is, at one level, a victim of the satire rather than an observer who may enjoy the discomfiture of others;
4. a characteristic set of strategies which serve to propel a characteristic set of satiric charges or indictments.

We may define the satire on mankind, then, as a literary work which embodies a twofold attack upon the species and upon those who entertain inflated opinions of that species (or who endorse flattering definitions of homo sapiens) and which most often proceeds in its attack along the lines I have suggested in the first three chapters here.

If I have described accurately what satires on mankind are and what they do, then two things become clear:

1. some works which have been labeled satires on mankind are, in fact, not;

2. some definitions of "satire" need to be expanded in order to include or reflect this particular satiric activity.

Before discussing several works which have been mislabeled, I want to consider one poem which has not been called a satire on mankind but which contains many of the ingredients I have identified as characteristic of that type. In the first stanza of "Man" (1650), Henry Vaughan reveals the orderliness he has discovered in the natural world:

Weighing the stedfastness and state
Of some mean things which here below reside,
Where birds like watchful Clocks the noiseless date
 And Intercourse of times divide,
Where Bees at night get home and hive, and flows
 Early, aswel as late,
Rise with the Sun, and set in the same bowrs.¹

The second stanza makes it apparent that Vaughan is contrasting such stability with the lives of men:

I would (said I) my God would give
The staidness of these things to man! for these
To his divine appointments ever cleave,
 And no new business breaks their peace;
The birds nor sow, nor reap, yet sup and dine,
 The flowres without clothes live,
Yet Solomon was never drest so fine.

Vaughan has been paraphrasing Matthew, 6: 26-29 here, which may give us a clue that his purpose is homiletic rather than satiric. In the next stanza he contrasts man to "The staidness of these things." Man is depicted as a vagrant, lost and wandering:

Man hath stil either toyes, or Care,
He hath no root, nor to one place is ty'd,
But ever restless and Irregular
 About this Earth doth run and ride,

¹ The Complete Poetry of Henry Vaughan, ed. French Fogle (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), pp. 245-46.

He knows he hath a home, but scarce knows where,
 He says it is so far
 That he hath quite forgot how to go there.

In the final stanza man is even compared unfavorably to stones:

 He knocks at all doors, strays and roams,
 Nay hath not so much wit as some stones have
 Which in the darkest nights point to their homes,
 By some hid sense their Maker gave;
 Man is the shuttle, to whose winding quest
 And passage through these looms
 God order'd motion, but ordain'd no rest.

The generalizing indicator is here, the animal comparisons, and even unfavorable comparisons to plants and stones. The assertions of aimless wandering and fruitless activity, the charge that God has provided benefits to other parts of the creation which he has not accorded to man, the claim that man's intellect is insufficient to enlighten him and, finally, the assertion that man is propelled through life without rest by the Creator--all these are materials which satirists on man have often employed.

Still, the poem is not a satire on mankind. The materials are not marshalled here for satiric purposes, to humiliate, to discredit, to rub salt in the wound. Satires on man, I have been maintaining, puncture our overly-pleasant assumptions about the species. Vaughan does not refer to such misconceptions, nor to man's anthropocentrism and speciesism. Vaughan does have some negative things to say about man, but such negative propositions alone do not constitute satire on mankind. While Vaughan's observations might undermine pride, pride is not being attacked here. The assertions are not present to humiliate man, to cause him to lower his estimation of himself. They do not threaten his self-image. In fact, he is given the consolation that,

even if his life or lot is not quite as satisfactory as he would like it, still there is ultimately a providence; and this offers him some security. Though man doesn't know where, he "knows he hath a home." God is not necessarily taking it easy on man: he "ordered motion. but ordained no rest." But He is there and, ultimately, in charge of men's lives and their welfare. Vaughan's poem is a homiletic lament. It is a meditation of the ways of God to man, but there is no real criticism involved. Satires on man which bring in the creator at all generally present the deity as disdainful of man, malevolent, or at best indifferent to him. But Vaughan is asserting merely that we are not privy to God's grand designs. The tone is resigned, without outrage; there is no hostility seething under witty images here. Thus, despite its use of some of the common materials employed in satires on mankind, the poem is not an example of the type.

As I have said before, materials which satirists on man use may appear in sermons and other kinds of literary activity which are themselves not satiric. This seems to have been the case with Vaughan's poem. We need to use some care, then, before assigning a work the classification of "satire on mankind." Failure to consider carefully the exact nature of satires on mankind has led to the mislabeling of several works. The mislabeling itself may not be occasion for much concern, but when it is to any degree part of a thoughtful process it can indicate a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the functioning or the direction of the genre, the individual piece being labeled or both. The following works or parts of works have all been termed satires on mankind. They do not appear to be so to me.

According to D.H. Griffin, Mathurin Regnier's "Satire 14" (1613) is a "full-scale satire on man."² "Satire 14" does contain satire on mankind; but it is decidedly not, as a whole, a satire on man. Admittedly, it does start out as if it is going to be just that:

J'ay pris cent et cent fois la lanterne en la main,
 Cherchant en plain midy, parmy le genre humain,
 Un homme qui fust homme et de faict et de mine,
 Et qui peust des vertus passer par l'estamine.
 Il n'est coing et recoing que je n'aye tanté
 Depuis que la nature icy bas m'a planté:
 Mais tant plus je me lime et plus je me rabote,
 Je croy qu'à mon advis tout le monde radote,
 Qu'il a la teste vuide et sans dessus dessous,
 Ou qu'il faut qu'au rebours je sois l'un des plus fous.³

The narrator claims that, like Diogenes, he has been searching hither and thither for one single honest man but to no avail. Either, says the narrator, everybody talks drivel and has an empty, topsy-turvy head or I myself am one of the most crazy of all. This last statement prepares us for a more tentative, less absolutely-certain narrator than was customary in English Elizabethan satire. Here are no wild-eyed, raging satyrs who flail their victims, of the sort Alvin Kernan describes in The Cankered Muse.

