

The Trope of an Upside-Down World: Carnival and Menippean Satire in Richard Brome's *The Antipodes*

Hsiao-chen Chiang

National Changhua University of Education

Abstract

Richard Brome's *The Antipodes* (1638), a Caroline comedy, contains several major characteristics of Menippean satire and, correlatively, of Bakhtinian carnival. Menippean satire typically employs a fantastic voyage in order to afford us an inverted (and thus perhaps clearer) perspective on reality, on the place we "started out from." In Bakhtin's closely-related theory of carnival the socio-political power hierarchy is temporarily reversed: slaves may be "crowned" as kings, just as kings are "decrowned" as slaves. Brome's play-within-the-play concerns a wild, fantastic journey to an unknown place, "The Antipodes," which looks like a "utopia" insofar as the journey there has the power to cure many ills, including madness. On the other hand, we are now looking at the "real" London upside-down; it has become "Anti-London," and this inverted lens exposes its dark spots, the genuinely irrational and perhaps "insane" aspects of London in the days of Charles I. In the Bakhtinian carnival the abrupt and total overturning, reversal or inversion of social, political and gender roles allows a comic release, but it also leads us to deeply question the underlying, pre-established ground of such hierarchies. Here, then, some of the more serious implications of this dialogic, carnivalesque play are explored.

Keywords

The Antipodes, Richard Brome, Bakhtin, carnival, crowning, decrowning,
Menippean satire, trope, upside-down world

Generally deemed a minor Jacobean playwright, Richard Brome (c.1590-1652) is known to have been in Ben Jonson's service, probably as Jonson's secretary. A friendship seems to have developed between Jonson and Brome, for in the title of his verse for Brome's *The Northern Lass*, Jonson writes, "To my old Faithful Servant [...] *Mr. Richard Brome*" (Bentley 50). Brome in effect became Jonson's dramatic disciple. Brome's major works include *The Northern Lass* (1629), *The City Wit* (1629), *The Sparagus Garden* (1635), *A Mad Couple Well Matched* (1637), *The Antipodes* (1638),

and *The Jovial Crew* (1641). Brome wrote plays and continued the Elizabethan dramatic tradition until theaters were closed by order of Parliament in 1642. Because they depict contemporary London and its life, Brome's comedies are of historical interest.

Like his other plays reflecting contemporary London life, *The Antipodes* is considered one of Brome's "cleverest and most entertaining comedies," and may even have been performed with some success (Bentley 57). Unfortunately, this brilliant "city comedy" has never really received the critical attention it deserved; recently only a few serious critical works on the play have appeared. For instance, in *Theater and Crisis 1632-1642* (1984), Martin Butler regards the play mainly as a political satire. In "Three Caroline 'Defenses' of the Stage" (1986), Jonas Barish discusses *The Antipodes* from the perspective of change and continuity in English and European dramatic traditions. In "Alienation and Illusion: The Play-within-a-Play on the Caroline Stage" (1989), Charlotte Spivack explores the play in terms of its form. In "Antipodal Anxieties: Joseph Hall, Richard Brome, Margaret Cavendish and the Cartographies of Gender" (1997), Marina Leslie discusses the gender issue in *The Antipodes*. In "*The Antipodes, or The World Turned Upside Down*," (2000), Clare Dover discusses its performances at Shakespeare's Globe from the perspective of clinical psychiatry. In addition, in *Three Renaissance Travel Plays* (1995),¹ Anthony Parr writes a detailed introduction to the play, pointing out the trope of the "world upside down." Since it is built mainly upon the trope of a reversed world, I would suggest that *The Antipodes* can be best understood in terms of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of Menippean satire. First then I will briefly examine the implications of Bakhtin's theory, and show how some of these "Menippean" traits are presented in this Renaissance travel play.

I. Bakhtin's Idea of Menippean Satire

The full title of Brome's play is *The Antipodes or the World Upside Down*. In *Astrologaster or the Figure-Caster* (1620), John Melton uses the idea of the Antipodes, the world upside-down, as a way of satirizing the English (Parr 37). The Antipodes was traditionally disdained as an inhabited "nether world" and the "Antipodites" were

¹ All the quotations of *The Antipodes* are from this edition.

considered inferior to the English due to their ignorance. Melton, however, points out that the Londoners were spiritually blind, and lived a life against the natural order, quite similar to those living in the Antipodes. In fact, then, the underworld (Antipodes) was not far from this world (London); it was even within this world. Melton applies the idea of an upside-down world, the Antipodes, to ridicule the folly of some of his contemporaries. The trope of the world upside-down is thus a device for satirizing the foolishness of human behavior.

