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## Swift, Bakhtin and War

I have always regarded literary theory first as a means of explaining my responses to primary texts. In the following essay, I will draw upon Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque in an effort to elucidate the humorous vitality of Swift's treatment of the subject of war in *Gulliver's Travels*.<sup>1</sup> Although Bakhtin himself sees the literary carnivalesque as peaking with Rabelais and losing "its living tie with folk culture" by the end of the seventeenth century, he does mention Swift as one of several satirists who kept the carnivalesque spirit alive by employing festive imagery (*Rabelais and His World*, 34. *The Dialogic Imagination*, 237). Traditional definitions of satire are woefully inadequate when it comes to explaining how one might respond to a specific passage of Swift; a preoccupation with the identifiable targets of ridicule in their universal and specific forms has diverted attention from the exuberance and wit of Swift's irony. We tend to read Swift's major prose works with engaging humour and analyze them with moralistic gravity. I can only describe my experience of reading Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World* (in translation) as being akin to Keats looking into Chapman's Homer. Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque and "merry time" helped me make sense of my comic engagement with Swift, in particular with Swift's view of war and history.

Although my specific subject is war, I do not intend to engage in a polemical debate with Bakhtinian critics, like Richard Berrongh, who challenge Bakhtin's carnivalesque interpretation of Rabelais as having been inspired more by twentieth-century Soviet history than the history of the Renaissance (36-38)<sup>2</sup>. This contention undoubtedly has some truth in it. I even tend to agree with Berrong's main thesis that in *Gargantua* Rabelais moved away from the carnivalesque that was so prevalent in *Pantagruel* (the latter actually having been written before

the former). But while the degree of difference in the carnivalesque contents of the two books is noticeable it is negligible for the purposes of my analysis. Moreover, the political allegory of Book 1 of *Gargantua* perhaps brings Rabelais even closer to Swift. War encourages polarization and the Bakhtinian wars raging at the moment do illustrate that critics are more often driven by *wit* and the spirit of contradiction than they are *judgment*.

Before turning to Swift, I would like to begin by recalling the war between the forces of King Picrochole and those of Grandgousier, which Rabelais describes in *Gargantua* and which Bakhtin interprets as part of the carnivalesque. The conflict actually arises when the cake-bakers of Lerné answer a request to sell some of their wares to the shepherds of Seully with a barrage of abusive epithets. The barrage is a good example of Rabelaisian exuberance which Sir Thomas Urquhart seasoned in his colourful translation:

The Bunsellers or Cake-makers . . . did injure them most outrageously [sic], calling them prattling gablers, lickerous gluttons, freckled bitters, mangie rascals, shiteabed scoundrels, drunken roysters, slie knaves, drowsie loiterers, slapsauce fellows, slabberdegullion druggels . . . (76)<sup>3</sup>

And so on for another half page. Language here is a spontaneous, popular act of creation and of war, and its cumulative effect is humorous.

Jenny Mezcicms maintains that Swift's treatment of war in the *Travels* recalls that of Renaissance writers like More, Erasmus and Rabelais: "War has . . . a particular centrality as the ultimate folly and the symbol of a divided society" (268).<sup>4</sup> According to Mezcicms, both Rabelais and Swift associate "cataloguing of forces," [l]ogical reasoning," and "mathematical measurement" with the "enemy systems" (268). But it is Claude Rawson who has made perhaps the most perceptive assessment of Rabelaisian exuberance in Swift: "The combination of exuberance and astringency permits some hideous energies to come to life, without letting the exuberance itself turn into a Rabelaisian joy in abundance" (102). Moreover, Rawson points to Swift's association with the cyclical view of history and agrees with Karl Popper that Swift "focused on that part of the cycle which leads to decay" (75-76, see also 81-87). War is part of this decay, and for Swift in the *Travels* the focus produces the impression of the past as pervasive conflict or as a series of conflicts. Although this impression may be disturbing, it can also have a cumulative ludicrous effect that borders on absurdity. The series is really a distorted view of history as

inevitable process: the complete process from decay or war to prosperity or peace is not equally presented but the principle of inevitable process is retained. These notions of exuberance and process belong to popular culture, and so Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque is a way for readers to make sense of their ludicrous response to some of the darker passages of the *Travels*. Terry Castle has recently used Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque to examine the festive nature of the masquerade as it is presented in eighteenth-century fiction (913-912). Wars were not the festive occasions that masquerades were, but Swift in the *Travels* is concerned with war as historical spectacle and as a natural consequence of rich-poor interaction.