Regnier's narrator is vulnerable from the very start. "I may be mistaken," he seems to be saying, "My perceptions may be wrong." This is made clear at the start of the second stanza:

² Satires Against Man: The Poems of Rochester (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 175.

³ Oeuvres complètes, ed. Jean Plattard (Paris: Société D'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1965), pp. 127-33.

C'est de notre folie un plaisant stratègesme,
 Se flattant, de juger les autres par soy-mesme.
 Ceux qui pour voyager s'embarquent dessus l'eau
 Voyent aller la terre, et non pas leur vaisseau:
 Peut-estre ainsi trompé que fausement je juge.

The fourth stanza introduces even more of a surprise than this self-effacement on the part of the narrator. The surprise comes in the form of encomium. Why, one might well ask, is praise being introduced into what has started out as a satire on mankind? After all this searching, the narrator says,

Pour retrouver un homme envers qui la Satyre
 Sans flater ne trovast que mordre et que redire,
 Qui sceust d'un chois prudent toute chose épulcher,
 Ma foy, si ce n'est vous, je n'en veux plus chercher.

It is not certain who Regnier is eulogizing here, other than that it is a statesman with fifty years of service to his country. It is not really important in terms of my argument who is being praised. What is important is that the location or discovery of this one paragon reduces the impact of the earlier satire on mankind, and the focus is reduced from "all" men as a species to "most." This alone suggests that Regnier is not writing a satire on mankind. Even if the statesman is not exactly the man the narrator has been looking for, he is still close enough so that the narrator feels no need to search further.

In the middle of the poem Regnier pauses to reflect upon his art:

Or c'est un grand chemin jadis assez frayé,
 Qui des rimeurs françois ne fut oncq' essayé:
 Suivant les pas d'Horace, entrant en la carrière,
 Je trouve des humeurs de diverse manière,
 Qui me pourroient donner subject de me mocquer.

He places himself in a well-charted tradition. Following in the footsteps of Horace, he traces out various humours as subjects for his

satire. This is what Regnier apparently perceives himself to be doing, but it is not a description of what a satirist on mankind does.

Next Regnier launches into a diatribe against, among other faults, gambling and its consequences, employing particular examples. In doing so, he incorporates an attack on the misuse of reason, although he does not go so far as to deny its existence or usefulness. He concludes that reason is a strange beast:

Ainsi ceste raison est une estrange beste;
 On l'a bonne selon qu'on a bonne la teste,
 Ou'on imagine bien, du sens comme de l'oeil,
 Pour grain ne prenant paille, ou Paris pour Corbeil.

Men, in Regnier's opinion, are apparently capable of reason and good sense, though the number who employ the capacity may be small.

Regnier closes his "satire" with a brief fable designed again to apply to the statesman. Jupiter received Minos and Tantalus into heaven and treated them with great favor. The one who knew how to act remained in this favored state, but the other who did not know how to conduct himself was cast out. The import here is obvious. The narrator is saying, you have been in favor for some time--and deservedly so. You have merited the trust that has been bestowed upon you.

It becomes apparent that the thrust of "Satire 14" is not satire on man; in fact, the whole work does not seem to be a satire at all, though it does contain satire. The incidents and assertions all seem planned, though sometimes rather casually connected, to further the author's design of complimenting one particular individual. The satire that is present is there seemingly as counterpoint to the encomium. Since the poem is praiseful of the statesman, the species is not under

attack as a species. Mankind is not a satiric victim here. If Regnier's "Satire 14" was designed to satirize mankind, it was faultily executed and the eulogistic elements intervened.

George Wasserman has argued that Hudibras Part I should be categorized as a satire on mankind.⁴ Wasserman's argument that Part I "is a satire on mankind, a redefinition of the sine qua non of man as folly and viciousness," is based primarily on quotations from Butler's notebooks.⁵ Wasserman locates assertions of the sort we are familiar with. Butler attacks man's pretence to reason and by use of copious animal imagery subtracts from man some of the dignity with which he ordinarily endows himself.

To be sure, the objects of Butler's satire are numerous. The religious satire is there. As Wilder and others have pointed out, the literary conventions of the epic and the heroic ideals associated with it are obviously taken to task in Hudibras, just as they are in Don Quixote. John Dennis had seen the poem as an attack on hypocrisy; and, more recently, Ian Jack has followed suit.⁶ In addition, there are numerous other professions, sciences, specialities, and people who are ridiculed. Politicians, scientists, members of the Royal Society, philosophy, alchemy, medicine, the classics, history, foreign travel, lawyers, women, and pedantry have all been identified by critics as

⁴ "'A Strange Chimaera of Beasts and Men': The Argument and Imagery of Hudibras, Part I," SEL, 13 (1973), 405-21.

⁵ Wasserman, p. 406.

⁶ Ian Jack, Augustan Satire: Intention & Idiom in English Poetry 1660-1750 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 17.

victims of the satiric attack. Does the number of victims add up to an attack on mankind? Do these various categories or echelons of corruption constitute an attack on the whole taken segment by segment? I see no such plan here, nor do I find Butler suggesting anywhere in the text that he is attempting to do this. At best we can say that if Butler intended the various attacks on specific corruptions to be added up into a general attack on the species, he does not himself do the adding. As a consequence he has allowed his major point to go by default. If he intended the work to be a satire on mankind, he did not succeed in producing one.

A somewhat better case can be made for the argument that Butler is satirizing the times or his age. The times are bad, what a horrible age we live in, things are in desperate straits--such complaints have probably been extant for as long as man has been a social animal; and they continue down to our own day. Juvenal took on his own society (although for his own safety he purported to attack an earlier era); and there is some evidence that Butler is doing the same here, attacking his times.

