POSTMODERN MENIPPEAS:
THE LITERATURE OF IDEAS IN THE AGE OF INFORMATION

by

Brian Greenspan

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Department of English, in the University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

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Rumours of the menippean satire's death have been greatly exaggerated. This ancient tradition, long presumed moribund, in fact survives in the intertextual space negotiated by the most dialogic of postmodern satires. Through the pursuit of specific intertextual crossroads between ancient and postmodern texts, this study examines literature as a form of knowledge that competes with other mass and information media in emergent post-industrial societies. The "anatomy" or "menippea," as described by Northrop Frye, Mikhail Bakhtin and others, shares many generic features with postmodern literature, such as skepticism toward totalizing ideological systems, and the "indecorous" miscegenation of various genres of utterance, culled from both "high" literary and popular sources. More significantly, however, menippeas past and present tend to
satirize those discursive formations and communications media which achieve hegemony within particular socio-historical contexts, be they based in myth, the printed word, or digital information. Postmodern menippeas use ancient satiric forms to show that "information," far from a uniform datastream, actually comprises a heteroglot complex of discursive subgenres that circulate within both "high" (technical) and "low" (popular) culture.

Postmodern menippeanists explore new media and cultural formations in light of very old, pre-novelistic forms of intellectual satire, including symposia, dialogues, and other mixed forms. In particular, this study examines how postmodern texts resuscitate the classical Lucianic nekyia, or "dialogue of the dead," to respond to monologic modes of information and communication. For Edgar Allan Poe, Thomas Pynchon, Robert Coover, and Ian Wedde, the so-called "threshold dialogue" provides a means for revitalizing the social dialogue that is increasingly stifled by the "dead speech" of contemporary mass and information media. The menippea, traditionally a genre for critiquing the languages, institutions and apparatuses that legitimize bodies of knowledge, offers these and other contemporary writers critical strategies for demythifying, "unfinalizing," and answering the disembodied messages that haunt the netherworld of the globalized mediascape.
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CHAPTER ONE.

Introduction: The Literature of Ideas?
The Age of Information?
Towards A Postmodern Post-Mortem on the Menippean Genre

Every man now has his own book of his own death, a jumble of maps and guidelines, most of them completely erroneous. But then who is to say what is and is not erroneous in this ambiguous area?

- William S. Burroughs

In postmodernism, I fear, we see fewer and fewer signs of life, but more and more monologic monuments--commercial tombstones marking the demise of the carnivalesque in the condition of postmodernity.

- Rosemary Coombe

Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave.

- ad slogan "Pepsi Comes Alive" as initially translated into Chinese

Pastiche is, like parody, . . . speech in a dead language.

- Fredric Jameson

Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival.

- Mikhail Bakhtin

1
I. The Literature of Ideas? The Age of Information?

Though once considered dead, the menippean satire has risen to new prominence in discussions of contemporary satiric literature. Perhaps it is owing to a certain sense of neglect fostered among critics by Northrop Frye's and Bakhtin's mutual interest in the form that the menippean genre is again fast becoming an independent field of literary study. One encounters no major studies of this form between John Dryden's *Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693), and Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929). However, the last three years alone have witnessed several new studies dedicated to the menippean satire. This is not to say that menippean satires were not written in the generations since it disappeared from critical favour, only that they were not recognized as such. Certain cultural conditions within and across many postmodern societies today render the menippean form attractive and necessary, and epicures of the satura are busy setting the table for an informal symposium that is centuries overdue.

This study argues that the contemporary menippean revival accompanies the exhaustion of more conventionally novelistic forms, in the face of a literary culture that is increasingly (self-)conscious of the changing conditions of knowledge and intellectual inquiry in technologized, post-industrial societies. Its title is intended to be triply provocative. Frye characterizes the menippean genre as a
literature of ideas, a designation that immediately provokes questions: what literature, after all, does not contain ideas? In Frye's view, the menippean genre approaches conceptual topics in an "extroverted and intellectual" manner that characterizes its willingness always to sacrifice the exigencies of plot and character development, of atmosphere and mood, for the speculative analysis of ideas (308-14). This brings us to the second proposition hidden within the title of this study, which tentatively opposes "ideas" and "information." This opposition triggers a humanistically biased response, which construes literature as the last bastion of ideas to be somehow threatened by the "vulgar" communications that pervade contemporary society under the rubric of "information". It will be seen, however, that the tradition of menippean literature complicates any ready distinction between ideas and information.

Following Daniel Bell's influential study, The Coming of Post-Industrial Society (1973), the "information society" is generally identified with the conditions that pertain within a late-capitalist, technologically advanced society, in which the service sector predominates in the labour force, and industrial means of production give way to an economy based in cybernetics. This phrase gives our third reason for pause, for it is not difficult to see from a perspective at the fin de millenium that an information economy such as that described by Bell does not necessarily produce an information society. William Leiss, for one, argues that an evidenced
increase in the "white collar" or service-sector labour base in first-world nations has not further democratized the process of decision-making and social policy formation at the highest levels of authority. In fact, inequitable distributions of information retrieval and processing skills within post-industrial societies combine with property to stratify social relations in even more complex patterns than ever before. As Leiss puts it,

What is at stake is by no means lack of information for the electorate. On the contrary, information is abundant, particularly via the print media, so long as one has the literacy skills and the willingness to find and digest it. However, image management and other techniques give rise to an equally impressive quantity of misinformation, disinformation, and what might be called . . . 'data flak' . . .

The paradox of the so-called information society is this: on the great issues of society and politics, the role of knowledge in the composition of informed judgment very well may decline in proportion to the increase in available information (139; emphasis added).

"Great issues" are precisely the province of the menippean satire, which perhaps suggests one reason for its popularity in what Leiss characterizes as the contemporary "misinformation society."

A more broadly historical approach than Bell's recognizes that the advent of the "information society" occurred long before the arrival of late-capitalist modes of production. Mark Poster has introduced the post-Marxist concept of the "mode of information" to suggest that all
societies have been information societies, exhibiting varying modes of information production, legitimation and exchange. The mode of information is perceived not as the destiny of contemporary culture, but rather as a heuristic for exploring the widely different modes, genres, media, and infrastructures of communication that characterize different socio-historical contexts. The present study mediates historical and millennial definitions of the "information society," situating the postmodern and predominantly American literature most closely identified with post-industrial signification within a broader history of communications.

Jean-François Lyotard has argued in The Postmodern Condition (1979; 1984) that the acceleration of these new social conditions in the West is contributing to the creation of a global information society characterized by a loss of faith in established principles of legitimation, radical disruptions of traditional modes of understanding, and a polyphonic proliferation of "paralogical" genres of knowledge. If Lyotard is correct in arguing that postmodernity represents a crossroads in the state of knowledge, then the recent resurgence of menippean forms only stands to reason. According to Eugene P. Kirk, menippean satires proliferate in times of crisis, especially intellectual crisis (x). In different socio-historical contexts and under different discursive conditions, menippean satirists have exhibited a variety of responses to what they have perceived as either a dangerous dearth, or equally
dangerous glut, of proper understanding. Over much of its twenty-three century history, the menippean genre has frequently been bent toward instructional goals, through the satire of faulty learning and philosophic schools. Education and self-formation were an important and serious part of the didascalic satire in the Varronian tradition, which influenced later Christianized menippeas by Boethius, Rabelais and Erasmus.

In medieval times, however, the state of learning had according to some so deteriorated that menippeanists abandoned their critiques of false learning, and adopted a rigorous educational program, producing such quiddities as the highly derivative encyclopedic menippea of Martianus Capella (see Korkowski 123-4). During its Renaissance revival, the genre was pressed toward different ends yet again, to confront disruptions and consolidations within the fledgling academic community. According to W. Scott Blanchard's studies of the genre, the rise of Italian humanism in the fifteenth century and its adoption of professional standards encouraged many of Europe's greatest scholars to write menippeas (to use Bakhtin's phrase for the genre) lampooning their own, increasingly competitive industry. The next century brought an expanded non-specialist reading public, and with the rise of print would see these documents of long-haired in-fighting transformed into sectarian religious and political satires, eventually leading to the encyclopedic line of Rabelais and Burton, and
later, the learned wit of Swift, the Scriblerians, and the novelized menippeas of Sterne.

The challenge confronting the menippeanist in the mode of information is not a lack of learning, but quite the opposite, an explosion and fragmentation of knowledges and competing apparatuses of legitimation. In the first modern information explosion of the renaissance, it was possible to maintain at least the fiction of a unified community of knowledge, an institutional foundation which scholars only reinforced as their individual reputations rose and fell. By contrast, in the "heterotopic" social field of the late-capitalist mode of information, it is impossible to presume that there exists even a basis for consensus. Nor is such agreement necessarily desirable, depending on which side of Habermas/Lyotard debate one falls. The menippean satura,

1 Gianni Vattimo characterizes postmodern society as heterotopic, a phrase he borrows from Foucault to express the destiny of utopian thought at the fin de millenium:

Aesthetic utopia comes about only through its articulation as heterotopia. Our experience of the beautiful in the recognition of models that make world and community is restricted to the moment when these worlds and communities present themselves explicitly as plural. Within this there may lie a normative guideline responding to anxieties that, if the beautiful is only ever the experience of community, we shall no longer have any criterion for distinguishing the violent community of Nazis listening to Wagner from that of rockers . . . (69).

2 For a discussion of the dialogue between Habermas' project of constructing a universal communicative ethic, and Lyotard's insistence on the necessity of the uncodable, unsystematic, tactical utterance, see Rorty; Lea.
with its encyclopedic sampling of social registers and
discursive genres, would seem to offer an ideal form for
responding to the variety of knowledges that circulate within
late-capitalist society. In a postmodern context, however,
the traditional menippean critique of "false learning"
becomes as problematic as the medieval, neo-Varronian ideal
of promoting "proper learning." Thus, the postmodern
menippea demonstrates fundamental differences from the
genre in either its ancient, its medieval, or its renaissance
forms. The problems associated with representing genres of
knowledge that have always been the province of menippeanists
are multiplied in the post-industrial mode of information.
"Information" today represents a heteroglot complex of
relations between diverse genres of discourses, and the
attempts to define it arguably demands insights from
semiotics, legal theory, cultural studies, postmodern social
theory, and other, more linguistically focussed disciplines.
This study attempts to reflect these interdisciplinary and
intermedia exchanges, and to encourage dialogue between and
across different disciplines, and different horizons of
understanding.

As a record of the history of intellectual debate, the
menippean genre can help to contextualize current internecine
conflict within postmodern studies between intellectuals of
Marxist, post-structuralist, feminist and post-colonialist
leanings, and the manifestations of these debates in
contemporary "school" satire. By the same token, Lyotard's
famous definition of postmodernity as an "incredulity toward metanarratives" (xxiv) goes far toward explaining the ideological orientation of literature in the menippean tradition, which deflates all kinds of builders of grand conceptual systems, representatives of Frye's "philosophus gloriosus" (309). Long identified by its "satura" of prose and verse, of high and low cultural forms, of literary and discursive genres, the menippean satire differs from other varieties of prose and verse satire in its radically relativist orientation. This plurality of perspectives makes it difficult for readers unaccustomed to the menippean form to recognize it as satire at all, since it fails to offer up any norms of behaviour against which social or intellectual deviance can be measured. This self-effacing quality of the menippean stance too bears not an accidental relation to the postmodern dilemma raised by Lyotard: that the denial of any legitimizing metanarrative in itself has no basis of legitimacy as a sociological observation.

Postmodernists and menippeanists alike seem content to live within this contingency of value, if only because a lack of absolute standards allows the proliferation of multiple discourses, forms of expression, and the knowledge systems encoded within them. Derrida's famous "crocodilism," that the idea of genre itself belongs to no conceptual genre, goes a long way toward explaining the apparent identity crisis of both the postmodern and menippean genres of literature. He concludes that genre must be considered a matter of
participation, and never of identity or belonging (63).
Instead of a single menippean genre, then, it may be better
to speak inclusively of the menippean dialogue (Lucian, Eco),
romance (The Golden Ass, Satyricon, Gulliver's Travels,
Gravity's Rainbow), and picaresque (Candide, Nathanael West's
A Cool Million); the menippean confession (Boethius'
Consolation, Philip Roth's Portnoy's Complaint) and allegory
(Martianus' Marriage, Giles Goat-Boy); the menippean anatomy
(Varro, Rabelais, Burton, Melville), utopia (More, Butler)
and detective story (Poe, Borges, Nabokov); and, more
recently, the postmodern menippean satire, which also
involves many of these other categories. The problem with
such torturous taxonomies is that they tend to provide static
descriptions of the most easily systematizable elements of
this highly protean, anti-systematic genre. For instance, F.
Anne Payne allows that there are only two great menippean
tragedies in English, Chaucer's Troilus and Cressida and
Shakespeare's Hamlet, in which the inability to find any
answer to the problem posed within the text "is felt as a
destructive incapacity that looms larger than the joy
promised by the freedom to investigate alternate
possibilities" (35). To these two "tragic" Menippeas, one
could readily add Marlowe's Faustus; Eliot's The Waste Land;
Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49, which hovers on the
indeterminate border between satire and irony in Frye's
sense; Hogg's Confessions of a Justified Sinner, in which the
gothic scenario of a spreading madness inhibits the comedy of
the diabolical Gil-Martin's pranks; and Alisdair Gray's *Lanark* (1981), whose protagonist is tragic in both the realistic world of Edinburgh and the fantastic setting of Unthank, and whose author will not permit him a happy ending.

Thomas Kent suggests an alternative, Bakhtinian approach to the definition of literary and speech genres that preserves their dynamic and historical nature. Kent bases his conception of genre on the "utterance," Bakhtin's name for the basic unit of dialogue. Since an utterance in Bakhtin's sense is always a unique response to a prior utterance made within a particular discursive context, it is unpredictable through any systematic linguistics. It therefore binds two interlocutors in a hermeneutic guessing game that Bakhtin characterizes as "answerability," the extreme manifestation of which is the unfinalizable "word with a loophole" (*Dostoevsky* 232-6 *et passim*). In keeping with Bakhtin's anti-systematic approach to language, Kent suggests that the genre, instead of a Platonic category, corresponds to this hermeneutic of answerability. A genre "represents a response to an utterance, and as a response, the genre is the form that interpretation takes" (299). For Kent, this responsive definition allows genre to be interpreted as a category of reception—an orientation that An-Chi Wang demonstrates when speaking of bringing "the newly re-discovered mode of Menippean criticism" to a Chinese text (1).
This definition of genre as itself a "dialogic utterance" foregrounds the relationship that Bakhtin discovers between literary genres and genres of knowledge, a relationship of great importance to both menippean and postmodern texts. For Bakhtin, we know something only when we can respond to it, and the genre of the responsive utterance determines the kind of our understanding. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson summarize his position:

a genre, understood as a way of seeing, is best described neither as a 'form' (in the usual sense) nor as an 'ideology' (which could be paraphrased as a set of tenets) but as 'form-shaping ideology'—a specific kind of activity embodying a specific sense of experience (282-3).

It ought to be added that the "sense of experience" which a genre conveys is never a purely phenomenal, individual experience, even though the individual utterance lends the genre that shapes it its uniqueness. Genres are those aspects of an utterance that are recognizable by communities of speakers within given socio-linguistic contexts. Bakhtin thus stresses the need to understand genres as socially-oriented utterances, each refracting its own kinds of knowledge. Different literary genres do not merely express different understandings of the world; they embody them in ways that are not reducible within another genre—not even the genres of criticism, which can only provide supplemental responses to given utterances with other, specialized forms of verbal knowledge.
With its encyclopedic levels of raw data and its satiric focus on intellectuals and their discourses, the menippea operates as a meta-genre which self-consciously demonstrates that speech genres are also socially codified genres of knowledge. The gamut of menippean *philosophi gloriosi*—quibbling lawyers and hair-splitting sophists, projectors and mad scientists, deceived illuminati, holy rollers, and omphaloskeptick academicians—celebrates social heteroglossia, as it criticizes all those who would institutionalize and systematize language and understanding. By keeping in play multiple speech genres, the menippea offers a multiplicity of discursive perspectives that implicitly satirizes those specific, monadic discursive formations which attain dominance within particular cultural or historical formations as legitimizing registers of language. In the Bakhtinian view, the menippea thus constitutes a primarily discursive analysis of epistemological conditions. Eugene Korkowski, the menippean satire's greatest proponent since Bakhtin, shares the latter's emphasis on the centrality of discourse to the genre. He points out that one target of the menippeanist's barb that remains constant throughout all periods is learned abusers and mis-users of language: "rigid grammarians, sophists who deals in glittering speech, hack poets, fanciful etymologists, word-torturers, 'systematizers' of language are the genuine bêtes-noires of the Menippeanist." (62). I suggest that the menippea's function of mediating between discourse and knowledge renders it eminently amenable to the "linguistic mechanisms" that, according to Poster, are "at the heart of the mode of information" (30).
In his study of "dissident postmodernist" satirists, many of whom overlap with the writers treated in the present study, Paul Maltby focuses on language as both the cause of contemporary social problems in America, and the potential source of their critical correction. Citing such social conditions as the "diffusion of concept-poor discourses" and the "corporate management of mass communications" (1), Maltby looks to contemporary satires to posit normative criteria for the production and exchange of information:

What counts as information may, of course, be of variable quality and use. If it is to serve as the material for 'the formation of opinion in discursive style,' it needs to be, inter alia, reliable and relevant. However, in postmodern culture, information is all too often devoid of these qualities and assumes such debased forms as 'factoids,' sound bites, and spectacle (31).

His exemplars of postmodern dissidence, which include Don DeLillo, Robert Coover, and Thomas Pynchon, embody political responses to impoverished language conditions from within the sphere of language, creating through various strategies a "heightened perception of the politics of language" (37).

At times Maltby sounds utopian, and the bases of his literary criteria of "reliability" and "relevance" remain elusive, as does the profile of the "concept- or information-rich discourses" which he valorizes. Still, his study suggests that with changes in the conditions of the production, legitimation and dissemination of knowledge in the post-industrial mode of information, it can be expected
that the target of the menippean satire should also shift. In its postmodern manifestation, the typically academic menippean emphasis on language and its many usages perforce assumes a heightened political dimension, which it is the goal of the present study to explore.

II. Defining Information: From Cybernetics to Dialogics

Bakhtin's theories of language can assist the reconceptualization of information as a diverse assortment of discursive genres. Bakhtin began to develop his dialogical theory of language in the 1920s in response to the contemporary vogue of formalist linguistics. He opposed the formalist method of describing "literature" as an object of study distinct from the "ordinary" realm of language. Medvedev/Bakhtin's critique of formalist linguistics, especially piqued in the Bakhtin Circle's "disputed texts," can readily be extended to address cybernetics, the study of communications and control systems which has formed a kinship with formalism through the agency of semioticians like Roman Jakobson and Yuri Lotman.

The formal (cybernetic) theory of information has spawned a number of productive literary studies. David

3 The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship was published under the name of P.M. Medvedev. The question of the authorship of texts by the "Bakhtin Circle" has elsewhere been disputed; see Bakhtin, The Formal Method viii-ix; Clark and Holquist 169-70; Morson and Emerson 101-19. To avoid confusion, I follow the convention of listing both Bakhtin and the nominal author when citing the disputed works.
Porush defines "cybernetic fiction" as a contemporary genre of literature that not only addresses information technology thematically, but also contains a kind of intelligence in its own symmetry, a self-awareness that makes it an "artificial intelligence device" (21). The idea sounds more convincing in William Paulson's description of literature as a mechanism that "self organizes through noise," a term he borrows from Henri Atlan to describe how a text seems to accommodate its reader's interpretive processes. His general theory of literary information does not propose any strategy for discussing particular texts in which information assumes a dominant role at the thematic or representational levels. Paulson's study is particularly interesting for the connections it establishes between the literary and scientific disciplines, but it unfortunately fails to connect these findings to broader social concerns.

Cybernetic theory recognizes that words, phrases and longer kinds of utterance are to a great extent preselected for our use, and attempts to chart the probabilities of given usages. Information is formally defined as a measure of the statistical potential of a given code sample. This approach at least helps to destabilize the vulgar understanding of information as a set of objective facts, or as a post-industrial currency reducible to a homogeneous, monadic quantity of cultural capital. Bakhtin's language theories can help to "dialogize" the concept of information, to restore its full sense as a socially relevant kind of
utterance. In marked contrast to the formal approach to language, then, Bakhtin argues that "we do not select the words we use from the dictionary; rather, we 'usually take them from other utterances, . . .." (Morson and Emerson 87). In a postmodern signifying context, the source of spoken and literary utterances also include those utterances that are recorded, replayed, and broadcast by the mass media, including the apparatuses of film, television, radio, journalism, advertising and the Internet. A Bakhtinian approach allows one to move from a purely formal conception of information as a mathematical probability, to an understanding of information as a heteroglot complex of discursive subgenres representing various kinds of specialized knowledge.

Beginning with this insight, this study will interpret contemporary menippeas as parodic of various discourses that have come to be identified with that post-industrial chimera, information. This approach reinstates something of the etymology of the term: the Latin word informatio signified a "sketch" or "representation"—in other words, a text having only a conditional or perspectival referentiality, an utterance needing contextualization. A dialogic conception of information would stress the process through which discourse informs a subject, in patterns that are inevitably related to the social conditions governing the transmission, dissemination and legitimation of knowledge.
One can extend Bakhtin's theoretical model of society as a heteroglot complex of competing utterances to address the relation of literary genres of knowledge to a broader economy of information. This study will also argue the bold claim that the menippean satire has always dialogized those genres of information which represent the most hegemonic media formations in a given socio-historic context. The menippean genre has satirized every dominant discursive formation within the history of Western society, from ancient myth and epic, to printed broadsheets and pamphlets, to magazine fiction, print journalism, advertising, film, television, and computer media. In the post-industrial mode of information, it is computer experts, media managers and information brokers, not Formalist theorists, who quantify and systematize knowledge and communications as a purely technical discourse. With its self-conscious emphasis on the structures of knowledge and communication, the menippean targets the monological forces that emerge today most notably in mass-mediated representations. Nor do all of these informational discourses necessarily correspond to official or monologic institutions. On the contrary, information itself generates so much press today precisely because it is at once the dominant source of socio-economic power, and an open set of unquantifiable, unlocatable, unmasterable discourses.
III. The Postmodern Menippea: Parody and the Popular

Comparing two such nebulous genres as postmodern fiction and menippean satire—if they are indeed only two—has already produced some fruitful critical dialogue. John Barth's postmodern texts have been repeatedly described as menippean, while several articles, dissertations, and at least one full-length study have been devoted to the reading of Thomas Pynchon's texts as menippean satires. Nabokov's *Pale Fire* has been aptly described as a prosimetric menippea that travesties academic discourse, while Keith M. Booker adds Flann O'Brien, Salman Rushdie, Carlos Fuentes and Ishmael Reed to the rosters of menippean postmodernists (see Flann 3). Most critics who would describe a postmodern text as menippean argue for its inclusion in the genre either from the perception of menippean intertexts in these contemporary works, or on the basis of Bakhtin's fourteen characteristics of the menippea, such as the presence of a formal prosimetric structure, or the text's non-coincidence with itself, detailed in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (110-19). While often illuminating, neither approach formulates a dialogical understanding of the non-self-coincidence of the menippean genre across various historical contexts. Accordingly, previous studies have hardly hinted at the local effects of

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4 For a reading of Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy* as menippean satire, see Gresham and Walkiewicz. The most thorough study to date of Pynchon's menippeas is Kharpertian's. On Nabokov's menippean tendencies, see Wilson, and Kirk's annotation of Paul Zall's 1966 *Satire Newsletter* essay (284).
such rampant intertextuality within and among particular texts issuing from different contexts of signification within the menippean tradition. Criticism has barely begun to suggest the particular shape that menippean discourse assumes in a post-industrial context.

Many of the hallmarks of postmodern literature—self-referentiality, parody, heteroglossia, and so forth—can be explained by reference to the "second line" of the novelistic tradition which, according to Bakhtin, derives ultimately from the menippea (see "Discourse" 366 ff.). One could readily construct a satisfying table of featural resemblances between the menippean and postmodern genres (see Table 1). Of all the formal resemblances between menippean and postmodern literature, their mutual obsession with parody has occupied the foremost place in discussions of both genres.5 Bakhtin defines parody as a strictly oppositional genre of discourse: "in all possible varieties of parodistic discourse the relationship between the author's and the other person's aspirations remains the same: these aspirations pull in different directions, in contrast to the unidirectional aspirations of stylization, narrated story, and analogous forms" (Dostoevsky 194). His sense of parody

5 Discussions of parody in ancient menippean satire and postmodern aesthetics abound. For good summaries of its use in menippean texts, see Kirk xiv-xix; Courtney, passim. Hutcheon provides elaborated discussions of Bakhtin's theory of parody (A Theory of Parody 69-83; "The Carnivalesque"). Here and elsewhere, she describes the postmodern use of parody, which comes close to the renaissance notion of imitatio. For the classic dissenting view, see Jameson's discussion of postmodern representational practice as pastiche (113 ff.).
reinforces a Restoration model of oppositional satyr, not the model of satura that is more germane to the menippean genre. Of course, the menippean tradition suggests many forms of parody that do not necessarily assume an entirely critical stance toward their object. Bakhtin accounts for these more ambivalent kinds of parody through an anatomy of the heteroglot means of incorporating another's speech into one's own (such as "hybrid discourse" and "hidden polemic") that writers, and novelists in particular, borrow from living speech.7

It has been argued that postmodern parody does not always demonstrate this hostile orientation toward another's word. Rather, it inhabits the other's word to motivate different speech genres from within, thereby illustrating the full variety of the unfinalized world of discourse.8 As with the menippea, the goal of postmodern satire is not to establish any social or discursive norm; on the contrary, it

6 It is generally accepted in current satire criticism that the Roman satyr is a false cognate of "satire." The word more likely comes from the Greek satura, or "mixed dish," which stands metaphorically for the menippea's variety of discursive genres. As Dryden points out in Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire, the menippean satura, or discursive "mixed dish," predates the more hostile verse satyra of Horace, Lucilius, and Juvenal. For a discussion of the ratification of the latter model of oppositional satire in the Restoration, see Zimbardo.

7 These terms, first introduced in the Dostoevsky book, are further developed in Bakhtin's seminal essay, "Discourse in the Novel." For a thorough summary of Bakhtin's anatomy of discourse, see McHale, "Free Indirect Discourse."

8 On the double-coded nature of parody, see Hutcheon, Politics 93 ff.
is to indicate the presence of those lived genres which exceed the norms of representation. The menippea differs from satire in the Restoration tradition precisely because it denies the elevation of intellectual or linguistic standards, exploring instead the heteroglot world of alternative utterances. The genre's "corrective" measure is, paradoxically, to imply the absence of any correct forms of behaviour. Postmodern parody likewise demonstrates a Bakhtinian awareness that no utterance can be final, since all utterances are already internally dialogized.

Still, this account of parody does not fully explain its predominance in the postmodern world of representation, a question that Paul Maltby finds sadly lacking in most accounts of postmodern parody (22). The ubiquity of parody as a mode of signification in late-capitalist culture might be explained by the observation that, while postmodern parody denies any ready consensus, it nevertheless builds commmunity in an increasingly heteroglot world, through mutual recognitions built into the parodic artifact. Jonathan Culler describes reading as a process dependent upon "presuppositions", which he characterizes as "anonymous discursive practices, codes whose origins are lost, that make possible the signifying practices of later texts" by offering the reader a set of paradigms that function as though they are always "already read" (103).
Table 1: A Comparison of Menippean and Postmodern Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menippean Satire</th>
<th>Postmodern Narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>characters inconsistent, non-human or grotesque</td>
<td>characters are grotesques, cyborgs or otherwise hybrids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plot non-linear and digressive, subservient to exposition of knowledge and ideas</td>
<td>refusal of linear diegesis and closure, coupled with nostalgia for it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perpetually liminal and parergal</td>
<td>entropic narrative patterns; lack of any totalizing frame; anomie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generic satura; misalliances; heteroglot mixture of discursive registers, languages, and literary genres</td>
<td>borrows the language of different media; dedifferentiation of discursive boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parody of epic, mythic, and &quot;professional&quot; speech genres</td>
<td>parody of informational genres (radio, film, TV, ads, bureau-kratic, technocratic, medico-scientific, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frequent use of classical allegory (Apuleius, Martianus, Boethius)</td>
<td>allegorical impulse to destabilize political allegory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>refusal to distinguish between philosophical and rhetorical theories of language</td>
<td>break with descriptive realism; denial of mimesis; a refusal to choose between metaphor and metonymy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diegesis privileged over mimesis, discourse over reference; macaronic punning, neologisms, or other foregroundings of language</td>
<td>self-reflexive and metafictional; punning names; playful with professional or technical terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fantastic motifs and perspectives designed to test ideas</td>
<td>magic realist motifs designed to juxtapose cultural frames of reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spoudogeloion (serio-comic)</td>
<td>tragi-comic, black comic, or ironic narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dialogic speaking subjects that do not coincide with themselves</td>
<td>schizophrenic subjectivities and perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>necromantic pageant of historical interlocutors</td>
<td>historiographic reengagement with documented past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emphasis on unusual or pathological states of mind and body: melancholia, intellectual obsessions, curious perspectives</td>
<td>emphasis on the socially, culturally or politically marginal</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
By activating such recognizable, though ultimately untraceable, intertextual presuppositions, parody creates audiences that are both competent and collective. A text's "norms" exist only as the local effect of a given interpretive community's mutual recognition of intertextualities, rather than within society at large. In satiric genres, such communal presuppositions operate as a temporary and contingent normative basis from which a critique may be launched. Since the presuppositions that create this community are only intertextually articulated, without ever being authoritatively installed, the resulting critique also remains the unfinalized effect of an utterance that exists only within a specifically contextualized, dialogic relation between a text and its audience. The critical intention that parody implies therefore need not weaken a reader-oriented response, as Owen Miller fears (23). Far from it, an understanding of parody based in intertextual "ungrammaticalities" retains the possibility of a satiric

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9 The "ungrammaticality" is Riffaterre's term for those under- and over-determined aspects of a text that operate as ciphers, inviting a reader to search for intertextual precedents:

[T]he connective for an interpretant intertext must be a syllepsis—that is, a word with two mutually incompatible meanings, one acceptable in the context in which the word appears, the other valid only in the intertext to which the word also belongs and that it represents at the surface of the text . . . . As a word, the syllepsis has two meanings, each of which generates its own derivation in its separate text; yet as a connective, it has no meaning of its own. The connective is therefore empty, since it is a mere phonetic shape which can be filled in turn by two
critique, while allowing room for any number of different responses by interpretive communities with distinct political or ethical orientations.

As the most obsessively parodic of satiric genres, the menippean satire continually substitutes its own presuppositions for given social norms, answering monologic social conventions with strategic dialogic responses. We shall see that this strategy has proved useful to postmodern texts that seek to establish some local pockets of consensus within the broader social differend. Yet, the menippean satire cannot be said to create collective responses easily. It is a difficult genre, often lapsing into pedantic displays of recondite reference and allusions that require a high degree of reader competence. Intertextuality in the menippean satire more often than not operates as a dialogical pedigree that works to exclude as much as to create receptive communities. Merely recognizing the presence of menippean features does not answer the specific ungrammaticalities built into a given text. Even the most carnivalesque of menippea rarely constitute any readily recognizable instance of popular culture, or what John Fiske would call a

otherwise alien universes of representation (71).

10 I am borrowing Lyotard's term for the inadmissable, unframable utterance to express a Bakhtinian sense of the necessarily heteroglot nature of any society of language-users, and the unfinalizable nature of every social utterance.
"producerly text." As Michael Gardiner points out, one of the problems with Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia is his inability to justify "folk" or festival forms outside a context of "high" literary intertextuality (289). Umberto Eco's texts provide a good example of highly intertextual satires that repeatedly test and exceed even their most avid and erudite readers. *Foucault's Pendulum* is an encyclopedic satire of the schemes of history's most outrageous *philosophi gloriosi*, set within a fantastic adventure narrative that combines the slum realism of Paris' sewers with an underground utopian society. But this romance plot merely provides the framework for an overwhelming morass of historical details of alchemical lore, diabolical sects, secret societies, and strange science that will only cohere within a complex, paranoid plot. Compelled by these ungrammaticalities and the threat of paranoia to search for an alternate intertextual "answer" to the question of the text, Eco's reader will often come up empty handed: as JoAnn

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11 Using Roland Barthes' distinction between the "readerly" and "writerly" text, Fiske establishes the intermediate category of the "producerly" text:

The producerly text has the accessibility of a readerly one, and can theoretically be read in that easy way by those of its readers who are comfortably accommodated within the dominant ideology . . . , but it also has the openness of the writerly. The difference is that it does not require this writerly activity, nor does it set the rules to control it. Rather, it offers itself up to popular production; it exposes, however reluctantly, the vulnerabilities, limitations, and weakness of its preferred meanings; . . . its gaps are wide enough for whole new texts to be produced in them—it is, in a very real sense, beyond its own control (104).
Cannon says, Eco himself "would seem to be not only the ideal 'model reader' but the only empirical reader whose competence is sufficiently encyclopedic to do justice to *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum*" (895).

Induction into a mysterious society announced by a trumpet, a motley collection of underworld characters, and a royal patent that delimits scientific artistry and inquiry by fiat, might strike the reader as motifs reminiscent of Pynchon's *Lot 49*. But the reader of prosimetric satires might also interpret them as intertextual allusions to the menippeanist Johanne Valentin Andreae's *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* (1459), one of the sacred hermetic texts of the Rosicrucian order. Andreae is a boundary figure who also wrote menippeas alongside his more hermetic texts.12 The first edition of his *Fama fraternitatis des Löblichen Ordens des Rosenkreutzes* (1614) was bound with a translation of an Italian nekyia, Trajano Boccalini's *Ragguagli di Parnasso* (*News from Parnassus*), "in which a number of historical and contemporary figures are depicted presenting various complaints about the state of the world to Apollo on Parnassus" (McIntosh 25). By dialogically responding to the actual sacred texts of the Rosicrucian order, Eco thus

12 Menippean satires have burlesqued mystery cults at least since the Atargatin priests of Lucian's *Lucius, or the Ass*, which Apuleius parodied. Andreae is particularly intriguing in that, in a twist that might anachronistically be called Borgesian, his menippean parody of an imaginary sect by all evidence seems to have summoned that very sect into existence. A contemporary parallel might be the muted post horns which, through Pynchon's satire, have entered the stock of common urban graffiti.
rereads world history back into the textual menippean tradition. That his postmodern satire has nowhere been considered in light of the generic precedent offered by its most overt intertexts suggests the degree to which the contemporary literary critical apparatus remains blind to the menippean tradition.

Many of Eco's shorter pieces also demonstrate menippean characteristics. "The Latest from Heaven" (1961) stands firmly in the tradition of the parodic "news from heaven," alongside News from Parnassus, Seneca's Apocolocyntosis and Byron's Vision of Judgement (see Chapter Four), not to mention Menippus' own "Epistles Artificially Composed As If By the Gods" (see Kirk 3-5).13 Whereas Seneca satirized the classical machinery of apotheosis, Eco's manuscript, a recorded diatribe putatively found atop Mount Ararat, burlesques the Judeo-Christian firmament as a bureaucratic disaster that cannot keep up with the changing times:

Once He admits the expanding universe and curved space, He'll have to abolish the departments of the Heavens and replace the Primum Mobile with a constant and diffused energy source. And then all the positions and posts will be superfluous: the Powers of the Sky of Venus, the Central Cherubinium for Firmament Maintenance, the Chief Executive Officers of the Heavens, the Seraphic Foundation of the Primum Mobile, and the Wardens of the Mystic Rose! . . . Ten big Archangels without portfolio: that's what'll happen (57).

13 Other satires in this tradition are Lucian's Saturnalia, Epistle to Cronus, Cronus to Lucian and Cronus to the Rich; see Korkowski 95.
Sacred institutions are "unfinalized," as Bakhtin says of Lucian's *Nekyomanteia*, as Eco reviews the biblical history of heaven in the comically contemporary light of a disgruntled civil servant's work-a-day morality.

If the intertextual precedents of this serio-comic literature are unavailable to most of Eco's readers, that is because the menippean satire *as a generic category* has been all but forgotten, relegated to the literary unconscious. While individual menippeas retain a familiar, even canonical appreciation, it is often difficult to see connections between them and contemporary texts without an appeal to some generic family resemblances. Although much critical ink has been spilled explaining Thomas Pynchon's menippean tendencies, to take one example, certain key intertextual configurations have been overlooked. No one has noticed that *Gravity's Rainbow* parodies *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, considered by Kirk, Efraim Sicher, and many others as a pivotal instance of the menippean genre as it diverged into novelistic discourse. Tyrone Slothrop not only bears the initials of Tristram (and Toby) Shandy, but also shares a similar genital affliction. Each satire comically truncates its protagonist's phallic power: Shandy is inadvertently circumcised by a sash window, while Slothrop is exploited by the army's marginal Psi Section because he experiences an erection whenever a German V-2 missile drops on London. *Gravity's Rainbow* (1977) anatomizes the horrors of war through a parody of Uncle Toby's hobbyist armaments
that refutes the Shaftesburian belief in the benevolence of humanity. As Uncle Toby "understood the nature of a parabola as well as any man in England" (240), so Pynchon's characters are preoccupied with the rainbow-shaped path described by a ballistic missile.

One can also read other menippean intertexts into Slothrop's circumambulations. His quest for the erectile polymer Imipolex G, which he is convinced provides the missing link between his own priapism and the pattern of German air attacks, could readily be shown to parody Petronius' *Satyricon*, which follows Encolpius' quest to calm the wrath of Priapus and end his impotence. This intertextual hermeneutic encourages Pynchon's reader to make a provisional substitution that is characteristic of the postmodern menippea: information, construed as the discourse of technology, provides the contemporary correlative of myth, the discourse of the ancient gods. Narrative perspectives multiply in a post-war landscape of sordid realism that Bakhtin might describe as "adventure-time" familiar from the Greek "adventure novel of everyday life" (*Chronotope* 90 ff.). At least one paranoid fable within Gravity's Rainbow, subtitled "THE STORY OF BYRON THE BULB" (647-55), has its analogue in an episode from Lucian's *True Story*, in which the travelling narrator meets his own oil lamp in Lampville, a mid-air nighttime retreat for lanterns beyond the Pleiades (26). All the satires studied in the following chapters imitate, parody or allude to multiple menippea. Each major
text in this study is interpreted as only the most recent term in an intertextual series, a respondent that keeps the menippean dialogue going by bringing together texts from widely differing historical and discursive contexts.

James T. Gresham convincingly demonstrates the menippean characteristics of *Giles Goat-boy* (1966), but does not indicate its parodic motivation of particular texts within that tradition. For Gresham, the Power Plant party "suggests Petronius" in some vague manner, and "invokes the Aristophanic Attic revel and the Semitic fertility rite and the life-death rites of Easter: George Herrold is 'buried' at this ceremony as George Giles services Anastasia . . ." (160). He does not observe, however, that the Goat-Boy's "tupping" of Anastasia before the assembled cast of the University resumes and completes the public coitus of Lucius the ass and the condemned murderess in Apuleius' tale, which had remained interrupted for eighteen centuries. Whatever metaphysical ironies were averted by Lucius' last-minute escape from his ignominious fate and ultimate ordination into the cult of Isis are reinstated in Barth's thoroughly postmodern universe, in which "ALL PASS ALL FAIL". *Giles Goat-Boy* may indeed satisfy the fourteen characteristics of

14 Although it is more properly called a Milesian fable, and is referred to by Bakhtin as an adventure novel of everyday life ("Chronotope" 111-29), *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius has been extensively treated as one of the earliest novel-length menipeas.
the menippea, but only an intertextual hermeneutic can demonstrate the significance of the cognitive distance between Barth's text and the satires of Apuleius or Swift.

Barth's text is typically menippean in the manner it posits the problem of identity as a function of the knowledge encoded within discursive genres. George's greatest dilemma is his inability to decide who He is from the evidence within world, since the nature of His world is conversely dependent upon what identity George, as the messianic Grand Tutor, chooses to assume. Since His world is also Barth's text, George's identity crisis models the hermeneutic circle faced by the reader. The question of identity is further complicated by the text's potentially apocryphal nature: it is, we are told in the putative publisher's "Disclaimer," a transcription of an edited tape written by a computer, and therefore represents the translation of myth into information media which characterizes the postmodern menippea. Giles Goat-Boy illustrates in metafictional fashion the dialogic relationship between epistemology and ontology, a key tenet of Bakhtin's theory of language. In Bakhtin's theory of language, understanding the other through dialogue is

15 Kharpertian and Payne both add to Bakhtin's original fourteen points. Both supplements, while intriguing, prove the point that any list of the characteristics of such a vast and various genre as the menippea must remain incomplete.

16 The epistemological approach the present study takes toward postmodern menippea thus challenges the theory Brian McHale develops, which says that modern literature exhibits an epistemological dominant, while postmodern literature is more ontologically oriented; see Constructing 64-5.
necessary for personal becoming. Being and knowing are thus locked in that dialogic relation that Bakhtin called "responsibility" or "answerability" [otvetstvennost'].

In its postmodern manifestation, the problem of identity illustrated by the menippean text intersects with the question of its possible audience. The difficulty and excessive demands made by Eco's and Barth's menippea on their readers guarantee that, while the genre lends itself to scholarly and critical analysis, it is not easily assimilated into popular habits of reading, despite both text's bestseller status. Critical of institutionalized academics, canonical literary culture, and popular representations alike, the menippea remains too imbricated in academic discursive structures to form any truly popular productivity. This blanket statement suggests the need to qualify Bakhtin's study of Rabelais, which is notorious for its emphasis on popular folk genres within Gargantua and Pantagruel. Of course, the popular realm has appropriated individual menippeas, but bowdlerized children's versions of Gulliver's Travels tend to omit the more excremental and intellectual bits that make Swift's tale a menippean satire. Nor is the 1986 film version of Eco's Name of the Rose sufficiently intellectualized to present more than a popular detective formula in monastic garb. Despite Bakhtin's convincing portrait of Rabelais, it is likely that the menippea in general is too complicit in the intellectual discourses which it critiques ever to survive its translation into the popular
realm intact. Its defining scholarly and philosophic orientation likely explains why the menippean genre is not as broadly known as the genres in which it participates, such as sci-fi and fantasy. In his discussion of literature in the popular realm, Tony Bennett argues that the purpose of genre theory is "to examine what genres do" within "modes of organized sociality" (108-9), not how society speaks through them. Criticism needs to demonstrate not whether or not a given text "qualifies" as a menippea, nor what social conditions the menippea reflects, but what a demonstrated participation in the menippean tradition could mean for a text and its reader today. This study aims to show the critical gains afforded by reading these texts as though they were menippean. Such an approach entails considering the impact for popular culture of some of the most abstruse and intellectual literary texts ever penned.

Menippean texts themselves often preclude such broad associative readings through overt indications of their primary intertexts. For Korkowski, Payne, Relihan, and others, the identification of an implicit or explicit intertextual pedigree is necessary to consider a given text as menippean. In his problematic study of intertextuality, Harold Bloom describes the Oedipal "anxiety of influence" felt by (male) writers as they "strongly misprision" their greatest literary influences. Menippean satirists betray perhaps the opposite affliction, an "anxiety of originality" if you will, which manifests itself in Athenaeus, Burton, and
other encyclopedic anatomists as a fetishistic citation of prior sources. Postmodern texts by Borges and Eco share this anxious search for a legitimacy that is dialogically situated within the literary and scholarly tradition. Alisdair Gray even provides a metafictional index of his plagiarized sources in the transposed "Epilogue" to his dystopian romance, *Lanark*, a list which includes the menippeanists Borges, Carlyle, Lewis Carroll, T.S. Eliot, Joyce, Melville, Poe, Kurt Vonnegut, and H.G. Wells (485-99).

The present study presumes that menippean intertexts of postmodern texts provide nothing as stable as sources, but are merely loci of productive readings. To say that intertextuality is historically determined need not imply a formal matrix of predetermined connections. Intertexts can be better approached as reader-negotiated, hermeneutic indices to specific horizons of interpretation, understood as sign struggles overseen by historically contextual institutions and ideological apparatuses. Intertextual reading, like intertextual writing, is always determined by the particular ideologies of influence, or discursive transfer, that govern particular historical circumstances. Bennett explains that intertextuality tells us something about how knowledge is organized, used, and disseminated in specific socio-historical contexts. The function of generic analysis is to

extricate itself from currently existing genre definitions in order to recover the systems of
inter-textual and institutional relations which regulate the spheres of political and ideological relationships in which forms of writing function in the originating circumstances of their production, use and reception—recognising, of course, that these may be diverse and even contradictory.

That said, there is no reason the moment of a text's origins should be privileged within such an enterprise. Forms of writing are not active within history once and once only. To the contrary, their very nature as, precisely, writing guarantees their availability to be re-inscribed within new sets of inter-textual co-ordinates and, correlativelively, new sets of ideological and political relations, forms of institutional use and so forth (112-3).

As a genre that self-consciously foregrounds its intertextual constitution, the menippean satire documents the various socio-historical conditions that determine how literary knowledge is produced, transmitted and legitimated. Moreover, their wide and recondite range of intertextual reference guarantees that their readers will be compelled to motivate and reflect on the modes of understanding available within their own horizons of reception. The chapters that follow analyze through different menippeas the intertextual organization of knowledge that govern particular contexts, be it the journals that organized nineteenth-century medical science, the legal discourses and apparatuses that have guided the course of modern authorship, the discourse of innovation that consolidated American influence in the Pacific in the last century, the paranoid associative readings that influenced the culture of the Cold War, or the urban myths that govern the associations people bring to contemporary advertising texts. Melville's Moby-Dick alludes
in different fashions than Burton's anatomy, and neither text makes intertexts signify like Pynchon's does: "The character of the interpretation of texts is historically and culturally specific, that is, changing and divergent, and that not only in different historical periods but also in different "cultural genres" co-existing at the same time. . . . The question about the methodological correctness of interpretation can be raised meaningfully only in relation to, and on the basis of, this broadly and vaguely outlined normative background" (Márkus 145). The menippean text encourages its reader to construct such signifying contexts, even while recognizing that intertextual "norms" can only be posited, never "recognized." In this sense the menippean genre presents a self-consciously hermeneutic genre, since it posits understanding as the principal mode of being, but one that is provisional and relational.

Theories of intertextuality are never neutral: a Bloomian reading of Lot 49, for instance, might privilege lines of literary influence, predicated upon an Oedipal relation, in a manner that obscures certain implications for hereditary models of transmission revealed through the quest of a pointedly named Oedipa, as we shall see in Chapter Three. This is to say that a general theory of intertextuality is as unfeasible as a foundational theory of reading. As György Márkus indicates, hermeneutics itself assumes a particular cultural function "under conditions of modernity: to create tradition where there was none, to
transform mere documents of a past, whose cultural significance has either been lost or has been completely alien to our culture, into an effective tradition for ongoing practices" (144). In the heteroglot condition of postmodern knowledge, the hermeneutic imperative assumes an even greater significance. Gianni Vattimo argues that the only ethic of interpretation "belonging" to the epoch of electronic information media is one that accepts a plurality of horizons: "Hermeneutics must recognize itself as the thought belonging to the epoch of the end of metaphysics . . . . [H]ermeneutics is the philosophy of the society of public opinion, of mass media" (113). This argument goes far toward explaining the interest in that ancient dialogic genre which best represents the plurality of interpretive horizons, and to which our discussion now turns.

IV. The Nekyia as Media Satire

To recognize strands of menippean discourse in contemporary texts requires that one balance any sense of postmodern epistemic rupture with an eye to the continuity of Western literary forms, or the persistence of what Bakhtin called "genre memories" (see Morson and Emerson 295-7). Joel Relihan points out in Ancient Menippean Satire that Menippus wrote in many literary genres, and not all were of his own innovation, including the satiric will and the epistle (31). Eager to pin down his subject of study to a
single, "original" generic strand, Relihan follows the lead of Diogenes Laertius, the Gadarene's first biographer, in identifying the necromantic satire, or nekyia, as Menippus' "most original" innovation, and thus, as the literary form most representative of the menippean genre. Lucian's Nekyomanteia, or Dialogues of the Dead, presumably written in imitation of Menippus' own, lost Nekyia, provide him with a locus classicus from which to begin his history of the tradition. Relihan further reins in the genre according to a strict series of literary borrowings and influences, according to which only classical texts that parody either Homer's Odyssey, the Frogs of Aristophanes, or the Platonic Myth of Er can be considered menippean satires proper.

While Relihan's focus on a single strand of this varied tradition is a useful approach, his attempt to delimit the nekyia as a form in prose and verse tied to a trivium of primary sources cannot adequately account for the continuing evolution of the genre. In fact, menippean "threshold dialogues" continue to be written even today, interacting with new discursive situations, responding to a growing range of intertexts, and continually assimilating features from other genres. Relihan's requisite, source-specific allusions or prosimetric structure may not always be evidenced in contemporary menipeas. The task of historicizing the genre is aggravated by the fact that, as the discursive conditions

17 Jennifer Hall successfully refutes Rudolph Helm's claim that Lucian's dialogues are outright plagiarisms of Menippus' own (Hall 64-72).
of literary production have changed, so have the targets available to the menippean satirist.

Nevertheless, there is good reason to retain the nekyia, in which cynical spokespersons scoff at heroic characters for retaining their worldly delusions from beyond the horizon of death, as a test case for examining postmodern menippeanism. The importance of the menippean nekyia to Bakhtin's literary criticism and linguistics can be seen from remarks he makes regarding the language theories popular in Russia in the 1920s. In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* Bakhtin critiques Formalist theories of language, of which Saussurean linguistics offers the prime exemplar, by comparing its proponents to their philological forbearers, who sought knowledge of language in cryptic texts and dead languages (see 72, 74, 77). He everywhere emphasizes that language is an open-ended negotiation of living utterances. In Bakhtin's "dialogical" theory of language, agreement is like death in life because it ends the dialogue, a position that many postmodernists would agree with.\(^\text{18}\) Thus, the Lucianic dialogue of the dead, which reanimated the closed horizons of mythic and heroic texts in order to burlesque their epic "finishedness," is more central to Bakhtin's linguistic outlook than even he overtly acknowledges.

\(^{18}\) Many, but not all. Whether the goal of society should be greater consensus or perpetual dissent remains, perhaps must need remain, undecided among postmodern theorists; see note 2, *supra.*
A genre can be defined in hermeneutic terms as a horizon of expectations that helps a reader to encounter an unknown textual object, to break the "hermeneutic circle" and cross the threshold into understanding. This being said, it becomes clear that the menippea's elusive identity and slippery rules complicate its reader's passage into understanding. Charles A. Knight explores this problem as it confronts the reader of Petronius' Satyricon: "[o]ne of the major functions of genre," he says, "is to transmit a code of interpretive signals that guide the reader's initial experience of the work" (336). The Satyricon, a fragmentary and corrupt text sui generis, suggests a plurality of many generic precedents and interpretive strategies, which invariably renders even initial interpretive "guesses" inadequate. Even a reader's most successful generic presuppositions are likely to falter once Encolpius and his associates join Trimalchio for dinner. Knight correctly points out the inadequacy of considering the Satyricon in its entirety as a realistic novel, picaresque, or menippean satire, although the latter category comes closest in his view. Noting that the text was probably initially read aloud to its audience, he argues that the genre of Petronius' text must instead be sought in its initial contexts of performance, which Knight says can only be guessed at from the work's "inner rhetoric" (340). By framing the text as a theatrical performance, Knight diverts all questions of genre into an analysis of its medium. However, he does not
explicitly investigate the relation between genre and medium inscribed within the text. While a hermeneutic analysis cannot ignore the "initial" conditions of performance of a satire like Satyricon, it must not allow the "original" inscription to outweigh the importance of subsequent contexts of reception, which have almost exclusively occurred through the textual medium (Fellini's loose 1969 filmic adaptation being perhaps the only the exception).

A more fully dialogic understanding of the text would accept the provocation and disappointment of various genre presuppositions not as any critical error, but rather as a constitutive part of the experience of reading the Satyricon. The menippean satura, past and present, multiplies the hermeneutic thresholds that confront its reader, thus foregrounding the interpretive function of genre. The "threshold genre," Bakhtin's term for the nekyia, could be extended to describe the menippea generally in this meta-generic sense of continually eliciting and delineating thresholds of interpretation and understanding. To modify a metaphor of Stanley Fish's devising, a menippea like Tristram Shandy or Gravity's Rainbow could be characterized as a continually self-consuming artifact. Such texts proliferate their own generic bases through continual, self-reflexive, digressive disruptions of the text—what Bakhtin calls "loopholes" (Dostoevsky 232-6 et passim)—thus extending the hermeneutic dilemma faced by the reader who would cross its
interpretive threshold. This liminality\textsuperscript{19} is one feature that the menippea shares with numerous contemporary forms that exhibit a collagist impulse, including advertisements, television, hypertext, and postmodern fiction.

Bakhtin took the menippea's hallmark intermiscegenation of discursive genres as a model for the heteroglossia that characterizes social utterance at large. For him, genres of utterance represent ways of understanding the world, and the valorization of heteroglossia accords with his refusal to privilege permanently any one epistemological perspective to the exclusion of all others. Bakhtin helps us to construe certain postmodern texts in the tradition of the satura, thereby issuing a rejoinder to theorists like Jameson, who claim the postmodern multiplication of genres and styles amounts to a nothing but neo-conservative stylistic eclecticism. The menippean satire's generic heteroglossia represents a profound distrust of any centralized or self-legitimating discursive apparatus, and a simultaneous celebration of the plenitude of linguistic diversity. To postmodern writers, the heteroglot character of the genre suggests a correlative of the states of value and knowledge in the "dedifferentiated"\textsuperscript{20} post-industrial economy.

\textsuperscript{19} The term is borrowed from Victor Turner's anthropological theories of threshold experiences. For a useful analysis of Turner's theories in connection with Coover's menippea, \textit{The Public Burning}, see Viereck 70-1.

\textsuperscript{20} Crook et al. argue that while modernist society was distinguished by the hyperdifferentiation and extreme specialization within and between cultural spheres and
Taken together, Bakhtin's writings on the menippean genre, his lengthy essay on novelistic discourse, and his various essays and fragments on language and genre suggest that the menippea can be understood as a satire on discursive excesses and irregularities, rather than moral failings or social abuses. This approach suggests affinities between the menippea and indeterminate postmodern satires, which install moral centres and representational norms only to subvert them. A number of theorists of satire have lately performed elaborate critical gymnastics to explain the problem of identifying a postmodern satire in a menippean mode that does not imply any normative basis of judgement. Frank Palmeri, for one, suggests that "prose satire" (his examples are primarily menippean) critiques an object, temporarily installing a norm, only subsequently to critique the very opposite position. Thus, Swift's Tale of a Tub (1710) first criticizes the allegorizing spirituality of Catholics, using materialism and nominalism as weapons, only to reverse direction suddenly and criticize the Protestant dissenters' extreme materiality (Palmeri 43).

I suggest that the menippean genre has a specific target, but one with a history of its own. If Lucian, Petronius and Apuleius targeted myth, they did so because myth represented the dominant medium through which the
ancient world expressed official historical, theological and political positions, the media formation that constituted the classical "regime of truth." It is helpful to consider Bakhtin's monologic social institutions as dominant media formations. The menippean genre has consistently satirized history's dominant or hegemonic media, including the Homeric epic, Greek and Roman theocratic myths, religious sects, the Latin language, and civil law—in short, the custodians of the authoritative word, and official mediators of social value. Movable print, classical conventions of rhetoric and literary decorum, British imperialism and, more recently, American consumerism, with its related media complexes of film, television, advertising, fashion, nuclear bombs and computers, have all presented targets for menippean scorn and ridicule. A historical discursive analysis reveals that wherever and whenever it appears, the menippean dialogue of the dead tends to parody the dominant medium of communication within a particular discursive formation. Recognizing the nekyia in certain periods therefore becomes as difficult as tracing the effects of an emergent medium.

This is not to say that menippeas satirize only the most hegemonic media to the exclusion of all else. Menippeas also address pertinent intellectual issues of the moment, including the Marprelate controversy in Nashe's writings, the Phalaris controversy in Swift's Tale of a Tub, the Clarke-Collins debate in Martinus Scriblerus, the issue of nonconformity in Hogg's Confessions of a Justified Sinner
(1824), Darwinians in Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), and Behaviourism and Freudianism in Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). But postmodern satirists who respond to the menippean tradition most often emulate that genre's traditional tendency to critique dominant media formations, which in their contemporary formation usually involve some form of mass-mediation. So Luciano De Crescenzo passes satiric observations in *The Dialogues* (1985; 1991) about contemporary media culture through the comic parody of Socratic dialogues, one ancient form from which the menippean satire originated (Bakhtin, Dostoevsky 109-12). In *The Dialogues*, a modernized Socrates discusses the folly of owning an automobile with Phaedrus and Aristogamus, and the phenomenon of UFOs with Eupolymus. Socrates expounds that people can only "take comfort in things mystical, in the supernatural. Thus it is that stories, myths, sightings of extraterrestrial beings, horoscopes, drug-taking and extremist political parties flourish" (113).