Rabelais' cake-bakers are clearly the instigators of the conflict, and their army, led by King Picrochole, is the first to mobilize and take aggressive military action. The shepherds of Seully are charged with the task of guarding the vineyards at the time of the harvest or *vendange*. Threatened with the loss of his wine supply, Friar John makes a spectacular defense of the abbey and his slaughter of Picrochole's forces is rendered as a spectacle of violence:

. . . he overthrew them like hogs, tumbled them over like swine, striking athwart and alongst, and by one means or other so laid about him, after the old fashion of fencing, that to some he beat out their braines, to others he crushed their armes, battered their legs, and bethwacked their sides till their ribs cracked with it; to others again he unjoynted the spondyles or knuckles of the neck, disfigured their chaps, gashed their faces, made their cheeks hang flapping on their chin, and so swinged and belammed them, that they fell down before him like hay before a Mower . . . (83)

And so on for at least another page. According to Bakhtin, these images of bloodshed and dismemberment, expressed so lively, are "steeped in 'merry time,' time which kills and gives birth . . ." (*Rabelais and His World*, 211). Language becomes such a rich rhetorical performance here that it detaches itself from the horrible action it means to describe.

Eventually Grandgousier, after failing to reach a negotiated peace, sends his son Gargantua into the fray. Gargantua soon overthrows the Lerne attackers, and so the forces of belligerent aggression are thwarted. Bakhtin sees the cake-bakers and vineyard guards as part of a "liturgical complex":

Wine and bread, grapes and cakes form a liturgical complex, subjected here to a debasing parody (the fact that these foods have a stimulating effect on the bowels). The first great episode of the war, the defense of

the abbey close by Friar John, also contains a travestied allusion to communion. We see the blood transformed into wine, while the ruthless beating suggests the *vendange*. In French winegrowers' folklore *vendange* is connected with *bon temps*, the "propitious time." The figure of propitious time symbolizes in folklore the end of evil days and advent of general peace. For this reason Rabelais develops a popular utopian theme: the triumph of peaceful labor and abundance over war and destruction. This is the fundamental theme of this entire episode of the Picrochole war. (*Rabelais and His World*, 228)

Swift's satire rarely, if ever, reaches the upper Rabelaisian heights of the carnivalesque, but it does have a carnivalesque element that is similar to Rabelais's. For instance, Swift writes a brilliantly humorous burlesque on the subject of transsubstantiation as a means of mocking the wars of religion that had raged in Europe for the previous century and a half. In Section IV of *A Tale of a Tub* Peter insists that the loaf of bread he serves to his younger brothers, Martin and Jack, is actually mutton; and his brothers rather shyly express their bewilderment and disappointment at seeing a slice of bread on their plates. The farcical dialogue in this section has its own absurd or popular humour that exists apart from the allegorical framework. Swift obviously allows the momentum of his wit, if not to run away with his satiric reason, to at least loosen the reins.

Bakhtin sees three dimensions in the war between Picrochole and Grandgousier. Two of these involve opposing burlesque distortions. First, he argues that the entire passage is a mock-heroic description of a legal dispute in Rabelais's home town having to do with navigation rights on the Loire river, and for evidence, Bakhtin points to the correspondences between various names in the fictional work and those of the individuals involved in the lawsuit (*Rabelais and His World*, 443-445). Second, the war is also a travesty of the struggle between Francis I of France and Charles V of the Empire. To represent his defence of French policy, Rabelais associates the sensible Grandgousier with Francis and the aggressor Picrochole with Charles. The third dimension contains these burlesque displacements and goes beyond them; it is the historic process itself or the merry time that is at the heart of the carnivalesque — the folklore humour that is both a spontaneous yet ritualistic form of social celebration:

... the festive popular images reveal the deepest meaning of the historic process, which extends not only beyond contemporary events in the narrow sense but beyond Rabelais' entire epoch. These images reveal the people's views concerning war and peace, the aggressor, political power, and the future. In the light of these views, formed and

defended over thousands of years, we discover the gay relativity of events as well as of the entire political problem they presented. The distinction between the just and the unjust, the right and the wrong, the progressive and the reactionary is not lost as the framework of definite time and immediate relevance is lost, but these distinctions do lose their absolute character, their one-sided and limited seriousness (*Rabelais and His World*, 447-448).