Butler wrote in his notebooks that "This age will serve to make a very pretty farce for the next, if it have any wit at all to make use of it."⁷ He certainly indulges in particular satire against the historical incidents of his own times. Party and government are attacked, but Butler is talking about a specific time in England, when "Both

⁷ Hudibras Parts I & II & Selected Other Writings, ed. John Wilders and Hugh de Quehen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 288.

Parties joynd to do their best, / To Damn the Publick Interest."⁸

Though announced intentions by satirists are sometimes suspect, we do have primary evidence that Butler is attacking the current state of things in England. Such evidence is available in his letter to Sir George Oxenden, dated March 19, 1662/3, which Wilders reprints:

. . . Butt I assure you my chiefe designe was onely to give the world a Just Account of the Ridiculous Folly & Knavery of the Presbiterian & Independent Factions then in power. . . .⁹

This statement, while it cannot be taken as conclusive, certainly lends some credence to a narrower interpretation of the text than Wasserman suggests.

In his satire on the times, Butler attacks man's excessive concerns about money and gain, man's inability to speak the truth or keep his word. However, is it asserted that all are culpable? Possibly all are greedy, all susceptible to man-made fears, and all averse to truth; in these Butler does not seem to be limiting the time period. But for the most part, the answer is no! A few apparently do hold out against hypocrisy, though perhaps not for the best of reasons. Does Butler claim that all factions and all parties and all governments are despicable? Even if we could say that all are being attacked within Butler's time, we should still have to limit the extent of our generalization to England itself, since Butler nowhere gives us authorization to apply it elsewhere, to export it beyond Great Britain.

⁸ John Wilders, ed., Hudibras (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), III, ii, 147-48.

⁹ Wilders, p. 451.

Butler was familiar with the theriophilist tradition.¹⁰ He wrote a verse satire on mankind, "Satire upon the Weakness and Misery of Man," which I have already discussed. And while there is plenty of evidence to show that his sentiments are in accordance with many of those of other satirists on mankind, Butler does not take the final step in Hudibras. He simply does not make it clear that all mankind is culpable. Wasserman claims that Part I is a satire on mankind read in the light of certain notebook passages; and the notebooks do indeed give evidence that Butler entertained certain attitudes that recur as basic material in satires on mankind, but we must ask if this material is transferred in quantities sufficient to justify calling the work, or even Part I, a satire on man. There are relatively few lines within the text to justify such a claim.

Butler roots Hudibras in England and at a particular time, and nowhere does he imply that he is surveying mankind from China to Peru. The particular satire is not used to provide instances or examples to support generalizations about the species. Types or classes of people are indicted but not for the purpose of attacking the species. We are shown, for example, a pedantic, Presbyterian knight, a bumpkin who has the "light," some tradesmen, an astrologer, a politician, a lawyer and some few others; but these certainly do not represent all segments of society. Nor do the main characters represent mankind. The reader does not look at Hudibras (or Hudibras and Ralpho together) and unmistakably see himself. Moreover, if Butler had wanted to make Hudibras represen-

¹⁰ Wasserman, p. 407.

tative of all men, he would not have misguided his readers by suggesting that he had an individual in mind as prototype for Hudibras:

'Tis sung, There is a valiant Mamaluke
 In forrain Land, yclep'd _____
 To whom we have been oft compar'd,
 For Person, Parts, Address, and Beard. (I,i, 895-98)

As a result, it seems apparent that Hudibras as a whole more legitimately falls into the category of a satire on the times than that of the satire on mankind. I have argued earlier (pp. 58-9) that the satire on the times is most often substantively different from the satire on mankind. The complaint against the times more often allows for exceptions to its charges, often reflects upon the "good old days," and may imply that the current unsatisfactory state of things is reversible. To satirize one's age means to satirize one's own time and milieu, one's own society. The generalizations are narrower than those of the satire on man. In satirizing one's own times, one is not attacking the entire species; Butler seems clearly to be doing the former rather than the latter.

Robert Gould's "A Satyr Against Man" appears in a couple of different forms. An earlier version of one part can be found in "Love given over: or a Satyr against the Pride, Lust, and Inconstance, etc of Woman. With Sylvia's Revenge, or a Satyr Against Man, In Answer to the Satyr against Woman."¹¹ The satire against man, as the full title indicates, is simply that: a response or balance to his satire against women. When Gould uses the words "mankind" and "man" here, he means

¹¹ London: H. Hills, 1709, pp. 1-24.

men, as in, for example,

Man, by some angry God in passion hurl'd
Down, as a Plague to vex the Female World.

Furthermore, there are none of the typical animal-man comparisons in the poem. When animals do get mentioned, they are not treated as physically or morally superior to men, as is customary in most satires on man:

Lyons and Tygers Men have learnt to tame,
Retaining nothing frightful but their Name:
With low submission have their Keepers own'd,
And trembled when their Masters have but frown'd,
But Man, unruly Man, that Beast of Reason,
'Gainst Woman still continues in his Treason.

One might argue, I suppose, that I am quibbling about the number of intended victims here, that taken jointly satires on men and women constitute satire against mankind. I do not, however, find any such amalgamation here. The two parts seem to defuse each other rather than to build up to one explosive, potent case against humankind. The two satires touching here seem to discharge energy or lose voltage. There is no frame made explicit which would say, in effect, since all men and women are bad (which is by no means resolved here), that, therefore, all mankind is bad, inconstant, odious, or whatever. Had he wished, Gould could have easily provided such a frame. Thus, in the single-part version, the "Satyr Against Man" is not, in my estimation, a satire on mankind.