In *The World Upside Down* (1970), Ian Donaldson shows that the trope was “an ancient and familiar one, based upon traditional scorn for the very idea of an inhabited nether world” (Parr 35). In *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, John Docker summarizes Donaldson’s main argument as follows:

We noted that the literary historian Ian Donaldson in his *The World Upside Down* pointed to how much seventeenth-century English comic drama shows magistrates as fools, judges incomplete, the rich as idiots; and that he traces this kind of inversion back to drawings prevalent in the Middle Ages of the normal world as upside-down, and to the custom of “carnival” in traditional societies, the one day of the year when all values of authority and respect are flouted. (159)

Thus, from Ben Jonson to Henry Fielding, Donaldson finds a “reversed world” in Renaissance drama and narrative and this inverted world shows the carnival spirit, basically a revolt against the ordinary and official world.

The idea of a world turned upside down is the core of the Medieval “carnival,” a festival interpreted by Mikhail Bakhtin in relation to his more general theory of “dialogism.” Although the modern novel beginning from Rabelais emerges, for Bakhtin, in the Renaissance, the Russian theorist goes back to the roots of carnival in classical culture. He claims at one point that the roots of the modern novel are found in Plato’s Socratic dialogue (with its use of irony to undercut presupposed positions) and Menippean satire (*The Dialogical Imagination* 22). The Roman drama of Menippus and Lucian, Bakhtin points out, often involves a fantastic voyage which itself has a carnivalesque nature. In addition to carnival (or the temporary “turning upside down” of social classes), other key features of Menippean satire include historical and legendary figures, wild fantasy, crude “slum naturalism,” ultimate questions, a three-level universe, an abnormal mentality, insanity, strange dreams, scandalous

scenes, sharp contrasts, utopian elements, parody, a multi-toned quality and topicality (An-chi Wang 32; I-chun Wang 1). Basically, in Bakhtin's opinion, Menippean satire depicts a kind of "quest," a journey to the "other" world (be it heaven, earth, or hell) for the purpose of investigating the truths (ultimate questions) of this one. From the (necessarily exaggerated, distorted, abnormal) perspective of this fantastic world, then, our own "ordinary" world is re-examined and satirized.

Menippean satire manifests the comic elements of the "carnival." Bakhtin focuses on the Medieval carnival in his early work, *Rabelais and His World* (1984). During the European carnival and festival of fools, with its mock priests, bishops and popes, the world was indeed temporarily turned "upside-down": the ordinary social hierarchy was inverted. The essential carnivalistic act is the "mock crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king" (Bakhtin, *Problems* 124). In discussing folk carnival ritual, Bakhtin states that "during the carnival there is a temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life" (Morris 203); thus for a limited period of time the emperor becomes a "slave" and *vice versa*. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1987), Bakhtin further explains that "he who is crowned is the *antipode* of a real king, [is] a slave or a jester; this act, as it were, opens and sanctifies the inside-out world of carnival" (124; my emphasis). The ritual of decrowning is the exact opposite of the ritual of crowning; for instance, the real king's royal robe is stripped off, his crown is taken away, and other symbols of power removed (Bakhtin, *Problems* 125). The decrowned king is then derided and (symbolically) beaten. This subversive act, this temporary destruction of the hierarchical difference by inverting the social status of slaves and kings, peasants and popes, is Bakhtin's "carnival"; its essential ritual is that of a symbolic crowning and decrowning.

Bakhtin also shows, in *Rabelais and His World*, how the 16th-century novelist Rabelais subverts or inverts the cultural, as well as socio-political, hierarchical order by foregrounding the crude humor of his peasants. The "gigantic" protagonists' parodying discussions of the (absurd) abstractions of Plato or Catholic theology, for instance, will gain force from jokes based on what Bakhtin calls the "material bodily lower stratum."² For after all, as Ludwig Feuerbach also implies, we first need to eat (and perform other vital bodily functions) before we can "philosophize."³ Indeed We

² For details, please refer to chapter 6 in Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* entitled "Images of the Material Bodily Lower Stratum."