To be sensitive to this "gay relativity of events" over time is to somehow synthesize the trivial and the grave, to conceptualize not individual events solely in their low (as in popular) and high (as in learned) forms but a series of events in a kind of festive momentum. Furthermore, the rhetoric of exuberance is equivalent to the festive view of historical event as recurrence.

*The Battle of the Books* is a work that probably comes to mind first when one thinks of the carnivalesque and war in Swift. Here the images of slaughter and dismemberment are pure allegorical representations of academic debate. The life of the parody lies in its humour — burlesque as popular culture. A full appreciation of the parody depends on a knowledge of the form, or on learned culture. For instance, Homer's slaughter of two French critics is portrayed as an enactment of one of the most common and grotesque Homeric motifs — "sprinkled brains" (see *Iliad* XI.97-98, XII.185-186, and XX.399-400): "He took *Perrault* by might force out of his Saddle, then hurl'd him at *Fontenell*, with the same Blow dashing out both their Brains" (*The Battle of the Books*, 246). But this slamming together of the heads of two moderns is also slapstick humour — a scene reminiscent of the three stooges. There is no substance to the slaughter other than a linguistic one; nevertheless, language has a substance of its own. And language itself becomes the tool of war as Thersites's barrage of abuse recalls that of Rabelais's cakebakers. (Thersites appears in *The Battle* as Bentley. Dryden and Shakespeare also cast Thersites as a scurrilous abuser.)

Swift addresses the *event* of war itself (causes, methods and glorifications) in all four Parts of the *Travels*, and in doing so eventually establishes a thematic consistency which serves to unify the work. I will focus my discussion on three subjects that we have seen in Bakhtin's carnivalesque interpretation of the Picrochole war: first, the burlesque forms and images; second, the cyclical view of war and peace; and thirdly, the spectacle of language and history. All three are intricately connected and so I shall proceed Part by Part through the text rather than by subject. What connects the three subjects is the notion of war

as distortion — its practice a distortion of animosity and its description a distortion of history. To a degree this distortion can be traced to the *maxima e minimus* doctrine that Swift supposedly imbibed from his former patron Sir William Temple and classical writers.<sup>5</sup> Monstrous events follow from trivial ones.

In Part I of the *Travels*, the conflict between those who would break their eggs open at the small end and those who are “Big-Endians” is a memorable travesty of the Reformation—Counter-reformation conflict. More specifically, the ongoing war between Lilliput and Blefescu is a travesty of the Spanish Succession War, and although Swift obviously ridicules the entire conflict, he also manages in Gulliver’s capture of the Blefescudian fleet to endorse the Tory view of the war. Tories advocated a shift away from the struggle on the continent to a naval strike against the Spanish and French overseas trade. This political element is similar to Rabelais’s defense of Francis I as the magnanimous Grandgousier. Between 1710 and 1712 Swift was actually creating history through his successful efforts to topple Marlborough (Foot, *Ehrenpreis* II 493-541). Detached from the Whig-Tory struggle ten years later while he wrote the *Travels*, Swift was able to reverse the emphasis from the political *agon* of satire to a meta-political statement on the human condition. In one of his “Various Thoughts,” Swift elucidates the distancing “time” factor that naturally blurs one’s perception of the importance of causal detail in past wars:

Reflect on Things past, as Wars, Negotiations, Factions; and the like; we enter so little into those interests, that we wonder how Men could possibly be so busy, and concerned for Things transitory: Look on the present Times, we find the same Humour, yet wonder not at all. (I,241)

If a historical overview of detailed events creates the impression of patterns, then the importance of any one of those events vanishes into a perceived momentum of process.

