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Satire and the Necessity of Locale: Genealogical Readings in Max Beerbohm and Karl Kraus

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Satire and the Necessity of Locale: Genealogical Readings in Max Beerbohm and Karl Kraus

An Honors Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of English
Bates College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts

by

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Lewiston, Maine
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Introduction

“For I have long observed that, twenty miles from London, nobody understands hints, initial letters, or town facts and passages; and in a few years not even those who live in London” (Nichols 755). So claimed Jonathan Swift about *The Dunciad*, Alexander Pope’s mock-epic of 1728 that was dedicated to Swift. Swift’s claim suggests that Pope’s satire was utterly local, contingent upon and perhaps even defined by Pope’s relationship with both the place and era he lived in and wrote about. If we contrast Swift’s remark to J.A. Cuddon’s words on the satiric author, “The satirist is thus a kind of self-appointed guardian of standard, ideals, and truth; of moral as well as aesthetic values. He is a man who takes it upon himself to correct, censure, and ridicule the follies and vices of society” (780). If the satire is of a moral kind and works towards unmasking truth, this begs the question as to whether satire relates to *all* civilizations across *all* ages, for truths and morals must surely hold steadfast across all societies to which they apply. Cuddon unconsciously appears to imply divergent standards for satire, and Swift’s and his observations about satire conflict and remain unsolved. This antinomy—the conclusion that a satirical text is poorly understood outside of its origin versus the worldwide scope of the satirical text and its message—is the subject of debate.

Other authors and commentators on satire, perhaps less astute than Swift in agonizing over the inherent locality of satire, have argued the absence of effective satire during certain times. Mikhail Bakhtin claimed that there had been no satirist since the Middle Ages, Swift included, to truly embrace the universal spirit of the carnival (*Rabelais and His Other World* 12). Bakhtin does, however, recognize what he terms the “heritage of the culture” (*Rabelais* 18) in which the carnivalesque and satire reside. The imagery and signs of the carnival are of a “peculiar type” (*Rabelais* 18) and contain certain characteristics that are congenial with the satire. Linda Hutcheon is also attuned to the relationship between a satirical text and the circumstances out of which it was born, “the creator...may well be dead...but the creator’s *position*—a position of discursive authority—remains” (85). But Swift’s familiarity to the issue of locality in satire is more proximate than either Bakhtin or Hutcheon because of his own association with the genre. If satire is merely local, then its applicability to non-contemporary readers is diminished; it can no longer instruct morals or discover truths in the way Cuddon believes it potentially can. This led Walter Benjamin to conclude that “satire is the only legitimate form of regional art” (260) because it “consists in the devouring of the civilization’s adversary” (260). Satire is particular to the region and civilization it is born in.

In Book IV of *Gulliver’s Travels*, “A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms,” Swift broadens the scope of his satire. Gulliver meets the savage and deformed humanoid Yahoos, whom he spurns, before encountering an intelligent race of Houyhnhnms. Gulliver admires the Houyhnhnms (the name means “the perfection of nature” (199) in their own language) and follows their rejection of his human counterparts, the Yahoos. Gulliver quickly becomes subservient to the Houyhnhnms, referring to his Houyhnhnm as “master” (199). Swift uses the Houyhnhnms as a tool to both chastise human nature through their degrading observations of the

differing “Degrees of Brutality” (222) amongst the Yahoos, and through their own apparent exemplary example. Says Gulliver, “these Noble Houyhnhnms are endowed by Nature with a general Disposition to all Virtues, and have no Conceptions or Ideas of what is Evil in a Rational Creature, so their grand Maxim is, to cultivate *Reason*, and be wholly governed by it” (Swift 225). But despite Gulliver’s admiration of one species and rejection of the other, he is finally spurned by the noble Houyhnhnms who are so governed by reason. Gulliver is exiled; the Houyhnhnms reason through their representative assembly that they must take “offence at his keeping a Yahoo (meaning myself) in his family more like a Houyhnhnm, than a Brute Animal” (235). The Houyhnhnms treat Gulliver with cold, racist disdain (Turner 439). Swift’s satire now begins its final, universal twist, a satire on the entire species, because of their pride in reason and Gulliver’s blind consumption of their ethics. Indeed, Gulliver’s own pride in reason and the doctrine instilled in him by the Houyhnhnm is so entrenched that after he is exiled he refers disparagingly to humans, even treating his wife as a Yahoo, “Yet the smell of a Yahoo continuing very offensive, I always keep my nose well stopt with Rue, Lavender, or Tobacco-leaves” (249). Furthermore, he is liable to spend several hours per day speaking with horses in his stables.

Two objects of satires appear here, the devotion to and the emphasis placed on reason and the treatment, or rather maltreatment, of other humans. Both the Yahoos and Houyhnhnms possess undesirable traits, but Gulliver chooses only to acknowledge one species. Because Swift consciously reduces the habitat to two species we can consider the satire universal; Swift shows an awareness that a point of comparison is required to establish the unenviable traits of the human species across the world. James Grantham Turner believes that Swift “solves a problem endemic to satire—its locality and topicality—by broadening the scope to include entire species”

(439). As Swift develops his satire he begins consciously to widen his horizons to include the entirety of humanity rather than just those alive in Ireland in 1726. Swift is perhaps aware of doing this because of the problem of locality he prescribes to Pope's satire; consequently, his satire is designed to be pervasive.

In the same way Swift wrote his satire, beginning in a specific locality, and then developing it to be universal, we can read and understand satire in the same way. It appears that satire must have a local basis; this is in some fashion unavoidable and a necessary part of the satirical text. The author's own morals and observations pervade throughout the text because the inherent nature of satire depends on the author having a subject to criticize and correct. Even the minimalism of Beckett exposes this sense of satire. But the quality of satire is not judged on any mere local predicament; the text must develop, as Swift points out to Pope, to incorporate all people. Bakhtin notes that the best satire, satire that pertains to the carnivalesque, embodies this all-inclusivity, "Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people" (*Rabelais* 7). But in Bakhtin's eyes this universal experience of satire has not been written since the folk culture of the carnival. Two early twentieth-century texts, Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson: Or An Oxford Love Story* (1911) and Karl Kraus' play, *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit, The Last Days of Mankind* (1919), would not be considered universal by Bakhtin primarily because of the propensity of modern satire to focus on the negative rather than ameliorative, removing the sense of belonging from the reader and imposing on them a private reaction (*Rabelais* 12).

Both texts are based in the region of their respective time period: Beerbohm's satire involves university society in pre-war Oxford, and Kraus' satire consists of an Austrian perspective on World War I. *Zuleika Dobson*'s story includes a young woman, the title

character, whose arrival in Oxford sends every undergraduate into delirium because of her allure. Beerbohm appears acutely aware of the heritage required to form his satire. His dedication, *Illi Almae Matri*, to her (Zuleika's) mother, hints at the inherent legacy and circumstance that is necessary to satirize the romance of Oxford. Similarly, Kraus can be described as needing World War I and its long list of evils in order to establish his satire, for without it, there is no plot to speak of.

There are, however, elements of these two satirical texts that can be interpreted as universal moments. Evidently, topics such as war and love are universal, but to describe each author's satires as universal because of the breadth of their topic is too loose a definition of universal and fails to reach the crux of the satire. Instead, both *Zuleika Dobson* and *The Last Days of Mankind* perhaps possess universal qualities in their satire through the texts respective critiques of human attention to the abstract. For example, both texts, display the "herd-mentality," of the student population of Oxford in *Zuleika Dobson* and the Viennese public in *The Last Days of Mankind*. Equivalent to Gulliver's blind following of the Houyhnhnms, both Kraus and Beerbohm recognize this human trait and subsequently make the herd-mentality an object of their satire. Herd-mentality can be defined as abstract; it often appears as something that is universal however, in reality, it is not a definitive truth. But because there is a propensity for satirizing this particular facet of human behaviour, illustrated by its appearance in the works of Kraus, Beerbohm, and Swift, then herd mentality and other abstractions deserve some consideration as to whether or not they can conceivably be universal, in full or part. These abstractions are undefined and perhaps do not necessarily work to instruct the reader, but they remain that part of satire that can be judged universal and potentially avoid the trap of locality and topicality.

But does Beerbohm's and Kraus' satire, in addition to their potentially universal criticisms, possess the ability to positively regenerate society and its readers? For Bakhtin, this is modern culture's primary fault, its negativity. It is not so much a question of perceptiveness, "Whereas once I was blind, now I can see" (John 9:25), but more a question of whether or not satire can instruct. To instruct, satire must contain universal qualities. But to reject the basis in locality and topicality would be foolish; satire can be universal in its ameliorative qualities, especially through the abstract, but the text itself must be based in locality. Satire, then, described as "consisting of an attack by means of a manifest fiction upon discernible historical particulars" (Rosenheim 323) permits this restatement: any universality in satire is born out of and defined by its local base.

Chapter I

The Necessary Locality of Satire

An Oxford Legacy

Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson* sees satire opportunities thrusting out from flawed, human conduct. Two major flaws are immediately obvious in *Zuleika Dobson*, the herd mentality of the entire male undergraduate population of Oxford and the actions of the title character herself who appears as an exaggerated literary *femme fatale*. Both the herd mentality and the *femme fatale* appear in just the second page of the book, indicating Beerbohm's intention to satirize aggressively these two topics. Zuleika arrives at Oxford by train:

Ere it had yet stopped, the door of one carriage flew open, and from it, in a white traveling-dress, in a toque a-twinkle with fine diamonds, a lithe and radiant creature slipped nimbly down to the platform.

A cynosure indeed! A hundred eyes were fixed on her, and half as many hearts lost to her. The throng made way for her (2)

The final sentence sets up both Zuleika as a *femme fatale* and the undergraduates of Oxford as men of a herd. Only a female of such significance and power can enchant fifty people at a train station; only will the mathematical division from paired eyes to single heart satirically mark the fall. Meanwhile, the Oxford undergraduates throughout the novel comply as if bewitched by the brilliance of a cynosure or guiding star. The satire, readily evident through Beerbohm's overblown description, simultaneously captures both the cause and effect of the *femme fatale* and the herd mentality. Instead of merely mentioning the number of men Zuleika enchants, Beerbohm conceals the number by quantifying the amount of eyes and hearts that follow

Zuleika. Henceforth with dark, comic foreshadowing, she owns both the eyes and hearts of these men. Additionally, this scene visually describes grown men parting as if Jesus were entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

But both these themes are elements of Beerbohm's satire that are particular to Oxford, despite their apparent connection to Wildean or Swiftian satiric moments. Although the *femme fatale* and herd mentality are evidently themes that may appear in other cultural contexts and time periods, the *femme fatale* and the herd mentality that Beerbohm describes is uniquely Oxford's. Oxford in particular was, in Beerbohm's eyes, susceptible to criticism due its inherent pretentiousness, upper-class mentality and failure to recognize the limited amount of sexual relationships. Max, the novel's narrator, writes that the Oxford man was "careless of the sharp, harsh, exigent realities of the outer world...these realities that may be seen by him...but they cannot fire him. Oxford was too damp for that" (197). The Oxford men are simply one of a flock, and a flock that was unique to Oxford. The undergraduates of the time lived in closed quarters and Beerbohm's first-hand experience of this (he was educated at Merton College in the 1890s) permitted him to make this observation. The smothering proximity of Oxford and the introspective way in which its undergraduates viewed the world led Beerbohm to see Oxford as a closed society, one that consequentially harvested a distinctive kind of student body. As a result, while it is easy to note the herd mentality in *Zuleika Dobson*, it is substantially more difficult to explain the basis of such mentality (Oxford life) without a close understanding of the time period because of how heavily rooted the satire is entrenched in Beerbohm's Oxford.

In a theater review from 1902, Beerbohm observed that Oxford life involves the repressed sexuality of its males that, in turn, causes them to be so susceptible to the real-life *femme fatale* (Hall xii). Beerbohm claimed that there was no successful play or novel set in

Oxford because of the author's fear of eliminating sex, "so the mainspring of every Oxford story is the love of an undergraduate for Miss So-and-So" (Hall xii). However, in reality, "the instinct of sex is dormant, and, even if it happens to be stirred in vacation, it quickly relapses in term" (Hall xii). Thus, the basis of the satire on the *femme fatale* is found in other love stories about Oxford that, despite evidence to the contrary, were readily happy to display the apparent sexual capacities and ambitions of the Oxford undergraduate. The *femme fatale*, and a very particular *femme fatale* narrative that is completely devoid of romantic scenes, exists in Beerbohm's text because it does not exist in others. In Beerbohm's opinion Oxford had never been an effective setting for a literary text: "Poor Oxford! Will she, I wonder, ever be made successfully the background for a play, or for a novel?" (Hall xii). This was primarily because of the author's presuppositions that directed them to emphasize sex. Therefore, Beerbohm's book aims to satirize the *femme fatale* but simultaneously avoids sex because this is the circumstantial nature of the Oxford that he knows. Thus, his satire, unlike, he believes, the other texts that romanticize the Oxford lifestyle, holds true to circumstance.

John Dougill's book, *Oxford in English Literature: The Making, and Undoing, of 'The English Athens,'* entitles one of its chapters, "The Delightful Lie: The Oxford Myth." Dougill notes that there was a tendency in Victorian Oxford to create a fabulous city with an aura of unparalleled mystique. According to Dougill, "The 'beautiful city' was constructed on foundations laid by Elizabethan and Romantic predecessors: Camden prepared the ground, Hazlitt laid the foundations, and Arnold shaped the superstructure" (135). The Oxford ideal was readily present before Beerbohm and the light-hearted criticism of this Oxford began under Wilde and was later picked up by Beerbohm. Oxford's literature now became "a mix of supercilious wit and superior posing" (Dougill 135). Beerbohm's satire relies on the heritage of

literature in Oxford and the way he currently viewed the Oxford lifestyle was partially dictated by Oxford's literary past. Thus, following Wilde's wit was Beerbohm's satire and it was a particular Oxford kind of satire based on the works of authors such as Camden, Hazlitt and Arnold.

Consequentially, Beerbohm includes several scenes that, in another book about Oxford, might mark sexual tension but in *Zuleika Dobson* instead turns out to be humorous. For example, when Zuleika goes to see the Duke, the male protagonist, early in the story before either has declared their love for each other (and, in the case of Zuleika, taken it away), the two protagonists are bashful about their love. The following scene involves the second meeting between the two and occurs when Zuleika visits the Duke in his chambers:

The lovers met. There was an interchange of ordinary greetings: from the Duke, a comment on the weather; from Zuleika, a hope that he was well again—they had been so sorry to lose him last night. Then came a pause. The landlady's daughter was clearing away the breakfast-things. Zuleika glanced comprehensively at the room, and the Duke gazed at the hearthrug. The landlady's daughter clattered out with her freight. They were alone (44)

Significantly, this is the only intimate instance in the novel where both characters are in love with each other but do not realize that their love is reciprocated. The awkward pause and Beerbohm's following description of the silence, including the trivial movements of the landlady's daughter, stereotypically depicts the uncomfortable nature of two people who lust after each other but do not know each other well enough to communicate effectively. They are reduced to cheap talk about the weather and their health; because of the palpable tension, Beerbohm still gives the reader no hint as to whether their love will materialize into a

relationship. The tension continues to build, “This dialogue led them to another hollow pause. The Duke’s heart beat violently within him” (45), until it is unexpectedly, and not without humor, broken by Zuleika who, despite her appearance as a *femme fatale*, has hitherto been only described as loving the Duke: “Love you?” she retorted. “You?” (49). The spell is broken and Zuleika assumes her role as the *femme fatale* who cannot reciprocate love. She can only love the man who is different from the rest and, since every man in Oxford loves her, she adores the Duke for showing indifference to her arrival in Oxford. But the Duke does love Zuleika; he is just not showing it because of his suppressed virility. Zuleika’s reaction is patently ridiculous and is an example of Beerbohm’s satire on the *femme fatale* but still strongly indicates its basis in circumstance, mirroring Beerbohm’s allegation that sex in Oxford was quickly made dormant.

Lawrence Danson notes that, “in the second half of the book, especially, there are scenes which have an oddly embarrassing sexual intensity (129). But even in the first half of the book there is tension that is broken by Zuleika’s humorous (for the reader) response. Coupled with this sporadic sexual intensity is the character’s incompetence and, while these scenes are rooted in humor, there is also the sense that there is a solid basis in circumstance. Beerbohm’s experience of Oxford was that there were severe sexual uncertainties on behalf of the male undergraduates. This experience is circumstantial because without it, the book does not pertain to this object of satire. There can be no embarrassing sexual intensity if Beerbohm does not first observe it in Oxford.

What effect does this basis in circumstance have on the satirical aspect of the book? John Felstiner offers his own opinion on the effects of Oxford on Beerbohm’s longest literary work; “Beerbohm’s particular experience there—coming of age quickly as a man and an artist, and not bothering to finish a degree—disposed him to write neither eulogy nor criticism of the place. He

loved Oxford, but the kind of wit the university fostered in him discouraged loving anything very seriously” (179). Felstiner’s last line is necessary because it shows the contradiction in *Zuleika Dobson*—a novel that is at once steeped in Oxford’s history and impressiveness, but similarly liable to poke fun at this fact. What is more contentious is Felstiner’s suggestion that *Zuleika* is neither a eulogy nor a criticism of Oxford. Instead, writes Felstiner, and it must be noted that he considers the text “satiric nevertheless” (179), “*Zuleika Dobson* began to look more like an attempt to preserve the nineties’ milieu and spirit than to satirize them” (179). Felstiner supports his argument by quoting Beerbohm’s own words, “I myself had supposed it was just a fantasy” (179). Felstiner, therefore, appears to see *Zuleika Dobson* primarily as a fantasy that is based in situation, rather than a satire based in situation, because he suggests that Beerbohm, while humorous, is nostalgically writing about Oxford rather than parodying it. In contrast, it is possible to see satire as the primary function working in the text, regardless of Beerbohm’s supposed intentions. Both fantasy and satire remove the author from reality, but satire’s power lies in its close affinity to reality. This may be misread as a nostalgic fantasy, but the key difference between satire and nostalgic fantasy (as pertaining to reality) is that satire must be necessarily underlined by reality. This is the case regardless of the author’s intentions. Meanwhile, a nostalgic fantasy can only be read in terms of the author’s intentions, because the very term “nostalgic fantasy,” suggests a romantic misconception that drives the text. Satire may well be ill conceived, but its purpose is to first highlight and then ameliorate its subjects rather than wallow in self-aggrandizement. *Zuleika Dobson*, as a text viewed independent of an author, fits this definition and can thus be defined as a satire rather than fantasy. This is not say that authorial intent is not significant in satire. The author in satire plays a larger role than in other genres because of satire’s circumstantial nature. But the satire prevents the text from being

Beerbohm's nostalgic fantasy because Beerbohm satirizes the penchant of previous Oxford authors to regress into nostalgia.

Francis Hackett, an early reviewer of Beerbohm who wrote an introduction to the 1926 edition, offers not dissimilar sentiments from Felstiner's. Hackett claimed that Beerbohm possessed a reverence for Oxford. He opines that, "a love such as Mr. Beerbohm bears Oxford could alone have steeped the book in sentiment as well as satire, beauty as well as mockery—and beauty the book possesses" (Hackett viii). Hackett's point has been somewhat deemphasized by later critics (bar Felstiner) but Beerbohm evidently feels affection for Oxford, for the undergraduate life that it provided him and for all its unique nuances. Hackett recognizes the emotion of the text; the book is, after all, covered in the sentimentality of an Old Oxonian, but he also recognizes that the satire is very much a prominent part of the text.