In spite of Bakhtin's emphasis on the social aspects of menippean discourse in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, practically every modern critic of the genre has accepted the judgement of Northrop Frye, who distinguishes the intellectually or philosophically oriented menippean "anatomy" from varieties of satire that are more socially or politically oriented. Ronald T. Swigger follows suit in his situation of the modern encyclopedic fictions of Flaubert, Borges, and Raymond Queneau in relation to the menippean
tradition. Although Swigger leaves literature's theoretical relation to knowledge unresolved, he argues that contemporary encyclopedic writers like Pynchon, Vonnegut and Calvino convey at least "the experience of knowledge" (364), and a nostalgia for the total world-view expressed in the epic writings of Dante and Homer: "The menippean approach seems most appropriate for the modern writer, who is likely to stress the carnivalization of knowledge, the outlook which, through relativizing parody, exposes the vacuity of official or fashionable 'current thinking'" (363).21

The distinction between Frye's anatomy and Bakhtin's menippea breaks down when one considers the information in the anatomy not as a static dissection of a body of knowledge, but instead as an anatomy of the arteries of social communication. The information conveyed through the anatomy form must likewise be understood as representing a quantifiable process of semiotic exchange, rather than a set of known facts. In Renaissance Fictions of Anatomy, Devon L. Hodges surveys the history of the literary anatomy. He relates that form's ironizing of any attempt to control a total body of knowledge to Foucault's political critique of the "technologies of power" which organize the (monologic) institutions most responsible for subject formation in modern societies. In the mode of information, electronic databases have perfected the panopticon, and raised the social

21 Frye expresses a similar point when he says, "it is in satire and irony that we should look for the continuing encyclopedic tradition . . ." (322).
panopticon to a new power (see Poster 69-98). Postmodern menippea like *Giles Goat-Boy*, *Foucault's Pendulum*, and Gray's *Lanark* draw upon the old anatomy form in response to these intensified forms of electronically mediated subjection. These texts not only provide portraits of epistemological deviants, *alazons* that resist the disciplinary norm, but do so through informational collages that parody the organizing potential of contemporary apparatuses of knowledge, and install the grotesque or hybrid bodies of goat-boys or homunculi as the correlates of the "unfinished" and undisciplined state of contemporary knowledge. Even Coover's *The Public Burning* stands out to readers familiar with Foucault for representing the American Cold War surveillance society as a pre-Benthamite culture organized around retrograde methods of social control based in spectacular anatomical displays of torture.

Menippeanists like Barth and Coover know that myth and media, though not interchangeable social formations, are often very similar in their relation to ideology. It is "*the development of publicity, of a national press, of radio, of illustrated news, not to speak of the survival of a myriad rites of communication which rule social communication*" that leads Roland Barthes to call contemporary society "*the privileged field of mythical significations*" (*Mythologies* 112 n.2; 137). For Barthes, a myth, whether ancient or modern, is
a language which does not want to die: it wrests from the meanings which give it its sustenance and insidious, degraded survival, it provokes in them an artificial reprieve in which it settles comfortably, it turns them into speaking corpses (133).

Barthes indirectly identifies the menippean satire as one antidote to the mystifications of contemporary myths when he cites Flaubert's *Bouvard and Pécouche* (1881) as an "artificial myth" strewn "with supplementary ornaments which demystify it" (135-6). He describes the comically excessive amounts of research that Flaubert's anti-heroes bring to their otherwise idyllic tasks as creating a bourgeois discourse represented in the "indirect" fashion of a secondary myth (n. 13), an account reminiscent of Bakhtin's own explanation of "indirect discourse." Flaubert's menippea marks a historical moment at which printed information had replaced older mythic understandings of the world, rooted in what Bakhtin would call a folkloric series of natural motifs (see "Chronotope" 170 ff.).

22 Barthes even cites the Latinate "'indirect style of discourse'" as an "admirable instrument for demystification" (136), a statement that calls to mind Bakhtin's own emphasis in his literary and linguistic theory on the perpetual indirect rehearsal, revoicing or refraction of heteroglot genres of discourse in everyday speech and the literature that comes out of it.

23 Walter J. Ong describes the rise of print and the increasing spatialization of information in the eighteenth century as a second nature that contributed to the emergence of Romanticism:

in terms of the growth of knowledge and the development of knowledge storage and retrieval systems, both romanticism and modern technology appear at the same
Western menippea are usually less pastoral than Flaubert's in debunking the media myths, often commercial or technological in orientation, that permeate postindustrial societies. They reveal the traditional aetiologies and folklore rooted in particular places to be unavailable under the globalizing conditions of late capitalism, which provides free-floating media myths instead. In non-Western menippea, the competition between urban and rural genres of knowledge often betokens a larger negotiation between traditional and regional forms of knowledge, and the cosmopolitan values of colonial interests, as we shall see in Chapter Five.

Early modernists like Joyce, Eliot and Pound were in the late 1920s already using menippean strategies to reconfigure the relations pertaining among myth, language, and other mass or technological media. Max Nanny has read Eliot's *Waste Land* as a parody of Petronius' *Satyricon* that exhibits many menippean features. Significantly, Nanny sees Petronius' carnivalization of the *Odyssey* as continuous with both the "mythic method" of Joyce and Eliot (530), and postmodern textuality (534-5). While Nanny mentions Eliot's time because each grows in its own way out of a noetic abundance such as man had never known before (279). He argues that the resultant exteriorization of information from the centred human subject produced confidence in the permanence of knowledge, quieted "the old fears of being swallowed up by nature" (280), and permitted the forging of a powerful Romantic imaginative relationship to natural forces.

24 Booker draws frequently on the "mythic method" to explain Flann O'Brien's dialogue with Joyce (e.g. 128), but does not compare either author's use of myth with that of
journalistic topicality and his use of the nekyia genre (533-4), he does not connect these themes to the poet's demythifying critique of the polyphony of voices mediated through the modern media of telephone calls, gramophones, and typists. Hugh Kenner has described Eliot's "telephone poem" and its menippean correlative, Joyce's Ulysses, in a fashion that, while technologically determinist, at least does not shy away from the subject of modern communications: "Among the first telephones in literature is the one we hear Leopold Bloom using," by which time people had acquired the habit of attending to disembodied voices, and returning them routine answers. It is as queer as any transaction with a ghost in Shakespeare.

But no one (save perhaps Tom Eliot) thinks it queer; because imperceptibly, amid distraction from the false analogy of the telegraph, everyone's sense of how voice relates to person has been altering profoundly (35-6).

Eliot was not as alone as Kenner indicates, for the Brazilian modernist Mário de Andrade also refers to the "ghostly switchboard operator" in his Brazilian menippean folktale, Macunaíma (1928). At a turning point in the text, the eponymous hero and his brothers journey from their native Tapanhuma forest land in Northern Brazil to the metropolis of São Paulo, importing their mythic mindset into the modern world: "[Macunaíma] turned Jiguê into a telephone-machine contraption, but as his brother was still rattled by the hero's tall story about the deer, he could not make the classical menippean texts."
connection; the telephone contraption seemed dead" (90-1). In Andrade's menippea, traditional forms of oral narrative have the power to silence the extensions of modern media; by the same token, failures of communicational technologies repeatedly confound oral heteroglossia, and stymie the progress of the hero and his kin in the new world: "he turned Jiguê into a telephone contraption at once so that he could make some insulting remarks... But the ghostly switchboard operator said there was no reply. Macunaíma was puzzled by this" (104). Whether traditional billingsgate or modern communicative contraptions contain a greater dialogic potential remains ambivalent in Macunaíma. But Andrade's satire clearly indicates how the modern menippean satura combines speech genres with communications media in an indecorous mésalliance that articulates the linguistic refraction of modern cultural conflicts.

The modernist menippean focus upon mass media only grows more accentuated in postmodern writings. This study presumes that, with the twentieth-century shift toward a more globalized information culture, technologies of mass representation assume a central position in questions of knowledge and its representation. New media bring new issues, concerns, and targets within the purview of the menippean genre. Poster sees postmodern media as responsible for renegotiating yet again the traditional relations between utterance and identity:
Speech constitutes subjects as members of a community by solidifying the ties between individuals. Print constitutes subjects as rational, autonomous egos, as stable interpreters of culture who, in isolation, make logical connections from linear symbols. Media language replaces the community of speakers and undermines the referentiality of discourse necessary for the rational ego. Media language—contextless, monologic, self-referential—invites the recipient to play with the process of self-constitution, continuously to remake the self in 'conversation' with differing modes of discourse. Since no one who knows the recipient is speaking to them . . . the subject has no defined identity as a pole of a conversation (46).

Poster is describing what might in Bakhtinian terms be called the loss of "answerability" in the electronically mediated utterance, thereby continuing a long-standing debate over the potential for dialogicity within mass-mediated messages. 25

In the postmodern mode of information, the communicative ideal of audiences secure in their solidarity confronts the entropic diversity of the mass media. Jim Collins points out that the mass media's practice of niche marketing creates increasingly differentiated communities of "unitary discourses". He argues that Bakhtin's theory of the fundamentally heteroglot quality of novelistic discourse cannot account for the increasing subdivision of the novel

25 Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco debated this topic in the 1960s. For Baudrillard, the media code predicts and delimits all possible responses from its receptor. Eco, by contrast, privileged the position of the receptor in creating the meaning of a message, although in recent studies he has to some extent reigned in the reader's productive potential in the interpretive process. For a good synopsis of their respective positions at the time, see Baudrillard, "Requiem"; Eco, "Guerrilla Warfare."
since the nineteenth century into self-contained discursive sub-genres (65 ff.). Under the conditions of late-capitalism, mass media help to proliferate unitary discourses within ever more specialized interpretive sub-communities, creating a popular vernacular which contributes to the radical breakdown of any grand (modern) unitary culture.

For Collins, then, the internal differentiation of the media represents a positive development in the history of utterance. Collapsing Bakhtin's opposition of folkish speech genres and hegemonic discourses, Collins argues for "the possibility of the vernacular within mass media, a vernacular that maintains its force and authenticity despite its commodity status" (131). But literature, film and other cultural artifacts do not always create hard-boiled detective enthusiasts, sci-fi fanatics, and other audience-positions that reflect the categories of genre fiction as neatly as Collins suggests. Such pristine generic determinations ignore potential responses from subject positions corresponding to a social heteroglossia striated along lines of profession, class, gender, nationality, sexuality and ethnicity. As a form that traverses and parodically empties out generic categories, the menippea produces reception communities that are more difficult to typify, an issue that will be taken up in greater detail in Chapter Four.

Part of the difficulty in even recognizing menippean texts as such involves the horizon of expectations created by the closely related genre of the novel. It is safe to say
that the novel today occupies a position of hegemony within both the popular and scholarly appreciation of literature, including Bakhtin's writings about the menippea. Whereas Frye insisted upon the primacy of the anatomy form in the history of letters, Bakhtin's theories, taken as a whole, tend to privilege the novel genre as the telos of the menippean impulse. Bakhtin describes the menippean genre as occupying an important but finished role in the prehistory of novelistic discourse, and even says of double-voiced discourse that it "did not in ancient times always achieve the status of novel," as though pre-novelistic literature represented a failure of heteroglossia ("Discourse" 371). For Bakhtin, the novel is the genre of genres; it is "a genre which is 'essentially not a genre,' but which exists only in so far as it 'imitates' and 'rehearses' other (non-literary) genres; a whole constituted only in the 'playing' and alienation of other kinds of whole" (Pechey 82). The present study dissents radically from this conclusion to suggest that the dialogical tradition, far from culminating in the novel, in fact continues to develop through other, related "prenovelistic" genre memories that include utopias, symposiums, necromantic dialogues, and other carnivalesque forms.

26 For Philip Stevick, "it is impossible not to feel a certain special force in the category [of anatomy], its introduction and description taking place in a work which is itself called Anatomy of Criticism" (154).
Of course, many contemporary texts deny the possibility of strictly separating novel from menippea, and one can point to numerous examples of the "menippean novel." Tom Robbins' Another Roadside Attraction (1971) is a comic novel that carnivalizes Catholic dogma through menippean strategies, while Graham Swift's Waterland (1984) is a historiographic metafictional novel with chapter-length digressions on menippean topics as diverse as "Holes and Things," "Phlegm" and the symptoms of melancholy, and the generation of eels. As the co-editor of The Magic Wheel: An Anthology of Fishing in Literature (1985), Swift would have noticed the resemblances which his narrative bears to Izaak Walton's idyllic Compleat Angler (1653-1676), which Frye identifies as an anatomy (312), and which contains parallel passages on melancholy and the mating habits of English eels. Angling and philosophy share a long history of association in menippean tradition, the earliest surviving text to combine the two being Lucian's Piscator, in which the author himself fishes into the Acropolis for false representatives of the various philosophical schools.

Robertson Davies' Murder and Walking Spirits (1991) is another novel with all the trappings of a necromantic satire. Having walked in upon his wife and fellow journalist in the midst of an act of infidelity, Connor Gilmartin (a name perhaps borrowed from Hogg's Confessions) is killed in the ensuing scuffle. The entire novel is thus narrated by Connor from beyond the grave, as he follows his mortal acquaintances
to a gala screening at the Toronto International Film Festival. Through some unexplainable metaphysical agency, Connor witnesses a cinematic reenactment of his own family history instead of the regular festival programme. This ancestral pageant presents a pseudo-menippean combination of the speaking dead with the medium of filmic montage, one that serves as an analogue for Davies' historiographic method. However, the other-worldly setting ultimately appears as merely an interesting device for rationalizing disjunctive temporal settings and an omniscient consciousness capable of wandering among its own genealogical history. True enough, the theatrum mundi motif that Scheick identifies in the story (153) is characteristic of menippean satire in the Lucianic and Senecan tradition. But Davies' text ultimately accepts the cinematic narrative perspective without offering any critique of its representational ideology, besides a surprisingly genial, uncynical depiction of the Toronto film community's pretensions.

Quite a different story is told in Julian Barnes' Staring at the Sun (1987). Barnes negotiates the divide between realistic and dialogic narrative (or as David Lodge puts it, between mimesis and diegesis)27 in a World War II

27 In "Mimesis and Diegesis in Modern Fiction," Lodge situates Bakhtin's typology of narrative utterance within the distinction Plato makes between "showing" and "telling" in the Book III of The Republic. The mimetic mode reproduces the represented speech of characters in its own voice, without authorial intrusion. The diegetic mode is characterized by quoted or reported speech, in which a clear "informational discrimination" between direct and reported speech is maintained (30). In the mixed mode of Bakhtin's
narrative that begins in linear novelistic fashion, but ends decades later in the very different of a menippean sci-fi dystopia, as the unity of plot and character "deteriorates" into an encyclopedic datastream on diverse topics. This rupture in the unity of novelistic time and action can be read as an allegory of a schism perceivable in literary history between novelistic forms which came before, and other dialogical forms still in the process of becoming.

Barnes' final, satiric section begins with a rash of geriatric suicides, Old People's Martyrs, to which the British government responds by establishing a General Purposes Computer (GPC) designed to answer all citizens' questions about life (and death) in strictly "objective" terms: "Rendering information anonymous was like milking the venom from a snake, they said. Only now would knowledge become truly democratic" (147). The third-person pronoun that legitimizes this description of computerized data suggests the vague mechanisms by which information assumes impersonal and authoritative status. Barnes' society becomes dependent upon this expert system which "stored everything hitherto contained in all books published in all languages; researchers had emptied radio and TV archives, book, record

"hybrid utterance," which Lodge calls "a kind of pseudodiegesis" (35), speech is refracted in such a way that problematizes deixis. The hybrid utterance involves a kind of stylization produced through the mimesis "not of a character's speech but of a discourse" (36): speech that refers to the speech of another. Lodge suggests that postmodern fiction differs from modern fiction in its self-reflexive foregrounding of the diegetic mode.
and tape libraries, newspapers, magazines, folk memory. ALL THINGS KNOWN TO PEOPLE ran the slogan carved on a stone videoscreen . . ." (147). Staring at the Sun thus updates for a postmodern age the imaginary library tradition of satire, which Korkowski traces to the fourth-century Byzantine Praise of Demosthenes (159 ff.), and which remains strong in Borges, Eco in The Name of the Rose, and the Serbian writer Milorad Pavic's "lexicon novel," Dictionary of the Khazars (1988).

Barnes updates this long-standing fantasy of a monadic system of knowledge for the cybernetic age. The GPC system's users are assigned response-ratings like those in Huxley's Brave New World, and a small number of preselected candidates are approved to receive TAT, an acronym for The Absolute Truth: "Scholars complained of defective input in several areas, and that the concept of 'Total Knowledge' was at odds with what they referred to as 'Correct Knowledge'; cynics observed that the only things you couldn't ask GPC about were its own input, sources, principles and personnel; but democrats were happy, and when asked to join the debate about total versus correct knowledge referred to angels dancing on a pinhead" (147). Afflicted with melancholy, the protagonist Gregory decides to ask GPC about the nature of death, and is inundated with thanatopic lore: "Pythagoras starved himself to death because of taedium vitae. Menippus hanged himself because of financial losses" (160). As the system begins to ask him unpredictable questions, such as "CAN A BRAIN SPEAK
TO ITSELF?," the reader discovers that the encyclopedic oracle is nothing more than a roomful of human respondents, specially trained to provide "objective" output. The citizen who seeks to inform herself by seeking a response in "[d]irect, unmediated discourse" (Bakhtin, Dostoevsky 199) that apparently refers monologically to The Absolute Truth, instead receives a heteroglot response refracted through the word of another citizen. GPC is after all just another medium for dialogue, as the Bakhtinian theory of language as always oriented toward the speech of another wins out, for the moment, over Lyotardian jeremiads of a postmodern society ruled by intelligent, articulate machines.

The postmodern menippea differs from traditional instances of the genre in that it provokes the generic expectation of the novel (as an extended, predominantly prose form of fiction, it can hardly do otherwise), in order to challenge the necessity of linear narrative, stable and psychologically consistent characterization, unity of tone and style, a coherent narrative point of view, the thematic predominance of social relations, and other novelistic features. Far from merely an instance of prenovelistic discourse that expired on the road to the novel's development, the postmodern menippea remains an active genre that often subsumes the novel within its general critique of hegemonic media.
V. \textit{Orality and Literacy, Philosophy and Rhetoric:}

\textit{The Postmodern/Menippean Oscillation}

As Postman suggests, the distinction between novel and menippea can best be understood through an analysis of the differing ways these genres refract the social conditions of mediation. Expanding upon Marshall McLuhan's theory of typographic culture and Frye's distinction between the novel and anatomy, Philip Stevick contrasts the orality of the menippean form with the fundamental literacy of the novel. He stresses the anatomy's discursivity, encyclopedism, and non-linearity as throwbacks to an older, oral culture: "from the eighteenth century to the present, the establishment of a typographical culture makes the writing of anatomy an act of willful perversity, a printed attempt to escape from the limitations of print, a joyous regression to an oral culture" (156). This explanation ignores the highly literate character of the menippea, which makes Bakhtin's reliance on the oral metaphor of dialogism to describe the genre seem curious. In fact, the menippean satire operates on the threshold of orality and literacy, of living utterances and their textual representations. It conceives of literature as a medium which functions to extend the living voice temporally and spatially to fantastic extremes, even beyond the apparently final boundary of death. That the satiric nekyia should today experience a resuscitation is to be expected, given the central role of contemporary mass media in creating and canonizing cultural celebrities.
Proliferation of images of the speaking dead in popular culture render the menippean satire topical once more, as a playful and critical response to the more mystical and nostalgic sampling of personalities that increasingly characterizes mainstream cultural production. Jameson maintains that the predominance of technologically reproduced signs in the late-capitalist mode of production leads to an era dominated by "speech in a dead language" (114). The postmodern nekyia revitalizes postmodernity's dead speeches through a ventriloquial reanimation, revoicing the givens of monologic discourse with a critical distance that Jameson claims to be absent from contemporary representation. Chapters Four and Five especially concentrate on the menippea as a dialogic answer to the monologic necromancies of the American culture industries.

Bakhtin failed to consider adequately the effects of mediation on literary history, and despite the wide and growing dissemination of his theories, there have been few attempts to supplement or "answer" his theoretical loopholes. As Michael Gardiner points out, there are moments within his discussion of novelistic discourse that gesture toward a fuller conception of language as merely one media among others:

[t]he novel begins by presuming a verbal and semantic decentering of the ideological world, a certain linguistic homelessness of literary consciousness, which no longer possesses a sacrosanct and unitary linguistic medium for containing ideological thought . . . .
What is involved here is a very important, in fact a radical revolution in destinies of human discourse: the fundamental liberation . . . from the hegemony of a single and unitary language, and consequently the simultaneous loss of feeling for language as myth . . . (Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel" 367).

Of course, for Bakhtin, the dialogical word is in itself a medium, understood not in a strictly materialist sense, but in the sense of an index to the ever-changing ground of dominant media formations:

For the word is not a material thing but rather the eternally mobile, eternally fickle medium of dialogic interaction. It never gravitates toward a single consciousness or a single voice. The life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another context, from one social collective to another, from one generation to another generation . . . .

If there is at the disposal of a given epoch some authoritative and stabilized medium of refraction, then conventionalized discourse in one or another of its varieties will dominate, with a greater or lesser degree of conventionality. If there is no such medium, then vari-directional double-voiced discourse will dominate, that is, parodistic discourse in all its varieties . . . .

What kind of discourse dominates during a given epoch in a given social trend, what forms exist for the refraction of discourse, what serves as the medium of refraction—all these questions are of paramount importance for the study of artistic discourse (Dostoevsky 202-3).

The focus on mediation in this passage is rare within Bakhtin's oeuvre, and seems to err in two directions simultaneously. In the first place, this alternation between epochs of "conventionalized" (monologic) and "double-voiced" (dialogic) discourse contradicts Bakhtin's emphasis on the
fundamental dialogicality of all language. At the same time, one can argue that all socio-historical contexts exhibit a dominant social institution that is fundamentally monologic, and which guarantees that every epoch exhibits some "authoritative and stabilized medium of refraction."

These contradictions are not unique to Bakhtin, and are perhaps endemic to any sustained thinking about mediation. Gardiner and others find their corrective in Antonio Gramsci's concept of "hegemony." Hegemony in Gramsci's usage retains a Marxist view of the dominance of ruling ideologies within mass consciousness, while allowing that pockets of resistance sometimes disrupt dominant strategies momentarily, only to be reabsorbed back into the state's official apparatuses. Hegemony explains ideological state apparatuses to function through a combination of coercion from official channels, and consent among the people, and thus provides a means of reconciling Bakhtin's concepts of "monologism" and "dialogism," as Gardiner suggests.

Horace M. Newcomb explores an opposite approach, using Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic utterance to correct certain oversights in Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Newcomb describes hegemony as a theory of interpretive practices that permits "individual variation in production and reception, but that also illuminates the ways in which larger social patterns are contained within dominant ideologies" (35). Hegemony ultimately represents an abstract (monological) system, that can only account for particular (dialogical)
responses to discourses as the positioning of pre-constituted subjects in relation to pre-existing ideological discourses. Newcomb argues that an understanding of the dialogic aspects of mass-mediated texts, as expressed in Voloshinov/Bakhtin's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, can better explain the actual social practices that occur in the "struggle for dominance" that occurs between media texts and their audiences (37). For Voloshinov/Bakhtin, "[l]anguage (communication) is both material and social. It is therefore mutable. Makers and users, writers and readers, senders and receivers can do things with communication that are unintended, unplanned for, indeed, unwished for" (38-9). The necessarily dialogical nature of all utterance guarantees that understanding, and thus subjectivity, is always oriented toward a future response that avoids ideological closure. Although Newcomb's analysis focuses on television discourse, he demonstrates how Bakhtin's insights might be applied to a broader spectrum of mass-communications.

Despite his total silence on any issues respecting twentieth-century mass culture, Bakhtin may have intimated the development of fully dialogic media formations. At one point he suggests that further study might examine the "dialogic relationships in the broad sense [that] are also possible among different intelligent phenomena, provided that these phenomena are expressed in some semiotic material" (Dostoevsky 184-5). Contrary to his emphasis elsewhere on discourse as a living relation, this passage suggests that
cultural artifacts themselves somehow contain or enact dialogical relationships. His Dostoevskyan "hero," the idea, is after all the literary enactment of a heroic proposition--what might be called an "intelligent phenomenon." Yet, it is clear that Bakhtin's phenomenology does not allow that a text can simply "be" dialogical; rather, it needs a reader to activate the phenomenon, to realize its particular historical situation in a responsive chain of utterances.

It is in this sense of a semiotic material containing the potential to form dialogic relationships that I choose to understand information in literature. This use differs from that of even Bakhtin himself, who often refers casually to "information" in the sense of bare, irrefutable facts about literature. The modern discourse of "objective information," which Timothy Reiss calls "analytico-referential" discourse, paradoxically guarantees its own legitimacy by erasing its provenance, separating itself from any context of utterance or inscription. Information such as that found in an encyclopedia or a newspaper typically tries to distinguish

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28 For Reiss, analytico-referential discourse describes the dominant discursive order of modernity, which originated in sixteenth-century Europe, and the premise of which is "that the 'syntactic' order of semiotic systems (particularly language) is coincident both with the logical ordering of 'reason' and with the structural organization of a world given as exterior to both these orders" (31). Tellingly, his chief figures in the passage of the medieval discourse of patterning (Giordano Bruno) and the development of analytico-referential discourse (Galileo, Kepler, Campanella, Cyrano de Bergerac, and Swift) were also all menippeanists, a coincidence that deserves deeper study.
itself from opinion, proceeding as if it were answerable to any and all future contexts of utterance, and thus not at all "responsible" in Bakhtin's sense. The menippean satire parodies the discourse of objective information, by demonstrating that "news from nowhere" in fact always issues from some context of utterance, some ideologically and historically contextual subject-position. The menippea often achieves its satiric thrust by giving voice to an otherwise static "fact" or "objective" statement, to reveal the socially positioned voice and institutionalized channels of legitimation that lurk behind the apparently value-free utterance. So the literary genre of "News from Nowhere," for instance, played the historical role of a parodic "answer" to the modern formation of print journalism which helped to consolidate the modern discourse of "objective information," a subject explored more fully in Chapter Two.

Information in the menippea is never just a string of data, but rather is a represented discourse articulated from a particular discursive position. These positions may be recognizable, as are the identifiable schools of Lucian's philosophers, or it may be more elusive, like the endless streams of "syllepses" in Joyce's *Ulysses*. The informative cetological chapters of *Moby-Dick* are more epideictic than informative, as is the encyclopedic catalogue of rhetorical figures that is Raymond Queneau's *Exercises in Style* (1947). Both texts demonstrate that even the most apparently objective information in fact is "doubly-oriented," referring
not only to reality, but also to another discourse. Bakhtin's insight that literature begins and ends in represented speech has profound implications for the topic of information, and reflects the etymology of the term: the Latin informatio signified not a known datum, but a "sketch" or "plan," and it is in this sense that the biological, technological, and historical digressions, that characterize the menippean genre can best be understood. This heteroglot definition of information has the effect of undermining its "objective truth value," while simultaneously restoring its significance as an indicator of social value.

Far from a body of knowledge or standing-reserve of facts, literary information resembles the "idea" that, as mentioned above, Bakhtin describes as the "hero" of the polyphonic novel: it is an intelligent, multivoiced, unfinalized artefact which represents a broad potentiality of response. In some sense, this conception of information accords with its formal definition as a semiotically quantifiable measure of the potential meaning contained within an utterance. Information is defined mathematically as the statistical entropy of a code, or the number of possible responses which a given data stream represents.\(^2^9\) But whereas this cybernetic theorem defines potentiality in terms of binary digits of equally valanced place-holders in a coded system, literary information rather recognizes its

\(^2^9\) Expressed in the formula, \(H=-\log_{2}P\), familiar to thermodynamic engineers, cyberneticists and Pynchon fans alike.
potential within a future utterance, chosen from the limitless store of uncoded, as yet unarticulated answers. It is by means of this responsive process that discursive genres become instantiated in the individually contextualized moment. Speech genres provide the limits of the sayable, and it is within them that the potentials for literary expression are stored.

In Interpretation and Overinterpretation, Umberto Eco describes literature as a semiotic machine intentionally calibrated to generate any number of unanticipated interpretive responses. Adopting this model, one could describe the menippean satire as a machine for generating the potentialities contained not only within speech genres, but also within the broader cultural phenomenon of informational genres. Here Bakhtin's theory of the utterance must be radically expanded to accommodate the genres of utterances that circulate in the mode of information. Postmodern literature and its predecessors, which include the menippean tradition, come not only from genres of speech, but also from genres of information disseminated through literate and electronic media, including literature proper, journalism, periodicals, textbooks and manuals, advertisements, film, radio and television programs, and hypertext. Stock reports, computer software and data, and marketplace rumours might be understood as "secondary" speech genres embodying a particular "form-giving ideology," or in-form-ation about the world. Far from any "speech image," the information that
circulates within post-industrial societies often precedes its verbal utterance. These genres inform speech patterns, generate and orient discursive communities, and produce subgenres like rumour and misinformation, which can function monologically as social myths, or dialogically like Barthes' demystifying "secondary myths." Like Bakhtin's "word," information is a fully social event, only ever realized in the particular relations between interlocutors in the actual historical time-space of its mediation.

Postmodern menippea represent, ironize, parody, and otherwise inhabit and explore these informational genres, whether their provenance is the advertising jingle, computer databases, military-industrial propaganda, or tabloid conspiracy theories. These satires parasite the heteroglot institutions and apparatuses of communication that describe and, to a large extent, determine the genres of information circulating within postmodern societies. With his humanistic orientation, Bakhtin was not quite ready to concede the phenomenological corollary of the "intelligent phenomena" whose existence he intimated: that just as people give life to objects, so things tend to take on lives of their own. The implications of a mode of information that turns the postmodern world into an actualized dialogue of the undead will be taken up again in Chapter Five.

That information media threaten to take over and monologize the word is fundamental to Lyotard's conception of postmodernity. Without buying into his apocalyptic scenario
too wholeheartedly, it is useful to examine Lyotard's description of the postmodern utterance as a strategic move in a language game. This pragmatic view of utterance encourages us to understand the apparent resurgence of menippean forms in light of the broader phenomenon of what might be called a rhetorical turn within cultural endeavours generally. In *The Digital Word*, Richard Lanham describes the postmodern as that which shuttles between the philosophical and rhetorical uses of language. Rhetoric, he suggests, can be considered a non-linear science, "an information system that functions economically, that allocates emphasis and attention" (61). The advent of digital literacy signals a reemphasis of waning rhetorical approaches to truth in Western culture. Since the dawn of experimental science, the logical (Platonic or rationalist) approach to knowledge has repressed the rhetorical approach, represented in the medieval trivium. Lanham describes how contemporary evolutionary and anthropological sciences have taken a rhetorical turn away from communicational transparency, and toward the acceptance of chance, play, and ornamental uses of language. In his view, postmodernism most broadly conceived represents an oscillation between logic and rhetoric, between function and ornament, in a manner that refuses to privilege one term over the other. Digital expression has provided a means of modelling this oscillation between numerically-based logical operations, and non-linear iconic expressions. Lanham anticipates that the digital word will help to
reinstate the medieval paedeia, the course of study that emphasizes grammar and rhetoric in equal proportions to dialectic, and which was originally consolidated by early menippeanists like Varro, Martianus Capella, and Boethius. Chapter Two examines how renaissance menippeas entered the debate over rhetorical and philosophical uses of language that was intensified by the rise of print technology in the first information explosion.

For Lanham, the advent of the digital word represents nothing less than a cultural revolution, affecting all fields of knowledge and its expression in the mode of information. One of the greatest changes that the digital word has wrought within all disciplines of knowledge involves the reassessment of copyright and intellectual property laws:

The electronic word has no essence, no quiddity, no substance . . . . It exists in potentia as what it can become, in the genetic structures it can build. . . . [I]ts essence is dynamic rather than static. How do we invest an intellectual property in an intellectual potentiality? (19).

The heavily imitative and intertextual form of the menippea offers contemporary authors a means for exploring and performing the shifting relations of property between literature and information in post-industrial society. Menippean satire exhibits a long instance of legal parody comprising Seneca's Claudius, Sterne's pettifoggers, the ridiculous trial of Martinus Scriblerus over Lindamora/Indamira's identity in Chapter 15 of his Memoirs,
Swift's criticism of legal jargon in Book II of *Gulliver's Travels*, and the seedy caricatures of Metzger and Roseman in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*. Anti-lawyer satire presents one avenue of the menippea where intellectual issues are parleyed into regions of "slum naturalism" (Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky* 115). Many of the menippeas treated in the pages that follow address cultural issues through the notion of property as legally defined. Chapter Two examines the long-standing tradition of menippean mock-testamental satire, which typically anatomizes the legalized bonds between property and authority that exist in a given historical context, and Chapter Three expands this survey into the post-industrial mode of information. Chapter Four demonstrates how a contemporary menippean discourse uses the *nekyia* form to critique the legal institutions of celebrity rights, while Chapter Five draws on comparative legal studies to extend this discussion into a cross-cultural investigation of intellectual property and information in a global post-industrial society.

VI. The Third as Parasite: Bakhtin and Serres

The writings of Michel Serres provide perhaps the best approach to reconfiguring formal definitions of information within a dialogical model. Based in cybernetics, Serres' writings pressure scientific models and discourse to the point that they converge with myth, but a myth that rather
exposes and explores the ideological than masks it. Serres' writings combine meditations on cybernetics with a kind of threshold dialogue that seeks "not general correspondences, not totalizing, abstracting schemas for integrating different fields of inquiry, but passages from one domain to the other . . ." (Paulson 36). His writings, allegorical, interdisciplinary, and paradoxical in quality, comprise a series of essays or discursive inquiries into the local and "paralogical" that Lyotard demands of a postmodern science (60-7). In short, they are themselves highly rhetorical and "noisy" meditations on myth and media.

It is surprising that no critic has noticed that Serres' persistent controlling metaphors—the meal, the social and biological parasite, and structures of exchange—are highly amenable to both Bakhtin's themes and rhetorical strategies, and the menippean annals of symposia, flattering nephews, and philosophical marketplaces. (The figure of Hermes, who appears in Chapters Two and Three of my study, owes as much to Serres as to Lucian.) Perhaps the most striking isotropy occurs over the epistemological issue of what Bakhtin calls "the third," and which Serres addresses throughout his works, but develops most fully in The Parasite. Parasitism is itself a venerable menippean topos in the tradition of the mock-encomium, beginning, perhaps, with Lucian's Parasite, and the paradox of a full-length study on this marginal natural and social phenomenon is not lost on Serres. In his schema of communications, the parasite occupies a position
perpendicular to an existing system of information exchange: he "obtains energy and pays for it in information" (Parasite 36), like Maxwell's cybernetic Demon (43; see Chapter Three).

As Paulson explains, the parasite provides a social relation in which literature can be described as "noise," a negentropic interruption in the system that is ultimately dissipated through a reshuffling of its levels of data organization. It is not difficult to perceive that Serres' parasite bears close affinities to the Bakhtinian "third," which he discusses in the Dostoevsky book, the "Chronotope" essay, and "Discourse in the Novel". Serres' parasite "is the beginning of intersubjectivity. The third is always there, god or demon, reason or noise" (63). Like Bakhtin's "third," the parasite is that constitutive element of every communicative system that renders communication dialogic. Just as for Serres two communicants self-organize through the noise of their (mis)communication, so for Bakhtin understanding the self is always contingent upon understanding the other.

In his essay, "The Origin of Language," Serres describes language itself as the highest level of biological noise, merely one kind of information among the many others that define the world. This theory sounds very much like Yuri Lotman's cybernetic organismism, which itself was indebted to Bakhtin's linguistics. Lotman borrowed the notion of a "semiosphere" from Bakhtin's "logosphere," adapted in turn from Vladimir Vernadsky's organismic concept of the earth as
a living biosphere (Mandelker 385). Bakhtin's notion that "the production of thought—like the production of beings—can only take place through contact with an other" (388) sounds suspiciously like an updated version of Martinus Scriblerus' theory that new ideas are born when "Animal Spirits" flowing through two different "channels" in the brain "disembogue themselves into one" (141). Clearly, it is dangerous to abstract the cybernetic metaphor too far from the social sphere of dialogical relations, whose delineation represents Bakhtin's greatest contribution to the theory of language and cognition. Serres' notion that the human body creates meaningful noise at all levels of molecular and motor activity seems to fall somewhere between Bakhtin's description of the full activity of social utterance, and the excremental vision of Rabelais and Swift, that reduces language and thought to the lowest of metabolic processes. To model all modes of material, semiotic, and linguistic exchange as informational phenomena threatens to collapse all bases for distinction into the most totalizing of metaphors.

The present study adopts the third as a figure for intertextual parasitism, in order to explore more local "passages." Each of the following chapters pursues an intertextual triad of texts from widely different historical periods. The method, which I explain in Chapter Three through the "dialogical hermeneutics" of Hans Robert Jauss, to some extent follows Kirk's suggestion that a "pedigree" of imitators is necessary to define the menippean object of
criticism. However, this study differs from Kirk's excellent work in that it attempts to open up particular texts to a broader literary and extra-literary intertextuality, not to lock them down to particular sources. Two or more texts can bear countless varieties of intertextual relations to each other, relations whose specificities can only be described in the most general terms as antithetical, imitative, or parodic. A dialogical hermeneutic permits one to consider the historically and culturally specific conditions of mediation which determine particularly contextualized instances of intertextuality. These specific intertextualities themselves go far toward determining how genres are instantiated as utterances within particular texts.

One of the dangers facing such a broadly intertextual approach is the errant tendency to consider the more canonical satires as a "legitimation" of postmodern texts. Though critical of the institutions that legitimize and centralize knowledge, individual menippeanists have tended to find their way into the heart of literary canons. A dialogical hermeneutic recognizes that postmodern texts alter the way earlier satires are read, at least as much as the reverse is true. It is by now a critical commonplace to indicate the conservative and traditional orientation of postmodern parody. As far as classical genres go, however, the menippean satire represents something of a family secret. This study calls for a more sustained recognition of the
dialogical affinities between postmodern texts and the most marginalized writings within the Western satiric tradition.

Chapter Two examines the short fictions of Edgar Allan Poe in the context of the menippean tradition and the nineteenth-century information explosion. In the same period that Dostoevsky was transforming the history of carnivalized literature into a new literature of ideas, Poe was motivating the same tradition to respond to the conditions of a nineteenth-century information explosion, by testing the discursive barriers that increasingly defined institutionalized fields of literary and medical knowledge in the period, and constrained the general circulation of information. Here, Frye's term for the menippea, "anatomy," is tested in the most literal sense against certain nineteenth-century satires that play with the notion of morbid anatomy. Poe proves a key figure in this discussion, especially for his motivation of Lucianic necromantic dialogues in response to contemporary legal and medical discourses. I argue that Poe's adoption of material from various data sources and his experimentation with genre and the inscription of literary authority are typical of the intertextual play that characterizes the menippea in the mode of information.

Chapter Three extends this history of menippean dialogue into the signifying context of the twentieth century, through the instance of Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49. In this chapter, I describe the tactic of reading intertextually through a "dialogic hermeneutics," and test the procedure by
reading Pynchon's satire in dialogic relation to a series of Elizabethan and Jacobean mock-testamental satires. *Lot 49* demonstrates that time-tested menippean themes and strategies can be made to respond to twentieth-century developments in mass mediation.

The relations between menippean and journalistic discourses that Poe revivified in the nineteenth century are picked up in Chapter Four, and focussed through a discussion of Robert Coover's *The Public Burning*, a kind of travesty that defamiliarizes the ritual elements of contemporary American fascination with mass-mediated images. If Pynchon's menippea performs a fictional anatomy of paranoia, then Coover's demonstrates how paranoia operated as an actual intertextual system in Cold War America. My discussion will consider the possibility of defining Coover's text, and the menippean genre at large, as a "popular" strategy of signification, within the broader politics of 1950s American popular culture.

The heavily Americanist orientation of my primary examples needs some explanation. That my discussion tends to center around American writing of the last two centuries might be explained by America's rise to global dominance in that period as the dominant source of mediated representations. Writers like Pynchon, Coover and DeLillo show that America's hypercommodification of celebrity images creates conditions which lead to a thanatopic media cult. For Coover and Pynchon, America herself represents
a vast social experiment, a heteroglot society that insists upon seeing itself in mythic patterns, including the reductive Manichaean terms of Left and Right, "Us" and "Them". The fifth chapter, on the New Zealand writer Ian Wedde's satire *Symmes Hole* (1986), examines the menippean satire from a position liminal to the contemporary (Western) centres of discursive legitimation. Wedde charts the passages between British imperialism and American expansionism, to examine the effects of global export culture on a post-colonized New Zealand. *If Lot 49* and *The Public Burning* intimate the influence of secret underground societies, then *Symmes Hole* takes this theme more literally, to link the history of imperialism to the heretofore unexplored chronotope of the hollow earth narrative, a subgenre of the menippean satire.

Finally, the Epilogue briefly addresses other varieties of dialogic literature that this study is forced to omit, especially menippeas by women, and suggests some further directions for research in this fecund genre.
CHAPTER TWO.

Testaments of the Times:
Anatomy and Mediation in Recent Necromantic Satire

It hath been likewise told me frequently, that old decrepit men upon the brinks of Charon's banks do usher their decease with a disclosure, all at ease, to those that are desirous of such informations, . . .

- Rabelais, Pantagruel 3.21

I. The Labours of Hermes

In a dialogue written by Lucian of Samosata in the second century, the god Hermes complains of overwork to his mother Maia ( Dialogue of the Gods 4, 255-7). Not only must the young god carry Zeus' messages all over creation by day; he also loses sleep guiding dead souls to Hades by night. Overtasked in myth, Hermes also works hard in Lucian's Nekyomanteia, or Dialogues of the Dead, stripping the departed of their flesh and falsehoods so they may safely enter Charon's ferry. For this duty, at least, Hermes has a helper in the shade of Menippus of Gadara, who eagerly trims an old philosopher's substantial beard while upbraiding him for flattery and false learning. With Hermes at his defense,
the Gadarene cynic remains beyond reproach from old Philosophy:

PHILOSOPHER

What about you then, Menippus? Off with your independence, plain speaking, cheerfulness, noble bearing, and laughter. You're the only one that laughs.

HERMES

Do nothing of the sort, but keep them Menippus; they're light and easy to carry, and useful for the voyage. But you, rhetorician, throw away your endless loquacity, your antitheses, balanced clauses, periods, foreign phrases, and everything else that makes your speeches so heavy (Dialogues of the Dead 20, 113-15).

Although parodic of received myth, Lucian's dialogues operate in a mythic mode, compressing numerous satiric observations into a few highly complex figures that need unpacking. What satiric point is achieved by the treatment of body, property, and rhetoric equally as dead weight? Hermes numbers the instruction of rhetoricians among his many onerous tasks (Dialogues of the Gods 4, 255), yet still prefers Menippus' mockery to their serious sophistry. What does it mean for the god of messages to be locked into a discursive system that he himself admits to be deficient?

Michel Serres, who studies literature in terms of information systems, has analyzed Hermes' mythic role as the mediator of all conveyances. He describes Hermes as the "father of Comedy" who presides over the circulation of all things, the host at the feast that is parallel to all
"objective communication" ("Hermes" 14). In Lucian's burlesque of myth, however, Hermes' performance as a universal conduit between gods and mortals is naturalized to hilarious extremes. His immediate task of conveying messages in the communicational utopia of heaven is only complicated by his responsibilities as Psychopompous, which include the transportation of dead souls encumbered with flesh, deceptive rhetoric and personal property. These realistic details point up the inability of myth to address the actual social conditions of communication. The labours of Lucian's Hermes thus amount to a materialist critique of communicative transparency. If Hermes is exhausted, Lucian seems to say, then so is the myth of an entity that presides over the totality of social communications.

And yet, it has passed entirely unnoticed that the necromantic satire, or nekyia to use its oldest name, traditionally functions as a kind of hermeneutic index, a self-reflexive critique of the modes of communication and interpretation available to a given community. Lucian reveals that myth, once a powerful form of rendering social experience, contained a media bias which masked an ancient culture's relationship to its real conditions of existence. To the extent that myth itself is a mass-medium which renders historical records in compressed and articulate form, as McLuhan argues (see "Myth"), the oldest extant nekyia also
emerge as the earliest self-conscious analyses of the most ancient form of mass media. By corollary, it is also true that mass media tend toward the condition of myth. Phonetic writing, print, and electronic media all have corresponding "macromyths," in McLuhan's phrase, that compress and codify their diverse social and cultural effects into symbolic form. Decoding the dominant form of macromyth in any given social period allows a culture to know itself, and to recognize the limits of its knowledge.

If McLuhan's media studies have opened up entirely new areas of culture for analysis, they also tend to reduce all aspects of society to the effects of media. For Raymond Williams, McLuhan's brand of media theory is only the culmination of a trend extending from early modern science through to Marxist theories of ideology, in which the material medium has represented a "third term" which intervenes in the channel between sender and receiver (Marxism 158-9). Understood solely as an objectified material entity, the concept of media tends to absorb and reify the social practices that surround communication and make it meaningful. For Williams, a medium is rather a form of social organization, not some "intermediate communicative substance" (159). He argues that introducing the category of "media" into cultural analysis merely interferes with the
direct recognition of social processes, formations and institutions.

And yet, it is possible that both Williams and McLuhan are correct, since the material advantages and limitations of any given communications media simultaneously inform and are informed by processes of social organization. Given this general definition of media, it can be understood how myth modifies historical and political developments for comprehension and communication on the mass level, thereby abstracting these developments from their real social conditions. Once communicated back into society, the myth snowballs into a "media bias" that channels material concerns along a particular path, while obscuring the presence of other social determinants. Lucian recognized the media bias inherent in ancient myth, and wrote satires to remind his readers of the social and material concerns that those myths eclipse. By focussing its cynicism on the inherited and unchallenged trappings of myth, Lucian's Nekyomanteia reexamine the use of mythic discourse as a basis of consensus. If agreement is a kind of death in life, as Bakhtin seems to suggest, then the threshold dialogue "unfinalizes" the closed perspective symbolized by death.

Of course, the Greek myths that Lucian addresses were no longer dominant in his second-century culture. That the Nekyomanteia do not document topical issues of debate

30 A point made to me by Dr. Charles Locke.
peculiar to Lucian's own age, but rather revisit familiar
mythic and philosophic saws, has led one critic to conclude
that he plagiarized his writings from the lost works of
Menippus himself. However, one need not suspect an earlier
source for Lucian's writings. If his fictionalized Menippus
railed against infamous cynics and mythic heroes, it is
likely that he did so in response to the anti-Hellenic
ideology that held currency in second-century Rome. The
oldest extant nekyia must be contextualized within an entire
communicative environment that included a rhetorical
education, a linguistically homogenous society, and a Graeco-
Roman culture with a centralized government for the
preserving and disseminating of official ideologies.
Lucian's critique of Greek myth can be read as an indirect
attack on the official ideology of the Roman empire.

It is the traces of this consensual context of
inscription, this unified Roman audience that is implied
within Lucian's dialogues, which leads at least one critic to
suggest that the dialogue of the dead "encourages a belief in
the unity and continuity of human nature" across time
(Robinson 163). The setting in an eternal afterlife, the
assemblage of characters from different periods of Attic
history and legend, and the continual levelling of worldly

31 For a discussion of the debate over Lucian's
originality, see Korkowski 91 ff.; Hall, Lucian's Satire 64-
94, 259-61.
differences through an unflinching look at death indeed contribute to the illusion that Lucian's dialogues occur outside the contingencies of history. As R. Bracht Branham says, Lucian's Menippus "appears in a timeless 'classical Athens,' and his motive is accordingly more universal and less dependent on the concerns of a particular audience or occasion. His is a philosophical quest spurred by long-standing puzzles and conundrums of Greek culture . . ." (15).

It is important to understand the apparently "timeless" perspective of Lucian's underworld dialogues as part of a satiric conceit that foregrounds the historical distance between their ancient setting and the author's second-century context. His necromantic satires invoke traditional heroes and topoi in order to illustrate the irrelevance of the mythic and epic media to everyday experience:

[t]he 'absolute past' of gods, demigods and heroes is here, in parodies and even more so in travesties, 'contemporized': it is brought low, represented on a plane equal with contemporary life, in an everyday environment, in the low language of contemporaneity (Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel" 21).

In Bakhtin's view, the satiric force of the Lucianic dialogues and serio-comic literature generally is directed not at the particular details of legends and heroes, but rather at the closed horizon of epic representation.
To subject ancient myth and epic to comic analysis is to undermine the ideological basis of third-century B.C. Greek nationalism. By satirizing myth, the dominant ideological state apparatus of a former empire, the Greek freedman Lucian could with impunity force reflection upon the mechanisms that mediate ideology in his own culture. Earlier, the powerful Roman statesman Seneca had used similar methods to critique the ruling class more directly, as we shall see in Chapter Four. But whereas Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* arguably targets the ideology disseminated by a particular Roman ruler, Lucian's *Nekyomanteia* scrutinize the status of communications generally. By overloading Hermes with the sundry commercial, rhetorical and legal interactions of a scheming Greek populace, Lucian satirizes the centralization of exchange which myth both enacts and encourages. In this development over the Roman Seneca, Lucian's writings shift attention from the approved ideologies of the Empire to the full system of social communications.

Ancient myth offered Lucian a widely disseminated set of ideologies that could readily be parodied for their lack of relevance to contemporary living. He drew on this dated material to emphasize the gulf between the old, dominant media and the new conditions of exchange. Branham notices this hermeneutic tension in Lucian, but dismisses it as a
function of comedy, in order to preserve the illusion of a unified and synchronic Hellenistic culture:

[Lucian's] Menippus' journeys are essentially a progression through a series of dramatized attitudes from the most to the least familiar, as he moves from perplexity with traditional beliefs and disenchantment with philosophers in Athens to comic misadventures in Homeric settings; the humor of his tales, however, is generated by overlapping perspectives, as we come to see one tradition by means of another in a kind of generic pun: thus Lucian uses the theme of the quest as a device for presenting the familiar machinery of old myths through the alien lens of Cynic discourse. It is this generic distance between Menippus the Cynic and his legendary setting that creates the possibility for humor. By transporting the wry Cynic into the terra abscondita of mythology, Lucian accentuates a conflict between naturally divergent traditions and endows the tales with a knowing sense of their own absurdity (17-8).

This astute reading ultimately belies Branham's earlier claim that the Nekyomanteia bear testimony to a unified millennium of Greek culture. I suggest that the "overlapping perspectives" of distinct genres which Branham notices in Lucian's nekia, and which Bakhtin calls a "confrontation of times from the point of view of the present" ("Epic and Novel" 26), can be explained as Lucian's literary representation of the alienation of verbal expression that inevitably occurs with historical distance. The effect is not, as Bakhtin describes it, simply to destroy the "distant epic image of the absolute past" with a "zone of crude contact." On the contrary, Lucian carefully resituates the
distant past of myth and epic within a new temporal horizon, forcing a recognition of everyday sameness with the alterity of "high" or "decorous" discourse. The "finished" world of myth is not so much finished off as "unfinished," reopened and made relevant to the new historical consciousness within a shifted communications bias.

II. The Death of the Nekyia Genre

As a self-conscious parody of ancient communications media, set in a fantastic realm that bridges past and present, the nekyia is a particularly apt form for representing historicity itself. Unfortunately, what may be a genuine hermeneutic self-consciousness is too often taken within criticism of the genre for topical allusion to the prevailing tides of intellectual history. Benjamin Boyce, for example, insists that the English dialogue of the dead emerges primarily during times of pronounced intellectual crises, a hypothesis which Kirk extends to account for the menippean satire generally (x; cf. Keener 20). This convincing but incomplete premise tends to monologize the necromantic dialogue, and treat it as a static mold into which satirists could pour voguish issues.

The failure to recognize the nekyia as a traditional satire of media has led its historians to the most egregious
claims regarding the genre's discontinuation. By all accounts, the Lucianic spirit was passed on to writers as various as Dekker, Swift, and Fielding—and there it ends. By the nineteenth century, the dialogue of the dead has all but disappeared presumably absorbed into the modern process of "novelization".\textsuperscript{32} Christopher Robinson's discussion of the fate of the nekyia after Lucian is typical:

[i]t is difficult to account convincingly for the short, rapid but very successful career of this very limited literary form . . . . It is rather easier to account for the decline of the genre. Its form was quite unsuited to the metaphysical and emotional interests which became dominant in European literature in the period 1780-1820. Its disappearance as a vehicle of journalistic satire, though more problematic, doubtless stems from the mere question of fashion to which that sort of ephemera is subject (145).

Lest the significance of fashionable ephemera be denied, it is my contention that rumours of the nekyia's death have been greatly exaggerated. Having entirely missed Lucian's emphasis on mythic discourse as a mass medium, critics have completely overlooked later developments in the nekyia genre that correspond to shifts in dominant media biases. All the

\textsuperscript{32} Most studies of necromantic satire seem to agree that it is a moribund genre. Boyce's bibliography of nekyia cites seventy-five entries from the eighteenth century, but just over two dozen from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries combined, while Keener's more limited checklist names less than two dozen from the same period. Relihan (who takes the nekyia as the most representative form of menippean satire) provides at once the most limited and in-depth study of the genre, restricting his purview to classical and pre-modern instances only.
critics mentioned above circumscribe the English threshold dialogue to a brief reflowering between the late sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Indeed, to look only for instances of the genre which overtly imitate classical models must lead one to conclude that the nekyia had all but died out with Erasmus and Fontenelle. However, if we are to trace the full evolution of the nekyia as an index to the development of menippean satire generally, then its context must be sought in the history of discursive struggle, instead of the currents of "intellectual" debate. An inquiry along discursive lines reveals that the nekyia never did disappear, but has in fact survived well into the post-industrial era, albeit with marked transformations. In Bakhtinian terms, the nekyia does not represent a closed or fixed form like epic or myth; instead, it has become "novelized," retaining and thematizing its own open discursive horizon. Robinson correctly points out that over time, "dialogues of the dead came to conceal a range of sub-genres quite diverse in content, manner and purpose" (145). Unfortunately, he does not see that the corollary is also true: from the sixteenth century on, the nekyia genre can be found distributed dialogically across a wide range of discourses, both literary and extraliterary.

An extended history of the dialogue of the dead in the context of Industrial and Post-Industrial society has yet to
be undertaken. Such an account would demonstrate how the genre has evolved to respond to new media biases, and thus new interpretive horizons, by increasingly relegating its more overt features (such as the infernal setting and strict dialogue form) to the realm of the intertext. Rather than look to the infernal dialogue as an index of intellectual and ideological crises, it is instead necessary to search for traces of the nekyia at the crossroads of discursive struggle.

III. The Nekyia at the Crossroads

Lucian's Nekyomanteia critiqued the dominant medium for the dissemination of national ideology in Hellenic and early Roman times. In the centuries leading up to the renaissance, threshold dialogues were not in evidence in European literature, their outward functions perhaps being fulfilled by related folk forms such as the danse macabre. Korkowski notes that the form ceased after Emperor Julian's Symposium (e. 5th c.), but continued to thrive among Byzantine satirists, only to be recuperated for Western Europe by fifteenth-century humanists and "agents-after-manuscripts for wealthy Italians" (117). Lucian's dialogues were at this time widely disseminated across Europe, most tirelessly by Erasmus. The genre of satiric nekyia had indeed
disappeared, but was rediscovered like a letter from the
dead, a revival that coincided with three major factors that
affected the condition of knowledge in the renaissance: the
fall of Constantinople and dissemination of her manuscripts;
the emergence of the printing press; and the rise of
humanism.

When the dominant media bias finally shifted to
accommodate the emergence of print, the nekyia was there to
evolve alongside it. Renaissance dialogues of the dead
turned from the satire of myth to a self-reflexive evaluation
of the printing press as a basis for scholarly consensus.
Menippean cynicism has always emphasized rhetoric and
dialectics in equal degrees, and historical precedents for
the satire of grammarians can be traced back to the earliest
instances of the genre. Diogenes Laertius reports that
Menippus wrote satires of grammarians, and Varro was an
expert on Latin grammar. Kirk hypothesizes that Lucian's own
paradoxical encomia may have been written as burlesques of
the ancient sophists' method of proving their rhetorical
skill by arguing a weak point (xvii). Certainly, the cynical
stance of his Nekyomanteia comes ultimately from the Sophist
school. Elizabeth Hall may therefore be correct to argue
that Lucian was a practitioner, not a parodist, of sophistry
(26C). Confusion over the matter of Lucian's stance toward
sophistry can perhaps be explained by that satirist's vague
distinction between false and true rhetoric: Lucian's Hermes, as we have seen, is responsible for teaching rhetoric, though he loathes the task of transporting the weighty shades of verbose rhetoricians.

The rise of print revitalized the nekyia, diverting its satiric barb away from mythic heroes and legendary philosophers, from the mazy wanderings of sophistry and grammar, and redirecting it toward the modern scholars who annotate, translate, and interpret them. Two examples should suffice to demonstrate this redirection toward the new medium as it quickly rose to dominance. The first is Codro Urceo's *Sermo Primum* (1494), a menipean satire on false learning. As W. Scott Blanchard shows, Urceo interpreted his own situation within a growing market of professional scholarship, in which vainglorious humanists worked in collusion with plagiarous printers to establish a reputation. As an early critique of this trend of professionalization, the *Sermo Primum* transforms Lucian's mockery of professional Sophistry into a philologic satire more in keeping with the dawning era of print.