It can be said that Gulliver’s perception of Lilliputian pomposity creates the burlesque feature of Part I. To Gulliver and the reader, the bloodless capture of the Blefescudian fleet also seems like a favour that any decent guest would naturally want to do for a host. Nothing is more ridiculous than Lilliputian notions of grandeur: the parade through Gulliver’s legs, the Emperor’s official title as “Terror of the Universe” (XI, 43) and the wish to reduce Blefescu to a province. The latter leads Gulliver to remark “unmeasurable is the Ambition of Princes” (XI, 53). The ambition of princes is the first cause for war that Gulliver mentions to his Houyhnhnm master in Part IV. I might

digress here for a moment to say that Swift's comic depiction of this ambition in *A Tale of A Tub* can certainly be related to the carnivalesque by virtue of the use of low body imagery, which Bakhtin sees as an integral part of the carnivalesque.<sup>6</sup> Louis XIV is the subject of a travesty in the "Digression on Madness" segment of *A Tale* wherein the modernist hack narrator identifies "*The Establishment of New Empires by Conquest*" as one of the "greatest Actions that have been performed in the World, under the influence of Single Men (Guthkelch and Smith 162)." Louis XIV's desire for military conquests is then said to derive from a vapour that concentrates in his "*Anus*" and concludes in a "*Fistula*" (Guthkelch and Smith, 166).

In Part II the situation is reversed; the King of Brobdingnag hears Gulliver's history of Europe as a burlesque. He laughs at Gulliver's account of England's "Wars by Sea and Land" just as the reader might laugh at the conflict between Lilliput and Blefescu (XI, 106). Even after a more sober second hearing, the particulars that appear reasonable to Gulliver remain trivial in the King's perspective: "He wondered to hear me talk of such chargeable and extensive Wars; that, certainly we must be a quarrelsome People, or live among very bad Neighbours" (XI, 131). At least the Brobdingnagian understands what Gulliver is saying, unlike the Houyhnhnms who have no word for "War" nor any concept of its art, which is a clear indication of war's irrationality and which makes European history a difficult matter for Gulliver to communicate to his Houyhnhnm master (XI, 244).<sup>8</sup> Myrddin Jones argues that in Parts II and III of the *Travels* Swift is concerned not only with "political partisanship" in history (i.e. Gulliver's Whig view of England and her past) but with its "sheer unreliability" insofar as the historian is excited by "his own prestige and power" (185, 187). Myrddin's ideas form a starting point for seeing the carnivalesque in how Swift represents war in the *Travels*.

The particulars of human politics being beyond Brobdingnagian perception, the King finally pronounces Gulliver's "historical Account" as being "only a Heap of Conspiracies, Rebellions, Murders, Massacres" (XI, 132). His statement is a commentary on historical discourse and historiography that looks forward to Gibbon's famous declaration that the "materials of history" are "little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind" (I, 84). History, depending on the emphasis of the writer and the position of the reader, can seem like little more than an *ad infinitum* narrative of human warmaking, and this kind of rhetorical momentum, like *amplificato*, can produce a ludicrous effect. In Bakhtinian terms, history is dialogic



— is shaped into spectacle by the reader as well as the author. Burton's tirade against war in the "Satyricall Preface" of the *Anatomy* is an example (I, 55-61), and Morris Croll's description of its baroque nature — the multiplying of a single "fact of the idea" into a plural "imaginative truth" or "energy" — seems almost synonymous with Rabelaisian exuberance (212). Moreover, the laughter of Democritus is not purely the derision of a learned philosopher; it is an individual and human response to overwhelming incidence, and the carnivalesque is merely the same response as it is manifested in popular humour. The interesting point is that itemizing in historical narrative is only meant to be accurate and exhaustive, as it is in Temple's own *Introduction to the History of England* and "Of Heroic Virtue" both of which seem excessive in their concentration on the matter-of-factness of war. Temple himself obviously sensed this incongruity and concluded "Of Heroic Virtue" with a statement on the greater virtue of peaceful achievements over military ones, a statement which appears too contrived and hence falls flat.<sup>9</sup> Swift's own fragmentary history of England, as Ehrenpreis remarks, shows a concerted effort to focus on constitutional issues as opposed to wars (*Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age* 11,62).<sup>10</sup> For Swift, humankind is responsible not just for creating spectacular violence — as in the description Gulliver gives to the King of the effects of gunpowder — but for remembering and recording it spectacularly as well.