In Gould's collected Works (1709), the poem is considerably amplified and appears in five parts.¹² It is this version which Lovejoy

¹² The Works of Mr. Robert Gould: Consisting of those Satyrs Which were formerly Printed, and Corrected since by the Author, vol. 2 (London: 1709). All citations are to this edition.

is thinking of when he identifies it as a satire on man,¹³ this version which Eugene Sloane discusses in his section entitled "Satires on Man."¹⁴ Again, the title Gould chose is "A Satyr Against Man." The question remains, does this extended poem qualify as an example of the type?

The opening lines in this extended version again suggest that he is writing this satire to balance his satire against women:

I who against the Women drew my Pen,
With equal Fury now attack the Men. (148)

As in the earlier single-part version, when Gould uses "man," he generally means "men." And, thus, he is not referring to the species. Gould attacks his age and issues a warning about the current state of things, but he does leave room in his discussion for good men and good women, the encomium, for example, on Anne and Marlborough. Gould does qualify his generalizations. By attacking most but not all men, Gould is writing general satire not satire on mankind.

More importantly, Gould's satire has a homiletic purpose. In those satires on mankind which mention the deity at all, as I observed earlier, God is often portrayed as indifferent or even inimical to man. But for Gould the world is ultimately constructed upon equitable principles by a just God for the purpose of testing man. The satire, thus, is designed to shake certain men out of their moral stupor, that is,

¹³ A.O. Lovejoy, Reflections on Human Nature (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), p. 16.

¹⁴ Robert Gould: 17th-Century Satirist (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1940), p. 57.

those who are capable of being saved--and apparently some of these do exist. The attack, then, is subsidiary to the homily.

Gould attacks those man-animal comparisons which end up derogating mankind and which are staple items for satirists on mankind. He places man higher on the great scale of being; he pictures God favoring man over all the other animals. He roots his poem in England, as did Butler, and does not try to extend those boundaries much, though he is quite willing to make a thrust or two at France and Louis XIV. Gould could easily have announced to the reader that his generalizations extend from China to Peru had he desired to, but he does not take this step.

There is even some direct evidence that Gould is not satirizing mankind. He goes so far as to criticize the very idea of writing a satire on mankind. Society, he says within the poem itself, sometimes influences one to perform certain kinds of unsavory mental activities:

Better if yet we wild in Woods did roam.
 Made some cool Shades, or silent Cave our home,
 Than growing by Society refin'd
 Disgrace, Burlesque, and Ridicule our Kind. (171)

Ridiculing one's own kind, which is exactly what satires on mankind set about doing, is a negative thing in Gould's eyes. Within the text Gould reveals his familiarity with those who do not have particularly high estimations of man and his place in the universe: he has read or is conversant with material which satirists on mankind conventionally employ. But he carefully dissociates himself from such positions. He maintains, for example, that men are obviously superior to animals.

Thus, despite its title, and despite the fact that several critics

have listed or discussed Gould's poem as a satire on mankind, it ultimately does not appear to be one.

George Hind has claimed that the Fable of the Bees "stands squarely in the Menippean satiric tradition."¹⁵ Furthermore, Hind equates Menippean satire with satire on mankind:

We might define the Menippean satire in its 'classical' sense as: an informal prose genre containing interspersed verses. It usually deals less with people than mental attitudes, and is particularly adapted to handling abstract ideas. Consequently, it often attacks pretentious philosophic systems and may offer a cynical or skeptical philosophy of its own, usually in the form of a dialogue or symposium. Sometimes it shades off into a serious moral discussion. The genre frequently makes use of comic scenes, fable, parable, and 'obscenity.' It has a loose, rambling structure which from time to time may incorporate almost any rhetorical or satiric device and may touch upon any topic, frequently resulting in long catalogs. The broad scope of the Menippean satire makes it nothing less than a 'satire on mankind.'¹⁶

The two terms that Hind equates here have not generally been recognized as synonymous. Hind is employing "satire on mankind" in a more general sense than I have been using the term. I think it more accurate to say that a given Menippean satire may well be a satire on mankind but that not all Menippean satires are satires on man. Hind has identified the Fable as a Menippean satire, and I presume his last remark above then identifies the Fable as a satire on mankind.

For now, I will just say that as a whole the Fable is not a satire on mankind, though it does contain elements of the type, and that Mandeville is thoroughly familiar with the charges and strategies, that is, the materials of the satire on mankind. His announced intention of

¹⁵ "Mandeville's Fable of the Bees as Menippean Satire," Genre, 1 (1968), p. 309.

¹⁶ Hind, p. 315.

showing man as he actually is, of course, is congenial to the satirist. Most writers, Mandeville says, "are always teaching Men what they should be, and hardly ever trouble their Heads with telling them what they really are."¹⁷ Naturally, the satirist will focus on man's negative traits, and this is perfectly acceptable to Mandeville. In his oft-quoted comparison of himself to Montaigne early in the Fable, Mandeville tells us that this is exactly what he will be doing:

'Twas said of Montagne, that he was pretty well vers'd in the Defects of Mankind, but unacquainted with the Excellencies of human Nature: If I fare no worse, I shall think my self well used. (5)

The satirist on mankind's favorite topic is man's failure to recognize these defects and his consequent pride. Mandeville's spokesman, Cleomenes, remarks that "We have not a more dangerous Enemy than our own inborn Pride: I shall ever attack and endeavour to mortify it, when it is in my Power" (II, 296). Earlier Mandeville had claimed that "generous Notions concerning the natural Goodness of Man are hurtful as they tend to mislead, and are meerly Chimerical" (I, 343). In the Fable Mandeville undermines many of those traits or concepts man has used either to build his self-image up or to provide himself with some solace. Mandeville also employs man-animal comparisons. Cleomenes levels the charge, in a couple of places, that man himself is the most vicious predator: "No wild Beasts are more fatal to our Species, than often we are to one another" (II, 238; and see II, 246).

