CHAPTER 3

The Scriblerian Mock Arts
Eighteenth-Century Satires of Didacticism

The Scriblerian mock arts are a set of imagined treatises and instruction manuals describing techniques that should not exist. This chapter offers a brief history of these distinctive didactic burlesques. It argues that their different satirical schemes had shared aims. The mock arts poked fun at the efforts of technical authors to specify various kinds of personal learning through written discourse. More broadly, they satirised modernity's division and fragmentation of knowledge. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, work on the diffusion of practical, mechanical information was already an important component of British commercial and scientific culture. This was the beginning of the Industrial Enlightenment. A progressive technological mindset was still unfashionable, however, in neo-classical letters. Prominent in the anti-modernistic campaign were Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope and their literary circle, which included among others the physician and mathematician John Arbuthnot and the poet John Gay. As with so many of the hints that re-appear in satires by Pope and his circle, the mock art idea was developed first by Swift.

This group believed that the ancient value system in which they had all been educated was threatened by the spirit of mechanism.[1] In his early satires Swift engaged directly with Cartesian mechanism in the strict sense of that term – that is, with the doctrine, opposed later by Newton, that the material universe can be described at the single fundamental level of inert micro-corpuscles and their actions upon one another.[2] But his real concern is with the more general modernist agenda, to '*put Morality and Mechanism together*', as John Locke phrased it, 'thereby making Men no other than bare Machins'.[3] This was an idea of mechanism that could be repurposed to different applications through figurative language. It described the literary mechanism of encyclopaedists and compilers like William Wotton and also the cultural mechanism of a new consumerist commercial society. Brean Hammond sums up its implications for Swift, Pope and their friends:

> [Questions] about whether writing was an activity of the spirit (issuing, to be sure, in a set of marks on paper, but not reducible to these marks), or whether writing was a mechanical and material act which produced goods exchangeable for the wherewithal to buy necessities of life, are focused through this mode. The Scriblerian target is *homo mechanicus*, a species both produced by and producing the new scientific learning, but at a cost to fundamental humanity, to naturalness, and to good writing.[4]

'Homo mechanicus' had been a target for literary satire before the turn of the century. Mary Astell's character of a '*Poetaster*' sketches a foppish plagiarist always on the lookout for shortcuts to copy: 'Verse is his *Manufacture*; For it is more the labour of his Finger than his brain.'[5] A decade later William Walsh made a similar sketch when warning the young Pope against over-correcting his *Pastorals* on the advice of critics who use 'mechanical Rules': 'They scan their Verses upon their Fingers; run after Conceits and glaring Thoughts; their Poems are all made up of Couplets, of which the first may be last, or the last first, without any sort of prejudice to their Works.'[6] What was different in the satire of Swift, Pope and their friends was their extension of this anti-mechanistic impulse beyond the specifically artistic concerns of earlier neo-classical commentators. As we will see in this chapter, the Scriblerian group used metaphors drawn from the mechanical arts to explore a range of attitudes to philosophy, religion and society. Although starting from conventionally anti-mechanistic positions, their satire developed rapidly to include increasingly sophisticated and sympathetic reflections on the kinds of intelligence demanded by skilled haptic work and on the social identity of the people who practised it.

It was Swift who first connected commonplace tropes of class ridicule aimed by the ancients at artisans and mechanics with a programme of Tory cultural satire against modernistic writers and thinkers. More than a decade before he met Pope, around 1697, he wrote 'The Battel of the Books'. In the central fable of that mock treatise a gracefully free-ranging bee, representing the liberal naturalism of ancient learning, gets the better of a cramped and conceited spider, representing modern mechanism. Descartes valued his new analytic procedures above the accumulated inheritance of scholastic knowledge. Now Swift refigured Cartesian method as degraded artisanship, the mere trick of a practiced, mechanic hand. As the bee remarks, taunting the spider:

> *Erect your Schemes with as much Method and Skill as you please; yet, if the materials be nothing but Dirt, spun out of your own Entrails (the Guts of* Modern *Brains) the Edifice will conclude at last in a* Cobweb.[7]

Elsewhere in the *Tale of a Tub* miscellany, where Swift published the 'Battel' in 1704, the modern literary critic is presented as 'a sort of Mechanick set up with a Stock and Tools for his Trade, at as little Expense as a *Taylor*', and his commonplace-book likened to the tailor's scrapheap of off-cuts.[8]

In the early decades of the eighteenth century these sorts of comparison between artisanal workers and literary critics became a common theme for Swift, Pope and their circle. Pope adopts ironically the 'Receits of good Houswives [for] making Puddings' in *The Guardian*, no. 78 (10 June 1713) as a model for the criticism of epic, since writing poetry now 'consists only in a Knowledge of Mechanick Rules'.[9] Gender and domesticity provide one set of references for the chauvinistic tendency in Pope's satire. National identity provides another. The French commentators who set up 'Mechanical Rules for Compositions' exclude their readers from ever using them, Pope joked, because 'the first Qualification they unanimously require in a Poet, is a *Genius*'. Swift borrowed the conceit back in Part III of *Gulliver's Travels*, when Gulliver meets the professors 'employed in a Project for improving speculative Knowledge by practical and mechanical Operations' at the Academy of Lagado. The first professor has contrived a machine (depicted in a famous illustration) by which 'the most ignorant Person [. . .] may write Books in Philosophy, Poetry, Politicks, Laws, Mathematicks and Theology, without the least Assistance from Genius or Study'.[10] In 1759 the Scriblerian acolyte Edward Young summed up this theme in his *Conjectures on Original Composition*, only stressing a little more the positive side of the old satirical trope. Comparing truly original poetry with the work of mere imitators, Young judges that the former 'rises spontaneously from the vital root of Genius'. Imitations are, by contrast, 'a sort of *Manufacture* wrought up by those *Mechanics*, *Art*, and *Labour*, out of pre-existent materials not their own'.[11] The metaphor has shifted. Swift's spider was condemned as mechanical for just the sort of self-elaborated creativity that Young figures now as vital. The issue of who 'owns' its supposedly organic produce has begun to obtrude.[12] But the moral structure is the same, and the opposition of free and natural processes to the confinement of art, labour, mechanics and manufacture remains intact.

The Mock Arts: A Satirical Theme

The earliest example of the mock arts appears in Swift's 1704 *Tale of a Tub* miscellany. In 'The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit', the third piece in

that volume, he sets out in ironic form an occult 'art' of spiritual self-projection and audience capture. When Swift took on the informal role of communications officer for Robert Harley's ministry at the end of 1710 he returned almost immediately to the same mock-didactic principle. The second number he wrote for the Tory propaganda organ *The Examiner* (no. 14, 9 November 1710) is an 'art of political lying'. Swift revisited it again at the very end of his career. In the introduction by 'Simon Wagstaffe' to *A Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation* (1738) and in *Directions to Servants* (1745) he presented two copiously redundant manuals of social and domestic malpractice. Once again, an elaborate instructional format is the pretext for satire on corrupted habits and absurd social conventions. Running through these writings is Swift's perennial comic theme. He describes the struggle between a general human urge to admonish and advise and the general human tendency to recalcitrance. The mock-didactic conceit reappears in occasional passages throughout Swift's works.[13]

While the mock arts are not among Swift's best-known satires, they have a significance that goes some way beyond their immediate impact. Swift's mock-didactic squibs are the model for a whole class of early eighteenth-century mock arts written by authors in his immediate circle and by sympathetic contemporaries. Gay and Pope produced two of the most sophisticated experiments in the pseudo-technical mode: Gay's *Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London* (1716) and Pope's *Peri Bathous: or, the Art of Sinking in Poetry* (1727). Both contain elements that parody (among many other things) Horace's *Ars poetica*. That epistle was imitated in several other Augustan mock arts: in William King's *The Art of Cookery* (1708); in Thomas Sheridan's *Ars Pun-ica* (1720); and in two pieces by the clergyman and playwright James Miller, *Harlequin-Horace: or, The Art of Modern Poetry* (1731) and *The Art of Life* (1739).[14] Seen in this company, Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711) begins to look like a re-adaptation of the mock art form for a serious purpose – a straightforward version of the scheme just touched with irony. Pope's *Essay* certainly shares with the mock arts its focus upon a passive, subordinate art – that of criticism – as a means of describing another dominant, productive art – poetry. A further Horatian parody was the clergyman James Bramston's *Art of Politicks* (1729), which comes late in a line of political mock arts that includes Swift's *Examiner* essay on the art of lying, Joseph Addison's *Spectator* number 305 (19 February 1712) on an academy for politicians, Arbuthnot's *Proposals for Printing [. . .] the Art of Political Lying* (1712) and the 'art of politics' that Gay sketched in a letter to Arbuthnot of

16 August 1714. Gay also wrote a 'science of dress' for *The Guardian* number 149 (1 September 1713, his only known contribution to the periodicals), which was plagiarised a few years later by Edmund Curll's associate John Breval as *The Art of Dress* (1717).[15] Swift's *Polite Conversation* was in part a satire on the sort of 'arts of being agreeable in company', usually translated from the French, that were popular in England at the start of the eighteenth century.[16] These were also glanced at in Richard Steele's *Spectator* number 386 (23 May 1712), in the 'Art of Modern Conversation' that Thomas Gordon included in *The Humourist* (1720) and in several pieces by Henry Fielding and his circle, such as Fielding's miscellaneous essays 'On Conversation' and 'On the Knowledge of the Characters of Men' (1743). The most popular single example of the sub-genre among modern readers, Jane Collier's mid-century satire *An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* (1753), acknowledges a debt to Swift.[17] While critics and editors have sometimes made connections among small groups of these mock arts, the extent of the field of Augustan pseudo-technical satire has never been accounted for adequately.[18]