The reference to the Brobdingnagian militia has always been interpreted as Swift's attack on the Whig policy of maintaining standing armies in times of peace. Z. S. Fink argues that the stability of Brobdingnagian civil affairs is Swift's endorsement of a classical political theory based on a balance of power, and that militia forms a part of this balance (158-161). His reading is valid but the stability offered by the militia must be seen against the long-term pattern of conflict which Gulliver perceives in Brobdingnagian history: "For, in the Course of many Ages they have been troubled with the same Disease, to which the whole Race of Mankind is Subject; the Nobility often contending for Power, the People for Liberty, and the King for absolute Dominion" (XI, 138). As seen in Part I of the *Travels*, Swift can simultaneously endorse a specific political position and mock the general conflict. It might also be noted that the militia, like the Lilliputian army, indulges in the spectacle of military exercise.<sup>11</sup>

The prospect of war as inevitable recurrence is a fearful one, yet it is precisely this idea of inexorability that fosters the carnivalesque or spirit of merry time. Gulliver believes that the immortal Stuidbruggs



must have "the Pleasure of seeing the various Revolutions of States and Empires . . . Barbarity overrunning the politest Nations, and the most barbarous becoming civilized" (XI, 210). We can trace this cyclical view of history to the ancient historians via Temple: ". . . according to the usual Circle of human Affairs, War ended in Peace, Peace in Plenty and Luxury, these in Pride, and Pride in Contention, till the Circle ended in new wars."<sup>12</sup> It might be remembered that Swift begins *The Battle of the Books* with a reference to Mary Clark's almanac sheet as a popular source for the cyclical theory of war: "Riches produceth Pride; Pride is War's Ground, &c. (Guthkelch and Smith, 165-166)."<sup>13</sup> Guthkelch and Smith cite a number of other popular sources. Swift adapts the theory to the debate by implying that it is the poverty and envy of the Moderns that makes them inclined to attack and plunder the riches of the Ancients.<sup>14</sup> That barbarism naturally invades prosperity also applies to the portraits of European colonial aggression at the end of the *Travels* insofar as the reference to "barbarous" natives is perfectly ironic while the European passion for conquest is described as an abject poverty of civilized spirit (XI, 293-295). Although Swift's tone is more sarcastic than that of Rabelais, the belief in a determined course of events essentially constitutes an example of Bakhtin's "merry time" (*Rabelais and His World*, 25, 211 and 217).<sup>15</sup> A cyclical view of history lends itself to a comic vision; the inevitable might as well be accepted, even celebrated.

Swift returns to the subject of military history as fascination and fiction in Gulliver's visit to Glubbdubdrib or the Island of Sorcerers in Part III. Given the chance to summon anybody he wants from the dead, Gulliver first wishes to see famous military leaders in "Scenes of Pomp and Magnificence": "*Alexander the Great, at the Head of his Army just after the Battle of Arbela,*" "*Hannibal passing the Alps,*" and "*Caesar and Pompey at the Head of their Troops just ready to engage*" (XI, 195).<sup>16</sup> These military subjects have been made notorious through the fiction of history, and it is possible that Swift meant to mock the popularity of battle scenes in the decorative painting of artists like Le Brun who did a series of military scenes at Versailles for Louis XIV or his student and imitator, Laguerre, who painted the battle scenes in Marlborough House. The Glubbdubdrib segment also gives Swift a chance to return to the subject of history as fiction. Gulliver claims to be "chiefly disgusted with modern history," which has attributed "the greatest Exploits in War to Cowards" (XI, 199) and discovers war itself to be an extremely haphazard affair — A view that may have come to him through Polybius.<sup>17</sup> A General renowned for

some great victory, admits it was ironically owing to his "Cowardice and ill Conduct" (XI, 199). The vision of historic process will not admit heroism, only mock-heroism.