However, like Felstiner after him, the inherent link between satire and sentiment, beauty and mockery, and parody and reality, is not thoroughly discussed or even posited. Hackett identifies these contradictions, and makes the link between Beerbohm's fictional Oxford and real-life Oxford but does not go as far as to suggest that the satire is driven by its proximity to its locale. The proximity of the text to Oxford life is often overbearing; in *Zuleika Dobson: Or An Oxford Love Story* you get exactly what the subtitle promises, with very precious outside influences or recognition. One of these circumstantial elements that Beerbohm satirizes is the absence of sex from undergraduate Oxford. Danson is alert to the awkward nature of sex in the text, quoting an example at the beginning of Chapter 16 with Zuleika on her knees, stroking the carpet, crooning "Aye, happy the very woman that wove the threads that are trod by the feet of my beloved master. But hark he bids his slave rise and stand before him!" (Beerbohm 241). The brief submissiveness of Zuleika may be out of character but it is far from fantastical. Instead, it

should be treated as a satire on both the propensity of the author writing about Oxford to include sexually charged scenes just for the sake of being there and a satire on the inelegance of sexual life for an Oxford undergraduate.

The satire is driven by the representativeness and a thorough understanding of Oxford in 1911 increases the understanding and wittiness of the satire. Therefore, Beerbohm can build tension in a beautiful, dramatic, and novelistic fashion (as he does in the scene in the Duke's room) but summarily root the text in the realities of Oxford life by doing something so darkly comical such as Zuleika changing her mind about loving the Duke on a whim. Suddenly the text becomes "local" again. There is, in Beerbohm's experience, no prevailing sexual desires in Oxford, at least none that will linger long enough to matter. When Zuleika refuses the Duke's love, the contemporary reader (who is acutely aware of Oxford undergraduate life) witnesses the satire working in conjunction with circumstance. The Duke's love for Zuleika is not able to realize its potential in an environment that does not foster long-lasting relationships; his desire for her is more of veneration rather than true love. Similarly, to return to Beerbohm's own words once more, a novel, especially an Oxford novel, is always based around the love for "Miss So-and-So," precisely because the author is hesitant about eliminating sex from his Oxford story. Beerbohm, then, satirizes both these faults in one foul swoop; he bases his text around the addictive love for a "Miss So-and-So" but manages to eliminate sex at the same time. Sexual tension is always on the surface, but it is awkward, overwrought, and then frequently humorous. Conversely, the text is not based in romanticism like other authors that, Beerbohm believes, shows a false ideal of Oxford.

Thus, the satire does ultimately prevail despite Beerbohm's indifference to categorization. The text may be fantasy (after all, *Zuleika* is a fictional text), yet it is based

heavily on everyday Oxford and it is this particular environment that is being satirized. The circumstances represented the larger failure of a genuine Oxford love story ever being written; sabotaged by the undergraduate life, the *femme fatale*, the snobbishness, and herd mentality. All these peculiarities to Oxford are mirrored in the story. Indeed, because the satire is so profoundly based on contingent occurrences and therefore is, in a sense, less allegorical, the locality of its satire shines through. Beerbohm knows Oxford, and knows that his readers know Oxford, and thus the fantasy of the book is a mixture of history and fiction. The absurdities are the fiction and the history is everything else; together they satirize pre-World War I Oxford.

Beerbohm wrote his aforementioned theater review (criticizing literature set in Oxford) in 1902, pre-Zuleika, and it is evident in it that he already had established his primary objects of satire that, significantly, were grounded in the Oxford lifestyle. The intrinsic reliance of the book on the Oxford lifestyle is meaningful because it emphasizes the locality of the satire. The satire and locality become one, the satire is inevitably about the locale and cannot exist without it. Beerbohm perhaps did see a world-problem with the herd-mentality of humanity or the power of the *femme fatale* but the satirical form perhaps forces him to instead focus on the narrower problem in Oxford. These are not so much common human faults but traits peculiar to Oxford. The locality is perhaps limited to Oxford to the extent that even its close counterpart, Cambridge, cannot be compared. For what its worth, S.C. Roberts wrote a sequel named *Zuleika in Cambridge* where Zuleika is treated rather differently by Cambridge undergraduates. Beerbohm admitted that, "I had often wondered what happened when Zuleika went to Cambridge. And now I know beyond any shadow of a doubt" (Fadiman 6). The fact that Zuleika fails to enchant the Cambridge undergraduates (or even that S.C. Roberts chooses to tell his story in this way), indicates the uniqueness of the text to Oxford. Evidently, *Zuleika Dobson* must be considered

individually and not in light of *Zuleika in Cambridge* nor Beerbohm's quotations, even though he is the author, many years after. But it is perhaps telling that S.C. Roberts and Beerbohm considered the text to stand-alone in the sense that *Zuleika Dobson* remains a very Oxford kind of love story.

Self-Referentiality in Satire

Beerbohm's audience itself would have been almost exclusively Oxford or Cambridge educated (Cambridge is mentioned at the end of the novel as the town that Zuleika will move onto next) or from upper-class wealthy families. Beerbohm's audience then, would have had an atypical understanding of his objects of satire and perhaps be able to recognize elements of men or women they knew. They were, in a sense, laughing at themselves and, if they were not brave enough to do this, then they were laughing at the satire of the society and community in which they lived. After all, as Swift opined, "Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it" (Bogel 65). Those who did not know Oxford would not understand the exact details of the city that undoubtedly contribute to the satire. For example, throughout the novel Beerbohm makes frequent references to the Emperors who watch over his characters and their fates. Beerbohm only tells the reader once where the statues are located, at the Sheldonian Theater in Oxford, but the importance of its location indicates that the readership would have been familiar with the theater. The Emperors are nearly always described as staring; they, the ancestral gods, watch the undergraduates of

Oxford and are portrayed as knowing about every event in Oxford. They “sweat, frown, and relax, according to what they see happening” (Felstiner 179) facially registering like some fixed magical mirror their ease or perturbation at what transpires. From the beginning they watch as Zuleika enters Oxford, “the high grim busts of the Roman Emperors stared down at the fair stranger in the equipage. Zuleika returned their stare with but a casual glance” (Beerbohm 4). And they watch until the end, “down on the road, without, not yet looked at but by the steadfast eyes of the Emperors. The last of the undergraduates lay dead” (Beerbohm 329). They are the first to know Zuleika and they are the first to know about the mass suicides. They are exclusively symbolic of aged Oxford, all that has come and all that has past.

What is so important, then, about these emperors as figurehead, and as figurehead particular to Oxford? For one, it is significant since it maintains what Linda Hutcheon might call the “creator’s position” (85). Hutcheon claims, “The creator, as originating and original source of meaning, may be dead, as Barthes argued years ago, but the creator’s *position*—a position of discursive authority—remains” (85). Hutcheon here references Roland Barthes argument in *Death of the Author* and she diverges from his argument over the relevance of the author in parody. As Barthes wrote, and to which Hutcheon is happy to agree, the author does not affect the written text that is, “the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the author” (Barthes 6). It has previously been stated that the satire can be viewed without the presence of the author. However, this merely related to determining whether or not the text may be considered satirical. Once the satire has been established, then the author’s presence is meaningful, more so than other literary forms, in determining the circumstances that originally produced the satire. Hutcheon wishes to argue that for parody in particular, the author’s initial thought processes can be observed after their “death” (i.e., after they publish the novel). This is

where the symbolism found in satirical and parodying texts becomes significant because, following Hutcheon's example, one can argue that Beerbohm's knowledge of Oxford (and his reader's knowledge) contributes heavily to how we interpret symbols. In turn, these symbols, which are woven into the satire, translate only from their locale, meaning that the satiric symbols of Beerbohm's text necessarily confine themselves to Oxford at the turn of the twentieth century. Thus, Hutcheon's divergence from Barthes is significant for the Beerbohm reader (and readers of satire as a whole) because it permits us to view *Zuleika Dobson* in relation to the author's surroundings. Satire cannot be read individually or singularly because it is always suggestive of a situation or predicament that the author chooses to satirize.

For the moment, at least, we will employ Hutcheon's work on the forms of parody and manipulate this work to include satire. Hutcheon does make the distinction between satire and parody in her introduction, establishing that satire, unlike parody, is both moral and social in its focus and ameliorative in its intention (Hutcheon 16). Simultaneously, however, she recognizes that parody can be used to satirize (16), and she even recalls the works of one of our satirical authors, Max Beerbohm, as a traditional example of parody (6). Essentially, Hutcheon argues that unlike literary forms, the author in parody, and satire, plays a significant role because of their "self-referentiality" (85). For example, Beerbohm's emperors are both self-referential to Oxford and their subtle symbolism links back to Beerbohm's experiences in Oxford. Other self-referential symbols can be as varied as the language that Beerbohm uses. For example, Lawrence Danson points to the two parts of Zuleika's name: the exotic and mystical Persian coupled with the bland English, hints at the mock-romantic and mock-heroic (115) that signal the supernatural mechanism and imitative imagery of Zuleika's pearls, which indicate the status of her love for the Duke (they light up when she is in love, and dim down when she is not). Michel

Foucault argued, “the author is not an indefinite source of significations that fill a work; the author does not precede the works; he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses” (390). However, although Foucault here assesses the tendency of critics to manipulate the author at their will, he, in contrast to Barthes, recognizes, “in saying this, I seem to call for a form of culture in which fiction would not be limited by this figure of the author. It would be pure romanticism, however, to imagine a culture in which the fictive would operate in an absolutely free state” (391). Foucault acknowledges the reality that the critic will always look to the author, whether we are correct to or not. Barthes wishes us to see the death of the author, Foucault the eternity of the author’s presence, for better or for worse.

Hutcheon then employs Foucault’s liberality to include parody (and, for us, satire) as one of the forms where the author is especially relevant. She asserts, “Parody’s overt turning to other art forms implicitly contests Romantic singularity and thereby forces a reassessment of the process of textual production” (5). In terms of Beerbohm, the imitation of other literary forms is present, but, more significantly, to extrapolate on Hutcheon’s assertion, the background of the author is also significant. The term “background” is not a reference here to how the author wrote the book, his or her personal life, or any assumption made from the author’s relationship to the narrator. Rather, and as Beerbohm’s book indicates, the exclusive symbolism and reference to the author’s locale, in this case Oxford, is how the “background” should be defined and, as such, is how *Zuleika Dobson* should be explored. This exclusive symbolism and self-reference is an implicit and arguably unconscious component of the book. Hutcheon indirectly supports this argument, “Parody is one of the techniques of self-referentiality by which art reveals its awareness of the context dependent nature of meaning, of the importance to signification of the circumstances understanding any utterance” (85). In Foucauldian terms, the author is neither

“dead” nor “alive” but in parody it is inevitable that his presence will always be felt. Thus, the signs of Oxford, such as the emperors, are significant because they are self-referential. We can consider the emperor’s as wise because they have previously witnessed the likes of Zuleika, and the behaviour of the whole undergraduate population. They loom and look out over Oxford Broad Street and thus become a symbol of the text.

The Emperors may, with their past experience, be equated to the alumni of Oxford (and even the Professors and other staff) who are the people reading Beerbohm’s novel and chuckling at the foolishness of the character, but, more importantly, the familiarity of the foolishness. In this interpretation, the symbolism of the emperors undertakes a new level; they are the readers themselves who know Oxford better than an average person. The readers, like the emperors, are themselves a part of the very fabric of Oxford. The self-referentiality of the text, emperors et al, play an important part because these symbols forge the humor. In a sense, of course, they also symbolize the gods, Clio and Zeus, who similarly watch over Oxford (halfway through the book, the reader learns that Clio and Zeus chose Max the narrator to follow Zuleika and tell her tale). Bakhtin describes the “exceptionally rich and original idiom of carnival forms and symbols” (11) and employs the term carnivalesque (more on this in Chapter III) to describe the humor and chaos that was originally found in medieval comedies and he believes it has not been so used since then (109). Beerbohm evidently employs some of the carnivalesque elements of satire—predominantly humor and subversion but, more appropriately, the original symbols found in the carnival, and the carnivalesque element of the text contributes to the satire. For example, few narratives could be written in such a light-hearted manner yet still witness the chaotic and manic suicide of every young man in Oxford. The disorder is certainly evident in *Zuleika Dobson*—after all, every man in Oxford has his world spun around when they fall, enchanted by Zuleika

(and Zuleika herself is not immune to the chaos; at the end of the text she, briefly, falls for the cowardly Noaks). The whole tone of the book indulges in the carnival atmosphere; it is at once light hearted and humorous but also sinister with dark undertones.

N. John Hall notes the fact that Matthew Arnold's description of Oxford in the Preface to his *Essays in Criticism* is played on by Beerbohm in one of his accompanying illustrations for *Zuleika* Dobson. However, Hall does not note the similarities between Arnold's 1865 description of Oxford and Beerbohm's opening description of Oxford in *Zuleika*. First is Matthew Arnold's elegiac description of Oxford:

Oxford. Beautiful city! So venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene!

"There are our young barbarians, all at play!

"And yet steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection,—to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from another side?—nearer perhaps than all the science of Tübingen. Adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic! who hast given thyself so prodigally, given thyself to sides and heroes not mine, only never to the Philistines! home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties!... Apparitions of a day, what is our puny warfare against the Philistines, compared with the warfare which this Queen of Romance has been waging against them for centuries, and will wage after we are gone?" (Dougill 151)

Arnold describes what Hall terms a “paean to Oxford” (xiii). Arnold praises Oxford’s charm and the quality of its undergraduates, its close affinity to the romanticized era (the Middle Age) and the idiocy of Philistines (a term Arnold applied to denote anti-intellectualism (Dougill 150)).

Many of these descriptions are reciprocated in Beerbohm’s opening paragraph:

That old bell, presage of a train, had just sounded through Oxford station; and the undergraduates who were waiting there, gay figures in tweed or flannel, moved up to the margin of the platform and gazed idly up the line. Young and careless, in the glow of the afternoon sunshine, they struck a sharp note of incongruity with the worn boards they stood on, with the fading signals and grey eternal walls of that antique station, which, familiar to them and insignificant, does yet whisper to the tourist the last enchantment of the Middle Age (1)

The similarities between the two are startling. Both descriptions reference the Middle Age and the “barbarous” quality of Oxford’s undergraduates. The repeated phrase “enchantment of the Middle Age” confirms that Beerbohm is parodying Arnold’s loving depiction of Oxford and undergraduate life. Whereas Arnold’s Oxford is an example of humanity’s proximity to perfection or the ideal, Beerbohm’s Oxford is antiquated and insignificant. Right from the beginning, Beerbohm’s language creates the “self-referentiality” that Hutcheon outlines, and, in this instance, as in many others, the idiom is presented in a self-deprecating and humorous fashion. Only to the tourist is Oxford the city that it once was or as it has been positively stereotyped (although to suggest Beerbohm was overtly critical of Oxford would be foolish; Dougill perhaps finds the right term for Beerbohm’s satire, calling it an “affectionate parody” (168)). The stark similarities between the two passages run further. Beerbohm, when establishing that only uneducated tourists felt enchanted by Oxford, satirizes Arnold’s Oxford

that, in contrast, is not appreciated by the Philistines. In this opening passage, Beerbohm ever so subtly reverses the situation so that his own Philistines, the tourists (which may be extended to include the outsider, Zuleika), are the ones that appreciate Oxford whereas in Arnold's Oxford, they alone are those who fail to understand it.

The close similarity between Beerbohm's opening and Arnold's lament implies that Hutcheon's theory that satire is self-referential can be correctly applied to large swathes of Beerbohm's satire. Beerbohm needed Arnold, or sincere authors such as Arnold, to satirize Oxford. Arnold is the believer that Beerbohm doubts in his satire although perhaps "doubt" is too strong a term. Instead, Beerbohm can be described as stressing and then making light of Arnold propensity to dwell on Oxford's so-called perfections. Therefore, the background to Beerbohm's book is definitive. It is not abstract, in contrast, it is exacting. Beerbohm treats the undergraduates of Oxford differently than Arnold and sees no harmony between the undergraduates and the town and the youth of the students contrasts sharply with the antiquity of the university, "they struck a sharp note of incongruity with the worn boards they stood on" (Beerbohm 1). In juxtaposition, Arnold paints a rather more harmonic picture of Oxford with the undergraduates affectionately called "barbarians." Their innocence compliments the perfection of Oxford. But Beerbohm sees this differently. The undergraduates are a pack afflicted by the plague of the *femme fatale*. They are young and naïve.

What is more difficult to determine because of the different time periods is whether Beerbohm is in some sense lamenting the Oxford of Arnold's era and wishing for a return to the "true," ideal Middle Age Oxford. However, this is unsubstantiated primarily because Beerbohm's text is so outwardly satirical and the fact that there were no ground-breaking events in Oxford that would have changed the mentality or social class of the undergraduate population

since Arnold's time (if the novel were written after World War I or World War II this counterargument might be easier to defend). In sum, what all these subtle references to Oxford undergraduate culture cue us to see is that a full understanding of Beerbohm requires knowledge of the Oxford of 1911. Beerbohm mocks Oxford in a nuanced manner, but the nuances remain just nuances and nothing more. There is no scathing attack on Arnold but rather an inside joke that is more pertinent to the real world. Indeed, in some fashion, Beerbohm recognizes this in *Zuleika Dobson*. During one of Beerbohm's narrator's conversations with the reader, the narrator Max notes that he has been selected as a narrator by the God, Clio, "because she knew me to be honest, sober and capable, and no stranger to Oxford" (183). Whilst Beerbohm is evidently not remarking that his form of satire is necessarily local (that, as Barthes would no doubt agree, is far removed from the author's jurisdiction), he is perhaps subconsciously acknowledging that in order to comprehend this satire you must be no stranger to Oxford. The similarity here between Arnold's musing and Beerbohm's direct satire of Arnold's musings, displays satire's self-referentiality.

Zuleika Dobson is a work that is generally considered a satire in its purest form partly because of its lack of plot and sole focus on caricaturing the Oxford ideal. The text is not a novel or a novella, poem, play and does not rely on plot to drive the story. Beerbohm instead relies on the reader's knowledge of early twentieth-century Britain and, more significantly, an understanding to what in this time period satire might attend. Although the unknowledgeable reader can understand the basic satire—the herd mentality of the males, their collective foolishness, the *femme fatale*, and the vanity of Zuleika—what the unknowledgeable reader cannot comprehend is what this satire means in Oxford circa 1911. Indeed, even those with prior knowledge have had trouble determining exactly what *Zuleika Dobson* is satirizing. Hall writes,

Zuleika Dobson is a fanciful though hard-edged satire, but of what? Of the new woman? Or the literary *femme fatale*? Of Oxford, university life, athleticism? Of rank, snobbery, the herd instinct? Of dandyism, or novels of dandyism (such as those of Bulwer Lytton and Disraeli)? Of aestheticism? (Hall xv)

Edmund Wilson was similarly confused, “What is the pattern or the point of *Zuleika*? Is it satire or parody or nonsense or what?” (112). With even critics unsure as to what Beerbohm object of satire is, the work is thus not easily transferred into a universal setting because the elements of satire that are exclusive to Oxford just before the war dominate the text. Perhaps, then, this is the best way to answer both Hall and Wilson’s questions: *Zuleika Dobson* is a satire on Oxford in 1911 together with all the excess baggage, past and present, that goes along with writing in this period and in this location. Beerbohm himself supports this notion, claiming that his book was “a fantasy” but that “all fantasy should have a solid basis in reality” (Hall xv). Beerbohm is expressing his view that his satire is specifically about the satire of Oxford and nowhere else. For example, although the herd-mentality of *Zuleika Dobson* appears conveniently to satirize the herd-mentality of peoples everywhere, it does, in fact, only specifically satirize the herd-mentality of pre-World War I Oxford because of the inherent self-referentiality of satire. It is tempting to see herd mentality as a microcosm for society at large; however, the basis of the herd mentality relies on a contingent context. In *Zuleika Dobson* it is Zuleika as the object of infatuation that triggers this herd-mentality. The trigger is decidedly contextual and evidently will differ from culture to culture if indeed it exists at all.