Common to the mock arts are two basic satirical aims. First, they all offer instruction in an area of knowledge that resists written specification. They play on the absurdity of describing such knowledge in technical terms.[19] Sometimes it is absurd to specify an 'art' because it is beneath codification, too banal or base or trivial to be worth analysing. This is the case with Swift and Arbuthnot's arts of lying, with Gay's art of dress, or with Sheridan's art of punning. Sometimes written instruction is absurd because the art in question (or a more prestigious art to which it refers) is so complex or elusive as to be logically unspecifiable. This is the case with Pope's art of bathos (which refers negatively to the supremely elusive rhetorical sublime) and with Bramston's art of politics. In one special case, Gay's 'art of walking the streets of London' in his city-georgic *Trivia*, the practice described seems too ordinary for specification. It invests the artist, however, with certain ethical characteristics that are intrinsically valuable and distinguished: a peculiar sensitivity of attentiveness, a robust but modest independence. Between Swift's earliest mock arts and the satires that he, Gay and Pope published in the second and third decades of the eighteenth century there is a development. They begin as jokes about the perversity of composing instructions for techniques that do not suit written specification. They evolve into a diverse set of reflections on the resistance of moral autonomy to conformist modernity.

Second, the Scriblerian mock arts satirise, in their different ways, the modern fragmentation and accumulation of knowledge. This fragmentation

was associated with the experimental method of the New Sciences and particularly with Robert Boyle's investigative minimalism and refusal to systematise.[20] In his 'Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning' Swift's erstwhile patron Sir William Temple had contrasted the modern accumulative method of knowledge management ('illustrated by a dwarf's standing upon a giant's shoulders, and seeing more and further than he') with the ancient assumption, identifiable with the Stoic school of philosophy, of knowledge as a tradition of inherited wisdom into which each individual thinker is absorbed: 'mighty Reservoirs or Lakes of Knowledge', as Temple wrote of Chinese philosophy, 'into which some Streams entred perhaps every Age, from the Observations or Inventions of any great Spirits or transcendent Genius's, that happened to rise'.[21] Some mock artists claim that the practices they try to describe are the products of traditional knowledge. The narrator of Swift's 'Mechanical Operation', for example, describes 'an Art of great Antiquity' only lately grown 'Epidemick'.[22] But their relations to those arts are characterised by detachment and mock pragmatic objectivity, however laboriously they are pursued. The mock artist is at once morally uncommitted to his practice and narrowly absorbed by it. There is a concomitant assumption that mock arts will be novelties to the public and that their rapid obsolescence is as unremarkable as it is inevitable.

Swift and the Emergence of the Mock Arts

Swift's 'Mechanical Operation of the Spirit' is the first of his mock arts, but it has a shadowy predecessor, and one that was never written. It is listed, however, among the fictitious 'Treatises wrote by the same Author, most of them mentioned in the following discourses; which will be speedily published', printed on the verso of the title page in Swift's *Tale of a Tub* miscellany. The last of these twelve imaginary publications is '*A Critical Essay upon the Art of* Canting, *Philosophically, Physically, and Musically considered*'.[23] The title may have been familiar to Swift's early readers. The 'canting' language of criminal underclasses was a well-established theme in British and Irish rogue literature, going back to Robert Greene's *Discovery of Coosenage* (1591), subtitled 'The Art of Conny-Catching', and running down to Richard Head's tales of dashing street criminality in *The Canting Academy* (1673), which refers twice to certain 'Professors of the Art of Canting'.[24] Canting comes up again in 'The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit', where the artist-narrator states that the '*Art of* Canting' is 'ever in greatest Perfection, when managed by

Ignorance'.[25] He despairs of being able to 'draw the Principles of this famous Art within the compass of certain adequate Rules' and ends with the promise, evidently never to be fulfilled, of 'oblig[ing] the World with my Critical Essay' upon the subject.[26] All this is a straightforward expression of Menippean mock-didactic convention.

This original mock art is a literary ghost. It helps to contextualise Swift's satirical scheme, however, because it places the mock art idea in the general category of satire on the early-modern book trade and specifically in the sub-category of 'mock books', of which the *Tale of a Tub* volume is itself a fully realised example.[27] Genuine lists of 'Treatises wrote by the Same Author' were a fairly common advertising feature for booksellers.[28] The most prolific self-cataloguer and likely butt of Swift's joke book-list was the natural philosopher Robert Boyle.[29] He extended, for example, a notice of 'Philosophical Writings already publish'd by this Author' inserted into his *New Experiments and Observations Touching Cold* (1665), with a further list of nine titles, 'mention'd (here and there) in the above-nam'd Books, [that] are not yet publish'd, but (though not absolutely promis'd) by divers of the Curious expected'. The *Tub*'s prospectus of treatises 'which will be speedily published' belongs to the same dubious order of promised publication. Swift's phantom titles also recall the 'learned wit' tradition of lists of imaginary books, which includes the catalogue for the library of St Victor in Rabelais's *Gargantua* (1534), John Donne's 'Courtier's Library' (c.1610) and Antoine Furetière's 'Catalogue of the Books of Mithophilact' in *Le Roman bourgeois* (1666).[30] These three fictitious book lists each feature several titles that involve an 'Art of. . .' formulation, or some other mock-technical hint.[31] Swift's notice of 'Treatises wrote by the Same Author' follows a convention of this established satirical tradition, the listing of imaginary mock arts.

Marcus Walsh points out in his edition of the *Tale of a Tub* that each of Swift's fictitious titles cross-references a later section in the *Tub* volume. As we have seen, the phantom '*Critical Essay upon the Art of* Canting' links up with the volume's third part, 'A Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit'. This is significant given that the 'Mechanical Operation' turns out to be a pamphlet-length elaboration of the '*Art of* Canting' idea. It purports to teach a technique for 'venting spiritual gifts' to aspiring religious enthusiasts. Instruction in this process is supported by the two subordinate 'arts': one of '*Canting*', as advertised at the front of the *Tub* volume, the other of '*Snuffling*', which is described in the final pages of the 'Mechanical Operation' as a specialised form of elocution. The word 'art' does not appear in the title of the actual treatise. Instead the piece is

called a 'discourse' and given the rhetorical dress of '*A Letter to a Friend*'. But then the author admits to 'having been perplexed for some time, to resolve what would be the most proper Form to send it abroad in'.[32]

It is clear in any case that the mechanical operations of religious enthusiasm described in this mock treatise are performed by accomplished artists. They are 'Practitioners of this famous Art', 'Dealers in this Art', 'Modern Artists', or 'Modern Artificers'.[33] Swift's imagined practitioners have mastered a new method for transporting their souls beyond the sphere of matter, not by an act of God, or of the devil, or of nature, but by purely physical (or, in fact, sexual) means. This 'Method of *Religious Enthusiasm*, or launching out the Soul', says the author,

> as it is purely an Effect of Artifice and *Mechanick Operation*, has been sparingly handled, or not at all, by any Writer; because tho' it is an Art of great Antiquity, yet having been confined to few Persons, it long wanted those Advancements and Refinements, which it afterwards met with, since it has grown so Epidemick, and fallen into so many cultivating Hands.[34]

The author has the historical good fortune, it appears, to be writing just as the 'art' of operating spirits mechanically becomes ready for specification. Swift's basic joke here is that some form of esoteric religious knowledge is being muddled with a similarly 'confined' but more vulgar form of artisanal knowledge. At several points the bathetic descent from religious practice to mechanical trade carries on downward toward the realm of similarly confined sexual practices: 'For, *Zeal* is frequently kindled from the same Spark with other Fires, and from inflaming Brotherly Love, will proceed to raise That of a Gallant' (186). Swift's satire confounds the transcendental and the mechanical, the human body being to the moderns (he implies) another kind of machine. The 'Mystery of venting spiritual Gifts' is reduced by means of pun to the 'mystery' of a mechanic's craft, or to the earth-bound 'cultivating' of a husbandman, or again to the 'Mysteries' of orgiasts. It is 'nothing but a *Trade*', says the author, 'acquired by as much Instruction, and mastered by equal Practice and Application as others are' (178). The word 'trade' appears often in Swift's writing, usually as a contrast or a complement to some more valuable sense of artistry. In the poem of exile 'In Sickness' Swift pictures himself 'Removed from kind *Arbuthnot*'s Aid, | Who knows his Art but not his Trade' – a personal instance of how the two can and should remain separate.[35] Five years later he sends Lord Bolingbroke a compliment that anticipates the irony of *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, expressing 'my vexation, at seeing you so much better a philosopher than myself; a trade

you were neither born nor bred to: But I think it is observed that gentlemen often dance better than those that live by the art'.[36] In both these cases, the distinction between banal trade and liberalising art is in a formal sense arbitrary, yet in an ethical sense intensely important. This tension is a source of dynamism in the mock arts.