¹⁷ The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits, ed. F.B. Kaye, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), I, 39. All citations are to this edition.

There are, then, some good reasons to call the Fable of the Bees a satire on mankind, yet I am reluctant to do so for several reasons. Though Mandeville continually makes use of the generic "mankind," still he does not in fact seem to be referring to all humans in every case; and he does allow for virtuous people, that is, for some exceptions. Cleomenes denies that he is speaking of all men:

I never thought that there were no virtuous or religious Men; what I differ in with the Flatterers of our Species, is about the Numbers, which they contend for. (II, 336)

In addition, Mandeville acknowledges that men do have some positive traits. He praises man's sagacity and perseverance in improving his condition upon earth and mentions some of his accomplishments in the arts and sciences (II, 128). God or providence is not attacked but given the benefit of the doubt. For Mandeville, as for Pope, "Whatever is, is right." But the primary reason the Fable of the Bees does not appear to me to be a satire on mankind is that it seems designed to present and explore an economic proposition. To accomplish this, Mandeville does employ materials that satirists on man employ, but he does so to produce a different final effect.

The Fable of the Bees has an economic core; it elaborates an economic paradox, the private vices-public benefits hypothesis. Mandeville states early in Part I,

For the main Design of the Fable . . . is to shew the Impossibility of enjoying all the most elegant Comforts of Life that are to be met with in an industrious, wealthy and powerful Nation, and at the same time be bless'd with all the Virtue and Innocence that can be wish'd for in a Golden Age. . . . (I, 6-7)

Or, as he phrases it in "A Search into the Nature of Society," "But the Necessities, the Vices and Imperfections of Man, together with the

various Inclemencies of the Air and other Elements, contain in them the Seeds of all the Arts, Industry and Labour. . . ." (I, 366) He elaborates on this in the penultimate paragraph of the same section:

After this I flatter my self to have demonstrated that, neither the Friendly Qualities and kind Affections that are natural to Man, nor the real Virtues he is capable of acquiring by Reason and Self-Denial, are the Foundation of Society; but that what we call Evil in this World, Moral as well as Natural, is the grand Principle that makes us sociable Creatures, the solid Basis, the Life and Support of all Trades and Employments without Exception: That there we must look for the true Origin of all Arts and Sciences, and that the Moment Evil ceases, the Society must be spoiled, if not totally dissolved. (I, 369)

Man flatters himself that he is virtuous and that his major achievement, society, is constructed to reward virtue, whereas in fact it runs on vice or evil. If this paradox, or something similar to it, is at the core of the Fable, as it seems to be, then it is difficult to maintain that the Fable is a satire on mankind. It certainly contains many of the materials we find in satires on mankind; but in connection with this central paradox, Mandeville does not assert that all men are guilty of believing that one can have both a good and thriving state. The number might be substantial and probably is, but nowhere does Mandeville claim that all are possessed of this idealistic illusion. And, if this were a satire on mankind, the main or unifying point of the whole would have to be illustrative of some defect in mankind. Paradox may be used to satirize mankind, but it does not seem to be employed for that particular purpose here.

One discrete section of the Fable of the Bees, however, looks more like the satires on mankind we are accustomed to seeing. This is the Lion and the Merchant section, which Voltaire liked well enough to adapt into a poem, "Le Marseillois et le lion."

In Mandeville's version a merchant encounters a lion, who having just fed is not particularly interested in eating at the moment and so offers not to eat the man "if he could give him any tolerable Reasons why he should not be devoured" (I, 176). The man tries flattery first, but this gets him nowhere. The lion charges the man with speciesism, "why should you esteem your Species above ours?" (177) The rest of the Lion and Merchant section is devoted primarily to the lion's extended man-animal comparisons with the rather predictable conclusions.

Man is weaker (177), and man indulges in massive onslaughts of aggression against his own kind (177-78). Furthermore, the various social classes not only do not care for each other but are actually antipathetic, and this attitude is exhibited all the way up to the royalty as well, who are charged with responsibility for the public weal: "All degrees of Men despise those that are inferior to them" (178). Such irresponsibility, particularly on the part of the public leaders, has a deleterious effect on the quality of life and thus indirectly affects everyone. The assertion that one's leaders, the guardians of the public weal, are incompetent, callous or downright hostile can therefore be used as material for satirizing mankind.

Next, the lion indulges in a bit of wordplay which numerous satirists on mankind have employed. The lion says that he is savage but not cruel, because he follows his instincts, whereas man does not. This can be seen easily in that man is the only creature who makes a sport of killing (178). Finally, as satirists on man have often pointed out, man is but a miniscule part of the creation. Man is not especially important to Nature: "If she had intended that Man, as Man

from a Superiority of Species, should lord it over all other Animals, the Tiger, nay, the Whale and Eagle, would have obey'd his Voice" (179-80).

The lion then enumerates his own physical superiority over the human species. Overcome by the lion's argument and realizing that he is in a vulnerable position, the merchant does not have recourse to either side of the fight-or-flight syndrome, but instead faints, something no self-respecting animal would do of course. And so ends the story itself, though Mandeville does not let it drop there.