The Importance of Locality Amongst Idealistic Satire

If Beerbohm's satire was necessarily specific to Oxford, then Karl Kraus' sorts satire differently, if not ultimately completely juxtaposing the very idea that informs Beerbohm's satire. Kraus, the Austrian satirist whose satirical magazine, *Die Fackel*, had wide Viennese appeal, produced his main body of satire in the play *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit* (*The Last Days of Mankind*). It was of course far removed from Oxford, being set on the European continent during the Great War. Even though *The Last Days of Mankind* was written in play form, it was never designed to be performed on stage. What requires that the play be read rather than performed is its unfathomable length, five acts of fifty-five scenes, and its endless list of characters and locations. Only two recurring characters feature in multiple scenes, the Grumbler and the Optimist, and both provide differing views on the nature of Austria's role in World War I, the role of the press, and the complicity of Austria's citizens. This led the critic Frank Field to describe the play as "basically a play for voices" (103). But what do these voices mean to satire? The Grumbler and the Optimist's views are usually juxtaposed and form a commentary on the events of the war, which are referenced in the other scenes. The play does not list war events and does not seek to summarize its occasions; instead, the Great War functions as a backdrop particularizing the attitudes of the Austrians for whom the war inevitably intervenes and plays a large part. There is no decisive plot here, only the progression of World War I, and the scenes are comprised only of conversation among the numerous characters. Nevertheless, the war does frame Kraus' play: in a linear fashion, its opening act focuses on the war's beginning and its end depicts Germany and Austria's eventual defeat.

The Last Days of Mankind was largely written between 1915 and 1917 and, although *Die Fackel* published some sections of the play, the play in its entirety did not appear in its final,

book edition until 1922. One benefit of publishing after the war was that Kraus' satire was no longer hindered by war censorship and thus was free to satirize all Austrian attitudes. The German pacifist Alfred H. Fried observed, "Kraus shows us the war at home" (Field 103) and the war at home was to be where Kraus' satire remained attached. We can regard Kraus as an idealist partly because he takes a worldview on the human condition. In turn, this suggests that Kraus' satire might be considered universal rather than local or provincial as posited when examining Beerbohm. One example of Kraus' idealism is his wish for a country with freedom of speech but without the negativity that modern press seemed always to create. Commonly described as conservative in the sense that he was anti-modernist (Carr 768), Kraus viewed the press, primarily the *Neue Freie Presse*, with suspicion and disliked what he termed their hypocrisy. At least in his early years Kraus was also politically conservative, although he would renounce these views as sentiment during World War I (Field 76). The description of him as a conservative has more to do with his disdain for modern culture and warfare, rather than any political views. Indeed, Edward Timms claims that the *Neue Freie Presse* was Kraus' principal target of satire until February 1920 (*Post-War Crisis* 88). By most historical accounts, the mass media was biased and focused on insignificant targets over significant ones (Timms cites Kraus indignation that during the war, the liberal press led a charge against government over damaged tapestries; meanwhile, there was a period of national emergency due to malnutrition, influenza and tuberculosis (*Post-War Crisis* 67)) and Kraus offered a more utopian, if conservative, alternative; peace, destruction of patriotism and the sensationalist press, together with the individuality of people. In some fashion then, we can consider, *The Last Days of Mankind* as having a universal message.

One of Kraus primary objects of satire is the role of the press, a group he criticized throughout his career, and the transferable elements of his satire on the press are sometime evident in *The Last Days of Mankind*. For instance, Kraus describes a frustrating scene (Act I, Scene 14) where a celebrity, Elfriede Ritter, is constantly misquoted by the press. Her words are twisted time and again, to the point where the questions become irrelevant because the press have already decided on the answers. This fictional actress has just returned home from a trip to Russia. The array of journalists manipulates her words to portray her visit to Russia as arduous and, more extremely, explicitly state that she has been tormented. Kraus' scene is evidently an exaggeration but it is easy to sympathize with the actress, especially in today' world where the media is effervescent in its efforts to scrutinize and sensationalize, especially with regard to celebrities. Hence, elements of sensationalism appear to be universal in the sense that one can identify with this scene, the purposeful misconduct of reporters in their efforts to report the secrets of celebrities, and easily envisage a similar one taking place in our present world. The Austrian press attempts to coerce Elfriede Ritter into claiming that she was mistreated in Russia, as a means to advance Austrian patriotism:

FUECHSL (writing): Rescued from the ordeal of Russian captivity, at the end of a wearisome journey filled with hardships, actress Elfriede Ritter wept tears of joy at the thought of finally being back in her beloved Vienna.

ELFRIEDE RITTER (wagging her finger admonishingly): Doctor Fuechsl, Doctor Fuechsl, that's not what I said. On the contrary, I said that that I had no reason to complain—absolutely none.

FUECHSL: Aha! (Writing) Today, the actress looks back upon her torments with a kind of ironic detachment. (46)

Fuechsl is an example of the manipulative press and quite evidently, to the point of absurdity, he twists Ritter's words so they undertake the complete opposite meaning, in order for him to create a headline. Yet we recognize Kraus' wit concerning the gall of re-description, how he sets up the alignment between "no reason to complain" and "ironic detachment." This led Walter Benjamin to comment, "But it is precisely the purpose of the public opinion generated by the press to make the public incapable of judging, to insinuate into it the attitude of someone irresponsible, uninformed" (239). The similarities to the modern day free press are immediately apparent. Kraus views these actions as an example of base culture and thus, the satire would appear to be relevant to all peoples because it is a message we can all observe. However, while the elements of sensationalism may be transferable, it is possible to argue that the satire itself remains self-referential and rooted in Kraus' world.

Therefore, though there are aspects of universalism, the satire cannot help but be indebted to the locale and period. For example, the media's intentions are specific to Austria's efforts in World War I. Under the threat of the media sabotaging Elfriede Ritter's role as Gretchen in a forthcoming production (incidentally, this fact represents another self-referential sign because the contemporary reader would have been alert to the significance of playing Gretchen and aware of the popularity of the play, presumably Goethe's *Faust*), one of the journalists, Feigl, suggests Ritter would do better to cooperate with the press. Feigl openly says, "Let me tell you a secret. It would do you no end of good not only with the public—but even with the press—to have been mistreated in Russia" (Kraus 48). Feigl's prerogative is to stir up patriotism amongst the Austrians. Ultimately, Kraus' satire does remain focused on Austria and Germany and thus should be read within the context of Vienna during the war years. The self-referential signs, from the small details of Gretchen to the larger details of the Austrian media's objectives,

indicate that Kraus' drama is a Viennese drama. Simply to claim that all you need to do to make the satire universal is to switch the names and locale is too narrow a reading of the play. Linda Hutcheon and Michel Foucault dictate that the author, somewhat inevitably, will always be present in works of satire (Hutcheon 4). Kraus is present in his play—the media play such a large role in the play (so large a role that their presence overwhelms the Great War itself) primarily because Kraus has a vendetta against the liberal Austrian press. The author's influence, coupled with the self-referential signs such as Gretchen and Austria's relationship with Russia around the year 1914, individualizes the satire here. Though the topics may be thematic (criticism of the press et al) the satire itself is resolutely local.

This is especially significant given the realism of the play. Not only did World War I shape *The Last Days of Mankind*, but also many of its scenes are drawn from true events. Franz H. Mautner believed that “at least a third of the drama is identical with its raw material to its central form” (Mautner 244), a sentiment that has been supported by Harry Zohn (50). While Kraus deals with a large, world-encompassing event, its basis in Viennese society remains crucially important to understanding the text. The reader, unwittingly or otherwise, encounters hundreds of documents, reports from the front, and advertisements, all reincarnated in the form of oral speech (Mautner 244). One such example from the *Neue Freie Presse* declares that once Austria was cut off from the sea, the war “lost its significance” (Timms, *Post-War Crisis* 27). This bias sentiment, supportive when Austria and Germany were winning the war and false indifference when they were losing, is reflected in the text itself. A Prussian Colonel declares, “A strategic retreat is always a success” (Kraus 221), while an Austrian General claims, “Have we not achieved successes that arouse the envy of our enemies” (Kraus 210). The way the press and the participants treat the war is heavily superficial. Moreover, many of the characters in the

play, however brief their appearance may be, are real people, contributing further to the idea that this is a uniquely Viennese satire. The essential circumstantial nature of the play is necessary to be understood by modern audiences and is only understood “against the backdrop of Kraus’ society during the First World War” (Field 103).

Walter Muschg wrote that, “with the outbreak of war in 1914, Kraus’s art transcended itself. From being Viennese it rose to become universal, from being literary it rose to become religious... Kraus is a spirit who acts under higher orders” (Ungar xvi). From Muschg standpoint then, Kraus’ satire on World War I (namely through *The Last Days of Mankind*) becomes universal because of the general critique of the human propensity for war and what Frederick Ungar saw as “Kraus’ primary concern. What mattered most for him was society’s spiritual and moral misery” (xvi). The idea that Kraus’ literature was universal is evidently not a novel one. To return to Hutcheon once more, Kraus’ text would appear to be more of a satire than Beerbohm’s because it is “unlike parody, (satire) is both moral and social in its focus and ameliorative in its intention” (16). Hutcheon thus makes the distinction between satire and parody: satire is instructive and seeks to improve the human condition. What Ungar and Muschg see as the universality of Kraus’ play contributes to the satire because Kraus expressively focuses on the morals of society (a more in-depth look at universality in satire will be discussed in Chapter II). However, Kraus’ satire remains local in the sense that the society he chooses to represent is his own and his readership, while widespread, was limited to the Germanic-speaking peoples of Austria and Germany (and, in Germany, only truly Berlin (Timms, *Post-War Crisis* 41). His satire is a critique of the Austrian people and their faults during World War I and therefore Muschg appears overzealous in suggesting his satire is universal since universal insinuates that Kraus’ satire can be applied to different societies and to different wars. *The Last*

Days of Mankind is “self-referential,” a description that Hutcheon equates to parody and not to satire, but it is certainly possible to extend this definition as we did concerning Beerbohm. It is difficult to see his satire applying to even other Western European countries during World War I because Kraus is solely and deliberately critical of the attitudes and actions of the Austrian people and hierarchy.

In one scene, two characters, Patriot and Subscriber, discuss the problems of other countries:

PATRIOT: I only read about a poor harvest in Italy.

SUBSCRIBER: Aren't you confusing that with crop failure in England?

PATRIOT: That's another story, and it has to be distinguished from the food shortage in Russia (39)

The biased nature of patriotism may be applicable to other societies and eras, but Kraus' satire remains local to Austria because of the very fact that this represents his knowledge of Austria at this specific instant. These rumors may or may not be true, but they are born specifically in Austria. People may have been repeating the same, reciprocal sayings in France, England, Russia, and other rival countries during World War I, but Kraus' focus is on Austria alone. His attention has a particular Viennese flavor and this fact is reflected by the role of the press in influencing the opinions of the public. In fact, the xenophobia initiated by the press contributes to the conversation of rumors and this couple; the press and the attitude of the people is something that Kraus simultaneously satirizes. For example, upon learning (only, it must be noted, an unconfirmed rumor) that a Briton was imprisoned for fourteen days for slandering the country's hopes in the war (the unnamed man suggested that Britain deserved to be annihilated by Germany), the Patriot and Subscriber are quick to jump on the bandwagon against the British

public, media, and country as a whole. They concurrently fail to recognize their own shortcomings, both on behalf of the public and the media: the Subscriber claims, “No, the fine English gentlemen certainly don’t like that kind of talk. They can’t take the truth. But then no journalist in this country would ever let himself get carried away like that” (41).

The Subscriber’s words suggestively tease both the Austrian people and the Austrian media. Evidently, Kraus is being ironic and the irony underscores the satire. The ironic language can be treated as an example of one of Hutcheon’s self-referential signs. It is an inside joke that Kraus is unveiling to the reader. The Subscriber’s words are not meant to be taken at face value, and thus the ironic language is self-referential in the manner that it relates to Kraus’ audience who are privy to the knowledge that, in actual fact, Austrian gentleman are the people not permitting any anti-patriotic talk, and the Austrian media are those who are getting carried away in a wave of patriotism and hyperbole.

Although the modern reader recognizes the political divide that existed between Austria and Germany up until the Anschluss, the cultures and people were intertwined through a shared language and close proximity and freedom of movement between the two countries. So while Kraus wrote in Vienna and satirized the Austrian people, the satire can be extended to include the German people—indeed, by the fourth and fifth acts Kraus openly satirizes the Germans as degenerate. According to some critics, the Germans were treated similarly to the Austrians by Kraus, “as objects of satire that is equally as mercilessly as that already bestowed upon the Austrians” (Mautner 247). The fact that Kraus was well read in Berlin and Germany throughout the 1920’s (as late as 1929 his play *Die Unüberwindlichen* was performed in Berlin (Timms 371)) adds weight to the argument that most of Kraus’ satire attacked Germans as well as Austrians. Thus, the self-referential aspects of his satire include both Germany and Austria.

Kraus' satire confines itself to the German speaking part of the world and, furthermore, it applies to a unique time period, World War I. Edward Timms would appear to disagree with this assertion because he links the role of the media in World War I to the role of the media during the First Gulf War,

Sadly, those who fail to learn from the errors of the past are doomed to repeat them, and the project of rationalizing the insanities of war is with us still, as can be seen from recent conflicts in the Persian Gulf. The conflict in the gulf, as a *New York Times* correspondent observed, "made war fashionable again," but the blame lay "not with the military but the press" which "saw itself as part of the war effort."

The linkage between the propaganda techniques satirized in *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit* and the media coverage of the first Gulf War was noted by the veteran biochemist Erwin Chagraff, who began reading *Die Fackel* during the First World War at the age of twelve. In his memoirs, written after his emigration to the United States, he recalls that as a student in the Vienna of the 1920s he prepared a lecture in praise of Kraus. The 'Last Days' may have begun in August 1914, he observed eighty years later, but they were still continuing in the 1990s, not least in the horrors of the Gulf War (79)

Evidently, there are similarities between the two wars and authorities such as Timms and especially Chagraff, who lived through both wars, should not be ignored. But in terms of the satire, the main object of focus here, the comparison cannot be transferred across eras, cultures, and continents. Kraus' satire is exacting—his target is the Austrian press circa 1918 and not the world press or the presence of the media in general (indeed, *Die Fackel* can certainly be considered a form of the media, published periodically and in small segments for the wider audience). Just as the satirizing of the herd mentality in *Zuleika Dobson* required a

circumstantial trigger, satire against the press similarly requires a trigger. Therefore, the effect of the media on war may be similarly hyperbolic and unnecessarily patriotic, but in satirical terms it remains necessarily local and unique to Vienna during the Great War. It self-refers back to the German-speaking world, back to Vienna, and back to Kraus' opinions. *The Last Days of Mankind* is so heavily based on factual events that the realism of the play adds to its locality. Indeed, many characters are real people and are specifically named, and this, coupled with the aforementioned fact that many of the character's words are real words extracted from military reports and the press alike, establishes how dependent the script is on this period alone. For example, in the media, Alice Schalek, that real woman who was Austria's first female war correspondent, is ruthlessly satirized for the glorification of war. The common man, in particular, undertakes a heroic and an almost heavenly transformation in the arena of war; "How is it before the war I never saw those splendid figures that I now meet every day? The common man is really a sight worth seeing! In the city – God how dull! Here, everybody is an unforgettable figure" (56). The name, Alice Schalek, becomes one of many symbols in Kraus. She calls up Austria; her inclusion is no accident, it is highly specific. Likewise, the common man that Schalek describes becomes a symbol embedded in the text. Only in the enlightened world—the Western world of Rousseau and especially Marx—would the common man ever be so revered or respected. Of course, Schalek does not truly revere the common man in anything comparable to a Marxist manner, but that is satire's whole point. There is no evidence of "working men of all countries unite!" (Marx and Engels 39) in Schalek's eulogism, although, admittedly, Kraus' conservatism does not mean he is advocating Marx either. But Kraus had undeniably read Marx, even if he was said to believe that militarism was the main enemy and not capitalism (Timms, *Post-War Crisis* 48). Austria, Kraus observes, is a country that pretends—it

pretends to venerate the working-class man, but in reality does so out of some form of romantic principle that is accentuated in the arena of war. It is a false notion of romanticism and also shows how far removed the media in Vienna (socially more than geographically) were from the war. A similar glorification may have taken place during the Gulf War but the Great War was its own separate war. It took place between different countries, began for different reasons, and its scale was incomparably larger. One cannot imagine the modern Western world—still post-Rousseau and post-Marx, but equally post-Hitler—depicting war in such a positive and romanticized fashion. “Once more unto the breach dear friends, once more” (Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 3.1, 1) would no longer be acceptable as it may have still been for many (but not Kraus) during World War I.

The role of the media thus becomes different and, in relation to satire, once more it probes at different areas of the press. If satire is self-referential, then the so-called universal elements of Kraus’ text are not elements of satire. Instead, they can be considered themes of the play. However, they can still be considered contributing towards the satire as long as we consider these topics as individually unique; they are contingent to the era in which Kraus’ was writing. Perhaps the most telling aspect of Schalek’s gung-ho journalism that roots her in Vienna between the years 1914-1918 is her references to war as a “first-rate show” (57). She is the stereotypically ill-informed member of the media, but she is definitively the Austrian version of this stereotypical trend. Her views on the liberation of war are similarly contentious, “Patriotism, you idealists may call it. Hatred of the enemy, you nationalists. Call it sport, you moderns. Adventure, you romantics. You know the soul of men call it the joyous thrill of power. I call it humanity liberated” (57). This last line is uncomfortably echoed twice more by Schalek and is perhaps the singular line that delves the deepest into Kraus’ satire on war and the

press. The self-referentiality of this final line is all too apparent; in Vienna and Berlin, the mood was that the war was being fought to keep the people free. Ironically, Schalek sees liberation in the faces of the common men. She has romanticized the war to such an extent that she believes she can see the development of humans through the massacre of others. Her opinions take an almost Darwinist twist; only the strongest survive and thus the killing will liberate and further the strong who survive. She argues that whatever your reason for war—adventure, sport, hatred, patriotism—there is a romantic ideal that is underlying it. This view can be determined as particular to Schalek’s time and location. The significance of what Kraus perceives in Schalek (namely, the romanticizing and glorification of man in war) is utterly self-referential despite its apparent universality. The media’s role in Austria during World War I was particularly unique and Schalek becomes a symbol of this uniqueness.

Kraus’ satire therefore attempts to show that in war, and this war especially, there is no patriotism, hatred, sport, or adventure. There is only death, injury, imprisonment, and certainly no liberation. Therefore, while the role of the media in war may contain some form of a historical trend (if, indeed, there can be historical trends), each example is different and relies on a particular society at a particular time and their media’s approach to warfare. The war shapes the novel, and because its events do not dominate the speech but remain as an ever-present background, the play becomes utterly indebted to the patterns of the Great War. To reiterate Alfred H. Fried’s quotation, “Kraus shows us the war at home” (Field 103). That is, his satire is domestic and so is Beerbohm’s.

Chapter II

The Abstract Components of Satire

The Scope of Moral Satire: The Viennese Herd

A suggestion that was hinted at in the last chapter but not fully explored involves the question of whether satire can ever be universal. Satire's self-referentiality means it is firmly rooted in its locality and period but there remains the concomitant potential for satire to attack with universal potency. In short, satire may have the ability to be at once transcendent and local. In Kraus' work, the idea was briefly posited that there are elements of the text that were universal or comparable to other locales and time periods. However, this was refuted by the evidence that implied that these trends did not directly contribute to the satire because they were ultimately grounded in the author's background and private perception; the prominent example being Kraus' zealous criticism of the Austrian media. The suggestion was countered because Kraus' object of satire remains necessarily local.