Urceo's menippea bears witness to the emergence of a new class of humanist scholars concerned with establishing a measure of authority grounded in professional identity and institutional controls ("O Miseri," 118-21; Bedlam 60-66). This new structure of authority freed authority from its
ideological bond to nobility, even while the humanists themselves remained economically dependent upon their noble patrons. But far from celebrating this development as bringing learning one step closer to the democratized status it would eventually achieve, the *Sermo Primus* mocks philologists for the abundance of their commentaries, issued too often in defense of their professional reputations, rather than in pursuit of good scholarship. Rabelais had signalled the new medium’s apparent heroicism by combining Pantagruel (or hemp, from which paper was made) with the spirit of literary Gargantuism (see McLuhan, *Gutenberg 179-83*). This development was, in McLuhan’s view, a natural offspring of print technology’s tendency to commute knowledge, once an applied, public sphere rooted in classical rhetoric, wholly into the realm of private experience (see “Myth” 342).

A far less exuberant document from the dawn of the era of print, the *Sermo Primus* faults the new medium for similar corruptions of scholarship, documenting the transformation of active, rhetorical modes of knowing into an exclusive, professionalized realm of criticism that appears to serve individual careers more than scholarship generally. To conservative humanists like Urceo, print represented a new apparatus of legitimation that encouraged scholars of the period to refashion the *grammaticus* or teacher as a criticus,
an original writer in his own right ("O Miseri" 98). The new means of dissemination appeared to Urceo to threaten an order of rank which has been established among the humanist scholars; the ones 'greater . . . in authority' are being credited with the emendation precisely because they are rushing into print with their information, becoming 'auctores' and not contenting themselves with their roles as mere teachers. Urceo's reputation has become, in effect, a casualty of the new technology, for his oral emendation in a classroom can no longer suffice as evidence of the priority of his correction (Blanchard 111; ellipses in original).

Urceo was thus, along with Rabelais, one of the first to register the effects of the "information explosion." This shared satirical emphasis on the implications of media for the state of learning designates both authors' writings as menippean. But the proliferation of printed texts could also be said to have made Urceo aware of a more general crisis in philological scholarship. The dissociation from dialogue that is an inherent aspect of the print medium made it plain that as a general rule, "[a]uthority in the intellectual arena turns out to be problematic, a regression backwards to authoritative sources whose veracity is finally unverifiable" ("O Miseri" 115). What was at stake for Urceo, then, was not just the value of print as a philological tool, but also the validity and authority of philology as a discipline. From this perspective, there was little ground upon which to resist the scholarly self-fashioning that print encouraged, or the scholar's greater claim to both unique "intellectual
property" and, by extension, the professional status guaranteed by the production of original work.

In time, print would be vindicated not for "privatizing" knowledge, but on the contrary for setting in motion a vast social change that by the nineteenth century would democratize access to learning and literary authority. But the ambivalent attitudes which Urceo expressed toward the new scholarly medium have never been completely resolved. The menippean genre provided him with a form in which such polyvalent and conflicting attitudes could be expressed simultaneously without cancelling each other out. In his emphasis on print technology and the problems of professionalism, patronage, and the authority of textual emendations, Urceo raised issues that would dominate menippean discourse from then on.

It is telling that the first text to address these issues in nekyia form can be observed in what is also the first renaissance satire to label itself "Menippean": Justus Lipsius' Satyra Menippaea, Somnium. Lusus in nostri aevi Criticos (or The Satire Menippean: A Dream. A Skit upon the Critics of Our Day), published in 1581. Considered by some the prime example of Neolatin menippean satire, the Somnium represents a medley of influences that blends the Lucianic dialogue and Varro's Eumenides with the concilium deorum from Seneca's Apocolocyntosis. Lipsius' parodic
symposium in which deceased philologists debate over the relative authority of various textual emendations represents that historical turning point in necromantic satire in which print joins myth as a major preoccupation of the genre.

By pitting ancients against moderns in an open debate, the early humanist Justus Lipsius found in the nekyia the perfect vehicle for testing Gutenberg's new technology as a medium for the study of philology (see Mattheeussen and Heesakkers). As in Urceo, it is now variant editions that dominate the discussion, rather than the opposed philosophic schools (Sophists, Cynics, and Epicureans) of ancient menippea. Moreover, Lipsius' symposium of the dead also addresses the impact of print on the science of philology. It is not surprising that Marcus Terentius Varro, Lucian's most learned predecessor, should play a central role in Lipsius' satire on scholarly affairs. What is surprising is that the "vir eruditissimus Romanorum," as Quintillian called him, should appear in this dialogue as spokesperson for both ancient philologists and modern printers. Varro emerges as the text's narrative and intellectual hero when he convinces the assembly of ancient worthies that they "owe some debt to modern printers and critics" (Grafton 385). The nekyia genre allows Lipsius the appearance of weighing ancient texts against their modern editions, in the same way that Lucian contrasted historical figures from different epochs. His
speaker's overriding concern is the ability of modern scholarship, including its new publishing apparatus, to come to terms with the vast tradition of received learning, and to guarantee the authoritative rendition of ancient texts. Of course, the authority of Marcus Varro's legendary erudition is finally contained within the dialogical relativism and low-comic frame of a mock-symposium. Like Urceo's Sermo Primum, Lipsius' Somnium thus expresses an ambivalence toward the conjunction of modern philology and print technology.

IV. News from Hell and Beyond: The Nekyia in Renaissance England

Lipsius' satire on scholarly emendation has its successors in the English tradition, most familiarly in the Glubbdubdrib episode from the Travels of Lemuel Gulliver, in which the spirits of Homer and Aristotle judge their progeny of commentators and find them wanting. Less ambivalent than Lipsius' Somnium, Swift's own nekyia is also more conservative, siding with the Ancients in their attack on the pretense to learning among Moderns. But the menippean

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33 Keener offers a thorough account of the English nekyia tradition, but does not adequately account for the genre's relation to changing discursive conditions. He takes the persistence of ancient mythic figures in Lucian and in necromantic dialogues for many centuries afterward as evidence of "the conservative bias of the genre" (6), and laments the passage of such frequent dranatis personae. As I.
emphasis on scholarly emendation spawned a broad range of responses among English writers who, like Swift, explored the conditions of scholarship in the universe of printed knowledge.

The rise of print was met with a polarized reception. On the one hand, Gutenberg's Bible had established print as a public medium for the standardization of scriptural authority, an association that has left its imprint on the canon of secular literature as well. On the other hand, it made possible the dissemination of vituperous pamphlets in which private feuds were scandalously escalated into libel wars. By the late sixteenth century, this proto-journalistic genre of discourse had proliferated enough to inspire its own parody, and England bore witness to a new subgenre of necromantic satire in the voguish format of infernal "Newes". Beginning with Tarlton's Newes out of Pergatorie (1590), the Elizabethan press issued forth a wave of "letters" or "news" from both "Heaven" and "Hell," suggesting that this innovative medium negotiated a broad range of information both personal and public, sacred and profane.

The underworld setting was a commonplace in Lucian's mythic parodies, and had required only minimal establishing gestures in his satires. When sixteenth-century nekyia began have already suggested, the presence of mythic figures even in Lucian is broadly critical of linguistic formations, including both residual mythic structures and their dominant parallels in contemporary Roman society.
to satirize print, they increasingly accounted for their fantastic mésalliances of personages, and their often libelous or even heretical situations, as a characteristic of genre. That is, whereas before it was laughing Menippus or weeping Beggars who journeyed to the netherworld, now it was the text itself which undertook a fantastic voyage. This development represents one manner in which the nekyia addressed the changes in dominant media and the corresponding condition of knowledge generally. As Anthony Smith explains, with the Gutenberg press, scholarly work "ceased to be focused on the restoration [of manuscripts], and became subject to a process of progressive augmentation; knowledge was no longer a matter of search, but now of research; the roles of memory, imagination, speculation, and reason shifted; intellectual skills were revalued" ("Books" 36). Whereas manuscript culture was of necessity conservative, a print culture could afford to be intellectually and culturally expansionist. In this context, the popular imagination could receive a letter from hell in the same sceptical mindset as news from the antipodes: both represented an exaggerated claim for print's range of dissemination.

The nekyia's orientation toward mass media explains why the dialogue of the dead was sustained for so long in the emergent popular press as a kind of self-parody. Wildly
popular among his own Roman audiences, Lucian's writings had been revived in the sixteenth-century by Erasmus in England, and Fontenelle in France. But the bulk of necromantic discourse by far was to be found in a new renaissance subgenre, which Boyce has dubbed the "News from Hell."

Hundreds of novel dialogues turned on the topical conceit of infernal "news" that pretended to convey some knowledge of life's ultimate mysteries, while actually slandering deceased politicians or churchmen through their own ventriloquized voices. A similar trend developed independently in eighteenth-century Germany through the influence of David Faßmann's dialogues, which spawned a deluge of Totengesprachen in Germany's moral weeklies and miscellaneous magazines (see Rutledge).

At the same time that the new medium was changing literature, then, its perception was in turn altered by menippean literature. Many English renaissance writers motivated the nekyía as a vehicle for parodying the medium of print, and engaged the genre in order to cast diabolical associations over the communicative range of print, which was as yet an uninstituted, unregulated medium. Lucian's constant insistence on the here and now as a means of debunking received myth was adopted in the Elizabethan period to the dissemination of information about contemporary religious and political affairs. Boyce is thus inaccurate to
record that it was Addison and Steele who, picking up on the popularity of Tom Brown's letters, first translated the dialogue of the dead into the journalistic media (423). He ignores the historical fact that those diverse genres of discourse known collectively as "news" circulated in various literary and extraliterary forms long before the introduction of formal journalistic publications, forms which included the necromantic satire. As Matthias Shaaber puts it, "the newspaper did not create the news, . . . news (plus the printing press) created the newspaper" (3). The history of the nekyia encourages a reconsideration of the late-modern differentiation of "literature" and "news" into distinct genres of discourse, one generally thought to provide "knowledge" and the other "information". Today, the discourse of journalism and other dominant media continue to inform the parodic nekyia, which responds to them in a critical fashion. I will return to this topic in Chapter Four, with reference to Robert Coover's contemporary journalistic satire.

V. The Mock-Testamental Menippean Satire

Few literary historians have recognized the extent of the English nekyia's reliance on extra-literary and extra-

34 Tom Brown discusses menippean satire in his Essay on Satyr of the Ancients; see Kirk 230.
generic discourses. Joel Relihan points out that Menippus wrote satiric wills and epistles, but privileges the nekyia alone as the Gadarene's most original and characteristic invention, thus blinding himself to the long history of association between the legacy satire and the dialogue of the dead, which begins with Lucian and continues into the Renaissance. As a variety of unfinalizing necromantic discourse, the parodic testament of the dead or dying offers ample opportunity for the satire of discursive closure. The satiric testament combines with journalistic discourse in one of the earliest instances of the English "news from hell." Thomas Nashe's Pierce Pennilesse his Supplication to the Devil (1592). \(^{35}\) Cast in the form of a letter sent to Satan by an indigent hack, Nashe's satire demonizes the widespread Elizabethan practice of literary patronage, and satirizes the moral conventions which administered the authority to communicate in that period. Lorna Hutson connects Nashe's efforts in the genre not only to the vogue of threshold dialogues frequently enacted at popular Elizabethan festivals, but also to the pageant "motif of the 'true

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\(^{35}\) Erasmus' Latin colloquy, "Charon" (1529), uses the "news" motif, arguably in the modern sense of printed broadsheets. The motif is fully explored in later masques of Jonson that bridge the distance between the ancient dialogic sense of "news," as deployed in News from the New World Discovered in the Moon (1620), and its modern journalistic sense, as used in The Staple of News (1624).
confession from the underworld." According to Hutson, Reformation humanists

looked back to the 'threshold' dialogues, or the dialogues of 'news from the underworld' which had been made so popular by Lucian. Closer to the ritualistic celebration of fool-king's death, however, was another literary offshoot. This was the dying fool's last will and testament—a form which offered similar opportunities for ironic revelation in the itemization of absurd bequests from an old tyrant to his heirs. Nashe's pamphlets are indebted both to the dialogic genre of 'news from the underworld' and to the grotesque 'dismemberment' of authority which takes place in the mock-testament (127-8).

Hutson's analysis of Nashe represents the best study of the threshold dialogue since Bakhtin "rediscovered" the form. She shows that the menippean satire, as a parody of specific discursive forms, itself represents "the grotesque testament or the dying confession of conventions that it appears to mishandle. It is a [deliberately] foolish, incompetent representative of its chosen genre" (130). Pierce Pennilesse acts as a mausoleum for the kind of deficient prose writing which Nashe observed among his contemporaries, and which he blames on the imposition of economic sanctions on authors by the entire Elizabethan system of patronage. By drawing on a variety of contemporary intertexts, Hutson demonstrates that the English crown regularly awarded patents conferring trade monopolies to entrepreneurs who could represent themselves as paragons of moral integrity. This system of privilege
extended to literary production as well, leading authors of the period in search of patronage habitually to disclaim their prodigal youths, while promising to redouble their writerly efforts toward the composition of moral exempla:

It seemed that any English poet who ventured to publish a composition that was not concerned to reform moral abuses would be stigmatized unless he excused the work as a piece of juvenile self-indulgence. By exposing the dated and inadequate economic basis of contemporary moral discourse, Pierce Pennilesse was trying to argue that it was time to recognize the wider intellectual contribution that poetic discourse had to make to the nation (Hutson 27).

In short, Pierce Pennilesse epitomizes and ironizes the state of Elizabethan literature as a long and hypocritical letter of solicitation from a moralizing writer to his patron.

Hutson notes that the prose format of Nashe's menippean satire is particularly suited to the representation of literary conventions as decaying effigies of discourse. Nashe's satire stands apart from this vogue for Juvenalian satire in the 1590s . . . because it is in prose, and prose is more capable than poetry of accommodating and objectifying the various accents and forms of contemporary discourse, even to the extent of typographical parody . . . . [T]he 'pamphlet' and the familiar prose period are capable of mediating any literary form the author chooses to represent" (133).

Pierce Pennilesse discovers in prose satire the perfect form for motivating necromantic and mock-testamental discourse in .
a reaction against the medium of print, and the literary and social forms it fostered. McLuhan describes print as a technology that responds to high quantities of information by reducing consciousness and its literary representation to a single perspective (Gutenberg 138). The perspectivism of print can be linked to the establishment at this time of a new kind of literary authority predicated along relations of property. If this perspectivism is at least partially responsible for occasioning the decline of dialogue in necromantic satire, it also encouraged the development of a prose narrative form capable of containing the extreme comic relativism, or polyphony, of Lucian. For Nashe, as for Rabelais, the printed page presented a forum for the traditional menippean prose-verse mixture to explode into a full satura of heteroglot genres, a citational medley of disparate consciousnesses within a single textual field that Bakhtin might call "pre-novelistic." Nashe ingeniously combines this new perspectivism with old testamental parodies, to juxtapose and parody the monological discourses of property and moral authority which the new publishing industry fostered.

In both ancient and modern necromantic satire, then, two complementary gestures can be witnessed. First, the mysterious threshold between life and death is established as a correlative of the open philosophic horizon, in contrast to
the closed, metaphysical horizon of mythic truths. The medium of communication which promises to convey knowledge across this hermeneutic threshold, be it printed news or the winged heels of Hermes, is parodied as deficient, and shown to contain its own immanent interpretive bias. At the same time, the nekyia enables a carnivalesque response to the solemn discourses of death and authority, in the bodily dismemberment of the fool-king. Lucian's critique of authoritarian discourse through a post-mortem divestiture of the flesh upon the banks of the Styx sets the pattern for a dialogic tradition of necromantic satire. In kind, these renaissance nekyia combine a general critique of communicative rationality with a graphic discursive anatomy of specific "official" languages.

Through a combination of testamental and necromantic discourses, the modern nekyia continues to parody the different monologic discourses that rise to dominance in different sociohistorical contexts. The remainder of this chapter will consider the *dialogi morti*, past and present, as a special case of the menippean satire that engages what might be called a "dialogic consciousness". While only a few entries in the continuing history of the infernal dialogue can be examined here, they are not necessarily chosen for their obvious connections to the elusive menippean "tradition". On the contrary, the illustration of previously
unacknowledged instances of the genre is part of the point of this dedicated "map of misreading". Examining three or four texts from vastly different historical periods allows the advantage of recognizing continuity within the context of changing sociohistorical conditions, especially those determining the varieties and means of communication.

VI. The Nekyia in the Nineteenth Century

Recognizing the correlation of the nekyia with other genres like the testamental satire, and focusing on the necromantic satire in relation to dominant media, can help to illuminate heretofore unrecognized threshold dialogues. While Boyce and Keener both observe a steady decline of the nekyia form in the centuries following the renaissance, they document only those texts which demonstrate the overt conceit of the infernal dialogue. An extended history of the dialogue of the dead in the context of industrial and post-industrial society has yet to be undertaken.\footnote{Boyce's extensive bibliography mentions only eleven examples of the form in this century, the latest dating from 1939. Keener's more selective Check List ends with Matthew Prior's 1907 dialogues.} In order even to locate its object of study, such an account would have to demonstrate how the genre evolved to address the emergence of new media and new socio-economic contexts by increasingly relegating its more overt features (such as the infernal
setting and the dialogue form) to the realm of the intertext. Rather than look to the infernal dialogue as an index to religious, political and intellectual crises as Boyce does, it is necessary to search for traces of the nekyia at the crossroads of discursive struggle. This task would require an investigation into several historical parameters, including the conditions of literary production and dissemination; the social construction of authorship, authority, and the literary profession; and the menippean genre in relation to extra-literary and mass-mediated forms of information.

It becomes clear that the disappearance of necromantic satire in modernity is merely an illusion created by the delivery of dead bodies over from the province of ethics to that of science and medicine. Modern epistemology, which understands knowledge as a representation in the consciousness of the monological self, could no longer adequately account for the inarticulate, unformulated kinds of knowledge that are embodied in concrete, dialogical social relations. The physical body simply becomes excluded as a basis of self-definition. Ironically, it is this apparent sundering of the self from the anatomical body that renders the modern individual subject to a regimen of bodily surveillance and discipline—what David Armstrong has called a "political anatomy of the body." It is Michel Foucault who
links this development to that moment at the turn of the nineteenth century when the surgical practice of pathological anatomy first confronted mainstream medical science. One could say that the institutionalization of anatomical procedure as an interpretive method by doctor-surgeons preempted the necromantic satire's most important strategy of response. The problem with Foucault's archaeology is that it construes the convergence of anatomical and clinical practice in strictly medical terms, when in fact this new hybridization of procedures was achieved only through negotiation at various sites of social struggle. The value of morbid anatomy was not only debated among surgeons and physicians, but also hotly contested in legal circles, and widely resisted in popular culture.

Foucault's reading is in part a function of its national context: it is true that late eighteenth-century France "saw no shortage of corpses, no need to rob graves . . . [that] one was already in full light of dissection" (125). The same is not true, however, of Britain and the United States in this period. In both countries, schools of anatomy struggled to find corpses, and were largely dependent upon body-snatchers, who managed an increasingly profitable sector of criminal activity (see Bailey; Maulitz; Wilf). In these nations, the discourse of violation surrounding anatomy was not the "dismal conjuration" of a self-romanticizing medical
profession, but the general response to the real conditions in which barber-surgeons plied their illicit trade. A rising popular revolt against the "resurrection-men" culminated in 1788 with violent anti-dissection riots in Baltimore and New York. These riots prompted the passing of the United States' first Anatomy Act, which provided for the medical dissection of criminals sentenced to hang. This measure did relieve the American shortage in anatomical subjects, but only at the cost of establishing morbid anatomy as a retributive disciplinary practice. British law, by contrast, had used dissection as a deterrent against capital crimes since the time of Henry VIII. Consequently, their own grave-robbing crisis was not so easily solved. The demand for cadavers by British surgeons was not met, and the sack-'em-up men flourished in Scotland, England and Ireland well into the nineteenth-century.

Interestingly, the measures taken to stem the practice of grave-robbing in Britain were directly opposed to those taken in the New World. In 1832, a revised British Anatomy Bill was passed which outlawed the dissection of criminals altogether: from then on, criminals would be simply hanged and left unburied. At the same time, in a striking reversal, the new Bill legalized the dissection of all innocent citizens within seventy-two hours after their deaths, providing no last testament turned up to dictate alternate
arrangements. The Anatomy Bill thus presents the same irony which Mark Poster finds in Bentham's panopticon (90-1): its effectiveness as a disciplinary means of controlling criminals was limited; but when generalized to society at large, it transformed an entire class of bodies into walking cadavers, and put the resurrection men instantly out of business.

The implications of the new Act did not pass unnoticed by the popular press. The issue of dissection found particularly apt expression in a series of six necromantic satires featured in the December, 1832 edition of Fraser's Magazine. Presented as an aggregate epistle from the dead, the pieces featured Socratic debates over the ethics of autopsy by mythic, historical and stereotypical interlocutors, including Charon and Mercury, an Ancient Mariner and a Modern Legislator, William Shakespeare and William Burke (the famous Scottish murderer and body-snatcher), Plato, a Surgeon, and sundry Utilitarians. In one dialogue, the shade of an indigent Mariner who has been dissected under the new Act tries vainly to convince an incredulous Charon that he is not in fact a convicted criminal. Charon replies, "How! Don't I know that you have been dissected according to law? And don't I know that dissection is the punishment of murderers, up where you come from?" (729).
Clearly, Robinson is mistaken to assert that the Lucianic dialogue of the dead had entirely died out by 1820 (144-5). But while the Fraser's dialogues are modelled on Lucian's Nekyomanteia, they lack both his "jolly relativity" and his utter ethical relativism. For Lucian, death is a leveller that reveals the ultimate irrelevance of hard work, philosophical schools and social institutions. Stripped of all our vain mortal trappings, he shows, we all come to resemble the same grinning death's head. By contrast, the Fraser's dialogues deflate utterly Lucian's comic irreverence, and collapse his elusive and free-ranging philosophical satire into a single, identifiable ethico-political stance. In short, these satires counter instrumental and parliamentary definitions of the modern self with an equally monological discourse of burial rights. The purpose of the Fraser's dialogues is not to break down and analyze the discourse of subjectivity through a scrutiny of the body, but rather to gird the body against parliamentary intervention in a suit of liberal rhetoric.

The Fraser's satires indicate that by the nineteenth century, the classical form of the genre could be used only toward specific agendas, and in a manner quite atypical of menippean discourse. These dialogues directly address the discursive split between the psyche of classical literature, and the heteroglot medical, legal and parliamentary
discourses which all compete to define the modern "self". One explanation for this change in emphasis can be found in the general growth of reflexive thinking in modernity. According to Charles Taylor, "the soul" of premodern metaphysics comes to be replaced in modern thought with the notion of the rational "self": "humans always have [had] a sense of self; but we [in the modern age] see ourselves as having or being 'a self,'" and that is something new" (307). The menippean satire, with its strong self-reflexive emphasis, is eminently suited to mediate the competing discourses of the soul and the self. As the early modern world turned "radically" reflexive, and the "self" came to dominate modern thinking, so the dialogue of the dead became popular as a comic burial ground for the increasingly implausible fiction of the soul.

At the same time, the genre had to undergo certain transformations to render it adequate to a satiric scrutiny of the new, reflexive modern epistemologies of the self.

37 The equivocation here over identity and possession is a fuzzy term in Taylor's theory. The notion will come up again in Chapter Five, when we examine Harold Skulsky's theory of the relationship between cannibalism, identity and possession.

38 A number of critics indicate elements of self-parody in menippean satire, including Relihan (25). Parody itself is to some extent always a self-reflexive mode of analysis that "backfires" upon itself (see Hannoosh). When the object of a parody is communication systems, its reflexive element perforce becomes exaggerated.
Taylor suggests that the body is one of two things which the modern monological concept of the "self" leaves out.\textsuperscript{39} We have seen how \textit{Pierce Pennilesse} revitalizes a longstanding intertextual connection with testamental satire, in taking the decaying body of authority as a starting point for a satire of monological social and literary conventions. But the paramount sanctity toward the body of the dead which motivates the \textit{Fraser's dialogues} sharply contrasts the more radical dismembering which occurs in Nashe's parodic \textit{nekyia}. The purpose of these dialogues is not to break down and analyze discourse through a scrutiny of the body, as in the traditional fool's testament which Nashe parodies, but rather to protect the soul against the law in an equally monological shroud of ethical and logical discourse. To leave the body intact as the inviolate property of an individual soul is to remove it from the sphere of dialogical action, and therefore exclude it as a basis of self-definition. Given their pre-articulated ethical stance, the \textit{Fraser's dialogues} cannot afford to explore the bodily discourse of testamental satire, even if the deceased physician who putatively presents the dialogues claims that among his underworld companions, "the dissection-bill has been completely dissected" (728). When the \textit{Fraser's dialogues} do motivate graphic corporal language, 

\textsuperscript{39} The "Other" is the second item left out of monological discourse, an important point that will be taken up in later chapters.
it is in a monologic catalogue of atrocities designed to raise popular sympathy against dissection:

Here a wife haunts a husband . . . [S]he presents a shape only of man, composed of bloody fragments of many bodies, more hideous than one trodden into a battle-field by a thousand hoofs, gory, and miry, and corrupting withal (741).

Far from Lucian's scoffing cynicism, these dialogues are rather the literary equivalent of the New York Doctor's Riot, which saw half-dissected entrails paraded about the town in demonstration of the surgeons' barbarism (Wilf 510).

There is, however, another genuinely dialogical satiric anatomy roughly contemporary with these, and written by a sometime critic of Fraser's, that both challenges the transparency of mediated communication, and offers an alternative strategy of embodied understanding. In "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," first published in 1846, Edgar Allan Poe reworks the same anti-utilitarian themes addressed in the Fraser's dialogues. Unlike these latter satires, however, Poe's is a full-blown nekyia that parodies not only the various medical and parliamentary discourses which competed to define the modern self, but also the mass-media in which these discourses were disseminated and legitimated.

Neither Bakhtin nor Frye ever explains his inclusion of Poe in their respective genealogies of menippean satirists.
One can certainly point to a number of formal and thematic features in Poe's fictions that correspond to Bakhtin's fourteen points: the indecorous satura of prose and verse ("The Assignation"), or the grotesque and absurd details ("Some Words with a Mummy"); the wide-ranging parody of literary forms, and satire of false erudition ("How to Write a Blackwood's Article," "Philosophy of Furniture"); his portrayal of obsessive narrators ("Berenice," "The Cask of Amontillado") and Doppelgänger ("William Wilson") to depict the "dialogic relationship to one's own self" (Bakhtin, Dostoevsky 116-7); his fantastic Lucianic voyages ("Descent into the Maelstrom," "Hans Phaall," "The Thousand-and-Second Tale"), utopian narratives ("The Domain of Arnheim") and dialogues of the dead ("The Colloquy of Monos and Una"). But such a featural analysis, while illuminating, fails to demonstrate how Poe uses the menippean satire to satirize his particular discursive context. A close analysis of "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" reveals one instance in which Poe motivates the traditional genre of the dialogue of the dead to address the new conditions of his nineteenth-century "information culture," and to discover how they affect literature's changing relation to knowledge.

Roland Barthes identifies the polyphony of discourses at play in "M. Valdemar" in one of the earliest theoretical analyses of the intertextual effect. He discovers in the
texture of Poe's story an intersection of medical, legal, historical, rhetorical, meta-linguistic and chronological social codes:

the narrative is immediately subsumed (at least when it lends itself to being so) beneath the notion of 'Text,' space, process of significations at work, in a word, signifying ..., which one observes not as a finished, closed product, but as a production in process of making itself, 'plugged into' other texts, other codes (this is intertextuality), thereby articulated with society, History, not along paths fixed in meaning, but citational ("Edgar Poe" 2; emphases in original).

Barthes uses Poe's story to illustrate his method of "textual analysis" which, unlike that of structural analysis, is designed to discover not "what determines a text (what brings it together as the final term of a causality), but rather how it breaks out and disperses itself" (2). Two other operative codes in "M. Valdemar" which Barthes does not address, but which enable the very discursive dispersion he identifies, are the parodic discourses of the nekyia and the closely related satiric testament. Like Pierce Penniless, "M. Valdemar" draws on the genre of testamental satire in order to represent the decay of various monological bodies of social discourse. By combining the premise of Barthes' textual analysis with an awareness of specific menippean intertexts, one can see how Poe brings these ancient genres to bear on the new conditions of knowledge and literary production which constitute his authorial context.
The genre of "M. Valdemar" has been at issue since its first publication in *Graham's Magazine*, where it was putatively presented as the "case study" of a terminal tubercular patient who is zombified through the inducement of a mesmeric trance at the moment of his death. The text reads enough like a factual report for London's *Popular Record of Modern Science* to have stolen the story and billed it as a valid record of a fringe medical phenomenon—a circumstance which led to accusations of fraud and humbuggery on the part of Poe. Recent rereadings, however, have focussed on the comic "clues" that spot the text and reveal Poe's "irony". Michael Williams indicates many hints of "black humour" in the text, such as the physician-narrator's vivid diagnosis which effectively anatomizes the hapless Valdemar before he has had a chance to die. He reports that

[t]he left lung had been for eighteen months in a semi-osseous or cartilaginous state . . . . The right, in its upper portion, was also partially, if not thoroughly, ossified, while the lower region was merely a mass of purulent tubercles, running one into another. . . . (157).

Tracy Ware also thinks it striking that the text could have been received as a hoax rather than a parody. He indicates, for example, the unlikeliness that the titular anti-hero would make journal entries right up to his final hour. That the narrative suppresses the content of these entries leads Ware to conclude that they could not have been important,
except as merely one of many "ludicrous" details planted in
the text to signal the presence of irony (477).
Unfortunately, Ware's discovery of "irony" in the text does
not satisfy the question of genre in "M. Valdemar." However,
if these red herrings are interpreted as Riffaterrean
"ungrammaticalities" signalling the coded presence of
intertexts, then it becomes possible to reconstruct a more
satisfying reading of the text. It soon becomes clear that,
far from a nebulous exercise in hoax or irony, "M. Valdemar"
in fact participates dialogically in the menippean tradition
of discursive parody. In particular, Poe's text critiques
the very same monologic discourses which the Fraser's satires
isolates, but in a dialogic manner that also includes the
discourse of the body.

That no one has noticed the generic resemblances between
"M. Valdemar" and the menippean legacy satire is a striking
oversight. A story which begins and ends around the death-
bed, "M. Valdemar" is structured like a satiric testament.
Moreover, the omission of Valdemar's last writings assumes a
far greater significance in this context. Omitted, purloined
or disappearing inscriptions are rarely meaningless where
they surface in Poe's texts. In fact, both the premature
anatomy and the omitted deathbed writings of M. Valdemar are
cues providing entry into the testamental discourse which
pervades Poe's text. That Valdemar writes "memoranda" before
his death may not be as "ludicrous" as Ware assumes (477), if we understand the word to signify not the patient's personal memos, but writings by which others are to remember him. Given Valdemar's premature anatomization, and the fact that a "memorandum" in legal terms signifies a short statement of agreement or contact, it is possible to find another possible content for Valdemar's lost writings in the language of Warburton's Anatomy Bill:

And be it enacted, That it shall be lawful for any Executor or other Party having lawful Possession of the Body of any deceased Person, . . . to permit the Body of such deceased Person to undergo Anatomical Examination, unless, to the Knowledge of such Executor or other Party, such Person shall have expressed his Desire, either in Writing at any Time during his Life, or verbally . . . that his Body after Death might not undergo such Examination . . . (VII; my emphasis).

For the first time in the history of common law, this statute clearly delineates the authority of the written word with respect to the body and the practice of anatomy. In the absence of any statement otherwise, the body of the deceased could be legitimately anatomized. The Fraser's dialogues recognized the faults of this system, and even suggest at one point that a certificate be attached to every corpse to prevent body-stealing:
Burke.—... Let such a little paper be printed with the age, marks, stature, every thing to identify the corpse—the printer's abode subjoined—and enclose it with every buried person (736; emphasis in original).

Considering this charged context, the fact that Poe's narrator suppresses his patient's written responses to an unprecedented mesmeric experiment invites the question of both narrative and legal authority, of whether the consent to mesmerize was ever "actually" acquired within the story. The very possibility that Valdemar's "memos" could have contained his dying wishes for a proper burial belies the narrator's description of the patient's cheerful eagerness to participate in the experiment, and opens the text to a satiric reading of Poe's narrative as a menippean mock-testament.

In this extraordinary case, the suppression of Valdemar's (pen)ultimate utterances force an additional transformation on the genre of satiric testament. We have seen how the traditional mock-testament parodies the discourse of the dead for its monological equivalence to the law, tearing it asunder in a refertilizing dissection that symbolizes the positive social force of heteroglossia. Poe gives the satiric screw still another turn, transferring his aim from the will of the dead to the word of the survivors. This modern case targets not the will of the dead, but the word of the surviving medical man: it is the language of the observing scientists, and not of M. Valdemar, which lapses
into a self-parodic display of monologizing jargon. By substituting his written account of the case for the dying man's memoirs, P— inadvertently offers up his own anatomico-medical language for dissection. Try as he might to unify his medical cant by organizing it around the body of M. Valdemar, the narrator's authority ultimately disperses along with his patient's putrescent corpse.

Accordingly, when M. Valdemar attempts to reconstitute himself in language, his impossible utterance—"I am dead"—is received by the attending medical team as an abomination. Barthes falls short when he ascribes the horror of the passage to the structural impossibility of the utterance, "I am dead." He argues that Valdemar's climactic post-mortem exclamation turns Poe's story away from discourse, and back into the structure of language itself. On the contrary, insofar as this subjective (in)completion, "I am dead," represents a true "narrative hapax" (9), a truly unique utterance, it signals a turning away from the systematizing tendencies of the narrator's diagnostic language, and the perfect paradigm of the dialogical situatedness of each and every utterance. Just as Valdemar's state transgresses any medical classification, so his statement transgresses any linguistic taxonomy. That professional cant and analytic "facts" must inevitably fail to meet the "case" of an individual utterance is precisely
the recognition which motivates Bakhtin's translinguistics, the study of language as it lives (or dies) in the historically unique individual. M. Valdemar's (un)final utterance contradicts the narrator's diagnosis of his condition, and thus further confounds the life-death distinction. What causes the onlookers to shudder, and the reader perhaps to laugh, is that Valdemar will be heard, dead or otherwise. With his last written requests obliterated beneath a sheet of medical jargon, all that is left to M. Valdemar is to deny the fact of his ultimate condition.

It is also all that Poe leaves to the nekyia tradition. In Lucian's Nekyomanteia, the dead are at least allowed their final speech of counter-finality, their mock-tragic moment of self-realization sub specie aeternitatis. For M. Valdemar, by contrast, hindsight and regrets are unavailable. His story is set in a utilitarian world which has lost all vestiges of eschatology, including even fictional perspectives on the afterlife. Rather than attempt to create a believable necromantic fantasy, Poe instead constructs a narrative setting in which a speaking corpse is unbelievable. This naturalization of the conventions of fantasy within a scientific context creates the inverted verisimilitude that originally earned his text the status of a hoax. Poe provides no glimpse either of Valdemar's self or of his soul. In short, if the Fraser's dialogues argued monologically for
the absolute sacrosanctity of both body and soul, then "M. Valdemar" foregoes any finalizing word, to remain hovering on the boundary of several possibilities. The narrative, like its protagonist, remains suspended on the threshold between life and death, shuttling between the grotesque and the ridiculous. It is this ambivalence that situates "M. Valdemar" firmly within the tradition of the dialogical threshold dialogue.

Though P——'s mesmeric experiment lies at the periphery of medical practice, his method is a too-perfect hybrid of ___________

40 "M. Valdemar" has all the trappings of a "serious" work of horror, although a close reading reveals elements of the ridiculous that contradict its mysterious atmosphere. It thus operates as what Gary Saul Morson calls a "boundary work," a variety of text in which "it is uncertain which of two mutually exclusive sets of conventions governs a work" (Boundaries 48). Morson mentions two ways in which a boundary work operates, both of which can be seen in "M. Valdemar". First, through "mistaken identity," the text encourages the reader to encounter it as either a truthful account of unusual case, a serious work of horror, or an unusually black comedy. Second, the text mixes incompatible generic elements—a feature, Morson points out, familiar in the menippean satire (see Morson 50-1). Clearly, our reading of the text depends to a large extent upon our initial generic expectations. As Michael Allen points out, the journalistic atmosphere in which the narrative first appeared featured both factual scientific essays and horror tales, and could thus support at least two widely divergent readings of the same text (74-100).

That the double significance of Poe's text was missed for so long perhaps confirms Bakhtin's historical thesis of the loss of carnivalesque unity after the Medieval age. Bakhtin finds a sharp contrast between laughter and death in Poe's stories that serves as a reminder of the lost unity of the carnivalesque matrix: "[b]ut the golden key to this [carnivalesque] complex has been lost: there is no all-encompassing whole of triumphant life, there remain only the denuded, sterile and, therefore, oppressive contrasts" ("Chronotope" 199-200).
the physician's and the barber-surgeon's, a combination which was accepted among the medical professions long before it won over public sentiment. Foucault argues that the acceptance of anatomy among medical professionals had normalized a clinical blurring of the boundary between life and death: "To treat death as an extension of life meant that it could shed light on the processes of life" (144). Death's epistemological value would at last be complex and visible, rather than monolithic and mysterious: from the nineteenth century on, "death is multiple, and dispersed in time; it is not absolute," but opens onto life (142).

In a hyperbole of this new school of medical thinking, P—— attempts to extend the clinical advantage by suspending his patient on the very threshold of death for a scandalous duration of nine months before his final suppuration. As Ware observes of "M. Valdemar", "[t]he irony of the ending is that life has not really been prolonged at all" (479). All that the narrator succeeds in prolonging is the transitional state which Barthes identifies as the transgressive moment in the text: ". . . in Death what is essentially taboo is the passage, the threshold, the 'dying'" (6). The narrator attempts to arrest this passage, but can only do so by fixing the living (or dying) subject through mesmerism, an operation that subsumes Valdemar's consciousness beneath his own. Even P——'s language expresses this relationship of subjection.
The narrator protests too much when he notes the precise time at which he "begged [Valdemar] to state, as distinctly as he could," his permission to proceed with the experiment:

He replied feebly, yet quite audibly, 'Yes, I wish to be mesmerized'--adding immediately afterwards, 'I fear you have deferred it too long.'

While he spoke thus, I commenced the passes which I had already found most effectual in subduing him. He was evidently influenced with the first lateral stroke of my hand across his forehead; but although I exerted all my powers, no farther perceptible effect was produced until some minutes after ten o'clock . . . (158-9).

Subduction, influence, the stroke of the narrator's hand, and his exertion of power reveal that mesmerism is not just an effect issuing from the narrator's language, but a genre of utterance unto itself, the performativé equivalent of his monologically oriented "factual" discourse. Anatomy and mesmerism assume a parallel course as techniques which both subsume a docile body beneath their own objectifying language. Despite his liminal position, then, Valdemar is at no point able to communicate any sign of metaphysical enlightenment. All he can do is assert the paradoxical fact of his boundary existence, crying out again and again, "I am dead". This failed threshold dialogue demonstrates that P--'s experiment precludes any revelation from beyond the threshold of life, and denies the dialogue of the dead its classical "unfinalizing" function. Far from permitting
conversation with the dead, his experimental discourse only silences them with the laws and words of the living.

When finally released from his trance after several months, M. Valdemar does not "cross over" the threshold of life, but instead disintegrates, as the account of his case consumes itself. With the final dispersion of his body, his ability to produce any utterance that might "answer" the text's ambiguities is lost, along with the narrator's ability to defend himself against scandal. Traditionally, the necromantic satire draws this connection between the responsibility toward the body and the authority to communicate. The use of language, which belongs to no one, paradoxically establishes one as an individual capable of ownership, of communication, and therefore, of authoritative utterance. It is not so much the "treatment" of Valdemar's failing body that offends as the confiscation of his right to communicate. The classical nekyia restores that right to the dead, even if what they say condemns them to ridicule or infamy. Standing as the endgame of this ancient genre, "M. Valdemar" satirizes the ghoulish theft by the living of the dead's authority to speak.

Poe's parody demonstrates the impossibility of retaining the classic nekyia in an age of monologizing utilitarian discourse—that which Roland Barthes describes as the factual "code of scientific deontology" (8), but which also includes
legal, ethical, parliamentarian and proprietal discourses. The case of M. Valdemar pushes language outside the realm of life entirely, to represent the necromantic utterance in a more sterile and unrevealing fashion than any dialogue of the dead before it. That the grievous voice of the dead so familiar in the classical nekyia is silenced, and replaced with an empty mockery of living speech, suggests a change in the discourses surrounding death that renders the traditional form of the necromantic satire unviable as a dialogic utterance. In short, "M. Valdemar" represents the exhaustion of the traditional form of the nekyia, a self-conscious denial of the conventions of the genre. At the same time it promises to revitalize the genre in a new kind of threshold dialogue that is a hybrid of horror and hoax, a "boundary work" that equivocates between a tragic lamentation for the soul, and a parodic anatomy of the modern self. Whether the cadaver's final dissolution represents the horrific violence which modern science and utilitarianism enacts upon the human subject, or an excremental vision of absurdity, it is an image that absolutely undermines the authority of the narrator.
VII. Valdemar in the Rabelaisian Tradition

Roland Barthes suggests that, as the body of M. Valdemar and the "facts" in his case dissipate, the text opens itself intertextually to another source of legitimation, grounded in the encodings of extraliterary knowledge. I have tried to show how "M. Valdemar" draws on menippean necromantic and mock-testamental discourse to critique the narrator's attempt at replacing Valdemar's body and soul with the utilitarian, "analytico-referential" discourse of the modern self. It should be added that, while Poe's satire issues from the same discursive context as the more monological Fraser's dialogues, it also encodes at least one more menippean intertext. The index to this specific intertext can be found in the "fact" that M. Valdemar translated Rabelais' Gargantua into Polish (155). In fact, "M. Valdemar" has strong affinities to a particular Rabelaisian episode of testamental satire: namely, the visit to Raminagrobis of Villaumere in Chapter Twenty-One of the Third Book of Pantagruel. A comparison of these two intertexts focuses the evolution of necromantic satire between the early renaissance and the Industrial Age.

Jeffrey Meyers suggests that "Valdemar's name—which in Spanish means 'valley of the sea'—suggests the solid and liquid states of his putrid body" (179). But the name of
Poe's mesmeric victim also gestures toward Rabelais' account of the poet of Villaumere. The circumstances of the two invalids are described in similar ways. Raminagrobis is a poet with the pox, whom the protagonists thus encounter, in at least one translation, both "in articulo, and at the point of death" (Gargantua and Pantagruel 346). Poe's narrator echoes this idiom when he first introduces the notion of mesmerizing a subject "in articulo mortis"—a phrase of grim foreboding that takes on a ghoulish second meaning as soon as the dead man speaks. This macaronic double-entendre operates like the literary equivalent to a perceptual illusion, admitting the reader into the comic intertext of this undecidable text. Even Panurge's mock-pedantic defense of the "gyronomonic circumbilivaginations" (Complete Works 45) of the mendicant orders is echoed in the obfuscating diagnosis of Valdemar's "semi-osseous or cartilaginous state" (157).

It is at the point of Panurge's curious overreaction to what he interprets as Raminagrobis' slander of mendicants that the germ of Poe's narrative emerges. When Epistemon points out that Raminagrobis was speaking literally, and that Panurge himself is "to blame for offering to expound his words otherwise" (47), Panurge's lampoon of Raminagrobis' incomprehensible theological sophistry lays itself bare as a hyperbolic self-defense, a preemptive rebuttal of any
accusations of heresy on his own behalf. "M. Valdemar" also introduces itself as a strategy of defense against scandal, which the narrator enacts through an "objective" filibuster of medical jargon. By shifting the defensive posture onto the narrator of his text, Poe puts the very "facts" of the story into question, as well as the scientific-deontological discourse in which they are stated. When the narrative authority of the tale itself is at issue, even the smallest details assume a potentially devastating significance. Thus, the narrator's description of Valdemar's surprisingly cheerful disposition in the face of imminent death becomes suspect as a potential ruse to conceal the true element of violence enacted against the patient. Valdemar's lively misdemeanour puts his narrator's reliability, and by extension the whole genre of Poe's narrative, into question. By contrast, Raminogrobis' lively misdemeanour (he is described as "in the agony of his departure from this world, looking cheerfully, with an open countenance, splendid aspect, and behaviour full of alacrity" [42]) remains in keeping with the "jolly relativity" of the Rabelaisian universe.

Whereas "M. Valdemar" self-consciously problematizes its own narrative authority, Pantagruel does not exhibit the same crisis. This contrast emerges over the issue of the status of the dying man's utterance in each text. Pantagruel
delivers a lengthy statement of precedents to establish the
prophetic wisdom of the poet divinely inspired by proximity
to death. The reader is even offered a glimpse of
Raminagrobis's notebook with its sibylline rhyme. Valdemar's
last writings, by contrast, are deleted from the facts in
the case, leaving us privy only to his final, spoken
utterance. This substitution of a spoken for a written
utterance is significant in light of the elaborate play of
orality and literacy encoded in Poe's text. As Michael
Williams points out, the narrator writes his authorized
"factual" account as a rebuttal to multivocal rumour.
Valdemar opposes "the authority of the written record . . .
to the 'many unpleasant misrepresentations' of public
speculation. His narrative is an attempt to regain control
over the dissemination of information. . . ." (106). Gossip
is deformed from the narrator's point of view because no
single authority can vouch for it (107). As Barthes
furthermore recognizes, "the opposition of fact to rumor is
an old mythic theme" (5); it is also an old theme of the
parody of myth. In Lucian's scandalous satires, the "facts"
spoken by the dead belie the rumoured glory of the mythic
hero, laying Alexander bare as a vainglorious coward, or
revealing Helen as a death's head.

"The Case of M. Valdemar" works in reverse: here, the
narrator records the "facts" in writing to silence the babble
of discourse surrounding "The Case of M. Valdemar," in the hope of thwarting a scandal and protecting his own reputation. Poe's narrator attempts to eliminate traces of oral heteroglossia through publishing an authoritative study of the case. The bias toward printed "facts" which the narrative only putatively endorses parallels the narrator's monological medical and mesmeric discourse. And just as his monological discourse dissipates, so too does the narrator have increasing difficulty retaining his distinction between a "factual" written account and a spurious oral recounting. As Williams indicates, his report not only depends on the oral testimony of others; it attempts in vain to fix the endless play of meaning through an equivocal narrative form, "to stop with the written word a process characteristic of writing" (107). With Valdemar's last written utterance obliterated, the narrator assumes the authority of speaking for him. For Valdemar's writings (and Raminagrobis' prophecies) he substitutes his own, published acknowledgement of the patient's oral consent to be mesmerized, as the inspired speech of the patient on the threshold of death is usurped by the authoritative printed record of the modern scientist.41

41 Valdemar and the poet of Villaumere both should perhaps be seen as progenitors of Flann O'Brien's undead and eponymously named character, "Sir Miles na gCopaleen," whom Booker omits in his study of O'Brien's menippeas. Buried before his time and subsequently exhumed, Sir Miles is found by the courts to have died neither testate nor intestate, but instead in a state of "extestacy" (159). The legal quandaries created by the corpse's revival provide the comedy
When M. Valdemar reclaims his authority over language, he does so through neither a spoken nor a printed utterance, but instead an undecidable gesture that combines elements of both. In Williams' revealing analysis, the image of Valdemar's distended, blackened tongue against his papery complexion as he audibly asserts his own morbidity reclaims the authority to speak from the monological printed word, and deconstructs the narrator's privileging of written authority over spoken "rumour":

The narrator has attempted to arrest Valdemar 'in articulo mortis,' just at the point of the ultimate difference—that between life and death . . . . But the emphasis here is not on the unity of the real and the ideal, but on their discontinuity. The voice speaks from the marginal in between, the place of absolute difference, where its 'syllabification,' its production of sound by difference, is perfect—'wonderfully, thrillingly distinct' . . . —and its utterance—'I am dead'—is an articulation of 'pure' difference in which the terms are mutually cancelling. . . . The tongue, then, announces the impossibility of the symbol's provision of access to the supernal, or, in other terms, to the secret signified of which death itself is the signifier (112).

in this satire on over-literal systems of regulation. Many of the themes of "M. Valdemar" are recognizable in this satire of the monological body of legal discourse and high-society legacy hunters: Sir Myles frets over the problems "if further exhumation revealed that he was neither alive nor dead, but in some sort of a trance"; while the legal impasse arises from the understanding that "[d]eath is a process, resulting usually in a serious fatality" (160). The piece is all the more dialogic for being a satiric testament on the author's "own" literary corpus, and stands in the tradition of Swift's "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift."
Tellingly, it is neither the voice of Valdemar's soul nor the text of his body that utters forth its impossible statement. Instead, the corpse of M. Valdemar reasserts its presence in a way that reminds us of both his body and his soul, two aspects of his being that the narrator's monological account leaves out. I would take Williams' analysis one step further and suggest that the body of Valdemar, as the deconstruction of the difference between written and spoken authority, in fact stands for the medium of print. In order to resist the narrator's published account of the facts, M. Valdemar, deprived of any final word, has to embody a posture equally relevant to and authoritative within his print-based, journalistic society.

Poe's denial in "M. Valdemar" of any and all information from beyond the grave transforms the necromantic genre almost beyond recognition. Renaissance nekyia communicated news between this world and the next with remarkable ease and regularity, in a caricature of the print medium's range of dissemination that undermined its hermeneutic authority. "M. Valdemar" adopts a similar, if more extreme, attitude toward a nineteenth-century culture in the full grip of a print-biased information economy. This suggestion goes far to explain Poe's rejection of the nekyia's most distinctive feature—its access to a realm of transcendent knowledge—in favour of a parodic engagement
with the legitimizing apparatus of the medical publishing industry. That the improbable case of "M. Valdemar" was received by many as a factual account is less surprising when one considers how Poe's narrative keys several themes familiar to medical journals of the period. Phthisis, the ailment which M. Valdemar suffers, was a central concern of these journals, ranking fourth for frequency of discussion in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* behind fevers, pharmacology and other therapies (Loudon & Loudon 62). Mesmerism, too, was a prominent source of inquiry in the medical press, along with phrenology and homeopathy. Barthes indicates that the teachings of Anton Mesmer were at the peak of their cultural currency in the mid 1840s; however, he does not mention that medical journals were largely responsible for legitimizing mesmeric inquiry. In fact, of all the medical or health-related journals published in Britain between 1800 and 1850, about 13% were devoted to the unorthodox or "fringe" sciences (Loudon and Loudon 53-4). These journals occupied a highly important role in nineteenth-century medicine: clinical knowledge was generally developed at the peripheries of medical institutions, and only incorporated into the great research centres of Edinburgh and Paris as it was needed (Maulitz 64).

Foucault speaks of the appearance at the turn of the nineteenth-century of a "sharp line [which] divides a
description that depicts membranes as being like 'damp parchment'" from a more emulsive, but equally metaphorical, description (xi). This line divides the old semiotic approach to medicine, in which symptoms are read as though written on a parchment, to a diagnostics based in a clinical gaze empowered through alliance to vectors of visibility. But the figure of M. Valdemar suggests a medium other than parchment and membranes for the communication of medical knowledge. When Valdemar succumbs, his skin is said to assume "a cadaverous hue, resembling not so much parchment as white paper," while his jaw jerks open to reveal a "swollen and blackened tongue" (162). As Williams has noted, Valdemar comes at his death to resemble a printed page (111), a figure fit for any modern medical journal. Poe thus traces changes in the discourses surrounding death not only to the new medico-anatomical practices, but back to the publishing apparatus that fed and legitimized them as well. "M. Valdemar" reveals that it was not only the clinical gaze of the doctor-surgeon which altered perception of the body in the nineteenth-century, but also an explosion of printed data that provided at best an equivocal source of knowledge. Poe's modern nekyia thus challenged the medical sciences' basis of knowledge and authoritative utterance even as it was forming. He capitalized on his situation as a writer of fiction at the historical moment just before the journalistic
creation of "objective information" was to transform the media into a self-legitimating, hegemonic estate.42

Reading "Valdemar" as a figure of contact mediating heteroglot medical, literary, journalistic and testamental discourses, brings its full relation to the Rabelaisian intertext comes into focus. McLuhan argues that Rabelais wrote to express the perspective of a renaissance society on the verge of a print revolution, divided between ancient and modern means of mediating knowledge and authority. He perceives Gargantua as a massive myth of the Gutenberg transformation that prefigures the sociocultural effects of the shift from a manuscript culture to a print-based society.43 Perched Valdemar-like on the threshold of a new media bias, Rabelais searches in Gargantua and Pantagruel for a means of reconciling the limited personal point of view.

42 Marie-Christine Leps writes of "the development of a new product, 'objective information' (as opposed to political opinion)" in the early French press, marked by the launch of Moise Polydore Millaud's Le Petit Journal in 1863 (87). The relationship between early, politically subsidized newspapers aimed at a general audience, and contemporary professional journals which (ostensibly) targeted a more specialized readership, needs further exploration. But her point that the "news" has only in recent history acquired the cachet of neutrality and referential transparency stands regardless.

43 "There are, indeed, four massive myths of the Gutenberg transformation of society. Besides Gargantua, they are Don Quixote, the Dunciad, and Finnegans Wake" (McLuhan, Gutenberg 179). Significantly, all four texts have also been described as menippean satires, a fact that makes a study of the implications of the menippean genre for the history of mediation all the more significant.
which had legitimized literature in the confessional mode, with the new democratized medium of applied knowledge. By opening the printed page to an indecorous satura of points of view and genres of discourse, McLuhan argues, Rabelais develops a form in which to mediate his inherited scholastic sources of authority with the informational "giganticism" latent in the print medium:

. . . Rabelais is like a medieval glossator of the Roman law in supporting his absurd opinions with a welter of learning which manifests 'rapid shifts between a multiplicity of viewpoints.' That is to say, Rabelais is a scholastic in his mosaic procedures, consciously juxtaposing this ancient farrago with the new individual single-point-of-view technology of print (Gutenberg 181-2).

McLuhan here approaches, but does not quite arrive at, a much-needed theory of the relationship between media bias and literary genre. His analysis of the Gutenberg phenomenon continually touches on elements of menippean discourse without ever acknowledging this genre's particularly close involvement in the process of making (and unmaking) media myths. So when McLuhan cites the Prologue of Book II of Pantagruel, he offers it as an example of Rabelais' anachronistic "tactility," his medieval emphasis on the material word as an opaque, weighty medium that demands excessive time and devotion from the reader:

And therefore, to make an end of this Prologue, even as I give myself to an hundred thousand panniers-full of fair devils, body and soul, tripes.
and guts, in case that I lie so much as one single word in this whole history; after the like manner, St. Anthony's fire burn you, Mahoom's disease whirl you, the squinanc with a stitch in your site, and the wolf in your stomach truss you, the bloody flux seize upon you, the cursed sharp inflammations of wild fire, as slender and thin as cow's hair strengthened with quicksilver, enter into your fundament, and like those of Sodom and Gomorrha, may you fall into sulphur, fire, and bottomless pits, in case you do not firmly believe all that I shall relate to you in this present Chronicle (Complete Works 288; McLuhan's translation varies).

What McLuhan does not mention is that this "tactile" discourse that frames the entire text has clear affinities with the mock-testamental. This beneficiary curse that threatens to anatomi and infect her every part is recognizable as the last will of a dying discourse of authority, through which Rabelais preempts his own monological claim to truth in a self-parodic dismemberment of his own body of discourse.44

The significance of Rabelais to both McLuhan's media theory and Bakhtin's history of the menippea suggests that an unarticulated common ground lies between them, a ground that Taylor's dialogical theory of knowledge may help us traverse.

44 Bakhtin instead provides a reading of the prologue to Pantagruel, Gargantua's letter to his son, which develops a kind of immortality that is earthly, relative, and deliberately opposed to the Christian doctrine of the immortality of souls. As opposed to the static immortality of some aged soul, Gargantua sees himself in the fresh youth of his son ("Chronotope" 203). Lucian burlesqued the idea of immortality of the soul, but Rabelais resituates it in a generative natural matrix, depicting the letter from the dead as a natural link in the regenerative series.
To recapitulate, Taylor suggests that modern epistemology, which understands knowledge as a representation in the consciousness of a monological subject, is inadequate to account for the inarticulate, unformulated kinds of knowledge that are embodied in concrete dialogical social relations. Taylor's concept of conversational "rhythm" is, like Bakhtin's "utterance," an aspect of communication that remains beyond representation, and which therefore presents a means of framing the unframable action of dialogic communication. The inadequacy of modern representational theories of knowledge to express the full experience of understanding through both the body and the other is a problem that Bakhtin explores as the irreconcilability of the distinct spheres of action ("Being-as-event") and representation:

... two worlds confront each other, two worlds that have absolutely no communication with each other and are mutually impervious: the world of culture and the world of life, the only world in which we create, cognize, contemplate, live our lives and die or—the world in which the acts of our activity are objectified and the world in which these acts actually proceed and are actually accomplished once and only once (Philosophy of the Act 2).

This recognition of a fundamental incompatibility between the world of life and the world of culture suggests an oversight in Bakhtin's earlier writings, especially those centring on the menippean genre. How can any literature (menippean or
otherwise) "represent" a dialogical discourse, if representation itself is an inherently monological procedure? This is a problem that neither "Epic and Novel" nor the longer Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics addresses.