To this point, the fable of the Lion and the Merchant has been, in terms of its indictment of mankind, pretty standard fare. But now Mandeville shifts the emphasis:

The Lion, in my Opinion, has stretch'd the Point too far; yet when to soften the Flesh of Male Animals, we have by Castration prevented the Firmness their Tendons and every Fibre would have come to without it, I confess, I think it ought to move a human Creature when he reflects upon the cruel Care with which they are fatned for Destruction. (180)

Mandeville has shifted the emphasis to the oxymoronic "cruel Care" with which animals are "fatned for Destruction." The detailed, graphic description which follows, of a large gentle bullock, attacks Descartes' animal-machine hypothesis (as the last sentence makes explicit) and is included to argue most forcibly that certain adjustments need to be made in man's way of looking at animals. At any rate, the scene does not seem satirical upon mankind while asking man to be more compassionate. And, in fact, this passage, in capping the Lion and Merchant section, drains off some of the satirical effect of that section. After reading these passages, the reader might well say, "So Mandeville

wants us to think differently about animals." He asks us to assume different attitudes towards them, not towards man himself, or ourselves. At least, this is how I interpret the following passage which concludes the Lion and Merchant section:

When a large and gentle Bullock, after having resisted a ten times greater force of Blows than would have kill'd his Murderer, falls stunn'd at last, and his arm'd Head is fasten'd to the Ground with Cords; as soon as the wide Wound is made, and the Jugulars are cut asunder, what Mortal can without Compassion hear the painful Bellowings intercepted by his Blood, the bitter Sighs that speak the Sharpness of his Anguish, and the deep sounding Groans with loud Anxiety fetch'd from the bottom of his strong and palpitating Heart; Look on the trembling and violent Convulsions of his Limbs; see, while his reeking Gore streams from him, his Eyes become dim and languid, and behold his Strugglings, Gasps and last Efforts for Life, the certain Signs of his approaching Fate? When a Creature has given such convincing and undeniable Proofs of the Terrors upon him, and the Pains and Agonies he feels, is there a Follower of Descartes so inur'd to Blood, as not to refute, by his Commiseration, the Philosophy of that vain Reasoner? (180-81)

So animals do have "feelings." They suffer; and, at the very least, we should commiserate. Moreover, Mandeville does not assert that all men are guilty of Cartesian attitudes towards animals; he does not rule out the possibility of there being numerous animal sympathizers (even vegetarians) whose positions he would not be satirizing here. Thus, even this section of the Lion and the Merchant which appears most like a discrete satire on mankind, and which certainly contains materials which satirists on mankind utilize, has its satiric effect appreciably diminished by this final paragraph. It may, as a result, be less confusing to label the Lion and Merchant section a fable within the Fable.

Voltaire's "Le Marseillois et le lion," (1768) directly inspired by Mandeville's merchant and lion, is more readily identifiable as a

satire against mankind.¹⁸ Ralph Arthur Nablo calls Voltaire's poem "a witty fable in which the poet illustrates the dictum that might is right,"¹⁹ though this is certainly not the point of the poem. Nablo expands this to a closer approximation of what satirists on mankind do: "At a more intellectual level Voltaire assails as he does in Micro-megas, the idea of man's inveterate vanity, reflected in the anthropocentric view of the universe."²⁰

The basic situation is similar to that in Mandeville. The lion will spare the man if he can give him some good reasons for doing so. The man begins with the traditional claims:

Qu'au plus haut des degres des estres inegaux
L'homme est mis pour regner sur tous les animaux;
Que la terre est son trone, et que dans l'étendue
Les astres sont formés pour rejouir sa vue. (143-44)

In man's estimation, all animals, the earth, even the cosmos itself were made for him alone. In a footnote designed to reinforce the satire against these ridiculous claims for mankind, Voltaire adds: "Il a fallu bien du temps pour detromper orgueil et notre ignorance. . . ." (144) Satires on man are designed to do precisely this: to disillusion man, to unveil his pride and ignorance and show it to him.

The lion strips the man naked to have a better look at this formidable "ruler of the universe" (144). Voltaire is saying, let's

¹⁸ "Le Marseillois et le lion," vol. 10, Oeuvres Complètes, ed. Louis Moland (Paris: Garnier Freres, 1877), pp. 140-48.

¹⁹ "A Study of Voltaire's Lighter Verse," Vol. 126, Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century (1974), p. 62.

²⁰ Nablo, p. 62.

strip the specimen naked and examine it. What does unaccommodated man look like, stripped of his pretensions? Not much, of course! Man's naked physical self, along with his pretension of superiority, is attacked.

The man, accosted by such undisputable facts, concedes that he cuts a sorry figure in this world, that he has been wrong, and that the lion is his superior:

Ah! dit-il au lion, je vois que la nature
Me fait faire en ce monde une triste figure:
Je pensais être roi; j'avais certes grand tort.
Vous êtes le vrai maître, en étant le plus fort. (144)

The man, however, claims to be made in the image and likeness of God. The lion responds, "Toi, l'image de Dieu! toi, magot de Provence!"(145) The lion claims further that God does nothing in vain, and God gave the lion certain physical gifts which were designed specifically for destruction, mastication, and digestion of prey. So the lion is also superior here. Finally, the man admits, "Sire, je suis battu" (147). He concedes that he is inferior to the lion both physically and, at least in some ways, mentally.

At the end, the man does not faint but shows he is a good merchant by making a deal with the lion. He will provide food for the lion, who will abstain from eating him. Here the emphasis is not shifted away from the satire as it is in Mandeville's version; here there is no rhetorical purpose overriding the satire. Therefore, it seems appropriate to label Voltaire's poem a satire on mankind.

Both versions are extended man-animal comparisons to the detriment of man. Both assert that man is unduly proud and attack his species-

ism and anthropocentrism. The distinctions man claims between himself and what he thinks of as the lower orders are blurred and lessened. Man's claim that he has an immortal soul is demeaned by a joke. Both writers portray man as a comparatively weak creature physically, though Voltaire makes this much more specific than does Mandeville. And both claim that man is avaricious and foolhardy as a result of it. Both works subject man to assertions which would reduce him in the grand scheme of things, in his relationship with at least one other sentient part of creation; and both depict man as ridiculous and unduly proud.