However, what was not explored in the previous chapter was whether the more abstract qualities of satire can be applied to other locales and time periods and, consequently, be considered as expansive and all encompassing. Examples of the abstract qualities of satire often involve human interactions and personalities, and primary among them, are power structures, complicity, and the herd mentality. For example, in *The Last Days of Mankind*, Kraus portrays the press as an intrusive and damaging force but the extent of their wrongdoings is ultimately determined by the reaction of the public. In this sense, the satire against the public is comprised of two abstractions; the power structure that is comprised of the press leading the people and the complicity of the people for agreeing with the press' sensationalism. Likewise, the herd-

mentality of the public is satirized with regard to war; in the play, patriotism is viewed as a virtuous principle by most of the characters because everyone else believes in its cause. The abstract elements of human nature as the objects of satire are also apparent in *Zuleika Dobson*, despite the fact that in Chapter I we had defined it as a decisively local satire. But the abstract human qualities persist; for example, the herd-mentality of the undergraduates, the basic human weakness of falling for the *femme fatale*, and the power relationships between Zuleika and the Duke. To reiterate, these abstractions remain important because of their potential (and, at this stage, it is only potential) to cross over time and geographic boundaries and, as a result, create a universal satire about the human condition.

These abstractions are more instructive than the elements of satire explored in Chapter I (the definitive objects include press, war, and Oxford life) even if the author does not necessarily intend them to be. The significance of instruction in satire is a well-trodden idea. Nabokov, for example, claimed, “satire is a lesson, parody is a game” (75). This idea suggests that satire points out human flaws and then seeks to rectify these flaws. Hutcheon also sees this as the difference between parody and satire, and while it is possible to disagree with her, it is a subject worth exploring nonetheless. Though Hutcheon’s interests lie in defining parody rather than satire, she does, as a by-product, differentiate between the two. For her, parody is merely imitation that “prevents any endorsement of the ameliorative implications” (36). Satire, by contrast, can ameliorate. These ameliorative elements of satire include, by any definition, the abstract principles that are present in *Zuleika Dobson* and *The Last Days of Mankind*. Whether or not these ameliorative abstractions make the satire universal remains the subject of debate.

Evidently, Kraus’ *The Last Days of Mankind* exposes many moral issues. Kraus appears as something of an idealist. This is something he is perhaps willing to admit; the professors in

Act IV Scene 7 argued the point that the mental patient (and his supporters, who we presume to include Kraus) were too idealistic. Kraus wished for the end of sensationalism in the press, the end of nationalism and the abuse of German legacy, and for peace in Europe. In contrast to Beerbohm who is focused only on the idiosyncrasies of Oxford, Kraus is preoccupied with more of a worldview and a willingness to follow the descent of humanity into the atrocities of World War I. One of the many speaking voices that appear in *the Last Days of Mankind* is the collective voice of the Viennese crowd.” This crowd symbolizes, perhaps unfairly, the representative voice of the Viennese people and, in this particular instance the satire is of a moral kind. Northrup Frye wrote that the satirist demonstrates “the infinite variety of what men do by showing the futility, not only saying what they ought to do, but even of attempts to schematize a coherent scheme of what they do” (229). The men in Kraus’ crowd are of Frye’s variety because of the ill-judged way in which they try to formulate and justify their opinions and actions.

Kraus presents a people who possess ambiguous (at best) values and beliefs. For example, a refrain used by Kraus in the opening act of *The Last Days of Mankind* is the crowd’s assertion that “We’re not like that.” The “crowd” is a speaking part in *The Last Days of Mankind* (there is further analysis on the Austrian-German crowd later in this chapter, but this is an early example of the influence of the mob and the ignorance of the collective views that are expressed as a consequence of the herd mentality). The crowd identifies “a shady bastard,” “two Englishman,” “two frogs,” and “Japs still in Vienna” (Kraus 11) before involuntarily releasing the people who are briefly fugitives. All the accused escape into a house with a rear exit, before the crowd claims, repeatedly, “We’re not like that” (11). They are ambiguous in their manner. They are unwittingly believers of two juxtaposing attitudes and, in turn, employ each attitude to suit their own ends. When they believe a foreigner is present they want to imprison, extradite or

sentence them to death. Conversely, when a foreigner is not present, they foster the feeling of solidarity in a modern, enlightened, and united Austria: “Everybody of one heart and one mind” (15) declares the First Reporter. After all, they consider themselves people made of better ilk than that.

Immediately the fickleness of the crowd is exposed but, more ominously for satirists such as Kraus, a sense of self-entitlement and distinct lack of moral awareness is revealed. The crowd, who come to represent Austrian culture as a whole, remain convinced that their opinions are right and just. In Kraus’ Austria, there was the feeling promoted by some contemporary writers such as Rudolf Hans Bartsch that, “the beginning of a new, improved people” (Timms, *Post-War Crisis* 38) could be detected. However, according to Edward Timms, writers such as Bartsch compromised their pride in Austrian heritage by espousing volkisch values (*Post-War Crisis* 38). Following in the footsteps of philosophers such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Bartsch believed in the superiority of Germanness. Although Bartsch would later not embrace Nazi party ideology, the adoption of volkisch and Fichtean values in Austria and Germany ultimately meant a celebration of cardinal values were turned into a belief in the superiority of these core values. As long as the Austrians believed in their own superiority, then they can never question their beliefs, tainted as they may be.

Therefore, this overt celebration of values is offered by Kraus as a warning to the reader. The danger of a population becoming too introverted and arrogant is highlighted. The World War II comparison is again tempting: the volkisch values of the Central Powers morphed into the radical ideologies of the Nazis. This warning can also translate to the modern world. It is easy to draw parallels between the opening act of *The Last Days of Mankind* and today, even in an era of relative domestic peace: the Tea Party for example, appears to share these values and fear of

the threat of foreign invasion. Simultaneously, true American values are misused and manipulated. The very name “Tea Party” not so subtly accuses the public of being non-patriotic if they do not agree with their social policies because they are going against one of the great, founding movements of the country. In reality, the Tea Party’s policies have nothing to do with the original Boston Tea Party or any part of the founding of the new nation. Similarly, the British Nationalist Party (BNP) adopts such a name to invoke pride in its members. Kraus would argue, no doubt, through his satire on mass nationalism, that a belief in such superiority is severely misguided. Believers in the universality of Kraus’ satire would consider examples such as these as the way in which satire can be transferred across period and locality and, in turn, applied to ameliorate the modern audience in addition to Kraus’ original readers. But this answer is ultimately too presumptive and ignores the text itself. The Tea Party example is facetious but it does serve to illustrate how minor connections can lead to grand conclusions about the purpose of the satire. Kraus was attuned to specifically volkisch values. His satire was influenced by men such as Bartsch and not by men such as Hitler let alone by any people as far afield as modern day United States.

In *The Last Days of Mankind*, Kraus identifies a sense of ignorance among the people. This is not directed at the individual’s ignorance or lack of education, but the collective ignorance of people when gathered together. The witlessness of the herd is not dissimilar from Beerbohm’s Oxford undergraduates; evidently educated, but unable to make their own decisions. In this locale, however, there is far more at stake. What remains most striking about Act One is the fact that the crowd is wrong. They are not wrong in the sense that they believe in their entitlement while their culture descends into, at best, mediocrity, or in the sense that they possess a duplicitous belief system, although they are evidently hypocritical. Simply, they are incorrect:

misled, ill informed, and ignorant. The “shady bastard” (Kraus 10) that they presume to be a spy, is first deduced to be a Frenchman because he asks for change and therefore his money must be French made (the reader is privy to the knowledge provided by the stage directions that indicate it is a ten-kronen gold piece, and therefore Austrian). The “spy” has come from the St. Petersburg direction, however, and thus the ignorant conclusion is reached that he is a Russian spy. The logic is severely flawed: the man is potentially paying with French money; therefore he is potentially French; therefore he is a potential spy; he is thought to be travelling from the St. Petersburg’s direction; therefore he is a Russian spy. The original fact that he was first thought to be a French spy is lost on the crowd who are caught up by the mere mention of the word spy; such is the wish to defend Austrian culture.

The presentation of Austrian domestic culture and ethnicity as overtly sanctified by its own people is a deliberate technique employed by Kraus. He creates a scene of hysterical Austrians seeking to reinforce their culture, but they are ultimately left looking ignorant and bigoted. Kraus’ criticism is a universal one—he satirizes the somewhat sad human reaction to close ranks and apportion blame to outside influence. In juxtaposition, as Kraus would have it, and indeed something that his satire provokes, there is no principle of looking internally and at one’s own character. The technique of using comic literalization sharply brings into focus the negative and complicit role of the Viennese crowd during World War I and, indeed, the complicit nature of many peoples across many wars. But, as in the case of Beerbohm, whose Oxford undergraduates revert to the herd, there still remains the nagging reality that Kraus’ satire is based on his own observations. This is not to say there cannot be a universal message, the reader can compare and contrast the morals of the “crowd” against people in other wars, but this universality still relies on the solid basis that has been established by the author’s region and

period. This feeling is more profound in Beerbohm than Kraus (perhaps due to Beerbohm's relative lack of focus on morality compared to Kraus) but any universal moral message must find its roots in the author's specific experiences.

Furthermore, the crowd's ignorance is truly compounded by their distinct lack of knowledge or understanding of other cultures and races. Kraus, despite accusations of political conservatism, was famously progressive in his sensitivity to social movements such as equal rights for women and other races. For example, Kraus announced the founding of the *Women's League for Peace and Freedom* on the front page of his magazine, *Die Fackel*. Further, Kraus has been accused as a "self-hating Jew" (Robertson 81) but this criticism holds little weight in *The Last Days of Mankind*. It is necessary to make this distinction in order to understand the meaning of Kraus satire: while Kraus did not lead a perfect life and while his theories have many inconsistencies and may have typecast groups of people (Robertson 96), the basic satire of the play is to criticize war, nationalism, and the way the press sensationalized both. Indeed, any accusations of stereotyping would further the argument that the author's authority is stamped across satire. However, Kraus' play appears to promote the inclusion of all cultures and he was a fervent opposition of nationalism, once saying, "Nationalism is the love that connects me to the idiots of my country, the people who libel my morals, and to the desecrators of my language" (Kraus, *Dicta and Contradicta* 123). Furthermore, Kraus was particularly interested in and reverent about Chinese culture. In *The Last Days of Mankind*, the Grumbler says to the Optimist, "The only race strong enough to survive the technological life does not live in Europe" (62) (for Kraus, modern technology had progressed because of war), to which the Optimist replies, "Aha, your Chinese, the race most unfit for war" (62). In Kraus' eyes, China had lived through modernization before and he praised the Chinese "for having worked through the

technological apparatus of the modern age in ancient times and kept their life intact” (Timms 60). Europe had continuously proved that it could not modernize without warring and continued to prove Kraus correct because of World War I. Thus, this particular aspect of Kraus’ play appears perfectly to depict the contrasting scope of satire. His satire is at once shared and local. In this instance he focuses on a prevalent subject, the role of modern technology in warfare, but his satire is also both confined and defined by Kraus’ own experiences and opinions. Therefore, while many political commentators may note the negative role of technology in war, it was Kraus’ own prerogative to acclaim the Chinese approach and deride the nationalistic Austrian (and Western) attitude. Kraus’ experiences alone dictated this particular version of criticism.

In this opening act, the ignorance of the Austrian people towards other cultures is ruthlessly satirized. First the crowd “discovers” two Englishman who are, in fact, American representatives of the Red Cross. Nevertheless, the crowd shouts, “Speak German! May God punish England! Let ‘em have it! We’re in Vienna!” (Kraus 11). Perhaps the crowd can be forgiven for this, after all, English and American culture and accent must be difficult to decipher (however, perhaps they should have recognized that the Americans are from the Red Cross and asked the more pressing question as to what exactly two Englishmen, if English they be, were doing walking around Vienna and openly talking English during the war). Secondly, and this is when the crowd’s ignorance reaches a new level of incredulity, a Turk is mistaken for a Frenchman, two cultures and languages that should be easily decipherable. The same phrase is repeated, “Two frogs! Speak German! Let ‘em have it! We’re in Vienna!” (11). Thirdly, two Chinese men are mistaken for Japanese—“Japs still in Vienna! The bastards should be strung up by their pigtails” (11). Even when a voice of reason isolates itself from the crowd the conclusion is reached by the crowd that “All Chinks are Japs” (12). Evidently, the presence of war is in

some part accountable for the negative Austrian attitude and the criticism of war is undoubtedly an element of Kraus' satire; not only does war lead to senseless deaths but also increases negative nationalism and the isolation of alternate cultures. In modern politics, the creation of national and ethnic identities leads to international and inter-ethnic wars and can be used by leaders of countries to maintain or gain power, both within in its borders and outside (Fearon and Laitin). This has particular resonance in Hitler's era, where he isolated the Jews both home and abroad to gain the favor of the local population, but it is a trend that Kraus seems to have foreseen—illustrated through his distaste of nationalistic wars. Fearon and Laitin argue that social construction of ethnicities is one of the premier causes of war (this social construction could work both ways; either negatively or positively, but both have their roots in nationalism and the domination of ethnicity over the other (857)). But while his sentiment provides some small elements of universality, the evidence he provides is distinctly Austrian. Kraus is not a political theorist, he is writing a war satire and his text is based within the confines of World War I. Hence, Kraus satirizes not only the war but also the sheer ignorance of the Austrian people; the ignorance of what they are saying, but also the senseless ignorance of believing what they are saying and treating them as cardinal truths.

Even the voice of reason is not spared from Kraus' satire. One voice in the crowd manages to placate the crowd by quoting a newspaper, "Such excesses of patriotism can in no way be tolerated. Furthermore, they are liable to harm tourist traffic" (12). The individual is satirized in two ways; firstly, he has received his information, and he takes this information at face value, from a newspaper that, in Kraus' eyes, represents the sensationalism that is wrong with modern Austria. Secondly he is suggesting the correct view of inclusiveness but for all the wrong reasons. This man in the crowd is not a voice of reason, however, simply another victim

of materialism and the press. Consequentially, his scope is limited and can only ask the question, “How is tourist traffic supposed to develop if this kind of thing goes on?” (12). One feels that Kraus considers that the question the man (and the crowd) should be asking is along the lines of “How are decent and enlightened human people supposed to develop if this kind of thing goes on?” Those that misidentify the “shady bastard” are ultimately shown to have shady motives.

The Oxford Herd

Just as there is a Viennese herd in *The Last Days of Mankind* there is the Oxford herd in *Zuleika Dobson*. Kraus identifies the Austrian crowd immediately by permitting them a collective voice in the play. Similarly, there is little subtlety in Beerbohm’s identification of the crowd, “All the youths, quite under her spell...in silence they followed her” (3). Collectively, the undergraduates are subject to Zuleika’s magnetism. They have little idea of what romance actually is but are instead defined by a collective body. It is little wonder that there are only three speaking male characters in the novel: the Duke, being the only one to arouse Zuleika’s interests; Noaks, noticeable for his cowardice; and the Warden of Judas, who is not an undergraduate and is Zuleika’s grandfather. Beerbohm’s narrator, ever the impartial sage, notices that,

It was because these undergraduates were a crowd that their passion for Zuleika was so intense; and it was because they were a crowd that they followed so blindly the lead given to them. To die for Miss Dobson was “the thing to do.” The Duke was going to do it. The Junta was going to do it. It was a hateful fact (151)

Jonathan Greenberg would argue that this aspect of the novel “can be taken as a satire on the herd instinct” (25) and, while the satire does not solely fall upon the men in the novel, their collective tragic descent brings to light the mob mentality. The comparison to a “junta”—a military led government with negative connotations—is particularly powerful if only because it highlights how bizarre the collective decision-making process can be. The undergraduates are vulnerable precisely because they are a herd. But to suggest that this universally satirizes the herd instinct is to not look carefully enough at satire’s basis. Beerbohm’s herd-mentality was contingent on the events of Oxford. His satire on herd mentality begins with the infatuation of the undergraduates with Zuleika. The beginnings of this particular form of herd mentality are very different from, say, the beginnings of the herd mentality in *The Last Days of Mankind*. These separate influence means that there is always an inherent part of their respective satire on the herd instinct that will be, however minutely, dissimilar.

Beerbohm’s narrator’s words best describe the men in the novel, “Two or three thousand human bodies, human souls? Yet the effect of them in the moonlight was as of one great passive monster” (162). The men of Oxford are “passive monsters,” eternally lusting and longing as Zuleika slowly brings into question whether they are much more than human bodies that make up this collective monster. In this fashion, Beerbohm’s words are just as harsh, if not harsher, than Kraus’ critique of the Austrian herd. By describing them as “a great passive monster” that loves Zuleika because it is “the thing to do” Beerbohm is unforgiving in his criticism of the herd. Indeed, objectively his language may better apply to the Austrian herd because the costs of their complicity are far more consequential than merely their own suicides. But the purpose of Beerbohm’s satire here is to grossly exaggerate and while the language he employs may be universal, the basis for his language remains the Oxford undergraduates.

Many critics have noted that the literal emasculation of the Duke, who believes he will expire when he catches a cold (Beerbohm 195), is comparable with the emasculation of all the men in the novel who, to a man, are compelled to make themselves a servant of Zuleika. Indeed, a common analysis of *Zuleika Dobson* paints Zuleika as a *femme fatale*. While this description is indisputable—she is an enchanting woman who is the downfall of all the men in Oxford—if we view the novel in strictly satirical terms, the scope of her fatality is so ridiculous that it becomes challenging to see her as traditional *femme fatale*. Beerbohm seems to be asking if a traditional *femme fatale* is so seductive and enchanting, then why could she not mesmerize every young male who lays eyes on her? Qualified to just the undergraduates in Oxford and you have the basis of one of Beerbohm’s most observable object of satire, the *femme fatale*. Thus, it appears that Beerbohm is satirizing the literary creation of a *femme fatale* by creating the ultimate, sanctified *femme fatale*. No other literary *femme fatale* can bring “great single cries of ‘Zuleika!’” from leaping figures “innumerable through rain to river” (291). Beerbohm’s victims of the *femme fatale* are the Oxford herd. Even his pathetic fallacy is satirical; only once the men commit suicide has the “signal been given by Zeus for the rain to fall” (289). The pathetic fallacy is ironically stereotypical and, because it is so stereotypical, the satirizing of the *femme fatale* (who supposedly controls men, God and the weather alike) is completed.

The idea that the *femme fatale* itself is satirized goes against many of the literary critics who recognize Zuleika as a *femme fatale*, but do not see it as an object of satire. Felicia Bonaparte believes that “only a literal reading of the myth of the *femme fatale* can bring to light its hidden meaning” (352). This hidden meaning, according to Bonaparte is “the communion of love and death” (352). This is a valid point because frequently in the novel the Duke lyricizes about the nobility of death. The narrator writes that the Duke believes “death was the one true

bridal” (87). Indeed, death as a whole in the novel is treated as aesthetic or the ultimate display of love. Says Zuleika, “She only knew that he must not die—not yet! A moment ago his death would have been beautiful. Not now!” (109). But the more pertinent consequence of this extraordinary *femme fatale* is not the focus on love and death. It is more simplistic than that as the herd mentality of the undergraduates is utterly rationalized through the presence of Zuleika.