The contradiction can be resolved, I think, by recognizing that, for Bakhtin, literature is a dialogical utterance that exists within time, and therefore outside of representation. Literature is never a self-contained representation communicated between two independent thinking subjects, but is instead always a medium of dialogical interaction between author and reader. How, then, is one to distinguish between monological and dialogical written utterances? I would suggest that a text constitutes a dialogical action when it succeeds in conveying a sense of its own unfinishedness from within the frame of literary representation. In Rabelais, this sense is achieved through a self-conscious focus on the limits of the new medium of print, considered as both the material element of the representation, and as a new set of discursive practices and social formations in which literary representation is reembodied. The "tactility" that McLuhan notices thus arises from Rabelais' self-conscious representation of his own artistic medium, in his attempt to render the material conditions of his writing. A similar strategy could be shown to underlie, for instance, both Burton's and Swift's
respective emphases on the anatomical and scatological body: in each case, an emphasis on that which Bakhtinians typically call the "lower material bodily stratum" foregrounds the embodiment of utterances, and their channelling to the outside social world. This discovery delineates a remarkable phenomenological chiasmus. If in Taylor's theory modern self-consciousness gives rise to monological subjectivities, then the same reflexivity applied to art can produce the most accurate representation of dialogical utterance.

The visit to the poet of Villaumere figures in Rabelais' vast mock-testament of old forms of knowledge as a dying representative of a vast source of spiritual authority, rooted in the confessional mode, which the author anticipated would be a casualty of print technology. Pantagruel's catalogue of inspired poets, intended to legitimize Raminagrobis' prophesies in Panurge's eyes, instead shows them up as the degree zero of the threshold dialogue. In "M. Valdemar," Poe extends this ambivalent Rabelaisian discourse, simultaneously tactile and Gargantuan, into the signifying context of the early nineteenth century. He adopts Rabelais' liminal stance between an old manuscript and a nascent print culture to explore developments in his own Industrial context, developments which can be understood as extensions of those which print technology brought to the renaissance. Writing four hundred years later, at the cusp of a second
information explosion, Poe gives renewed relevance to
Rabelais' transitional strategies of representation. He
rewrites this myth of social transformation to accommodate
his own particular signifying environment, in which the
inspired voice of the dying poet is checked by the
monological discourses which compete to construct not only
the modern self but, as we shall see, the modern writer as
well. Poe demonstrates through a complex play of literacy
and orality that for the modern self-reflexive subject, dead
words may be the only source of inspiration left.

VIII. Poe and the Information Society

Poe's importance to the present study depends to a great
extent on his unique situation part-way between a thoroughly
Romantic and an utterly instrumental mentality. As a writer
who addressed the social and material impact of print
technology from within the nekyia and testamental genres, Poe
revitalized the menippea during a significant moment in its
history. His writings have too often been described as the
inspired lines of an oracular poet living dangerously close
to the threshold of a death by dipsomania, when in fact they
may be more adequately characterized as the Gargantuan
preoccupations of a professional writer on the threshold of a
new information economy. Rather than ascribe Poe's literary
achievement to some ineffable "Romantic genius," Terence Whalen correctly situates his productivity within the context of the nineteenth-century "information explosion," a phrase he uses to describe the "signifying environment" of antebellum America. According to Whalen, the most important influence on a commercial writer such as Poe had to be the antagonistic relation he assumed toward the sundry embodiments of capital in the publishing industry, which included "printing machinery, transportation networks, commercial information, [and] technical data . . ." (382). In this view, the merchant economy in which Poe was immersed not only "facilitated a sordid intermingling of conflicting discursive traditions," but also fostered a "need to combine different kinds of information" (390). Whalen claims that Poe had to learn the central writerly lesson that information, whether commercial or literary, derives its value from circulation: "[f]or Poe, writing is a form of production that derives its raw materials not from divine inspiration, experience, or a discrete literary tradition, but instead from the whole jumbled mass of information that has been accumulating from ancient times down to the present moment" (392). This view attributes Poe's survival as a writer to his ability to adopt an intertextual strategy of writing appropriate to the new cultural economy of information. Once the writer overcame his anxiety of drawing
writerly stock from quotidian sources, he could refashion himself as a sort of capitalist bricoleur.

Whalen's attempt at bridging literary discourse and other forms of information is generally convincing; however, it is flawed by a definition of information that falls too easily into the commodity paradigm. Detached from both sender and receiver, information in Whalen's model is understood to circulate like capital on its own self-sufficiency—a sort of discursive raw material, utterly decontextualized, but prefabricated to fit whatever context the writer might create. He conceives of information as a cipher, a nebulous form of intellectual currency capable of transmuting itself into any number of discourses—crop reports, books of days, penny tabloids, or the tales of E. A. Poe. In short, far from constituting a heteroglot complex of specific discursive genres, information for Whalen rather represents the absence of all genres of utterance.

One might accept the conceit, if not the reality, of a nineteenth-century signifying context in which information began to circulate more freely and apparently by virtue of its own capital, often without clear point of origin or destination. That decontextualized information was too readily taken as "factual" was one of the social tendencies which "M. Valdemar" satirizes. Responses to the tale's original appearance indicates the nebulous authority of a new
publishing apparatus as it attempts to distinguish between the known and the possible, between general knowledge and verifiable information. Against the Morning Post's assertion with regard to "M. Valdemar" that "[f]or our own parts we do not believe it," the American Magazine argues that the characters and places named in the story were enough to establish its authenticity, and furthermore that "there is no strong point for disbelief" (in Walker 148-50).

Yet, an emergent post-industrial culture in which "objective" information was increasingly accepted as raw capital could certainly be said to have provided the background of Poe's more daring generic experiments in literary serendipity. Many of his writings demonstrate that the lack of a context, far from hindering a written utterance, is in fact constitutive of textuality. Poe was fascinated by the anonymous text as a limit-case of communication. In narratives such as "MS Found in a Bottle" and "Descent into the Maelstrom," he explores the message in the bottle as an exaggerated, even fabulous symbol of the circumstances governing every written communication. For Poe, as for Derrida, the found document exemplifies an irony inherent in textual authority: that the absence of any identifiable communicative context ironically guarantees its verisimilitude. This recognition encapsulates some of the basic premises of Jacques Derrida's grammatology, exemplified
in his famous dictum that "a letter can always not arrive at its destination, and that therefore it never arrives" (Post Card 33). Derrida's metaphor of the missent missive gains its peculiar force precisely from the frisson which occurs when communicative genres are crossed. The theorist posits a worst-case scenario of pragmatic communication (the errant epistle) as a necessary condition of the more complex forms of semiosis involved in literary communication, in which sender and receiver, or author and reader, can never connect with any certainty. Like the signature, which at once represents a mark of authorial absence and a cachet of authenticity, so the proverbial bottle is a sign of both the exigency of the message contained therein, and the reader's inevitable belatedness to the original scene of inscription. The illusion created is that of an urgent communiqué transformed into an aesthetic object, through a distancing of any imaginable pragmatic context.

If Poe provokes the question of authorial context, he does so not to emulate the free-floating capital of information, as Whalen might argue, but to analyze the industrial print culture's loss of legitimation, and its impact on the nature and role of fiction. Many of Poe's tales develop this conceit of having issued from an irretrievable context of inscription. "M. Valdemar" requires that the reader work from inference to reconstruct an
imaginary scandal from the written *apologia*, in order to recover the answer for which it is a question. Similarly, in "Mellonta Tauta," a comic inversion of the classic message-in-the-bottle motif, the putative author of the future has "lost" or forgotten the reader's contemporary historical context. All of these tales exhibit an uncertainty with respect to their originary source, purpose, and destination; in other words, they all exhibit a certain generic undecidability. I am here defining literary genre from a reader's perspective, as a system of expectations which help to establish the provenance and purpose of a given text, in order to facilitate its reception. Genre could be said to hold the place of the lost scene of inscription; it is the cipher of textual provenance. Genre is like the cast-away bottle which initially substitutes for a lost context, and allows the document within to be read.

To modify Whalen's original thesis, then, Poe did not simply "accept" dissociated information as writerly capital; on the contrary, he exploited it as a probe into the condition of literary genres in the broader discursive context of a nascent information society. In *Genres in Discourse*, Tzvetan Todorov identifies Poe's fascination with limits of all kinds as his distinguishing characteristic (94). Perhaps Poe's writings might better be understood as an expression of an overriding concern with the pragmatic
limits of written communication itself. Boundary texts like "M. Valdemar" demonstrate Poe's concern with the conditions of communication, concerns that were intensified with his culture's adoption of new apparatuses of dissemination. If Poe could be said to have accepted the imaginative capital of information it was not, as Whalen claims, as a free-floating resource divorced from the apparatuses that channel information. Rather, he used it to self-reflexively interrogate the conditions of utterance that produced it. Far from an objective token or ideologically neutral source of capital, "information" emerges in "M. Valdemar" as the umbrella term for various heteroglot genres of discourse affiliated with different institutional practices—medical, legal, experimental, and so on—each involving varying degrees of professional responsibility. To attribute P----'s failings to Poe would be to miss the point of his satire: "M. Valdemar" is only the story of a putative author who tries to abstract the conditions of utterance and abdicate responsibility for his actions by recasting them in a collage of informational codes which he believes to be value-free. Ironically, this circumspect narrator frantically engages so many different discourses in his forensic monologue that he cannot but draw attention to the heterogeneous institutional moorings of his language. Try as he might to monologize the information before him, to reduce the case to "facts", Poe's
putative narrator cannot ultimately eliminate the inevitable trace of intertextual drift from his discourse. The medical man's discursive dilemma thus stands for the plight of the sciences in the new information age, and their search for legitimation within the new heteroglot universe of discourses.

As the endgame of the threshold dialogue, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" represents Poe's scepticism toward the possibility of ever attaining ultimate knowledge in a post-industrial society that persists in defining the self in monological terms. In an analysis of Poe's endings, Paul John Eakin shows that while all of Poe's necromantic stories (including the mesmeric tales, angelic colloquies, and "Lazarus tales") equate endings in death or apocalypse with the achievement of total knowledge, the narratives themselves never achieve the kind of closure that guarantees any certainty. While Poe's most classical nekyia, his angelic colloquies (like "Monos and Una"), take place in the realm of total knowledge, Poe never represents the communication of this understanding to the temporal world. Similarly, the mesmeric tales remain forever on the threshold of understanding, never conveying any knowledge that would allow the narrative to transcend the fact of death itself. With the third variety of threshold narrative, the "Lazarus tale," a lone figure's extraordinary encounter with a sublime realm
beyond renders him beyond human comprehension, and thus incapable of conveying his experience to the world of mortals. In every case, knowledge of a realm of total knowledge that would allow the transcendence of the fact of death remains uncommunicated to the temporal world.

This denial of transcendence represents a late development within the tradition of the sceptical necromantic dialogue. We have seen that renaissance nekyia communicated news between this world and the next with remarkable ease and regularity, in a caricature of the disseminating range of print that undermined its claim to authoritative understanding. The conceit of "news" that pretended to convey knowledge of ultimate mysteries while actually debunking politicians or the latest church edict anticipated and sabotaged the print medium's claim to increasing understanding through more efficient communication. "M. Valdemar" adopts a similar, if more extreme, attitude toward a nineteenth-century culture in the full grip of a print-biased information economy. Poe abandons even the blatantly ironic treatment of the barrier between this world and the next as a gateway to ultimate answers; instead, it is treated as a boundary to the limits of knowledge. Menippeanists who came after Poe would have to innovate other strategies for reopening dialogue between this world and the next.
CHAPTER THREE.

More Dialogues of the Dead, 
the Diabolical, and the Dispossessed: 
The Crying of Lot 49's Menippean Legacy

That truth it is, we all bear testament . . . .

- Richard Wharfinger, The Courier's Tragedy
(Vatican edition)

1. Hermes, Menippus, and the Legacy (of) Satire

The last chapter sketched a broad argument for considering the menippean legacy as a satiric socio-cultural history of media. If Lucian's pioneering focus on the role of mediation in Greek myth has passed entirely unnoticed, this is perhaps so because the earliest extant dialogues of the dead also foreground some of Roman satire's more traditional social themes. The satiric emphasis on property and the body, which, I suggested, opens Lucian's dialogues to a materialist critique of ancient systems of communication, also converge in the traditional satiric theme of captatio, or legacy-hunting. In the Dialogue we examined earlier,
Pluto commands Hermes to set straight the parasitic economy of legacy hunters and their beneficiaries, a task that falls entirely within Hermes' responsibilities as the administrator of all manner of exchange. Again and again in the *Nekyomanteia*, the endless attempts of greedy suitors to usurp their opponents' place as the final beneficiary of these protean wills are finally short-circuited by Hermes, who drags the parasites down ahead of the wealthy men they flatter—the captator captus. Hermes does not play the parasitic game of deviation and deferral: his is a finalizing interruption that sets the system right, and admits of no further misdirection. As the archetypal conductor, he is opposed to any interruptions of the current, any noise in the system.

Behind Lucian's mythic cynicism, then, lies a satire on the discourse of conveyance or communication itself, epitomized in the labours of Hermes. Those who work hard to gain undeserved wealth through false promises or learning only make more work for Hermes, who tries in vain to maintain transparent lines of contact. Flatterers exchange words for a promise of property, and property for a deathbed oath, a last right that would guarantee material gain. To confound discourse and property in this way is to disrupt the very byways of communication. The only remedy, to the delight of Menippus, is a ritual divestiture of flesh and falsehoods.
that upsets the parasitical structure, defers the final reward, and mocks the very idea of burial "rights."

As the deity who presides over systems of transportation, communication and exchange, Lucian's Hermes remains entirely within their rules. His interference always ends the seemingly infinite deferral of the parasitic social economy by returning the estate to its rightful owner, thereby revealing death to be that which strips away property rather than bestows it. While Midas bemoans his lost riches, and Achilles mourns his departed strength, only Menippus among them can take part in the divine feast of a revealing laughter, roaring even louder than the busy gods themselves. The rest, as Antilochus tells Achilles, "see the uselessness of speaking. We've resolved to say nothing, and to bear and endure it all, for fear that we too become a laughing-stock, as you have . . ." (Dialogues of the Dead 26, 159). Only Menippus, the consummate Cynic, is exempt from this harsh law of dispossession, because he does not "take money . . .

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45 Menippus was a Cynic, though his writings mocked even that most critical of philosophical schools. Blanchard argues that Menippus was as much a Pyrrhonist as a Cynic (11 et passim), though Korkowski points out the strange fact that Lucian and later menippeanists mocked the Pyrrhonists, whose doctrine of suspended judgement rings so close to their own (55). In her discussion of Lucian, Jennifer Hall points out that Cynics doubted the value of all rhetoric, whereas Lucian only critiqued unworthy practitioners of that art. She offers the dubious conclusion that neither Menippus nor other Cynics had any substantial influence on Lucian (260).
for cheating the young men with his show of wisdom" (Dialogues of the Dead 20, 115).

When Charon demands his obol in payment for transportation, all Menippus can produce from his bag are lupines and a meal meant for Hecate (Dialogues of the Dead 2, 13): he remains outside the system of payment, choosing instead to defer his debt with an offer of a gift. This is how the hero trumps the creditor, in Michel Serres' analysis of the cultural economy of parasitism: "Do not return tobacco for tobacco, that is, goods for goods, words for words, love for love; give instead words for goods and love for money" (Hermes 5). Menippus thus proves himself freer even than Hermes, who must regulate and balance the several spheres of commerce and communication, and deal out final desserts with unwavering equity. He exists outside the economy of interpersonal communication which Hermes labours so hard to maintain. Hermes cannot step out of his Homeric horizon and into the present, as Bakhtin saw:

In the epic, characters are bounded, preformed, individualized by their various situations and destinies, but not by varying 'truths.' Not even the gods are separated from men by a special truth: they have the same language, they all share the same world view, the same fate, the same extravagant externalization (Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel" 35).
Menippus, on the other hand, shows how a character might violate the laws of epic representation that govern the gods. Hermes permits him to laugh precisely because the cynic embodies an autonomy from the rules of exchange which the god can only envy: "Don't you know, my dear Charon, what sort of man you've taken across? He is absolutely independent and cares for nobody. This is Menippus" (2.15). Having "no time to moralise" with Menippus, Hermes must run off to work while the scoffer chooses a place to lie down (5.25).

Having nothing else to give, Menippus gives the gift of laughter. "Laughter," writes Serres, "is the human phenomenon of communication (reciprocal definition), parallel, in the feast, to all objective communication: it is inextinguishable at the table of the gods" (Hermes 14). Serres writes of myth proper; but in Lucian's sceptical parody of myth, even the divine cena requires that Hermes spend his feasts serving others (Dialogues of the Gods 4, 255-7). Lucian derives his humour from the dystopian demonstration that communication is far from a transparent process, even at the table of the gods; instead, all utterances are intercepted, or "parasited," everywhere by competing systems of exchange. Mortals work to gain riches illegitimately, while Hermes works to undo their schemes.

46 The suggestion that laughter involves "reciprocal definition" is very close to Bakhtin's notion that the subject defines itself in dialogic relation to another; see Kujundzic on Bakhtin's laughter as a marker of alterity.
Menippus alone seeks to gain nothing in exchange for his laughter. With Hermes too busy to find amusement, Lucian's Menippus usurps his role as the laughing genius of Comedy. The idler of the underworld, Menippus alone understands that work and the pursuit of property always interfere with communication. The "world of apparently determinate evil" presented in Lucian's dialogues on captatio (Duncan 147) thus diverts criticism away from the traditional satiric theme of the morality of legacy hunting, and redirects it instead toward a critical apprehension of communicational ethics. The whole system of effortless and instantaneous communication on which the mythic world rests is laid bare as an inefficient mechanism, inadequate to deal with the worldly interests of mortals.

II. Speaking Corpses and the Detective Satire

Certain broad trends can be observed from the history of the necromantic satire. Lucian found it a convenient form in which to debunk popular conceptions of mythic or historical figures, by confronting the fabulous underworld realm with a proto-realistic tone of daylight morality and philosophical

47 Duncan refers specifically to Lucian's ninth Dialogue of the Dead (number 19 in the Loeb edition), in which the late Polystratus relates to a friend in Hades how he tricked his suitors into bestowing favours upon him by promising to make each his benefactor, in a ruse made famous by Jonson's Volpone.
scepticism. The fantastic Homeric Hades is installed to be subverted from within, and laid bare as metaphysically untenable. Writing in response to Lucian, Rabelais and, after him, Poe deny any direct access to the underworld setting in their threshold dialogues, focussing instead on the realm of the dead as mediated through the perceptions of the living. Poe extends Lucian's scepticism to comment on the phatic, the channels of communication themselves. In "M. Valdemar", the authority of the dead to speak has been usurped by the analytico-referential discourse of modernity, and the imaginative utterance can hardly vie for a voice amid the self-legitimating noise of instrumental language.

This newly defined role of the revenant, the underworld journeyer who crosses the threshold in search of total knowledge, only to defer it comically, represents a developing self-reflexive recognition of the horizon of interpretation itself. The barrier between this world and the next, ideally conceived even in Lucian as a gateway to ultimate answers, was refashioned in the renaissance as an epistemological boundary that defines the limits of the knowable. As the last chapter shows, the threshold dialogue, which satirizes the otherworldly desire for total knowledge, throughout modernity became increasingly drawn into association with the medium of print. This development suggests that, for menippean satirists like Rabelais, Nashe
and Poe, it was print itself, and the information explosion it caused, that proved at once the greatest promise for and barrier to the attainment of integrated knowledge. Of course, hundreds of nekyia in the traditional mould continued to be written during this period, at Byzantium, in northern Europe and, ultimately, in England; but alongside these classical exercises there arose a growing recognition of the genre's potential for satirically foregrounding the shifting currents of residual and emergent apparatuses of communication.

That this pattern of evolution has until now been ignored may account for criticism's failure to recognize the strong and continuing presence of necromantic satire in late modern and postmodern literature. Unfortunately, even the most up-to-date histories of the nekyia fall short of the late-capitalist or post-industrial age. Korkowski limits his concerns to menippean satires penned before the mid-eighteenth century; Keener's bibliography ends with a 1907 anthology of dialogues of the dead, while Boyce's more exhaustive study includes a necromantic satire published in the Sewanee Review as late as 1939. One need not look too far for instances in which necromantic discourse engages contemporary culture. In the last chapter we saw that the nekyia, far from disappearing in the nineteenth century, actually engaged parliamentary discourse through the magazine
fiction of Edgar Allan Poe. More recently, Lucian's legacy satires have entered directly into the discourse of probate law. In a 1963 judgement, Lord Denning drew attention to "'the group of ghosts of dissatisfied testators who, according to a late Chancery judge, wait on the other bank of the Styx to receive the judicial personages who have misconstrued their wills'" (Hancher 516).

One reason for the apparent cessation of necromantic satire involves the rise to dominance of a new discursive tradition, the detective story, which largely replaced the fantastic dialogue of the dead with a predominant concern for the "facts," a discursive bias which Poe parodied in "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar." The decay of dialogue in necromantic satire emerges along with the taboo of learning from the dead in any manner except through the anatomist's objective gaze. In the detective genre, the dead generally hold relevance not as any repository of threshold wisdom or final truths, but simply as the tacit index of the ultimate fact of death itself. The tell-tale corpse signals the inevitable presence of a body of clues to assist the reconstruction of a crime, an extension of the anatomical method of narrative organization. Far from a satiric dismemberment, the murdered corpse from now on enables an authoritative anatomy of the crime, and the reconstruction of a monological discourse of guilt and innocence. Modern
analytico-referential discourse is rather authorized than undermined in the modern detective story.

"The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" could be considered a parody of the detective genre, invented by Poe, in which the crime committed is the narrator's overhasty delivery of his patient into the hands of death, and the clues to the mystery which the reader must detect are distributed intertextually throughout his rationalizing patter. Terence Whalen has directly linked the detective stories to the new information economy in which Poe finds himself: "Stories like 'Rue Morgue' attempt to outwit the crisis of overproduction in the literary market by imagining the reverse situation—a social crisis caused by a scarcity of information" (410). The detective story thus emphasizes the value of the missing clue or unavailable data in a saturated field of information. That Poe should in his tales of ratiocination have endorsed the same anatomical procedures which he satirizes in "M. Valdemar" represents a double perspective typical of menippean satirists, who often treat subject the same topic to serious treatment and ridicule alike. If "M. Valdemar" demonstrates the failure of factual discourse in the face of death, then Poe's detective stories celebrate the accuracy of ratiocination when it is applied within the limits of the knowable. Poe's necromantic satires and his tales of ratiocination alike attempt to problematize
a modern discourse that grounds its authority in the
effortless flow of large quantities of information.

That the detective genre has much in common with the
menippean mock-testament is perfectly illustrated by Thomas
Lot 49 is a testamental satire, surrounding the protagonist
Oedipa Maas' attempt to execute the last will of her late
friend, Pierce Inverarity. As she wanders about an irrealist
California urbenscape, taking inventory of Inverarity's
holdings, Oedipa stumbles, perhaps by accident, into an
underground society of dissident couriers. The further back
she traces the Tristero's secret history, the more it becomes
entangled with the "official" past and present of America.
Her story combines the parodic discursive dismembering and
underworld visit of the testamental and necromantic satires,
with the mysterious atmosphere and journey of discovery
associated with detective stories.

A significant difference between Lot 49 and both the
necromantic and detective traditions, however, is that
Pynchon's text motivates these genres in the absence of any
dead or dying body. Pierce Inverarity, the "victim" around
whom the satire is centred, is instead embodied through
various other social forms—property holdings, corporate
entities, personal belongings, and even electronically
transmitted signals. The more Oedipa tries to incorporate
these fragments of property and media in a monological discourse of probity, the more they disperse themselves in the fashion of a traditional mock-testament. Pynchon thus parodies the menippean testamental satire in order to critique modern definitions and instantiations of the self, a self which, as Charles Taylor observes, monologically omits any reference to the body. Moreover, the particular forms in which Inverarity's legacy is embodied point the finger of guilt at the discursive infrastructures of property rights and communications media. These two spheres of discourse decay within Pynchon's satiric testament, making space for the construction of a dialogical alternative.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of Pynchon's critics have delimited the generic precedents of Lot 49 too narrowly, consequently misinterpreting his satiric targets. The text has been received almost unanimously as a novel. Pynchon's first novel-length text exhibits in itself the kind of "'characteristics with reservations'" which Bakhtin describes as typical of ill-fated attempts at stable isolations of the novelistic essence ("Epic and Novel" 8-9). Thus, one might indicate that Lot 49 is largely in prose, yet admixes blank and lyric verse, or that it is intricately plotted, but in such a way that the very idea of plot threatens to subsume any pretense of descriptive realism. In short, it must be allowed that Lot 49 does not "belong to" the genre of novel;
rather, it participates in the process which Bakhtin describes in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics and the long essay, "Discourse in the Novel," as the novelization of menippean discourse. The omniscient narrative voice and contemporary setting of Lot 49 provoke an expectation of novelistic conventions, only to frustrate it in the end through the intermingling of pre-novelistic genres of discourse. Its causal plot and character development are gradually subsumed by a paranoid reinterpretation of history that explores a single, extreme intellectual proposition: the possibility and implications of a mysterious underworld of communication operating alongside contemporary America.

Theodore Kharpertian has considered Lot 49, along with Pynchon's other major texts, as a menippean satire. Kharpertian translates Ronald Paulson's definition of satire as a fundamental antithesis of the desirable and the actual, or of fertility and sterility,48 into Bakhtinian terms:

This sterility is represented in The Crying of Lot 49 principally in forms of communication. The institutional communicative systems of mail, radio, and television are depicted as stifling, fraudulent,

48 Kharpertian draws his primary definition of satire as an opposition of real and ideal from Ronald Paulson, who traces this "thesis-antithesis structure" to ancient fertility rituals (6). The opposition of fertility and sterility has much in common with Bakhtin's analysis of the carnivalesque in the Rabelais and Dostoevsky books, specifically his discussion of the crowning of the carnival king, which always implies an uncrowning. However, the menippean satire does not characteristically fall so neatly into this binary paradigm.
and deceptive—in Bakhtinian terms, monological—forming a wasteland of official uniformity from which diversity and meaning—Bakhtinian dialogism—are excluded (85).

This schematic understanding of dialogism does well to bring Bakhtin's terms of analysis to bear on mass-mediated communications, a strategy that the present study continues and expands. Unfortunately, he attempts to fit Pynchon's narrative into a Procrustean bed built from abstract definitions of the ancient genre, without examining its intertextual relationship with any actual texts in the menippean tradition. Dialogism is a diachronic as well as a synchronic feature of language, and Kharupertian's diagrammatic reading fails to demonstrate how Pynchon's investigation into the social conditions of communication participates dialogically in the history of media and of the menippean genre. As a result, his analysis lapses into a simple polarity of monological and dialogical discourses that misconstrues the targets of Pynchon's satiric attack, and ultimately places too much faith in the mysterious Tristero as a liberating alternative institution.

However, by situating *Lot 49* dialogically within the tradition of necromantic and testamental satire, one can construct an alternate reading of the text as a menippean critique of monological communications and information media. Such a reading does not offer the menippean satire as a
totalizing rubric that unifies Pynchon's text; on the contrary, it opens the narrative to a testamental potlatch in which its various intertextual debts are repaid. The intertextual in Lot 49 cries out to be heard: Oedipa's name alone immediately cues Sophoclean overtones (see Moddelmog; Richwell), while the fictional Wharfinger's Courier's Tragedy suggests connections to the whole corpus of Elizabethan and Jacobean blood tragedies. But little if any critical response has been devoted to the tradition of legacy satire which provides the background to the primary diegetic impetus of Lot 49, and which overlaps significantly with the menippean tradition. Only a dialogical reading of the text in relation to its menippean intertexts can enable a critique of the politics of communications in late-capitalist society.

The plot of Lot 49 consists of Oedipa's attempts to make sense of a historical palimpsest of texts, coalescing around the legend of the Tristero and the various editions of the Wharfinger play. Frank Kermode points out the metafictional foregrounding of the processes of interpretation in Pynchon's text when he says, "What Oedipa is doing is very like reading a book" (163). But Oedipa herself exhibits some anxiety over her New Critical college literary training, which "had managed to turn the young Oedipa into a rare creature indeed, unfit perhaps for marches and sit-ins, but just a whiz at pursuing strange words in Jacobean texts"
(76). If the metafictional text typically incorporates its own first reading (Hutcheon, Narcissistic Narrative 1), then *Lot 49* is a kind of anti-metafiction, insofar as Oedipa's interpretive approach provides the first misreading of her situation, and of Pynchon's text.

Her error lies in her inability to keep San Narciso's inscrutable past separate from its evocative present. Oedipa collapses the entire history of social communications in America into a single configuration that depends on the historical continuity of the conspiratorial Tristero. She comes to believe that the cryptic symbols and secret sharers in San Narciso's subterranean communications system will grant her immediate access to the history of mediation itself. Oedipa thus gives in to what might be called a "paranoid reading," an epithet that Brian McHale uses to characterize the interpretive method adopted by many of Pynchon's critics. McHale argues that Pynchon's fiction provokes this paranoid act of forming connections only to subvert it, in a reverse-metafictional gesture designed exclusively to demonstrate the pitfalls of a certain type of analogical reading institutionalized by "Modernist" literary institutions (*Constructing* 87 ff.).

While McHale's reading is convincing as far as it goes, it threatens to discharge Pynchon's satirical thrust in a self-reflexive critique of the reading practices endorsed by
literary-critical institutions. Such an approach only compounds Oedipa's own misreadings, which are rooted in her adherence to a narrowly academic experience and a "paranoid" resistance to the broader sociohistorical significations of her circumstances. Oedipa's perception even of her own interpretive skills is marred by her inability to separate her own interpretive style from those of the past, such as the close textual readings of seventeenth-century Puritans, who "... were utterly devoted, like literary critics, to the Word" (117). Such historical allusions to interpretive methods, real or imaginary, perpetually draw the self-conscious reader into a broader frame of reference.

C.E. Nicholson and R.W. Stevenson broaden McHale's approach, and end up making the opposite mistake of historicizing the text to the exclusion of its literary intertexts. They argue that _Lot 49_ "undoes" the reader's Modernist strategies for reading intratextually within the literary canon, by demanding a return to historical intertexts outside the novel. Their research shows how Pynchon weaves information about Thurn and Taxis couriers, the California Gold Rush, M. Bakunin, and other actual historical references into his overtly allegorical account of Oedipa's periplum through an imaginary San Narciso. To read _Lot 49_, they argue, is to relinquish the still prevalent (formalist) critical assumption "that a literary text
autonomously contains sufficient [fictional or aesthetic] information for its own interpretation" (108). If any sense is to be made of the text, this reading suggests, it must be through a manner of "citational" reading that engages the "supra-textual organization of notations" that make up that which we call knowledge (Barthes, "Edgar Poe" 10-11).

That the "supra-textual" phenomenon of knowledge is today also understood to comprise information and communications media is a given of the present study. In Nicholson and Stevenson's view, Pynchon posits systems of information and communication rather than "order" as a means of making sense of history (102). His text works as an index to a coded realm of intertextualities from which the reader might learn to mediate the historical horizons layered in the text. These critics seem to find in Lot 49 another level of metafictional signification beyond the diegetic, a play of fictional and historically actual codes that leaves the reader, like Oedipa, uncertain of whether she is "'inside, safe, or outside, lost'; in other words, uncertain whether she is safely contained within an artefact created partly for the sense of order it brings to and imposes upon the randomness of experience, or 'outside,' reading a novel . . ." (Nicholson and Stevenson 105).

While illuminating for its historical situation of the text, the view of history that these critics put forward is
nevertheless limited by its failure to address the mediation of literary intertexts in Lot 49. Literature is also a part of communications history, and literary parody (and allusion) another means of confounding the "safe inside" of a text with the "lost outside" of historical actuality. If Lot 49 is to be understood in relation to the history of communications, some means must be found for mediating all levels of information, and for opening a channel between literary and historical intertexts. What is required is a hermeneutic that stresses the dialogical relations that govern the miscegenation of different kinds of discourse within and between different historical frames of reference.

III. Intertextuality as Dialogical Hermeneutics

The nekyia genre's self-reflexive emphasis on the limits of knowledge and communication bears certain affinities to the "dialogical hermeneutics" of Hans Robert Jauss. Jauss identifies the interpretive horizon as a literary-hermeneutic concept that posits the ontological horizon of experience as a basis of being in the world. His detailed inquiry into the concept of the interpretive horizon is worth quoting at length for the insight it provides into the nekyia genre:

one can so construe the shift in the meaning of the term within the Greek/occidental tradition that, at the beginning, horizon is the name given to the location of the soul in the cosmic hierarchy but, 
at the end, means the self-generated, human experience of the world delimited by the horizon. 'Man no longer is but instead has a horizon, one that he himself defines through reflection on his own consciousness.' . . . [A]n observation that has no doubt always been available in the praxis of life—that every current horizon gives way to new horizons as one moves along or travels—found no entry in the epistemology of the classical period or the Middle Ages. But the idea of an immovable, world-encompassing horizon survived the Copernican revision in the legendary form: the mythologem of that divide where the heavens meet the earth. From a hermeneutic point of view, the divide between the closed horizon of expectations of innerworldly knowledge and the open horizon of onmoving experience corresponds to the divide between understanding as the recognition and interpretation of professed or revealed truth on the one hand, and understanding as the search for or investigation of a possible meaning on the other (200).

Jauss' emphasis on the horizons of expectations and experience suggests a striking parallel with Bakhtin's emphasis on the nekyia as a "threshold dialogue." Even in antiquity, Lucian represented the barrier between life and death as a correlative of the open philosophic horizon, in dialogues that sceptically readdressed the closed horizons of mythic truths. The last chapter showed how Poe's "M. Valdemar," for instance, recognizes his culture's media bias as a communicative horizon that both enables and limits self-understanding. By locating the horizons of literary hermeneutics within the broader horizon of the history and sociology of knowledge, Jauss provides a means for situating
the contemporary menippean satire in the context of knowledge
and the emergence of information society generally.49

Although Jauss does not discuss communications media
specifically, he does offer his dialogical brand of
hermeneutics as a means of debunking the historicist fallacy
of transparent access to the historically distant, or alien,
text. "Aesthetics involves mediated perceptions, not
spontaneity" (Jauss 223), and a dialogical hermeneutics
begins and ends with the identification of the horizons of
expectations and experience, past and present, that mediate
the reception of any given text. Ever since Lucian's mythic
parodies, the menippean satire has demonstrated hermeneutic
mediation to be fully contingent upon mass-mediated forms of
information. Jauss' methodology helps to illustrate the
nekyia as a genre that creates a self-reflexive hermeneutic
in which past and present horizons of knowledge are mediated
through a fictional dialogue with departed interlocutors. As
the nekyia evolves into its modern form, these horizons
become more self-consciously foregrounded as the mediators of
understanding. In many ways, the history of the menippean
genre thus demonstrates a growing awareness that the means of

49 In a recent conference paper presented at the 1996
ACCUTE annual conference at Brock University, Michael Keefer
provided a "necromantic model" for discussing hermeneutics.
Keefer discusses the serious, or epic nekyia tradition almost
exclusively, without considering the strain of satiric nekyia
that concerns the present study. But the Gadamerian
hermeneutic he outlines closely resembles Jauss' hybrid
Bakhtinian theory.
addressing the "ultimate questions" facing society lies increasingly in the role of communications media, interpreted as the open horizon of understanding itself.

Whether it is the noisy banks of Lucian's Styx, or the prattling cemetery of Dostoevsky's "Bobok," the threshold narrative in the dialogical tradition represents death (like the feast) as the space of intertextuality. The dialogue of the dead parodies whatever discourse threatens to silence that post-mortem babble: the distanced, closed form of myth and epic in the case of Lucian; or, in the case of Poe, the monologizing "scientific-deontological" discourse of modern medicine. A dialogical hermeneutic allows the exploration of specific intertextualities as indicative of sets of institutionalized representational practices and apparatuses, each entailing a specific range of historically conditioned expectations that not only influence reception, but make it possible in the first place.

A hermeneutic model of intertextuality furthermore factors in the historical provisionality of associative reading. Jauss theorizes that the reader can never attain access to the alien element in any given text, especially that which is historically distant. On the contrary, interpretation involves a process of mediating the historically determined reader's "horizon of expectations and experience" with the alien horizons encoded in the text.
Since both the text and its reader have different experiential horizons, significance can be recognized only in the difference between them, a relation that Jauss describes as dialogical in Bakhtin's sense. Aesthetic experience arises through a recognition of what Bakhtin would call "answerability [otvetstvennost']," or the positioning of horizons from different historical periods in dialogical relation to each other. The interpretive horizon thus points toward a theory of intertextuality that foregrounds interpretation as a dialogical process of mediation, without giving in to a "paranoid" elision of historical contexts.

We shall see that in Lot 49 Oedipa confronts not one, but two new horizons that force her to reassess what she thinks she knows. She discovers not only the infernal underworld of the secretive W.A.S.T.E. system, but also America's hidden underside of dispossessed souls, huddled on the margin of all lines of communication. This overlay of different horizons resembles the tripartite structure characteristic of the traditional nekyia. As in Lucian and Seneca, the differences between earth, heaven, and hell—represented here by Oedipa's experience of San Narciso, the W.A.S.T.E., and those outside either system—are levelled to deny the possibility of any transcendent catascopic

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50 See Bakhtin, Dostoevsky 116. According to Relihan, Seneca's Apocolocyntosis represents the only truly tri-planed menippea in ancient literature (76).
perspective that would legitimate a hierarchy or consensus of communicational ideals. Knowledge is produced not from the perspective of any single realm of experience, but from the dialogic relation between horizons.

Jauss' observation of the modern subject's growing awareness of her own interpretive horizon bears obvious affinities with Charles Taylor's narrative of the rise of the modern self, discussed in the last chapter. However, the two theories diverge over the issue of alterity. We recall that Taylor views self-consciousness as an intrinsically monologizing force proper to modernity. Jauss, by contrast, interprets monologism and dialogism as stances one takes toward history, rather than dialectical phenomena that alternately dominate successive historical periods. He sees potential for the recognition of alien Otherness through a dialogic mediation of the self in relation to past horizons of expectations. Nevertheless, Jauss cautions that

even if, according to Bakhtin's lengthy interpretation of Dostoyevsky, the polyphonic word found in the novel is especially able to represent and disclose alien speech through speech, the receiver cannot simply leap over the hermeneutic difference and arrive at the alterity of the text or the 'alien utterance in its discourse' on the basis of his own aesthetically mediated self-reflection (216).
This caveat describes precisely the failings of Oedipa's dehistoricizing interpretation. In an inversion of the hermeneutic strategy, Oedipa subsumes her own horizon of experience within that of Wharfinger's drama. She tries to find a connection between the drowned Faggian Guard of The Courier's Tragedy and the bones purchased by the Beaconsfield cigarette company that would collapse historical distance, and prove the persistence of the mysterious Tristero: "I don't care what Beaconsfield uses in its filter. I don't care what Pierce bought from the Cosa Nostra. I don't want to think about them . . ." (76). Uninterested in the historical particulars of these isolated incidents, Oedipa only wants "to see if there's a connection" between them (54). In short, she becomes too closely caught up in the web of the Tristero to recognize it in its alien otherness, and through its otherness to recognize the peculiarity of her own historical situation.

Though Oedipa fails to discover a method of reading that will illuminate the Tristero, her quest leaves intertextual traces that act as clues to a strategy of interpretation more sensitive to the historical contingency of communication systems. *Lot 49* may not in itself "contain" sufficient information for a fully contextualized reading; however, its Menippean intertexts enable the "sensitive" reader to construct a critique of the conditions of knowing and
communicating in post-industrial America. Pynchon experts have failed to notice that Lot 49 parodies a text that we have already considered in relation to the necromantic tradition: Nashe's Pierce Pennilesse His Supplication to the Devil. A consideration of Pierce Pennilesse can help us restore the hermeneutic distance which remains integral to a full understanding of Oedipa's situation, however hard the (anti)heroine tries to eliminate that distance. This interpretive process mutually illuminates the signifying context of both Lot 49 and Pierce Pennilesse, foregrounding the problem of mediating alien horizons, without ever overcoming it.

IV. Pierce Inverarity His Supplication to the Demon

The last chapter described how Pierce Pennilesse critiques the Elizabethan system of literary production for its investiture with a patronage system of advancement based on a strictly commercial ethic. Pynchon translates this satiric focus into a dawning post-industrial context, in which new electronic media have begun to challenge seriously traditional legal and literary notions of intellectual property. In Pynchon's treatment, the dispossessed renaissance plaintiff Pierce Pennilesse undergoes a metamorphosis into Pierce Inverarity, late financial mogul of
San Narciso; while Pierce's correspondent, the Knight of the Post for the Low Countries (i.e. the underworld), becomes transformed into the diabolical Hernando Joaquín de Tristero y Calavera. Tristero, the dispossessed heir of the Thurn and Taxis courier monopoly, provides a thematic focus on dispossession that parallels Pierce Penniless's plaint.

While these allusions certainly trigger a reading of Nashe's work as an intertext to Pynchon's, a dialogical hermeneutic analysis must go beyond such monodirectional source-critic ism. Most critics of the menippean satire, along with theorists such as Harold Bloom, delimit interpretive avenues by tying texts to a strict pedigree of influence that is analogous to an inherited property—and property is precisely what is at issue in these two satires. An intertextual reading, by contrast, opens proprietal relations to a broader economy of signification. Read in the light of Nashe's text, instead of as a direct result of it, Lot 49 can be seen to create the conditions for its reader to construct a general critique of the property relations which responds to late twentieth-century developments in post-proprietal systems of cultural exchange.

This particular hermeneutic tactic corrects many of the blindspots in Pynchon criticism. For instance, in his consideration of Lot 49 as a menippean satire, Kharpertian focusses quite accurately on the theme of dispossession, but
fails to explain how this theme connects with either Pynchon's menippean intertexts, or his general emphasis on the social aspects of communication. Other critics focus on Pynchon's cybernetic themes, by now the hallmark of his fiction, without ever drawing this strain of communication together with the issue of dispossession. By reading *Lot 49* and *Pierce Pennilesse* as mutually informing intertexts, we can construct a comparative analysis of the impact of proprietal relations on communication in Elizabethan and contemporary America societies.

Bernard Duyfhuizen comes close to a fully integrated analysis of *Lot 49* in the attempt to contextualize Oedipa's compulsive search for narrative authority within the broader context of modernity. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's discussion of "The Storyteller," Duyfhuizen relates the motif of Inverarity's testament, and the theme of property relations in general, to the problem of narrative authority in the age of mass communications. Far from signifying "the orderly transfer of property," Inverarity's will represents "what Benjamin suggests becomes transmissible to the storyteller at the moment of death: 'authority' over the representation of one's life" (Duyfhuizen 81-2). With Inverarity's will situated at the center of Oedipa's *muthos*, her problem becomes how "to transform her authority, assigned for whatever reason by the subject of her story [Inverarity],
into an 'authoritative' tale that will satisfy both herself and the laws of probate" (82).

Duyfhuizen subjects "Oedipa's life story, where gains in the quantity of information are offset by the gradual destruction of the story itself" (88), to a value-judgement rooted in Benjamin's privileging of the enduring "story" over merely ephemeral "information." The protagonist cannot bring an authoritative closure to her story because the intrusion of the modern world of information and mass communications prevents any kind of lasting closure. Duyfhuizen presumes that information and communications get in the way of Oedipa's narrative, rather than convey it as they ought to do. He thus draws attention to "the hyperreal intertextuality that is woven through the various transmissions of the text. The lines of demarcation disappear, hushed in a way that disrupts any hope Oedipa (or the reader) might have for the emergence of a univocal 'story'" (91).

Why clear lines of intertextual transmission should necessarily contribute to univocality is something Duyfhuizen never explains. If anything, hushing the intertextual traces in *Lot 49* contributes to rather than destroys the illusion of narrative unity. Duyfhuizen's confusing metaphor can be explained as a side-effect of his own expectations of a narrative unified by novelistic conventions. The fragments
of information that constitute Pynchon's text only "defy conventional reconstruction" (92) if our horizon of expectations leads us to expect a linear plot that resolves in a diegetically unambiguous manner. On the other hand, one need not interpret the features which Duyfhuizen observes in *Lot 49*—the centrality of the last testament, the antagonistic relationship between legal and narrative discourses, and the dissipation of narrative authority that results from this discursive conflict—as symptoms of a crisis in authority. On the contrary, they can be read as signs of Pynchon's mock-testamental investigation into the very forms of discursive authority.

From a menippean perspective, Duyfhuizen completely misreads Oedipa's plight because he misconstrues the target of Pynchon's satire. *Lot 49* finds fault not with the mass-mediated forms of information which interfere with the establishment of discursive authority, but rather with the social and legal mechanisms that persist in perpetuating a construct of authority that refers to a unified body of property. The call for clear lines of transmission is ultimately an attempt to limit the sources of authority through an unambiguous record of proprietal relations, a kind of limitation that Pynchon reveals to be impossible in an electronic information society. As the example of Pierce Pennilesse suggests, Oedipa's inability to construct a
positive source of authority from the decaying body of Inverarity's holdings need not be interpreted as Pynchon's indictment of post-industrial society and its signifying practices. Read as a satiric nekyia, Lot 49 posits the dissipation of the monologic authority of testamental discourse as yet another kind of legitimation, one that speaks to a post-industrial context. As Oedipa learns more about the social construction of authority, she moves further away from the property relations and legal institutions that define her role as executrix. Pynchon's satire compels her and her reader to find a basis of authority distinct from that articulated by Benjamin, an authority which is not transferred, like property, at the benefactor's death.

Much of the criticism of the legal definition of authorship is aimed at the law's fundamentally Romantic understanding of the author as an individual creative genius. Legal theorists point out that the Statute of Anne of 1710, the document on which British, American, and Canadian copyright law is based to this day, never reflected any concern for protecting the interests of working writers. Rather, the bill was lobbied by and for the benefit of established London-based publishers and booksellers, seeking new legal weapons against down-market competition spawned by the proliferation of print technology (Jaszi 296). With the institution of copyright law, booksellers co-opted the notion
of "authorship" to create a stable legal foundation for the commodification of texts.

But the seeds of the debate over artistic property were sown in literary language long before the concept of copyright was even formulated in legal discourse, as Pierce Pennilesse bears witness. Writing in the nekyia tradition just over a hundred years before the Statute of Anne, Nashe could only illustrate the detrimental effects of the commodification of literary property by drawing a satiric analogy between literature and other, material commodities. He entertains the conceit that literary production is similar to other modes of production only ironically, in order to demonstrate its radical difference as a unique form of cultural expression. Pierce Pennilesse thus exhibits traces of what Raymond Williams calls "emergent" oppositional practices (123-7), practices that have grown fully articulate only very recently within postmodern critiques of the modern discourse of intellectual property that cannot address new conditions of signification in the "mode of information".

Pynchon, writing in the late twentieth century, faces the opposite problem to that which confronted Nashe: he must respond creatively to an overdetermined set of relations between literary and legal definitions of property that have achieved cultural dominance. The horizon of expectations within which The Crying of Lot 49 emerges includes a complex
of established, well-articulated contractual relations between authors, publishers, and texts that have long been naturalized, but which do not accurately represent the modes of creative productivity germane to a post-industrial society. As a dialogical response to Nashe's satire, Lot 49 activates a hermeneutic bridge for investigating the changes that have occurred in the relations of creative and proprietal authority in the last four hundred years. To read The Crying of Lot 49 as an intertext of Pierce Pennilessse is to become aware that the affiliated notions of authorship and copyright are not now and, moreover, never were an adequate expression of the real conditions of literary productivity.

The differing positions expressed by various characters in Pynchon's text amount to a polyphonic exploration of the relation between authority and ownership in post-industrial society. Ralph Driblette, the theatrical director who blocks Oedipa's incessant reaching after certainty, perceives his production of The Courier's Tragedy as an act of necromancy:

'You guys, you're like Puritans are about the Bible. So hung up with words, words. You know where that play exists, not in that file cabinet, not in any paperback you're looking for, but—' a hand emerged from the veil of shower-steam to indicate his suspended head—'in here. That's what I'm for. To give the spirit flesh' (56).

But Driblette's tirade is too readily interpreted as Pynchon's endorsement of the doctrine of the "death of the
author." In fact, it is the persistence of Inverarity's authority from beyond the grave which compels Oedipa's actions as executrix, and eventually leads her to suspect him of being capable yet of posthumously plotting her quest. Her paranoia arises from the recognition that the propertied author is never utterly dead, a realization that leads directly into a critique of the modern tendency to equate property rights with discursive authority. Simply asserting the death of the author as Driblette does addresses neither the real conditions of authorship and artistic authority in society, nor Oedipa's paranoid experience.

If one is to understand *Lot 49* as a polyphonic text, then one may not look for any direct expression of the author's views among any of his characters. Far from the last word in *Lot 49*, Driblette's position in fact enters into an extended dialogue with those of the other characters in the text over the relation between ownership and authority. One such interlocutor is Stanley Koteks who, like Nashe, has an axe to grind against the patent system:

Koteks explained how every engineer, in signing the Yoyodyne contract, also signed away the patent rights to any inventions he might come up with.

"This stifles your really creative engineer," Koteks said, adding bitterly, "wherever he may be" (85).

Though he voices the most overt critique of intellectual property in Pynchon's text, Koteks cannot transcend the
established conceptual limits of individual ownership. Seemingly progressive, he finally falls back on the notion of the isolated Romantic genius on which patent law has always been based. Taken together, Driblette and Koteks articulate the two extremes of response to the state of intellectual property in twentieth-century America. On one side of the issue stands the radically misprisioning dramatist who ignores all questions of source, and delegates all responsibility for interpretation to the reader or performer. This position recommends the liberation of ideas and their expression through a radical denial of any proprietorship on the part of their originators. On the other side stands Koteks, an engineer who asserts his personal rights over his own intellectual property as a challenge to its corporate takeover. His neurosis suggests that when it comes to cases involving intellectual property other than the literary kind, an application of Driblette's radical stance only threatens to substitute one claim to ownership with another, more powerful claim on behalf of corporate interests.

Because copyright legislation had yet to be enacted in Nashe's era, he could not target any fully articulated social formation as the institutional basis of literary regulation. Instead, he had to base his satire on an analogy between the political system of patronage, which degraded the literary writer into conventional moralizing postures, and the
Elizabethan system of patents which controlled other forms of production. Responding to Nashe from within the interpretive horizon of the late twentieth century, Pynchon must subvert the earlier writer's ingenious analogy, and divide the two terms of literary creativity and patents among their respective spokesmen, Driblette and Koteks. These characters articulate two equally monological responses toward intellectual property in the age of mass communications. Through them, the narrative sets up a thesis and an antithesis, only to frustrate the expectation of a dialectical synthesis.

Instead, the text offers a dialogical response to the problem of intellectual property. Ironically, this alternative issues from Koteks' paragon of the Romantic inventive genius, the semi-mystical, lazily debauched character of John Nefastis. The reclusive inventor fulfills the task of explaining to Pynchon's protagonist (and readers) the concept of entropy, that cybernetic shibboleth that has come to signal right of passage among Pynchonians and postmodernists alike. Entropy, like intertextuality, is an elastic term that has been associated with a number of thermodynamic, cybernetic, and sociopolitical concepts, signalling by turns either the dissipation of all
organization, or the attainment of total order.\textsuperscript{51} Entropy's cross-validity as a concept in several apparently unconnected fields of knowledge is what makes it a perfect vehicle for modelling the relationship between ideas, their expression, and their ownership in a market economy.

For an episode that is arguably the climax of Pynchon's satire, very little happens during Oedipa's visit to Nefastis—perhaps nothing at all. Try as she might to integrate her thoughts or mental energy with the thermodynamic information contained in Nefastis' machine, Oedipa herself remains uncertain whether anything happens: "And there. At the top edge of what she could see: hadn't the right-hand piston moved, a fraction? She couldn't look directly, . . ." (78). The scene has been understood as a self-reflexive metaphor of the act of reading Lot 49 itself, in which Oedipa becomes a sort of demon distinguishing between the two "chambers" of San Narciso and the Tristero, and the reader serves as the "sensitive" who tries to communicate with her, to help her make sense (see Hall, "Behind" 72-3). J. Kerry Grant has shown that Pynchon's introduction of a "sensitive" observer to perform the negentropic task of organizing thermodynamic information is a theoretically valid (if somewhat preternatural) solution to a

\textsuperscript{51} For an explanation of this paradox as it relates to literature and postmodernism, see Paulson (46) and McKinney respectively.
long-standing bugbear of physics. The classic critique of Maxwell's Demon is that it only seems to "solve" the problem of entropy by surreptitiously smuggling in energy (negentropy) required by the Demon's organizational work. Opening a channel between the Demon and a sensitive that is metaphysical (mental) rather than physical (thermodynamic) would allow the Demon to perform its work without disturbing the integrity of the system.

The circuit of Oedipa and Nefastis' engine constitutes a communications system as Michel Serres describes it: a parasitical economy. Serres seems to summarize Oedipa's dilemma: that "[t]hose who have energy necessarily cannot have information; thus those with information can do without energy" (36). His "parasite," which stands for both social and zoological parasites, as well as the added sense from "static" or "noise" (in French, le parasite) mediates between the thermonuclear world of energy, and the cybernetic world of information. Like the parasite, Maxwell's Demon mediates between the worlds of work and ideas; he "invents something new. He obtains energy and pays for it in information" (Serres, Parasite 36). The encounter with Nefastis likewise focuses the issue of mental activity and its relation to

52 Remarkably, I could discover no other critic who even mentions Serres and Pynchon in the same context. The points of contact between these two writers, or "passages" as Serres might describe them, deserve a more detailed investigation than I have space for here.
work. Earlier, when Koteks explains the Demon inside Nefastis' engine to Oedipa, she quips, "Sorting isn't work? . . . Tell them down at the post office, you'll find yourself in a mailbag headed for Fairbanks, Alaska . . ." (86). Less belaboured than Lucian's Hermes, the Demon more closely resembles the loafer Menippus, who laughs at the morose shades of Oedipa and Nefastis: as the heroine stares at Clerk Maxwell's profile, "[i]t seemed, behind the beard, he'd begun, ever so faintly, to smile" (78).

Drawing Lot 49 into an intertextual hermeneutic with Serres and the Lucianic tradition of necromantic satire suggests a new understanding of Nefastis' engine. Serres himself compares the "well-placed" Hermes to Maxwell's Demon, who Nefastis describes as sitting at the "one point" connecting thermodynamics and communications (77): "Hermes is the god of the crossroads and is the god of whom Maxwell made a demon. Thus the message, passing through his hands in the location of the exchanger, is change[d]" (Parasite 43). But the Greek god of parasited messages disappears when early Christianity first opens its channels of direct communication with a monotheistic deity: when the miraculous communion with the Holy Ghost occurs, "there is no longer an intercepter, no longer a crossroads or intermediate; there is no longer a town; Hermes, the father of Pan, died on the Pentecost" (43). Lot 49 displays a demonized Pentecostal
imagery, beginning in *The Courier's Tragedy* with Ercole's torture of Domenico, the evil Duke's informant, and Dwight Eddins has suggested that the numerology of Pynchon's very title alludes to the imminence of Pentecost, which is Greek for "fiftieth" (see 106 et passim).

As the divine feast at which information need not be exchanged for energy, the Pentecost establishes a monotheistic conversation, and does away with the need for a god of switches, be he Hermes or Maxwell's Demon. A gust of wind and fire, the Paraclete arrives like noise in the thermodynamic system, the divine parasite that is constitutive of all communications. It now occupies the position of the "third person" in the dialogue, the very prosopopoeia of noise (Serres, *Parasite 51*). Here Serres' parasite closely resembles the Bakhtinian "third," the principle of unfinalizability that interrupts every utterance at its source, and guarantees a future response. It is this Pentecostal feast which Oedipa awaits throughout the text, but in vain: "As if, on some other frequency, or out of the eye of some whirlwind rotating too slow for her heated skin even to feel the centrifugal coolness of, words were being spoken" (13). At the end of the narrative, she is left still waiting for the bestowal of the truth about Inverarity, the Tristero, and all of history, like the arrival of a fiery tongue. Read as an allegory of the ancient history of
communications theories, Oedipa's encounter with Maxwell's Demon returns to the moment at which the heteroglot byways of Hellenic conveyances first confronted the immediate, centralized message of early Christianity. *Lot 49* thus picks up Lucian's Hermetic satires from the historical point of their supersession. The episode with Nefastis revitalizes Lucian's necromantic satires on mediation within a postmodernized cybernetic context, in which theoretical science crosses over into mythic modes of paralogy.