³ It is one of Feuerbach's aphorisms that "Man is what he eats" (*Der Mensch ist was er isst*). For a

have the grotesque physical presentation, or “embodiment,” of animals and people in the Medieval carnival as described by Bakhtin. Indian legends are, he tells us, an important source of those “grotesque bodily images” and fantastic beasts such as harpies, unicorns, phoenixes, griffins, dragons, magical herbs and enchanted woods, which underlie both the carnival and the (essentially subversive) literary tradition to become known as “gothic.” Docker summarizes Bakhtin’s ideas as follows:

Bakhtin evokes in detail those facial and bodily features of clear carnivalesque signature. The nose, often evoked in animal terms as snout or beak, a well-nigh universal comic image, is symbolic of the phallus. The grotesque is also interested in protruding eyes, but the most important of facial features is the mouth, the gaping mouth, a wide-open bodily abyss, through which the world enters to be swallowed up, transformed, and renewed. Bakhtin suggests that the grotesque body is cosmic and universal [...]. Bodies and parts unite in androgynous confusion. Bakhtin refers to an emblem on Gargantua’s hat portraying a man’s body with two heads, four arms, four feet, and a clutch of sexual organs, both female and male. [...] There are giants, dwarfs and pigmies, or beings half-human, half-animal, constituting an entire gallery of bodies of mixed parts: Cyclopes with one eye on the forehead, others with eyes on their shoulders, creatures with six arms. (200)

Menippean satire then gives us a fantastic journey and thus an “observation” of the normal world from an unusual, unconventional, inverted viewpoint. It gives us what Bakhtin will call a carnivalesque world, one where we see grotesque bodies and fantastic, magical “creatures”—beings that mix together chaotically features which in normal species will be separated. This imaginary, “antipodean” world teems with sharp contradictions of the ordinary world. During their bizarre trips, travelers will find that the customary course of events and established norms of behavior in their homeland have been violated; they will experience an inversion, a symbolic “crowning” and “decrowning.” Yet this upside-down world is created in order to test, as in Rabelais, the “solidity” of our conventional ideology, our moral, religious and philosophical ideas; it will force us to rethink our most basic assumptions; it functions through satire

discussion of Feuerbach’s ideas about human eating and human stomach, see Karl Barth’s introductory essay to Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity* (1959).

and parody as a critique of our current society (Bakhtin, *Problems* 114-33).

II. Menippean Satire in *The Antipodes*

The Antipodes is characteristic of Menippean satire. In this travel play, Brome employs the satirical strategy of a carnival upside-down world as a primary *trope*. Regarding the drama as a political satire, Butler claims: “Underlying *The Antipodes* is a nexus of popular motifs linked with the Saturnalia—passages through release or madness, overturning of degree, flouting of authority” (220). In fact, the Caroline comedy contains several major qualities of the Menippean satire. It describes the wild, fantastic journey to an unknown place, “the Antipodes,” assumed by the characters to be a sort of “utopia”: the trip there is supposed to cure a young traveler of insanity. Actually, however, Brome creates this upside-down carnival world of wild fantasy, dreams, grotesque creatures and insanity in order to parody, satirize, critique our everyday human behavior, to comically “de-crown” normally powerful figures. I would suggest that this play has, then, the standard form of Menippean satire, and that it is “dialogic” in Bakhtin’s sense: the “peasants’ voice” subverts the “official voice.” Thus in effect the “real” world (early 17th-century London) is re-examined through a lens that inverts it, seen from the perspective of an (of its) imaginary Antipodes. In this way the satirist lays bare our very real madness, the all-too-human irrationality we manifest in our everyday social and political life.

Brome’s *The Antipodes* begins with Joyless worrying about his son, Peregrine, who suffers from “Melancholy” (a mental disease, perhaps insanity) caused by immersing himself in Sir John Mandeville’s travel accounts. Doctor Hughball takes Peregrine away from Renaissance London to an obscure place, the Antipodes, where almost everything runs counter to established practices in England. Since this bizarre trip will gratify Peregrine’s desire for exotic sights, the Doctor expects Peregrine’s wits to be restored after the fantastic journey. These remedies are implemented *via* the device of a play-within-the-play, invented by Lord Letoy and his company of players. Lord Letoy directs his players to play the role of the inhabitants of the Antipodes, a fantastic place. They drug Peregrine to make him think he has slept for days. Upon arrival at the Antipodes, on the other side of the Earth, Peregrine finds everything topsy-turvy, the exact opposite of the way it is in London. Brome is quite explicit:

Peregrine calls this new place “th’ antipodes of England.” At the end of the bizarre adventure Joyless is no longer jealous, Peregrine’s madness is cured, and Peregrine marries the princess (who is in reality his wife).