These themes of war as burlesque history, as part of a predictable process, and as spectacle are brought together in the final Part of the *Travels*. It is not surprising that Gulliver begins his discourse with his Houyhnhnm master on "the whole State of Europe" by relating Europe's immediate military history, being King William's War 1689-1698 and the War of the Spanish Succession 1701-1713 (XI, 245-247). Gulliver then claims that the text he actually gives the reader is a "Summary of the most material Points" of this discourse. When Gulliver begins to generalize about the causes of war, we are once again entertained by popular ridicule in the travesty of the transubstantiation debate presented as a culinary argument: "whether *Flesh* be *Bread*, or *Bread* be *Flesh*: Whether the Juice of a certain *Berry* be *Blood* or *Wine*" and so on (XI, 246). The low-burlesque of religious difference of things indifferent continues and with each item the exuberance of absurdity becomes more humorous:

. . . Whether *Whistling* be a Vice or a Virtue: Whether it be better to *kiss a Post*, or throw it into the Fire: what is the best Colour for a *Coat*, whether *Black, White, Red, or Grey*; and whether it should be *long* or *short, narrow* or *wide, dirty* or *clean*; with many more. (XI, 246)

Gulliver's *casus belli* list then reads like a casual, yet *ad absurdum*, statement on the natural human propensity for conflict based on inequality:

Sometimes a War is entered upon, because the Enemy is too *strong*, and sometimes because *he* is too *weak*. Sometimes our Neighbours *want* the Things which we *have*, or *have* the Things which we *want* . . . *Poor Nations* are *hungry*, and *rich* nations are *proud*; and *Pride* and *Hunger* will ever be at Variance. (XI, 246).

The true popular element in the passage has to do with the rhetorical rhythm of reciprocal contrasts and balances, the easy generalizations, and the unceasing dialectic.

When his Houyhnhnm master expresses disbelief at an estimate of a million Yahoo casualties in "the long War with *France*," Gulliver smiles at the Houyhnhnm ignorance of the "Art of War" and goes on to give an encyclopedic list of the latest tools of war and the horrid details of battle. His history then becomes a spectacle of violence. The catalogue of new weapons and newfangled terms (e.g. "Bayonets," "Undermines," "Countermines") is simultaneously Gulliver's attempt

at accuracy and Swift's subtle mockery of the modern technology and professionalism of the military (XI, 247).<sup>18</sup> Epic motifs, such as "dying Groans" and "Limbs flying in the Air" (see *Aeneid* XI.618-635), give the passage the impression of universality and literary tradition. The scavenger image, also with epic antecedent, points to the life that comes from death: "Fields strewed with Carcasses left for Food to Dogs, and Wolves, and Birds of Prey" (XI, 247). And the final series of gerunds imitates the ecstasy of brutality in victory: "Plundering, Stripping, Ravishing, Burning and Destroying" (XI, 247).

One could call the description a vignette of an actual battle and aftermath, moving as it does from the chaos and horror of the battle itself to the slow dying, pillage, rape, and destruction which follow. In fact, the second part of the description ("the trampling to Death under Horses Feet . . .") bears a remarkable similarity to Laguerre's episodes of the battle of Ramillies that were commissioned and done for the main staircase in Marlborough House in 1713.<sup>19</sup> Yet despite the visual impact of the imagery, the description ultimately depends on linguistic effects; and Gulliver's language perhaps more accurately resembles what Frye describes as a "verbal tempest" or "Verbal exuberance,"<sup>20</sup> here made to imitate the unrestrained violence of war, than it does Rabelaisian energy.

Gulliver finishes his description of the "Art of War" with an even more disturbing image of how the morbid human imagination is drawn to such sensational scenes of destruction and death:

. . . to set forth the Valour of my own dear Countrymen, I assured him, that I had seen them blow up a Hundred Enemies at once in a Siege, and as many in a Ship; and beheld the dead Bodies drop down in Pieces from the Clouds, to the great Diversion of all the Spectators. (XI, 247)

Swift seems to be referring to the popularity of witnessing a siege-bombardment as if it were a fireworks show; in Fortescue's words, "[t]he Court of Versailles was particularly fond of a siege, since it could attend the ceremony in state and take nominal charge of the operations with much glory and little discomfort or danger" (I, 357). Louis XV and his entourage viewing the battle of Fontenoy (1745) as if it were the Superbowl is a reflection of the greater popular tendency to see war as spectacle.