The first tenet of art, as every student of school-room rhetoric knew, is to show proficiency by concealing technical accomplishment. Swift's narrator is going in the opposite direction, however, when he proposes 'describing and deducing the whole Process of the Operation'.[37] Poised to reveal the mysteries of the art, Swift falls back on a favourite typographical joke. A lacuna blocks the manuscript at the climax of the demonstration.[38] Where the technical secrets should be, Swift casts a blizzard of asterisks across the page, indented with the note '*Here the whole Scheme of spiritual Mechanism was deduced and explained, with an Appearance of great reading and observation; but it was thought neither safe nor Convenient to Print it*' (179). The mock art is paid the tribute of obliteration and recedes back into the sphere of the esoteric.[39] There is a connection here between the never-to-be-delivered '*Art of Canting*' advertised at the start of the *Tub* volume and the truncated art of mechanical operation – itself supplemented by the third art of eloquent '*Snuffling*' in the second part of the treatise. These cursory glimpses of arts make up a pattern of abbreviation, of comic abruptness. Technical manuals are by their nature inclusive, expansive and systematic, but, if *Arts* are typically long, mock arts are best when whittled down to a mere title. In at least one case the title stuck in a reader's mind after the contents were forgotten. In 1712 Daniel Defoe complained that inspirational sermonising was still derided often as 'the Mechanism of the Spirit'.[40]

Mock-technical Minimalism

In the 'Mechanical Operation' Swift establishes the basic convention of the Scriblerian mock art: that of minimalism. In its original form this new class of satirical treatise is a mere joke title. Its first literary manifestation remains a truncated fragment. Like so many of the younger Swift's best hints, the mock art reappears a few years later, borrowed and slightly modified, in *The Spectator*. Addison presents in *Spectator* no. 239 a mock-rhetorical survey of the styles of arguing employed in London coffee-houses, concluding with a never-to-be-fulfilled promise to write 'An Account of the whole Art of Cavilling'.[41] This sounds like an echo of Swift's '*Art of Canting*'. Again, in *Spectator* no. 305 Addison imagines a

modern academy of politics where students are taught the arts – and we are given no more than their titles – of '*State Legerdemain*', '*Political Grimace*' and the latest techniques of evasive shrugging.[42] As with Swift, Addison's humour here depends on the dashing negligence with which the mock art is alluded to and on the refusal to develop it beyond a bare hint.[43]

By the same principle, Arbuthnot stops short of printing a full *Pseudologia Politikē* in 1712, contenting himself with mere *Proposals for Printing* [. . .] *a Treatise of the Art of Political Lying*, with eleven chapter summaries making eleven compacted jokes.[44] Abbreviation rescues the satirist from the banality of specification. At the same time, it helps preserve the clear distinction between artist and audience, which comes most memorably under threat in Pope's *Epistle to Arbuthnot* (1734).[45] In Scriblerian mock arts the sphere of proficiency is as likely to be trespassed upon by the amateur as by the pedant. Novice enthusiasts in the 'Mechanical Operation' acquire the knack of spiritual ejaculation not through study but through a facile sympathy with their preacher, cultivated by mutual jiggling, reciprocated humming and imitation by 'meer spontaneous Impulse'.[46] Passive consumer is confounded with active master. A similar process happens at a more formal level when King prints Horace's *Ars poetica* on pages facing his imitation of the epistle, *The Art of Cookery*. Throughout King's little book the productive, creative art described by Horace is travestied across the page by an account of the passive, unproductive process of eating. For example the Socratic taste for wisdom ('sapere') that is the fount of invention for Horace becomes mere modern appetite, 'what ingenious Cooks the Relish call'.[47] There is a polite variation on this ironic theme at the beginning of Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, where the Horatian 'nascitur non fit' tag is adapted for modern readers *and* poets: 'Both must alike from Heav'n derive their Light, | Those *born* to Judge, as well as those to write'.[48] Even here there are traces of the falling-off that mock arts typically represent. A copious ancient mastery is degenerating into a refined but barren modernity.

Part of the frisson that comes with cutting down arts to titles or fragments is that the process goes against the grain of what the ancient philosophers thought distinguishes an art (technē) from an acquired knack such as cookery. The truly liberal art is comprehensive. It is worth pursuing for its own sake, rather than for some purely external, instrumental purpose. It embodies a distinctive process of reasoning and leads to a set of definable internal ends.[49] Pope has this sort of distinction in mind when he identifies bad critics in *An Essay on Criticism* by their preference for mere disconnected 'notions' over truly technical principles.

> Thus Criticks, of less *Judgment* than *Caprice*,
> *Curious*, not *Knowing*, not *exact*, but *nice*,
> Form *short Ideas*; and offend in *Arts*
> (As most in *Manners*) by a *Love to Parts*.[50]

Mock arts that can be codified by the mere gesture of naming them are more like Pope's 'parts' of arts than like abbreviated systems. But Pope claims more than this. Those who 'make the *Whole* depend upon a *Part*' cannot rest upon what they know – they cannot totalise it or comprehend it.

This scruple of Pope's is related to the general Scriblerian contempt for knowledge fragmented through index-learning, common-placing and such like.[51] The mock art is still more apt, however, to satirise a contrary tendency in modern knowledge. The Scriblerians were particularly suspicious of those who distractedly pursue several arts. Worst of all are those who try to stitch them together. 'One *Science* only will one *Genius* fit', warns Pope, 'So *vast* is Art, so *narrow* Human Wit.'[52] In 'A Tale of a Tub' the narrator recommends one of his own new publications, a '*New help of Smatterers*, or the *Art of being Deep-learned, and Shallow-read*' – the urge to acquire a universal smattering of knowledge being a characteristic weakness of the Moderns and their followers.[53] The idea that no individual person should attempt to master more than one major art was an important theme in the Renaissance 'learned wit' tradition.[54] Robert Burton, in Democritus Junior's prefatory epistle to *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, confesses the 'unconstant, unsettled mind' that compelled him '(not able to attain to a superficial skill in any [art]) to have some smattering in all, to be *aliquis in omnibus, nullus in singulis*' – something in all of them, nothing in any one.[55] The Scriblerians and their contemporaries defined their own post-Humanist phase in the history of the arts in part as a reaction against the pedantry of the Burtonian generalist. The modern 'universal artist' represented by the figure of Martinus Scriblerus is, 'a man of capacity enough that had dipped in every art and science, but injudiciously in each'.[56]

These Augustan suspicions about expertise-spread-thin produce the second convention of the Scriblerian mock arts. Often they come mixed up with other mock arts. Minimalism and fragmentation lead to conflation, which in turn often involves confusions about the proper status of different arts. As we have seen, the 'Mechanical Operation' includes sketches of two subordinate arts, those of 'canting' and 'snuffling'. There is a similar conflation of arts in Swift's Bickerstaff hoax pamphlets, which attack the astrologer and almanac writer John Partridge. One of Partridge's

signal absurdities is the hotch-potch of arts he professes – shoe-mending, star-gazing and politics:

> Some Wits have wondred what Analogy
> There is 'twixt *Cobling* and *Astrology*;
> How *Patrige* made his *Opticks* rise,
> From a *Shoe Sole* to reach the Skies.[57]

Swift made a similar joke, pitched at a higher cultural level, about John Vanbrugh's wanderings from art to art, in the poem 'Vanbrug's House'. Even before he turned architect to build at Whitehall and Blenheim, Vanbrugh was more than just a playwright: 'Van (for 'tis fit the Reader know it) | Is both a Herald and a Poet'.[58] In successive revisions to the poem Swift places more and more emphasis on the joke of Vanbrugh as a modern Orpheus, whose literary skills (or rather shortcomings) have a magical correspondence with his architectural achievements (or rather failures).[59]

The miscegenation of different arts is a fertile source of absurdity in satires by Swift and his circle. Where Horace had connected the art of poetry with the strenuous skills of the athlete, King connects his art of cookery with the dexterity of the rope-dancer.[60] At the very highest levels of artistic achievement, too broad a mastery of too many arts will itself hang a lead on genius. Addison pulls back from his praise of *Paradise Lost* in *Spectator* no. 297 with the reservation that its author's attainments are too conspicuously displayed:

> *Milton* seems ambitious of letting us know, by his Excursions on Free-Will and Predestination, and his many Glances upon History, Astronomy, Geography and the like [. . .] that he was acquainted with the whole Circle of the Arts and Sciences.[61]

Addison experiences Milton's learning as a kind of imposition upon the reader, a coercive bid for admiration at odds with Augustan codes of artistic reserve. The sharpest satire on the over-reaching artist is, of course, Swift's description of the '*Universal Artist*' and his work at the academy of Lagado, in Part III, chapter 5 of *Gulliver's Travels*. The portrait, which is often read as a reflection on Boyle, makes clear the correspondence between the range of the artist's curiosity and the barrenness of his experiments.[62] The artist has fifty men at work on various schemes, including the petrifying of horse's hooves and the softening of marble for pillows. His personal projects involve sowing land with chaff and developing an ointment that inhibits the growth of wool on sheep. Swift's '*Universal*

Artist' is the mock artist in action. His projects, born out of a solipsistic want of public spirit, tend to the degradation of practical husbandry and trade, rather than to their improvement.