This play can then be analyzed in terms of the most significant elements of Menippean satire: A. the grotesque body in carnival; B. the observation of things from an inverted point of view; C. the crowning and decrowning in carnival; D. topicality, or the focus on “current events.”

A. The Grotesque Body in Carnival

Menippean satire presents a carnivalesque world, and an obvious feature of carnival is the display of grotesque animal and human bodies. Bakhtin suggests that these grotesque bodies are “universal” and “cosmic,” and that some bodies and body parts unite in androgynous confusion. For example, Gargantua’s hat portrays a man’s body with two heads, four arms, four feet and a clutch of sexual organs, both female and male. There are also giants, dwarfs and pygmies, or beings half-human and half-animal. Such images of grotesque bodies appear in Brome’s play: its inverted, carnivalesque world is filled with strange and even monstrous creatures, totally “abnormal” beings.

Brome also makes allusions to several old travel books and “histories of animals” which abound in portrayals of weird, fantastic animals and human shapes. Peregrine, for instance, takes very seriously, indeed is obsessed with the exotic descriptions of creatures in Mandeville’s *Voyages and Travailes*, a book which Andrew Hadfield claims as “[t]he most important English book of travel writing of the late Middle Ages,” one that “clearly owed as much to medieval romances as it did to factual observation” (6). Other sources of Peregrine’s knowledge about fabulous animals are such “natural histories” as Pliny’s *Natural History* and Topsell’s *The Historie of Four-Footed Beastes*. Joyless complains to the Doctor that Peregrine loves to read reports of “travels and voyages,” which “might convey his fancy round the world” (1.1.132, 137). Barbara thinks Peregrine is mad; she says he is haunted by a “huge tympany of news”: monsters, apes, elephants, griffins, crocodiles and strange creatures such as two-headed geese and hens that “bear more wool upon their backs than sheep” (1.1.195). Indeed, Peregrine is fascinated by the “wild beasts” mentioned in Mandeville’s fantastic book, such as “[d]ragons, and serpents, elephants white and blue, / Unicorns, and lions of many colors, / And monsters more, as numberless as nameless” (1.3.38-40). These exotic creatures of act 1 all belong to an imaginary

animal kingdom.

According to Mandeville, in fanciful Renaissance journeys travelers witnessed grotesque animals and birds and unusual, magical plants not found in the “real world.” In act 1 scene 3 Peregrine appears, holding Mandeville’s book in his hand and reading passages from it:

Drake was a didapper to Mandeville.
 Candish, and Hawkins, Furbisher, all our voyagers
 Went short of Mandeville. [*Turns pages.*] But had he reached
 To this place here—yes, here—this wilderness,
 And seen the trees or the sun and moon, that speak
 And told King Alexander of his death, he then
 Had left a passage ope for travelers
 That now is kept and guarded by wild beasts— (1.3.30-37)

These accounts are full of incredible animals and magic trees. Here Peregrine mentions trees talking to people; those who eat the mysterious trees’ fruit can live “four or five hundred year” (1.3.46, sic).

In a fantastic, carnivalesque world the mammals are odd, the birds are two-headed and plants have an inconceivable power, but what of the people? As Bakhtin observes, human creatures “in carnival” are misshaped, their bodily parts confused; bodies and body parts unite in “androgynous confusion” to make a “carnival display.” In the play Barbara says Peregrine believes in what Mandeville describes in his book—pygmies and giants, and androgynous or hermaphroditic humans: “men upon women, / And women upon men, the strangest doings,” and men “with heads like hounds” (1.1.180-81, 197). Imagining what the people of the Antipodes are like, Peregrine asks: “Are they not such / As Mandeville writes of, without heads or necks, / Having their eyes placed on their shoulders, and / Their mouths amidst their breasts?” (1.3.98-101). To these descriptions of odd and grotesque human shapes, Diana mockingly adds another unusual feature: the “heels go upwards” (1.3.102), implying upside-down people. These grotesque bodily images all suggest we are now in a carnivalesque world, a quite literally inverted world.

B. The Observation of Things from an Inverted Point of View

In Menippean satire, then, a “traveler” tends to observe things from an unusual (or

inverted) point of view; thus the conventional order of events and standard norms of behavior will be violated. Carnivalistic life, as defined by Bakhtin in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, “is life drawn out of its usual rut [;] it is to some extent ‘life turned inside out,’ ‘the reverse side of the world’” (122; my emphasis). In other words, life is observed from a skewed, oblique or even inverted point of view.