Granted the dark sarcasm and indignant irony that we know so well in Swift and Voltaire and Erasmus is present in many of the passages from the *Travels* that I have been discussing. But we laugh outright at a Swift passage more often than the tone of our satiric analyses would

suggest. I have tried to demonstrate how Swift's language enacts carnivalesque or saturnalian features and how, through Gulliver, Swift presents war as historical and popular spectacle. Admittedly, the cyclical view of war is never forcibly argued by Swift; it is simply one of several war motifs in Swift's work, yet it sheds light on how we interpret his exuberant wit and how the flux of war as event is popularly conceptualized. And although Bakhtin is right in saying that Swift's carnivalesque is more subdued than that of Rabelais, the relation between the carnivalesque and war has by no means disappeared. While Swift spewed his satiric energy, another soul of the enlightenment, Giambattista Vico, worked out his own cyclical view of history. James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is, of course, based on the Viconian cycle, the *Corso-Recorso*, and sports its own series of war travesties or archetypal combatants: Shem and Shaun, according to Campbell and Robinson, constitute the "exclusively masculine battle polarity which is basic to all history"; and their "shadow extensions Butt and Taff, Mutt and Jute, the historical figures of Wellington and Napoleon, Caesar and Brutus, Sigtrygg and Brian Boru, and those curiously inchoate personages, Buckley and the Russian General" (11, 27). So many wars since Swift, so many since Joyce. When one considers the constancy of human bellicosity, the fact that culture — be it popular or learned — has managed to survive is cause enough for celebration, for festive laughter.

## NOTES

1. For a discussion of Swift's views on war, especially the subject of standing armies, see Robert C. Gordon, "Jonathan Swift and the Modern Art of War," *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities* 83 (1980): 187-202. The most detailed descriptions of the British army in Swift's time remain Clifford Walton, *A History of the British Standing Army: 1660-1700* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1894), J. W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, Vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1910), and R. E. Scouller, *The Armies of Queen Anne* (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1966). These, however, should be supplemented with more recent research. For a general overview of military strategy in Swift's time, see David Chandler, *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Marlborough* (New York: Hippocrene, 1976); on the impact of the military on European society, John Childs's *Armies and Warfare in Europe: 1648-1789* (Holmes and Meier, 1982) is probably the most useful.
2. Berrong emphasizes the similarities in the war sequences of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*; see Berrong, 39.
3. It should be mentioned that on the basis of Swift's library, critics such as Claude Rawson have concluded that Swift read Rabelais in French. See Rawson 173, n.9.
4. In *Rabelais and English Literature*, Huntington Brown outlines the frequency with which Swift's contemporaries associated Swift with Rabelais (152-172). Brown identifies with impressive detail the basic similarities between Rabelais and Swift, including the rhetoric of exuberance that the latter inherited from the former.