Despite these similarities, there are crucial differences. Mandeville's assertions seem designed for use as part of another argument, that man should in fact seriously consider his treatment of animals, that his attitudes need readjusting towards them. The use of satire on mankind for a purpose in which the satire is subsidiary requires that we label the fictional product itself as something other than a satire on mankind. That product might be, for example, a sermon employing satire on mankind for the purpose of frightening sinning men into the arms of an angry God. In such a case, it would be more accurate to label it as a sermon employing satire on man rather than as a satire on mankind. In the *Lion and Merchant* section and in the Fable of the Bees as a whole, the satire on man is subsidiary to an argumentative proceeding whose purpose is other than that of satirizing mankind.

Tobias Smollett's Roderick Random is yet another work which has been labeled a satire on mankind. Smollett himself did the labeling.

In a letter to Dr. Alexander Carlyle, Smollett wrote that Roderick Random "is intended as a Satire on Mankind. . . ." ²¹ Though several critics have cited this passage, none has carefully investigated the implications of Smollett's comment. Some obvious questions arise if we are to examine the work as a satire on mankind. Does Smollett have something particular in mind here, or is he merely using the term in the less precise sense that Bertrand Goldgar has mentioned: a work which paints "a dark picture of human nature"? ²² Is Smollett using the phrase in this vague way, or is he referring to the specific sub-genre of satire exemplified by Boileau's "Eighth" and Rochester's "Satyr against Mankind?"

Smollett employs animal imagery within the novel, but there is only one example of the kind we are accustomed to seeing in satires on man:

A thousand times I wished myself a bear, that I might retreat to woods and deserts, far from the inhospitable haunts of man, where I could live by my own talents, independent of treacherous friends and supercilious scorn. ²³

Most of the animal imagery in the novel, however, is of a kind usually not located in satires on man. I refer to the traditional use of animal imagery to debase individuals by likening them to any of a number of less attractive animals. In this type of imagery, men are

²¹ The Letters of Tobias Smollett, ed. Lewis M. Knapp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 6.

²² "Satires on Man and 'The Dignity of Human Nature,'" PMLA, 80 (1965), 535.

²³ Roderick Random (New York: Signet, 1964), p. 271. All citations are to this edition.

compared to animals which are traditionally not well thought of, whereas in satires on mankind men are most often contrasted with animals in order to reduce man's pride in his species.

In using the term "satire on mankind," Smollett is probably referring to his exposition against man's treatment of his fellow man (a regular part, we have noted, of the satire on man) and to his exposition of man's lot in the world.

In the preface to the novel, Smollett speaks of his intentions. He refers to "that generous indignation which ought to animate the reader against the sordid and vicious disposition of the world" (xvii). Part of his purpose, then, will be to expose this disposition of the world. One of his strategies to accomplish this will be to throw a young, helpless child into the world and then observe the effects. He says he has "attempted to represent modest merit struggling with every difficulty to which a friendless orphan is exposed, from his own want of experience, as well as from the selfishness, envy, malice, and base indifference of mankind" (xvii). We certainly do not have to look far to find these traits which he attributes to mankind. Roderick becomes a figure to pity almost ab ovo, and he is subjected to an incredible number of injustices which I need not enumerate here.

Now we can view this endless chain of atrocities committed against Roderick in two different though closely related ways: as information about society or as information about man's lot. The society is, first of all, a vicious one; and its viciousness comes out in many forms. Perhaps the three most important words in the novel, which recur again and again, give us some indication of the world embodied

in it. The words "mortification," "indignation," and "revenge" are repeated numerous times throughout the work and, in fact, often resolve themselves into a recognizable pattern: a character is mortified, becomes indignant, and then takes or attempts to take revenge. Mortification can occur in any of a number of ways and can be physical, being hit with the contents of a chamber pot, or mental, having one's pride or pretensions deflated. Practically every character in the work is mortified at one time or another. Indignation is naturally the next step, the rousing of anger, which leads to the final stage of revenge. In fact, revenge is one of the prime motivations for action in the novel.

By a slight shift of emphasis, and using the same "facts," we can consider man's lot in the world. Man's lot is that he is born defenseless into this world which is inhabited by "mankind." He is born of necessity into mortification, into a furious, vengeful world, and life in fact is but a "paltry province."

We might very well expect to find such kinds of assertions in a satire on mankind. But we find very little else in the novel that will enable us to identify it as an example of the type. Pride and presumption are attacked, but not all are apparently guilty of them. We find no charges of anthropocentrism, no attack on man's pride in reason. Smollett does use the generic "mankind," but his is not a blanket indictment. The reader is not made to feel as if he is one of the culpable.

Had Smollett left Roderick unrewarded, the satire might have held sway; but this, of course, is not the case in the novel. If the good

are ultimately rewarded and the bad punished, then those temporary pains and evils wrought on the good by the bad are not so serious. The satire against mankind is muted by the assertion that Poetic Justice exists. Mankind may still, for the most part, be heartless, base, ungrateful and all the rest, but the effects of these have been reduced by divine or authorial intervention. This may be just one of the problems Smollett creates by having his principal "victim" and his "hero" one and the same; he cannot save his hero without saving his victim.

Smollett further mutes the effect of his satire by including good characters. Narcissa, to use the obvious example, is too good. Even Roderick is unable finally to curse society because of her:

Not withstanding all I had suffered from the Knavery and selfishness of mankind, I . . . should have blessed the occasion that secluded me from such a perfidious world had not the remembrance of the amiable Narcissa preserved my attachment to that society of which she constituted a part. (428)

The savage indictment has mellowed considerably. Smollett, then, is apparently using the term "satire on mankind" in its more general signification. He is not using the term to refer to the specific tradition or strain of satire whose nature has been the subject of this study.