In *The Antipodes*, just as its subtitle suggests, things are indeed viewed “upside down.” The Doctor explains: “This, sir, is Anti-London. That’s the Antipodes / To the grand city of our nation: / Just the same people, language, and religion, / But contrary in manners” (2.2.38-41). In brief, the Doctor is saying that all “Degrees of people, both in sex and quality, / Deport themselves in life and conversation / Quite contrary to us” (1.3.131-33). In Anti-London, as reflected in the microcosmic world presented by Lord Letoy’s players, customary roles are reversed. Here ordinary people command magistrates, women overrule men, servants govern masters, coachmen beat captains, men do housework while women go hunting, talkative men are punished by being “ducked” in the water, wives seduce their servants, and merchants ask gentlemen to cuckold them. In addition, the “lords” pawn their jewels to feast their honorable servants, old men marry girls and old women boys. Thus in one scene a virtuous youth woos an ancient widow with *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women*, an account of the Puritan Philip Stubbes’s wife’s “exemplary” death at the age of twenty: this is of course absurd, since such an account would hardly impress an elderly woman and widow (Parr 267n84-85). Furthermore, in Anti-London old people are sent to school by their sons and they like to “play the truant” (1.3.117-19, 123, 152-56, 159-60, 179-80; 2.2.168-70, 180-81; 3.85-87). The governor (also a judge) drives lawyers away from the court and hears the defendant before hearing the plaintiff (3.375-77). The Doctor describes to his patient, Peregrine, the strange citizens of this place as follows: a sick man gives counsel to a physician, a Puritan tradesman teaches a traveler to lie, a ballad-woman pleases the most learned antiquary, a fool gives grave instructions to a lord ambassador, a parish clerk gives military discipline to a general (4.269-79). Even in the animal kingdom roles are reversed: parrots teach their mistresses to talk, mice devour cats, a deer pursues the hounds, a sheep worries a dozen foxes, and oxen hunt and dogs plough (1.3.159-63).

In short, this world is so bizarre that Peregrine thinks it must be in a dream: “Sure these are dreams, / Nothing but dreams” (4.158-59). Similarly, Barbara concludes that all their confused and melancholy travels are but their “dreams” (5.2.268-69).

C. Crowning and Decrowning in Carnival

Comically presented upside-down, the world of the Antipodes also displays the “crowning” and “decrowning” taken by Bakhtin as a crucial element of carnival. Thus normally marginalized, ordinary men, women, and servants are endowed with the power and strength to rule their superiors; this is the “crowning” of the weak, the less powerful and the less privileged. Those typically esteemed as the ones holding the power in a patriarchal society—magistrates, men, “masters”—are deprived of their privilege through “decrowning.” This crowning/decrowning structure is likewise reflected in the animal world: mice devouring cats, deer pursuing hounds, sheep worrying foxes.

Such an inversion of society’s normal order-of-rank or power hierarchy is the central function of carnival. Lawyers and merchants are typically thought to be extremely avaricious: in the Antipodes, however, they are displayed in a contrary fashion. When the lawyer does not ask for any fee the Doctor says: “There’s no such honest men there in their world / As are their lawyers [...] No fees are taken” (1.3.183-84, 189). After accepting the lawyer’s counsel, the poet wants to pay “a double fee,” but the lawyer becomes angry and refuses to accept any payment at all; even his wife is not allowed to accept any money. The lawyer says:

Will you abuse me therefore?
 I take no fees, double nor single, I.
 Retain your money; you retain not me else.
 Away, away; you’ll hinder other clients.
 POET. Pray, give me leave to send then to your wife.
 LAWYER. Not so much as a posy for her thimble,
 For fear I spoil your cause. (3.97-102)

The lawyer says the same to another client, a young Captain: “Away and keep your money” (3.158). He accepts no fee until Buff Woman forces him to do so by threatening him: “Take it, or I will beat thy carcass thinner / Than thou hast worn thy gown here” (3.184-85). The Captain also complains that his feathermaker has asked him not to pay a penny for all the feathers he has bought in the last four years (3.127-35). Those stereotypically most greedy of creatures, lawyers and merchants, are morally upgraded, symbolically crowned for their honesty in Anti-London.