5. When Temple cites this doctrine to introduce his focus on the character of William the Conqueror, he does so without humour (11, 582). See also Lock 30, 87 and 144.
  6. *Rabelais and His World* 19-20 and 317-336.
  7. Swift's poem, "Ode to the King, On his Irish Expedition, and the Successes of His Arms in general" (1691), contains a reference to Louis XIV that anticipates *A Tale of a Tub*. Louis is said to have a venereal disease and to have fallen "sick in the *Posteriors* of the world" (*Poems* 1, 1.146).
  8. Ehrenpreis sees the king of Brobdingnag as a mouth-piece for Swift's former patron Sir William Temple (*The Personality of Jonathan Swift*, 94).
  9. "After all that has been said of Conquerors or Conquests, this must be confessed to hold but the second Rank in the Pretensions to Heroic Virtue, and that the first has been allowed to the wise Institution of just Orders and Laws, which frame safe and happy Governments in the World. The designs and Effects of Conquests, are but the Slaughter and Ruin of Mankind, the ravaging of Countries, and defacing the World: Those of wise and just Governments, are preserving and increasing the Lives and Generations of Men, securing their Possessions, encouraging their Endeavours, and by Peace and Riches improving and adorning the several scenes of the World." (1, 232)
  10. Although Hobbes appears as one of the Moderns in *The Battle*, it is clear that Swift endorsed the Hobbesian view of natural man existing in a state of war: see "On Poetry" (1733): "Hobbes clearly proves that e'ery Creature/Lives in a State of War by Nature" (11.319-320) *Poems*, 11, 651.
  11. Elaborate military manoeuvres involving footsoldiers, dragoons and even artillery were held in Hyde Park in 1716 and 1723 for, in David Chandler's words, "the delectations of the citizens of London" (163).
  12. For a discussion of war and cyclical theories of history, see G. W. Trompf, *The Idea of Recurrence in Western Thought: From Antiquity to the Reformation* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1979) 70-73, 166-167, 2328 and 288-289. See also J. W. Johnson, "Swift's Historical Outlook," *Journal of British Studies* 4.2 (1965): 68-69; and *The Foundations of English Neo-Classical Thought* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1967), 44-49. For a more recent example of a similar deduction, see Patrick Reilly, *Jonathan Swift: The Brave Desponder* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1982), 107.
  13. This cyclical theory of war was part of popular folklore during the Renaissance. Marston, of course, based his play *Histrion-Mastix* on it: allegorical figures succeed one another in the manner of a morality play according to the cycle. See Paul A. Jorgensen, *Shakespeare's Military World* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1956), 192-193; Sir George Clark, *War and Society in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1956), 130-150; and J. R. Hale, *Renaissance War Studies* (London: Hambledon, 1983), 354.
  14. This variation also has a classical precedent, as can be seen in Sallust's comments on Rome: "But when this new community had grown in numbers, civilization, and territory, and was beginning to seem amply rich and amply strong, then, as usual with mortal affairs, prosperity gave birth to envy. As a result, neighbouring kings and peoples made war upon them . . ." *Sallust: The War with Catiline*, trans. J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library (1931; rpt. London: Heinemann, 1965), 11-13.
  15. This is the position taken by Burton in the Second Partition of the *Anatomy* in which he outlines a number of cures for melancholy. Wars are classified as general discontents or grievances which constitute "an inevitable necessity. . . . So it is, so it was, and so it ever will be": the high is yoked with the low as items in this classification range from "plagues" and "famines" to "unseasonable weather" (11, 127-128)!
- Only the smallest traces of festive humour can be found in the closing lines of Swift's "A Satirical Elegy (1722), which was written on the occasion of the death of the Duke of Marlborough — his bitter political enemy — and while Swift was writing the *Travels*: "From all his ill-got honour flung,/ Turn'd to that dirt from whence he sprung" (11.25-32). The cyclical images of birth and death are reminders of life's greater patterns.
16. Swift may have been inspired by the tradition of battle paintings or historical *tableaux* like Altdorfer's "The Battle of Issus." Altdorfer's painting depicts both Alexander's and Darius's armies with a striking brilliance of uniform detail and density.

That battle paintings were popular cultural artefacts in the eighteenth century is demonstrated by Jacques Casanova's brother, François, who earned a living by copying the battle pieces of Simonetti.

17. Reilly, 105. On Polybius's relation between war's haphazard and predictable aspects, see Trompf, 70-73.
18. See Gordon on the "bayonet" and other modern weapons or systems, 195-197. Rawson discusses this passage and the one quoted on p. 324; see Rawson 15-17, and 50-52.
19. The episodes in the Ramillies series feature trampling horses, figures in flight and pursuit, the English victory and subsequent plundering and stripping of the enemy. Nude carcasses and bodies are also rather prominent. For illustrations, see Correlli Barnett, *Marlborough* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974), 167 and 174-175. For information on Laguerre as a decorative painter, see Edward Croft-Murray, *Decorative Painting in England: 1537-1837* Vol. I (London: Country Life, 1962), 61-68, 250-254.
20. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957), 236. See also Frye's comments on "intellectual exuberance," 311-312.

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