Oedipa's subvocal dialogue with this latter-day Psychopompous focuses the satire's testamental themes as well. The introduction of a metaphysical sensitive into a physical system is an overdetermined gesture that alludes to mythic and cybernetic theories of communication, and at the same time enables Pynchon's general critique of intellectual property. Oedipa's question of whether sorting is work is integral not only to the connection between thermodynamics and information, but also to the modern ideology linking property and authority. From a legal standpoint, the question of labour is of the utmost importance in defining intellectual property. The law defines creative work quite literally as an artifact that evidences performed labour. Work, in other words, is what distinguishes an idea from intellectual property, conceived as protectable information.
At once "real" and metaphorical, Nefastis' engine explores the basis of analogy between work and thought, or material and intellectual property, without either confirming or denying it. Because entropy mediates matter and metaphor without reducing their differences, it provides a means of conceptualizing the creative work that produces intellectual property. I suggest that the connection between the representational strategies of Lot 49 and what has been called "the famously elusive 'political' Pynchon" (Tö löyan 153) occurs over issues of property and authority which every literary "work" must confront. The question of the labour involved in literary productivity certainly dominates Nashe's satire. His Pierce's letter complains to the devil about the waste of labour he sees around him, and appeals to him to organize the distribution of wealth more carefully. Nashe's point is to satirize the very system of patronage that would evaluate writing as a form of common labour, and literature as a commodity like any other. His ironic defense of idleness, and his emphasis in Pierce Pennilesse and other works on the theme of "waste," has led Lorna Hutson to characterize him as one of a generation of "Elizabethan Prodigals"53 who wrote only guiltily, with a sense of wasting the time and talent they should be devoting to the service of their country. These writers

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53 The term is Helgerson's.
are all obliged to adopt a posture of repentance. This enables them to redefine the amoral tendencies of their writing as the prodigal experience of a misspent youth, which they claim to have set before the reading public for admonitory purposes (10).

Lest we miss Nashe's irony, it is helpful to situate his critique of idleness within the broader menippean tradition. The traditional nekyia critiques not sloth, which is "the antithesis of the methodical life" (Meltzer 133 n. 4), but precisely the opposite, a misplaced organizational effort. Thus Lucian's Menippus laughs at the fruitless administrative labours of legacy hunters, while he himself relentlessly follows the other shades about Hades to torment them. Some amount of self-parody is inherent in this active cynicism as in the menippean stance generally, which often recognizes writing itself as a waste of time. Indeed, the renaissance anatomy will later reflect this awareness of its own "wasted labour" in its quality of over-organization. Burton, most notably, writes the Anatomy of Melancholy as a cure for his sloth, a therapeutic retreat into a counterproductive task.

Pynchon's Demon fills a narrative function analogous to the infernal addressee of Pierce Pennilesse's epistle. Oedipa, like Menippus or Burton's Democritus Junior, is a central figure trying to make sense of a whole economy of information that flows around her, albeit from within a
novelized satiric narrative, rather than a dialogue or a confession. Her status as a paid agent of the Inverarity estate becomes more conspicuously counterproductive the more she finds out about San Narciso, which is "less an identifiable city than a grouping of concepts" (12)—a fit setting for a menippean satire—and, by extension, America. If her work is very much like reading, then it is equally like the writing of a particularly confused anatomy.

Oedipa's nocturnal periplum around San Narciso (86-92) shows her surreal characters on the margins of society, but she can make no sense out of her experience. Playing the "voyeur and listener" (91), she comes to resemble the nineteenth-century flâneur, who,

like the vagabond, interrupts the flow of busy humanity on the city streets. Both rupture the efficiency of the pedestrian; they even disrupt the linearity of movement (which is in itself an extension of the smooth progress of the production line). In the case of the flâneur, it is not just that he offends by not working; he also observes in a nonlinear fashion, one which uses collage, pastiche, interruption, the aleatoric—the converse of the linear and the efficient—as modes of seeing to be constantly cultivated (Meltzer 130).54

Oedipa denies not only the capitalist distinction between leisure and work, but also the modern opposition between productive work and mere organization on which the definition

54 Meltzer traces the flâneur back to the dandy, noting that Diderot's menippean satire, Rameau's Nephew, describes a prototype of this social type (49).
of property itself is based. More optimistic than the frustrated Pierce Pennilessse, she is lured on in her writerly task of organizing data by the promise of some revelation behind the W.A.S.T.E. that will justify her several stations of executrix, citizen and character.

V. What Oedipa Doesn't Know about the Knight of the Post

In his discussion of the theme of censorship as it intersects literary and political history in the text, John Dugdale approaches a dialogical reading of *Lot 49* and its allusions to various historical contexts of utterance. He claims that the "'independent carriers' of Tristero clearly represent, at one level, writing... but of a particular sort: communication which has withdrawn, or been debarred, from normal public discourse; which transmits private or secret messages in unorthodox ways; which has always to evade 'suppression'" (178). In Dugdale's reading, the "artistic dimension" of the Tristero coalesces around Wharfinger's fictional Courier's Tragedy. He shows that this hyperbole of a revenge play can be indexed to new signifying practices which actually emerged in writing of the Jacobean period and mid-seventeenth century, a "recognisably modern literature" engineered to evade the censors. According to Dugdale, these new signifying practices are manifest in a broad range of
literary evasions: "the fantastic Italy of the Jacobean political theatre, the allegory of Bunyan, Milton's infiltration of heresy and interpretation of the course of the Revolution into Christian myth, perhaps the device of the madman in Shakespeare and Cervantes" (179). Dugdale traces this modern spirit of secret expression into nineteenth-century European symbolism, which was transplanted in the New World in the writing of Poe, Melville and Thoreau. The heirs of the Symbolist spirit—Yeats, Conrad, Eliot, Rilke and Joyce, by his conspicuously canonical account—modified their inherited means of covert literary communication through the adoption of parody, fictional masks, and obscurity, with Borges and Kafka representing "the terminal stage of Tristero-like writing" (184).

By drawing historical and literary allusions together, Dugdale has indeed struck on an important dimension of the Tristero. After all, "The Courier's Tragedy" does engage the limits of the sayable, by foregrounding those aspects of the drama, couriers and violence, which are usually kept offstage. As convincing as Dugdale's history of cryptic literature is, there are several problems with his approach to intertextuality in Pynchon. To begin with, his Jungian premise that all the "loose ends" in Lot 49 text actually cohere on a deeper level in the intertextual "subconscious" constitutes another kind of modernist reading which, like
Oedipa's paranoia, tends to foreclose the openness of intertextual horizons in favour of a generalizing search for latent unities. Moreover, his definition of intertextuality as "sustained allusion elevated to a principle of composition" (155) neither credits the reader's central role in producing intertextual effects, nor explains how that "principle of composition" relates to cultural production generally. Dugdale presumes that all readers will have common access to these "collective dreams," without addressing how cultural codes are in practice negotiated. Intertexts, like knowledge, never circulate freely; they are instead always inscribed across various institutionalized practices and apparatuses that constantly compete for dominance.

It is this realization of the vested nature of intertextual signification that Oedipa's quest for understanding foregrounds. By combining these insights into literary property with Jauss' hermeneutic of intertextual horizons, we can begin to formulate a dialogic theory of reading that accounts for the historical horizons of intertexts and their readers in terms of institutions and power relations. Such a theory must not begin, as Dugdale's does, with the premise that all associative fields will be available to all readers at all points in history. Instead, it should demonstrate the socio-historical conditions under
which certain intertextual codes operate upon a reader to concretize the text at hand in particular configurations.

The Romantic and Symbolist traditions which Dugdale traces simply do not account for *Lot 49*'s more overt allusions to legacy satire and conspiracy fiction.\(^{55}\) It is not enough to assimilate Pynchon's text into a Modernist tradition of parody and satiric personae (see Dugdale 182), when one can even more convincingly read the text's parodic pedigree as participating in a much older satiric tradition.

Dugdale is correct to trace the new mode of secret expression in literature which the Tristero represents to the period of Wharfinger's fictional "Courier's Tragedy." As the cue to a datable aesthetic, "The Courier's Tragedy" summons up not only the revenge tragedies of the Jacobean stage, but also the distant horizons of an entire range of Elizabethan political writers that participated in the dialogical tradition of satire. Menippean satire suggests an alternate model of secretive literary transmission, and a hermeneutic frame for reinterpreting the Tristero in terms of historical struggles over media of communication. The menippean genre provides both an index to the history of the repression of social heteroglossia through monological institutions, and an

\(^{55}\) Dugdale's mapping of a Freudian interpretive model onto the process of literary transmission is highly reminiscent of the theory of intertextuality formulated by Harold Bloom. Even the Miltonic-Romantic literary tradition which Dugdale claims to be signified by the Tristero is the same that Bloom charts.
example of secretive literary transmission that stands distinct from and in opposition to the Puritanical-Romantic tradition. We have seen how Lot 49 suggests a political analogue for Oedipa's reading strategies by identifying her fascination with the word of the text with the Puritan movement. Oedipa is first introduced to the "Trystero" when Ralph Driblette quotes a textual variation from an obscene Scurvhamite parody of Wharfinger's play, designed to bring the dramatist ill repute. As Emory Bortz explains to Oedipa, "'It was [the Scurvhamites'] way of putting the play entirely away from them, into hell. What better way to damn it ['The Courier's Tragedy'] eternally than to change the actual words. Remember that Puritans were utterly devoted, like literary critics, to the Word'" (116-7).

Putting people and texts into hell is, of course, the precisely the province of the satiric nekysia. Given Pynchon's allusion to Puritan literary politics at the turn of the seventeenth century, a reading of Lot 49 in the context of Pierce Penniless cannot but draw the Marprelate controversy into the fray. Martin Marprelate was the "author-function" adopted by the Puritan John Penry who, with John Udall, conducted a pamphlet war against Nashe. The Martinists, as they came to be known, stirred great public controversy through their criticism of the Papacy and Anglican church alike. To quell this controversy, the
episcopacy secretly hired poisoned pens to respond to Martin Marprelate, Thomas Nashe among them. For five years the Martinists eluded the censors before they were caught, cropped at the ears, and hanged in 1593.

The Marprelate controversy was, significantly, the first debate of the English renaissance to occasion the writing of menippean satires, and the genre remained active during the Puritan interlude only by shifting its satiric emphasis on academic wit to a new interest in theological debate (Kirk xxix). It was only after the Martinists were executed that Nashe wrote his lone anti-Martinist satire, An Almond for the Parrat (1592), in which he deals soundly with Penry's last "waste paper" (369). His contribution demonstrates vestiges of the menippean genre's didascalic emphasis, inherited ultimately from Varro: An Almond had attacked the Puritans for upholding Ramus over Aristotle, and for voicing opposition to learning and the liberal arts (Hibbard 44).

Nashe ends his satire with a warning to Martin Marprelate: "broach no more heresies vnder colour of inspiration: if thou doest, thou art like to heare of me by the next Carrier" (Almond 376). Though Nashe himself never carried out this threat, his ghost returned some seventy years later, in a satiric nekyia by John Taylor, the "Water-poet." Called the most prolific of English menippean satirists (Kirk 180), Taylor's satires, pamphlets and tracts
share many motifs and concerns with Lot 49. Taylor wrote about trips to Hell, and a number of pieces are infernal dialogues, while his Carrier's Cosmographie (1637) restructures England alphabetically according to courier's routes and habitations. The Suddaine Turne of ffortunes wheele (1631) is an imaginary conference between the Pope, the Holy Roman Emperor, and the King of Spain, held in the castle of St. Angello, a name with significance for collectors of Wharfingeriana.

But most significant to Pynchon's text is Taylor's satire Crop-Eare Curried, or Tom Nash his Ghost, in which Taylor inspires the spirit of Nashe to speak against Prinne's anti-royalist writings. The title picks up on Nashe's pseudonym from An Almond, "Cutbert Curry-knaues." In Taylor's response, Tom Nashe appears as a revenant who is not only a courier, but a currier as well.56 Dressed in a "Black Cloath Cloak" reminiscent of the Tristero carrier's uniform, Taylor also invokes Nashe as an avenging spirit: "Take heed M. Prinne what you say, for if M. St.-Johns, and your Masters of the highest lower House heare you, they may perhaps occasion a conference betwixt you and Tom Nash his Ghost" (17). Taylor's threat thus establishes a precedent for the premise of Lot 49, in which the opposition of a secret

56 One is tempted to say he both runs and hides.
society of black-cowled messengers represent the last form of resistance to post-industrial America.

Resonances with *Lot 49* abound in the dialogical exchange between Nashe and Taylor. Taylor at one point criticizes Prinne for teaching "his Clients to hire Knights of the Poste, to witnesse that which they know nothing of" (22). In *Almond for a Parrat*, Nashe threatens that "if [the work of Penry] wer published, that [which] is pouldred with the brains of so many Puritan springols, . . . . then would I distill my wit into incke, and my soule into argumentes, . . . ." (369), an image reminiscent of the evil Duke Angelo's ink, a "pitchy brew" manufactured from the bones of "wildly different beasts" (*Lot 49* 70-1). Nashe derides Martin's (Penry's) writings as "waste paper," while Taylor's text opens "about the waste . . . of the night" (1). At another, he allows that his adversary's meaning "is a taske for an Oedipus onely to unfold" (21). The main body of Taylor's text concludes by lambasting Prinne's scheme to replace the royal seals with forgeries made by Parliament, which surely bears a remarkable parallel to the Tristero's counterfeit postage stamps.

The extent of the parallels between *Lot 49* and its menippean forbearers invite one to consider these more obscure authors as literary analogues to the secretive Tristero. An actual historical incident of literary
repression that required a secret response, the Marprelate affair is closer to the concerns and generic patterning of Lot 49 than either Milton's Areopagitica or Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. The writings of Nashe and Taylor which bracket the controversy also frame the period of the fictional Courier's Tragedy, the era in which Dugdale locates the origins of modern secretive writing. Furthermore, the menippean satire was reintroduced to the West following the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire, where it had flourished among Byzantine scholars for centuries—the same period in which the early "Trystero" carriers first went underground (see Pynchon, Lot 49 119-25). One could carry these allusive hints even further. Taylor's overtly anti-Puritan pamphlets were confiscated in 1649—a date that is numerologically significant in Pynchon's alternate universe. Indeed, given that Inger- is the German word for record-keeper, it is not too bold to suggest that "Wharf-inger" may be an encrypted pseudonym for the "Water-poet" himself.

VI. Satiric Intertexts as Serial Collaboration

Situated at the threshold of a renaissance vogue of infernal dialogues, Pierce Pennilesse revitalized the necromantic satire for English audiences, and initiated a chain of responses and imitations in the centuries following
its publication. Thomas Dekker was first to respond with his Newes from Hell, first published in 1606. In it, Dekker provides a lengthy tour of the underworld that follows the Knight of the Post, here named as Mephistopheles, as he carries Pierce Pennilesse's supplication to Lucifer, "that Emperor of Low Germanie" (102). The archdemon finds Pierce's observations about the inequitable distribution of wealth so accurate that he suspects him of spying into the underworld, and insists upon postponing his response to these sensitive matters until he can address Pierce in person. Many episodes along the way are lifted straight from Lucian, including the overcrowding of Charon's bark (118) and the appearance of Mercury (144).

Significantly, Pynchon's text can be read as being directly intertextual with Dekker's as well as with Nashe's. Mephistopheles' progress through the underworld postal route parallels Oedipa's hellish journey through San Narciso's fantastic underside. More astonishingly, Dekker's text also mentions some of the key signifiers in Oedipa's quest: Dekker's courier Knight, who travels with his post horn (104), commands the deference typically paid to the Thurn and Taxis couriers: "with much intreatie (because he stood vpon Thornes) hee was aduaunc'd (in regard of his Knighthood) to the vpper end of the boord . . ." (105). Dekker records the respect these envoys commanded, and provides an antecedent
for Taylor's (and Pynchon's) representation of a dangerous order of spectral couriers.

Because Lucian's dialogues debunk myth, they tend to represent the underworld setting with little flourish, and in familiar terms—as Rutledge puts it, Lucian's hell is "netherworldly," but not "otherworldly" (13). Though Nashe never depicts the world with which Pierce Pennilesse communicates (a task left to Dekker), he still takes the presence of an underworld carrier route for granted in Lucianic fashion. Nashe's protagonist issues his petition in utter faith that it will reach its destination. Readers must decide for themselves whether the traveller whom Pierce encounters "actually" is a carrier for the devil, or merely an amused passerby who Socratically goads the galled naif on: the degree of fantasy remains indeterminate.

Oedipa exhibits much less blind faith in the channels of communication. Nashe's narrator never doubts the authenticity of his diabolical messenger, or the existence of a direct channel to the Demon, as Oedipa does at John Nefastis' place. Although she has witnessed the W.A.S.T.E. system in operation at the Scope, and followed one of its carriers on his delivery route, she still suspects that it is "... all a hoax, maybe something Inverarity set up before he died?" (126). The very premise of the earlier Pierce's supplication—the existence of an infernal realm from which
absolute answers could be solicited—can be entertained by Oedipa only with a mixture of hope and paranoia: "Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth" (136-7). She thus finds herself trapped in a typically post-industrial hermeneutic circle, in which the greater amount of available information introduces an interpretive entropy into her narrative that prevents the authentication of "facts."

These intertextualities need not end with Dekker. The ghost of Tom Nashe subsequently appeared in an anonymous satire of 1642 before visiting Taylor's satire, while Dekker's own nekyia was in turn treated to a thorough "improvement" by an anonymous author in 1677. Pynchon's text can thus be understood to respond not only to Pierce Pennilesse, but to an entire series of intertexts. It exemplifies that class of texts which Peter Jaszi calls "'serial collaborations—works resulting from successive elaborations of an idea or text by a series of creative workers'" (304). Such collaborative efforts are precisely what copyright law represses, by reserving the privilege of utterance for the first term in the series alone. By participating in an intertextual series, Pynchon's text enacts the critique of property that Oedipa only intimates.

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57 See Kirk 191. Boyce claims this anonymous satire brought Dekker's text up to "an excitingly depraved present" (418).
Legal theorists like Jaszi have only very recently begun to recognize that dialogical utterances necessitate a program of copyright reform.\(^{58}\) Rosemary Coombe also draws on a Bakhtinian theory of cultural influence in order to form a critique of copyright law that goes beyond a strictly economic analysis. Pointing to parodies of specific popular cultural forms, Coombe demonstrates that laws which protect intellectual property tend also to delimit the creation of meaning most germane to a postmodern culture featuring both centralized mass communications, and ubiquitous electronic media and information technologies. Bracketing reactionary concerns over the legal protection of capital, Coombe argues that "intellectual property laws may deprive us of the optimal cultural conditions for dialogic practice".

By objectifying and reifying cultural forms—freezing the connotations of signs and symbols and fencing off fields of cultural meaning with 'no trespassing' signs—intellectual property laws may enable certain forms of political practice and constrain others ("Objects" 1866).

In other words, intellectual property law exerts a monologizing pressure on the centrifugal cultural forces which would creatively "recode" and recontextualize well-known signs. Inevitably, the will-to-protect trademarks,

\(^{58}\) Peter Jaszi points out that "[o]nly recently have literary-critical constructions of authorship and legal critique of copyright converged" (293-4).
slogans and other information arises only from the need to protect the reputations of corporate owners. To prove this, Coombe cites one rationale used by the courts since the 1927 to protect copyright, the so-called "dilution rationale," according to which the unique market value of a trademark is somehow diluted by the publicization of similar symbols (Coombe 1871). She reveals that in many cases this rationale actually guards against a contextualizing interventionism that threatens to lay bare the questionable corporate or political allegiances of the defending corporation. In this manner, the law extends commodity fetishism to trademarks, and empowers them with the authority "to maintain a pristine innocence, abstracted from the history and the practices of the corporate bodies that produce them. . . . By controlling the sign, trademark holders are able to control its connotations and potentially curtail many forms of social commentary" (1872-3).

Literary criticism can use legal history and theory to account for the historical construction of authorship and the stakes of parody, just as legal discourse is informed by Bakhtin's literary theory. Bakhtin's own treatment of the law as a strictly monological discourse59 clearly cannot in

59 This is in the main true, although Bakhtin at times seems to distinguish between just applications of civil rights, and mere pettifogging. In "Discourse in the Novel," he speaks of the law as an authoritative discourse, yet one which operates from a potentially redeeming rhetorical stance (342). Bakhtin wants to do without the law, speaking for
itself account for the continual contestation and revision which characterizes that heteroglot set of discourses known collectively as "the law". It is impossible to understand the dialogic relationship of Pierce Pennilesse and Lot 49 outside the domain of intellectual property. Pierce Pennilesse lays bare the incompatibility of two Elizabethan institutions, the contemporary systems of royal patents and authorial patronage, that together threaten to silence literary creativity. Lot 49 in turn motivates Nashe's satire intertextually to address the ideology of ownership that continues to oppress social communication in late-capitalist societies. Each text engages legal or parliamentary discourses that determine the ownership and authority of literary property. Moreover, as two elements in a set of serial collaborations, these texts encourage the reader to enact an intertextual hermeneutic which operates outside the modern and Romantic paradigm of originality and ownership. Far from just a fictionalized analysis of property relations, each text engages the ideology of writing as property, and shows how property relations determine discursive authority in modern Western society.

instance of the "parodic-stylized speech of the lawyer" (307); yet, at other times, he seems to recognize that a responsible, dialogical discourse is the fundamental indicator of a fully ethical, legal and political citizen (see 349-50).
VII. *Visuality, Orality and Media Bias: The Anti-Catastrophic Dilemma*

Both Nashe and Pynchon satirize the modern representation of literary communication as a commodity subject to ownership, a right determined by the positive value of work. Since each text calls the value of productive labour into question through an exploration of the politics of idleness, a strict Marxist analysis that stresses the intrinsic value of the labouring class will do justice to neither. Moreover, each text foregrounds the apparatus and ideology of literary production and, by extension, of social communication generally; and, as Mark Poster has indicated, modern innovations in transportation and communications are precisely what Marx left out of his materialist analyses. However, by shifting his heuristic from the mode of production to the "mode of information," Poster provides an analytic frame that is capable of addressing, if not reconciling, the apparent gulf between the distinct social realms of production and language.

The mystery behind San Narciso is that relations of modern capitalism are everywhere present in the inequitable distribution of wealth, while the forces of industrial production are visible nowhere. Oedipa inhabits an industrialized allegorical world on the brink of a
communications revolution. Pierce Inverarity stands for real estate and heavy industry, just as Pierce Pennilesse signifies patronage and patents: both characters represent a dominant mode of production that has extended its influence beyond its relevance. We have seen how in the traditional mock-testament, the decay of the corpse enacts the decay of monological discourse. To extend this logic, the death of arch-capitalist Pierce Inverarity should signal the death of the discourse of industrial capitalism. Instead, his death only seals the immortality of property relations under the conditions of industrial capitalism, which transcend even the lives and bodies of their owners. Inverarity becomes, like the Trystero at the demise of the Holy Roman Empire, an adversary with seemingly boundless influence, and therefore endless potential to create paranoia.

Despite its apparently libertarian implications, the W.A.S.T.E. delivery system only apparently represents an alternative to the monopoly of ownership of communications in San Narciso's post-industrial society. Kharpertian constructs a dialectic reading of *Lot 49* in which the thesis of American communicative liberty is threatened by the antithesis of oppression, embodied by the official U.S. Mail. In his reading, the Tristero can only represent a logical synthesis that effectively "answers" the issues raised by the text: "[j]ust as the federal postal monopoly in *Lot 49*
signifies a sterile uniformity of communication, so the Tristero signifies the initiation of a fertile diversity and the ultimate possibility of an anarchic plenitude of communication" (91). In similar fashion, Nicholson and Stevenson assert that Oedipa "discovers that any possibility for redemption in the spiritless California she observes seems to lie with the potential of a secret anarchist community existing behind it . . ." (107).

If the Tristero did provide such a redemptive and satisfying synthesis, then, one might wonder along with Oedipa, "why the chance of its being real should menace her so" (98). In fact, there are indications that the legacy of the Tristero, like the supplication of Pierce Pennilesse, stands not for liberty but for an (ironic) capitulation to the forces of cultural privatization. As a radical alternative to state-sanctioned correspondence, the W.A.S.T.E. system may be even more oppressive than its official counterpart. Oedipa reflects that the last stand of communicative freedom is the private withdrawal from communication:

For here were God knew how many citizens, deliberately choosing not to communicate by U.S. Mail. It was not an act of treason, nor possibly even of defiance. But it was a calculated withdrawal, from the life of the Republic, from its machinery. Whatever else was being denied them out of hate, indifference to the power of their vote,
loopholes, simple ignorance, this withdrawal was their own, unpublicized, private (92).

The W.A.S.T.E. system denies even this measure of freedom, by compelling its participants to exchange null letters, even when they have nothing to say. As Mike Fallopian of the Yoyodyne chapter explains,

'It's the principle, . . . To keep it up to some kind of a reasonable volume, each member has to send at least one letter a week through the Yoyodyne system. If you don't, you get fined' (53).

At a certain point, maintaining the underground system itself becomes more important than any individual message it can carry. To describe such an institution as dialogical would be to ignore the anti-systemic orientation of Bakhtin's translinguistics toward a (responsible) freedom of act and utterance.

If the Tristero fails to provide any liberating alternative to Oedipa, this is because it aims to correct its legacy of dispossession by regaining ownership over the channels of literate communication. A cabal of secret sharers, the Tristero represents the hidden flip-side of the modern impulse to bring an entire culture's systems of communication under private control. According to Jésus Ballesteros, the modern emphasis on property relations as the fundamental sociopolitical order corresponds historically to .
the dominance of visual over oral media in the same period (19-23). That the Tristero should build its media empire on written messages locks it a priori into the modern logic of control through ownership. Based on an oxymoronic legacy of dispossession, the Tristero still defines itself in terms of property and literacy. Symbols of the organization, like the muted post horn and the sympathizer hangout pointedly named The Scope, only reinforce the renegade organization's particular media bias. Even verbalizing the emblem "W.A.S.T.E." as a sound unit closes the access channel to the secretive, visually-biased system:

She took a chance: 'Then the WASTE address isn't good any more.' But she'd pronounced it like a word, waste. His face congealed, a mask of distrust. 'It's W.A.S.T.E., lady,' he told her, 'an acronym, not 'waste,' and we best not go into it any further (87-8).

The "ritual reluctance" to name names that Oedipa notices taking over whenever The Courier's Tragedy broaches the subject of the Tristero extends to the secret society's modern legacy: "certain things, it is made clear, will not be spoken aloud . . ." (50). When Oedipa first encounters the Tristero at The Scope in Chapter Three, she wonders whether it will reveal its secrets as in a striptease, or "bend to her alone among the desolate rows of seats and begin to speak words she never wanted to hear" (36). As she is drawn under its influence, however, she correspondingly
develops a misplaced emphasis on the visual that is manifest in her general obsession with printed matter, including Inverarity's stamp collection and the several editions of The Courier's Tragedy, traced through Zapf's Used Book Shop, the L.A. Library, and the Lectern Press copyright (65). Oedipa's stubborn attachment to text and visual media generally hinders her search for an alternative means of producing value. Her paranoia is a kind of intertextuality run rampant and, as Harold Bloom suggests, intertextuality is a literary phenomenon, not an oral one, despite his constant references to the influential "voices" of strong poets (see 34).60 Oedipa is incapable of hearing the call of the new media, the "revelation in progress all around her" (28) that would release her from the "anxiety of influence" of a secret history of conspirators. Nor is she alone: Manny Di Presso is paranoid of being audially parasited: "All the time, somebody listens in, snoops; they bug your apartment, they tap your phone—" (43). When one of The Paranoids produces some recreational marijuana to chill out Di Presso, Metzger,  

60 Bloom's reading of intertextuality as an Oedipal struggle suggests obvious strategies for interpreting Oedipa's own intertextual dilemma. However, his Romantic description of writing as a heroic struggle with literary ancestors ("Who could set forth on the poet's long journey, upon the path of laboring Heracles, if he knew that at last he must wrestle with the dead?" [17]) is incompatible with the mythic cynicism of dialogical satire. Still, one could perhaps describe the satiric nekyia as an ironic Apophrades (Return of the Dead), and the menippeanist as the strongest of poetic misprisioners.
always the conniving lawyer, "closed his eyes, turned his head, muttering, 'Possession,'" in another characteristic double-entendre that further links vision to a proprietorial ethic.

The possibility of another kind of meaning manifests itself to the reader in the form of the pun. Driblette's performance of The Courier's Tragedy conveys the plenitude of meaning in puns: "This pitchy brew in France is 'encre' hight;/In this might dire Squamuglia ape the Gaul,/For 'anchor' it has rise'n, from deeps untold" (49). Like Wharfinger, Pynchon compels his reader to make sense with the ear instead of the eye, by selling characters with names like Gengis Cohen and Manny Depresso. This verbal play casts a comic hue over Oedipa's tragic version of her own story, and checks her paranoia with paronomasia, another kind of linguistic connectivity gone mad. Moreover, Pynchon's persistent play on words operates as a fulcrum balancing the spoken and written word, and opens the text to a broader media economy divided along lines of sight and sound. Oedipa unknowingly arrives at the secret of her quest dialectically, in a punning exchange with Metzger whose full sense goes undetected:

'You certainly don't look,' Oedipa began, and then had second thoughts. Metzger flashed her a glib wry couple rows of teeth. 'Looks don't mean a thing any more,' he said (17).
Such extended passages of puns and double entendres resound throughout the text like a subsonic carrier frequency, providing the reader with numerous routes of access to an underground that, unlike the Tristero, communicates its sense through a parasitical economy of sound. When Oedipa arrives at her Berkeley hills motel, a meeting of the California Chapter American Deaf-Mute Assembly mocks her own deafness to the signals around her: "A clerk popped up from behind the desk where he'd been sleeping and began making sign language at her" (74). Once in her room, Oedipa cannot sleep for a recurrent nightmare about "[n]othing specific, only a possibility, nothing she could see."

This hard and fast distinction between orality and literacy can be explained as very much a part of Lot 49's interpretive horizon. Just as early satiric dialogues such as Lipsius' Somnium investigated the ideological adjustment entailed in the shift from a manuscript to a print culture, so Pynchon's post-industrial nekyia explores the effects of print from the other side of the Gutenberg galaxy. Pynchon encourages a release from the tyranny of print, and a transition to what Ong would later call a "second orality." Dugdale notes that Lot 49 provides a rich portrait of mid-1960s America (159), but does not mention the transistor radio, which figures in the text both as both a realistic
detail adding to its historicity, and a symbol that hints at
the existence of some supernal revelation without, however,
announcing what it is. When Oedipa witnesses her San Narciso
setting from an aerial perspective,

... she thought of the time she'd opened a
transistor radio to replace a battery and seen her
first printed circuit. The ordered swirl of houses
and streets, from this high angle, sprang at her
now with the same unexpected, astonishing clarity
as the circuit card had. Though she knew even less
about radios than about Southern Californians,
there were to both outward patterns a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to
communicate. There'd seemed no limit to what the
printed circuit could have told her ... so in her
first minute of San Narciso, a revelation also
trembled just past the threshold of her understanding (24).

This clear but cryptic vision is typical of the
menippean catascopia, an imaginative glimpse of the world
from a vantage far above that presents a total picture of
society, while cynically denying it any transcendent
significance. Douglas Duncan writes that "[t]he unifying
concept [in all of Lucian's dialogues] is detachment and the
key metaphor is that of the detached observer, or kataskopos
... All his writings reflect in some way the search for
a detached point of vantage, ... a compulsion to get out in
order to look in" (15-6). But the emergent oral bias of
Oedipa's information society does not permit the perspective
she seeks, or indeed, any perspective at all. Oedipa's
fruitless attempt to separate fact from fantasy, information.
from understanding, and the external traces of history from the internal signals of her own paranoia belie the catascopic ideal. Outside the Tristero, there remains the redemptive promise of new communications media which beckon to Oedipa in vain. Pynchon bombards his protagonist with communications from various technological media that descend like an ironized Pentecost, "a slow whirlwind, words she couldn't hear" (15). The heroine made no sense of the late Inverarity's last polyphonic phonecall, in which he adopted several stock cinematic personas. She despairs that the "phone line [that] could have pointed any direction, been any length" is brought up short, its potential import monologically finalized in her imagination by the linear, legal authority of Metzger's letter (3). Nor does she immediately recognize her husband Mucho's voice on the radio, brought to her from Kinneret by "the whimsies of nighttime reception" (57). Imagining him before the soundproof glass at KCUF station, she wonders whether he too is deaf to the numinous message in the airwaves: "did Mucho stand outside Studio A looking in, knowing that even if he could hear it he couldn't believe in it?" (13). Oedipa cannot like other people "carry a Sony radio in [her] shirt pocket" (53). When new communications media fail her, Oedipa heads for the old: "The phone buzzed on and on, into hollowness. She hung up and headed for Zapf's Used Books" (65). In short, Oedipa's
quest to understand San Narciso, past and present, is prestructured through her textually biased horizon of expectations and experience, a horizon that obliterates all traces of alternate communications media. Anthony Smith phrases this hermeneutic circle in McLuhanesque terms:

the media impose a bias upon the relative status of the senses, and thus influence the content of memory, which in time further amplifies the prevailing patterning of the sensorium. As subjects of experience, as potential knowers of that which is to be known, we are to that extent prestructured, though in a context of constant change. Human perception thus enjoys its own history, of which media history is a part (39).

Oedipa's quest traces a fictional historiography of communications in miniature. However, she fails to make sense at every point because she does not share the insight which Smith inherits from Harold Innis: that the key to history lies in communications, and communications are dependent on developments in the media. Noting Innis' treatment of myths as the record of the emergence of new media, McLuhan asks, "Is there significance in the fact that the Oedipus myth has so far not been found among the preliterate?" (341). Pynchon addresses this question on McLuhan's own terms, rewriting Sophocles' tragedy in a serio-comic manner such that the heroine's hamartia is not an overwhelming desire to know, but rather a media bias which prevents her from knowing. Social blindness is the result of.
too much sight, and the text insists that Oedipa's failure to free herself from the oppressive notion of private property is related to her insistence on literal/visual experience over the oral/aural. She has experienced an excess of vision, and, like her tragic namesake, must put out her eyes in order to attain understanding.

Pynchon's satire thus allegorizes the complex and disorganized shift from literacy to "post-literacy" as a conflict between a legacy of aspiring postal monopolies (including the Yoyodyne internal delivery system, the Tristero, the Thurn and Taxis, and the U.S. Mail), and the liberating "second orality" of information media that remains ever on the verge of Oedipa's awareness. In this postmodern nekyia, the messages of the dead are communicated below Oedipa's threshold of perception, outside the media bias which bounds her horizon of understanding. She "dreamed of disembodied voices" (131), and wonders at the spontaneous vernal fermentation of dandelion wine, "As if the dead really do persist, even in a bottle of wine" (72). Lost in uncertainty, she attempts to communicate telepathically with the drowned Driblette:
[s]he tried to reach out, to whatever coded
tenacity of protein might improbably have held on
six feet below, . . . . Driblette, she called.
The signal echoing down twisted miles of brain
circuitry. Driblette!
But as with Maxwell's Demon, so now. Either she
could not communicate, or he did not exist (121-2).

Inverarity, too, was lost to Oedipa's ineffective necromantic
powers: "she could never again call back any image of the
dead man to dress up, pose, talk to and make answer" (134).
Lot 49, like Poe's "M. Valdemar," demonstrates that in a
print-biased culture, even the ironic nekya becomes
unavailable, lost like the menippean tradition itself.

Locked within a literary model of paranoid intertextual
reading, Oedipa cannot detect the signals of a new, post-
literary intertextuality. More than just the narcissism of
recognizing literary echoes, reading Lot 49 intertextually
demands tracing the lines of contact between apparently
isolated cultural, historical and political institutions.
The text thus builds a political thesis which implicates the
modern tendency to regard communications media as a form of
property as the main cause of social oppression in twentieth-
century America. Pynchon demonstrates that the condition of
oppression in post-industrial society means dispossession not
only of material goods, but increasingly of the immaterial
means of communication as well. When Oedipa reflects upon the
disinherited citizens she has encountered on her quest, she
imagines them as living in wrecked automobiles, walking by
the side of the road, or perched atop telephone wires. In short, she pictures them on the boundaries of the social infrastructure which connects the circuits of transportation and communication—the two social spheres, we recall, that Marx does not address:

If only she'd looked ... She thought of other, immobilized freight cars, where the kids sat on the floor planking and sang back, happy as fat, whatever came over the mother's pocket radio; of other squatters who stretched canvas for lean-tos behind smiling billboards along all the highways, or slept in junkyards in the stripped shells of wrecked Plymounds, or even, daring, spent the night up some pole in a lineman's tent like caterpillars, swung among a web of telephone wires, living in the very copper rigging and secular miracle of communication, untroubled by the dumb voltages flickering their miles, the night long, in the thousands of unheard messages. She remembered drifters she had listened to, Americans speaking their language carefully, scholarly, as if they were in exile from somewhere else invisible with the cheered land she lived in; and walkers along the roads at night, zooming in and out of your headlights without looking up, too far from any town to have a real destination. And the voices before and after the dead man's that had phoned at random during the darkest slowest hours, searching ceaseless among the dial's ten million possibilities for that magical Other who would reveal herself out of the roar of relays, monotone litanies of insult, filth, fantasy, love whose brute repetition must someday call into being the trigger for the unnameable act, the recognition, the Word (179-80).

Although Oedipa begins her recollection with a regret of not having "looked" in the right places, the memory she constructs is rather an acoustic than a visual collage, a medley of "unheard messages" both public and private,
naturally and electronically mediated. It is difficult to schematize the sense of the passage, except to remark that it hints that the ineffable answer to Oedipa's quest may be found in the heteroglot entirety of social communications which is too vast to be regulated, and too ineffable to be possessed. Metzger faults her, effectively, for dialogizing Inverarity's testament, for wanting to "Raise ghosts. All from a drunken hassle with Manny Di Presso. Forgetting her first loyalty, legal and moral, is to the estate she represents" (53). But Oedipa intuits that Inverarity's estate, however extensive, cannot organize the underworldly dialogue of dispossession played out by a babble of "voices before and after the dead man's," the truly polyglot dialogue of America's dead. Like Lucian's Menippus, Oedipa is the flâneur of the San Narcisan necropolis, idly observing; unlike the Gadarene cynic, however, Oedipa misses the connection between property and communication, and can thus indulge in no revealing laughter.

VIII. Pynchon's Ending: Monological or Dialogical?

The truly disinherited of America, doubly excluded from both the official lines of communication and the W.A.S.T.E. system, exist on the threshold of an imminent shift from a
dominant visual and proprietal conceptual bias to an emergent oral/aural bias. Dugdale comes close to this realization:

With its anachronistically assertive individualism . . . and its insistence on the value of private experience, it [the Tristero] is now about to be superseded by a culture of 'teamwork' . . . and its role appropriated by new masters, the mass media. The alternative is implied by the . . . appearance of the super-secretive Tristero book-bidder. A last paranoid writing, reasserting such anachronisms as the connection between authorship and authority (185).

The end of the narrative famously achieves only indeterminate closure, and leaves the reader uncertain whether Oedipa has yet heard the word that will allow her to overcome the modern bias of literacy which connects property to authority. This paradigm is reinforced by the introduction of the auction, another classical topos of menippean satire ever since Menippus' lost Sale of Diogenes, which Lucian probably imitates in his Vitarum auctio, or Philosophers for Sale. If Oedipa still believes that seeing the purchaser of Inverarity's stamps will help her end her quest, then she is still operating within the modern paradigm that privileges the visual and proprietal. On the other hand, if awaiting the crying of Lot 49 makes punning reference to Oedipa's imminent harkening of the miserable supplication of America's dispossessed, then she may yet anticipate some revelation.
The ending of *Lot 49* suggests that there exist no simple means for transcending our persistent modern interpretive horizon, with its inherited tendency to conceptualize literature and other forms of communications as a kind of property. Pynchon does not try to solve the issue of copyright in postmodernity, only to raise it and lay bare the proprietal ideologies at work. Nor does Oedipa resolve her dilemma of whether to denounce the Tristero, celebrate it, or ignore it altogether. Oedipa's story denies the telos which would guarantee the thematic, generic, and ethical closure of the text, thereby subverting—or performatively re-affirming—the tragic maxim of its Sophoclean intertext, attributed to Solon: "Here is the truth of each man's life: we must wait, and see his end, scrutinize his dying day, . . ." (ll. 1528-9). Lucian's *Nekyomanteia* also subvert the convention of tragic closure, by continually forcing his comic characters into a mock-tragic realization of their errors in life, and a redaction of their renowned earthly opinions. Menippus' sentiment, borrowed from Oedipus Rex and expressed in dialogue with a company of kings, is "Know thy selfe" (Keener 147). But menippean experience, as Kristeva notes, by nature is not cathartic (84). Accordingly, Oedipa is left eternally waiting, but without

61 Bakhtin's theory of the unfinalizability of the utterance echoes this epigram: "As long as a person is alive he lives by the fact that he is not yet finalized, that he has not yet uttered his ultimate word" (*Dostoevsky* 59).
the certainty of hindsight sub specie aeternitatis. The question that remains is whether the ending of Lot 49 brings the literary series initiated by Nashe to a (monologic) terminus, or points toward a renewed (dialogic) response.

Part of the difficulty in understanding Oedipa's dilemma today is that information media have evolved differently since the publication of Lot 49. The evolution of technology in the three decades since its publication has rendered inaccurate Ong's prediction of a return to a "secondary orality." Silicon has taken over from the transistor as the harbinger of the communications revolution, and computers paradoxically combine features of omnidirectional analog media (TV, radio and telephones) with the digital, linear and analytical aspects of print culture (see Berg 124-5). It remains unclear whether the digital revolution promises the sort of Leibnitzian, Paracletion system of immediate communication and understanding that Oedipa seems upon the brink of discovering. Like our technology, Pynchon's text leaves a loophole for Oedipa and her reader, in which the fate of modern media remains undecided.
CHAPTER FOUR.

Nuking the Middlebrow:
Robert Coover's The Public Burning
and the Disembodiment of Carnival;
or,
Shocking Pinkos as Satiric Schlock Therapy

The moving image is a substitute for the cemetery.

- Anthony Smith

USA Today appears, without a geographical base (Sept. 15, 1982): News-from-nowhere as an infotainment paper.

- Dennis Sexsmith

There's so much comedy on television. Does that cause comedy in the streets?

- Dick Cavett

[The] spread of communistic theories . . . at last almost paralysed the marvellous system of commerce under which the old world had lived so feverishly . . . . The year 1952 was one of the worst of these times.

- William Morris, News from Nowhere

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'... [W]e'll transform the courtyard into a Nuclear Exhibition Centre. We'll have a big, big banner over the entrance, a poster showing the mushroom cloud, a hundred or so fairy lights in all the colours of the rainbow . . . .'

'And hey presto it's Carnival!' moaned Giorgio despondently.

- Luciano de Crescenzo, The Dialogues

The last two chapters have built a brief history of the English necromantic satire, from the revival of the Lucianic dialogue's mythic parody in the Elizabethan "news from hell," through Poe's nineteenth-century satiric anatomy of the dead discourses that circulated within his burgeoning information society, to Pynchon's postmodern, post-literary nekyia, in which new electronic media threaten to take over from literature as the new communication system of the dead. Chapter Three further explores the continuity between ancient menippean parody of myth, and contemporary literary satires of the mass media. Having examined some of the intersections of menippean satire with different forms of media, we will now turn to consider the impact of the nekyia as a broader cultural phenomenon in a burgeoning information society. This study has so far drawn on the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin without emphasizing the serious oversights in his theories of language as they apply to modern linguistic and cultural formations. Although Bakhtin's writings are invoked
with increasing frequency by postmodernists and cultural theorists alike, critics have hardly begun to test his theories of language and culture, rooted in explorations of ancient and pre-novelistic genres of literature, in the living arena of contemporary culture. This chapter will explore the full relevance of elaborated theories of dialogism, chronotopes and the carnivalesque to a contemporary information society, through the example of Robert Coover's postmodern menippea, *The Public Burning* (1978).

Set principally in New York City in June of 1953, and documenting the days leading up to the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for conspiracy to commit treason, *The Public Burning* presents an indecorous parade of characters living and dead, both real and imaginary, within a satura of high literary tropes and popular genres. Coover gathers the entire nation of entertainers for a grotesque Petronian "smorgasbord" set by Betty Crocker, the nation's matron of marketing. Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy burlesque the President and his most vigilant senator, while nuclear escalation is compared to a Buster Keaton pie-throwing act, a kind of latter-day Rabelaisian kitchen war. This is an excessive cultural artifact that confounds historical fact with fantastic narrative perspectives, including that of a realistically rendered Richard Nixon, who wanders this
cartoon world as a complex and sentimental naif—a laughably innocent foil to the Rosenberg's alleged guilt.

With so much happening, Coover seems capable of almost any transgression. There is a sense of heightened narrative freedom throughout The Public Burning that exceeds the attainable limits of social freedom, especially in the Rosenbergs' case. It is doubtless this brazen display that leads Jackson Cope to call The Public Burning "the first truly dialogic, perhaps the first truly American, novel" (113). Cope's apostrophe suggests that literary dialogism, understood as the ideological correlative of the novel genre, must somehow correspond to the ideals of American civil society, construed in both Coover's text and actual political rhetoric as a giant, heteroglot public square. And yet, it is difficult to accept Coover's discursive freedom as genuinely "American," when his satire of McCarthy's loyalty hearings calls into question the very opposition of "American" and "un-American." Moreover, it is not clear that Coover's embittered carnival and representational license necessarily correspond to either any clear democratic or novelistic principle, correct any judicial error or historical oversight, or (re)produce any real political agency.

On the contrary, I want to suggest that this outrageous satiric display cannot but fail to represent the most shocking and pertinent fact of all: the utter ordinariness
of the alleged atom spies. According to Andrew Ross, the
Rosenbergs were convicted more on the evidence of their
middlebrow lifestyle than any real proof of subterfuge. The
term "middlebrow" was first used in the 1920s to describe
novels and plays which were neither simple entertainment for
the masses nor "high art." Middlebrow writers "attempted to
establish continuity not with great [Modernist] literature
but with the past: they employed the nineteenth-century
structure of well-rounded narratives, with clearly structured
plots and definite endings, and they assumed the presence of
an audience bound by a community of values" (Bracco 12).
From the 1930s on, however, the middlebrow came to signify a
much broader set of middling cultural identifications, that
were consolidated through institutions like The Book-of-the-
Month Club (see Radway). By the 1950s, this implied
interpretive community elicited more suspicion than
solidarity from cultural critics like Dwight MacDonald, who
saw signs of Soviet influence in lifestyles that coupled
intellectual "pretensions" with lower-middle class purchasing
patterns, as we shall see.

Earlier chapters have suggested that the menippean
tradition of "learned wit" has undergone several alterations
in the twentieth century. Continuing a trend observable in
Poe, modern menippeanists like Joyce, Eliot and Mario de
Andrade began to draw upon the discourses of modern
communications that close the gap between "intellectual" and
"popular" modes of expression. What remains is the discourse of information, which in modern societies mediates "high" scholarly and "low" folk discourses through what could be called pre-novelistic strategies that resemble ancient dialogic satire far more than the "well-rounded narrative" and communal values of monthly middlebrow offerings. The Public Burning provides an example of this process, emptying out both high- and low-brow cultural positions, represented in the text by Richard M. Nixon and the American masses respectively. And like other recent menippeas, Coover's violent and spectacular dialogic representational strategies exclude that middlebrow community with which the Rosenbergs had, in Ross' view, come to be identified. Coover's chosen genre therefore presents the danger of recapitulating the attitudes of those very same neo-liberal intellectuals who excluded and condemned the Rosenbergs, not on the basis of their politics, but because of their "middlebrow" aesthetic. The question of how Coover's "implied audience" might constitute itself in relation to popular culture and the Rosenberg case remains to be answered.

I. The Postmodern Menippea: From Chronotopes to Mediascapes

That The Public Burning constitutes an almost embarrassingly complete catalogue of the contemporary carnivalesque is difficult to overlook. A text that examines
the effects of a fascist anti-Stalinist movement in Cold War America through comic reversals, low bodily humour, and linguistic diversity cannot but remind us that Bakhtin praised popular parodic forms as a coded objection to the monological rule of Stalinism. But where folk parody emerges in contemporary literature, it tends to appear not as the positive, regenerative force that Bakhtin described, but rather as a "carnival turned bitter." There are any number of arguments to describe why and how genuinely dialogical modes of folk expression become attenuated in late modernity. Whether framed within novelistic discourse, sublimated within bourgeois social formations, or reduced to pantomime or

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62 A view made famous by Clark and Holquist in their biography of Bakhtin, which has led to critiques of Bakhtin's idealistic portrayal of the carnival's radical potential. Booker and Juraga's recent reconsideration argues for a dialogical reading of Bakhtin himself, one which allows for the officially sanctioned nature of the carnival, and interprets it as a broader allegory of modern Russian history. In this view, the liberating potential of the carnival is represented in the brief moment of the October Revolution, framed on either end by the oppressive regimes of Czarism and Stalinism. The concept of a carnival that is always already co-opted is likely present in Bakhtin's own use of the term.

63 For Michael André Bernstein, the embittered contemporary carnivalesque represents "what happens when genre memories exert such automatic control over a book that it becomes a catalogue of the most familiar and shopwork Saturnalian effects, massed together without any reflection of their provenance" (367-8). One must presume that by "provenance" Bernstein means both the physical and temporal "wholeness" of the material folk body which Bakhtin discusses in the Rabelais book as the grounding matrix of the carnivalesque series, and the pre-novelistic history of dialogic satire.
pastiche, aspects of the contemporary carnivalesque, it is often argued, produce alienation instead of community, and inspire sterilizing shock instead of regenerative laughter.

Stallybrass and White argue most cogently in The Politics and Poetics of Transgression that the middle-class disengaged from carnival, only to displace its forms geographically, temporally, and socially. In their by now familiar view, carnival culture was historically marginalized to the geographic fringe, and sublimated "into bourgeois discourses like art and psychoanalysis" (178). Coover's text exhibits important differences from this account of the modern destiny of carnivalesque folk forms, not the least of which involves a reevaluation of the deployment of the carnival across space and time. His satiric analysis of contemporary life discovers the carnivalesque to be doing a booming business in the spectacle of modern politics and mass entertainment. Back from the margins, Coover's political sideshow is situated front and center, smack in the middle of Times Square, the "mythic omphalos of the nation" (Coover 357).

Through this central setting, The Public Burning explores the role of contemporary media in ways that supplement Bakhtin's own theories of genre and the literary chronotope.64 The chronotope, simply put, is Bakhtin's term

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64 Bakhtin's most extended treatment of the chronotope appears in his essay "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," but he discusses the specific chronotopes of the
for the organization of narrative time-space, and it is this above all else which determines the genre(s) of a given utterance. The Public Burning offers a veritable catalogue of ancient chronotopes, combining elements of all three of the ancient genres which Bakhtin identifies from the pre-history of the novel: the Greek romance, or adventure novel of ordeal; the adventure novel of everyday life; and the biography of the public man (see "Chronotope" 86-151). The Greek romance, like Coover's text, is shaped by two factors: the motif of separated lovers, and the idea of a legal trial. Its hero is an isolated individual who tries to justify his private love in the form of a public accounting. By coming to perceive himself as Ethel's long-lost lover, separated from her by both Julius and her criminal charges, Coover's Nixon tries to recast his historic role in the light of a Greek romance. The stage of Ethel's public execution in Times Square becomes the public accounting at which he will, as Clitophon to her Leucippe, intervene to profess his love and her chastity, and justify their fidelity before the court of law.

Unfortunately for Coover's Nixon, other generic forces at work in his fictional universe interfere with his romantic designs. His private shriving degenerates into a public exposure of his own licentious crimes, as Ethel hoodwinks him

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gpublic square and threshold dialogue in both Rabelais and His World (10, 254-5; 69-70, 386-7) and Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics. (111; 128-9 et passim).
into appearing centre stage with his pants down. Coover's joke lies in representing both Nixon and Ethel in precisely the manner that history presents them. Nixon tries to change the course of history, but cannot: his actions are overdetermined by the demands of political office, by the reader's knowledge that Ethel was in fact executed, and by the urgency to commit the execution conveyed by the intensified time-frame of the satire. In the ancient adventure chronotope, for example, time is "reversible" and space is abstract. Neither the order of events nor their locale has any contextual specificity, but instead are left vague so as to heighten the element of chance. In marked contrast, The Public Burning exhibits throughout its highly condensed action an entropic insistence on the urgency and finality of history:

... it's as though events have gone too far, as though there's an inner momentum now that can no longer be tampered with, the nation is too deeply committed to this ceremony, barriers have already come down, the ghosts have been sprung and there's a terror loose in the world, an excitement: if the spies don't die and die now, something awful might happen (211).

Far from the openness and future-orientation of novelistic time, Nixon's story approaches the absoluteness of epic time, making him perfect material for menippean parody.

On the other hand, Ethel's daubing of Nixon's posterior with the slogan, "I AM A SCAMP" (469) represents an incident
more consistent with the "adventure novel of everyday life" (the two ancient examples Bakhtin provides being Petronius' *Satyricon* and Apuleius' *Golden Ass*). In this chronotope, too, the criminal trial takes on an enormous organizational significance. Space assumes a more concrete significance in relation to the hero's fate, which is one of metamorphosis. Historically, this chronotope provides the first instances in literature in which the need to represent private life began to outweigh the literary concern with public genres. Bakhtin shows that Apuleius surmounted the difficulty of representing private life through the confessions and testimonies of the criminal trial, and above all else through the theme of spying. Morson and Emerson speculate that, for Bakhtin, this emphasis on secrecy could represent a coded objection to the censorship enforced by Stalin (391). For Coover, the motifs of the trial and spying lend themselves perfectly to the Rosenberg case, and provoke broader questions about the nature of public and private utterance in contemporary America.

This chronotopic nexus of the private and public life is further explored through Nixon's laughably deadpan attempt at autobiography. A parody in part of Nixon's ghost-written autobiographical *Six Crises* (1970; Cope 79, 82), Coover's text also recalls Bakhtin's assertion that the biographical genres began in the public square, with the presentation of the public man ("Chronotope" 131). The vice-president's need
to confess all his most personal thoughts humorously belies the historical Nixon's secret ministrations, and leaves him open to a series of bawdy abuses and embarrassments in the public square. Ultimately, this ironic autobiography reengages the liberal apologists of the Eisenhower administration, who faulted the Rosenbergs for failing to distinguish between the appropriate registers of public and private discourse, as Ross shows.

Coover's contribution to the history of chronotopes goes well beyond the mere formal parody of ancient narrative patterns to investigate the mediation of time-space in late-capitalist societies. In discussing the ancient autobiographical genres, Bakhtin draws an important distinction between the "internal" and "external real-life" forms of the chronotope (131). Far more than a purely structural feature of narrative, the "external" chronotope also describes the dialogic relationship that pertains between an author, his or her text, and its reader. The act of reading takes place in space-time, and therefore exists within its own "creative chronotope," its own organized social space. 65

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65 Though Bakhtin does not detail the lineaments of this particular chronotopic relation, he does imply their importance: "We might even speak of a special creative chronotope inside which this exchange between [artistic] work and life occurs, and which constitutes the distinctive life of the work" ("Chronotope" 254). Chronotopes of reading become particularly important in the case of a menippean satire like Coover's, which demands extensive commitment, both temporal and ideological, from its readers.
understood as the product of real-world chronotopes, the historically determined patterns which organize social relations in space and time: "Out of the actual chronotopes of our world (which serve as the source of representation) emerge the reflected and created chronotopes of the world represented in the work (in the text)" (Bakhtin, "Chronotope" 253; emphasis in original). It needs to be recognized that this chronotopic orientation holds true for other media besides the literary. Bakhtin's theory lacks any means of moving from the subject of literary genre to an analysis of the spatio-temporal parameters of other media that determine value and the allowable limits of communicative action in the real world. Although there have been a few attempts to characterize the "external real-life" chronotopic structure of different media, including film and television, no one has heretofore addressed the vast potential which Bakhtin's chronotope holds for a general theory of mediation.66

Morson and Emerson raise the question of whether the chronotope determines possible action, or leaves an individual free to alter his or her spatio-temporal relations within a given social and historical context:

66 The most significant studies are by Stam and Montgomery, who consider filmic chronotopes, the former to great effect. Drueding brackets the full potential for a chronotopic analysis of media by treating the soap opera "as a form of narrative embodied in televised form". Even Hirschkop begins and ends his discussion of the chronotope and civic space with the novel genre, without undertaking to explore the democratic potential of electronic media in Bakhtinian terms.
each genre offers a different 'image of a person'

... It is as if each genre possesses a specific field that determines the parameters of events even though the field does not uniquely specify particular events. To study the field is to study the chronotope (370).

Chronotopes create the meanings that shape narrative, and "define parameters of value" (369). This relationship that Bakhtin explores between the private will and the public utterance or action is central to The Public Burning, as its very title suggests. Coover examines the notion of individual freedom through Nixon's attempts to alter the fate of the Rosenbergs, a fate overdetermined in his text—and, we conclude, in the text of history as well—by the chronotopic pressures of a public opinion refracted through the mass media. Nixon self-consciously mirrors the reader's own sense of the narrative in which they are mutually embroiled when he thinks, "in a sense I was no more free than the Rosenbergs were, we'd both been drawn into dramas above and beyond those of ordinary mortals" (367). The Cold War era that forms the historical background of Coover's satire marks the onset of a post-industrial society in which mass and electronic media for the first time begin to dominate spatio-temporal relations, and thus to determine social action on the mass scale. As the first world leader to use the new medium of television for political ends with any measurable success
(and, later, failure), Richard Nixon presents the perfect figure from which to begin an analysis of media chronotopes and their effect on questions of justice.