The Antipodes also subverts conventional Renaissance gender roles. Many

Elizabethan “marriage treatises” claimed that a wife, like a royal subject, should be instructed in the virtue of obedience and the danger of rebellion. One Anglican sermon stresses the husband’s sovereignty and wife’s inferiority: “it is not lawfull for inferiours and subjectes in any case to resist or stande against the superior power”; to dismiss authority is to invite “al mischiefe and bitter destruction both of soules, bodies, goodes and commonwealths” (Jordan 215, sic). However, the established norms of behavior of a monarch-husband and a subject-wife are undermined and reversed in *Anti-London*: the “superior” husband is decrowned and the “inferior wife” crowned. Women rule men; women go out to “*Hunt, hawk, and take their pleasure*” while only men are seen at “*christenings and gossips’ feasts,*” or doing “*tittle-tattle duties*” (1.3.143-46). In act 2 scene 2 the Gentleman, after taking the “*silks and cloth of gold*” from a “*mercier,*” shirks his duty, which was to make love to the mercier’s wife; he is thus subject to arrest. Old Lady scolds her husband, this same Gentleman, for breaking his own promise and failing to make love to the other woman:

But now—if thou hast impudence so much
 As face to face to speak unto a lady
 That is thy wife and supreme head—tell me
 At whose suit was it? or upon what action?
 Debts I presume you have none, for who dares trust
 A lady’s husband who is but a squire
 And under covert-barne?
 [.]
 For shame!

Be not ingrateful to that honest man,
 To take his wares and scorn to lie with his wife,
 Do’t, I command you. What did I marry you for?
 The portion that you brought me was not so
 Abundant, though it were five thousand pounds
 (Considering, too, the jointure that I made you),
 That you should disobey me. (2.2.113-19, 131-38)

In the patriarchal society of Renaissance England, women were advised to be silent and to obey their husbands. By marrying they brought a dowry to their husbands’ houses. Theodora A. Jankowski explains how a wife was expected to be “chaste, silent,

and obedient” (31). In *Oppositional Voices* (1992), Tina Krontiris also mentions that in the 16th and early 17th-century England women’s silence was regarded as “one of the principal virtues” (5), for “one of the wife’s duties is to accept her husband’s superiority and her own inferiority” (7). On the other hand, one of the husband’s duties was “to rule”; the wife was not supposed to question her husband’s authority (7). As for a woman’s dowry, Jankowski writes that “if she was an upper-class or noblewoman, marriage negotiations involved large amounts of money and property. Yet even if she were a lower-class woman, an exchange of dowry was still part of the transaction” (31). Thus it can be seen that in *Anti-London* the customs and social behavior of the patriarchal society are inverted: Old Lady speaks boldly, orders her husband around and even scorns his “portion” (dowry) as being inadequate when compared with her “jointure” (sum of money). For the woman to be dominant and the man submissive has of course seldom been the standard pattern of behavior in any society. But in the *Antipodes*, wives are crowned and husbands decrowned.

This concept of crowning and decrowning is further demonstrated in act 4, where one stage direction reads: “*Enter Buff Woman, her head and face bleeding, and many Women as from a prize [a fencing bout]*” (118-19). Seeing these Amazonian “women warriors” passing across the stage Peregrine asks, “What can her husband be, when she’s a fencer?” “He keeps a school,” replies the Doctor, “and teacheth needlework, / Or some such arts which we call womanish” (123-25). Again our traditional, patriarchal image of gender roles is inverted or reversed. In the preface to John Taylor’s *The Needle’s Excellency* (1631), women are encouraged to love needlework: “That women kind should use no other pike, / It will increase their peace, enlarge their store, / To use their tongues less, and their needles more, / The needle’s sharpness profit yields, and pleasure” (Aughterson 211). Yet in this fantastic world women are warriors, using knives and swords instead of needles, while men are good at needlework. Women, displaying physical strength and violent tendencies, are again crowned; men, exhibiting “feminine” qualities, are decrowned.

There is still more evidence of the emasculation of the men and masculinization of the women. In the “real” London unruly, nagging wives were often punished by ducking—“plunging into water several times” (Jankowski 39); in the *Antipodes* a man is ducked for having a sharp tongue. After being ducked several times, he pleads:

No, no—I charge ye, no!
Was ever harmless creature so abused?

To be drenched under water, to learn dumbness
 Amongst the fishes, as I were forbidden
 To use the natural members I was born with,
 And of them all the chief that man takes pleasure in,
 The tongue! O me, accursed wretch! (*Weeps.*) (4.145-51)

Peregrine then asks, “Is this a man?” (151). Bakhtin emphasizes that such parody is “an integral element in Menippean satire,” parody being “the creation of a *decrowning double*” whereby the same world is “turned inside out” (*Problems* 127). Hence, in the Antipodes, England is “turned inside out”: husbands are reproached, despised, ducked, emasculated, castrated by wives; in a word, they are “decrowned.”