The Duke can be viewed as a singular representation of the Oxford herd; despite being the leading male character in the text, the large proportion of his actions mirrors the rest of the undergraduates. However the Duke can equally be defined by his own “leadership” qualities; the death of the undergraduates has much to do with the way they follow the Duke who, in turn, follows Zuleika. Beerbohm the narrator is quick to note that these “young men were the victims less of Zuleika than of the Duke’s example, and of one another” (151). This is associated with the herd mentality of the undergraduates that Beerbohm is so quick to satirize. The men of Oxford are easily acquiesced into committing suicide—it is not strictly against their will, but it is clearly against their best interests and their rationale. They do not make their own decisions and they are not individuals—they are one of a crowd, the Duke’s herd or Zuleika’s. Precisely because the herd mentality is so ruthlessly satirized, the aura of the *femme fatale* is somewhat diminished. Indeed, the novel could rather be described as more of a self-inflicted *homme fatale* where the men of the novel have their weaknesses exposed by the Duke (although the Duke himself is clearly a victim of the *femme fatale*). This is especially true if we consider that Zuleika is not truly beautiful (9 and 280), a point Beerbohm is eager to establish early in the text, nor does she possess a charming personality. She is merely an upper-class woman with an enhanced reputation who appears in a town dominated by a large, male, undergraduate body.

She is nothing exceptional, but the men are decidedly unexceptional because of the fact that they cannot make rational decisions, or decisions for themselves.

Ultimately, it is the Duke's decision to commit suicide. He is the one who, in his own mind, would set the example that "everyone would follow" (204). Furthermore, if we are to consider the Duke a *homme fatale* (in the sense that he is more responsible for the deaths of the undergraduates than the *femme fatale*, Zuleika) we need look no further than his sparkling qualifications. Like Zuleika he is dominant amongst his sex—at Oxford he had been called "peacock" (29)—and is brilliantly intelligent, unlike Zuleika, and on his way to a First at Oxford (30). He has political friends, sporting accomplishments, and a name so long ("John, Albert, Edward, Claude, Orde, Angus, Tankerton, Tanville-Tankerton, fourteenth Duke of Dorset, Marquis of Dorset, Earl of Grove, Earl of Chastermaine, Viscount Brewery, Baron grove, Baron Petstrap, and Baron Wolock, in the peerage of England" (57) –another example of a particularly Oxbridge, upper-class joke) that he believes himself too entitled, more in a political sense than sexually, to be turned down. Most significantly, however, he was "idolized by the undergraduates of his day" (30). All these descriptions sound eerily like a male depiction of Zuleika, if not even more impressive. Thus, while most commentators recognize "the neurotic tease behind Zuleika's *femme fatale*" (Danson 134) is it also possible to perceive the self-debilitating *homme fatale*? And for just a moment the *homme fatale* dominates the book. When the power dynamics are reversed early on in the novel, the Duke is truly the "peacock" because he dominates even the most powerful *femme fatale*.

However, what is certain is that the *femme fatale* and *homme fatale* are satirized alike. By creating absurdist characters and by taking their irrationality to new extremes, Beerbohm is satirizing the very presence of their character. For example, the Duke's name alone is an

example of Beerbohm's humour; it is so preposterously long and reeks of upper-class Oxford (a humorous extension being Beerbohm's footnotes that state that Tankerton be pronounced Tacton, and Tanville-Tankerton be pronounced Tavvle-Tacton (57)) that one cannot help but think that Beerbohm intended the Duke to be a unusual character. Indeed, the last words between the two primary characters sums up their respective incongruousness. Remember, the Duke has only come up with the idea of suicide in order to make "she, the hyena woman, would be the fool" (151). But as he dies he promises to Zuleika to call her name in a loud voice (admittedly, Zuleika reminds him to do that). Their parting lines are even stranger. Zuleika asks the Duke,

"If you hadn't forced me to kill my love, I would have died with you. And you know it is true."

"Yes." It was true enough. (285)

The humour of the narrator's summation completes the idea that both characters possess an absurd form of logic. The *homme fatale* submits to the *femme fatale*, just as the rest of the undergraduates submit to a product of them both. However, they are both utterly foolish, and, because of the Duke's foolishness in particular—even the sporadically present Gods take note: "Shaking with laughter, the gods leaned over the thunder-clouds to watch him" (217).

Therefore, because of her foolishness, Zuleika cannot be considered a true *femme fatale*. Similarly, to describe the Duke as purely a *homme fatale* is insufficient because of his subservience to Zuleika.

Zuleika Dobson is no traditional love story of unrequited love. Indeed, the romance in the novel borders on the extreme and is absurdist and this in itself points to the locality of Beerbohm's satire, as does the presence of a *homme fatale*. Who had ever heard of hundreds of

undergraduates committing suicide because of one, single woman they barely know?

Nonetheless, these absurdities appear in some way relatable to real life. Copycat suicide is a near proven trend, with the most famous historical example being the spate of suicides after the publication of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. David P. Phillips coined the term *The Werther Effect* to describe the copycat phenomenon (Coleman 2). The book was banned in Italy, Germany, and Denmark because in the years that followed many men shot themselves at their desk, the same place Werther committed suicide, dressed as Werther accompanied by the book (Coleman 2). Goethe's text is, of course, completely unlike Beerbohm's novel and its sheer intensity, depth of character and first person narrative, make Werther's suicide in no way comparable to the suicides of the undergraduates of Oxford. However, in real life, there really were mass suicides taking place in the name of Romanticism. This aspect of "romance" relates to the more idealistic "Romance" that Sara Lodge claims originates with Romanticism (and was continued by the romanticization of Oxford by Arnold et al), "open self-love, yet self destructive wantonness and preoccupation with death" (40). Lodge's observation is particularly resonant when one considers that the Duke is idealistic to the extent that he dresses as a medieval knight of the Garter before he jumps in the river to his death. This is Arnold's Oxford gone mad. Because the Duke's actions are driven by this melodramatic romanticism, we do not exhaustively blame Zuleika for his and all the other deaths. Beerbohm's decision to play with both romance and Romance sees these two notions fight against each other in the text with disastrous, if darkly humorous, consequences.

We cannot view Zuleika as a villain or a traditional *femme fatale* because the men act as part of a herd—"He forgot her levity and vanity—her wickedness, as he had inwardly called it. He was thrilled with that intense anxiety that comes to a man when he sees his beloved" (162).

The herd's actions provoke the dominant question in the satire: why do the Oxford's undergraduates act collectively rather than individually? In a very literal novel, *Zuleika* possesses no literal magic (or, indeed, originality, a topic discussed in Chapter III) and the men can recognize her faults but not their own. But enchanted they remain. The literality of the novel (in the sense that the suicides are not metaphorical, they are a real part of the satire) left Edmund Wilson complaining that the "wholesale suicide at the end of the book is apocalyptic, but to me completely unreal" (42), while Northrup Frye observed that the reader "should be well advised to allow for ironic intention" (87). However, it is the literality that drives the satire. Beerbohm wishes to emphasize the herd-mentality of the Oxford undergraduates and he uses the most shocking and absurd means to underscore this. The literality of the novel is so intense that it conversely creates a "crystalline surface of unreality wrought by the author for the character and settings of the book" (Dupee 183). It is upon this surface that the satire can be found: without it, the novel really would just be an Oxford love story.

The Pursuit of Power

The locality of satire is very much evident in *Zuleika Dobson*, but while we, the reader, must understand Oxford in 1911 to understand Beerbohm's book, abstractions that capture the human imagination still creep into the novel. Rather than considering Beerbohm's satire merely as either one of two things, a satire that only applies to Oxford in circa 1911 or a universal satire that is concerned with human plight, we can instead consider *Zuleika Dobson* in light of belonging to both. Beerbohm is not an idealist; his satire does remain narrow and within the confines of Oxford and the text can only be understood with knowledge of Oxford in 1911, because, quite simply that is the topic of his satire. However, concurrently, trends of satire that

are present in other texts are also apparent in *Zuleika Dobson*, albeit with a distinct Oxford flavor. One of these trends is power and the human fascination to give meaning and resonance to this abstraction.

The false power that the protagonist in the novel believes they enjoy frequently makes them the object of satire. In psychological language, the notion of the false perception of power led Smith, Wigboldus and Dijksterhuis to conclude that “one’s objective sense of power often has a great influence on behaviour than the amount of power one actually possess” (378). In relation to the satirical novel, this shows how satirical novels that develop a character (often the protagonist) make them the subject of the satire through the characters increased belief in their own power.

For example, Zuleika is almost defined by her opinion of power relationships. Zuleika’s power is found in her beauty, as soon as people see her get off the train at Oxford station and greet her Grandfather with a kiss on either cheek, the narrator, in parenthesis, notes, “Not a youth there but would have bartered fifty years of his future for that salute” (2). But what is more important is that Zuleika is acutely aware of her power over the throngs of men and is thus able to manipulate them to her own ends. She is a wealthy heiress, already rich, living at the hotel in Mayfair with innumerable gowns and gifts (16). Indeed, Beerbohm sets up the power hierarchy early on in the novel, stating that “she was an empress and all youths were her slaves. Their bondage delighted her” (22). This is an example of her awareness of having power over almost everyone she encounters and this awareness means she can manipulate the undergraduates of Oxford.

However, early on in the novel, Beerbohm subverts the power relations that Zuleika is accustomed to. The Duke, rather than ogling Zuleika, acts indifferently in her presence. As soon

as Zuleika meets a person, she has a conscious control over them. Thus, she has little concern for them and their subservience means that there is little chance of true love. But remove this control, as in the case of her first meeting with the Duke, and Zuleika is intrigued—objectively she does not hold any power over the Duke. The effect of this power subversion means Beerbohm’s satire is as direct as it is specific in its subject; the idea of tenuous and abstract power relations that are treated as law by the character.

Beerbohm asks the reader, “Was the Duke bewitched? Instantly, utterly. But none could have guessed as much from his cold stare, his easy and impassive bow” (26). The Duke is bewitched by Zuleika, everyone is, but the impression he gives her means the normal power relations concerning Zuleika have shifted. To return to Smith, Wigboldus and Dijksterhuis’ study, nothing has really changed about Zuleika’s dominance over men, indeed, the Duke is likewise summarily enchanted, but now her subjective sense of power is having a great effect in changing her behaviour. No longer is she dismissive of men, “at last, here was the youth who would not bow down to her; whom, looking up to him, she could adore” (28). Zuleika’s behaviour is directly linked to how she perceives her power relationships to men, and consequentially, her ability to love a man. Now she can love the Duke because his worthiness is displayed through his indifference to her; the Duke acts as if he has control over his feelings of love, and hence he has power over Zuleika because she is denied her own source of power, submissiveness. This may seem absurdist, and is presented by Beerbohm in a slightly fantastical fashion, but these illogical power relations are the object of Beerbohm’s satire and underline the fundamentally abstract nature of power.

Beerbohm satirizes power through its scarcely believable fluidity—such is the abstract nature of power that one false move can undermine the very character. In *Zuleika Dobson* this is

the Duke's fate. Partly due to his wealth and connections, the Duke is seemingly the most powerful man in Oxford, but more importantly, the power stems from the fact that no other soul can attract Zuleika. However, as soon as he delivers his apologetic and amorous opening monologue, culminating in those fateful words "I love you" (48), Zuleika's love for the Duke vanishes. Zuleika once again holds the power and her character's psyche does not permit her to love those who worship her.

Beerbohm's satire here is highlighted by its proximity to the absurd; clearly, the power in a relationship would not change at this velocity. But Beerbohm's symbolism borders on the magical, with the Duke noticing that the color of Zuleika's pearls has changed. They were white when she entered the room, symbolizing her love for the Duke, before their old color returned to them. Their color, like her love, has faded away. On the other hand, the Duke's pearls are destined to remain the color they have been ever since he first laid eyes on Zuleika, just as he is destined to remain in permanent love with her, suspended in this state. Jonathan Greenberg notes that the supernatural changes of colour "signals the changes in characters' emotional states before they themselves are conscious of them" (25). Therefore, the supernatural changes highlight the abstractive nature of power and how it does not truly exist as a definitive form in the real world but only exists as a form in the mind of the character. Greenberg notes that emotion is "everywhere treated as something that comes upon the characters from without. Through the act of feeling, the Duke abandons the theoretical world for the experiential" (25). Similarly, power relationships between characters act in the same way; outside actions, however small, ultimately define whether or not they consider other characters beneath them, above them, or their equals.

The reader must remember that power is not a physical reality, but because it is treated as an outside physical force in the novel (especially by the characters), power has a great effect in determining the social relationships in the novel. Beerbohm mirrors Pope's satire in *The Rape of the Lock*. In Canto II, Pope describes the males attraction to Belinda, "Nourished two locks.../well conspired to deck/With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck./Love in these labyrinths his slave detains,/And mighty hearts are held in slender chains" (43: 20-24). These ringlets are described as love's labyrinth, specifically designed to ensnare any heart that might get entangled in them. Like Beerbohm's pearls, Belinda's locks become the symbol of power that men seek to possess. The only difference is that the Baron literally seeks to acquire Belinda's locks, while the Duke must seek to keep Zuleika's pearls white. Furthermore, both locks and pearls relate back to power. Belinda is powerless without her locks. Meanwhile, Zuleika is powerless when, out of her control, the pearls alter their color. The similarities between Belinda and Zuleika early on in their respective texts has not been commented on by critics, perhaps because of their respective outcomes: Belinda becomes the victim and Zuleika the empowered survivor. But the women are associated through their radiant and addictive beauty and the objects on their body, the two locks and two earrings, which entice and then ensnare while simultaneously embodying their power status. The pearls provide a rare moment of analogy in *Zuleika Dobson*, in the sense that the rest of the text contains literal and believable events. This brief removal from the novel being read literally (literally, in the sense that the text's intentions are to make the reader believe that the story is real rather than analogous—here we must ignore Edmund Wilson's complaints that the story is unreal) is uncharacteristic but perhaps indicates how much Beerbohm's wishes to stress the significance of the power relationships in the satire. His brief deviation into a fantastical tale, little else in the novel

suggests that objects can change color, satirizes how seriously the undergraduates of Oxford treat an abstraction such as power relationships: serious enough that it can absurdly lead to their suicide.

Zuleika is able to succinctly recognize this change in the power relationships:

Not one of them ever touched the surface of my heart. You stirred my heart to its very depths. Yes, you made me love you madly. The pearls told you no lie. You were my idol—the one thing in the world to me. You were so different to any man I had ever seen except in dreams. You did not make a fool of yourself. I admired you. I respected you. I was all afire with adoration of you. And now it is all over. The idol has come sliding down its pedestal to fawn and grovel with all other infatuates in the dust about my feet
(51-52)

Zuleika, acutely aware of the changing power relationship between the Duke and herself, admires the Duke precisely because he is not like other men—he is unique, even if this inimitableness is defined by a perceived indifference to Zuleika herself. Ultimately, however, the Duke becomes similar to the other men and makes himself a slave to Zuleika. So why is Zuleika acutely aware of power relationships when the men in the novel are not? Perhaps it is a matter of gender or, more exactly, it is how Zuleika lives. Precisely because she is always admired she is constantly confronted with subservience and therefore she can always recognize it. In a novel that is admittedly not overloaded by emotional depth of character, Zuleika's character is distinctive because of her awareness of power relationships, which are, in turn, established by her burning desire for love that can never be satiated.

This sense of empowerment is echoed on a collective scale in Kraus' *The Last Days of Mankind*. The Austrian public, Kraus believes, enjoy thinking themselves as world-leaders; they

are the greatest country on Earth and all other cultures pale in comparison. This is why Kraus presents to the reader scenes where every other country is troubled except for Austria. Tellingly, Kraus does not always use the voice of the crowd to emphasize the empowerment the Austrians feel, although the crowd's false empowerment is a byproduct of the herd mentality. Kraus is willing to use individual characters, such as the "Patriot" and "Subscriber," who are not named characters but nevertheless indicate to the reader an individual sense of empowerment. Kraus gets even more specific, using named characters such as the "Austrian General" or the made-up journalists Fuechsl, Feigl, and Halberstam. Kraus is even willing to use real-names in his satire, citing Alice Schalek and Pogatschnigg by name. This readiness to identify individual indicates that this sense of empowerment does not just occur when people are part of a herd (conversely, remember Beerbohm's assertion that it was precisely because they were a crowd that they felt compelled to die for Zuleika), but also an individual problem. For example, the aforementioned "Patriot" and "Subscriber" describe citizens in France being "Imprisoned for disseminating the truth in France" (Kraus 41). Further, they discuss the situation in Italy, "Do you know there are already draft dodgers there?" (40). Meanwhile, in Austria they are left basking in their own fortuitousness: "Thank God we have a clear conscience" (30-31) and the provision of wool blankets provides "an excellent example of the way everything works out in this country" (37). Part of this reveling in their perceived power over other countries is because of the nature of war. But it is a particular aspect of war relating to nationalism and power that leads the Austrian people to act in such a fashion. Consequently, right until the very end of the play, the Austrian people remain convinced of their righteousness even as the war heads towards an inevitable victory for the Allies, the Austrian General cries, "Gentleman, one step more and the victory is ours!" (211).

The similarities to Zuleika are not direct but both satirists, Kraus and Beerbohm, criticize the sense of empowerment by which the person or community is sustained by. Their very value of existence, the high-opinion they maintain of themselves, is not based on their actions (certainly, both Zuleika and the Austrians perform little to no altruistic or virtuous acts in the texts) but on their own estimation of their power and subsequent superiority over others. Does this commonality extend to universality? Perhaps, but the similarities between the two texts can instead be attributed to the abstract nature of power. Because it remains undefined, it is easily manipulated and comparative examples are comfortably drawn out from these abstractions. But this is illusionary. Abstractions such as power structures and herd mentality are human constructs and are easily manipulated to suit the reader without proper consideration of what these texts are based in. They are based in the locality and period of the satire and not within these abstractions.

Bertrand Russell stated that human desire is exceptional for “human desires, unlike those of animals, are essentially boundless and incapable of complete satisfaction” (9). We chase this abstract, and the futility that comes with the chase is a main object of satire. Evidently, this thought can be applied to all the young men in *Zuleika Dobson* whose carnal desire for Zuleika come to define their life. However, if we are to believe Russell, it is not a carnal desire that leads the men blindly to chase Zuleika. It is something deeper than that, something that conversely separates human and animals rather than connects them. In *The Last Days of Mankind*, it is the want to be the most dominant nation on earth; in *Zuleika Dobson* it is the want of the males to claim the most adored woman in Oxford or for Zuleika herself to maintain her lofty status. Russell claims, “imagination is the goad that forces human beings into restless exertion” (10) and, if we relate this to power once more, we can see that it is this imagination of power relations

and the pursuit of the abstract notion of power, that Beerbohm and Kraus are accentuating here. And by accentuating the abstract notion of power, Beerbohm is making it a premier object of his satire.

Russell's definition of power and its relationship to desire can also apply to Zuleika—her own chase for a mate is similarly futile and insatiable as evidenced for her wish for an idol and not a slave. This may suggest that Zuleika rejects any power she may appear to hold over the male population; after all, she, like the throngs of men, is looking for love. For example, towards the end of the text, when Noaks is the only survivor in Oxford, it is Zuleika's turn to imagine love: "man of my greater, my nobler need! Oh hush, ideal which not consciously I was out for to-night—ideal vouchsafed to me by a crowning mercy! I sought a lover, I find a master" (325). Zuleika continues, "I bow to your will, master. Chasten me with your tongue" (325). The roles of Noaks and Zuleika are momentarily subverted (although, many have noted that Noaks is the only "dismally realistic" character in the novel precisely because he does not conform with the mass suicides (Bonaparte 359)) with it being Zuleika's turn to bow down to the ideal of love and cede power to the opposing party. The language Beerbohm employs to illustrate the power relationships is unabashedly unsubtle, with the language of "master" and "slave" echoing the "idol" and "worshipper" rhetoric used by Zuleika to describe the Duke. Indeed, her personal quest is just as futile and insatiable as the men in the novel. At the end of the novel she orders the train to be redirected to Cambridge, moving on to the next university town. At this moment, she appears to be like the men, chasing love from town to town.