Swift establishes two main themes in his mock arts: the tendency to minimalism and the tendency to fragmentation and multiplication. They show his concern with judging the depth of commitment that is appropriate for the artist and with the extent to which the practice of an art might define one's character, for better or for worse. As Matthew Prior expressed the old anxiety: 'Too great an Application to any one sort of Study may spoil a Man of good Natural Parts, either as to his being agreeable in Conversation or Useful to the Public.'[63] Above all, Swift's conventions articulate his assumption that a life dedicated, in the modern way, to the dogged pursuit of fragmented arts will lead to a corresponding fragmentation of the self. But the Scriblerians did something more than simply re-articulate the ancient patrician prejudice in favour of easy, liberal 'praxis' arts and against those absorbing technical arts that can degrade and consume the lives of their practitioners.[64] Swift and his circle pursued the literary arts as an ethos-defining avocation, which they were happy to describe as a 'trade'.[65] They were as suspicious of genteel smatterers as they were of over-dedicated pedants. Prior distinguished between, on the one hand, the kind of dedicated study that is necessary to all liberal professions and, on the other, hobby-horsical pottering applied to, 'if I may so express it, some Secundary Science', such as 'Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Gardening &ca'. But the usefulness of the 'Secundary Science' is that it helps to protect your principal avocation, 'to turn the Discourse to what may at once conceal your Secret, and entertain your Company'.[66] Pope, an aficionado of painting and gardening as well as a poet, is more circumspect about such secondary arts in *Peri Bathous*, because he wants to ward off '*Genius's* of *Rank* and *Fortune*' from treating poetry as 'secondary' in this sense. Noble smatterers in verse, he hedges,

> ought to be praised no less than those Princes, who pass their vacant Hours in some ingenious mechanical or manual Art. And to such as these, it would be ingratitude not to own, that our Art [of sinking] has been often infinitely indebted.[67]

Here 'praised no less' means 'praised no more'. The precise nature of the debt of the manual to the liberal arts becomes an important theme in pseudo-technical satire, but Pope does not provide the best evidence of its extent. That is provided by the mock arts of John Gay.

A More Delusive Art

Of all the writers who took up Swift's idea of the mock art, none was more thoroughly taken with it than Gay. Pseudo-didactic satire was almost a default mode in his writings from the early post-georgic instructions of his *Rural Sports* (1713) to the 1727 *Fables* of 'The Monkey who had seen the World' (XIV) and of 'The Jugglers' (XLII). It spills out into occasional writing such as the 'Art of Dress', which he wrote for Steele's *Guardian* of 1 September 1713, and into his correspondence. The most important contribution made by Gay to the genre is the poem *Trivia: or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London* (1716). The mock arts of Swift and Pope are fragmentary conceits about modern methods for mediating knowledge. Gay's pseudo-technical satires, however, are distinguished by the poet's personal commitment to the practices that he describes, however hedged about with ironies that commitment might be. The ethical concerns that are only implicit in other pseudo-technical satires become the primary themes in Gay's mock arts. His willingness to pour himself into his mock arts is particularly evident in his two mock-georgic exercises, *Rural Sports* and *Trivia*. Both of these poems explain how the practice of the arts they describe leads to the cultivation of moral qualities in the artist: a modest integrity of the self that is manifested in a special kind of attentiveness to the world.

Gay's early poem *Rural Sports: A Georgic, Inscribed to Mr. Pope* (1713) aligns with the second Swiftian convention – the fragmentation and multiplication of mock arts – in so far as it is concerned with a whole circle of different country pursuits, each informed by its own practical 'art'. What sets Gay's *Rural Sports* apart from the common Grub Street compendia of 'Gentlemen's Recreations' is his intense evocation of the perceptual focus that successful sportsmanship demands, especially in the case of the fisherman. Hunter and prey are locked together in an absorbing competition of attentiveness. The trout is a natural prodigy of vigilance. With the slightest miscalculation of the lure's size, 'the naked fraud's in sight, | And fear forbids, while hunger does invite' (lines 163–164). So the fisherman must first 'His hooks, his lines peruse with careful eye' (line 133); then 'mark well the various seasons of the year' (line 191), paying particular attention to the insects in flight on any given day. Catching an entomological specimen, he 'examines well his form with curious eyes' (line 203). The epithet 'curious' has already been used to indicate the point on a sunny day at which the unsubtle live-bait of a worm is swapped for a more artful lure: 'You now a more delusive art must try, | And tempt their

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hunger with the curious fly' (lines 175–176). There is something of the minute curiosity of the seventeenth-century virtuoso about the fisherman's skill here.[68]

Gay's drama of sporting alertness rediscovers a theme that was central to the most enduring seventeenth-century fishing manual, Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler* (1653) – a book that had been thoroughly broken down and digested into the compilations made by Nicholas Cox, Richard Blome and their ilk.[69] In one of the climactic passages of *The Compleat Angler* Walton compares the extreme sharp-sightedness and timidity of the trout as a natural analogue for the one indispensable qualification of the angler: an 'inquiring, searching, observing wit'. Gay follows Walton closely in his description of the supreme achievement of the art: when the fisherman catches a specimen of the insect of the day, ties a fly to imitate it there and then on the riverbank, and then uses it successfully to lure the trout to his hook. Even if you are human, says Gay, a good fly 'Dazles our eyes, and easie hearts betrays' (line 190). As is the case in *Trivia*, the subtlety with which Gay describes his art, be it fishing or walking, depends on the success with which he describes valuable skills or attainments that resist specification. A disposition to alertness and a propensity for experienced observation become the principal examples of such processes in Gay's poetry. As Walton so often admits, 'Much more is to be observed in this kind of Fish and Fishing, but it is far fitter for experience and discourse than paper'.[70] Gay prepares the reader to acquire such experience, not by denoting rules in a book but by imitating in his poetry an ethical disposition, a special quality of attention, an incalculable perpensity of instinct, and by making it available for imitation in turn. It is through the mockery of art that this truly practical basis for artistry becomes a usable subject for discourse.

The Art of Walking the Streets of London

When Gay wrote his second georgic mock art, *Trivia: or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London*, he was careful to avoid making false claims about the sort of knowledge that he was teaching. Everything in *Trivia* comes in threes, and in each of the poem's three books Gay includes a passage cautiously denying, in Socratic style, that he has any technical information to convey to the reader. In book 1 the influence of approaching spring upon ladies, fawns and sparrows is direct and mechanical, responding to nothing innate in the animals themselves. Gay rejects them as appropriate subjects for his poem:

> *Not that their minds with greater skill are fraught,
> Endu'd by instinct, or by reason taught,
> The seasons operate on every breast,
> 'Tis hence that fawns are brisk, and ladies drest.[71]

For similar reasons Gay refuses to recite the 'vulgar Circumstance' of city life in book 2:

> Why should I Teach the Maid when Torrents pour,
> Her Head to shelter from the sudden Show'r?
> Nature will best her ready Hand inform,
> With her spread Petticoat to fence the Storm.[72]

In book 3 it is the hackneyed frauds of guinea-droppers, sharpers and so on that Gay passes over with a brisk occupatio:

> I need not strict enjoyn the Pocket's Care,
> When from the crouded Play thou lead'st the Fair;
> Who has not here, or Watch, or Snuff-Box lost,
> Or Handkerchiefs that India's Shuttle boast?[73]

The knowledge in which Gay is interested is quite distinct from the pseudo-moral 'knowledge of men and the world' of which his friend Swift was similarly suspicious. It requires neither rules nor conscious practice.[74] It is a distinctly tacit and passive sort of knowing. Gay tends to name the kind of knowledge in which he deals adjectivally as a quality of persons or things involving experience: 'May Providence o'ershade me with her wings, | While the bold muse experience'd dangers sings'; 'Experienc'd Men, inur'd to City Ways, | Need not the Calendar to count their Days'; 'Come Fortesque, sincere, experience'd Friend'.[75] This last case is 'experienced' both in the common sense of having acquired practical knowledge and in the etymological sense that his friendship has itself been tested or tried. Bacon had looked back at the history of learning and complained that 'experience has yet to be made literate' – only when practical knowledge is taught to read and write can invention progress.[76] British Baconians of the early Royal Society took this sort of remark as an encouragement to attempts at codifying the full circle of arts and manufactures.[77] 'Experience' is exactly what Gay refuses to denote for his readers. Like the instinct of the animals, or the maid's petticoat, or the playgoer's pocket it is always already 'endu'd' – literally, put on and worn, like Gay's famous raincoat at the end of book 2: 'O rather give me sweet Content on Foot, | Wrapt in my Vertue, and a good Surtout!'.[78] It is

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knowledge acquired through a certain disposition of attentiveness to the world, rather than through habitual, repeated practice.

By determining so carefully the particular kind of knowledge with which *Trivia* is concerned, Gay indicates that his art of walking has the superior status of the praxis art, as distinct from to the mechanical art of technicians. The ascendency of praxis over techne was asserted by the ancients – most succinctly by Plutarch at the beginning of his 'Life of Pericles' – through arguments that stress its ethical focus and the characteristic desire for emulation that it raises in others. King's *Art of Cookery* had already muddled this distinction by proposing that cookery is a 'learned, industrious, moral, upright, and warlike Profession', and one of great significance to 'the highest Stations of human Life'.[79] Plutarch originally described how technicians reveal their 'negligence and slothful indisposition to virtuous and useful practices' by their absorption in processes that could be delegated to others:

> For as to the goods of *Fortune* [such as skill in the plastic arts], we are fond of the possession and enjoyment of them; but as to those of *Vertue*, we are in love with the practice and exercise of them: and those we are content to receive from others, but these we had much rather our selves to impart and communicate to others.[80]

Gay's poem is about raising this sort of desire for mimesis in the reader and about asserting the independence and dignity of the walker's calling. But while Gay's walker is ethically distinct from the tradespeople he passes, the poet refuses to 'slight and set little by the workman', as Plutarch advises.