The *Public Burning* shows that in the emergent post-industrial society of Cold War America, mass and electronic media eclipse literary genres as the chief determinants of spatio-temporal relations. Into ancient narrative time-spaces, Coover interpolates the modern chronotopes of journalism and advertising that dominate representation within the mode of information. It is not merely a coincidence that his principle setting, Times Square, is both a literal translation of "chronotope" and the seat of one of America's most broadly circulated journalistic organs. Depicting the *New York Times* and Times Square as coextensive spaces of mediation allows Coover to efface the boundaries between actual urban space and the represented space of the broadsheet, between Bakhtin's "actual" and "created" chronotopes. For Bakhtin's idealized novel, Coover substitutes the newspaper as the contemporary benefactor of social heteroglossia. In his conceit, the *Times* is not a mass-reproduced document that travels each morning to thousands of readers; instead, it is a unique shrine within the public square, to which the faithful make pilgrimage every day:
Dwight David Eisenhower in the White House, rushes here daily, . . . his Vice President, Richard Nixon, does come here often, pretending disdain. . . .

Julius, more faithful—a regular dues-payer, in fact—presents himself diligently at Page One every morning at ten o'clock, pressing his nose against the great slabs, frowning through his wire-rimmed spectacles at all this irrelevant history, weeping to himself to see such monumental dignity conferred on a world so mad (192).

That New Yorkers come to the Times willingly, even ritualistically, indicates the extent to which the hegemony of the mass media finds its basis in popular consensus:

"Conscious or not, The New York Times statuary functions as a charter of moral and social order, a political force-field marker, defining meaningful actions merely by showing them, conferring a special power on those it touches . . . . How else struggle against entropy?" (Coover 191). As James W. Carey notes, when communication media are considered in their ritualistic as opposed to their transmissive function, the emphasis switches from the traversing of spatial distance to the creation of sites of community.67 Coover demonstrates

67 Carey makes much of the distinction between "transmission" and "ritual" understandings of communication: "A ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs . . . . [T]he archetypal case under a ritual view is the sacred ceremony that draws persons together in fellowship and commonality" (18). He suggests the problem with society is that our models of communication are based on transmission rather than ritual; that is, the process of mediation itself has become transparent, leading a society to believe its own constructions of reality. Interestingly, Coover makes the
that in the media-saturated agora of postmodernity, journalistic representations to a large degree determine the parameters of social action, agency and utterance, in ways that hinder community. Far from a Baudrillardian critique of the depthless uniformity of social simulation, The Public Burning explores the specific spatio-temporal parameters of contemporary social organization.

As a strictly defined social space-time, the public square can only partially describe the complexities of contemporary mediascapes. In order to represent more accurately the modern media formations that extend consciousness spatially and temporally, Coover must recreate a rare, though not unprecedented, menippean hybrid of ancient chronotopes. By transporting the electric chair from the Sing-Sing death chamber to a raised platform in Times Square, he collapses the carnival square with the space of a threshold dialogue. This combination creates a late-capitalist satiric nekynia, a dialogue-of-the-dead in which TV and film celebrities commingle with marketing spokesfigures, like mythic anti-heroes in a nation permeated by the dead discourses of "liberty" and "manifest destiny". Just as

ritualistic "shared beliefs" are too easily inflected by monologic forces that manipulate on the mass scale, Bakhtin does not always recognize the ritual function of communication. He at times distinguishes only between everyday speech, which is "the engaged transmission of practical information," and various forms of represented speech--from quotation to parodic distortion and slander--that refract the utterance ("Discourse" 339).
Lucian's *Nekyomanteia* scoffed at the nation-forming ideology of ancient myth, so Coover lampoons the mass media for the political myths they market to a contemporary American society.

II. **Media Myths: A Scandalous Senecan Spectacle**

In an interview conducted during the writing of *The Public Burning*, Coover admits that the "basic struggle for us all is against metamorphosis" (*Robert Coover* 152). He laments that faith in myth has been lost (142-3), and claims that, while writing *The Public Burning*, he turned to ancient literary material "more as mythic residue than as real fiction" (147). Coover's "mythic residue" comprises not only ancient heroic and folkloric themes, but also "other material we take in as stories—newspaper articles, television, societal notions..." (150). Stan Fogel interprets this mythic dimension as a simultaneously revealing or demythifying function, much like a Barthesian "artificial myth" which "restores the mythological fabric of a culture in order to expose the semiological system latent in that fabric" (Fogel 193). Unfortunately, Barthes' semiotic definition of myth does not sustain the classical resonances of Coover's mythopoeia. Kathryn Hume interprets myth more positively, arguing that Coover's characters generally engage mythic or archetypal value systems to compensate for their
spiritual "nakedness" or weakness. She stresses the way that myth apotheosizes, raising humanity from its animal state to that of godliness. This reading underestimates the satiric deflation of Coover's text, and justifies Paul Maltby's assertion that critics like Hume who focus on Coover's mythologizing tend to foreclose on political readings of his fictions' discursive contexts.

A fuller awareness of the menippean legacy of mock-apotheoses, on the other hand, permits us to read The Public Burning as a satire in ancient literary style of the mythic structures of contemporary politics. In fact, The Public Burning carnivalizes the myths of the American Cold War in the same manner that Lucius Annaeus Seneca lampooned the political machinations of pre-Neronian Rome in his famous menippea, the Divi Claudii incipit Apotheosis Annae Senecæ per satiram (more economically known as the Ludus Seneca, or Apocolocyntosis, 55 A.D.). Seneca's innovation in the Apocolocyntosis was not only to combine the threshold dialogue with the public square chronotope, but also to bring menippean form to historical events. Whereas Lucian's dialogues deal primarily with characters from the myths and legends of a previous era, Seneca's displays an unusually specific target in its focus on one historic individual, the Emperor Claudius, rather than a social type (Relihan 81). The traditional necromantic dialogue in the spectral land beyond time becomes instead a timely and occasional piece, as
Seneca adapts demystifying menippean tactics to the recently deceased Emperor's infamous attempts during his life to mythify the history of his reign by apotheosizing himself and his closest relatives.

The most serious charges Seneca hurls at Claudius are those of the arbitrary administration of justice and summary executions (see Nauta 75;86), details that suggest immediate implications for the capital injustices committed by the American Supreme Court in its administration of the trial and execution of the Rosenbergs. Striking textual parallels can also be drawn between the central dupes of Coover's and Seneca's satires. Richard Nixon and Claudius were both powerful rulers who suffered the vicissitudes of public opinion. Nixon was a lawyer before entering politics; Seneca lampoons Claudius for consorting with lawyers in life (7.4-5), and achieves a poetic justice in sentencing his shade to eternal damnation as a legal clerk. Claudius mirrors Nixon's college football injury and characteristic tremulous posture: Seneca describes him "shaking his head; he was also dragging his right foot" (§ 5). Likewise, Nixon's stomach problems, which earn him the nick-name "'The Farting Quacker'" (50), parallels the incontinence of the Emperor, who cries out before he dies, "'Oh my! I think I've shit myself'" (§ 4). Both rulers sport the affectation of a lap dog—which, in Nixon's case, took on political significance in his landmark televised "Checkers" speech of 1951, a political triumph that
Coover's vice-president recalls with fond memories of his own rhetoric: "... and when I got to Checkers, I even told exactly how the dog had arrived in a crate at Union Station in Baltimore—I said that: Union Station in Baltimore" (310). Furthermore, each leader is attended by a mythic hero: Claudius is first led to Olympus by a dull Hercules, and finally conducted to Hades by Mercury, while Nixon is goaded on throughout his travels between Times Square and the White House by a heroically incarnated Uncle Sam, alias Sam Slick, the Star Spangled Superhero, and "our Superchief in the Age of Flux" (341).68

The Apocolocyntosis is Bakhtin's paradigm for the "three-planed construction" of the menippea (Dostoevsky 116), and, according to Relihan, is the only ancient instance of the genre to exhibit all three distinct ontological levels of

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68 Seneca's Hercules and, indirectly, Coover's Uncle Sam, both feed off the established ancient non-menippean tradition of Hercules furens.

Other critics, who seem generally unaware of Coover's Senecan intertext, tend to bring other mythic and literary analogues to their readings. Thus, Thomas Pughe acknowledges Coover's description of Uncle Sam as an "American Autolycus" (Coover 7), but emphasizes his American qualities (71). Terence Cope reads the entire text as a hybrid of Greek romance and its menippean parody, by which he means the Petronian/Apuleian "adventure novel of everyday life". But Cope identifies Aesop as Coover's primary "originary" intertext (72-3), in a critical will-to-origin that makes Cope's Bakhtinian reading a rather torturous exercise. Cope further chooses an Apuleian intertext, which leads him to identify Uncle Sam as "clearly" the goddess Isis to Nixon's Lucius (83).

My dialogical reading of Coover's text with Seneca's suggests that Senecan mock-apotheosis, not Aesopian metamorphosis, is another possible metaphor controlling Nixon's characterization.
earth, heaven and hell. Coover's menippea perhaps stands alone with Seneca's in exhibiting this full tripartite structure. Claudius' journey follows a pattern of descent which begins in Olympus with the central episode of the parodic *consilium deorum*, as the expired Emperor insists on recalling the divine senate to decide his worthiness for apotheosis. Nixon's visit to the Supreme Court in Chapter 12, tellingly subtitled "A Roman Scandal of Roaring Spectacle," also features a very special council: namely, the illegal and unprecedented midsummer recalling of the American Senate in 1953, for the express purpose of vacating Justice William O. Douglas' (legitimate) staying of the Rosenberg's execution.

Claudius is sent out of heaven by a strong vote, and brought to "the infernal regions" by way of his own funeral march in the crowded Campus Martius (appropriately celebrated as a national *dies festus*), with "his head wrapped up so that no one could recognize him" (§ 13). Paralleling this scene, Nixon attempts to enter Sing Sing wearing sunglasses, a homburg around his ears, and a "cheap handlebar moustache" (364). His attempts are thwarted by the multitudes in a geographically transposed Times Square, gathered this time to witness not a funeral but a public execution. Significantly, the combination of threshold dialogue with the carnivalesque chronotope of the public square appears to be unique to these two satires. Claudius ends his mock-ascension as a slave in
Hades; similarly, Nixon finds himself in the Epilogue in the belly of Disney's animatronic whale, undergoing a Lucianic interrogation with a cross-dressed J. Edgar Hoover. This kitsch underworld setting, which Coover will use again in *Pinocchio in Venice* (1991), closely resembles the ancient nekyia's cheapened vision of immortal machinery. But Lucian's infernal dialogues depict Charon or Menippus interrogating the worn-out mythic figures of the past from within a contemporized mindset, to stress that the common human fate of death implies freedom in life.

Coover's and Seneca's satires exhibit similar formal characteristics as well, each representing a satura of lyrical, confessional and other public modes of discourses. Seneca borrows from the poetry of Sappho and the writings of Varro, and multiplies adages taken from folk sayings, Virgilian epithets and Homeric tags. Echoes of epic verse, such as the ancient proverb to "be born a king or a fool!" (§1), travesty the inherited wisdom and Olympian machinery that Claudius evidently invoked to lend pomp and gravity to his reign. Coover's text, a medley of versified media blurbs, jingoist campaign slogans and dramatic monologues, likewise presents a macaronic farrago of the received wisdom of the American judiciary system:

The motto over the east entrance [to the Senate] translated, 'God Has Favored Our Undertakings,' and over the south door: 'In God We Trust.' Tailormade for me, just like the 'E Pluribus Unum' over
my head. But the slogan that excited the imagination was the one attached to 'Courage' over the doorway to the West, my part of the country: Novus Ordo Seclorum (59).

These weighty mottos are carnivalized within the public square, as the electric sign at Broadway and Seventh Avenue reading "AMERICA THE HOPE OF THE WORLD!" is transformed by a round of Nabokovian word golf into "AMERICA THE JOKE OF THE WORLD!" (41). Everywhere are placards of all political persuasions, some reading "HEIL EISENHOWER!" (287) and "SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS!" (399), others proclaiming, "RID THE U.S. OF RATS!" (342). And over the Rosenbergs' entrance to their death stage above the information kiosk in Times Square, a lone sign quietly implores, "SILENCE" (4).

The contrasts between these two menippea are equally telling. Claudius dies at the beginning of Seneca's satire, expelling his last breath flatulently through "his easiest channel of communication" (§ 4). The rest of the text concerns his aspirations to promotion in the Olympian synod (§§ 5-7), the gods' denial of his petition for apotheosis (§§ 8-11), and his ultimate sentencing to infernal humiliation (§§ 14-5). In The Public Burning it is not the protagonist Nixon who suffers death and a trial, but the scapegoat victims of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. But Nixon, in every way Claudius' successor, nevertheless seeks throughout to apotheosize himself by making an example of the Rosenberg
case. Sitting in the Senate Chamber, modern America's answer to Olympus, Nixon "tries to imagine what it felt like to be the Incarnation of Uncle Sam, the physical feeling of it as the transformation came over you. Terrible, some said" (60). He ultimately discovers exactly how terrible the Incarnation is, which occurs through an assault by Uncle Sam on his own communicating channel. Uncle Sam has already appointed Justice Douglas to the "High Council of Elders" (65), but when Nixon's own metamorphosis finally occurs, the feeling of transformation is far less transcendental. In the satire's Epilogue, he achieves at the hands of Uncle Sam the degraded apotheosis that Seneca denies to Claudius, through a bawdy operation that gives Nixon a bellyful of presidential spirit: "I felt like a woman in hard labor, bloated, sewn up, stuffed with some enormous bag of gas I couldn't release. I recalled Hoover's glazed stare, Roosevelt's anguished tics, Ike's silly smile: I should have guessed. . . ." (533).

The Public Burning thus compares two of history's most powerful lords of misrule, parodically transforming the apostasy of one into the apotheosis of the other, a posteriori. Although his conclusion is opposite to that of Seneca, its effects are equally devastating: Coover's comic coup is to invert Seneca's satiric point not by denying, but rather by affirming the mythic centrality of apotheosis to the spectacle of contemporary politics. If Claudius' punishment was his exclusion from heaven, then Nixon's
ambivalent fate is to achieve his desired incarnation by Uncle Sam, the spirit of the nation. After two millennia of frustrated scholarship, Coover finally answers the long-sought after justification for Seneca's disputed title, which translates as something like "pumpnification,"69 as Nixon is bloated into a gourd-like shape by the mythic ejaculate of manifest destiny. Just as Seneca's satire gives up its subject abruptly, as is commonly observed (Duff being one of the few critics to find this ending satisfying [95]), so Coover's epilogue in a few pages telescopes the time from the few days surrounding the Rosenberg's trial to the historical Nixon's political reversal two decades later, as though the future of American history were already contained within this

69 This author does not understand the difficulty of accepting "Apocolocynsosis" as a Senecan tag. Michael Coffey points out, for example, that Claudius is nowhere transformed into a pumpkin in the extant text; nor could such a transformation increase his stupidity. C.F. Russo, for one, believes the neologism to suggest not the apotheosis into a pumpkin, but the apotheosis of a pumpkin. (On the problem of Seneca's title, see Coffey's survey of the various critical positions, 245-54). Instead of such literal-minded approaches, one ought perhaps to consider the title and the satire generally not only as a personal attack on Claudius' reputation, but also as a lampoon of the mythico-political ceremony of apotheosis itself (see Duff; cf. Coffey 255 ff.). Whatever the vagaries of Seneca's original intentions, Coover extends this satiric heritage into an unmistakable satire of American political mythemes.
III. Novel, Nekyia, Media: Reading Chronotopically

Both the novel and the menippean satire are phenomena far too complex and historical to permit any cavalier speculation about their relative cultural status, audiences and effects. And yet, the question of the menippea's audience(s) might be engaged chronotopically. Drawing on Bakhtin's last writings on the chronotope, Morson and Emerson sketch out a response-oriented theory of reading:

Just as the processes of 'canonization' and 'reaccentuation' may affect or enrich the meaning of works, so may analogous changes in the chronotopes of the reader's world. We may presumably speak of a changing chronotopic background as well as a changing dialogic background. These factors, and many more, establish the differences of culture—the outsideness—that makes real dialogue among cultures and periods possible (429).

The most fruitful approach to interpretation does not give primacy to either the author's or the reader's chronotopic

70 Cope disagrees with this view of the text's historicity when he suggests that "Nixon was calculated to be unknown even at this little distance from the novel's origins. The Public Burning is thus a historical novel in an almost random sense: neither the author/narrator nor the historical narrator, nor the burning itself, have other than vehicular presence in the novel" (68). In this view, then, the hermeneutic dilemma posed by the lacunae and lost references of Seneca's satire are to some extent mirrored by Coover's topical ephemerality.
bias, but instead explores the dialogic relationship between them. Seneca wrote his lampoon within a year of Claudius' death, perhaps for the Saturnalia of A.D. 55, as Nauta argues. Festival themes signify the end of the vicious "carnival time" of Claudius' reign, and celebrate a new kind of carnival more consistent with a nostalgic return to a Golden Age:

There was such a mob, such an orchestration of trumpeters, horn players, and every kind of brass instrumentalist that even Claudius could hear it. Everyone was happy and gay. The Roman people walked about like free men....

Weep, weep,
For the man's good judgements.
Who could master
Lawsuits faster,
Hearing either
One or neither (§ 12).

If the funeral of Claudius has a triumphal rather than a mournful air, this is only to signal the end of a brief period of inverted politics, a real-life Saturnalian reign characterized by arbitrary justice and summary executions. The death of Claudius is equivalent to the uncrowning of the carnival king that traditionally marked the end of the Saturnalian festival. Here the public square chronotope appears to fulfil its highest social function, linking

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71 Riikonen (48) cites an earlier expression of this view in an 1896 article by Furneaux, which I have not been able to view.
democracy and judicial reform to the oral heteroglossia of the Roman populi.

Yet, while the *Apocolocyntosis* depicts an entire nation's response to the Emperor's death, its first (and perhaps only) context of reception would have been within Nero's court itself (see Nauta, *passim*; Coffey 253). Its carnivalesque strategies were thus wholly sanctioned by and contained within the incoming order of Nero, leading Relihan to consider its political critique necessarily limited and unenthusiastic (89). Many scholars consider it but an extension in a different mode of the laudatory speech which Seneca wrote for Nero's inauguration in the same year. The case of the *Apocolocyntosis* thus supports the observation by Michael Gardiner, Timothy J. Reiss and others that Bakhtin represents the carnivalized genres inaccurately when he privileges its outward display of liberty. Indeed, the complicity of the carnival in dominant or ruling social formations has posed the single most frequent critique of Bakhtin's theory of satire. Reiss warns that

the idea of carnival can really remain only a handy means of disputing the dominant forms of discourse (and of ideology). That marks its own limit as well, of course: as contestation, it could never, itself, replace what it is disputing and challenging; as such, it could never become the dominant discourse. Furthermore, as dispute, it will always be recuperated and absorbed by its adversary: it will be the Roman or medieval festival with its precise dates and its prescribed 'deviations' . . . (Uncertainty 138).
Although Reiss pays lip service to the contextual specificity of actual instances of carnival, his analysis effectively abstracts the carnival as a mere marker of alterity. Carnival was not a practice for Reiss, but a sign of rupture between the old medieval way of life, and the new empiricist, liberal and logical-positivist discourses of modernity. The modern discursive order thus "did not respond to carnival by seeking to make use of its elements or terms, nor did it reply to medieval discourses by trying to rework theirs. Rather, it marked the passage . . . into a new 'logical space'" that precludes the dialogical space of the carnival (149). Like Stallybrass and White, Reiss relegates the carnival to the utopian space of the always-already oppositional. His stress on the impossibility of living within carnival for more than an instant stops short of describing the paradox of a contemporary American society that has permanently installed and sanctioned the forms of carnival monologically. Where, he seems to ask, is the dialogical "other" to a perpetually carnivalized society?

The Public Burning poses this very question through an intertextual strategy, a dialogical hermeneutic that situates contemporary American life within Seneca's carnivalesque take on a previously extended chapter in the history of empire. Finding no immediate other to stand in opposition to a formally carnivalized but ideologically oppressive mainstream,
American culture, Coover's text instead finds an historical exemplar of perpetual carnival in Claudius' reign, as conveyed through Seneca's satire. His carnival is not merely a hypertrophy of modern American life, but rather merges contemporary media representations with the differently valenced carnival of Seneca. In Neronian Rome, Coover finds an alternative social order that, at least by some accounts, succeeded in overcoming its carnivalization, and reinstating imperial rule. Coover's portrayal of America as a carnival that sustains the hegemony of the mass media contradicts any characterization of the carnivalesque as fully libratory and revolutionary forms of expression. The carnivalesque folk forms which Bakhtin valorizes are demonstrated to be so refracted through the mass media that they are left devoid of any revolutionary or redemptive potential. Whereas Seneca hails the end of an over-extended Roman carnival, Coover depicts America as a carnival without end. In both cases the carnivalesque public square is a sanctioned space that contains any real social unrest.

No one has yet performed the kind of chronotopic analysis of contemporary media that The Public Burning demands to be understood in its dual orientation toward ancient and contemporary forms of carnival. Coover questions the necessary alliance of liberty, Bakhtin's guiding ethic, and carnivalesque inversions: that is, he demands more seriousness from the state that would execute its own
citizens, not more laughter. He anatomizes the American
sense of humour, to show that contemporary comic expressions
arise not spontaneously from the folk, but rather from the
Leviathan of popular forms of mass expression, including
film, radio and television:

[the naughty boy who gets away with it, the old
man who needn't try, the dumb broad who doesn't
know what's happened when it's happened, plus a
little danger, a little violence, anticipation and
surprise: these are the things that open the
Whale's mouth (452).

Just as Seneca refashions the vox populi to suit the decorum
of his courtly audience, so Coover, in an equal but opposite
move, reinforces Nixon's view of his electorate as a "sea of
passivity" that only wants to laugh at the entertainment
provided by movies and television (477). Seneca's Roman
people are free at last to walk about and discourse sensibly
in the square; by contrast, Coover portrays the American
masses rather unforgivingly as a blood-thirsty mob,
"screaming, no longer distinguishable from one another as
Sinclair Weeks here, Patti Page there, but all folded into a
single mindless seething mass" (491). In many ways, this
portrayal of the populace is far removed from the social
encyclopedism of the renaissance anatomy, which Blanchard
sees as a reaction against more elite literary genres (39-
40). The menippean satire is traditionally a scholarly
criticism of scholars, whose victims are typically members of
fashionable pseudo-intellectual groups. Coover extends the menippean focus beyond ridicule of the bookish Nixon, to include his polity as well, as any hope for genuine social heteroglossia, or the plurality of freely voiced utterances, deteriorates into the emotive outbursts of a politically inarticulate mass: the "packed-up mob flinches, squeezing out of itself an airy moaning wheeze, compounded of gasps, groans, farts, curses, shrieks, belches, and woeful wails" (468). This "street-level skepticism" differs markedly from the plain-speaking mockery of intellectuals that Korkowski finds "consistent everywhere" in the menippea (69).

Ken Hirschkop insists that, although Bakhtin's chronotopes have real political ramifications, the modern hyperdifferentiation of linguistic styles alone does not achieve true heteroglossia. For novels do not record heteroglossia; they create it, by bonding "specific aesthetic purposes, value and linguistic form" (70). In Bakhtin's claim for the historical reality of the public square, Hirschkop detects an attempt to project a novelized space into the institutions of civil society. Realizing the novel chronotope in the public square permits Bakhtin to read linguistic diversity as the mark of a genuinely political pluralism:

In effect, groups come to the public square, or are represented in the novel so that they can become 'points of view,' or, to put the matter in a more pointed or provocative way, they come to 'make
history', a project which requires of them a change in form, from private world to 'world-view', from personal passion to public—though still passionate, one hopes—argument ('Heteroglossia' 71-2).

The novel genre thus exemplifies the process by which individual action becomes instantiated, and dialogically related to the social and historical lifeworlds: "The social task reflected in novelistic stylistic practice is . . . the making public of private values" (73). Of course, Coover's Nixon wants to do just the opposite: he wants to make Ethel's private life conform to some sort of civic value:

I understood the Rosenbergs as no one else in the world could understand them—not their families, their children, their co-conspirators, the FBI, not even each other. And out of that understanding I could provoke a truth for the world at large to gape at: namely, that nothing is predictable, anything can happen (365).

The problem with Hirschkop's understanding of heteroglossia (and I believe his reading of Bakhtin to be correct) is that it focusses too fetishistically on the novel genre, to the exclusion of those genres of discourse disseminated more broadly through the mass media. Neither the novel nor its correlative in Bakhtin's theory, the heteroglot public square, offers a metaphor adequate to address late twentieth-century civil society, which is thoroughly saturated with technologized utterances that reflect a differently mediated relationship to political
action. At the outset of this chapter I suggested that Coover's critics have tended to misread *The Public Burning* in treating it as a novel, and to overpraise the novel genre in treating it as the destiny of social heteroglossia and the cultural expression of political democracy. Indeed, it is unclear not only whether Coover's text is a novel at all, but whether the novel today can be dialogical.

The current hegemony of the novel within literary representation must be historicized in order to understand its long-standing association with media discourse. This study has argued that the ancient *menippean* forms developed during the renaissance in close proximity to the mercuries and broadsheets. But it is by no means clear why the assimilation of journalistic genres into "higher" literary form should necessarily lead to the production of *menippean* discourse. As Lennard Davis shows, the English novel originated when writers such as Defoe imposed linear narrative and a (relatively) stable narrative perspective on popular journalistic forms. The realistic novel has progressed from the disparate, public discourse of journalism to a means of representing internally lived life, usually focussed through a unified consciousness. At the same time, journalism has evolved alongside the realist novel, reassimilating the features of that genre. By the early 1950s, newspapers had so thoroughly absorbed the principles of novelistic discourse that the novel genre provided less
and less of a distinct stance from which to critique the fourth estate. Linear plot and suspense (in follow-up stories and series reports), character development and emotional rhetoric (in human interest stories), and an overwhelming attempt to make the particular case-study stand as a general social or moral lesson, are all features which modern newspaper and magazine reportage share with the realist novel.

Even the complex degree of ideological refraction which Bakhtin identifies in novelistic discourse can be found, for instance, in the actual follow-up coverage of the Rosenberg trial and execution. A story that appeared in the New York Times on Sunday, June 21, 1953, is divided by subheadings into short chapter-like segments. "BEGINNING OF THE PLOT" makes use of a pun that further disrupts the apparently objective surface of story, as does "Dealing With Harry Gold." The heading, "END OF THE ROAD," introduces the road chronotope so typical of the everyday adventure novel, and anticipates the narrative crisis in the Rosenbergs' elaborate escapade:

Rosenberg did not confine his professional interest to atomic information, according to the evidence at his trial. He confided to Greenglass that he had stolen the proximity fuse while he was working at the Emerson Radio Company on a Signal Corps project (col 3).
The words I have emphasized in the above quotation adopt the language of professionalism, but not to legitimize Julius' activities in earnest. Rather, they reaccent his actions in the kind of voice the journalist imagines that the culprit might have adopted to rationalize his alleged subterfuges. Far from journalistic objectivity, this language represents as fine an example as any of doubly-oriented language, or the "hybrid utterance" which Bakhtin identifies as the chief hallmark of novelistic discourse.\textsuperscript{72}

A sophisticated journalism that has so adroitly assimilated the subtle misdirections of novelistic discourse preempts any serious critique from within that discourse. One way around this quandary is to proceed as Nathanael West does in Miss Lonelyhearts (1933). Citing West's confession that he planned to write his disillusioning portrait of an advice columnist as a comic-book novel, Thomas Strychacz interprets West's text as a postmodern accommodation of mass cultural discourses that derides its canonical, modernist literary precursors as stilted and dead. As an alternative to modern novelistic practice, West reproduces and offers up for critique various forms of mass culture, not failing to reproduce also the mass-cultural tendency toward auto-

\textsuperscript{72} Virginia Carmichael notes a similar instance of the media using hybrid utterances for the purposes of misrepresenting the Rosenbergs. She cites a press release by J. Edgar Hoover that was reported as if spoken by Julius (88), another case in which "doubly-oriented discourse" in the media works to non-dialogic ends.
critique. The comic strip form, which "frees from the linearity of prose . . . [and which provides] instantaneous information," refurbishes the novel with a brand new chronotope.

Nevertheless, Strychacz insists that West's text remains a novel despite its formal innovations. The problem for him becomes one of distinguishing West's novel from the mass-cultural forms it critiques, of retaining its critical moment somewhere between the historical avant-garde and the modern culture industry:

... Miss Lonelyhearts might be seen as the quintessential text, dialogically conceived and executed, of twentieth-century culture... It is writing at the point where controlled parody (of mass culture) hovers on the edge of unconscious self-parody. It is writing at the point where Shrike's speeches, the letters, and newspaper columns cannot adequately be evaluated as good satire (that is, bad writing that we recontextualize as West's genius) or as bad satire composed in a throwaway comic-strip style... Yet it is precisely this self-consuming doubt about its own cultural status that makes the novel seem so valuable (184).

With its startling juxtapositions and allusiveness to a satura of forms, both popular and scholarly, Miss Lonelyhearts begins to sound, at least in the abstract, very much like The Public Burning. But if Coover exhibits a certain campy allusiveness that is similar to West's dominant style, he is not so sanguine regarding the political efficacy of mass-cultural forms. Coover's break with mass culture,
though expressed through the complicitous practice of parody, does not permit such an ambivalent reading.

The significance of the chronotope generally is that it makes time "palpable and visible . . . . An event can be communicated, it becomes information, one can give precise data on the place and time of its occurrence" ("Chronotope" 250). The chronotope typically transforms time and event into narrative information, which Bakhtin is careful here to distinguish from "mere dry information and communicated facts." But for Coover the newspaper provides just that—mere, dry information. In the news items which he reproduces, international and domestic news alike, of various import and tones, jostle against advertisements for wallpaper and umbrellas, crossword puzzles, and reviews of thriller novels. If, in Bakhtin's story of Western representation, the undifferentiated world of folkloric community gave way to the differentiated world of capitalism and print technology, then Coover shows that this social fragmentation reaches its limit in the "de-differentiated" informational matrix of the newspaper.

It is not that popular cultural forms are intrinsically banal, as Strachycz argues, but that their undifferentiated and repeated presentation in the newspaper matrix renders them so. As the epigraph to this chapter comments about USA Today, news from nowhere has become news from everywhere. No longer the Rabelaisian series of images linking the magical
herb Pantagruelian to a serial embodiment of folk knowledge, the newspaper abstracts popular forms from their real-life context, to resituate them in a relativizing grid. Whereas Bakhtin insists on the power of mere physical contiguity to ground meaningful utterance within the closeness of the carnival square, Coover concludes from its modern journalistic equivalent merely that "these things touch each other. There are sequences but no causes, contiguities but no connections" (190). Julius cannot hope to project any meaning against this ever-changing collage of data: "Such things are said every day, and no marvels ensue" (195). In short, the newspaper, understood as the modern equivalent of the public square and the destiny of social heteroglossia, finally constitutes only a monologic intertextuality that strips all utterance of its contextual valences, and destroys its potential social agency.

The dialogical does not reside in citationality for its own sake. To the "great civic monument" of the Times, people come "to commune with the latest transactions of the Spirit of History as made manifest in all the words and deeds of living and dying men fit to print" (188). Coover frames this monologic necromancy of the Times within his own fictional satura of information, a truly Lucianic nekyia that promises to re-establish a more meaningful dialogue with time.
IV. *From Mass to Popular, from Hegemonic to Heteroglot*

Here one encounters a new problematic in the history of the menippean satire, one that seriously problematizes the genre's relation to popular discourses like the advertising and journalism of *The Times*. The dearth of modern commentary on the menippea leaves open to question its social function in the era of mass society relative to, say, novelistic, mass or popular genres. Given the seriousness of Coover's topic and the absence of any unambiguous indication of self-parody, there must be some way to distinguish his own critical *satura* from the more popular and monologic citational matrix of *The Times*. The aesthetic dilemma which *The Public Burning* expresses is the problem of locating a valid artistic critique in a cultural space that is fully saturated with the chronotopes of monological cultural technologies. The problem is not unique to Coover, though it does assume particular relevance when one considers the cultural terms at stake in the Rosenberg case, the very terms of which, as we shall see, rested on mid-century intellectuals' perceptions of American popular culture.

In the Introduction, I discussed how the characteristic prose-verse mixture of ancient Greek and Roman menippea evolved into a *satura* of many different genres of prosaic utterance—the process that Bakhtin calls "novelization." Korkowski follows the lead of J. Wight Duff in identifying
Varro as the first to motivate the mixing of didascalic topoi with popular genres of verse for the purpose of making philosophy more accessible to the folk. Ever since, the relative quantities of high literary and popular features have been at once the most salient and the most disputed aspect of the menippea. But Seneca's satire represents a departure in the genre. Serious in purpose and designated for a courtly audience of elites, the Apocolocyntosis is a satire on politics, not learning, and thus introduces to the genre a new high-minded relationship to culture that stresses the need for a sober administration. It is Nero's no-nonsense political mandate that relieves Seneca's Romans, making them so "happy and gay."

Coover presents a much different relation between the populi Americani and their ruling class. As a self-conscious pastiche of already parodic forms, a further reversal of carnivalesque inversions, The Public Burning cuts a highly paradoxical figure. Nowhere do we witness any regenerative holiday violence against the symbols of a dying authority. Instead, in this carnival-turned-bitter, mass-mediated images interpellate New York's own public square, transforming the heteroglot folk into a mob that is easily manipulated by images of ritual sacrifice. Into Bakhtin's organic

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73 Pointing to evidence from Cicero's Academica, Korkowski supports Duff's claim that Varro tried to sweeten the bitter pill of learning by intermingling popular verse among his lessons (49; Duff 74).
materialist vision of society, Coover interposes the Times as a synchronic plane of media simulation; for Bakhtin's liberating shouts in the street, Coover substitutes the voice of the crowd, revealing it as nothing more than the programmed response to the "unanswerable" slogans of a mass-mediated, anti-Communist ideology. The immediacy of the public square boils into a fearsome, mobbish contact that closes the circuit on the Rosenberg trial: in the words of Uncle Sam, "'The impure, through their presumptulous [sic] contact with the sacred, are momentaneously as lit up with this force as are the pure, and it's easy for folks to confound the two'" (90). This illuminating "contact" is inevitably literalized in the burning of Ethel, which indeed confounds justice and force.

Of course, merely substituting the newspaper for the novel as the contemporary instantiation of heteroglossia does not address the problem of political agency, and in doing so Coover perhaps reproduces Bakhtin's silence over the issue of power relations in social communications. Michael Gardiner accurately points out that Bakhtin's championing of the subversive potential of dialogic literature and popular culture naively fails to express any (Foucauldian) awareness of "the social and institutional realities of power and domination" (176). Bakhtin does not consider any media or broader cultural practices through which the dominant class maintains its oppressive monologic hegemony. In short,
Gardiner finds lacking in Bakhtin's writings any working theory of how communication in advanced bourgeois societies is mediated by the institutional structures that administer power relations (177).

To overcome these blind spots in Bakhtin's theory of social communication, Gardiner draws on Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Gramsci argued that in advanced capitalist societies, the ruling class retains its dominance through a dialectic of coercion and consent:

Because class domination was not exercised exclusively through the state apparatus but mainly through the partially autonomous sphere of civil society, Gramsci felt that the dominant culture and ideology were not totally monolithic and all pervasive. . . . [T]he maintenance of consent necessitated a certain amount of freedom with respect to the internal elaboration of popular forms of thought and culture . . . (183-4).

Bakhtin does not fully consider the negotiations that pertained between popular utterances and official forms of expression, relations which Gramsci would describe as hegemonic. Carnival laughter in itself does not mount any organized, counter-hegemonic political strategies.

Nor does Coover's wholly pessimistic portrayal of mass culture at first seem to appreciate the intricacies of modern social coercion. If Coover does not automatically equate folk art and the carnivalesque with social liberation, he does appear to support the well-known opinion of Adorno and
Horkheimer that mass artforms intrinsically reinforce the hegemony of ruling structures, as Stan Fogel suggests (190). Coover's depiction of a nation utterly saturated with hegemonic media representations leaves open no readily occupied space for any communicative freedom, grassroots responsiveness, or Gramscian counter-hegemony. The familiar chronotopes of the threshold and the public square, the traditional locus of dialogic parody, merge in The Public Burning with the modern mediascape, where radio, TV, film and the press all combine to transform the heteroglot folk into a single, seething mass. What unites and transfixes this national audience, what entertains them in the sense of containing them, is the thrill of the threshold—the spectacle of death.

In The Perfect Machine, Joyce Nelson demonstrates that the administration of American life in the late-twentieth century has been wholly dominated by the collusion of the ruling "sweet technologies" of the military and culture industries. Information culture, she argues, amounts to no more than the management of military-industrial interests through the medium of advertising.74 Coover's blend of

74 Nelson's nostalgia for the ancient folkloric connection to the material folk body closely resembles Bakhtin's thesis in Rabelais and His World. She writes: "In past ages, given collectives of people had their own unique face-to-face rituals by which each member felt contained and valued within the social matrix" (24). She suggestively contrasts this organic vision with "the new 'matrix', the new 'virtual container'" (25) created by television, advertising, and other image-oriented media.
nuclear-age paranoia with the instruments of mass entertainment coincides with Nelson's vision of Cold War America as an event programmed by "the two dominant mass media of our time: television and the bomb" (42). What these dual technologies of perfection encourage above all else is the separation of the living body from its rationalized ideal—or, to be still more precise, the fissioning of the embodied subject from its mass-mediated representation. Of course, Stallybrass and White describe the bourgeois rejection of the grotesque material folk body. At this point, their conclusions must be completely reconsidered for a contemporary mediascape. For if in early modern times the middle class repressed forms of carnivalesque, then Coover shows that in Cold War America it was the carnivalesque impulse, now mediated through various forms of mass culture, that successfully repressed the middle class.

Nowhere is this development more apparent than in the case of the historical Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. That they were convicted at least in part on aesthetic grounds, implicated for their surprisingly commonplace and "non-progressive" appearance, is clearly shown in two infamous reviews by Leslie Fiedler and Robert Warshow. Both critics panned the Death House Letters, a volume of the correspondence that Julius and Ethel kept while on Death Row, published by the National Committee to Secure Justice in the
Rosenberg Case shortly before their execution. Warshow, for one, has been roundly criticized for his circular assertion that these letters between "spies" must perforce contain some kind of coded assault on American democracy. But it is above all else the tone of the letters, in which husband and wife interlard references to Irish folk songs and Beethoven's Ninth, Frank Sinatra and the Brooklyn Dodgers, that supposedly betrays "the awkwardness and falsity of the Rosenbergs' relation, to culture, to sports, and to themselves" (Warshow 76).

Warshow's real objection to the Rosenbergs is revealed by his supposition that their opinions would have changed "if the Dodgers had fired one of their Negro players, if Gentleman's Agreement had been unfavorably reviewed in the National Guardian" (77). As Andrew Ross has shown, Warshow faults the Rosenbergs for putting politics before aesthetics, a prioritizing Warshow reverses to dubious effect. Thus, signs of absolute ordinariness and conformity, such as the Knickerbocker Village row houses in which the Rosenbergs lived, signified to contemporary critics a "Stalinized" lifestyle that, ironically, betrayed its exact opposite: a remarkable double-life of espionage and treachery. Uncle Sam's description to Nixon of the Rosenbergs' "depravity" sums up Ross' argument that they were convicted for their middlebrow lifestyle.
'... You don't see it so much in the shape of their noses as in the way they twitch and blow them. ... You see it in their crummy business, their greasy flat, their friends—even their crockery betrays them, their lawyers, their pyjamas, their diseases. It's no accident, son, that they've been nailed with such things as Jell-O boxes, console tables, and brown paper wrappers—'(88).

My concern is that Coover's Saturnalian fantasy, with its "obsessive concern for and bombardment of [its] readers with data . . ." (Andersen 119), is complicit in this same occlusion of bourgeois values which helped to make the Rosenbergs' execution appear just and inevitable to so many. For, in crossing "the great divide" between prosimetric satire in the Graeco-Roman tradition and entertainments drawn from vaudeville, dance hall, films (both epic and B-grade), radio shows and advertising (both commercial and political), Coover passes over that which the American public of the early 1950s found truly shocking: the relatively recent, armchair process of bourgeois self-improvement and enculturation that was associated with "middlebrow" pretensions. Coover's satiric media carnival cannot include that constellation of cultural institutions which, for millions of Americans (and not all of them Popular Fronters), mediated between the high arts and mass entertainment.

In fact, Coover's gallimaufry of high-literary and low-popular genres actively excludes all vestiges of the middle class. So Ethel, whom the Press photographed doing dishes
immediately following Julius' arrest (Schneir, Plate 13), is transformed by Coover into the melodramatic anti-heroine of the tabloids: no longer the "dowdy" housewife (Fiedler 33), the convicted Atom spy that stands on Coover's stage of execution in "commanding style" is "disturbingly pretty, with none of the puffy puckery-mouthed sag of the photos" (512). Even the excerpts from the Death House Letters which are broadcast across Times Square in the final chapter have been carefully framed as a side show within the carnival of death. Gone are the Rosenbergs' purple prose and literary pretensions; in Coover's bowdlerized version, "only" genuine fear and conjugal sentiment remain. In short, Coover does not attempt to disprove Fiedler's and Warshow's claims that the Rosenbergs lack authenticity; rather, he chooses the counter-tactic of demonstrating the inauthenticity of post-war American culture and politics generally. By mixing high literary satire in the Saturnalian mode with the more buffered thrills of mass entertainment, Coover outdoes the tasteless pastiche of pseudo-literary effects that was said to characterize the Death House Letters. ("Why hadn't the Rosenbergs mentioned the river in their letters?," Nixon wonders. "The sounds, the smells, the images of freedom it offered up?" [406]). Here Bakhtin's own ethical judgements of artistic chronotopes are called into question. What were the Rosenbergs' monological, if politically left, dialogues
of the dead are parodied by Coover in a polyphonic, but ideologically noncommittal nekyia.

My concern is that Coover perhaps reiterates too closely the neo-liberal position of intellectuals like Dwight MacDonald, who addresses what could be called the modern chronotope of the masses in his critical diptych on "Masscult and Midcult" (1960). A broad-sweeping and elitist tract, this lengthy essay introduces many of the terms which Coover later explores in a different mode. MacDonald's squib should remind us that the postmodern is not the only artistic genre to cross "the great divide" between elite and popular culture. For MacDonald, Midcult is the "damnably American" development which blurs the distinction between Masscult and High Culture, thus preventing the latter from coming to its full fruition, despite the educational inflation among America's youth ("Midcult: II" 614). The arbitrariness inherent in this kind of criticism can be seen in the instance of the Henry Luce publications Time and Life. The parthenogenetic offspring of "Mother Luce" in Coover's media mythology represent yet another pretense of the middlebrow in MacDonald's second essay ("Masscult" II 600, n. 5; 618), but only the "homogenized culture" of Masscult in the first ("Masscult" 212 ff.). MacDonald's analysis of the homogenized articles, advertisements, and circulation of Life, complete with representative headlines ("A NEW FOREIGN POLICY, BY JOHN FOSTER DULLES and KERIMA: HER MARATHON KISS"
IS A MOVIE SENSATION" [213]) closely resembles Coover's parodies of journalism.

While one may disagree with many of MacDonald's judgements, he nevertheless adds another term to the cultural situation of Coover's text. MacDonald traces the origins of Masscult to the demise of the patronage system, beginning with journalists like Nashe in the late sixteenth century. Its development culminates in the figure of Lord Byron, whose self-promotion and personality in MacDonald's opinion provide the social mortar that otherwise impersonal modern culture of the masses needs to form community. With Byron, we arrive at the reason for considering *The Public Burning* as a popular artifact. Not a text to be tied down to particular sources, *The Public Burning* brings to mind another mock-apotheosis in the tradition of the *Apocolocyntosis*, Byron's *Vision of Judgement* (1822). A parody of Seneca's own threshold dialogue,75 *A Vision of Judgement* is a modern dialogue of the dead featuring political figures at the origins of America's national independence, including George Washington, John Horne Tooke, and Benjamin Franklin.

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75 In his preface, Byron refers his vision of the afterlife to Fielding and Quevedo, as well as Chaucer, Pulci and Swift (iii-iv). Kirk points to a number of satires in the mock-apotheosis tradition, including the lost anonymous work, *Moron epanastasis* (c. A.D. 50); Erasmus' *Julius Exclusus* (1513); Lipsius' *Satyra menippea Somnium* (1553); Daniel Heinsius' *Virgula divina, sive Apotheosis Lucretii Vespillonis* (1608); Caspar Barth's *Cave canem* (1612); Los Sueños of Quevedo (1627 and later); and Taylor's *Feast* (1638), by John Taylor, "The Water Poet".
The parallels between The Public Burning and A Vision of Judgement are significant, though yet unrealized among Coover's critics. A comparison of these two intertexts will help to demonstrate that Coover's own position toward Masscult and Midcult stands perilously close to MacDonald's. Byron presents a vision of the arrival of George III at the Gates of Heaven, as witnessed from earth through a telescope. George, like Nixon and the Claudius of poetic lore, is "neither a successful nor a patriot king" (iii). Moreover, Byron's ironic distinction between the public and private George in his Preface recalls the liberal terms with which Fiedler and Warshow critiqued the Rosenbergs: "In whatever manner [George] may be spoken of in this new 'Vision,' his public career will not be more favourably transmitted by history. Of his private virtues (although a

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76 Although there is insufficient space here to elaborate all the textual parallels, it is worth mentioning that Coover's Satanic imagery bears closer affinities to the "Satanic School's" rhetoric of burning and energy than it does to Milton's devils, as Cope suggests (112).

77 The report of heavenly news gathered by virtue of a telescope is also used in Jonson's "News from the New World Discovered in the Moon" (1620) and Cyrano's Comical History (1650). A variety of the "news from hell" genre, this conceit inverts the necromantic catascopia of Lucian's Icaromenippus, in which Menippus tells a friend of his recent voyage in the sky. With Edward Bellamy's scientific-philosophic fable, "The Blindman's World" (1886), the telescope becomes an instrument of astral projection, in a renewed combination of the infernal news motif with the Lucianic fantastic voyage.
little expensive to the nation) there can be no doubt" (iii; emphasis in original).

The main thrust of the satire, however, was aimed not at George III but at his poet laureate, Robert Southey, who shares Claudius' "gouty feet" (XC [1. 720]). Intriguingly, Coover's mock-encomium of Time magazine as the American National Poet Laureate brings that organ to task for the same injustices of which Byron accuses his opponent Southey. The parallel points up the fact that today journalism has taken over from literary patronage as the system for the legitimation of hegemonic political views and discourses. The mock-epic catalogue of regal occasions to which Southey had, in Byron's opinion, failed to rise is a more cynical model of Time's own account in Coover of its career as Poet Laureate. Interestingly, as an ineffable figure responsible for spreading rumours, Junius (Byron's caricature of Southey) also withstands close comparison to Coover's Phantom. In his preface, Byron labels Southey an "informer" for notifying the legislature of a so-called "Satanic School" of poetry (i), an accusation with obvious resonances for the Rosenberg trial. And like Time, Junius is a personified literary text: to find his identity, he claims, "you may consult my title-page" (LXXXII [1. 650]). That Southey should offer such a close parallel to both Time and the Phantom brings home Coover's point that in Cold War America, the mass media were largely
responsible for creating an atmosphere of paranoia.\textsuperscript{76} Byron's example shows that Coover is not the first to use the menippean form as a testing ground for the relationship between media and politics. Just as Byron uses the figure of George III to satirize his medium of ideology, Southey, and as Seneca satirized Claudius through the myths which the emperor created around himself, so Coover uses Nixon to critique the media carnival of Cold War America. This is to say that the menippea represents a political satire to the extent that it is a discursive satire.

If Seneca's \textit{Apocolocyntosis} was coopted by the elitist interests of the Imperial court, then it spawned at least one intertext that cowed less to royalty. Just as The Public Burning harshly criticizes its Senecan holiday crowds, so too does it eliminate Byron's populist critique of court politics and elite literary in-fighting. Instead, Coover's own vision passes judgement on TIME magazine, the new "poet laureate"

\textsuperscript{78} MacDonald finds the essence of his arguments in a citation from Kierkegaard:

In order that everything should be reduced to the same level it is first of all necessary to procure a phantom, a monstrous abstraction, an all-embracing something which is nothing, a mirage—and that phantom is the public. . . .

The public is a concept which could not have occurred in antiquity . . . . Only when the sense of association in society is no longer strong enough to give life to concrete realities is the Press able to create that abstraction, 'the public,' consisting of unreal individuals who never are and never can be united in an actual situation or organization—and yet are held together as a whole (MacDonald 630; first ellipses in original). . .
whose ventriloquized confession stands alternately for either Masscult or Midcult, MacDonald's preferred cultural pariahs. TIME, a prominent journal of high circulation, could hardly be said to form the sort of Byronic community of readers that, for MacDonald, would resist the impersonality of the modern age. The very complexity of modern America lulls Coover's personified TIME into a melancholy, mid-life autobiographical confession in Chapter 18, as "The National Poet Laureate Meditates on the Art of Revelation." TIME at least understands better than The Times that "[i]t is not enough to present facts—something has to happen in time and space . . . . Raw data is paralyzing, a nightmare, there's too much of it and man's mind is quickly engulfed by it. Poetry is the art of subordinating facts to the imagination" (320).

By "poetry" TIME means his own journalistic columns, which Coover quotes broken into lines and stanzas, creating a menippean prosimetrum that reveals the news magazine's rhetorical contrivances. Confessing to "'pusillanimous'" (322), "'fascist'" and anti-semitic turns (327), TIME inventories its own "stylistic infatuations" in terms that recall the satire of Seneca or Rabelais:

the puns and quips, inverted sentences, occupational titles, Homeric epithets and rhythms, compound words, cryptic captions, middle names and parenthetical nicknames, ruthless emphasis on physical details, . . . alliteration, rugged verbs and mocking modifiers, and TIME's own personal
idioglossary of word-coinages, inventions like 'kudos' and 'pundits' and 'tycoons' and hundreds more which have passed into the national lexicon (326).

This linguistic freedom, carnivalesque tropes of inversion, and avowed grotesque realism describe a genuine menippean satura of effects, and demonstrate that the mass media have encroached upon not only novelistic discourse, as we saw earlier, but menippean discourse as well. TIME even compares himself to Eliot's Waste Land, the menippean qualities of which we noted in Chapter One:

They still call him [TIME] an opportunistic thief, a pastepot-poet who steals from everybody, but that only means he's squarely in the mainstream of American poets, most of whom have been great eclectics, gatherers and enhancers of the detritus from the passing flux, collage-shapers—and as for being opportunistic, so what? As he himself wrote when T.S. Eliot's Waste Land was being 'revealed' as a hoax: it's immaterial, 'literature being concerned not with intentions but results' (326).

TIME's soliloquy indicates the satiric point that even the most dialogic of literary forms can be appropriated by a middlebrow organ to serve monologic ends.

The issue to consider is that Coover's own satura itself appears to come perilously close to just such a conservative, formal eclecticism. TIME's self-portrait encourages us to read Coover's text in a similar light: as a collage of data carefully structured to provide some shape, some "form-giving ideology" to the flux of the times. Such a strong auto-
critique is typical of the menippean genre. As W. Scott Blanchard shows, the menippean satire has, with rare exception, represented a highbrow form of entertainment that simultaneously ridicules and appeals to the intellectual community:

The menippean satire is first and foremost intellectual satire practiced by an intellectual elite upon itself; it depends for its success upon a thorough knowledge of canonical literary forms by whose negation it defines itself, and in every case it expresses an anarchic impulse to dissolve some form of logical, rhetorical, or social organization by rejecting claims of any one social group (whether the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, or professional philosophers and philologists) to master or systematically organize the social or intellectual polity (Blanchard 37).

It should be added that if the menippea ridicules the intellectual community, it does so in a complicitous manner that also consolidates it. Coover's menippea, by contrast, is far too alienating to create any identifiable community of interpreters. Blanchard traces the discursive conditions for Rabelais' menippean satire in the rise of a vernacular reading public that had no use for the intricacies of Latinate scholarship: "Like their modern counterparts, middle-class readers had little interest in the refinements of intellectualism; learning had nothing to do with the moral life, and systematic thought was a symptom of intellectual pride and vanity" (78). Unlike Blanchard's examples,
however, Coover's subject matter is not prohibitively erudite for those with a minimal grounding in mid-century American history. On the contrary, his allusions activate a popular intertextuality that draws upon popular film, television, and music celebrities, as well as the daily press and national magazines. More than even Rabelais, he adopts the menippean genre to popular forms of expression, as though to mitigate his violations of historical probability, crude realism, and other indecorous excesses. At the same time, Coover's wholesale critique of these forms and their audience as a cruel, collective automata suggests that no one escapes his censure: not Nixon, a self-proclaimed intellectual; not the Rosenbergs, unconfessed Popular Fronters; and especially not the American people en masse.

To argue that Coover sides with MacDonald and the Rosenberg detractors is not at all to say that his literary tactics are culturally elitist, since his text does not promote itself as "high art" or "Truth." It is instead to say that The Public Burning lacks that charitable, Pauline empathy with the "common" lot of humanity which, for Blanchard, traditionally mitigates the encyclopedically inclusive vitriol of the menippean critique (42-3). This lack of charity extends even to Coover's handling of the Rosenbergs themselves. His satiric exuberance implicitly faults the accused couple for their idealistic attempt to construct an autonomous realm between high culture and mass
culture, and their concomitant failure to engage dominant cultural formations critically and pragmatically. As TIME explains, he has been known for "smearing Jews and Socialists—but all that only went to show he was a lot smarter than Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who'd been growing up with him" (327).

Nixon's comparison of the Rosenberg's letters to his own televised "Checkers" speech (242) reveals the hard truth of spectacular politics: that the Rosenbergs' innocence was denied because they failed to make a show of their alleged guilt. Only within the highly ritualized context of a political media circus could Julius' insistence that he "avoid hysterics and false heroics" (514) be reinterpreted as itself a falsely heroic posture. The reader of The Public Burning is constantly confronted with the urge to laugh at serious issues. Korkowski shows that in the medieval era, the menippean satire altered its strategies, eliminating many of its humorous features to avoid excluding any potential readers: "There was not enough general learning to make a popular antipathy toward the doctissimi possible on intellectual grounds, and the locus of learning, such as it was, within the sphere of the church made attack from popular (or secular) quarters all the more unlikely" (125). Coover approaches his task with a similar awareness: given the general co-option of ideas and politics by media formations, it becomes difficult to launch a strictly intellectual
critique. His response is to retain the sprawling and encyclopedic format of the menippea, but to replace its intellectual matter with mass-mediated information. Instead of scholarly abuses of knowledge, his satire targets political abuses of ideas, especially when those ideas lead to death. In so doing, The Public Burning alienates every possible basis for readerly identification or the formation of community. By contrast, E.L. Doctorow, who retells the Rosenberg story in novel form in The Book of Daniel (1973), installs pathos for the Rosenberg-like characters and their children throughout the narrative, saving his version of a Disneyfied carnival for the end. In a quite different fashion, The Public Burning demonstrates that, while the menippean satire is a form most appropriate to the actual chronotopes of contemporary American life, the genre unfortunately cannot but include middlebrow culture within its broadside critique.

Of course, one could always make a virtue of this limitation, by arguing, as Pughe does, that Coover's menippea is in excess of its subject matter only to illustrate his criticism that modern American society was too large and

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79 In E.L. Doctorow's fictionalized account of the Rosenberg incident, the son of the victimized couple holds a conversation with Mindish, Doctorow's Greenglass figure, at Disney World.
abstract to treat individuals with any justice. There are certainly menippean precedents for exhausting great deals of scholarly energy on topics considered unworthy of that scholarship and it is possible to see Coover's encyclopedic inventory of kitsch Americana as a kind of menippean paradoxical encomium. However, such sophisticated reasoning does not alter the liminal cultural status of the postmodern menippean satire. Seneca's occasional squib written for an elite audience, Byron's populist satire that attacks the patronage system from without, and Coover's wide-ranging satire that comprehends all cultural sectors of his society represent only the various cultural extremes that a menippea could occupy. At different times, and in different cultural contexts, menippean satires have assumed different positions in relation to culturally stratified audiences. The relatively recent formations of Midcult and Masscult that Coover engages ought to be understood not only in dialogue with previous menippean attitudes toward "the elite" and "the popular," but also in relation to the heteroglot subcultural

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80 For Pugh, the question that the novel, by its sheer bulk, raises is: why should an author go to such (in a sense self-destructive) lengths? What [Tom] LeClair has said of Gaddis's JR, seems just as applicable to Coover's work, namely that Gaddis's book 'imitates what it hates, relentlessly insists that the author and the reader occupy in fiction what they inhabit in America. The excess of JR is its consistency" (62).
identifications that increasingly organize American media discourses.

V. The Cold War, Demonic Rumours, and the Heteroglot Discourse of Information

If postmodernism straddles "the Great Divide" between high art and the mass culture, as Andreas Huyssen has argued (3-15), or is "double-coded" to reflect both a professional and popular aesthetic, as Charles Jencks has described postmodern architecture (4-5), then Coover's text ridicules both, while refusing to lay claim to the middle ground that lies in between. Huyssen points out that postmodern cultural artifacts often employ avant-garde techniques nostalgically, emptying out their critical function in a bourgeois appropriation. Coover avoids this conservative nostalgia by parodically returning to the pre-modern menippean tradition of learned wit. His critique of media draws on techniques used by Seneca and Byron, thereby avoiding the unmitigated faith in historical progress that Huyssen identifies as the secret dialectic between the futurist orientation of the historical avant-garde and the technological bias of affirmative mass culture. By delving into the historical and literary past, The Public Burning frustrates this faith in progress. In addition, it leaps right over the modern distinction between high and low culture by challenging the
media of journalism, film, and advertising which perpetuate
the gulf between high and low in contemporary society.
Coover's affront to high, popular and bourgeois culture alike
is necessary for his broader critique of the cultural codes
responsible for sustaining the hegemony of America's
entertainment and military-industrial apparatuses within the
postmodern mode of information.