Nevertheless, Zuleika does not refuse the power she holds over the undergraduates. She employs her perception of her power over men (to which the men are embarrassingly acquiescent) to the extent that she rejects love and rejects men on the very principle of power

relations. Lawrence Danson notes, “Zuleika cannot love any man but the one man who will not love her” (117). Even the coward Noaks commits suicide in the end, once Zuleika realizes he is not an object to be put up on a pedestal like the Duke once was: “As for you, little Sir Lily Liver...I do but felicitate the river-god and his nymphs that their water was saved to-day by your cowardice from the contamination of your plunge” (Beerbohm 328). The perception of power roles has shifted once again. Noaks is summarily demoted and that demotion beckons his suicide. Thus, Zuleika’s move to Cambridge can instead be viewed as parasitical—she is comfortable with herself as she leaves Oxford, despite hundreds of men committing suicide because of her. She departs with “her lips parted in a yawn, met in a smile...and very soon she fell asleep” (350). She knows she has power over these men and will continue to wield it in Cambridge as well as Oxford. This, at least, is the presumption, despite S.C. Roberts aforementioned sequel. *Zuleika Dobson* should be considered within its limits and Beerbohm is utterly suggestive at the end of the novel. Roberts does, however, make an important point about the quality of character,

Here was Zuleika for the first time with a Cambridge undergraduate; and undergraduates, she assumed, (as Dr. Johnson assumed of the waters of the sea), were much the same everywhere. She hoped that the young man would not fall in love with her too violently before she had her lunch (7)

Not all young males are the same but Zuleika’s attitude remains consistent. S.C. Roberts sequel begs the question; is this an attitude that is particular to Oxford? In a sense, the inevitable answer is yes, because the book is an Oxford fantasy and told for the purposes of Oxford people to laugh at. Simultaneously, this can also be equated to a false perception of power once more; Zuleika believes she can conquer Cambridge in a similar way to Oxford and therefore she moves

to Cambridge for precisely that reason. She is a parasite who overplays her ability to coerce others. Therefore, Roberts' future is a salient one because it illustrates the way in which power is satirized through Zuleika's character and not just through the subservience of the Oxford undergraduates.

Beerbohm exaggerates Zuleika's knowledge of her power over men to the extent that she knows that all the men at Oxford University have committed suicide because of her. The Warden asks Zuleika, "What did they die of?" to which she replies "Of me" (335). This, of course, is unrealistic but Beerbohm's goes to this length to ridicule not only the conformity of the men but the power that Zuleika now exerts. Thus, Zuleika is also subject to Beerbohm's satire in terms of her own approach to notions of power. Simply put, she believes she has power over men and this parasitic appetite to maintain this power (at her own personal chance of love and the moral cost of blood on her hands) drives her on to Cambridge and, presumably, elsewhere. This narcissism was a topical subject in an Oxford steeped in the upper class snobbery of the 1890s and early twentieth century. Oscar Wilde, a close friend of Beerbohm, noted, "to love oneself is the beginning of a life-long romance" (Danson 118). So while Danson's assertion that "narcissism is the Oxford kind of love; and the love of Oxford is the Oxford's man's unattainable desire for the image of his own youth" (118), refers strictly to men, the same concept can similarly be applied to Zuleika. This topicality means that once more the text is indebted to its circumstance. Narcissistic love is the novel's subject of satire; as the narrator asks early on in the novel, "Whom, then, could Zuleika adore?" (22).

Defiance and Complicity

To claim that Kraus' satire on war and media is universal is a mere tautology. Kraus forcefully discusses both these topics and the themes are so large and all-encompassing that comparisons can be made precisely because they constantly composite human culture. A better example of potentially universal satire (that is, by necessity, somewhat instructive) would not be merely Kraus' criticism of the press, but would instead be how Austrian citizens react to the patriotic sensationalism of the press and how it pertains to war. Evidently, if the Viennese people had ignored the press or treated them with disdain, the press' role would have been nullified, and the satire would have been utterly local because the press had no widespread or long-lasting influence. However, if the Viennese take the media's word at face-value, then the way they react to the press becomes a universal subject of satire. If the satire probes at the complicity of the people (because they do not make their own decisions, these are made for them by the press) and at power structures (whether these decisions are made by an individual or a body such as the media, one group has significant power over the other), then these two abstractions, power and complicity, may perhaps be in some way transferable to other similar situations throughout history. It is a jump, perhaps, to leap from local critiques of power structures and complicity, to universal critiques, but the evidence is feasibly there. The obvious comparison that relates favorably to Kraus' satire is the rise of Hitler and the complicity of the Germans in the face of events such as Kristallnacht and the Night of the Long Knives.

Critics have pushed the issue as to whether Kraus can be said to identify with the political views of one of his characters. Kraus uses the Optimist and the Grumbler to bounce opposing ideas off each other. While the Optimist remains largely upbeat and patriotic about the war effort, the Grumbler, as the name suggests, is staunchly pragmatic and reluctant to see any upside

of the war, either on a larger scale or on a more domestic scale. It is not immediately evident as to whether Kraus considers himself the Grumbler, or indeed that Kraus is professing that the Grumbler's opinions are the correct views. Earlier scholarship suggested that the Grumbler was an extension of Kraus himself and espoused the views of the author. In 1957 Erich Heller asserted that the "Grumbler is the author himself" (253). Even earlier, in 1931, Walter Benjamin describes Kraus, "there he stands on 'The Last Days of Mankind'—the 'grumbler' who has described the preceding days" (256). Both Heller and Benjamin agree that Kraus is the Grumbler, the narrator, of sorts, in the play and the character whose opinions are not only strongly characteristic of the author, but rather completely representative. In this sense, we witness the authority of the author on the play.

However, more recent scholarship has suggested that the Grumbler should be treated as a character and not as an extension of Kraus himself. Harry Zohn recognizes this shift in opinion, "the figure of the Grumbler that has been widely regarded as the mouthpiece of the satirist and is even identified with him...the Grumbler is (now regarded as) a character that serves a literary purpose, not a mirror image of the satirist or Kraus himself" (50). In 1986, Edward Timms mused, "It is clear that the character of the Grumbler is by no means an accurate reflection of Kraus' own stance" (*Culture and Catastrophe* 390).

The difference in opinion is significant because it effects whether we view Kraus' satire being led by the Grumbler or whether the Grumbler himself is also potentially subject to derision and included in the power structure of the play. Heller considers the Grumbler representative of Kraus, however, simultaneously, he sees the Optimist as the "reasonable man" who is not "satirically caricatured, but is throughout the Grumbler's intelligent partner" (253). Heller's view can be considered somewhat contradictory, predominantly because, to the modern

readership at least, the Optimist frequently offers opinions that seem to represent the very objects of satire that Kraus ridicules; the complicity of the Viennese people, their acquiescence, and lack of ethical responsibility. The Optimist is liable to offer opinions that are completely atypical of any views that Kraus himself would offer. For example, he believes in the nobility of war, “The *Neue Freie Presse* underscores with justification how noble it is of Count Berchtold to go out to the front himself now, saber in hand, in order to meet eye to eye with that sworn enemy” (123-124). Furthermore, he professes the rather naïve opinion that Emperor Franz Josef was “tricked” into war (155). These views are so patently out of touch with the reality of modern warfare that the Grumbler’s opinions become summarily poignant. So while, the Optimist can appear reasonable (and can certainly not be considered an evil character like others in the play) and offer sensible counterarguments to the often radical Grumbler (“Do you really believe the war was decided upon by a few wicked men?” (153)), the Grumbler’s views, while depressing and scathing, provide a more accurate commentary to the ironic scenes for which he delivers an interlude. Primarily because the Grumbler provides these scathing, yet insightful and crucially knowledgeable, interludes, he can therefore be most closely associated with Kraus, even if he is not necessarily Kraus in his true form. He is the character that is not complicit, much like Kraus himself during World War I.

Even Timms backtracks a little in the end, describing the Grumbler as a “simplified version of Kraus’ satirical self” (*Culture and Catastrophe* 391). Therefore, while characters such as the “Austrian General” are ignorant as defeat becomes inevitable to the point of being delusional, “And have we not succeeded? Have we not trampled Serbia, gentlemen?” (Kraus 210), the Grumbler can intervene and supplement Kraus’ irony, claiming, “the devil himself would have advocated a peace treaty that renounced all war aims” (197). He is not Beerbohm’s

narrator who is self-conscious and divinely omnipotent, but neither is the Grumbler the complete opposite of Beerbohm's narrator. There are moments when the Grumbler is acutely aware of telling the tale and, again, just as with *Zuleika Dobson* where Max the author and Max the narrator remain separate, it is impossible to ascertain whether the Grumbler ever truly comes to represent Kraus but there remains enough crossover between the two to see the effect of contemporary events on the texts.

Nevertheless, the Grumbler's self-consciousness is significant because, in a sense, it removes him from the satire, and puts him in a position more akin to the authorial position—he is on the outside looking in. Late in the play, the Grumbler asserts, “This is my manifesto. *I have considered everything carefully*. I have taken it upon myself to tell the tragedy, which breaks down into the scenes of mankind breaking down, so that the Spirit, which has compassions for the victims would hear it” (204). The connection with Beerbohm's narrator continues; just as Max the narrator is literally divinely chosen and thus outside the satire upon the people of Oxford, the Grumbler's divine links removes him from the people of Vienna. Additionally, he is not given a conventional name, suggesting that both the Optimist and he belong outside the common satire of the Viennese people. They are not given generic names such as the Patriot, Subscriber, or Crowd, nor are they real people. This leads to the conclusion that the Grumbler is closely associated with Kraus the author, even if his views are not wholly representative of Kraus.

Perhaps, then, the Grumbler is more representative of Kraus' views at the end of the war because the war effort so radicalized his opinion. The more conservative Optimist is Kraus' conservative self at the beginning of the war, offering, albeit through sensible and logical arguments, opinions that defend to an extent the onset of war. The relationship to local

circumstances is readily forthcoming. But what is conclusively certain is that the Grumbler is afforded more stage time than the Optimist whose lines pale in comparison to the length of the Grumbler speeches, which are often more than a page long. Consequentially, the Grumbler's sentiments, whether they represent Kraus' or not, is the more prominent view and the opinion that leaves a lasting impression on the reader. The Grumbler wields the power in the play in the sense that he is the dominant voice. Precisely because the play does not rely on character and character interactions, the power structure in the play is felt differently than in *Zuleika Dobson*. Firstly, there is the power the press and the government hold over the general public, the crowd, and, in turn, the power the crowd holds over the individual. Secondly, there is the power the Grumbler holds over the reader, because of the relative greater exposure he is given in the text and because of his passionate views that perhaps echo Kraus' sentiments. For example, a scene set early on in the war (Act I, Scene 22) when the Optimist's opinions about the war remain singularly positive, demonstrates the length of speech afforded to the Grumbler over the Optimist, their contrasting opinions, and an insight into some of Kraus' objects of satire:

OPTIMIST: You are simply putting on blinders so as not to see what abundant generosity, what spirit of self-sacrifice the war has inspired!

GRUMBLER: No, it's just that I don't close my eyes to all the dehumanization and vileness it took to achieve that result. If you have to set fire to a house just to find out whether two decent tenants will come to the rescue of ten tenants, while eighty-eight shady tenants seize the opportunity to do something underhanded, then it would be a mistake to delay the goodness of human nature. Surely, there was no need to prove the goodness of the good, and it was impractical to bring about a situation through which the wicked become still more wicked. At best war teaches us an object lesson by increasing

contrasts. It may well be of value in preventing war from being waged in the future. The only contrast sharpened by war is the one between health and sickness.

OPTIMIST: In that the healthy stay healthy, and the sick remain sick?

GRUMBLER: No, in that the healthy get sick (50)

A theme that holds true throughout the play and is immediately apparent in this extract is the fact that the Grumbler is the character in charge. Furthermore, the Optimist is the one asking the questions, with the Grumbler summarily providing the answers; again indicating that he is the character in control. Thus, the view that war causes “dehumanization and vileness” is the prominent opinion coursing through this scene. In this instance, the Grumbler espouses Kraus’ own opinion on the nature of war; this is the power that the Grumbler’s character is afforded by Kraus. He maintains an insight, he can see the eighty-eight tenants, the crowd, or stand on idly by. In the Grumbler’s eyes, war is a sickness, a disease and no good can come of it—even the “spirit of self-sacrifice” that the Optimist suggests is rejected because of the means it takes to get there. The only potential redeeming factor of the Great War, according to the Grumbler, is that it serves to “increase contrasts:” what the Optimist sees as spirit, patriotism, and heroism through acts such as self-sacrifice is perversely ironic because it can only be established amongst the evil and the atrocities of war. The scenes involving the Grumbler and the Optimist serve as some of Kraus’ less ironic scenes and bring into focus the seriousness of the situation, rather than highlighting the propensity to the absurd as other scenes do (where the character’s opinions, although very believable, are devised to be ridiculous). Kraus’ presence in the satire is surely felt in the Optimist and Grumbler scenes.

It has often been suggested that Kraus’ main object of satire is about the press (Timms, *Post-War Crisis* 65; Field 88), however, it is also easy to see that the presence of war (and

humanity's reaction to it—this reaction may also include the press) is the object at which Kraus' satire truly probes. The Grumbler is so anti-war that soon after his comments that war may provide contrasts he goes even further to deny any positives of war,

OPTIMIST: The good become better and the bad become good. War purifies.

GRUMBLER: It deprives the good of the faith, if not of their lives, and it makes the bad worse. The contrasts of peace-time were enough (60)

The final sentence witnesses the Grumbler retract his earlier argument; there are no redemptive qualities of war, even if it is as brutal as the Great War. Indeed, the Grumbler's argument is borne out by the advent of World War II—the horrors of warfare may serve as a contrast that will lead people to say “never again,” but this proclamation will only endure so long. A new generation comes along and the “contrasts of war” cannot stop new warfare. The Grumbler may appear overtly pessimistic but his refusal to sanction any positives of war serves as a refreshing contrast to the glorification of war by the other characters in the book. For example, war correspondent Alice Schalek describes the warfare she witnesses in stark contrast to the Grumbler, “Call it patriotism, hatred of the enemy, sport, adventure, or the joyous thrill of power—I call it humanity liberated! I am gripped by the fever of this experience” (58). That is why the Grumbler is so important in the play; he may play the devil's advocate perhaps, but he is also such an opponent of war that the reader cannot fail to sympathize with his views. Evidently, patriotism is not always a dangerous notion or a feeling that, when felt collectively, can lead to war. But in this particular instance it can and it ultimately did. Kraus' view is a perilous one; opposing nationalism by its very nature is unpatriotic, anti Austrian, and anti-German and during the war it runs the risk of accusatory looks (and worse) in Kraus' direction for fear of not only not supporting the war effort but actively supporting the other side. In this sense, it appears that

Kraus, in *The Last Days of Mankind* at least, is more concerned with critiquing warfare than he is the role of the press.

Again, the workings of abstract satire play a large role in determining whether or not there can truly be universality in satire. The components of war that Kraus hones—overt patriotism, the herd mentality, and the power these two abstractions have over the people—are the elements that are transferable to other wars. To say war is a universal property of satire is too broad a definition; instead, we must delve into the abstract mechanisms of war on which the author, consciously or subconsciously focuses. Therefore, merely being anti-war is not a transferable quality of satire because the critic must recognize that each war is dependent on the moment in which it occurs. But the more specific human qualities that go along with war, such as complicity and subservience, can perhaps be considered universal because the reader can recognize and compare these abstractions across time periods. Abstractions such as complicity may not be applicable for every war but the abstractions may have the potential to be universal because their existence is defined by and reliant on the authorial discourse or the satirical moment. They are separate because of the fact that they are not concrete. Thus, the human desire to chase an abstraction such as power, or to act blindly as one of a herd, are the transferable elements of satire that can traverse the horrors of World War I to the significantly more peaceful pre-war Oxford and many eras and locales besides. The satire is not dependent on its locale like the satire against war or the *femme fatale* is. But the existence of these abstractions is still contingent on both the author's intent and the circumstances of the period. Therefore, we can say that abstractions such as herd-mentality and power structures are partially transferable in some instances, but they do not apply to every situation or culture. The mere fact that we see two different types of herd mentality in Kraus and Beerbohm, one is triggered by mass

infatuation and sees the herd in love, the other is triggered by World War I and sees a patriotic herd, indicates that the abstractions cannot ever truly be universal.

Chapter III

The Modern Carnival and Hindsight in Satire

Kraus the Prophet?

The most prominent example of complicity of the people in war happens to occur shortly after Kraus' death in 1936, and takes place during World War II. The Germans and the Austrians were led by Hitler's fascist regime and one of the most inconceivable questions that comes out of World War II is how such a modern, developed, and enlightened country could commit such horrific evils. Clearly, the complicity and herd-mentality of the Austrian people that Kraus describes in World War I did not reach quite the same levels as World War II. However, at the same time, there was no true reason for World War I except for the abstract notion of patriotism. The similarities between Kraus' opinions on World War I and the later actions of the Nazis and events of World War II (Hitler took power in 1933, Kraus died in 1936) has led some critics to consider Kraus' work as prophetic. Kraus' "prediction" was to highlight the complicit nature of the Austrian and German peoples and to suggest that this complicity offered no sign of ending. On the other hand, critics have further considered Kraus' focus on what he considered to be apocalyptic dangers as exclusively immediate. The significance of this distinction will permit us to understand whether satire is local or universal: if satire is local then Kraus' satire is not prophetic because it concerns only proximate (in terms of time and geography) faults; conversely, if satire is universal, then Kraus' satire is prophetic because he critiques the human condition.

The dangers of being complicit reached their zenith during World War II. This point, coupled with the proximity of Kraus' satire to the war, has led most critics to use World War II

as a point of comparison for Kraus' prophetic tendencies (although, as we saw in Chapter I, Edward Timms also compares Kraus' satire on the press to the First Gulf War). Timms advocates Kraus as a prophet and sees multiple parallels between what Kraus observed in World War I and what would later occur in Austria-Germany:

His phrase, "Germany a concentration camp," jotted down in an unpublished notebook, shows uncanny foresight, especially when taken together with prophetic scenes from *Die Letzen Tage der Menschheit*...No text could have been more topical in the concentration-camp universe created by National Socialism (*Post-War Crisis* 543)

Timms offers many examples of the prophetic nature of Kraus' writing and indeed some of the events Kraus observed would be echoed in World War II and perhaps in other wars as well. Kraus' critique of the bombing of civilian populations can be viewed as a pertinent illustration of his darkly apocalyptic premonitions coming to disastrous fruition. One example that Timms does not use, yet may easily apply to the point he makes, is the aforementioned opening act, where the crowd attempts to identify enemies of the state. It is also apocalyptic, and Timms sees it as a sign of events to come where a Germanic identity will violently ostracize all other identities. However, if we closely analyze the semiotics of the crowd and each step the crowd takes in determining the villain, then we begin to understand a scene that is particular to Austria during the Great War. For example, the (incorrect) identities that the crowd creates for the foreigners can be attributed to Austrian stereotypes for that set of foreigners ("All chinks are Japs," and "No bathroom at 10 Downing Street...those filthy people"). It is typically xenophobic, but the play relies on stereotypes that are of a particular Austrian variety. They are not constant and will undoubtedly morph as both Austria and its relationship with the foreign country change. For example, the reader is expected to know that a ten-kronen gold piece is

Austrian money. Furthermore, the “Cabby’s” suspicion that it may be French money highlights Kraus’ perceived ignorance of the Austrian people (10). Precisely because Austria and France were at war is the Cabby’s suspicion automatically (and incorrectly) aroused. Therefore the Cabby’s suspicion can be determined as particular to this period. Still another example of Austrian culture occurs when the spy is led away by the police. As they are led away, the stage notes indicate to the reader that, “One hears the singing of ‘The Watch on the Rhine’” (13). *Die Wacht am Rhein* is a German patriotic anthem that was popularized during the Franco-Prussian War (Fuld 608). The irony of the crowd singing this anthem is multilayered. First, the crowd are singing a victory song many miles from the front, and far away from the realities of war. Secondly, their celebration is based on their own ill-informed presumptions. Thirdly, it displays their tendency to revert back to patriotic induced behaviour; their “victory” is rooted in French-German enmity and provides the basis for convicting the spy. It is no accident that Kraus’ stage notes convey the locality of his play to the reader. They provide the humor, another stage notes describes how the spy is thought to be a man because, “a lady with a trace of moustache appears” (Beerbohm 12), and the irony; the crowd are ignorant because they do not understand their own culture. They do not recognize the ten-kronen piece and they sing a patriotic song as the person is led away to display their victory over a person whom they falsely believe to be a French spy.