In *Trivia* there is affection and often identification in the relationship between praxis and techne artists. Gay inserts two memorable mythological digressions into *Trivia*: the stories of Vulcan's invention of the metal shoe-patten in book 1 and of the goddess Cloacina and her son the boot-black boy in book 2. Both are concerned with mechanic (or mock mechanic) arts and place emphasis on the invention of tools. After her passionate liaison with a mortal 'Scavenger', the goddess Cloacina invokes divine protection for the 'Fondling' to whom she gives birth, 'To teach his Hands some beneficial Art | Practis'd in Streets'.[81] The enjambment points up the ambiguity of 'Practis'd', which could refer either verbally to the 'beneficial Art' or adjectivally to a general urban wisdom, in the sense of a habituation to the streets, or to the legerdemain of the thief or cheat. The urchin himself first acquires 'the canting Art' of the beggar (an echo of Swift's earlier '*Art of Canting*') by the mere instinctual process of learning to speak. But later he laments being deprived of proper parental

instruction: 'Had I the Precepts of a Father learn'd, | Perhaps I then the Coachman's Fare had earn'd'.[82] Cloacina answers his prayer not only with the gift of tools – tripod, brush and polish – but also by inspiring him with the mystery of the bootblack's trade. The affinity between this fable of apprenticeship and Gay's larger mock-didactic scheme is seen when the poet calls the probationary walker's attention from this mythological digression back to perambulation:

> Like the sweet Ballad, this amusing Lay
> Too long detains the Walker on his Way;
> While he attends, new Dangers round him throng;
> The busy City asks instructive Song.[83]

This is a transferred epithet – evidently it is the probationary walker, not the city, who demands to be taught – yet in another sense everyone in London is asking for instruction, even those who have their trade and live among the streets. *Trivia* pretends to be a surrogate for the knowledge that hazardous, hard-earned experience of the city provides. More dynamically, it expresses the apprehension of urban danger as a necessarily unsatisfiable desire for skilled preparation.

The Art of Political Lying

In June 1714, two years before the publication of *Trivia*, Swift and Arbuthnot helped Gay secure the position of secretary to Edward Hyde, third Earl of Clarendon. Clarendon was due to travel that summer as Envoy Extraordinary to Hanover with a mission to resolve the latest diplomatic spat between Queen Anne and the court of the future George I. It was too little too late. The death of the queen on 1 August rendered the mission redundant, and Gay was left without a place.[84] But for three hopeful months he enjoyed the prospect of a new career in politics. Swift had responded to the initial good news on 12 June by sending an impossible list of reading for the probationer statesman, beginning with Aristotle, Grotius on natural law and whatever 'accounts of Negotiations & Treatyes &c.' could be got through in two short weeks.[85] Taking this as a joke – and chafing a little under Swift's patronage – Gay shot back with his own performance of diplomatic mastery, returning Swift mock advice for advice:

> [T]here is yet one thing more that is extreamly necessary for a foreign Minister, which he can no more be without than an Artisan without his Tools, I mean the Terms of his Art, I call it an Art or Science, because

> I think the King of France hath establish'd an Academy to instruct the young Machivillians of his Country in the deep and profound Science of Politicks.

Gay proceeded to draft a miniature mock art of court know-how drawn from his reading in Abraham de Wicquefort's *Ambassador and his Functions* (1681) – though 'I design this only as a Compendium', he admitted modestly, 'of the Embassador's Manual, or Vade Mecum'.[86] In the world of the Moderns, after all, the transition from total novice to manual-maker is an instantaneous one.

Gay's comments are interesting, because they suggest how well established the idea of the specifically political mock art had become by 1714. The most likely source for his reference to the Marquis de Torcy's *Académie politique* is the essay that Addison wrote about it two years before in the *Spectator* no. 305.[87] The essay turns on the irony that Cardinal Richelieu had set up the *Académie Française* with precisely the opposite of de Torcy's later intention (that of occupying talented people with literature so as to distract them from politics).[88] Addison gave a solemnly satirical account of various mock arts he expected to be taught at de Torcy's new college in the Louvre. They include a course in '*State Legerdemain,* as how to take off the Impression of a Seal, to split a Wafer, to open a Letter, to fold it up again', another in how 'to shrug up their Shoulders in a dubious Case, to connive with either Eye, and in a word, the whole Practice of *Political Grimace*', and so on.[89] It is a brilliant *Spectator*, and Swift, who seems to have read it when it came out, would have recognised it two years later as the model for Gay's diplomatic vade mecum.

Evidence of Swift's early acquaintance with it comes from the *Journal to Stella*. On 21 February 1712, two days after the publication of *Spectator* no. 305, Swift reported to Esther Johnson and Rebecca Dingley that he had spent six hours that morning drafting a letter 'to L^{d} Treas^{r}, about forming a Society or Academy to correct and fix th English Language'.[90] When this letter was published on 17 May as *A Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue* there were intersections with Addison's essay. Swift talked about Richelieu's academy, for example, and its failure to control 'the Affectation of some late Authors to introduce and multiply *Cant* words'.[91] His own language academy project had been a topic of discussion with friends since the summer of 1711.[92] The timing of Swift's push to write it up suggests that Addison's sudden appropriation of the topic for the *Spectator* had pricked him into action. A further complication was that Addison's essay itself derived from a Swiftian hint. In the 'Preface' to *A Tale of A Tub* (1704) the narrator sets out his project for 'a large

Academy' to occupy the '*Wits* in this Island', Richelieu-style, with its departments (including 'the School of *Looking Glasses:* The School of *Swearing* [. . .] The School of *Hobby-Horses*' and so on) listed.[93] It is not clear from Gay's letter that he understood quite how deeply Swift was involved in the joke already.

Swift converted the mock art idea to the purposes of political satire almost as soon as he began producing propaganda for Harley's ministry in the autumn of 1710. In the second issue that he wrote as editor of *The Examiner*, the Tory paper Henry St John had set up in August 1710, Swift sketched out a history of the 'art of political lying', using it as an introduction to an aggressively satirical portrait of the Thomas, Earl of Wharton, one of the leaders of the Whig opposition.[94] Wharton, who was lord lieutenant of Ireland between 1708 and 1710, had made an enemy of Swift by failing to elect him chaplain at Dublin Castle during a round of appointments that saw Addison (then Swift's friend) selected as his secretary. The dramatic tension of *Examiner* no. 15 comes from the clash between Swift's promise of a structured 'Art' of political lying and the account he gives of Wharton's chaotic practice as a liar:

> [Wharton] never yet consider'd whether any Proposition were True or False, but whether it were convenient for the present Minute or Company to affirm or deny it; so that if you think to refine upon him, by interpreting every thing he says, as we do Dreams by the contrary, you are still to seek, and will find your self equally deceiv'd, whether you believe him or no: The only remedy is to suppose that you have heard some inarticulate Sounds, without any Meaning at all.[95]

Wharton's art of dissimulation creates an expectation of technical coherence, but produces political speech acts that are essentially meaningless. This is its constitutive lie. The Whig grandee has built up a reputation as 'the most skilful Head in *England*, for the management of nice Affairs', and yet his lying is a negation of intelligent political operation. Swift's mock art may owe something to a near-contemporary squib that Edward Ward wrote for his *Secret History* of London clubs (1709), 'A Poem in Praise of the Art of LYING: Written by a Member of the Lying Club', which opens with a similarly anti-artistic paradox: 'No painful Studies can our Thoughts refine, | Or gild our Wits, like Impudence and Wine'.[96] Swift's darting ironies work at a different speed, however, to the coarse comedy of Ward's *Secret History*. Every commonplace they touch is turned inside out. For example, the difficulty of keeping up a lie if you do not have a good memory was proverbial.[97] But in Swift's art of dissimilation the liar must have 'but a short Memory', because that will make 'differing from himself,

and Swearing to both sides of Contradiction', more convenient.[98] Wharton explodes the common codes of public virtue in Swift's satire. He turns the principles of art itself upside down.