D. Topicality

Menippean satire also satirizes real human society through the use of topicality, that is, through reference to the contemporary public domain, to actual current events. As Bakhtin puts it, this form of satire shows great “concern with current and topical issues” (*Problems* 118). Discussing the general concerns of Renaissance travel writing, Hadfield comments:

[...] much early modern travel writing and colonial writing was written in whole or in part, in order to participate in current pressing debates about the nature of society, the limitations of the existing constitution, the means of representing the populace at large, the relative distribution of power within the body politic, fear of foreign influences undermining English/British independence, the need to combat the success of other rival nations, religious toleration and persecution, and the protection of individual liberty. (12)

Similarly, Brome uses Anti-London (antipodean London) to define what a normal world should be. The Antipodes is a trope for the “world upside-down” and, as Parr has suggested, it “was an ancient and familiar one, based upon traditional scorn for the very idea of an inhabited nether world [under world]” (35). Nevertheless, does the Antipodes really differ from London society? Melton suggests a relationship between the Antipodes and satire: “And doe not those that in a perverse order, and quite retrograde from Nature, making the Day Night, and deprive themselves not onely of

the Common light, but the light of the Minde, by involving themselves in the thicke clouds of Ignorance and Heresie, live like true Antipodites?" (qtd. in Parr 38, sic). It is thus obvious that the Antipodians are weird, but what about the "real" Londoners in this play? Virtually all the "real" characters are emotionally disturbed in one way or another. Peregrine is abnormally obsessed with his travel fantasies; his wife Martha is deranged; his father Joyless is irrationally jealous of his wife Diana. Dr. Hughball and Lord Letoy are also eccentric figures. The Doctor is professionally eager to see madness everywhere, and the Lord deviates from normal behavioral standards by dressing up as a servant, and by having a scandalous affection for Joyless's wife (2.2.74). As Butler suggests, the "Antipodes is what *is*, not what is not," and in effect "London and Anti-London are indistinguishable" (215-16).

In addition to satirizing the insanity of the characters on stage, the play condemns the contemporary mania for travel and the error of confusing imagination with objective observation (Parr 41). His feverish "mental traveling" not only makes Peregrine suffer from melancholy and drives him to behave abnormally; it also renders him incapable of distinguishing illusion from fact. Yet, empirically speaking, where *is* the Antipodes? Does it exist on a purely mental map or a real, geographical one? In an anonymous 1580s engraving depicting the folly of travel, an inset world map displays a great "unknown" southern continent, and makes it clear that going to this place is pure folly and illusion (Parr 41). Peregrine, in his disturbed state, mistakes this mental "location" for an actual place. He describes how, after passing over lands and seas, he arrived at the Antipodes; the whole process is like "shadowy phantasms, or fantastic dreams" (2.2.11). Dr. Hughball asks him to recall his journey:

But what chief thing of note now in our travels
 Can you call presently to mind? Speak like a traveler.
 PEREGRINE. I do remember, as we passed the verge
 O'th' upper world, coming down, downhill,
 The setting sun, then bidding them good night,
 Came gliding easily down by us and struck
 New day before us, lighting us our way,
 But with such heat that till he was got far
 Before us, we even melted. (2.2.23-31)

Thus, as Parr comments, Peregrine "mistakes the trackings of his imagination for

objective observation (an error he shares with many Renaissance travelers)” (41).

In addition to addressing an actual psychological problem suffered by people during this period, the confusion of imagination and reality, the play is also a “specifically political, potentially radical critique of Charles’s government” (Butler 220). It exposes the weaknesses of the current government by showing how “upside-down” the real England is under the governing of Charles I. The Antipodean statesmen, for instance, patronize and monopolize foolish projects, such as attempting to increase the production of wool by “flaying of live horses and new covering them / With sheepskins,” or using owls to eliminate all the rats and mice, or destroying cats to “prevent witchcraft and contagion” (4.298-304). The most ridiculous project envisions the charitable rehabilitation of decadent gamblers and criminals, panders and cheaters, burglars and highway robbers. Although some of these characters had great estates and money in their youth, they wasted it all on prodigal feasts and harlots. Yet the government would pass a law providing them with relief. In the play Peregrine shouts angrily: “And find relief for cheaters, bawds, and thieves? / I’ll hang ye all” (4.369-70).