A close reading of The Public Burning in relation to the
cultural context of the Cold War reveals that its avoidance
of bourgeois novelistic and social realist representational
strategies (linear plot, character development, descriptive
realism, and so on), which stand as the literary correlative
to the middlebrow, in fact enables a more radical critique of
the hegemonic military-industrial and media formations that
were ultimately responsible for the ritualized paranoia of
McCarthyism. Coover shows how, through avant-garde
techniques, the mass media technologize the body to reject
(one version of) the bourgeois body, while at the same time
installing the new bourgeois norms of a rationalized body
politic. Bakhtin's celebration of the grotesque body in
Rabelais is set within a French folk culture that can attain
some utopian unity of purpose, without recognizing the power
relations inherent in embodied instantiations of otherness.
This does little for a culture like post-war America, in
which the carnivalesque becomes the means for containing
rather than celebrating embodied differences.
Coover explores these dilemmas, not by installing some false carnivalesque predicated along ethnic and gendered grounds, but rather by examining how the media carnival excludes these very marks of embodied difference. His apparent failure to represent adequately American middlebrow culture in fact is a side-effect of his demonstration of how the entertainment and atom bomb industries collude in order to exclude embodiments of otherness, and to rationalize the body politic through the commodity sphere. In its menippean negotiation of high and mass-cultural positionalities, then, The Public Burning engages a politics of identity that Huyssen finds sorely lacking in the more avant-garde postmodern texts of the 1970s (172).

Of course, it is not immediately clear why the marginalization of a domestic socialist front that was not as radical as the Old Left should even matter. Coover’s apparent exclusions become problematic only when one considers what other repudiations accompanied the villainization of the middlebrow in the post-war years. It was at this time that there emerged the hidden technological dialectic which Huyssen finds to be operative within the apparent contradiction between the utopian thought of the historical avant-garde and the mass-mediated forms of popular culture:
Today, the obsolescence of avantgarde shock techniques, whether dadaist, constructivist, or surrealist, is evident enough. In an age saturated with information, including critical information, the Verfremdungseffekt has lost its demystifying power. Too much information, critical or not, becomes noise. The legitimate place of a cultural avantgarde which once carried with it the utopian hope for an emancipatory mass culture under socialism has been preempted by the rise of mass mediated culture and its supporting industries and institutions (15).

With the onset of a post-war, post-industrial society, the bipolar division of commodity culture into "high" and "low" target groups was readily mapped onto the growing capital of information. On the one hand, there existed information about technological developments that was closely tied to military-industrial endeavours and issues of national security. This sacred knowledge was protected from the lower castes not only by the scientific elite, but also by political agents with specific agendas. The slippery association of nuclear secrets with a Communist spy ring enabled the American government to justify the censorship of certain political ideologies as necessary to preserve national security, as Coover shows:

81 The menippean genre can be shown to have been concerned with theft of intellectual property almost from its inception. Responding to claims by Rudolph Helm that Lucian merely copied Menippus' satires slavishly, Korkowski traces this theme in the Samosatan's writings, especially the idea of a god of verbal theft (a Prometheus "in words") that emerges in Jupiter Tragoedus. Another satire, Bis Accusatus, attests that Lucian did steal from other writers. See Korkowski 93-4.
The President was saying: 'By no means am I talking, when I talk about books or the right of dissemination of knowledge, am I talking about any document, or any other kind of thing that attempts to persuade, or propagandize America into Communism, so manifestly, I am not talking about that kind of thing when I talk about free access to knowledge' (30).

Coover's statesmen repeatedly use the democratic principle of freedom of information to reinforce the sanctity of certain kinds of information: "'If the President says the American people are entitled to know all the facts,' declares Congressman Nixon, 'I feel the American people are also entitled to know the facts about the espionage ring which was responsible for turning over information on the atom bomb to agents of the Russian government!'" (14). The selectivity of the Eisenhower administration belies Nixon's boast that his "way with every project, scholastic, political, athletic, or romantic" is to "talk for hours with every person [he] can find, spend every spare moment studying reports and recommendations, gather up and try to absorb every known bit of information" (116). Time and again, his self-examining reflections on the parallel personal histories which he and Pat share with Julius and Ethel come across, in the words Julius uses to describe The Times' reportage, as "cruelty politely concealed in data, . . . truth buried away and rotting in all that ex cathedra trivia . . ." (193). "[J]ustice is entertainment," in the prosecuting attorney
Irving Saypol's words (121), and The Times represents the discursive plane on which sacralized data meet the various consumable genres of profane information, which included the intratextual realms of journalism, advertising and mass entertainment that pervade Coover's text. Though mutually exclusive in their social distribution, according to Nelson, information, both sacred and profane, was necessary to sustain the interests of the post-war state of informational inflation and emergency.

The perceived threat of the middlebrow was in part the result of anxieties felt on a national scale toward the onset of a full-fledged post-industrial society. There is good reason to consider the Rosenberg trial as the benchmark of a national urge to move from an industrial commodity culture that was increasingly seen as Stalinized, toward a post-industrial managerial culture which could for the first time fetishize the acquisition and pursuit of information, epitomized in the mythic secret of the Atomic bomb.82 In public opinion, reinforced by the press, the Rosenbergs had destroyed America's only chance of defining its national

82 I say "mythic" here because scientists had publicly made it clear, from the mid-1940s on, that there was no secret to the A-bomb, and that the Manhattan Project made no significant discoveries in the course of its development. As Coover's Ethel Rosenberg tries to tell Eisenhower in her dramatic dialogue with him that forms the satire's second Intermezzo, "[i]t is perfectly clear that such valueless information [as David Greenglass was supposed to have stolen] could have had little effectiveness 'in putting into the hands of the Russians the A-bomb,' even had they not possessed the 'secret'" (250).
identity through the possession of a powerful technological secret. The shock of their alleged crime, then, was caused by their apparent aspiration not just to high culture, but to the ultra-specialized and sacralized fields of high-level foreign relations and high-energy particle physics as well. Since the Rosenbergs' middlebrow pretensions could not be contained by the more profane genres of information, they were labelled as a threat to the sacred secrets of the state. The Cold War had added new valences to information and, as Andrew Ross points out, a new kind of spy was required. Much like the "pumpkins, carpets, typewriters, and teeth" which Nixon had produced as evidence against Alger Hiss (Coover 88), it was everyday, mass-produced commodities—the famous Jell-o box and Macey's console table—that convicted the Rosenbergs (Ross 61).

Here we can take Ross' class-based analysis of Cold War commodity culture one step further, to demonstrate that the Rosenbergs actually functioned for post-war America as an index to the emergent formations of post-industrialism. I want to suggest that the symbolic capital of the particular brand-names associated with the Rosenbergs is more significant here than the generalized commodity form itself, for reasons that continue to plague mass-marketers. Contemporary folklorists know that, in late-capitalist societies, "mercantile rumours" tend to haunt the most recognizable corporate trademarks in any given industry.
According to Rosemary Coombe, so-called "demonic" folk rumours respond to corporate logos that colonize the marketplace from an untraceable origin ("Demonic" 1859). Trademarked products are everywhere and nowhere, familiar domestic invaders that we unwittingly invite into our homes. Coover demonstrates that everyday products were not just more rationalizations to be added, post-facto, to prosecutor Cohn's courtroom exhibits; on the contrary, they were the very source of McCarthyite fantasies of the "invisible enemy within." Through a rampant intertextuality, The Public Burning redirects the paranoid associative strategies of the FBI and the House Un-American Activities Committee back onto those cultural institutions which were affiliated with the hegemonic formations of Cold War hysteria. Coover does what the Rosenbergs refused to do: he names names, inverting the shock value of smear campaigning through a libellous assault on the reputations of politicians, corporations and celebrities. Thus, an anthropomorphized Betty Crocker and Uncle Sam wander the threshold stage, members of Coover's cast of "unpersons" who signal the onset of a late-capitalist state in which trademarks come to signify independent of the commodities they advertise. These icons are the contemporary equivalents of the mythic heroes which populate the ancient nekyia of Lucian and Seneca, Capella's Philology, Boethius' Philosophy, and the figures of statecraft ancient and modern that appear to Gulliver at Glubbdubdrib.
The disembodied trademarks that parade through Coover's public square provide proof that Bakhtin's dense, pre-capitalistic folk matrix, his heteroglot populace connected to each other and ritual time-space through the material bodily stratum, has lost for good whatever communal ethic it might have had. Instead, the social dialogue has been re-embodied through mass-mediated communities of profiled consumers that are hailed into being through the carefully programmed chronotopes of advertising and journalism. To borrow a pithy phrase that Joyce Nelson uses to describe television, contemporary heteroglossia is "demographic, not democratic" (105). Within this mass-embodiment lies the key to a broader politics of cultural difference, a politics that underwrites the accusations of cultural and ethnic "inauthenticity" which Warshow levels against the Rosenbergs. As Janice Radway shows, organizations like the Book-of-the-Month Club were perceived as threatening by Cold War intellectuals because they offered consumers a means of subject-formation that apparently erased embodied differences of gender and ethnicity, thus eliminating the distinction "between the material and the immaterial, between the particularities of the body and the universality of the intellect" (886). Mass-marketed commodities offered new means of subject-formation that did not necessarily inscribe visible embodiments of gender or ethnicity. Middlebrow culture prompted such a strong political reaction because it
threatened to enable millions to scumble the marks of their subordinate embodiment with the standardized, uniform trademarks of corporate America, trademarks transferred from cereal boxes, soaps, and crackers to books and even to literary advice itself" (885).

If consumers purchase commodities partially to erase marks of difference, then it is also true that commodities adopt the embodied marks of gender and ethnicity as signs of distinction. As an embittered festival of otherness, The Public Burning foregrounds the tendency of contemporary advertisements and entertainers to embody a generalized distinction at the expense of real individuals. The text aims to represent all the embodiments of dissent throughout American history with encyclopedic inclusiveness, only to contain this celebration of alterity within a utopian vision of politics designed by Walt Disney, scripted by Buzby Berkely, and directed by Cecil B. DeMille. Uncle Sam crowds his stage with Forty-Niners, Suffragettes, Darkies, Carpetbaggers, and Moonshiners, in an all-American pageant of Ancients and Moderns that confounds national myths and history with the domestic spectacle of consumer distinction. For the pre-execution warm-up act, Coover carefully foregrounds performers whose compromised ethnicity is readily absorbed into a generalized celebrity aura. Thus, the Marx Brothers perform a slapstick interpretation of the Death House Letters, a shtick that is felt by all assembled to show.
special sensitivity to the Rosenbergs' Jewishness, but "without their crybaby ways" (Coover 453). The strategic deployment of ethnicity here is underscored by the fact that the Marx Brothers and Jack Benny were considered by Hollywood and the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League alike sufficiently unmarked as Jewish to be admissible within a swelling atmosphere of anti-semitism (see Sayre 33-6).

This is not to say that these performers did not produce specific sub-cultural identifications among their audience members; in Coover's carefully casted production, however, they become entirely complicitous with dominant political interests. We have seen that Coover's readiness to abandon the hopes for social heteroglossia to the influence of centralized ideological state apparatuses smacks of a Senecan elitism. And yet, Jackson Lears has shown through various studies that by the 1950s, the tendency of advertising to incorporate alterity had become completely recast in hegemonic configurations: "The lists of 'American' traits compiled by seekers of national character bore a suspicious resemblance to the values enshrined by corporate sponsors of the American Way of Life" (112). This kind of composite marketing of alterity continues to this day. General Mills Foods recently reported plans to remodel the appearance of Coover's "Holy Mother," Betty Crocker, by using a computer composite of ethnic features that are statistically representative of their market. The company's stated goal is
"to 'morph' her into someone with more politically correct facial features" ("Betty Crocker" B11). 83

An awareness of such technological embodiments of alterity are what Poster's theory of advertising media in the mode of information lacks:

The TV ad as sign system holds an ambiguous relation to the project of emancipation. It incorporates the subject into itself as a dependent spectator, constituting the subject as a consumer. . . . Constituted as both object and subject, thing and god, the viewer is presented with the impossibility of the position of the subject, the basic insubstantiality of the subject (67).

For Poster, the short-circuiting of the "insubstantial" subject within the act of consumption creates "a community of individuals who participate in the self-referential conversation of the TV ad in one manner only: by constituting themselves as subject/object of the message" (68). But this analysis does not go very far to explain the more "producerly" identifications that consumers of

83 In a panel discussion at New York University on "Shock Culture/Culture Shock", in February of this year, Dr. Philip Brian Harper suggested to me that Coover's omission from the general fray of trademarks icons such as Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben, which embody negative stereotypes of African Americans, raises problems for his overall political critique. Clearly, the issue of exclusionary representations becomes more complicated when it is a matter of one distasteful stereotype threatening to upstage another. The question one needs to ask is whether Coover's text opens itself to a productive reading from specific social subgroups, including those determined by ethnicity, gender, religion and class. The middlebrow, which, I argue, Coover's parodic strategies cannot engage on its own terms, is a good test case, since it comprises social and discursive registers that cut across other cultural and class boundaries.
advertising make, in John Fiske's phrase, identifications that are enabled by the material "grotesque realism" of Coover's represented mediascape. Similar attempts to characterize contemporary cultural production in the mode of information as disembodied or "immaterial" would benefit from a Bakhtinian awareness of the materiality of popular culture. Of course, Bakhtin's "material folk body" needs to be repositioned for a postmodern context. Because Bakhtin's celebration of the grotesque Rabelaisian body is framed within an early modern French folk culture, it can boast a certain nationalistic unity of purpose, without acknowledging the power differentials inherent in embodied instantiations of otherness. In post-war America, the carnivalesque becomes the means for containing rather than celebrating material differences. Coover reveals that the apparent exclusion of a particular variety of bourgeois culture in this context in fact amounts to a public calcination of the embodied traits of alterity. He thus installs a body politic that is thoroughly rationalized and industrialized in order to subvert corporate America's liberal politics. The material folk body, far from any source of heteroglossia, becomes rather the focal point for a disciplinary reinforcement of the wide-scale xenophobia required by a nuclear-(em)powered state.

84 In "Offensive Bodies and Carnival Pleasures," Fiske offers a rare application of Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque to the mass media; see Fiske 81-90.
In Coover's America, entertainment becomes indistinguishable from daily life, as national timespace is entirely compressed into the space of generalized mediation. He foregrounds that development which Jody Berland calls the central paradox in mass entertainment—that, although entertainment has become an everyday, popular genre, it retains the "alibi" of a high modernist claim to an aesthetic purity divorced from everyday life:

Entertainment has been continuously transformed by technological mediation from 'medium of the special' to 'medium of the everyday' . . . . Yet its value is determined by (and calculated on the basis of) its claim to autonomy from the constraints of work, philosophy, politics, effort, discipline, boredom, history, and the 'normal' confines of everyday life, of which it remains, in fact, an integral part.

. . . [T]he triumph of entertainment values finds its alibi in the restitution of dangerous pleasures to the discipline of the everyday, and thus in the reunification of dispersed audiences, the 'common culture' . . . .

Rhetorically this posited value conflates two concepts: pleasure and democracy. Fun is fun, and has nothing to do with power . . . . The implicit complement of this is that good entertainment is 'what people want,' which means if you don't like it, you aren't people. This suggests that entertainment value arises form a classless, genderless, raceless popular desire . . . (47).

Coover's dystopian, depoliticized democratic square traces the effects of a strictly nominal pluralism on a society whose power relations are inequitably coded within the body politic. Through the marked absence (or unmarked presence)
of the middlebrow, Coover signifies the inability of the military-entertainment complex to represent embodied social diversity. The exclusions of the truly dangerous, the socially marginal, are not at all a bourgeois function, as Stallybrass and White's inversion of Marxist destiny will argue. Rather, they signal a more complicated scheme in which the signs of real pluralism are displaced by marketing demographics.

Coover renders the dominance of monologic political and corporate institutions over the disembodied and redesigned body politic most unambiguously in his deliberately distasteful Epilogue, in which Uncle Sam elects Nixon to the nation's highest office through a bawdy transmission of national spirit that pays this most Vice of Presidents back in kind. Sam orders an incredulous Nixon, "'jes' drap your drawers and bend over, boy—you been ee-LECK-ted!' . . . 'You heerd me!' he roared. "E pluribus the old anum, buster, and on the double!'" (Coover 530). Here, any remaining faith that the republic which showcases its embodied otherness represents a genuine social heteroglossia must be abandoned, as Coover travesties the national melting pot through a mock-encomium of Nixon's fundament.85 This scene brings home the fact that the only pleasures Coover allows are embittered ones. He reinforces the claim, standard among Cold War

85 The Laus anus is an old menippean topos, derived ultimately from the eponymous paradoxical encomium by Celio Calcagnini (1479-1541); see Kirk 95.
intellectuals like Macdonald and Clement Greenberg,\(^6\) that popular entertainments and advertisements leave no room for dissident responses and alternative identifications.

Of course, it has since been argued that show biz constitutes "a relatively autonomous mode of cultural production" that mediates between the wants of the people and the demands of patriarchal capitalism, without simply reproducing either (Dyer 273). Furthermore, there is evidence that mass-mediated representations of the carnivalesque need not foreclose so absolutely on an unprogrammed reader-response, that television wrestling and other displays of bodily grotesquerie are popular precisely because they permit the reader to respond in a producerly fashion. But The Public Burning parodically reproduces the corporate strategy of foregrounding political and cultural difference only as a marketable trait of distinction, even to the point at which the satire forecloses on the libratory effects of popular pleasures. Any pleasurable catharsis of laughter is to a large degree offset by Coover's obsessively detailed and tawdry tour of American cultural and political history. The text rather anatomizes than stokes the American sense of humour, showing that no laughter is safe: for "[s]ome have contended," his most omniscient narrator points out, "that it was America's love of pie-throwing that led the

\(^6\) For Greenberg's position, see his widely reprinted article, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch".
nation to develop the atomic bomb" (Coover 452). Despite its readiness to incorporate sex and slapstick, then, The Public Burning is finally a treatise on, not a showcase of, ethnicity and popular culture.

Still, Coover's farrago manages after all to please without succumbing to the media spectacle, by flying in the face of the most sacrosanct codes of post-war America—namely, those legal and paralegal codes that guarantee the pseudo-private ownership of disembodied trademark and celebrity rights. In the transgression of libel and intellectual property laws, the codes that govern the decorum of the sayable in the new information society, Coover's text finds a radical response to the cultural economy of the Cold War that is not readily classifiable as either high art, Masscult or Midcult. Moreover, by violating protected names and trademarks, he indirectly deflates the collusive realm of official technological secrets which was responsible for convicting the Rosenbergs. As Berland points out, "the corporate entity has acquired personality in the most material sense of legal construction" (49), a development which only furthers the goals of corporate capitalism through an increasingly deregulated free market of information that operates under the guise of a democratic commodities market. The shock value of Coover's text lies finally in its affront to the codes that have increasingly reigned in allowable public discourse since the rise of
nuclear media. These slanders are aimed first of all at the personal reputations of almost every U.S. politician involved, with the notable exception of Justice William O. Douglas. The legions of Nixonia have included many other literary satires, mostly *romans à clef* which changed the names to protect the not-so-innocent.\(^{87}\) Given Coover's bolder approach, it is not surprising that it took him a year to find a publisher daring enough to risk a libel suit.

The *Public Burning* anticipates parodic strategies that are today widely employed, and just as widely curtailed by laws that correctly, if monologically, refuse to recognize art as an autonomous, non-utilitarian realm. For that very reason, his text proves even more daring today than when it was originally published, making it a rare cultural document indeed. Traditionally, protections of the right to imitate and parody relax with time; however, through an unusual constellation of events within both legal and cultural history, *The Public Burning* appears more scandalous now than at the time of its publication in 1977. In 1982, the Marx Brothers' estate successfully sued the stage production of *A Day in Hollywood* for appropriating their images. The defense attorney's invocation of the First Amendment "was dismissed on the ground that the play was an imitative work" (Coombe, 1990, p. 67). Philip Roth and, in a different way, Spiro Agnew and John Ehrlichman, all wrote satires of the Nixon era that were more careful to "conceal" partially the true names of their historical referents. For extended discussions of the vast body of Nixon fiction, see Schmitz and Whitfield.
"Objects" 1857). Given this legal precedent, and the increasing collusion between politics and television which Richard Nixon originated, a text like The Public Burning continues to gain in social relevance.

Other unpredictable social developments have further rendered The Public Burning increasingly litigious. For one, a body of historical revisions have continued to exculpate Nixon since his death in 1994,88 elevating him to the status of a misunderstood, and therefore tragic, hero. It is also doubtful that Coover could safely publish a satire today in which Times Square is converted into a theme park extravaganza, filled with animatronic wax figures, given the urban renewal project now jointly planned for that locale by Disney and Mme. Tussaud's. In an eerily prophetic illustration of the precession of simulacra, Coover's depiction of the mob gathered in Times Square anticipates the Disneyfication of the American people. They have "seen it all before" (510); and yet, as the narrative approaches both its climax and the limits of representation, the unflappable assembly of dramatis personae for once seems just as shocked as the reader:

88 Even if one does not buy Jackson Cope's argument that Nixon was "calculated to be unknown even at this little distance from the novel's origins" (68), it is unlikely that Coover could have anticipated a Nixon wholly absolved and apotheosized by the likes of Oliver Stone, the prophet of the contemporary middlebrow.
Ethel Rosenberg's body, held only at head, groin, and one leg, is whipped like a sail in a high wind, flapping out at the people like one of those trick images in a 3-D movie, making them scream and duck and pray for deliverance. Her body, sizzling and popping like firecrackers, lights up with the force of the current, casting a flickering radiance on all those around her, and so she burns—and burns—and burns—as though held aloft by her own incandescent will and haloed about by all the gleaming great of the nation—. . . (517).

Ethel, head of the post-nuclear family, must be transformed in the most literal manner into a shocking sign, like a latter-day Peregrinus. As though in emblematic parody of Fiedler, there is nothing of Ethel left to die by the time Coover finishes with her: ungendered and ethnically effaced, she flaps in the wind like an irradiated flag, marking the birth of a new nation and the loss of American innocence. Unfortunately, this glowing bough signals only the further proliferation of disembodied images in the televised American necropolis, without finally revealing any route of escape from nuclear limbo. For at the fin de millenium, we are all, as Jean Baudrillard puts it, subjected to "perpetual electrocution" by the omnipresent devices of information and communication. Writing in a somewhat bathetic "future shock" mode, Baudrillard describes the post-Cold War American information society as a pageant of dead images, a perfect postmodern nekya:
We are already experiencing or soon will experience the perfection of the societal. Everything is there. The heavens have come down to earth. We sense the fatal taste of material paradise. . . .

Everything has already become nuclear, faraway, vaporized. The explosion has already occurred; the bomb is only a metaphor now ("Anorexic" 34).

Given this post-fatal condition of society, it remains to be seen whether the new (dis)embodied heteroglossia of the culture industry has any revitalizing representations to offer. As a reporter for The Economist recently put it, "In the end, it will all be down to Disney" ("De-sleazing" 18).
CHAPTER FIVE.

Cannibals at the Core: Trade Winds, Trademarks, and the Traducement of Rumour in Ian Wedde's Symmes Hole; or, Did Melville Eat Whaleburgers in Wilkes Land?

The bomb will not start a chain reaction in the water, . . . letting all the ships on all the oceans drop down to the bottom. It will not blow out the bottom of the sea, and let all the water run down the hole.

- Vice Admiral W.H.R. Blandy, Commander, Bikini Atoll Atomic Test

The aviator who will be the first to reach this New Territory, unknown until Admiral Byrd first discovered it, will go down in history as a New Columbus and greater than Columbus, for while Columbus discovered a new continent, he will discover a New World.

- Dr. Raymond Bernard, The Hollow Earth: The Greatest Geographical Discovery in History, Made by Admiral Richard E. Byrd in the Mysterious Land Beyond the Poles--The True Origin of the Flying Saucers

I was afraid to admit I'd never read the book.

- Leonard Zelig on Moby-Dick
Hamburgers . . . have been aestheticized to such a point of frenzy and hysteria that the McDonald's hamburger has actually vanished into its own sign . . . McDonald's is a perfect technological hologram of suburban America, and of its extension by the capillaries of highways across the nation.

- Arthur Kroker, et al., eds., Panic Encyclopedia

None of us was born solid.

- Petronius, Satyricon

I. Toward a Post-Colonial Dialogics

The last chapter explored Coover's menippean satire in relation to a broader critique of the post-industrial politics of alterity. But Coover's parodic recapitulation of the systematic exclusions of gender and ethnicity from the American culture industry does not reinstall any productive strategy for reinvesting mass culture with a politicized sense of social heteroglossia. The Public Burning participates in a long tradition of menippean satire that operates close to the centre of Western imperialist power. Part of the purpose of this study has been to examine intertextuality not as a generalized semiotics, but rather as an index of the forms, modes, genres and media of communication available in specific historical and cultural
configurations. Yet, it is hard to ignore the fact that menippean criticism has tended to privilege an intertextual "pedigree" that locates the genre firmly within the bounds of traditional knowledge, close to hegemonic centres of knowledge and legitimation. L. Annaeus Seneca represents only the most extreme example of menippean centricity, and the "slum naturalism" characteristic of the ancient form (Bakhtin, Dostoevsky 115) still confronts politically centric formations from their marginalized interior fringe.

Moreover, the menippea's exaggeratedly erudite referentiality and réchercé humour makes much of its comedy, learning and symbolism inaccessible to those not possessing high levels of competence in the humanist tradition, classical literature, and the Latin tongue.

Even allowing these limitations, however, the fact remains that the history of menippeanists contains a long line of political dissidents. Lucian, a Syrian by birth and thus extrinsic to the language of the Roman Empire, was a man of the people and a popular public speaker, as evidenced in his autobiographical Somnium (My Dream). His native Samosata for Bakhtin exemplifies the "ancient and complex polyglossia" of the second-century Orient ("Prehistory" 64). That Apuleius too was from the Roman colony of Madaura, in Morocco, lends credence to the outsider's perceptions of mainstream Graeco-Roman society gleaned by his transformed
protagonist, Lucius. For Bakhtin, this outsider's perspective represents an early instance of the "philosophy of the third person in private life" that will pervade the menippean genre from The Golden Ass on (126). Blanchard points out that the menippean satire was revitalized in the Italian Renaissance only when humanist scholars, newly disenfranchised from the centres of power, first began to perceive themselves as outsiders, and sought a literary form from which to articulate their renewed cynicism (37 et passim). Bakhtin perhaps emulates this marginal position in relation to his own oppressive Stalinist society, when he praises the folk cultural bias in Rabelais' menippean grotesquerie. The "third person" who observes from the position of a cultural outsider is essential to the development of literary heteroglossia, which Bakhtin characterizes as the fracture of "the hegemony of a single and unitary language, and consequently the simultaneous loss of a feeling for language as myth, that is, as an absolute form of thought" ("Discourse" 367).

Despite the menippea's demonstrable alterity in relation to the national languages of various historical epochs, literary critics have until very recently refused to acknowledge the continuing influence of the menippean satire among world literature. This widespread reticence is at least in part a function of the refusal to recognize the
distinct intertextual modes in the writings of post-colonized peoples. Yet, post-colonized writers such as the Brazilian Mario de Andrade, the Cuban Guillermo Cabrera Infante, or New Zealand's Janet Frame bring post-colonial intertextualities to the canonically grounded menippean tradition. A number of recent studies have used the menippean genre as an index to the dialogic relations that pertain between cultures as well as within them. In his study of Flann O'Brien, Keith Booker suggests the amenability of the menippean genre to post-colonized discourse, evidenced in Beckett's and O'Brien's anti-Cartesian critiques of British rule. Booker labels these writers as menippean for three reasons: both parody Joyce's menippean texts; both demonstrate "skepticism toward any mode of investigation that would present itself as having a special access to the Truth"; and both exhibit an "irreverent challenge to [British colonial] authority" (27). Still, not every text that exhibits a suspicion of metanarratives can be labelled menippean, and Beckett's writing tends to convey rather a certain existential absurdity than the comic spirit of rhetorical exuberance and "jolly relativity" which Bakhtin finds within traditional instances of learned wit. But Booker's study suggests how even the highly allusive and relational character of menippean discourse can function both within and between the
identifiable boundaries of a nationalist discourse.

Retaining this Swiftian line of satire as a hermeneutic guide can help demonstrate the menippean satire’s rich non-Western legacy, one that is only beginning to be intimated. An-Chi Wang has taken a "Menippean approach" to the coincidental resemblances between Gulliver’s Travels and the nineteenth-century Chinese narrative Ching-hua yuan (Flowers in the Mirror, 1828). Wang is sensitive to the problems raised by cross-cultural comparative studies, beginning with the imposition of the Western generic category of satire onto Chinese feng-ts’u (see Wang 9-12). Nevertheless, she convincingly demonstrates that given the patriarchal society of the Chinese society under the Empress Wu that forms Li Ju-Chen’s horizon of inscription, his adoption of a woman’s point of view represents a typically menippean shift of perspective (85-90). The differences revealed in a cross-cultural comparison of genres are equally telling. That the nekyia has persisted in Western literature is due partially to the similarities between the Hellenic notion of the

89 It would be interesting to see if Joyce were responding to a general tradition, or to specifically a Irish line of menippeanism extending back before Swift, and which E.P. Kirk suggests could date back to the fourth century (Kirk xvi). In any case, O’Brien’s case supports my general thesis of the centrality of media formations to the contemporary menippea. A newspaper man who refracted the discourses of newspapers, journals, and even newsletters of low circulation by fictitious interest groups, O’Brien wrote numerous ingenious threshold dialogues. See Chapter Two, note 12 (supra).
underworld and Christian eschatology. A Byron in The Vision of Judgement, or a Fielding in Journey From This World to the Next can easily translate Lucian's Olympus and Hades into Heaven or Hell. In cultures with differing religious conceptions of the afterlife, however, the menippean satire can expect to take on different forms. Thus, Wang points out that the satiric underworld voyage became popular in Chinese with the T'ang romance, who used "other-world" settings as a safe means of safely and frankly satirizing their own societies (59-60).

A dialogical literature by definition engages questions of identity and alterity, and Bakhtin's relational conception of subjectivity has also been extended to account for the liminal status of national and cultural discourses as a whole. This approach has produced some very promising theories of the post-colonized subjectivity that explore the necessary interanimation of apparently distinct cultural traditions. Since Bakhtin's word is always a relational and ideologically contested phenomenon, it lends itself readily to a politics of resistance. In Dialogics of the Oppressed, Peter Hitchcock examines dialogism as a form of resistance in four subaltern women writers. For Hitchcock, dialogism is the medium of an "emergent culture of the oppressed" (xv), since its strategy of "multiple voicing fractures the monolithic and monologic discourse of power . . ." (xvi). If
subject formation is an inherently dialogical process, then the disruptive voices of subcultural subjectivities perforce disrupt the ruling subjectivities whom they co-author. Since monologic discourse tends toward phallocentric patterns of speech, the subaltern subject can cause interference without even speaking:

Subalternity produces not only voices but strategic silences, the gaps in communication themselves signal a disabling of the traditional modes of 'speaking' the other, and this too must be figured in the dialogics of the oppressed—silence itself as a 'language' of transgression (Hitchcock xvii).

In the analysis that follows, the notion of strategic silences will become very important indicators of repressed fears within colonial discourse and imperialist myths.

Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson also express the potential for a post-colonial dialogical theory when they write in their encyclopedic study of Bakhtin that "the great texts of any culture require the perspective of other cultures to develop their potential" (289). Literary dialogism in the fullest sense opens onto ethnography and comparative cultural studies, just as literary genres can be considered a subset of speech and "behavioural" genres (291). Conceived as an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural exploration of communication in the broadest sense, Bakhtinian dialogism brings to post-colonial studies an ethical theory of
intertextuality, based in the mutually constitutive relation of different speech and cultural communities. A dialogical approach stresses how utterances and deeds bring two distinct parties into an "answerable" or "responsible" relation, without naively erasing conflict or the necessary refraction of competing intentions. To facilitate dialogue between parties as complex and distinct as nations or regional ethnic communities within a global theatre, a dialogic theory of communication must also account for the social apparatuses that mediate utterances within and between complex societies. The familiar dialogues which Gulliver and Rasselas hold with foreign potentates notwithstanding, modern nations hold official dialogue not in open forum, but through highly ritualized symposia in which diplomacy and international legal conventions govern all aspects of discursive exchange. These institutions of dialogue are further situated within the specific intertextual conditions that govern particular cultural and historical communicative contexts.

The discursive specificity of intertextuality has nowhere been more thoroughly theorized than in criticism of post-colonial texts. Theories of intertextuality as developed in reference to the Western canon and its

90 In his as yet unpublished work, Craig Scott explores Bakhtin's dialogic philosophy as a normative basis for policy formation within international human rights law, based on his observation of the diplomatic rhetoric of organizations like the United Nations General Assembly.
transmission need to be reconsidered within non-Western signifying contexts. As Stephen Slemon puts it, colonialist textuality (and intertextuality) "is not seen as coterminous with the circulation of textual images in other cultural locations, which are of course in their own ways produced and consumed ideologically" (8). Slemon further suggests that the "post-colonial literary reiteration—or parody, or intertextuality, or quotation" often works with the canonical tradition to challenge the hegemony of colonial literary representation (7-8). The post-colonial text thus represents an utterance that is doubly-oriented toward Western literature and its own context of inscription. This double-coding provides a liminal position for the post-colonial utterance that need not identify wholly with either the colonizer or colonized.

Unlike some post-colonized menippeanists, Ian Wedde is neither a colonizer nor a colonized. As a Pekeha dissident living in New Zealand, a self-excluded middle-grounder, he occupies the position of the Bakhtinian "third person." For Iris Zavala, the "third" represents that principle that guarantees the (ever unrealized) non-coincidence of reader, writer, and text in the future. Like the menippean satire, it depends on "irony as a distanciation not only of the subject of enunciation from the enunciated subject, but as a constant 'substitution of subjects of enunciation for one
another" ("Third" 54). Far more than a shorthand for pure intertextual drift or semiotic openness, the "third" rhetorically mediates cultural exchange (52-3), understood as a dialogic encounter of different, socio-historically grounded genres of knowledge. It is an ethical communicative role, "a theory of the subject as a dynamic development towards the 'other' in a (co)responsive act not disarticulated from knowledge" (58).

In postmodern texts, this "third" emerges in the form of what I have been calling a "dialogic hermeneutic," to explore contemporary informational discourses that themselves mediate rhetoric and knowledge. Wedde explores how colonial myths survive in the postmodern mode of information through the "third person" perspective of James "Worser" Heberley, a nineteenth-century colonist, within the controlling fiction of an unnamed modern-day researcher. Worser is one of the so-called "new people," a group of New Zealand settlers whose "unofficial" methods were radically different from those of the British imperialists (see McLaren). His liminal social position offered him a perspective from which to mediate the discourses of the Pakehas and Maori, reorienting them toward a future response that, Wedde shows, remains unrealized.

Zavala elsewhere makes novel use of the Bakhtinian "chronotope" to investigate the intersection of historical periods and geographic borders in post-colonial concerns.
Beginning with the premise that modernism is both a
chronotope, a unique configuration of time-space, and a
narrative of liberation, Zavala investigates how turn-of-the-
century Hispanic texts use the "dialogical social imaginary"
as "the medium for a counterdiscourse and a practice of
symbolic resistance" (*Colonialism* 8). She extends Bakhtin's
and Gramsci's analyses to argue that

the 'political underground'—understood as the
sediment of fantasies and imaginary identities—is
collective, since the cultural being of the subject
is instantiated only in the situational interaction
between self and other. The ideological position
of the Bakhtinian 'third' closes the enunciatory
gap through the act of 'comprehension' and of
'responsiveness,' a dialogical truth which builds
counterpositions into its own progress. The
'third' points to the responsive character of
understanding. What elsewhere I have called the
enthymemic, or 'unuttered formulations of the
third,' are the categories of knowledge which do
not evolve into a final individual truth
(*Colonialism* 23).

Admittedly, Zavala's approach is partially motivated by
a desire to distinguish Bakhtin's global concepts of
dialogism and carnivalization from experimental modernist
representation strategies as they are conceived in Western
literary institutions. Elsewhere, Zavala argues that
Bakhtin's notions of dialogism, carnivalization and
unfinalizability have little to do with the fragmentation,
alienation and openness that she finds at the heart of
Western postmodernism (*"Postmodern"* 61). Yet, as we have
seen in previous chapters, there is a variety of postmodern literature that critically refracts the conditions of late capitalism through the parody of older, less alienated and isolated representational modes. This chapter explores the possibility that writers can engage canonical satiric texts in a productive, post-colonial dialogue that mediates a recent colonial past with the still undecided vagaries of a global multinational market, and answering capitalism's calculus of desire with a genuinely dialogic imaginary. In the pages that follow, the metaphor of a "political underground" will gather almost literal significance as a repository for both the repressed history of the colonial unconscious, and the liberating fantasies of post-colonized peoples. That textual chronotopes are contiguous with actual time-space was the lesson explored in the last chapter with respect to Coover's menippea. This chapter will demonstrate through Wedde's Symmes Hole how a postmodern text might offer discursive patterns capable of unfinalizing the modern commercial and colonial chronotopes that delimit the contemporary horizon of antipodean experience.

One need not fall back upon the "referential purchase" of language which Slemon claims represents a point of difference between postmodern and post-colonial texts. On the contrary, a text like Wedde's Symmes Hole remains post-colonial in its ethical orientation, while exhibiting a
postmodern refusal of any ready referentiality, choosing instead to recede into interminably and undecidably nested frames of parody and allusion. In order to destabilize the epistemological bases of the Western information society, Wedde must leave the realm of official literary history, to engage the colonial legacy of 150 years of rumours—rumours of white whales, cannibals, and secret societies living inside the hollow earth. One's certainties about literature and the world must be temporarily relaxed to figure out this chronotope—this place, time and text—called Symmes Hole.

II. Postmodern Peregrinations: Charting Theory

There is some debate as to whether postmodernism, as an imported concept, can ever speak for a post-colonial nation. Leonard Wilcox, for one, questions whether the phrase "postmodernism" can have the same force in New Zealand that it carries in the United States. Wilcox adopts Fredric Jameson's view that postmodernism—at least the American variety—is the cultural manifestation of the logic of late (multinational) capitalism. He claims that New Zealand's isolation from media culture (i.e. television, films, advertising and pop music) prevents that country from even considering the darker possibilities of the postmodern world (Wilcox, Anti-modernism 347-8). Instead, New Zealand critics
such as Wystan Curnow tend to characterize postmodernism as a healthier, happier condition than Jameson's neo-Marxist scepticism will allow. Whether these more optimistic postmodernisms have anything to do with the phenomenon as it has been defined elsewhere is a political issue for Wilcox, with implications that extend beyond the circle of antipodean academics and literary critics. Thus, Wilcox dismisses Curnow's "pastoral" vision from the postmodern problematic altogether, labelling it an "anti-modern" and conservative attempt to depict New Zealand as a "transparent space, free of ideological distortion and class conflict" (352).

To carry Wilcox' point further, from a post-colonial perspective, the representation of New Zealand as a "post-pastoral" paradise is not merely conservative, but also threatens to perpetuate certain myths which, historically, have facilitated the colonial enterprise. Imperial powers have always represented their colonies as simple, bucolic paradises waiting to be "discovered," territorial ciphers without any indigenous culture to speak of. This image of paradise allows the colonizer to rationalize its contact with the colony as the originary bestowal of experience on an innocent land, rather than the imposition of an imported culture on an indigenous civilization. If the indigenous culture is acknowledged at all, it is depicted as savage, "uncivilized," even monstrous. Colonial culture, in this
conceit, inscribes itself as the balancing term, the golden mean which hovers between the mirage of an empty paradise, and the phantom of a savage wilderness.

This colonial imaginary is nowhere more clearly inscribed than upon the maps which provide one of the most powerful tools of empire. Civilization abhors a void, and rushes to fill in the blank spaces that represent the limits of imperial rule. As late as 1759, Western cartographers were still rushing to plug the fearful absences that ate up their drawings of the world. Blank spots were filled in with the biblical images of Eden and Magog,91 of paradise and cannibal lands (Barnett 207-8). These empty spaces did eventually vanish beneath coastlines that were more perhaps realistic, though no less ideological. But the paradigm of the cannibal in paradise lasted well into the nineteenth century, sublimated in the ideology of Empire. The quest for an earthly paradise allowed colonizers to allegorize their enterprise as a return to an unmarked, prelapsarian land, while rumours of cannibal natives encouraged the doctrine of Manifest Destiny.92

91 Gog and Magog "appeared in early maps in Northern Siberia, confined behind an Iron Wall. They were cannibals. In a World Map of 1235, they are shown eating legs and arms amputated from victims whose severed stumps spout blood all over the snow" (Barnett 208).

92 As Clark and Motto point out, "benign Europeans were, it was claimed, 'rescuing' natives and transporting them to the New World of Christianity and civilized captivity where
These paired motifs coexisted uneasily, each constantly threatening to swallow up the other. Reports of cannibal tribes from the antipodes suggested to many that the Pacific paradise could yet turn out to be a fallen underworld, that the void could reassert itself.93 Thus, H.G. Wells' idyllic Eloi are revealed as human fodder for the subterranean Morlocks. The fear of degeneration that a polar void raised was only confirmed by the Franklin expedition of 1845, as Marlow shows (650 ff.). Both the popular and literary imagination display an implicit tendency in this period to use the hollow earth motif as an avatar affording access to an imagined, originary state of humanity. Examples of underground cannibal societies competed with paradisiacal settings for title to the literary imagination. In 1888 the Canadian author James De Mille's A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder was published posthumously. This dystopian narrative tells of a hapless explorer who discovers two cannibal tribes, one living at the South Pole and one dwelling beneath it. As his craft is swept into the abyss, de Mille's narrator recalls

they would be forced to adhere to more sanitary diets" (174).

93The antipodes was considered identical with hell in some early menippeas. Korkowski points out that "[i]n Erasmus' Lucianic colloquy, De captandis sacerdotis, Cocles has actually been to the Antipodes, like Menippus" (192 n. 26).
that old theory . . . the notion that at each pole there is a vast opening; that into one of them all the waters of the ocean pour themselves, and, after passing through the earth, come out the other pole (54).

The original referent of this very "old theory" remains unknown, but De Mille may have heard of John Cleves Symmes of Ohio, an American soldier in the early nineteenth century who firmly believed the earth to be "hollow, and habitable within" (quoted in Kafkont-Minkel 61). No one knows where Symmes heard of the venerable, though esoteric notion of a hollow earth; but one can imagine what a fertile, new New World inside the earth's crust must have meant to a young frontier soldier fighting for elbow room. The pioneer spirit ran thick in Symmes' blood: his father and namesake was instrumental in securing semi-licit land patents for the Miami Purchase in the late eighteenth century (see Bond). Perhaps it was this neo-colonial heritage that led him to dream of new interior worlds lying beyond the maelstrom of the polar abyss.

Symmes' theory was widely disseminated in the early eighteen-hundreds—and broadly parodied in the popular press. The idea of a hollow earth might eventually have passed the way of mesmerism and phrenology, were it not for the publicity campaign of one Jeremiah Reynolds, Symmes' greatest disciple, and arguably the most influential rumourmonger of the American Renaissance. After all, it was Reynolds who
first spread the sailor's legend of a Pacific Leviathan called Mocha-Dick. 94 He also exerted a profound influence on the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, especially visible in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym (1837, 1838, 1841). 95 In 1836, after twelve years of lobbying, Reynolds convinced Congress to send six naval vessels in search of the South Polar void. 96 The United States Naval Exploring Expedition never reached the mythic chasm; it did, however, stake an American claim in Antarctica, and produced endless maps and soundings that fuelled an already thriving domestic whaling industry. The search for Symmes Hole thus marks the beginning of America's global economic ascendancy. How mysterious, then, that the White Whale should persist as a founding American myth, while the corresponding rumours of a hollow earth have been all but forgotten, sunk in the sub-cultural denizens of pulp sci-fi,

94 "Mocha Dick: or The White Whale of The Pacific; A Leaf From a Manuscript Journal", by J.N. Reynolds, Esq., appeared in The Knicker-bocker in 1839. Melville could easily have seen it, and doubtless did; see Murray and Taylor for internal evidence to this effect.

95 For convincing proof of Reynolds' direct influence on Poe, see Rhea; Starke. For convincing proof that Jeremiah Reynolds was not the Reynolds for whom Poe purportedly cried out on his deathbed, see Bandy.

96 It has been rumoured that Wilkes, a fiery personality who was twice court-martialled, was Melville's model for Ahab.
Florida communes, and Melville scholarship.

This secret history of the intertextual "gam" between Melville, Poe, and Reynolds, that mysterious "third term," is the subject of Wedde's strange menippean cartography. Michael Hollister has shown how Melville recruits one of his characters from the Grampus, the ship in Poe's Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, thereby setting his characters afloat upon the same fictional waters as Poe (279). By alluding to both Pym and Moby-Dick within a single narrative, Symmes Hole transforms all three works into intertexts. The net effect of this ploy is to foster the illusion of a continuous fictional universe distinct from the "actual" one, into which the texts at hand offer a limited view, as though through a porthole. By an uncanny Lucianic inversion, the actual universe is destabilized with a glimpse of its own irreality.

Poe's game with the notion of authorial presence gives this strange interweave of fiction and reality yet another twist. Pym's narrative is left open-ended, interrupted at the point in the story when the Grampus begins its descent into a cavernous opening at the center of the South Pole cataract. Interestingly, the ending of the story is not lost in the adventure: obviously, Pym did not die in the

97 I must thank Dr. Peter Fitting for bringing to my attention Walter Kafton-Minkel's study, which provides the most comprehensive survey to date of the various popular and literary manifestations of hollow earth theory.
catastact, or no part of his story would ever have been told. In fact, as the character Pym tells us in the "Introductory Note," he gave the story to Edgar Allan Poe some time after his return to the United States (621). It is only at the story's completion that we discover, in an anonymous concluding note, that the final episodes of Pym's written narrative were lost during his accidental death—presumably a freak incident entirely unrelated to his adventure. Apparently, Pym somehow escaped from the chasm in the South Pole, and lived to tell about it.

According to John T. Irwin, the reader is meant to infer from this elaborate narrative passe-partout that Pym escaped from certain death by virtue of Symmes' Hole, here conceived as an uncharted tunnel running from pole to pole. Irwin even points out references in Pym to Jeremiah Reynolds (76-7), who also features in Wedde's novel as an important historical proponent of the theory of Symmes' Hole. In short, the inconclusiveness of Pym's narrative, the hollowness of his tale, proves the existence of an even greater absence at the center of the earth without ever explicitly mentioning it. Poe's narrative frames ought to lend Pym's tale at least the illusion of authenticity; instead, they render it as fantastic as a Jules Verne adventure.

Pym and Symmes Hole are thus connected at the point at which the notion of literary authority and legitimate
knowledge of the world comes into question. Dennis Pahl has analyzed the ways in which Pym questions the very notion of narrative authority. In his view, the opening at the South Pole is also the flaw in the story, through which the authenticity of Pym's story, and the very concept of narrative authority, leaks out. It is a breach in Pym's text which the supporting narrative frames cannot patch. Instead, the responsibility for conferring authority on the narrative comes to rest with the reader. As Pahl puts it, the mysterious white figure which Pym encounters waiting within the cataract "marks the absence around which the reader is allowed to construct his own interpretive discourse, filling in the blank space with his own sort of fiction" (42).

Symmes Hole continues this deferral of authority with a series of nested narrative frames similar to those used by Poe. The kernel of Wedde's story is drawn from the diaries of James Heberley, an actual document which rests in the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington. Heberley's story is loosely framed within the interior monologue of Wedde's researcher, who sits in his attic, pouring over the diaries. The researcher's story is told, in turn, by an (anonymous) omniscient third-person voice. But one must not forget the "Introduction" to the novel, a helpful summary of the text, putatively written by one Dr. Keehua Roa. Dr. Roa is actually Wedde's alter ego (Williams, Leaving 163), a
fictional critic who first encounters Wedde at a Canadian conference on whaling (Wedde 13), much as Pym "meets" Poe at a party in Virginia. This deception leads one to conclude that Wedde wanted his "Introduction" to be considered part of the text. The reason for the deception is not simply to make available certain background information which would render a rather difficult narrative more accessible. As Dr. Roa suggests, the receding frames of narrative amount to "a statement about history and the importance of experiencing it as living; of knowing that no episode is ever closed, that everything is ghost-written . . ." (Wedde 11).

The satire closes with Wedde's list of acknowledgements, including Heberley's Journal, the works of Melville, and the ghost of Robert Louis Stevenson—a final frame which connects Wedde to his central character. In an interview, the author confesses to feeling an affinity with his researcher-protagonist: "what happened to the central character, getting lost in an obsession, happened to me to a degree . . ." (in Dowling 168). Wedde's paranoid researcher finally comes to the conclusion that paranoid schemes are bottomless: "there'd always be more: 'research' was infinite regression . . . . But there comes a point when you close the file" (Wedde 268). In the end, Symmes Hole reaches the same (non-)conclusion as Pym: that "there is no bottom to the abyss of meaning" (Pahl xii).
Pym's journey to the South Pole, like Ahab's search for the great white whale, is an example of an American nekyia, and "the romantic dream of knowing the truth of nature, and thereby the true nature of oneself" (Pahl xii). If Poe and Melville both ironize this dream in subtle ways, as Pahl argues, then their loss of faith in the ultimate goal of knowing could be said to culminate in the modern age with Conrad's journey into the heart of darkness. By the time Wedde joins the quest, the world is so fully charted that the outward journey is no longer possible. History is all Wedde's researcher is left to explore, as he undertakes an imaginative journey into a time when the thrill of "discovery" was still attainable, or at least imaginable. Indeed, history itself becomes the goal of his quest, with the caveat that the deep truths of history must remain imageless: "the 'history' written down in books, the selective necessities of 'recorded fact'—all that was no more than a memory of what had been remembered in time . . . the atavism of what is" (Wedde 169). History, then, is a process of infinite deferral, a memory of a memory. Symmes Hole thus provides a necessarily indeterminate image of the historical avatar that induces, but ultimately defers any authoritative reading of the past.
III. *Paradise With Musak: The Post-Provincial Anatomy*

Inspired by colonial rumours, "Worser" Heberley settles in a New Zealand that he sees through a modest vision of Heaven on Earth, which echoes throughout the text: "a house a home a wife, toss the fish on the beach, she'll clean it against you get home from your work" (214). But after a short while among the Maori, Worser quickly realizes that Earth alone will have to suffice: "not denique caelum—'Heaven at last!'—Herman Melville's family motto . . . but 'Pucker and submit, it's the earth . . . !'" (110). Having spotted the rumour of paradise as just another sailor's yarn, Worser attempts to form a more convincing opinion of the land and its indigenous people. His quest for paradise is qualitatively different from Colonel Wakefield's official plans for landscaping a New Zealand Garden of Eden based on an English model:

The Colonel's vision of an English lawn and a drooping elm and labourers' housing with allotment gardens was just plain daft—didn't he know that the ground he walked on was steeped in human blood? And that the land he bought didn't belong to anyone in a way that meant they could do that? (192).

Worser's confusion points to the paradox at the heart of the utopian paradigm: a territory is first identified as edenic in order to justify its appropriation as the Empire's final reward; then, once colonized, its landscape is altered to fit
the colonizer's preconceived notion of paradise. Represented as the locus ultimum, the place of places, the colonized land is made "civilized" to the point that it resembles all other places.

It is this paradox, embodied in Colonel Wakefield's displaced English garden, which persists to plague Wedde's modern-day researcher: "you look around and suddenly, English trees planted on the eroding hillsides, washbrick haciendas in bare paddocks Wizard-of-Oz green with superphosphate [sic] . . . where am I?" (47-8). Before his very eyes, the vision of a transplanted paradise dissolves into images from popular cinema, emphasizing the irreality of the colonial fantasy. According to Wedde, once the colonial myth of a "Paradise in the Pacific" is abandoned, what naturally follows is the realization that "[p]aradise is as much in the carpark in Palmerston North as anywhere. . . ." (in Dowling 174). To arrive at this regional understanding of paradise is the rite of passage from a provincial mentality, which still defines itself in marginal relation to a European center, to a post-provincial awareness that "[w]here it's at is where you are" (in Dowling 181). Wedde's troubled researcher remains caught in the negative space between these two attitudes. He realizes that New Zealand is neither center nor margin, neither Britain's second-self nor its utopian Other; unfortunately, the realization has merely
confused his sense of place, without leading him to any
liberating conclusion. He is left floating freely with no
land destination in sight, like Heberley upon the
undifferentiated surface of the sea:

the ocean horizon, far beyond the heads of this
quiet anchorage—that three-hundred-and-sixty
degree vortex whose centre is always where you are,
within which you always voyage and never
arrive—that horizon is as real as the forested
shoreline you can barely see, where you may not set
foot: not now, maybe not tomorrow, maybe never
(Wedde 99).

Since any representation of New Zealand as a pastoral
utopia is at risk of validating the paradisiacal paradigm of
the colonizer, Wedde chooses instead to represent
contemporary New Zealand through the splintered vision of its
lost and distracted researcher. Far from any provincial
scenes, what he presents us with is a seamless vista of
commodified images and superficial signifiers—as though
"paradise did have musak in it" (48). As Wedde’s protagonist
strolls through Wellington, contemplating "the exhausting
artificiality of the consumer process" (47), he observes an
urban landscape that is buzzing, threatening, and synthetic:
"Ahead of him the big digital clock with the illuminated
weather-forecast flicked its numbers over. . . . [L]ights
shone reflected in the water of the artificial lagoon . . . .
The container wharf emitted a cybernetic hum" (49). The
noisy babble of the media in such scenes ought to be surprising, considering New Zealand's supposed distance from any "postmodern" media culture (see Wilcox 346). One critic explains Wedde's fascination with media as a postmodern weapon with which to contest the boundary between the "high modernist" culture which some local writers have called for, and the "low" or popular practices which, for Wedde, define New Zealand culture (Williams 141). Indeed, Wedde has claimed a genuinely democratic fascination with media culture: "Even the signals that come of a city," he says, "the traces of ordinary business, street signs, town planning—are very mysterious as well as potent" (in Dowling 165).

I suspect, however, that Wedde's mediation between "high" and "low" culture is even more complex than the writer himself allows. The function of "low" culture in Symmes Hole lies in the relationship that text adopts toward its chief literary model, Moby-Dick. Wedde's novel is, in part, a parody of Moby-Dick, and shares with Melville's romance participation in the menippean genre. Symmes Hole is, like Lot 49, universally understood as a novel by its critics. Its broken narrative surface, shifting perspectives, and lack of clear action and characterization would describe, at least to some, a failed novel, were it not for the menippean material. And yet, unlike previous texts we have seen,
Symmes Hole is not formally a menippean satire. There is little in the text to suggest radical changes in perspective, a tri-levelled construction, or catascopia. Nevertheless, Symmes Hole does demonstrate all the hallmarks of the quintessential American anatomy, including an emphasis on the technique of lost crafts, a mixture of prose and verse, and a central character who is little more than an abstraction. Wedde has streamlined the anatomy form to keep pace with the postmodern era, using popular media to catapult the "literature of ideas" into the information age. Thus, Maori versions of antipodean sea shanties ("'New-come buckra/He get sick/He tak fever/He be die . . . ," 33) must take their place next to Calvin Coolidge's political slogans ("PERSISTENCE AND DETERMINATION ALONE ARE OMNIPOTENT," 253) and pop songs in this latter-day prosimetric satire:

'All that stuff about, what's Dionysus got to do. . . ?' - and then a young grinning Maori man standing next to her turns his transistor radio up, it's Ray Davies singing with The Kinks . . .

You had your chance in your day
Yet you threw it all away
But you know what they say
Every dog has his day (114).

Wedde fleshes out his satura by drawing with novelistic sensitivity from the socio-linguistic heteroglossia which he imagines must have confronted nineteenth-century New Zealand settlers. He writes that among the "fine Yankee merchants"
were desperate and murderous American deserters who wandered the beaches. The combination produced an "appalling farrago, which presented a certain extreme confrontation of powerless authority and impotent crime . . . . And pincered likewise in the midst of this modern vise, were the wretched native peoples, . . . " (287). The representation of this heightened oral heteroglossia gives way to a modified Melvillian anatomy form when Wedde addresses aspects of contemporary American culture overtaking New Zealand life. Thus, the numerous lyrical passages in Worser’s narrative which recall the lost techniques of deep-sea fishing (in language to rival the cetological sections of Moby-Dick, no less) find their twentieth-century expression in the recipe for a McFry:

the pale tacky stick had come from a murphy cured for a month at seventy degrees to balance the starches and the sugar, after which it had its spots cut off, then it had been fed through a cutting machine to slice it into strips, after which it had been washed to get the extra starch off, followed by blanching, the first stage of cooking . . . (Wedde 247).