Swift's 'art of political lying' had a sustained impact on party journalism during the last years of Queen Anne's reign. It forced opposition pamphleteers to raise the technical standard of their writing. 'If this *Examiner* does not prove too hard for all that shall attack him', admitted Arthur Mainwaring and John Oldmixon in *The Medley* on 20 November, four days after it appeared, 'I will never more believe what any Man shall say of himself.'[99] A Tory periodical called *The Plain Dealer* (attributed to the satirist and physician William Wagstaffe) kept up the game by running a mock advertisement in July 1712 for a '*Proposal for Printing by Subscription, a General History of the Lyes raised by the Wh—gs*', in six folio volumes.[100]

This anticipated the appearance in October 1712 of an anonymous pamphlet containing *Proposals for Printing a Very Curious Discourse, in Two Volumes Quarto, Intitled, Pseudologia Politikē; or, a Treatise of the Art of Political Lying*. It was by Arbuthnot. He had sent the manuscript from Windsor for approval by Swift in London, who handed it on to his printer John Barber for publication.[101] Though based on Swift's idea, Arbuthnot's *Pseudologia Politikē* resembles Addison's essay on the *Académie politique* in its format, which consists of a series of satirical hints briefly developed, each representing one of eleven chapters in the fictitious treatise. Like Swift in *Examiner* no. 15, Arbuthnot opens with historical conjectures about the original 'reduction' of arts:

> That at first they consist of scatter'd Theorems and Practices, which are handed about amongst the Masters, and only reveal'd to the *Filii Artis*, till such time as some great Genius appears, who Collects these disjointed Propositions, and reduces them to a regular System. That this is the Case of the noble and useful art of *Political Lying*, which in this last Age having been enrich'd with several new Discoveries, ought not to lie any longer in Rubbish and Confusion, but may justly claim a place in the *Eucyclopædia*.[102]

Arbuthnot is more resourceful than Swift had been in creating a pseudo-technical idiom for his art and an appropriate place for it within the system of learned sciences. For example, Swift allegorised the political liar with the grotesque image of a flying goddess carrying a trick looking-glass, in which the crowd sees 'their Ruin in their Interest, and their Interest in their Ruin'. Arbuthnot answered with a mock-mechanistic theory in which the human soul is revealed to be 'a *Plano-Cylindrical Speculum*, or Looking-

glass; [. . .] the Cylindrical side, by the Rules of Catoptricks, must needs represent true Objects false, and false Objects true'. Just as the larger surface area of the cylindrical side, which represents human credulity, takes in more 'visual Rays', so the mind is especially receptive to 'the *Malicious* and the *Miraculous*'.[103] Arbuthnot is the first member of Swift's circle to realise the potential of the mock arts' technical dimension as a satirical resource. He gives the 'art of political lying' a pseudo-scientific structure and a psychology, a social context (there is a project for 'uniting the several smaller Corporations of Lyers into one Society') and both external and internal ends.

Swift told Esther Johnson that Arbuthnot intended *Pseudologia Politikē* as a parody of the book abstracts that appeared in the review periodical *The History of the Works of the Learned* (1699–1712).[104] This is a peculiar assumption, given that the pamphlet is a book-trade pastiche of a publisher's subscription prospectus. Swift's classification may be connected with a letter that Addison had published in *The Spectator* three months before *Pseudologia Politikē* came out, in which an anonymous correspondent reports his 'Design to Publish every Month, An Account of the Works of the Unlearned'.[105] Pope used the same formulation in a near-contemporary letter to Gay, so he is usually assumed to be *The Spectator*'s unnamed contributor.[106] In later comments Pope elided this unrealised project of 1712 to write a satirical journal with the Scriblerus collaborations of 1714. By extension, Swift's remarks to Johnson place *Pseudologia Politikē* at the very beginning of the line of satires by members of his circle that target those who dip into 'every art and science, but injudiciously in each' – a line that culminates in Pope's *Dunciad*.[107]

The Craftsman and the Art of Politics

Notwithstanding the impact of Swift's 'art of lying' in *Examiner* no. 15, political mock arts written before 1714 played only a small part in the pamphlet wars of the last years of Queen Anne's reign. By the time that Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, began his efforts to 'revive & animate the paper wars' once more during the autumn of 1726, however, Swiftian mock-technical satire had settled into the language of political polemic, joining with the older theme of 'state craftsmanship' in renewed debates about expertise and the narrowing professionalisation of politics.[108] The most conspicuous indication of this trend was the title that Bolingbroke and his Old Whig ally William Pulteney chose for the opposition periodical that they founded with the journalist William

Amhurst in December 1726. *The Craftsman*, which became the most famous and long-running political journal of the period, was at the heart of their determined campaign against the ministry.[109] Swift himself never published in *The Craftsman*, but he identified with its cause, and the influence of his writings on the style of the periodical is pervasive. In the first number 'Caleb D'Anvers', the journal's fictional editor, tells how *The Craftsman* was chosen as a general title under which to

> lay open the Frauds, Abuses, and secret Iniquities of all Professions, not excepting my own [i.e., the law]; which is at present notoriously adulterated with pernicious mixtures of Craft, and several scandalous Prostitutions.[110]

Caleb's 'chief business', however, is 'to unravel the dark Secrets of Political Craft, and trace it through all its various Windings and intricate Recesses'. When *The Craftsman* complained about artfulness and expertise in politics, it was referring to a very specific expert: Sir Robert Walpole, the First Lord of the Treasury from 1715–1717 and from 1721–1742. Walpole enjoyed the reputation of a supreme political technician. Lord Chesterfield, one of his most effective critics after 1737, stated that, 'He was both the best parliament-man, and the ablest manager of parliament, that I believe ever lived [. . .] So clear in stating the most intricate matters, especially in the finances, that, whilst he was speaking the most ignorant thought that they understood what they really did not.'[111] In an earlier character Swift described Walpole as 'perfectly skilled, by long practice, in the senatorial forms; and dexterous in the purchasing of votes'.[112] The *Craftsman* set out to present Walpole's technocratic ability as fraudulent and corrupt, a false artfulness at odds with the effrontery with which he faced down his opponents.

The opposition writers who contributed to *The Craftsman* had a delicate task. They set out to argue that technical proficiency in statesmanship is bad for the commonwealth and that genteel generalism serves it better. This preference had been implicit to the code of western political ethics since classical times. However, Bolingbroke and his associates were among the first conservative thinkers who attempted to make the case explicit since its basis had become eroded in Great Britain by the economic complexities of the modern fiscal–military state. Their main polemical tool was the equation of real political complexity with alleged deceptive concealment. In the first number 'Caleb D'Anvers' predicts that he will never run out of material because 'the Mystery of *State-Craft* abounds with such innumerable Frauds, Prostitutions, and Enormities in all Shapes, and under all Disguises, that it is an inexhaustible Fund, and eternal resource

for Satire'.[113] It was a theme that *The Craftsman*'s authors returned to often.

The idea behind this theme is that banausic practice and political art, usually assumed to be quite distinct, are in fact very similar. The great distinction between '*State Craftsmen*' and common artificers, writes 'Jack Hinter' in *Craftsman* no. 8, is that ordinary workmen expect to be rewarded in proportion to their talents, 'and if they do not excel in their Professions, they do not thrive in them. But the Case is very often not the same amongst Those, who govern the great Affairs of the World.'[114] A more positive model of Renaissance statecraft follows in *Craftsman* no. 9, which contains extracts from a letter of Polonius-style advice written by Francis Bacon to the Duke of Buckingham, concerning the promotion of appropriately talented people to offices of state. 'The Character of a *great Man* was not to be acquired, in those [Elizabethan] times', comments *The Craftsman*,

> by understanding the paltry Business of a *Money-Scrivener*, or a *Stock-jobber*; by a Skill in Usury, Brokage, and the Tricks of *Exchange-Alley*; or by colloguing with certain *great Bodies* of Men, in order to defraud, bubble, and beggar the rest of the Nation.[115]

Instead of possessing these Walpolean attainments, a statesman need only prove himself to be 'a Man of great Knowledge, Depth, and Penetration in publick Affairs'. These positive qualities at first seem almost meaningless in their generality, but they are oriented significantly towards comprehensiveness of understanding. They are at odds categorically with the facility of the political technician, who prides himself instead on narrow '*ability*'. 'What are commonly called *great Abilities,* in this Age', according to *Craftsman* no. 99, 'will appear, upon Enquiry, to be nothing but a little, sordid Genius for *Tricks* and *Cunning*, which founds all its Success on *Corruption, Stock-jobbing*, and *other iniquitous Arts.*'[116] Here the positive qualities associated with good statesmanship take a pastoral turn, in line with the anti-metropolitan tendency that often accompanies attacks on technocratic experts: 'If you want a Man to employ in any particular *Manufacture* or *mechanic Art*, you will certainly chuse one, who is expert in that Particular; *but in a* Shepherd *or a* Steward*, you desire nothing more than* Frugality, Labour *and* Vigilance.'[117] Such, on the authority of Cicero, were the qualities that Rome expected in her magistrates, and such are the qualities that the British state now requires of its 'stewards'.[118] Once again, the generic attainments that we are told to demand of politicians are defined by contrast with the 'expert' specificity of the craftsman's mechanic art.

The Craftsman's debts to Swift and Arbuthnot for these anti-technocratic themes were evident from more direct borrowings. There were regular variations on the art of political lying. No. 47, for example, uses the 'Persian Letter' format to apply the 'art of political lying' trope to stockjobbers who inflate the price of joint-stock company shares. Their activities are more para-technical than mock artistic, and 'Caleb D'Anvers' contrasts them with economically productive processes. Dealers in South Sea Company stocks operate 'not by Arts, or Science, or Industry, or Labour, or Mechanicks, or Navigation, or Warfare, or any other Business of Use or Advantage to Mankind', writes Amhurst; 'their commerce is *Lying, political Lying*'.[119] More shrill is *Craftsman* no. 112, possibly written by Gay, who presents the character of a 'LYING MINISTER', an enemy of mankind who forges and intercepts letters and misrepresents to the King the characters of his subjects.[120] Amhurst adopted from *The Plain Dealer* its mock advertisements for fictitious books, which in *The Craftsman* are often hints at further mock arts. They include a '*Method of Acquiring* Dulness; *or, the Art of Being Unintelligible*'; an anti-treatise of rhetoric set out in *Craftsman* no. 16; a new Whig periodical to be called '*The Lye of the Day*'; and a six-part translation of a treatise written supposedly by the French Jesuits, titled 'Matchiavel Redivivus; Or, The Modern Politician, *Shewing* [. . .] *the Art of Managing a Chief Favourite*'.[121] As ever, the mock art idea has a particularly strong connection with satire on the book trade, and its roots in the Rabelaisian line of fictitious library catalogues remain firm, even after multiple transplantations.