I stated in my preface that I hoped to be able to offer a base from which we could proceed to identify specific works as either satires on mankind, or not, with more precision. If critics are going to be labeling works as satires on mankind (and, as we have seen, critics have been doing this), and if the label is to mean anything beyond that of a negative picture of human nature, then we need to

establish as nearly as possible what it is that we mean by the term when we as critics employ it. I have attempted to perform this task for the satire on mankind along the lines suggested by Robert C. Elliott (see my Preface). I have provided examples of the type, and I have considered works which might appear to be but which are ultimately not satires on mankind. Although I am arguing here for a more precise use of the term, I think my own use of it allows for some leeway and does not put any undue constraints on either critic or work. Granted, I am asking for more precise use of the term than it was often accorded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the term was obviously employed loosely.²⁴ Nonetheless, I think the subtype I have been delineating is a distinct, discrete variety or strain of satire which we may accurately and conveniently label the "satire on mankind."

I also stated earlier that could we identify clearly one type of satire, chart the boundaries of one kind of satiric activity, this might have some ramifications for our attempts at defining the larger entity of "satire" itself. Our definitions of satire may need to become more inclusive to recognize this particular satiric activity, which acknowledged satirists have long engaged in and of which there exists a canon of noted examples. Some definitions of "satire" simply

²⁴ In the play The Stranger, the Baron is moved at witnessing a scene of gratitude for acts of charity. He is told by Mrs. Haller, "you satirize mankind, my lord." He does so by "supposing such scenes to be uncommon." Even the act of making certain suppositions is described as satirizing mankind. The play is translated by Benjamin Thompson from Kotzebue's original play and can be found in Inchbald's The British Theatre, vol. 24 (London: 1808), p. 27. The OED records a figurative use of the word "satire" which seems to apply here: "A thing, fact, or circumstance that has the effect of making some person or thing ridiculous."

do not take satires on mankind into account.

If the definition of "satire" is restricted to (a) an attack upon an individual or individuals or (b) an attack upon the vices and foibles to be found in certain individuals or groups (and there is considerable evidence that at various times writers or critics have meant one or the other of these by the word), then satires on mankind are not in fact satire at all. Or, the critics and satirists have constructed their definitions without considering one minor though interesting subtype; and, therefore, their definitions fall short of giving a full account of satire.

We have already considered Rosenheim's working definition of "satire" as "an attack upon discernible, historically authentic particulars."²⁵ And Douglas Grant has concluded that "Satire is inspired by personal resentment; it deals in personalities."²⁶ We do find satirists who write particular and personal satire, but satire does not end here. Were we to assume that this was the only kind of satire, we would be unnecessarily limiting the term. As we have seen in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, attacks against particular persons were generally labeled lampoons and distinguished from satire. It seems more accurate to say today that some satire deals in personalities and attacks individuals.

The major satirists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

²⁵ Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., Swift and the Satirist's Art (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 25.

²⁶ "Samuel Johnson: Satire and Satirists," The New Rambler, 3 (June 1967), 17.

instead generally meant by the word "satire" an attack upon the vices or foibles of mankind. But general satire, as espoused and practiced by Addison, came under heavy attack for being simply ineffective. To stipulate that "satire" must be general satire is also an unduly narrow conception of satire.

In contrast, one critic, I think, goes too far in the opposite direction. His conception of what constitutes satire may be too broad. In a spirited and insightful article, "Satire and St. George," Philip Pinkus argues that "Satire does not concern itself with the individual as such."²⁷ What satire presents is an image of evil beyond the individual. The "satire" that Pinkus presents or describes is close to the satire on mankind; and, in fact, he observes that sometimes the satiric target "is mankind, more bestial than the beasts and yet pretending to the dignity of man."²⁸ Pinkus later extended his remarks on satire in a second article, in which he again discusses briefly the satire on mankind.²⁹ What Pinkus has to say in these two articles is generally accurate about some satires--satires on man for example--but not all.

Theoreticians and satirists have often put forth forceful and accurate descriptions of various types of satire. Trouble emerges when claims are made that a specific type or strain or mode of satire

²⁷ "Satire and St. George," Queens Quarterly, 70 (Spring 1963), p. 39.

²⁸ Pinkus, p. 38.

²⁹ "The New Satire of Augustan England," UTQ, 38 (1969), 136-58.

is the only legitimate or true kind. I argued in my second chapter that satire is an amazingly versatile weapon, capable of individual attack or mass destruction. A less unpleasant metaphor also applies.

Satire, though its components are sometimes bitter to our taste or green or too strongly flavored, is still a marvelously diverse platter, which satirists have often not-too-graciously served up to us. We tend to forget, though, that despite its magical early stages (charted so ably by Robert C. Elliott), and despite its early association with those rascally or malicious satyrs (well documented by Kernan), satire is probably the most civilized form of attack. Satire attacks with words in lieu of swords, fists, or our even less civilized technological agents of destruction. Satire may hurt more than some sticks and stones but is decidedly less harmful to civilization than the gun and the bomb.

Though satires on mankind are distinct in the ways I have sketched in this study, they still share essential characteristics with acknowledged satires and should be considered as legitimate although diminutive portions of the mixed platter which is satire. Future attempts to define or characterize "satire" need to take into account this heretofore neglected and quite gamy ingredient within the variegated mixture. The satire on mankind is one discernible part of the whole. I only hope it is now a more recognizable portion of the platter.

Satires on mankind attempt to clear away the optimistic underbrush which has blocked our vision of the true nature of the beast that has emerged from the cave. Today, in our jungle of high technology and

so-called sophisticated weaponry, we still need the satirist's ancient art to denude us, in the manner of Voltaire's lion, of our all-enveloping pretensions.

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December 11, 1981
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