Melville, as Wedde reads him, "had to camouflage all he’d learnt about self discovery and inner visions under a mass of common detail" (in Dowling 169). In the dimensionless prospect of contemporary media culture, a sensory overload of superficial detail is all that remains of both Ishmael’s and Worser’s romantic visions. With any hint of the sublime drained out, Wedde’s researcher-narrator must search for
evidence of his paranoid convictions in an elliptical manner more suggestive of a restless sliding of attention, than the deep structures of any vertical "plot":

... Ronald McDonald ... the Clown Prince ... the hundreds and thousands of him ... the 'greeting' and 'performing' varieties ... android buffoons ... programmed for Success. ... tarnished shine in Ghostly eyes of old Spanish silver ... indrawn laughter ... sound of surf on Penrhyn Island. There have been no more 'authenticated sightings' of Mocha Dick. ... ha ha (188; ellipses in original).

Mark Williams describes Wedde's prose style well when he says it "suffers from excess of sense" (158). A victim of the globalizing information society, Wedde's researcher lacks an epistemological frame through which to focus his paranoid delusions. Wedde thus motivates the menippean genre to address the threat of utter absorption in postmodern media culture which the increasingly decentred New Zealander subjectivity faces.

Lyotard warns that in the spread of electronic information technology, human languages are liquidated into data for machines, and knowledge is dissociated from the individual, exteriorized in the form of mere information (3-6). The schizophrenia from which Wedde's researcher suffers is the result of this postmodern fragmentation of the Bildung, expressed through the traditional menippean alazon.
The classic menippean satire attacked anyone whose perspective on life is deemed too narrow. With the renaissance anatomies of Nashe and Burton, a single perspective came to govern obsessively over masses of data. In its postmodern manifestation, the protagonist's ambivalent conviction to the most wide-ranging paranoid conspiracies is mocked by his own inability to make the plot cohere.

IV. The Hollow Earth Chronotope in the Menippean Tradition

Like other menippeas we have examined, Wedde's text debunks myths—specifically, colonial myths—through the testing of a grand and bizarre philosophical notion: Symmes Hole. The hollow earth constitutes a unique chronotope, a literary figure of time-space that promises instantaneous communication with lands far removed in space and time. The primary function of the hollow earth chronotope in literary and scientific writings has been to literalize the metaphorical connection between geological depth, and a "deep" scientific knowledge of nature's mysteries.98 Athanasius Kircher's non-fictional Mundus Subterraneus (1665), to take one example, describes "an intricate system

98 Rosalind Williams historicizes this connection through the cultural impact of underground societies (45-50). She points out that new excavation technologies in the nineteenth century revived the old belief that the search for truth involved a descent into underworld.
of intercommunicating cavities' beneath the planetary crust, the most important of which was a subterranean channel of water, 'through the earth from the north pole to the south'" (Fitting).

As a chronotopic hyperbole of colonial movement through time-space, the hollow earth combines the adventure romance with the "first encounter" structure of the traditional nekýia, or threshold dialogue. Whether set in a Homeric Hades, or in the belly of a whale, the necromantic dialogue by turn reveals either deep, Tiresian truths, or an irreverent, scoffing attitude that debunks hegemonic myths. The renaissance nekýia had seen the fantasy of communicating with the underworld wed to the spirit of territorial expansionism, and combined it all with journalistic genres to create ironic narratives of "first encounters" in other lands. Suddenly, there emerged a new kind of nekýia that imagined impossible communication not across the metaphysical threshold of death, but across geographic and cultural barriers instead. In Innisian terms, this new dialogue represented a shift in the history of technologies of empire from time-biased to space-biased media. The idea of a hollow earth emerged at this time as a legendary short-cut to new worlds, a communicating passage that would permit discourse, and commerce, with new worlds across—and ultimately within—the globe. Thus, in his Journey to the World
*Underground* (1742), Ludwig Holberg presents his protagonist Neils Klim with the job of royal courier, a task that he considers well beneath his schooling, and which instances the perennial menippean concern with the conflict between the acquisition of knowledge and the communication of information. Wedde reverses this procession of media biases, recuperating the temporal dimension for his historical investigation. By turning the avatar into a means of communicating with the past, with ghosts and history, he frustrates the geographic bias of late capitalist neocolonialism.

At the same time, the subterranean dialogue competes with the closely related carnival motif of the underworld banquet. Bakhtin shows through the example of Epistemon's voyage in Book Two of Rabelais' *Pantagruel* that the underworld chronotope is closely tied to excremental and gastronomic satire (*Rabelais* 381-6). In the nineteenth century, this ancient satiric pattern merged with evolutionary theory to form a new colonial discourse of domination through a very old chronotope. For Victorian authors like Wells and Edgar Bulwer-Lytton, a terrestrial avatar offering access to so-called "bygone" and "primitive" societies could be used to "confirm" dominant scientific theories of the biological and cultural superiority of Westerners. For Wells in particular, the subterraneum was
the future repository of our cannibal descendants, with their unspeakable feeding habits drawn from the dark vestiges of racial memory. Even today, it still seems that even the most sober and "scientific" discussions of the earth's interior as a window to past times and pre-human societies somehow give rise to the issue of cannibalism.99

In response to Wells and the tradition he represents, Wedde uses the fanciful hollow earth chronotope to debunk that other, closely connected colonial myth of cannibalism. He takes his reader back through the paranoid history of colonial appropriation, as he endeavours to understand reports of Pacific cannibalism past and present, both literal and metaphorical, through the better-kept secret of the earth's inner void. To declare cannibalism a colonial "myth" is not to use the term, as W. Arens does, to suggest that anthropophagy was never practiced upon European colonizers by indigenous peoples. Such an attitude provides no strategy for contextualization in the face of undeniable evidence of cannibalism within, say, Maori history. I consider cannibalism to be mythic in the Barthesian sense that it is made to legitimize colonial enterprise on ideological

99 Most lately, these dual motifs appear in the January, 1996 edition of National Geographic, which features articles on the composition of the earth (mentioning Athenasius Kircher, one of Ludwig Holberg's influences), Neandertal [sic] cannibalism, and polar ice crossings—not to mention John Mormon, founder of the Church of Mormon and cousin to John Reed Tead, "the man who lived inside the earth" (see Kafton-Minkel 90-107).
grounds.

To some extent, the menippean tradition itself is responsible for propagating such myths in the first place, even if only ironically. The *topos* of cannibalism enters the genre as early as Lucian's satire of Pythagoras' fear of eating beans, in *Dialogue of the Dead* 20, while tales of foreign cannibals received a real boost from Lucian's *Vera Historia*, the *locus classicus* of the fantastic journey narrative, which is proto-postmodern in its fanciful play with established ethno-historical fact. The paradoxical encomium, a genre closely related to the menippean tradition, later produced praises of cannibalism, perhaps based upon Diogenes the Cynic's *Republic*, which contained ironic defenses of incest and cannibalism (see Korkowski 103, n. 59). Cannibalism stands alongside the deipnosophistical theme of the "learned banquet" in numerous menippea, including *Satyricon*, *The Golden Ass*, *The Compleat Angler*, *Alice in Wonderland* (see Birns), *Moby-Dick* (see ch. 66, "The Shark Massacre," for the image of cannibalistic sharks as uroborous) and, more recently, *Giles Goat-Boy* (see Gresham 162-3) and *Lanark* (see Lee and Donaldson).

Still, I have yet found no critic who investigates the affinity of this fantastic chronotope of the hollow earth with cannibal narratives, despite their long and venerable literary association. Wedde engages a tradition of romance
literature linking these two themes that stretches from De Mille to H.G. Wells, from Edgar Rice Burroughs to Paul Metcalf. However varied in style and purpose these various hollow-earth texts may be, it is intriguing that they all have one aspect in common: they all depict the earth's center as home to a troglodyte race of cannibals. This strong chronotopic connection, I believe, can be explained through the history of the nekyia genre, and the fear and fascination raised by the trope of the speaking dead.

V. **Cannibalism and the Discourse of Preterition**

Significantly, the dialogue of the dead has often been extended to include swallowed characters: thus, Jonah survives his ordeal in order to tell a moral of repentance and redemption; and Dostoevsky's pedantic Ivan Matveich continues to speak from within the very belly of his crocodile captor. Nevertheless, it seems to be a satiric law that no one ever speaks from inside the anthropophagite's belly.

Cannibalism is a subject that at once occasions and swallows up utterance, like the maelstrom that both engenders and engulfs Arthur Gordon Pym's narrative. European notions

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100 As a parody of Poe's *Pym* by a descendant of Melville, Metcalf's *satura, Both* (1982), is particularly apposite to Wedde's satire. See Kadlec for a good account of cannibalism and hollow earth theory in Metcalf's text.
of cannibalism were born of silence, in the gaps between languages and cultures. Gananeth Obeyesekere shows that the discourse of Maori cannibalism specifically was forged in taciturn interactions between Europeans and Polynesians, a "conversation" of sorts that developed only through third-party translations and elaborate pantomimes (637 ff.). Wedde likewise represents alleged incidents of cannibalism only through fragmentary, second-hand reports. Significantly, Wedde never represents cannibalistic acts through any omniscient narrative perspective. The story of the murdered slave-girl whose blood was drunk by the Maori chief (105), the case of Betty Guard who was offered her own brother to eat (224)—all such incidents are represented as reports by second-hand witnesses:

... but then about eight on a cold foggy morning the Maori rushed across the river and cut down two of the seamen . . . Guard had told how they whacked one of them up into joints 'for their cannibal repast, tell the Colonel here if I'm not speaking the Lord's . . .' 'It's true, so I . . .' (224).

This narrative perspective expresses the necessarily vague understanding of cannibalism, an all-consuming act of violence which leaves little in the way of material evidence behind. More importantly, however, the fact that these incidents are reported as the yarns of sailors renders their validity ambivalent. Whether these reports of cannibals were
factually true, or merely rumours incited by colonial myth, is left unanswered in Wedde's text. The authenticity of the reports of cannibals must remain lost, like Wedde's researcher, "between the shifting faces of history, reality and 'reality'" (Wedde 10-11). Ellipses dot his text like seismic rifts, giving vent to ominous, sibylline gossip from sailors and squatters long since dead.

In her study of literary cannibalism, Maggie Kilgour demonstrates the broad metaphorical resonances between cannibalism and other figures of incorporation. If theories of the hollow earth are implicitly totalizing, then discussions of cannibalism are by contrast habitually underdetermined. As a crime habeus non corpus, cannibalism has since Cook's first voyages been the occasion of more nautical rumour than narrative. Even Melville perpetuates this conspiracy of silence. Writing in his public role of Tommo, the Man who Lived among Cannibals, Melville introduces the topic in Typee by alluding to "vague accounts of such things [that] reach our firesides" (33). His reticence is typical, for anthropophagy was in the nineteenth century, and remains today, inscribed within what Caleb Cavil has called a "discourse of preterition." By this, Cavil means to indicate how the cannibal act was used by writers and artists to "stand in" for other subjects that were considered

101 Of particular pertinence to the present study is her discussion of Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy (140-166).
unrepresentable, such as homosexuality among British sailors. I want to suggest that Cavil's unusual choice of phrase, the "discourse of preterition," is more apt than even he acknowledges. In legal vocabulary, "preterition" signifies the deliberate omission of a name from the list of beneficiaries to a willed estate. The discourse of cannibalism is preterite in this specific sense, because it is generally invoked for the purpose of divesting indigenous peoples of their rightful inheritance. A culture labelled as cannibal belongs already to a pre-civil past, and therefore cannot hold title over property.

Silence is both the discursive precondition of cannibalism, and the source of its mythic power. As Harold Skulsky speculates, the tabu prohibiting anthropophagy does not arise from our fear of being consumed; on the contrary, it is the projected fear of consuming another from which we cringe, the apprehension of possessing another willful and cognizant being within us. It is the fear of possession, of having another malignant, thinking being within one's belly that makes the cannibal act disgusting. The preterite discourse of cannibalism is thus hollow at the core: it reveals nothing but the fear of the colonizer when confronted with the emptiness of his own identity. Herein, I suggest, lies the connection between cannibalism and the hollow earth: both notions threaten us with emptiness, the uninhabited, and
give rise to fears of "possession" by another. Images of
cannibals and the hollow center both compel us to regain our
self-possession assertively, through appropriative acts of
consumption.

Wedde lays bare this fundamental connection between
colonial myths of cannibal attacks, and the colonizer's
repressed revulsion at his own invasive and appropriative
actions. The fear of cannibalism is actually the predator's
projected fear of ingesting an entity which, in turn,
consumes his identity. In Symmes Hole, this fear is
modelled as a projection of the capitalist drive, the
parasite of conspicuous consumption which would invade all of
our bodies, and infect us with its malevolent will. Thus, in
the perforated but telling synthesis of Wedde's researcher,
the need to invade every human being in the form of
cheeseburgers and McFries is, like Captain Wilke's need to
penetrate to the center of the earth, the final act of
appropriation:

The Renaissance wanted to 'civilise' Caliban
... [T]he Enlightenment wanted to appropriate
'natural innocence' ... and Jeremiah Reynolds
wanted to get inside—and his descendants did:
nuclear submarines and fast food. It may be that
Wilkes and Reynolds had a metaphorical
understanding (Wedde 154).

Here, the colonial desire to 'civilize' an indigenous people
is revealed for what it is: a systematic, parasitic
invasion of their bodies. Once and for all, the colonizer's
horror of cannibals is laid open as the fear of consuming
something that cannot be digested.

Cannibalism is literally disgusting only when one
imagines oneself as the consumer of an unsavoury meal, as
unwitting host to a bodily parasite, perhaps "something
malignant, intelligent, and alive" (Skulsky 303)—or worse
yet, something still talking. If few dare to talk about
cannibalism, then, it is because utterance only intensifies
the horror of the act. Given this general lack of dialogue,
early descriptions of Maori cannibalism were perforce
elaborated from British explorers' own culinary experiences.
It is probably safe to say that more is known about British
cannibalism than any other variety. Whenever the crews of
stranded navy or merchant vessels began to crave their
bangers, it was typically that passenger marked as Other who
provided the funeral sweetmeats. I suggest that it was
easier to eat the Spaniard, slave, or cabin boy, because he
was marked, not only physically, as Obeyesekere argues (640),
but also by linguistic difference, and thus posed less of a
threat of talking back, as it were, from beyond the
intestinal grave. Indeed, garrulousness was felt to act as a
kind of charm to thwart the cannibal's appetite, a voluble
and uninvited dinner guest who spoils the banquet.

Oddly enough, contemporary post-industrial culture has
thoroughly fetishized this tabu of ingesting a living, speaking being through marketing campaigns that resemble grotesque animistic feasts. From articulate, bipedal cheeseburgers, to giggling dough-boys, to socialite tunas that beg to be caught, the mass-media increasingly appeal to anthropophagic fantasies. Furthermore, with so-called "smart" products like talking beer caps and milk cartons that low upon being opened, technology has created a consumer's Wonderland in which we are constantly hailed by potions that say "Drink Me," and cakes that say "Eat Me." Here Montaigne's familiar thesis can be updated for the fin de millenium: not only are "civilized" peoples at least as "barbarous" as cannibals; in post-industrial society, they actually aspire to the condition of cannibalism. It is in such a climate that a recent subway ad could feature a postcard from a young woman travelling Borneo, who claims to have met a tribe of cannibals that enjoy her Juicy Fruit chewing gum, and which offering presumably sates the dangerous indigenous appetite. Perhaps this development is to be expected in a culture that increasingly fetishizes information, for commodity cannibalism offers to fulfil the Swiftian fantasy of learning through eating—food for information, if not for thought. Consume a product and you consume a lifestyle; incorporate an ideology, and you likewise become incorporated. Contemporary marketing
strategies are at heart based in a magico-religious repast that promises to transfer the spiritual qualities of the product to the consumer. Bakhtin's dialogical theory, in which language mediates the inanimate world and the social life-world—what Bakhtin respectively calls dan and zadan<sup>102</sup>—seems the perfect brand of phenomenology for a noisy information society.

VI. More Tasty Rumours: Marketing Conspiracy McTheories

It is telling to examine how, for a writer like Poe, this curious confluence of cannibalism, possession, and the hollow earth operates. Poe's racist representation of black cannibals in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym is well-documented. But few will know that around the time of writing Pym, perhaps the most famous hollow-earth story in the history of the chronotope, Poe published a series of articles in the Southern Literary Messenger endorsing the American Naval Exploring Expedition in terms drawn from the discourse of preteritition.<sup>103</sup> He wrote:

<sup>102</sup> Literally, the "given" and the "conceived," by which Bakhtin intimates a neo-Kantian separation between world and idea; see Clark and Holquist 72-5.

<sup>103</sup> In a paper presented at the 1995 MLA Annual Conference, Susan Beegel equated Poe's position papers on the South Polar Expedition with contemporary "technofiction" like Tom Clancy's Hunt For Red October. Is it purely coincidental that Symmes Hole identifies Reynolds' descendants as the
It is our duty, holding as we do a high rank in the scale of nations, to contribute a large share to that aggregate of useful knowledge, which is the common property of all. . . . Let it not be said of us, in future ages, that we ingloriously availed ourselves of a stock of scientific knowledge, to which we had not contributed our quota. . . .

("Committee" 89).

By stressing the scientific goals of the Wilkes Expedition, Poe justifies the projected American exploration and appropriation of the South Pacific as but the side-effect of a selfless gift of knowledge to the world. Moreover, legal discourse supported this cryptic slippage in Poe's language. The vocabulary of intellectual property law was derived historically from real property law. Until the late 1800s, the word "patent" was used in America to describe legal title to both land and technology. Poe turns this metaphorical connection between real and intellectual property into an ideological one, in order that the primacy of America's technological discoveries could justify the "discovery"—that is, appropriation—of outlying territory and natural resources.

Interestingly enough, this particular development in American colonial discourse was predicted as early as 1820 in a dystopian romance entitled Symzonia, purportedly written by one Adam Seaborn, sometimes thought to be Symmes himself (see makers of aluminum foil and nuclear submarines for the American government?"
Bailey, "Utopian Fiction"). A parody and fictional exploration of Symmes' theories, the little-known Symzonia is the first American work of science-fiction. What is fascinating here, however, is how Symzonia ironically anticipates Poe's discourse of invention. Seaborn's text begins not with the more familiar author's disclaimer, but rather with the precise opposite: a statement in which the putative author gives notice that he has no intention to relinquish his right to the invention of oblique paddles for steam ships [described in his narrative], though the circumstances narrated at the close of the volume hinder him from taking out a patent at present (vii).

Taken as a paratextual framing device, this "claimer" supports the general parodic thrust of Symzonia, often missed by its readers: namely, that Symmes' theory is founded on a patently colonial lust for property.

America continues to rationalize its colonial practice today through similar claims to technological "discoveries." These claims are made not only in the area of military technology, but also through continual "improvements" to the most mundane disposable commodities. On the other hand, the symbolic capital of intellectual property emerges in modern and postmodern society as highly vulnerable to parodic reappropriation. So Wedde launches his main attack in a
creative violation of advertising slogans, logos, and trademarks which, in today's multinational markets, carry on the work started by the Wilkes expedition. Sut Jhally discusses advertising's role today as a ritual that transforms quotidian, mass-produced objects into magically healing totems:

Production empties. Advertising fills... The hollow husk of the commodity-form needs to be filled by some kind of meaning, however superficial... People need meaning for the world of goods (222).

It is this belief system which an iconoclastic Wedde would empty out, by filling the multi-national market's most visible and most empty commodity form with meanings that it can neither contain nor readily purge. In Wedde's mock-conspiracy theory of commerce, it is, hilariously, the McDonalds hamburger that links the predatory act which colonists attributed to the Maori, and the consumption of traditional lifestyles by a "postmodern" culture of multinational corporations. The scare-quotes around "postmodern" are intended to register my disagreement with Fredric Jameson's influential equation of postmodernism with the totalizing forces of late capitalism. I would rather suggest that a novelist like Wedde is postmodern to the extent that he criticizes the totalizing grid of corporate power, by connecting the insatiable appetite of the Western
financial, Ray Kroc, to a cannibalistic impulse. Mark Williams has remarked upon the analogy Wedde draws between historical colonialism and contemporary corporate franchise:

The Pacific world in Moby Dick [sic] is represented as a map of conquest and the expansion of American global economic, technological, and military power. In Symmes Hole the process of American expansion across the Pacific is complete, but the vehicle of that power is not the whaling ships, . . . but Ray Kroc's McDonald's hamburger empire. Behind both the whaling and fast food industries lie the same ideas that encourage the human subjugation of matter (160).

Indeed, Wedde's researcher launches a post-colonial ecological critique of McDonalds in no uncertain terms, citing the incredible stretches of forest which cardboard packaging alone has consumed in the history of the company (265). However, Williams fails to mention the parallel between the fast-food enterprise and the colonial myth of Maori cannibalism. If cannibalism represented for Victorian society the threat of regression from a state of civilization into one of barbarism (Marlow 653), then Wedde reverses the threat, adopting the Wellsian theme to suggest that homo oeconomicus has been steadily devolving since the onset of late capitalism: "Victors, 'doers of deeds,' Hamburger Kings, Clown Princes, Ronald McDonald, The Descent of Man (his finger that had poked through the clammy burger smelled faintly of onion and arsehole) . . ." (Wedde 246).

The anonymous researcher arrives at this Wellsian
inversion of Darwin's theory while playing with a McDonalds hamburger, to the amazement and delight of the onlooking children. By poking a hole through the center of the burger, Wedde turns his Big Mac into a model of the world as Symmes perceived it—hollow at the core. It is the logic of digestion, not the logic of analysis, which holds his plot together:

that flow pattern's the ali', the elementary one, that's the surface movement . . . but then there's the deeper drifts and flows, there's the weft that complicates your prevailing persistence warp, there's the Menu on which is recorded another consumption altogether, and that's the one where the Pacific is served up, to McDonald's . . . (Wedde 254).

For Wedde, Symmes' Hole represents "the hole in the bottom of your body," the crowning reminder of the biological necessity which chains humanity to a logic of consumption and waste (Wedde 77); one might say that Wedde's researcher refuses to know his arse from a hole in the ground. It is the "Hollow Mountain" upon which Wellington is built, reconfigured to resemble the McDonalds trademarked "M" (165-6). Symmes Hole also provides a paradoxical globalizing image that "decolonizes the map," in Graham Huggan's phrase, by self-consciously foregrounding the aporia in the coordinate-grid model of corporate takeover. Just as the sausage figures in renaissance farce as a grotesque reminder of the
indeterminate boundary between inner and outer, between animal and human flesh, between consumer and consumed (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 221-31), so Wedde shows that for a post-industrial world, the doubly-invaginated hamburger is the carnivalesque foodstuff *par excellence*. Through this postmodern kitchen war, Wedde demonstrates how *Moby-Dick* can serve New Zealand, without serving her up to America, the great devourer. Above all, the comestible macrocosm Wedde sculptures is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the entrepreneurial schemes of historical *alazons* like Jeremiah Reynolds and Ray "Big Mac" Kroc, McDonalds' head cheese. By operating from within the superficial realm of rumour, Wedde counters their drive to "get inside" the bowels of the earth, or of billions served; in his postmodern *nekyia*, the deep truth must remain unsounded.

The strategy is not entirely innovative. Writers like Joyce and F. Scott Fitzgerald used the rhetoric and iconography of advertisements to intimate the proximity of mythic avatars, faults of meaning that opened up within the mundane repetition of slogans and jingles. For the modernist, ads could establish the setting of a moral wasteland under the eyes of T.J. Eckleburg, or kindle private, stream-of-consciousness associations that remained beyond conscious comprehension on the mass-cultural level, and beyond the time of narrative. According to Jennifer
Wicke, modernist narratives appropriated the primarily visual and lyrical emphasis of advertising, at a moment in history when advertisements themselves attempted to transcend narrative—especially historical narrative (604). Advertising speaks the modern; and by speaking advertising itself, Wicke argues, a text like Ulysses could assert a colonized Ireland's readiness to circumvent history, and enter the modern Western order.

Postmodern texts likewise reinterpret the contemporary, sign-saturated mediascape as a numinous field of portents. Unlike the private associations triggered by modern literature, however, postmodern texts engage totems of communal desire and resistance drawn not from advertising proper, but rather from popular responses to advertising. For in a late-capitalist marketplace, ads, slogans and trademarks tend to gather fables and other forms of folk narratives around themselves. Increasingly, contemporary folklorists are taking notice of the heteroglot genres of discourse that reinterpret the advertising text dialogically, in order to read narrative time—and history—back into the advertised product. In the last chapter we saw how these "demonic mercantile rumours," as Rosemary Coombe calls them, were co-opted during the Cold War by military-entertainment interests, and employed monologically to nurture a generalized paranoia. Today, demonic mercantile rumours form
unto themselves a sub-genre of urban legend that empowers consumers, and enables them to offer "producerly" responses to the hegemony of the mass-media. Whether expressed through a box of cereal that accumulates sentimental ironies, or a pack of cigarettes containing coded proof of alien visitation to earth, mercantile rumours are increasingly being reworked as the stuff of fiction.104

Mercantile rumours present a cultural field that is particularly productive to the post-colonial writer. For, as Coombe suggests, rumour represents the last remaining terra incognita of the global mediascape, a malignant enemy lurking within corporate marketing strategies that cannot be silenced:

Demonic rumors . . . provide a means by which people culturally express commercial power's lack

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104 Motifs of Kurt Vonnegut's Breakfast of Champions (1973) and Tom Robbins' Still Life With Woodpecker (1980). It is perhaps only coincidental that Robbins' text should also allude to hollow-earth theories (96).

It is difficult to say when rumour first became a menippean topos. Lucian's True Story parodies the exaggerated rumours of sailors, and Seneca's Apocolocyntosis represents the rumour of Claudius' death spreading through the agora. In Erasmus' Lucianic dialogue "Charon" (1529), the ferryman mentions that he has received news of apocalypse in the overworld from Ossa, Homer's goddess of Rumour (113). Ben Jonson also makes much of the proximity of rumours and news, in his masques, many of which demonstrate Lucian's influence; see Duncan. Blanchard mentions an allegorical birth scene in Leon Battista Alberti's fifteenth-century menippea Momus, when the roguish Olympian Momus rapes Flattery, begetting Rumour upon her (Bedlam 71). Rumour in the menippean genre thus plays a dubious role as mediator of myth, news and knowledge—precisely the discursive formation I am reserving for the postmodern discourse of information.
of place . . . . Rumours give presence to the consumer's cultural absence . . . . [R]umors colonize the media in much the same way that commercial trademarks do—subversively undermining the benign invisibility of the trademark's corporate sponsor while maintaining the consumer's own lack of authorial voice.

Trademarks tend in popular culture to traduce their owners, parading them before unprovable accusations that destroy their corporate capital and goodwill. Of unknowable provenance and dubious truth-value, the mercantile rumour circulates in the unclaimed middle-ground between the public discourse of commerce, and private fantasies of abundance. That the literary text should creatively engage the corporate logo is not surprising: after all, a literary copyright expires within a lifetime; but a trademark is protected by law "into perpetuity," making it at once a demonic entity, and the ideal ground for vast historical plotting. Corporate rumours pleasure the disenfranchised by intimating the existence of alternate realms of meaning. These are excessive, illogical realms, hinting at a different kind of abundance: one actualized not in conspicuous consumption, but rather in the conspicuous production of a paranoid signifying strategy.

This is precisely the popular satiric mode within which Wedde operates. Admittedly, we can only speculate on the connection between R.J. Reynolds, the tobacco manufacturer
from Robbins' *Still Life With Woodpecker*, and old Jeremiah, literary hobnobber and rumourmonger extraordinaire. According to Wedde, at least, Reynolds' descendants are the very same people who make the aluminum foil. And foil, in turn, is what the McDonalds Restaurant empire uses to package its wares. In Wedde's fictional anatomy, the individual destinies of these large corporations are both figuratively and literally wrapped up in each other. Significantly, within the genre of the mercantile rumour, those involving McDonalds form a subclass of their own. Wedde recirculates these signs of popular post-industrial resistance in an assault on the corporate "goodwill" of Ray Kroc's McDonalds empire.

Admittedly, I have found nothing to verify Wedde's claim that Reynolds, Inc. also manufactures nuclear submarines for the American government. The truth behind his story must remain submerged, "a constant nuisance, like a lone whale in the vast Pacific whose rumour haunts and infects those plying the marketing grids that whaling bequeathed to the fast food industry . . ." (9). Drawing on the power of marketplace

105 R.J. Reynolds has a certain cachet among those who construct serio-comic paranoid theories of Western industrial conspiracies. His history, read through the trademark of Camel cigarettes, prompts Princess Leigh-Cherry's revelation in Robbins' *Still Life With Woodpecker*. Wedde takes such corporate historiography more seriously, demonstrating that the secret history of multinational corporations, their logos, packaging and commercial icons, provide an opening into the global subjugation of regional interests through imperialist marketing strategies.
gossip, Wedde neither fictionalizes history, nor claims to set the record straight; he simply instills doubt by spreading rumour, that juiciest of polyglot genres. If the paranoid connections he draws between cannibalism and the historical search for a New interior World are, in the final estimate, hard to swallow, that is precisely what distinguishes them from the readily comestible and eagerly devoured products of Kroc's fast-food, fast-history empire.

As noted earlier, Leonard Wilcox has lamented that attempts by New Zealand writers to incorporate a local postmodernism have tended to produce pastoral visions of idyllic Batesonian ecologies. Too often, he claims, New Zealand is represented as "a pure and transparent space" of information exchange, in which culture and nature, the indigenous and the imported, mingle freely and directly, without need for mediation. Into this neo-colonial cybernetic paradise, Wedde re-introduces the parasitic motif of the cannibal. His narrative method incorporates various channels of information—biological, musical, electronic, historical—without, however, naively erasing power differentials. No longer Colonel Wakefield's safe British garden, Wedde's post-pastoral New Zealand more closely resembles the omnivorous cosmos of Moby-Dick, which, as Randall Bohrer writes, swallows up everything without for a moment believing that this grotesque "whole is synonymous with the good" (89). One can almost hear Wedde taking up the
Brazilian rallying cry, "Down with the vegetable elites. In communication with the soil" (quoted in Bary 40). But Andrade periodically bloated reports of Tupi cannibalism into a howling predatory movement, whereas Wedde's post-modern, post-provincial text speaks with the submerged voice of the prey, like a subterranean rumble from a bit of undigested rarebit. He writes, "this rumour of another history—something with the quality of the invisible, the unofficial, the disquieting, the subversive—must not become official or successful: must remain a 'failure' as . . . Melville used the term of Moby-Dick, because in that 'failed' role it can be useful" (Wedde 8).

VII. Mana vs. Tapu: a Maori Carnivalesque?

Despite Graham Pechey's faith in the "migratory quality" of Bakhtin's theories of language and culture, to explain world literature exclusively through some travelling theory raises that problem of critical voice illustrated by Montaigne's essay on cannibalism: it is the problem of exoticizing the cannibal barbarian, in order to perform a reassuring self-analysis of domestic cultural forms. While

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106 This is not to imply that Wedde's and Andrade's strategies are at each and every point opposed; on the contrary, there is considerable overlap in their several "cannibalisms". But while both equate cannibalism with the consumption of American mass cultural artifacts, for Andrade the act becomes a sign of indigenous strength, while for Wedde it represents a colonial appetitiveness.
Bakhtin's theories travel well, they stand in highest relief against a European literary and epistemological tradition. On the other hand, one can point to a topsy-turvy value system of higher and lower material strata that is indigenous to Oceana, without importing a European carnivalesque. Ross Bowden shows that Maori cannibalism, far from any random instances of savagery, was practiced as a form of political revenge within an intricate socio-cultural system in which people, things and events are contrasted as either tapu (sacred) or noa (profane). In traditional Maori culture, the head is tapu, the lower body noa; warfare is tapu, foodstuff and eating are emphatically noa. To transubstantiate one's enemy into a foodstuff, either literally by eating them, or figuratively through a culinary billingsgate, was traditionally the greatest possible insult among the Maori: one of the worst traditional slanders was "kai upoko, an expression which literally means to eat or make food (kai) of a person's head (upoko)" (Bowden 94).

While this signifying system bears superficial resemblances to the Rabelaisian carnivalesque, there are significant differences between the two. For instance, the excremental satire that is closely associated with the deposing of the fool-king in the menippeas of Seneca, Rabelais107 or Dryden does not map onto Maori custom, in which

107 Despite Bakhtin's claim that the excremental always represents a positive, regenerative, folk-cultural force in Rabelais, Richard Berrong has successfully shown this thesis
the latrines were, in the old days at least, highly tapu. Plundering Maori myth, tradition and symbolism for exogenous criticism perhaps represents a brand of colonialism appropriate to a late-capitalist society, in which information of the exotic acquires capital, just as "news" from abroad was commodified in the first age of print, leading to the institution of literary markets. Perhaps the greatest difference between traditional Maori and contemporary Western culture lies in the fact that the Maori eat only their vanquished foes, while the West vanquishes its foes by eating them. Wedde shows that, as far as enemies go on the national scale, McDonalds Restaurants is inherently noa.

I began this chapter by arguing for the cultural specificity of intertextual systems, and will end by testing the portability of a dialogical theory of textual exchange against one more indigenous to Wedde's context. Traditional Maori customs of exchange can help describe the mana of Symmes Hole, and its relation to intellectual property. George E. Marcus has critiqued copyright's response to postmodern forms of parody in terms reminiscent of Bakhtin's dialogism. He suggests that the very notion of "intellectual property" may be incompatible with certain cultures' intertextual forms of cultural production. Drawing on anthropological writings, Marcus proposes a Maori paradigm of to be greatly overstated (70 ff. et passim).
gift exchange and indebtedness, rather than ownership of property, as the basis of a culturally specific model of intellectual reciprocity. Moreover, he suggests this alternative model of cultural exchange as a replacement for American trademark laws which stifle dialogic forms of creativity in an age of rampant parody and electronic reproducibility.

In its most schematic form, the Maori gift resembles the dialogic "third" of Bakhtin's theory of utterance. Presume that A gives a gift to B, who then sells the gift to C for money. By Maori custom, B must return the profit of the sale to A, who has always owned the spirit of the gift, its hau. Marcus explains:

the critical power of parody is felt only if it succeeds in stimulating reactions that enmesh it in further communication with the object of its criticism or in passing on the spirit (hau) of the original through the response of other realms of discourse . . . . [T]heir own power is not in representing the original, but in stimulating further exchange, keeping the gift in circulation. . . . The critical component of parody can thus be seen as the value added, the yield of the original, the hau or spirit of the gift (314).

The concept of hau closely resembles the Bakhtinian notion of responsibility or answerability. The risk of all discourse, and of parody in particular, is that it may not be "answered"—the hau may not be returned. Nashe's Pierce

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108 See Clark and Holquist 75-7.
Pennilesse encountered this eventuality in Gabriel Harvey's rejoinder, *Foure Letters and certaine Sonnets* (1592). As Lorna Hutson indicates (197-214), Harvey's own satiric response is unanswerable in that it leaves Nashe no recourse, no hau: Nashe can respond only in a different spirit, by reclaiming the authorial right-to-own which Pierce Pennilesse had lampooned in the first place. Similarly, readers of "M. Valdemar" responded to Poe's parodic play on the discourse of information not with laughter, but with accusations of falsehood and humbuggery.

By introducing Reynolds into the intertextual circuit of exchange, Wedde likewise forces Melville to yield up the hau of his creative gift to the language, land and lore of New Zealand and her earliest settlers. Wedde tries to convey a sense of this particular intellectual exchange, or mana, which must have influenced Melville. Mana could be described as an aura or intertextual effect that cannot readily be translated, but which is observable, according to Simon During, "wherever the untranslatable flirts with meaning[, which] . . . it does as long as it is circulated" (57). The recirculation of meaning is precisely how Melville's highly citational anatomy operates. In Wedde's own words, Melville was (along with Poe) "one of the first to do what postmodern writing now finds familiar: recycle material, make use of existing texts, regard the act of writing as redistribution rather than creation" (14).
Symmes Hole "unfinalizes" Melville's Typee through vignettes that depict Worser among his Maori wife and children, contrasting these realistic slices of life with the American author's chivalrous vision of his Fayaway. Melville was also one of the "new people," and occupied the dissident settler's dialogic relation to colonizer and colonized.

Wedde reminds its reader that before Melville was canonized, he stood for a new class of writer-adventurer, a "new people" who ingested stories like a rare and radical delicacy. "[T]o love Melville," one early reviewer said, "was to join a very small circle. It was like eating hasheesh" (quoted in Lauter 15). However dated this assessment may sound today, it nevertheless captures the feeling that Wedde recreates, as his narrator swallows a dose of frozen fish-bait, the "mystery history drug" that allows him to commune with the past. Symmes Hole shows that if Moby-Dick still speaks to a contemporary audience, it does so through the mana of the unfixable, diabolical rumour. And if Melville's postmodern readers can at all identify with Tommo, then that is because in today's globalized McDonaldsland, we all live among cannibals.
EPILOGUE.

In Media Res: Dead Speech, Live Data, 
and the Future of Necromantic Satire

It takes information to play the game. But it takes knowledge to win.

- ad for Dun and Bradstreet, 
  Information Brokers

Some people write a pizza. Me, I write a clubhouse sandwich.

- Umberto Eco, overheard in Toronto, November, 1995

We are assured by the Bardo Thödol, or Tibetan Book of the Dead, that the soul newly in transition often doesn't like to admit—indeed will deny quite vehemently—that it's really dead, having slipped so effortlessly into the new dispensation that it finds no difference between the weirdness of life and the weirdness of death, an enhancing factor in Takeshi's opinion being television, which with its history of picking away at the topic with doctor shows, war shows, cop shows, murder shows, had trivialized the Big D itself. If mediated lives, he figured, why not mediated deaths?

- Thomas Pynchon, Vineland

"You haven't understood my work at all."

- Marshall McLuhan, in Annie Hall

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No study of the Menippean satire, past and present, could ever aspire to anything like encyclopedic totality without either violating Gödel's theorem, or transforming its author into a melancholy wreck, a postmodern Democritus Junior, Jr. This study has perforce left a number of loopholes. In focusing on the nekyia genre almost exclusively, it has left open the matter of how related Menippean strains, like the utopian narrative or symposium, operate within postmodern writing. The disproportionately high representation of American writers among postmodern menippeanists was accounted for in Chapter One, and redressed in Chapter Five. It is hardly surprising that a genre that resists dominant discourses and hegemonic media should prosper in America, close to the source of contemporary mediation. Still, there have been some menippeas at the furthest outposts of the "global village," and one can expect more to emerge beyond the confinements of hegemonic discourse.

Recognizing a new generation of menippeanists enables the construction of other, more complex intertextualities. Eric McCormack's Mysterium, for instance, is perhaps unique among contemporary menippea, in that it could be read as a parody of another postmodern text. As the narrator stares from his desk at The Voice out onto a graveyard called the Necropolis (2), he establishes a typically menippean
connection between death and the media. But the presence of James Maxwell, a clerk, suggests a parodic reference to the Scottish engineer made infamous by Pynchon's Crying of Lot 49. The theme of the day is "dissolution" (17), and Maxwell observes the decay of Carrick, a San Narciso-like town suffering from a mysterious epidemic, and full of people who "aren't much more than cadavers who can still talk" (109). Recent deaths in Carrick are ambiguously traced to the bones of a drowned platoon of World War I footsoldiers which are poisoning the water supply of Carrick, a motif which parallels that of the bones at Pynchon's Lake Inverarity. Someone is trying to erase Carrick's history, and Maxwell is the modern-day Oedipus who must search for the source of this miasma in the secrets of the past. Like Oedipa, who wonders whether or not the Tristero exists in actuality or only as a hoax, McCormack's reporter cannot figure out if the town of Carrick presents a genuine mystery, or only a mysterium in the medieval sense of a mystery play (a term explained through an inserted Shandyean sermon), put on by the whole town's perverse collusion.

We have seen that menippean parodies are often multiple, and Mysterium, true to form, could be shown also to parody James Hogg's antinomianist satire, Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824), which Frye describes as an unrecognized confessional anatomy (312). This strong menippean intertext is signalled by the appearance of one Sentinel Hogg, and The
Reeve, Robert and Martin Kirk, who parallel Reverend Wringham, Robert Wringham, and Gil-Martin respectively. Like Hogg's text, Mysterium exhibits a predominance of character doubles (see 97-8); patterns of repeated tellings, secret forays and observers from windows; a murderer who is identified at the beginning, leading to a frustration of the generic expectations of a mystery that parodies antinomianist thought (see Redkop); and a vaguely Scottish setting, replete with a thick mist to cloak the action. In short, Mysterium "answers" both Hogg's and Pynchon's texts in dialogical fashion, creating a disconcerting feeling that McCormack's protagonist approximates when he describes the sensation of seeing one suspect "through separate lenses of binoculars," in two distinct images that cannot be resolved (213).

If this study enables the recognition of menippeas like Mysterium, it is striking for the absence of virtually any discussion of menippean satires by women. One would think that the radically oppositional nature of the menippean satire, its emphasis on material and embodied modes of perception over abstruse metaphysics, its challenge to canons of taste, and even its deipnososophistical themes would offer valuable strategies to women satirists. However, not a single menippean satire known to be written by a woman appears in the extensive bibliographies of Boyce, Keener and Kirk. It is a shocking discovery that women satirists tend
not to write in the menippean mode—at least, not as that mode of writing is defined by the male tradition of satirists. Even feminist theorists who adopt Bakhtinian theories rarely do so for their specific insights into dialogic genres. Peter Hitchcock, for instance, suggests that the chronotope might be used to explore "the organization of time in space [which] has specific characteristics in the formation of women's community identities" (xviii), but does not discuss menippean chronotopes.

One could suggest some ready reasons for the apparent male gender bias of the menippean genre. For one, its disinterest in character and plot development puts it at odds with the novelistic territory that has become so closely identified with female writers in literary theory. Another historical reason might be that such a highly erudite, polymathic genre as the menippea would tend necessarily to exclude women writing within patriarchal epochs and cultures that do not permit them to attain and express the same range of learning as men.

One problem facing the (hypothetical) women menippeanist is that to parody a discourse necessitates its installation, a compromise that many women writers may not want to accept. So the Priapic tradition of menippean satire, which begins with the parodic romances of Apuleius and Petronius, only subverts the phallogocentric ethos by carrying it to ridiculous extremes, as witnessed in Encolpius' and

Moreover, many menippeas by male writers actively reinforce oppressive representations of women. Wayne Booth has at least broached the subject of Rabelais' alleged misogyny, and one need not look far within the menippean canon to supply further examples. From Apuleius' castrating witches to Swift's repulsive Brobdignagian maids, from Martinus Scriblerus' enjoined paramour(s) Lindamira/Indamora, whom the law reductively defines by their "member[s] of Generation" (157) to Wedde's notoriously servile feminine characters, the female gender tends to be represented within menippeas through the cynical distortions of deviance, "slum naturalism," and other demythifying perspectives that are typical of the genre.

Having offered these "explanations" for the apparent paucity of female menippeanists, it is not difficult to imagine how a feminine menippea might look. Pauline Harvey's *Le deuxième monopoly des précieux*, which has been described as a latter-day Québécoise *Alice in Wonderland*, Monique Wittig's lesbian anatomy, *Le corps lesbien* (1973), and Janet Frame's *Carpathians* (1988) all suggest possible examples of feminist menippeas. Doris Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (1971), though classified as an "Inner-space
fiction" on the text's title page, could be read as a menippea; Kathy Acker's *Don Quixote* (1986) offers another obvious candidate.

One text by a woman satirist that clearly "qualifies" as a full-fledged postmodern menippea is Christine Brooke-Rose's *Textermation* (1991), a contemporary dialogue of the dead and dying. Like the humanist scholars that Blanchard studies, Brooke-Rose uses Menippean form to explore the conditions of scholarship and of professional literati in an age in which canonical literary texts compete for their audiences with more popular media like film and paperback "genre" fiction. Set in an MLA-style annual convention, her satire follows the fates of a number of literary characters borrowed from actual texts by other authors, as they pray for their own continued existence in the minds of their readers. *Textermation* thus resembles "Lipsius' nightmarish depiction of scholarly production, [in which] it is the classical authors who are near death, not their self-promoting editors whose marginal interpretations suffocate the authorial sources" (Blanchard, Bedlam 82). In Brooke-Rose's version, the Western canon takes the place of the ancient enkyklos, and modern literary critics substitute for renaissance grammarians.

In her response to Umberto Eco's *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, Brooke-Rose points out that the "polyphonic palimpsest histories" (137) of male writers like
Eco, Pynchon and Rushdie "are large partly because they are packed with specialized knowledge":

Now knowledge has long been unfashionable in fiction. If I may make a personal digression here, this is particularly true of women writers, who are assumed to write only of their personal situations and problems, and I have often been blamed for parading my knowledge, although I have never seen this being regarded as a flaw in male writers; on the contrary. . . . What has been valued in this sociological and psychoanalytical century is personal experience and the successful expression of it. . . .

The novel's task is to do things which only the novel can do, things which the cinema, the theatre and television have to reduce and traduce considerably in adaptations, losing whole dimensions, precisely because they now do better some of what the classical realist novel used to do so well (135-6).

For Brooke-Rose, fictional literary texts realize their value in relation to other, mass-mediated representations. Just as Lipsius used the menippean symposium to explore the effect of the printing press on scholarly production, as we saw in Chapter Two, so Brooke-Rose explores the impact of new narrative media on the Western canon of literature, by mixing cinema characters in among the literary kind. Rose comes down on the same side as Lipsius' Varro, arguing the dialogic principle that old and new interpretations alike are necessary to maintain the literary and scholarly conversation. Her use of literary cameos within a necromantic dialogue to investigate the impact of new media on the production of literary knowledge makes Textermination
one of the finest examples of the postmodern menippea.

Part of the failure to recognize menippean strategies in contemporary literature results from a critical apparatus that relegates women's writing and dialogic genres closely related to the menippea, like sci-fi and fantasy, to the status of the "sub-literary." These latter genres have their roots in the satires of Lucian, Kepler, More, Cyrano de Bergerac, Rabelais, Swift, Holberg, Poe and Borges. One can expect certain menippean trends to be carried on in the realm of SF. The short story "Loitering at Death's Door," by Theodore Jeschke, explores the scientifictional possibility of reproducing human clones of the dead from genetic recordings. In this futuristic satiric testament, a family enshrines its grandfather by "saving" him in a digital copy that they can then reproduce in living, three-dimensional organic form on the anniversary of his death. Sadly, the reunion does not last long, as this latter-day Lazarus begins to degrade, ultimately sharing the comically grotesque fate of Poe's M. Valdemar. In true menippean fashion, the story is intercut with impersonally narrated historical data about the monologic use of necromancy by Hellenic mystery cults.

Robert J. Edgeworth has pointed out Lucian's influence on Philip José Farmer, especially on his Riverworld series of SF books. Farmer's Lucianic universe actually engages serious philosophical issues in menippean fashion, most importantly the tendency of humanity toward imperialist
reductions of social heteroglossia, as Mayan, Napoleonic and Mongol empires compete for global dominance over the author's Stygian world. His influential texts have even inspired a collection of spin-offs, some of which also demonstrate menippean characteristics. David Bischoff and Dean Wesley Smith's "Nevermore" (1993) is a Farmer tribute story that pits a resurrected Edgar Allan Poe facing his own authorial fears of premature burial in the Riverworld beyond death. An image of linguistic liberty, Poe, now sobered through a frustrated reunion with his beloved Virginia, destroys a revived Johan Gutenberg's reconstructed printing press, rather than allow it to be pressed (so to speak) into service disseminating Nazi propaganda. This story combines the necromantic theme with a philosophy of the media in a manner reminiscent of renaissance menippeanists.

This study stops short of considering dramatic and cinematic texts as menippean, although one could think of many such examples. A recent article in Shift magazine discusses Hollywood's growing fascination with the dead. I would rather argue that the American entertainment and culture industries at large are, and always have been, fascinated with the undead. Cinema remains a medium for perpetuating the living voice and image of celebrities, a point that Robert Stam misses in his otherwise excellent Bakhtinian study of cinema. Still, one can extend Stam's criteria to account for menippean films that more squarely
address the issues raised by mass mediation. In Bruce Robinson's *How to Get Ahead in Advertising* (1989), a British advertising executive externalizes his own doubts over his chosen professional medium when an advertisement he is writing for acne causes him to grow another head—or at least to believe that he does. His predicament explores the Bakhtinian theme of the subject's non-coincidence with itself through a menippean topos introduced originally in Varro's *Bimarcus*, and imitated by Codro Urceo (who in his lecture divides himself into Codro the philologist and Antonio Urceo, the layperson [Blanchard, *Bedlam* 61]), Poe (in his sundry doublegänger), and Italo Calvino (*The Cloven Viscount* [1961; 1962]).

Louis Malle's *My Dinner With André* (1982) is a cinematic symposium that steadfastly observes the unities of time and place, while deliberately ignoring the cinematic potentials of motion and montage. The two principal characters discuss a medley of topics that would not be out of place at Trimalchio's table, including strange religious sects, staged deaths, and matters histrionic. André emerges as a new-age alazon who takes his quest for intellectual freedom to unrealistic lengths. The narration of his peregrinations ends with a description of a ritualized burial and resurrection that bathetically exceeds the usual limits of polite dinner conversation.

As Stam points out, films like Woody Allen's *Zelig*
(1983) challenge the modern subject's coincidence with himself, and parodically destroy what Bakhtin calls the absoluteness of epic time: "Contemporaries can achieve greatness in their own time if they are represented and sensed as existing in a special sort of world beyond familiar contact. Bakhtin might well have had in mind the epic treatment of heroes in Socialist Realist fiction, in the Soviet press (Stakhanovites), and in official representations of Stalin" (Morson and Emerson 422). Today there are new media that work once again to erect heroes, including newspapers, television, and cinema. It should hardly be surprising to find that this resurgence of epic time, in different media, has in turn occasioned a new menippean impulse among postmodern writers and filmmakers.

Stam's criteria for recognizing filmic menippeas, adapted from Bakhtin's fourteen points, could be extended to other narrative media as well. The Internet presents a new site for the playing out of old genre memories. Menippean strategies would seem even more at home on-line than on film, if only because hypertext is inherently citational, and removes many of the usual indices that legitimize textual authority. It is fascinating that this ancient genre should have anticipated so closely many of the developments which electronic textual media have only recently brought to narrative practice. George P. Landow points out that hypertext provides almost embarrassingly concrete
illustrations of post-structuralist metaphors of decentralization, non-closure, and intertextuality, noting that electronic texts are inherently citational, and remove many of the usual indices that legitimize textual authority. It has yet to be recognized, however, that the menippea has always exhibited these same characteristics of digressiveness and non-linearity, fragmentation and intertextuality, encyclopedism, perspectivism, virtuality, and a general overload of factual data. If hypertext performs literary theory, then contemporary literature in the menippean mode tends self-consciously to foreground the convergence of hypertextual practices with ancient dialogic genres of literature.

Given the numerous formal affinities of menippean intertextuality with hypertext and electronic writing, and the persistence with which contemporary menippeanists have explored the heteroglot nature of the information society, one would expect to find more menippean satires appearing in electronic form. Chapter Five of this thesis was written with the help of a Moby-Dick diskette running on Hypercard, an invaluable resource for satires with the richly allusive informational texture of Melville's and Wedde's. The CD-ROM, as an even higher density multimedia, represents an inherently encyclopedic medium that "sweeten[s] the bitter pill of learning," as J. Wight Duff says of Varro's admixture of verse into his menippean satires (74), by interspersing
not only verse, but also graphics, sound-bites, and digitized film clips. As Bakhtin points out, the menippean genre has always focussed self-consciously on the material aspects of literature—what might now be called its data format. Barry J. Fishman and George P. Landow have already produced instructional literary-critical hypertexts on the subject of Graham Swift's Waterland, the menippean traits of which we examined in Chapter One (see Landow 107-8; 139-40).

The Internet, too, presents a ready medium for the already parodic, non-linear, and encyclopedic characteristics of menippean satire. On-line collaborative data networks allows the widespread mixture of forms to occur more quickly and interactively than those demonstrated by the collagist media of newspaper and television. Furthermore, frequent and often illicit copying of materials and the predominance of collaborative work create a tendency among Internet documents toward polyphony, irony and masking that generate a carnivalesque atmosphere. More importantly, there is a general recognition, at least among highly technologically developed nations, that the Internet is changing the global parameters of legitimate knowledge, a commonplace of menippean satire across the ages. Umberto Eco caused a stir on the 'net last year, when someone uploaded a translation of an article he wrote for an Italian daily comparing the schism between users of competing computer operating systems to that separating Protestants from Catholics, an old menippean
topos. Eco thus situates information technology within much older debates about power and knowledge, and isolates computers as a source of contemporary ritual and superstition. Robert Coover, too, has successfully translated his menippean impulses into the new medium. While continuing to publish printed texts, Coover has been instrumental in popularizing many hypertextual innovations, including pioneering hypertext authoring tools, through his involvement in Brown University's Storyspace Cluster (http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/hypertext/landowHTat Brown). Here we find a menippeanist negotiating and reshaping literary genres and media themselves, much as Edgar Allan Poe did with magazine fiction and the short story within his own burgeoning information society. Writers on the 'net today face the same explosion of potential with which the emergent magazine culture of the last century confronted Poe.

The menippean tradition has achieved adequate representation in cyberspace, and features many sites that attempt to recreate traditional dialogic chronotopes in the time-space of a new medium. Although no one has yet fully explored the dialogic chronotope in relation to hypertext, Bakhtin's concept of generic time-spaces has potentially more to offer the study of electronic writing than even Jay David Bolter's notion of electronic "topographies." Internet surfers can browse through a randomly generated version of
Petronius' *Satyricon* that restores the fragmentation of the surviving text in ways no text-based edition ever could (http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/hypertext/landow/SSP Cluster/Satyricon.html). At least one site explores the motif of "news from hell" that was so popular among Elizabethan menippeans (www.hooked.net/users/barefoot/), while numerous others devoted to Pynchon's writings exploit the hype that already surrounds communication on the Web, the samizdat sensation created by this alternative signifying space, in order to supplement the mystery of the Tristerno. Fans of Pynchon can even log into the San Narciso site, and send a message to the site's masters at the user address W.A.S.T.E., in a role-playing activity that extends the narrative of Lot 49 into a virtual chronotope that exists somewhere between real and fictional space.

The new medium lends itself to the creative expression of menippean themes. Mailer-Daemons have replaced printer's devils as the latter-day Hermes of negentropic publishing, while Free Nets everywhere feature virtual town squares, perhaps the closest contemporary simulacrum of the Bakhtinian carnival square, and the final forum for responsible utterance in civil society. Mark Poster hints as much in his ambivalent threnody to political communities at the fin de millennium:

*Electronically mediated communication to some*
degree supplements existing forms of sociability but to another extent substitutes for them. New and unrecognizable modes of community are in the process of formation and it is difficult to discern exactly how these will contribute to or detract from postmodern politics. The image of the people in the streets, from the Bastille in 1789, to the Sorbonne in 1968 and Tiananmen Square, Beijing in 1989 may be the images that will not be repeated . . . (154).

One wonders whether Poster has something like William Gibson's "consensual hallucination" in mind. Perhaps more to the point is Gibson's Neuromancer herself, as the story's omniscient AI explains: "Neuro from the nerves, the silver paths. Romancer. Necromancer. I call up the dead" (244). It is not exaggerating to describe the internet as a repository of actual, technological necromancy. Hypertext, like the menippean satire, operates on the threshold of orality and literacy, of living utterances and their (hyper)textual representations. It conceives of literature as a medium which functions to extend the living voice temporally and spatially to fantastic extremes, even beyond the apparently final boundary of death. As Maurice Crane, who administers Michigan State's on-line Voice Library, explains, "Machiavelli once said everyone he was interested in talking to was dead. Around here, they talk back" ("Internet Speaks Out" 37). The internet could well assume from Hollywood tabloids their traditional role of keeping the stars alive. In a related story, pop guru Timothy Leary recently made media history by broadcasting his dying words
over the 'net, in a kind of auto-epideictic that blows open the necromantic potential of this new medium.

With the improvement of natural language processors, and their inevitable extension through the mass media, it will become increasingly difficult to distinguish between the voices of the living and the dead, whether on- or off-line. We may all end up, like Gibson's cyberpunk characters, caught in the loop between presence and pattern, in "a new kind of immateriality that does not depend on spirituality or even consciousness, only on information" (Hayles 81). What these developments in the discourse of information might ultimately mean for the nekylia genre's cynical spiritualism and ornamental encyclopedism and has yet to be seen. Both short texts situate information technology within much older debates about power and knowledge, and isolates computers as the source of contemporary ritual and superstition.

An awareness of literary genres opens up different genres of knowledge, and provides new kinds of understanding. This study takes up the undertheorized but increasingly prominent relationship between genre and media, without, however, trying to resolve it in any straightforward manner. Part of the difficulty in accepting the substitution of "media" for "myth" is one of framing. Mythic genres, for instance, seem to be a kind of medium; and yet, there are many media that function in a mythic manner. To recapitulate Derrida, there is no genre of genre, no meta-category will
help us to hierarchize the closely interrelated and mutually traversing conceptual categories of genre and media.

Nevertheless, in order to understand contemporary fictional modes fully, it is increasingly necessary to recognize the interanimation of even the most ancient literary genres with new media formations.
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