A coda of sorts to the 'art of political lying' motif came in December 1729, when an anonymous imitation of Horace's *Art of Poetry* titled *The Art of Politicks* appeared. The poem was the debut of a witty country parson called James Bramston, and it was the first of a series of works by associates and protégés of Pope published over the next three years by his newly chosen house publisher, Lawton Gilliver, who had been given charge of issuing the *Dunciad Variorum* (1729) earlier that year.[122] Pope had read Bramston's *Art of Politicks* in manuscript, and it appeared under his protection.[123] It represents a coda for the political mock art because Bramston had no direct connection with the political world and, though aligned to the patriot opposition, brought no obvious party axe to grind. His poem elevates – or reduces – to a genteel academic exercise what had been in Swift's hands, two decades previously, a dangerous polemical scheme. Bramston's argument is that the one unacceptable position in 1720s British politics is that of the Trimmer, the pragmatic politician who switches between Whig and Tory, from measure to measure:

> Who would in earnest to a Party come,
> Must give his Vote, not whimsical, but plumb.
> There is no Medium: for the term in vogue
> On either side is, Honest Man, or Rogue.[124]

Bramston issues advice on the importance of ideological commitment and integrity ('Like Anna's Motto, always be the same') from a position of polite neutrality, which is itself thoroughly ambiguous.[125] The mock-didactic voice of his poem allows him to be at once realist in his political descriptions and ironic in his final positions. The art of political lying ('To lye fit Opportunity observe') makes a reassuring appearance, as part of Bramston's satirical advice aimed specifically at 'ye *Weekly Writers*': 'Wrap up your Poison well, nor fear to say | What was a Lye last Night is Truth to Day.'[126] *The Art of Politicks* is a poem that recognises the dangers of operating in a public realm where party talk is cheap, but party jealousies still run high. 'Words to recall is in no Member's power', a young parliamentarian is warned. 'One single word may send you to the Tower.'[127] The attitude of all-seeing independence that Bramston affects is indistinguishable from the stance of self-censoring partisanship that he proposes to his reader. Both are products of a weakening cultural pessimism.

A Very Instructive Piece: *Peri Bathous*

Gay wrote *Trivia* to model the development of a certain tough moral intelligence out of every-day, street-level experience. There is a positive agenda nestled beneath the surface of mock-technical satire in this 'very instructive piece', as it advertises itself.[128] *Peri Bathous: or, of the Art of Sinking in Poetry* (1727) is another mock art with hidden practical ends, although they are hard to make out behind its broad burlesque of didactic conventions. *Peri Bathous*, Pope suggested to Spence, 'though written in so ludicrous a way, may be very well worth reading seriously as an art of rhetoric', and the text itself leaves open the possibility of its '*Usefulness*' as a source of negative example, to be drawn on by poets of real '*Strength of Nature*'.[129] But where *Trivia* promised its readers pointers towards the inner sources of such strength, *Peri Bathous* adopted a more aggressive posture and a more comprehensive satirical programme. Gay imitates and urbanises the rural didactics of Virgil's *Georgics*. *Peri Bathous* is a much darker parody of its ancient model, the rhetorical treatise *On the Sublime* attributed to a first-century Greek author known as 'Longinus'. Pope extends the satire with four supplementary squibs at the end of the piece. A 'Project for the Advancement of the Bathos' includes a plan for manufacturing a '*Rhetorical Chest of Drawers*'; a set of precepts for the making of

panegyrics of satires; a recipe for making an epic poem; and a concluding project for introducing bathos to the stage. Each has a mock-technical frame.

Peri Bathous was the first substantial publication to emerge in 1727 from the wreckage of the collaborative projects that Pope, Swift, Arbuthnot and others had diverted themselves with in their Scriblerus conversations thirteen years previously, during the last months of Queen Anne's reign.[130] It was also the earliest acknowledged work to bear the name 'Martinus Scriblerus', the fictional antiquary and pedant to whom Pope would soon attribute the 'Prolegomena' and mock-scholarly notes to *The Dunciad Variorum* (1729).[131] A footnote in the so-called 'Last' volume of the *Pope-Swift Miscellanies* (1727/8), where *Peri Bathous* first appeared, promised speedy publication of a '*Life* and *Memoirs'* of Scriblerus, although in the end readers waited another thirteen years to see it. Pope had started to collect examples of 'solemn nonsense' from modern British poetry in the summer of 1714, and it was Pope who assembled them into a mock dissertation during the summer of 1727.[132] He found it convenient, however, to keep the authorship of *Peri Bathous* a matter of public uncertainty.[133] The first four chapters borrow so conspicuously from Swift – 'The Battel of the Books', 'A Tale of a Tub' and *Gulliver's Travels* – that one critic felt sure 'the merit of this treatise must and can only be ascribed to Gulliver'.[134] This was just the sort of public confusion over authorship that Pope wanted, partly to promote the flattering myth of the Scriblerus Club alliance and partly to safeguard himself against counterattacks in the reviews or in the courts.

An active role in *Peri Bathous* can be ascribed more positively to Arbuthnot, who was credited by Pope as co-author of the treatise in 1742.[135] Pope told Swift early in 1727/8 that he had only taken charge of the mock treatise when 'the Dr grew quite indolent in it, for something newer'.[136] This is consistent with Leonard Welsted's comment in 1730, which accuses Pope of refusing a request from Arbuthnot, 'who originally sketch'd the Design of it', to leave out 'the Initial Letters of Names of the Gentlemen abused' from chapter VI (the catalogue 'Kinds of Genius's in the Profound'), an allegation to which Pope leant supporting evidence in the 'Advertisement' to *An Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot* in 1734.[137] The involvement of a distinguished physician and mathematician like Arbuthnot is especially significant to *Peri Bathous*. It warns us that we should not take the treatise's basic satirical trope – the treatment of literary processes in mock-artistic and mechanical terms – as straightforwardly anti-technical.[138] It alerts us also to echoes of various works attributed to Arbuthnot. Even before we look at the text itself, the ordering of the sixteen chapters in *Peri Bathous* displayed in its

contents page has striking correspondences with the eleven-chapter structure of Arbuthnot's own mock art, *Pseudologia Politikē*.[139] If Arbuthnot did sketch the design of *Peri Bathous*, he began with a template that he had used at least once before.

Traces of Arbuthnot's work on the *Peri Bathous* can be detected in a handful of passages that feature scientific idioms and usages and in the treatise's more general concern with mechanical production and design. In the opening paragraph, for example, Scriblerus proposes as a universal maxim 'that our every way industrious Moderns, both in the Weight of their writings, and in the Velocity of their judgments, do so infinitely excel the said Ancients'. The use of the physical term 'Velocity' in this cognitive context is jarring. The coinage itself was recent, first used in its modern sense (*OED* 1b., 'relative rapidity') and paired with 'Weight' in the 1656 English translation of Thomas Hobbes's *Elements of Philosophy*. It seems to have been associated with Hobbes as a term of modernistic philosophical art. The Earl of Clarendon, in his *View and Survey of Leviathan* (1674), wrote sarcastically of Hobbes's 'presence of mind, and velocity of thought'.[140] The conceit is too distinctive for its reappearance in *Peri Bathous* to be coincidence, and it indicates from the outset that the hand of a scientific insider has been involved in its writing. Another example is the use of the word 'Atmosphere' in chapter IV:

> Few can arrive at the felicity of falling gracefully; much more for a man who is amongst the lowest of the creation, at the very bottom of the Atmosphere, to descend beneath himself, is not so easy a task unless he calls in Art to his assistance.

It is not easy to trace the sense here, but *Peri Bathous* seems to be mimicking the language of William Whiston's *New Theory of the Earth* (1696), which includes elaborate conjectures about man's place in the separation of 'atmosphere' from 'abyss' at the end of the Mosaic creation.[141] Arbuthnot had a particular contempt for authors who 'pretend to explain how the Earth was framed', as he put it in his *Essay on the Usefulness of Mathematical Learning* (1701), 'and yet can hardly measure an Acre of Ground upon the surface of it'. Among them he numbered Whiston.[142] This was a topic of professional significance for Arbuthnot. His own mathematically rigorous investigations into the effects of atmospheric pressure on human bodies would be published in 1733.[143] These fugitive references to velocity and atmosphere in *Peri Bathous* open up far-reaching chains of association in the scientific culture of the period.