Therefore, although Kraus evidently made some correct prophecies, the benefit of hindsight permits us to make these connections. Kraus may have foreseen trouble in Germany beyond World War I but Timms’ claim that Kraus could predict the concentration camps of Nazi Germany is forcefully over-zealous. Kraus’ satire must be read in the moment; it can teach, instruct, and preach, but his play also relies on the semiotics of Austria circa 1914. This argument, however, does not mean his satire cannot sometimes transfer across cultures. These

aspects of his satire are still forthcoming. But Timms and other authors who see Kraus as a prophet extend a connection too far. Kraus was describing Austria and Germany as he knew it, and therefore, the comment that “Germany is a concentration camp” should be read in conjunction with an understanding approximate to Kraus’ era, and not the period after his lifetime.

Alfred Pfabigan, another literary critic who believed that the actions of Kraus’ words were prophetic, claims Kraus was “a prophet of detail who, basing himself on his magnificent imagination, managed to use trivial occasions to predict catastrophes years before they actually happened” (170). Pfabigan is directly critical of Kraus, believing him to possess an insight that he did not fully utilize and that any new satirical works by Kraus completely evaporated during the rise of National Socialism (which they did) (Timms, *Post-War Crisis* 6). Nevertheless, Pfabigan imagines that Kraus’ vision allowed him to predict that the German-speaking world would take a severe moral downturn. Pfabigan’s harsh words about Kraus are borne out of the fact that he believes Kraus to be prophetic. But this grossly misreads Kraus’ satire. Pfabigan confuses the universal aspect of Kraus’ satire with any potential prophetic tendencies. Just because Kraus’ satire possesses these universal traits through the criticism of abstract qualities and faults of human beings (the pertinent example here being the crowd’s complicity to patriotism) does not imply he predicted the rise of National Socialism or any other events. Kraus’ words in *The Last Days of Mankind* concern Austria during the Great War: they may be adapted, tailored or transposed to compare to other wars and historical trends, but this potential is a product of the transferability of Kraus’ satire and not its prophetic nature. There were complicit crowds before Kraus and there will be complicit crowds again.

Similarly, Erich Heller believed that Kraus “foretold the end of Austria-Hungary” in addition to the advent of World War II because of the “gradual corruption of its (Austria-Hungary) moral, intellectual, and artistic life” (237). Heller’s analysis appears a better fit to the system; he recognizes that Kraus’ criticisms of Austria are based on the current trends that he observes. If Austria were to continue along this path, they would find themselves in a political and social environment that pertains to immoral and nationalistic behaviour. But, significantly, as Heller points out, the corruption is gradual and Kraus does not ever claim to predict the rise of fascism or World War II. Instead his satire provides a cautionary warning about the route of moral, intellectual, and artistic life in Austria. Therefore, although Heller does not make this connection, the play serves as a warning for the moment of what Kraus describes—there is no prophecy here, merely a path that has begun to be tread upon.

In light of these efforts to connect Kraus to prophecy, we can understand why the play takes place in World War I. All the ridiculously ironic scenes that simultaneously touch on the sad predicament of Austrian society are very much a part of World War I and not of Nazi Germany. For example, Kraus depicts a short one-line scene almost utterly reliant on stage direction, involving a character named the Crown Prince (presumably Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, the leader of the Somme offensive):

During the Battle of the Somme. Gate in front of a villa. A company of front-line soldiers, wearing their death-defying countenances, marches by into the foremost front-line trenches.

CROWN PRINCE (at the park gate, in a tennis outfit, waving to them with his racket): Do a good job! (127)

Here Kraus contrasts the horrors of the Battle of the Somme (widely considered to be the most horrific and deadly battle in World War I, if not human history), with the leisurely and pleasurable activities of the Crown Prince. The naivety or blatant *laissez-faire* attitude of upper-class society, even those near the front, has disastrous consequences in the arena of war. By not protecting its citizens, and instead protecting some abstract nationalistic ideal, Austrian leadership has truly outdone itself. But black humor also prevails in this scene, as it is depressingly humorous because of the absurdity that sees the Crown Prince at leisure failing to comprehend that the soldiers will meet certain death. He bids them well, “Do a good job,” but his well-wishes make the scene even more painfully laughable and dark. The whole scene is laced with Kraus’ dark irony; even the stage-directions are not immune to his witticism as he notes that their only true form of protection comes from the expressions on their faces, “wearing their death-defying countenances.” But the stark reality that the Prince fails to grasp is that they will be on the front line of the Somme where there is no protection as both Allied and Central Powers alike would throw their men over the top and march into the face of machine guns. Kraus point is a simple one; one million men from both sides died at the Battle of the Somme, including around 450,000 from the Central Powers, and the Crown Prince was busy playing tennis.

Erich Heller, however, does not end his analysis of Kraus as a prophet by suggesting that Kraus foresees “gradual corruption” (237). Gradual corruption is a conceivable argument because it is not so much of a prediction but more a recognition of current events and the realization that, if extrapolated over time, the extreme degradation of Austrian culture may occur. Heller goes on directly to establish Kraus as a prophet: “It was Karl Kraus who discovered to what satanic heights inferiority may rise. He anticipated Hitler long before anyone knew his

name” (249). The conclusion Heller reaches here is different from the previously quoted passage where he considers Kraus’ satire to warn of the gradual corruption of moral, intellectual, and artistic life (237). Instead, he sees Kraus as a prophet who predicted a Hitler-esque figure in Central Europe. Evidently, this is an analysis borne out of the benefit of hindsight. If Hitler and the Nazis did not materialize in Germany and Austria would we therefore consider Kraus’ satire to be incorrect or irrelevant? The answer is probably not because Kraus’ text is relevant in the era he wrote in. Consequentially, Heller makes a dangerous assumption to suggest Kraus possessed the gift of prophesizing; Kraus’ satire would have remained just as relevant if a Hitler-esque figure had not seized power because his satire is rooted in World War I. Clearly, the subsequent arrival of Hitler and the Nazi Party gave the critics chance to canonize Kraus as a prophet (Heller) or criticize someone who did not make enough of his gifts of foresight as Hitler moved closer to seizing power (Pfabgian). One could even say that because of the universal topics in Kraus’ satire (namely war), reading his work today allows the critic to make and then popularize the connection between *The Last Days of Mankind* and World War II. But Kraus’ satire is not set in the future like George Orwell’s *1984* or in a dystopian fantasy world like Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*. His is a true-life satire (remember that many of Kraus’ character’s quotations were from real newspaper clippings and official releases) inferring that Kraus does not predict but enlightens. Both reader and critic can elaborate on his satire to draw connections, but ultimately passages such as Act III Scene 42 involving the Crown Prince rely on a Viennese humor particular to the period.

Other critics claim that because Kraus’ humor is so close to contextual events, then this proximity creates the dark humor for a grim future. For example, Kenneth Knight claims that Kraus satire is transcendent because “given just a slightly new emphasis” (151) the satire can be

relevant to today's world. Knight does not specifically mention whether Kraus' satire has any prophetic qualities, but does establish that because of its "note of desperate urgency," his satire can be as relevant in 1980 (the year Knight published his article) as it was in 1918 (151). Thus, his satire is "home-grown satire but also European and International" (151). In Kraus' work specifically, the elements that transcend Kraus' era, Kenneth believes, are the role of the media and war. This would appear to rule out Pogatschnigg as an example of transcendent satire: his is a specific case centered round the activities of an individual. The role of media and war should be treated differently and as perhaps pervading universal elements. Evidently, Kraus did not predict World War II or the increased involvement of the media in daily life and, indeed, Knight does not believe that Kraus predicted either. The war and media that Kraus describes however needed his own era and his own criticism to allow critics such as Knight to see the transferable qualities of Kraus' satire.

Gilbert Carr does not directly view Kraus as a prophet, but considers his work in light of the future, "The forward momentum in his repeated confrontation with the present paradoxically projects an ethical route beyond despair" (773). This assessment follows in line with a reading of the play that does not focus on Kraus' satire as prophetic but instead concedes that it must be based within the present. Kraus' satire ventures into the future but only in the sense that the reader must make this extrapolation himself. If the reader can extract a warning from the present then they can read the play with a view to the future path of human population. But any warning they may extract comes from an analysis of the present. In Act III Scene 11 a character named Paul Pogatschnigg appears, leading chauvinistic chanting in a German nationalist drinking club. Pogatschnigg was the real-life leader of the Federation of German Postal Workers in Austria, described by Timms as embodying the "nationalistic grass roots" movement of Austria (112).

Timms contends that, “Kraus satire proved prophetic. Pogatschnigg, whose activities first caught his eye in 1916, became one of the pioneers of the Nazi movement in the Austrian provinces. It was he who arranged for Hitler to visit Krems on 13 October 1920 to deliver a rabble-rousing speech” (Timms, *Post-War Crisis* 113). The legitimacy of Timms’ claim that “Kraus was a prophet” is difficult to substantiate, especially in light of Carr’s claim that Kraus could only project a path of despair based on the events of the present. Kraus needed the present day Pogatschnigg and his nationalistic actions to declare an ideologically bleak future for Austria. Notably, it is not Kraus that makes this connection but the critic—even Carr is culpable of looking to the future. But Kraus needed the contingency of the present. Similarly, Timms’ point that Pogatschnigg would invite Hitler to speak in Austria just four years later (113), in 1920, is compounded by the fact that Germany’s and Austria’s path to fascism would be indirect, with the intervening years dominated by the generally liberal, if not necessarily stable, Weimar Republic. The benefit of hindsight when reading Kraus facilitates the links the reader can make between Kraus’ own era and the Third Reich: in reality, the most Kraus’ satire can do was to advance the present to project the future.

The opinion between those who consider Kraus to be a prophet is split. Some, like Carr, see his satire observing Austria on a route to despair, others, like Heller, are certain that he predicted Hitler and Nazism. Carr’s assertion seems more reasonable, especially if we consider the local requirements of satire. Kraus comments on the current moment in Austria and if this moment is permitted to extend across months and years, we can witness the country’s fortunes gradually decline. This is the crux that results from mixing universality and locality in Kraus’ satire: his satire can be applied across time and location, but any application inherently relies on the root of the satire, namely, its original locale.

But Kraus was not wholly apocalyptic. Through the Grumbler, Kraus posits the idea that Austria and humanity are not doomed. The Grumbler does not always grumble merely for grumbling's sake. Rather than playing devil's advocate, he frequently offers an insightful, philosophical solution grounded in ethics. For example, the Grumbler declares that, "what is alive in the instinct of even the most enslaved mankind, is its longing to protect the freedom of the spirit against the dictatorship of money, to protect human dignity against the autocracy of acquisitiveness" (63). Here the Grumbler firmly represents Kraus' views because he is no longer grumbling but offering hope for mankind. In satire, claims Carr, an author such as Kraus can derive "long-lost beauty from 'found ugliness' by realistically facing up to it each time" (779). This section of the play proves to be a clear example of finding this beauty, namely human hope, amongst the ugliness of World War I and the materialistic and money-bound culture that went with this new world. Thus, Alfred Pfabigan appears incorrect when asserting that Kraus used trivial occasions to predict catastrophes (170). Instead, Kraus also appears as a hopeful satirist, a satirical author who does not always descend into the definition of a grumbler (or the Grumbler). Hope for humanity is not foolish, even if the Germanic people feel entitled enough to shout, "Let the German conscience, the self-assurance of power, alone be our commander and our leader! It's rallying cry rings out: More power! More German power!" (Kraus 176). Kraus was not limited to merely describing a pre-determined apocalyptic road that humanity was set upon, but also recognized the hope that he retained for humanity. Heller calls Kraus "a living spiritual power" (243), and this description of him eerily resonates with the quoted section above where Kraus talks about the instinct of mankind, the hidden spirit within, to protect its rights. Consequently, deigning Kraus a prophetic, apocalyptic satirist is inaccurate because he fits neither description. There is hope for the crowd yet.

But not all critics consider Kraus a prophet. Frank Field is one critic who disagrees with the idea of Kraus possessing prophetic tendencies. He claims that, “With the benefit of hindsight it is easy to read into his polemic and satire an astonishing premonition of the events that were to occur in Central Europe after the war” (133). Evidently, hindsight gives a skewed vision. More pertinently, Field recognizes that the “political and intellectual climate of Austria-Hungary between 1914 and 1918 was not that of Germany in 1933” (135). They were different, and Kraus’ satire does not seek to compare both periods (in the way Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* was written, drawing parallels between Joseph McCarthy’s communist “witch-hunts” in the U.S. in the 1950s and the Salem witch trials of 1692). Field notes that when *The Last Days of Mankind* was published, “it was a tribute to the freedom that still persisted in Vienna” (135). Kraus would not have been able to publish such widely read satire under Hitler’s regime. The observation is a salient one and relates directly back to the purpose of satire: to indicate to the reader the moral, political, social and other faults of each other and the region they inhabit. Even Heller points out “Kraus was primarily interested in the realization of immediate dangers: his apocalypticism was not projected on the future” (236). Therefore, Timms is incorrect in suggesting that the play was prophetic: “The (play) takes us into the heart of darkness—the ultimate horror that anticipates the Holocaust” (68). Kraus work, including the sections discussing Pogatschnigg, remains self-referential and not prophetic.

Unofficial Satire: Kraus’ Modern Fool

In *Rabelais and His World*, Mikhail Bakhtin outlines his theory of carnivalesque. Based on the unadulterated laughter of the medieval carnival, Bakhtin’s definition has come to refer to the subversion of the dominant style and atmosphere. The carnival in the medieval world

enabled the people to create their own laughter, devoid of all bureaucracy and authoritarian rule. For Bakhtin, “laughter in the Middle Ages remained outside all official spheres of ideology and outside all official strict forms of social relations” (*Rabelais* 73). In contrast, to the “intolerant, one-sided tone of seriousness (that) is characteristic of official medieval culture” (*Rabelais* 73), the carnival provided an extended moment where the people could laugh removed from social constraints such as organized religion, official ceremonies, and etiquette. The proximity of the carnivalesque to satire is readily apparent; it is unofficial laughter intended for the people. Kraus and Beerbohm wrote in the carnivalesque spirit because they wished to subvert the official line and create their own laughter of the carnival.

Bakhtin claims that since the novel represents the very essence of life, carnivalesque is a necessary ingredient of a novel. In relation to satirical texts, Bakhtin, this time in his book on Dostoevsky, notes that “In carnival...the new mode of man’s relation to man is elaborated” (*Poetics* 164). An essential element of man’s relationships is the “unmasking” and disclosing of the unvarnished truth under the veil of false claims and irrational behaviour (Pomorska x). In short, carnivalesque is closely related to satire because of the ability it has to unmask the “truth” that the satirist wishes to submit. Thus, carnivalesque can be seen as a tool employed by satirists because of the fashion in which it seeks to show the viewer, or in satire’s case, the reader, the truth amidst human follies. He outlines below the complex nature of carnival laughter:

Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. Second, it is universal in scope it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival’s participants. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay relativity. Third, this laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives. Such is the laughter of the carnival (*Rabelais* 11-12)

The most pertinent aspect of Bakhtin's description of carnivalesque is the ambivalence of the laughter and the universality of its scope. By manipulating Bakhtin, we can infer that laughter in satire does not necessarily have to occur at the expense of others. This ambivalence is strongly felt in *Zuleika Dobson* where Beerbohm can aptly be described as both mocking Oxford and equally basking in its steeped, elite culture. The more contentious aspect of Bakhtin's argument, however, is the assertion that the laughter in a carnival can be universal in its scope and a microcosm of the entire world. In his eyes, this has been lost to modern literature because of the overemphasis on negativity in satire. Indeed, he claims the universal capacity of laughter has not been seen since the Renaissance period (*Rabelais* 12). Although Bakhtin does not unequivocally connect this statement to satire, if we are to establish the link between satire and the carnivalesque, then it becomes necessary to determine whether or not satire and the carnival can be universal in their scope. If satire is not universal, the connection to Bakhtin's definition of carnivalesque diminishes.

One aspect of Bakhtin's carnivalesque that is applicable to Kraus' satire is the subversion of normal practices and convention. One of Kraus' most memorable scenes presents the "mental patient" speaking sense amidst a crowd of German intellectuals and doctors. Although Kraus' influence is likely more Shakespearean than medieval (Kraus' translations of Shakespeare's works was published in German (Timms, *Post-War Crisis* 65) and the Grumbler even quotes King Lear, "And worse I may be yet: the worst is not so long as we can say 'This is the worst'" (173)), the idea of the fool playing the only logically speaking character in the crowd represents a crucial part of the carnival. Bakhtin consistently references the "feast of the fools" where power roles and sensibilities were reversed and those occupying official positions (priests, clergyman, lords, etc.) would become those with foolish ambitions within the carnival arena.

This, then, is the grotesque element of satire: the fantastic combined with the absurd. But Bakhtin is willing take this further. Rather than the grotesque being formed by, as he describes Jean Paul depicting it, a “reduced form of laughter, a cold humor deprived of positive regenerating power” (*Rabelais* 42) and “outside the laughter principle” (*Rabelais* 42), the grotesque remains independent of such scorn and furthermore contains ameliorative powers. Bakhtin believes that the supposed folly of the fool is deeply ambivalent, “folly is a form of gay festive wisdom, free from all laws and restrictions” (*Rabelais* 260). This description is especially significant when we consider Kraus’ scene with the character simply called the “Mental Patient.” Precisely because the patient is Kraus’ modernized version of a medieval fool, he is free from the misconceptions and restrictions that hinder the German physicists. To relate back to Chapter II, the mental patient is not deceived by abstractions such as power or patriotism and thus these become the object of satire.

Kraus employs this simplistic technique of the grotesque and uses it to reverse the sensibilities of what is considered moral in Austria and Germany during the Great War. He includes a scene where a mental patient is the only person talking sense at a Physicians’ Meeting in Berlin. Quite how the mental patient got into the meeting is not explained and, indeed, is part of the humor of the satire, but his presence among the professors perversely provides coherent moral reasoning amongst a crowd of learned people whose morals appear misguided. For example, the mental patient complains about those who “opened the door to impassioned lies with their protest against attacks on German honor; and those who joined their ranks have drawn German culture even further away from Goethe and Kant” (Kraus 141). The self-proclaimed leaders of German culture, the professors and the intellectuals, have been imprudent in supporting the Central Power’s cause in World War I. The widespread popularity of

nationalism, Kraus believes, is sending Germanic culture along an immoral path. The satire here, from one point of view, is particularly scathing because one who is mentally impaired presents the moral opinion and is deployed as the voice of reason against the mistaken professors. The suggestion is, then, that Germans and Austrians view it as insane to offer the “radical” view that German culture is declining and that the war is not positive. Such a person is in fact modernity’s version of the medieval fool. Though considered insane, within such socially labeled insanity the reader deciphers wisdom. Kraus’ fool is akin to one present at the “feast of fools” where you are permitted to look at the world with “foolish eyes” (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 206). But from another point of view, the professors appear foolish and idealistic nationalists—“Even now the poison of pacifism has penetrated healthy brains, and the exaggerated idealism of the opponents to war... must be seen as one of the worst evils from which the German national body suffers” (Kraus 141). The professors who are portrayed as pro-war, claim that the opponents to war (such as Kraus) are idealistic, but through the satire it is readily evident that their self-professed pragmatism is subject to bias. By this carnivalesque scene, Kraus frames his satire. Both he and the mental patient’s recognize that as the horrors of the war increase German high culture declines. The purportedly intellectual professors condemn this attitude as anti-nationalistic.