Furthermore, the government led by King Charles was not only foolish but corrupt, a problem alluded to by Blaze, a painter, when the Doctor is visited by public officials seeking a cure:

Then, sir, of officers and men of place,
Whose senses were so numbed they understood not
Bribes from due fees, and fell on praemunires,
He has cured divers that can now distinguish
And know both when and how to take of both,
And grow most safely rich by’t. (1.1.65-70)

Thus we know that court officers take bribes. This description may be an allusion to Sir James Bagg, the corruptible courtier in a contemporary incident noted by Butler:

This seems to be alluding to the inquiry of 1635 into the behavior of Sir James Bagg (“Bottomless Bagg”), to whom another courtier had fruitlessly given £2,500 for his services as an intermediary in an attempt to get repayment of a debt of £6,000 from the Lord Treasurer. The episode was highly embarrassing for the government for it highlighted its insolvency

and the large part played by bribes and gifts in the normal course of the court's business. (217)

Thus in the play, the very real government of King Charles is criticized for its bankruptcy and corruption.

The Antipodes also satirizes injustice under Charles's reign. In Anti-London an "odd Jeering Judge," who claims that he will not be ruled by law, says: "I can give judgment, be it right or wrong, / Without their needless proving and defending" (3.3.369-70). Indeed, what kind of judgment can be reached when there is no chance to provide proof or conduct a defense? Another incident also illustrates the impossibility of justice in Anti-London—that is, King Charles's "self-contradictory" London. A Maid wrongly accuses two men of violently assailing her, so the Constable says to her, "I will do thee justice." After hearing the Maid's accusation, the Constable orders the Gentleman and Servingman imprisoned; his judgment is based on irrational logic: "Besides y'are two, and one is easier / To be believed. Moreover as you have the odds / In number, what were justice if it should not support / The weaker side?" (4.99-102). After seeing the whole incident, Peregrine asks, "Call you this justice?" (4.103). Such a sentiment is also expressed by Butler, who states: "The sword of justice by which Charles rules has come to look very like the sword with which Peregrine tries to knight his Antipodean judge, only a property dagger lath [not a real, but a prop dagger]" (216).

III. Conclusion

"During the Renaissance," writes Bakhtin, "an epoch of deep and almost complete carnivalization of literature and worldview—the menippea infiltrates all the large genres of the epoch" (*Problems* 136). Brome's *The Antipodes*, a Renaissance travel play, clearly displays the main characteristics of Menippean Satire, and therefore its absurd comedy has a certain satirical bite to it. The upside-down fantasyland of the Antipodes, a place far away from London to which travelers go on a playfully imaginary (or seriously deluded) journey, is filled with the grotesque bodies and other comic elements of a carnival world. These may delight and stimulate the reader's or spectator's mind and yet, on a Bakhtinian reading, they can also be directly tied to a "seri-

ously playful” inversion of the socio-political hierarchy. The “real” Caroline London now becomes in effect Anti-London, since we are looking at it “upside-down.” The inversion of established norms of behavior, including social and gender roles, strikes as being absurd and thus comical. And yet, to the degree that we also take it seriously, it prompts us to look closely at the real London of that period—and at ourselves, our own society, our own socio-cultural values and roles. This inversion prompts us to ponder and to question these values and roles. For instance, the radical role-reversal of master and slave, the feminization of men and masculinization of women, leads us to ponder more deeply the question: What do these terms mean in the first place, “master” and “slave,” “feminine” and “masculine”? Why do we assume there must be a difference between the two? What could be the meaning of such a difference?

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About the Author

Hsiao-chen Chiang is Associate Professor of English at National Changhua University of Education. Her teaching and research interests include the Renaissance, Shakespeare, feminism, literature and film, drama, and English teaching. She has been hosting two television teaching programs for Open University broadcast at Chinese Television System: *Chinese and English Translation* and *An Approach to English Literature*. Her recent publications include "Constraint and Mobility: Women and Theatrical Culture in the English Renaissance," *Sun Yat-sen Journal of Humanities* 6 (2003): 55-71. Her recent conference papers include "Writing the Unspeakable through Translation: Joanna Lumley and Margaret Tyler," delivered at the 11th National Conference for the English and American Literature Association of the Republic of China, National University of Kaohsiung, Kaohsiung, 2004, and "Self Fashioning in Anne Askew's *Examinations*," delivered at "Identity and Politics: Early Modern European Culture" conference, National Sun Yat-sen University, Kaohsiung, 2004.

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