One of Arbuthnot's abiding concerns about the public role of natural philosophy in eighteenth-century Britain was with the structures that

dictated how scientific expertise was disseminated through to the working nation. It is important, Arbuthnot argued, that universities and learned societies should be reserved for serious inquiries conducted on a mathematical basis. But there must also be processes instituted for the transfer of their knowledge to people with artisanal and other practical expertise. A 'competent number of able Mathematicians ought to be entertained', he suggested,

> in order to apply themselves to the practice; not only to instruct the former sort [i.e., artisans], but likewise to remove those obstacles, which such, as do not think beyond their common Rules, cannot overcome. And no doubt it is no small impediment to the advancement of Arts, that Speculative Men and good Mathematicians are unacquainted with their particular defects, and the several circumstances in them, that render things practical or impractical.[144]

It was, in short, the institutionalised separation of theoretical innovators from expert practitioners and the lack of commerce between the two groups that slowed the progress of productive arts. One thinks of the mathematicians of Gulliver's Laputa holed up on a flying island, out of touch with the blundering practitioners corralled into the mechanical academy at Lagado on the mainland below them. In *Peri Bathous* there is a correspondingly doomed project for institutional exclusion and separation.

At the risk of exacerbating precisely this problem, Martinus Scriblerus urges the scattered practitioners of bad poetry to 'enter into a firm association, and incorporate into One regular Body' as part of a project 'for the advancement of the Bathos'.[145] The satirical idea of a dysfunctional college is not so well-developed in *Peri Bathous* as it is in the 'Academy at Lagado' episode in *Gulliver's Travels*, but it is more tightly focused on the problem of knowledge transfer between the learned and practical sciences. Here again it seems reasonable to assume that Arbuthnot, rather than Pope, was responsible for the satirical idea. The joke is that incorporation will allow poets to divide their labours into different 'trades', by a preposterous analogy with the division of labour in modern manufacturing. *Peri Bathous* offers a specific parallel with the production of horological instruments:

> For instance, in Clock-making, one artist makes the balance, another the spring, another the crown-wheels, a fourth the case, and the principal workman puts all together: to this oeconomy we owe the perfection of our modern watches, and doubtless we also might that of our modern Poetry and Rhetoric.[146]

The multiplication of projects in the academy at Lagado lets Swift show off the richness of his own satirical imagination. Mock project follows mock project in a bravura display of literary invention. *Peri Bathous* is less exuberant, but its satire homes in more surely on the structural issue of divided expertise and on the absurdity of applying it to arts that require a comprehensive intelligence, like poetry. This description of the watch-making trade is drawn from a well-known source. It corresponds with the description of labour division in horological workshops given by Petty in *Another Essay on Political Arithmetick* (1682).[147] Arbuthnot was a sincere admirer of Petty, and there is no sense here that the latter's writing is an object of ridicule, any more than the Petty-aligned language of political economy used in the first chapter of *Peri Bathous* ('plenty of our Manufacture', 'vent for our own product', etc.).[148] All of the satirical energy is focused on the absurd application of that language to a critical discourse on poetry.

During the 1730s Pope gave *Peri Bathous* an important place in the narrative he constructed to help justify the aggressive personal satire of *The Dunciad*. *Peri Bathous* was an unattributed squib, he claimed, published in a collaborative miscellany. Bad writers, in a frenzy of narcissistic self-accusation, took its general satire to refer to their own particular work. They filled the common newspapers with 'abusive falshoods and scurrilities', and Pope at last saw an occasion to do public service by 'dragging into light these common Enemies of mankind' with his satire.[149] Self-serving and partial as this narrative is, it places *Peri Bathous* at the doorway to the *Dunciad* project. The mock art also anticipated *The Dunciad*'s most memorable satirical episode, the diving competition in Fleet Ditch that closes book 2. Diving, which becomes a mock-Olympic sport in *The Dunciad*, is still largely a mechanical proposition in *Peri Bathous*:

> Is there not as much Skill and Labour in making of Dykes, as in raising of Mounts? Is there not an Art of Diving as well as of Flying? And will any sober Practitioner affirm, That a diving Engine is not of singular Use in making him long-winded, assisting his Sight, and furnishing him with other ingenious means of keeping under Water? [. . .] I grant that to excel in the Bathos a Genius is requisite; yet the Rules of Art must be allow'd so far useful, as to add weight, or as I may say, hang on lead, to facilitate our descent.[150]

The association with the arts of flying and diving is particularly resonant. *Peri Bathous* appeared just before Ephraim Chambers published his *Cyclopædia* (1728), which describes alongside many 'liberal' and 'mechanical' arts a special category of what he calls 'divers particular *Arts*; as the *Art* of Memory, the *Art* of Decyphering, *Art* of Flying, of Swimming, *Art* of

Diving, &c.'.[151] Chambers's entry on the state of the art of '*artificial* Flying' is cursory, but his summary of 'DIVING, the Art, or Act of descending under Water to considerable Depths, and abiding there a competent Time' refers to an extensive body of literature that includes contributions by the astronomer and mathematician Edmond Halley. Halley was a close friend of Arbuthnot. He conducted famous experiments with diving bells in the 1690s, proving that the human respiratory system can bear vastly increased air pressure in artificial environments. Efforts were made throughout the period to monetise these experiments. Defoe marked them down in *An Essay upon Projects* (1697) among some doubtful enterprises. He had lost £200 in a diving machine scheme a few years before. As late as 1713, however, he was trying to involve Robert Harley in a similar project.[152] Arbuthnot would discuss the implications of Halley's dives later in *An Essay Concerning the Nature of Aliments* (1731). It seems likely that he rather than Pope was behind the diving motif in *Peri Bathous* and perhaps the punning joke about long-windedness as well.[153] The mechanical and scientific material in *Peri Bathous* has a certain imaginative freshness. One feels that it loses some of its immediacy when Pope carries it over to the *Dunciad*. The divers' lead of *Peri Bathous*, for example, becomes less of a scientific object and more of a symbol in Pope's mock-epic poem. It reappears as the trophy awarded in a game of degradation ('A pig of lead to him who dives the best') and as the era-defining element of a 'new Saturnian age of Lead'.[154]

The Short Evolution of the Scriblerian Mock Arts

Peri Bathous represents an advance in sophistication for the line of mock art satires and a positive reconnection with debates about the place of natural philosophy and practical didactic in early Enlightenment culture. In Swift's 'Mechanical Operation of the Spirit', Arbuthnot's 'Art of Political Lying' or Gay's art of walking the streets of London, the mock-didactic format has no immediate connection with the practices described. Indeed, the incongruity of paying technical attention to narrowly personal actions is essential to the joke. *Peri Bathous* works on a tighter circle of irony. The creation of poetry has been bound up with artistic theorisation in manuals and treatises since the ancient era. The satirical gesture of writing a handbook to bad poetry is more than simple burlesque. It has parodic and formal ironies built into it as well. Pope and Arbuthnot get satirical fuel out of the idea that 'the Bathos' cannot exist in a natural form. It is essentially artificial and can in fact be arrived at only by following

written instructions. Stiff habit, drudging industry and mysterious craft define it, rather than simply facilitating it:

> I doubt not but the reader, by this Cloud of examples, begins to be convinc'd of the truth of our assertion, that the Bathos is an *Art*; and that the Genius of no mortal whatever, following the mere ideas of Nature, and unassisted with an habitual, nay laborious peculiarity of thinking, could arrive at images so wonderfully low and unaccountable.[155]

Much stress is placed on this new rhetorical category of the 'unaccountable'. The business of the bathetic poet 'must be to contract the true *Gout de travers*; and to acquire a most happy, uncommon, unaccountable Way of Thinking'. The word 'unaccountable' is a micro-parody of the many different ineffabilities with which Enlightenment aesthetics preoccupied itself: the sublime, *esprit,* taste, the *je-ne-sais-quoi* – all of them culturally valuable but indefinable and, indeed, unaccountable qualities. It is also a dig at Pope's old antagonist Addison, who liked to deploy the word 'unaccountable' for purposes of winsome comedy. When Mr Spectator first introduces himself to his readers he reports that he left university 'with the Character of an odd unaccountable Fellow', the earliest usage for that context in the *OED*.[156] The 'unaccountability' of the bathos represents a paradox at the heart of Pope and Arbuthnot's satire. It is an effect that looks like artlessness at its worst, and yet it depends upon the most laboriously artful denotation for its existence. As such, *Peri Bathous* is for all its absurdity the most coherent of the enlightenment mock arts.

Looking back on the development of the Scriblerian mock arts between 1693 and 1727, the diversity of the cultural tasks for which they were deployed is striking. A minor satirical convention that emerged out of neoclassical debates about technical specification in the literary arts evolved rapidly into a stronger vein of satire. Swift used it originally in his attacks on dissenting clergy, but he adapted it to larger issues concerning the fragmentation and uncontrolled accumulation of knowledge in the modern age. Gay further opened the theme by exploring its cognitive dimensions, describing in *Trivia* a kind of common-sense, street-level experiential knowledge based on a lively poetic attentiveness, rather than worldly routine or observational habit. It was in political satire, however, that the mock-technical conceit achieved widest circulation, as an instantly recognisable critical trope that could be wielded against state-craftsmen and artificial politicians of all descriptions. In *Peri Bathous*, Pope and Arbuthnot imagined a wholly artificial poetic art. Their critical thought

experiment stands at the end of this line of development in the mock art idea. With each successive iteration, the basis of the trope in the social denigration of skilled workers receded, and the satire became more ambivalent. Alexander Pope, at first the most abusive of the denigrators, at last produced the most balanced and experimental of all the Scriblerian mock arts.