The professors treat the mental patient as someone who espouses ludicrous ideas. Of course, this is part of the humor that the reader is privy to enjoy: the mental patient is not mad but represents the only one speaking sense amongst a crowd of insanity. The professors echo the views of other characters in the book because of the way they empathize with nationalism. Ultimately, the mental patient is arrested because “he talks like an enemy of the fatherland” (142). Here Kraus has switched the morals of the two, as the expected “liberalism” of the

professors never materializes. In Bakhtinian terms, the mental patient and the professors alike act in accordance with the ritual of the carnival, including the end of the scene where the professors order the mental patient's arrest. The carnival relies on "the suspension of all hierarchal precedence during carnival time" (*Rabelais* 10), and the issue that is most important in this scene is not in where the power to arrest resides but in the subversion of wisdom and knowledge. Even though the hierarchy is seemingly restored through the arrest of the mental patient, the fact remains that his sentiments are more attuned to the truth. He is the character, and not the learned professors, that unmasks the meaning of patriotism and complicity and reveals it for what it is.

Thus, for Kraus the carnivalesque in his satire serves as a mechanism to expose the absurdities of the objects of his criticism. However, does this use of the carnivalesque pertain to satire's universality? Bakhtin claimed that carnival laughter was universal in its scope and that the entire world could be seen in its droll aspect (*Rabelais* 11). Evidently, laughter is universal, since everyone can enjoy the humor. But for the purpose of this argument, Bakhtin's definition of universality must be considered in full: whether or not we can see the entire world in this satire, and whether or not the satire is directed at all and everyone (*Rabelais* 11). Can the reader, employing Bakhtin's definition, learn anything constructive ("positively regenerate" (*Rabelais* 38)) from Kraus' satire? This particular scene involving the mental patient can be read universally. It warns to mankind that even the most educated men can mislead and be incorrect. The rise of nationalism sweeps all before it, and, in this sense, Kraus' warning applies to other moments in human history. All war is in some fashion a product of nationalism, and Kraus' satire warns against nationalism everywhere. The fact that his warning is presented through an Austrian lens is purely contingent. Perhaps, this is why many critics have incorrectly considered

Kraus a prophet because he was singularly hesitant about the advantages of nationalism and patriotism and was active in expressing his views. But it must be stressed once more that these qualities, primarily patriotism, are abstractive qualities that are directed against all peoples. Through these abstractions we see, as Bakhtin described, the entire world in its droll aspect (*Rabelais* 11), the “triumphant” (*Rabelais* 12) victory of the mental patient over the professors and the simultaneous “mocking” (*Rabelais* 12) of the collective German-Austrian sentiment.

These abstractions may permit us to instruct and ameliorate in certain circumstances. However, despite this instruction, it is important to clarify that Kraus’ satire is still based in locality. Indeed, the basis in locality is palpable, even the scene involving the mental patient. Firstly, there is the simple fact that the scene is set at a Physicians’ meeting in Berlin. Of course, this fact does not make the satire any less universal since every scene requires a setting. But it does highlight Kraus’ roots and his area of focus. Secondly, and directly linked to the first point, the critic must also consider Kraus’ personal campaigns. It is well documented that Kraus maintained a vendetta against Sigmund Freud’s psychology and the two especially clashed over their interpretation of dreams. Timms notes that Freud, the analyst, treated dreams as “symptoms of neurotic disorder” but for Kraus, the artist, dreams were “treasured as creative inspiration” with his late-night fears becoming stimuli for satire (*Post-War Crisis* 174). Timms analysis is a salient reading and is echoed in this very scene involving the mental patient. The mental patient’s opinions are treated as part of an irrational illness, whereas, in reality, his views are the most morally inspired. The criticism of the art of modern science (not the physical branch, but the psychological) is direct. Psychology has diagnosed the patient’s disease as “suffering from the fixed idea that Germany is being driven toward an ultimate catastrophe” (Kraus 135). Kraus here is satirizing what he considered the Freudian principle of searching for

a “neurotic disorder” where there is not one. Thirdly, in the same scene, Kraus takes a shot at the immorality of German science as a whole, “German science is a prostitute. Our men of science are its pimps” (140). Kraus believed that the intellectuals had sold out to the nationalistic aims of Germany, and he refers specifically to the ninety-three leading German intellectuals who, at the beginning of the war, did sign a proclamation supporting Germany’s war aims (Ungar 136).

So, while Freud and Kraus “were the two greatest critics of the discontents to emerge from Habsburg Vienna” (Timms, *Post-War Crisis* xv), their criticisms differ remarkably and Kraus’ personal battles infiltrate the moral satire. This observation is analogous to Kraus’ continued war against the role of the Austrian press that often dominates *The Last Days of Mankind*; evidently, it is an important and multi-faceted topic that Kraus feels passionate about but it does sometimes deter from the primary focus of the play that is anti-war. Indeed, the strength of locality is increased by the fact that the moral opinions do seem to mirror Kraus point of view. Kraus’ own views are approximate to the mental patient’s views, and thus the reader needs to consider that Kraus’ influence on the morality that the play discusses is absolute. This does not refute the idea that his satire cannot instruct, but it does confirm satire’s necessary locality that moves in conjunction with its universality.

The relationship to the carnival becomes increasingly tenuous the more authorial intent we judge to be in Kraus’ satire. But Bakhtin does provide room for authorial inclusion, so long as the laughter is likewise felt in the passages. Bakhtin recognizes that even in Rabelais’ novel, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, the shining light of the carnivalesque form, patriotism was sweeping the land. The following passage begins with Bakhtin’s own words and follows with the words of Rabelais’ character, the town herald, in quotation marks,

But now he speaks in the solemn and pompous tone of the town herald, resounding with the national patriotic enthusiasm of the time when Rabelais was writing his novel. The historic importance of that time is directly expressed in the following words: “I would deem it very disgraceful indeed to stand aside as but an idle spectator whilst so many valiant and eloquent heroes perform soul-stirring roles in the magnificent epic spectacle all Europe watches today.” But even this solemn, pompous, and monumental tone is combined with other elements, for instance, with indecent jokes about the Corinthian women who served military defense after their own fashion (*Rabelais* 178)

Like Kraus, Rabelais is not immune to contemporary occasions and it just so happens that both authors must contend with patriotism and war in Europe. The last portion of the quoted passage is important for Bakhtin, the ability to induce laughter in spite of current atrocities and more serious, negative satire. Kraus never quite achieves this combination, this is not to say his satire is of a lower quality than Rabelais (although Bakhtin would argue it was), but it prevents him from treating satire as healing by laughter rather than through negativity. Rabelais, meanwhile, can “defend the rights of laughter which must prevail even in the most serious historic struggle” (*Rabelais* 179)—and Kraus’ was the most serious. But though Kraus’ polemics are stamped across the text, the instructive qualities still persist through one of Bakhtin’s most important themes of the carnival, the mask. The mask “contains the playful elements of life; it is based on a peculiar interrelation of reality and image” (*Rabelais* 40). This interrelation is especially important for Kraus because he relies on carnivalesque scenes, such as those involving the mental patient, to project his image. Unveiling the mental patient as the fool who speaks sense is the Bakhtinian equivalent of unmasking the truth at the carnival through the power of subversion.

So far Bakhtin's criticism functions here to illustrate the carnivalesque nature of satire and the workings of the grotesque in satire. However, this application to satire is a sentiment that Bakhtin himself would likely disagree with. For him, modern satire pales in comparison to the carnivals of the Middle Ages because it is devoid of any ameliorative potential. The parody of modern times, writes Bakhtin, is far removed from the folk, carnival culture. Bakhtin, referring to modern satirists, claims that negativity equates to the absence of universality, "the satirist whose laughter is negative places himself above the object of his mockery, he is opposed to it. The wholeness of the world's comic aspect is destroyed, and that which appears comic becomes a private reaction" (*Rabelais* 12). Kraus' satire appears to conform to Bakhtin's claim because of the negative qualities of his satire, and, therefore, Bakhtin would imply that compliance hinders his potential to write a universal satire. Bakhtin proclaims that no satire since Rabelais has possessed this quality; modern parody, as he calls it, is confined to negativity. The modern satirist, such as Kraus or Beerbohm, can "praise laughter's liberating power, but there is no hint of its power of regeneration. Laughter loses its gay and joyful tone" (*Rabelais* 38).

Bakhtin writes that the "positive pole of grotesque realism drops out and is replaced by moral sententiousness and abstract concepts" (*Rabelais* 53). His caustic attack on modern satire and, presumably, Kraus' satire as well, is no different. Bakhtin would argue that Kraus' satire is overtly apocalyptic and devoid of the positive pole of grotesque realism and thus his satire fails to ameliorate. Bakhtin perhaps assumes too much in surmising that *all* recent satire is culpable of being negative, lifeless, and meaningless; still his point that only abstract concepts remain is pertinent here. The contention, then, is whether or not these abstractions can ameliorate and, through the satirizing of the abstract, provide the reader with a positive message to take away

from the satire, one enabled by gay laughter rather than irony. The focus on the moral takes away from the laughter (*Rabelais* 62); nonetheless, in relation to the universality of satire, the abstract remains important because it maintains the potential to be universal, in spite of Bakhtin's criticism of abstractions being weighed down by negativity and not being freed by the unadulterated joy of positive grotesque realism.

Kraus, who is frequently described as being apocalyptic (Edward Timms gave two of his books the subtitle *Karl Kraus: Apocalyptic Satirist*) saw no future for the contemporary Austria he lived in. In contrast to the scene involving the mental patient, how Kraus ends his play thoroughly supports Bakhtin's argument that modern satire is devoid of the positive pole of grotesque realism and therefore laughter. The mental patient scene is richly Bakhtinian because it subverts, but the closing scene is anti-Bakhtinian and is defined by an extreme negativity that border on being apocalyptic.

Kraus' final scene is the longest in the play, spanning thirty-two pages, and its latter half, immediately after the war reaches its bloody conclusion, is dominated by a dream-like sequence where a new setting replaces the old with hallucinationary velocity. We witness, then, in quick succession, predominantly by Kraus' hitherto sparsely used stage directions, the unfair trials and death sentences of soldiers, soldiers burying men in the Carpathians, children playing with a soon to explode shell, drunk officers, Flanders, Winter in Asinara, prisoners with cholera, corpses standing upright with their rifles ostensibly ready, and many more morbidly inspired scenes. This is not to say that Kraus' apocalypticism as the war closes was unwarranted or erroneous. The sheer inventiveness in this scene may hint at the carnivalesque once more; Kraus, drifting from location to location, presents the organized chaos of human warfare. But in the ending to the play he moves away from genuine satire, away from the oxymoronic sanity of

the mental patient or the ironic patriotism of the crowd. For the contemporary reader, those living in the satire, there is no humor. Instead he is consumed by the need to confront the negativity that he sees. Again, this observation is not a criticism of Kraus, but Bakhtin's claim that modern satire is too negative cannot be ignored here. There is no humor in Kraus' closing moments, not even of the dry, ironic kind. Beerbohm's play also ends in mass death, but the scale of the deaths is so grotesquely unrealistic and devoid of human attachment or sentiment, that one cannot help smirking slightly at the sheer ridiculousness of the black humor.

The final pages of *The Last Days of Mankind* witness a continuation of the dream-like sequence but now include a variety of speaking voices to end the play. There are eleven voices; "The Frozen Soldiers," "The Old Serbian Peasant," "The Twelve Hundred Horses," "Leonardo Da Vinci," "The Lusitania Children," "Army Dogs," "The Dead Woods," "The Mother," "The Ravens," "The Women Auxiliaries," and "The Unborn Son." All these voices lament war except for the Ravens who celebrate, "Ravens, since the killing started, never have run short of fodder" (236). The Lusitania children, already dead, eerily bob across the ocean, "we drift and we don't know where" (233). Da Vinci withholds his design for submarines "because of man's evil nature, which would lead him to utilize it for committing murders" (233). Most radically "The Unborn Son" pleads, "Later witnesses of outrage, we implore you to abort us" (237). Kraus' intention is to show the horrors of war in the most shocking ways possible. There is no room for humor here as there is with the abstract concepts of war such as patriotism and complicity. Therefore, Zohn's view that Kraus possessed an "ambivalent attitude" (38) does not bear out as the book progresses. First, the Grumbler becomes increasingly biased and falls in line with Kraus' own views; second, the satire all but disappears as Kraus sees the war end (we remember that he started writing during the war and continued writing new material throughout the war).

The self-referentiality, from the Lusitania children to the use of submarines, overwhelms the final passages of the satire. Kraus is not ambivalent in *The Last Days of Mankind*; rather he is immersed in his vision; he is a proponent of total satire, which seeks to critique as decisively and unilaterally as possible. Perhaps this is a necessary part of World War I satire; the weight and seriousness of the situation required art different in apocalyptic magnitude from anything offered Rabelais. If anything, this decision to end satire in this way enforces the notion of locality being satire's dominant force. Kraus' moral sensibilities force his hand. He must be apocalyptic; he must end with "The Unborn Son" declaring, "Here the air is noxious foul" (237) and with the forsaken stage directions, "The glow dies out. Total darkness. Then, on the horizon, the wall of flames leaps high. Death cries off stage." (237), because that is the reality of the First World War.

Beerbohm's Institutional Satire

What, then, would Bakhtin make of Beerbohm? In Bakhtinian terms, Beerbohm can be seen as the antithesis of Kraus. Instead of being overly negative and apocalyptic, he is perhaps guilty of being too light-hearted (mass suicides aside) and not idealistic. Consequentially, his laughter similarly lacks regenerative power because of his lack of idealism; Beerbohm largely conforms to the Oxford ideal with little evidence of carnivalesque. The controversy, or the subversion, in *Zuleika Dobson* is comparatively minimal; an old Oxonian writes for old Oxonians. Perhaps as a consequence, when reading *Zuleika Dobson* one does not feel hatred towards Zuleika, or consider her a villainous character. Primarily, this is because of the absurdities in the novel, the Duke's pretentious actions such as dressing up like a medieval knight to better express the purity of his romantic intent, and "because we perceive that the love

Zuleika inspires is essentially narcissistic and has deep roots in the institution she has overwhelmed” (Lodge 40). As we have seen Bakhtin describe, the carnivalesque remains outside the realm of officialdom (*Rabelais* 73). But Beerbohm’s satire seems to be very much embedded in Oxford; his satire can better be defined as an inside joke rather than an agitation of experience. Of course, we can laugh at Beerbohm’s humor, for humor there certainly is, but according to Bakhtinian doctrine there is little here of the carnivalesque. His satire does not seek to unmask, there is no opening of eyes or instruction. Instead, as we delve deeper into the satire we are left with mere abstractions, the herd mentality and the propensity for power structures. Beerbohm creates a situation where those in the know can laugh at the foolish undergraduates of Oxford, like his readership perhaps was. It is an institutionalized satire and therefore non-carnivalesque because it goes along with the humor of the institution rather than subverting it. Thus, Zuleika is not a villain; she is a fixture in the Oxford structure of laughter.

Michael Murphy claims that in *Zuleika Dobson* the characters “are in love with the Idea of Love” (303). Little of the interactions between the characters that seek love (the Duke, Noaks, Zuleika and Katie) are actually concerned with love itself and, as Murphy points out, there is a distinct lack of “healthy sexuality” (303). Thus, it is possible to link the romance in the novel to power and the abstract once more—the characters in the novel are not interested in actual love but rather chase the abstract notion of the “Idea of Love.” This is relatable to the abstract concept of power because the characters are primarily concerned with themselves and display little or no altruism. In Bakhtinian terms, the descent into abstract concepts once more indicates the failure of modern satire. For Bakhtin, the image of “character” is a “sterile image...offered by degenerate, petty realism” (*Rabelais* 53). The static nature of the character and the inward looking nature of Beerbohm’s satire, both in terms of his character’s narcissism

and the novel's exclusivity to Oxford, prevents universal laughter and hence instructive satire, from being read in the text. Zuleika, for example, does not want to be desired, "but enjoys and exploits the fact that she is unutterably desirable; the would-be Lover must remain eternally the youth of the Grecian urn" (Murphy 303). Through the Keatsian comparison, Murphy, like Danson, hints at the combination of romance with Romance. On one hand, the men of Oxford seek a modern, lustful notion of love, but simultaneously they espouse the medieval fantasy of undying love that is only preserved through death. Death preserves; as that instant where Zuleika loved the Duke is immortalized forever if the Duke dies with that memory. The Duke dies with his love for Zuleika unspoiled and the wish that maybe as he dies Zuleika is overcome with grief. In that instant her love for him would return and become immortalized in the moment of his death. Beerbohm presents the competition between romance and Romance; on one hand we have the desire for romance, and on the other hand, the desire to enhance the Romantic tradition. But for Bakhtin, this removal from the festive satire of the medieval period is characteristic of post-medieval and post-Renaissance satire. Comments by Murphy and Danson that *Zuleika Dobson* is a distinctly Oxford competition between modern romance and Romanticism, enable us to apply Bakhtin's musings on the Romantic genre as pertaining to the individual rather than belonging to all the people. Unlike the medieval folk culture that "belonged to all the people, the Romantic genre acquired a private 'chamber' character...an individual carnival marked by a vivid sense of isolation" (*Rabelais* 37). Zuleika's character is of this ilk. This is significant because a Bakhtinian reading would dictate that this modern, Romantic version of satire is local rather than universal, individual rather than collective.

Beerbohm makes a mockery of the romantic competition and the characters in the novel are at the centre of this mockery. Zuleika may ask, "what harm has unrequited love ever done?"

(99)—indicating her oblivious and self-centred attitude to romance—at the same time as the Duke claims that when she was in love with him, she looked “nobler, more spiritual” (99). In this particular instance, Zuleika and the Duke represent each side of the romance versus Romance competition that is prevalent throughout the novel. Zuleika characterizes romance and the search for affection and the chance to admire a man, while the Duke is more Romantic and liable to represent love as divinely induced but with potentially morbid consequences—the Duke asks Zuleika, “You don’t believe in the love that corrodes, the love that ruins?” (100). Zuleika can even be considered as rejecting her place as the woman in the medieval Romance—rejecting the ideal that it must always be men who place women on the pedestal rather than vice versa. Thus, romance can be described as “a recurring attraction” (Dupee 188). Dupee is talking about romance in the form of traditional English pastoralism in the novel, “the moonlight, the floating mist, the nodding lilacs and laburnums, the weedy bottom of the Isis” (Dupee 188). But his observation can be extended to include the character’s actions and, in turn, Murphy’s premier point, the Idea of Love. Both Romance and romance attract the characters, and this attraction culminates in the power struggle to which all of Beerbohm’s characters, even Zuleika, are subservient.

But the problem with this narcissistic struggle is the failure of modern satire. In Bakhtinian terms there is the absence of laughter as a regenerative power. Bakhtin bemoans, “But laughter was cut down to cold humor, irony, sarcasm. It ceased to be a joyful and triumphant hilarity. Its positive regenerating power was reduced to a minimum” (*Rabelais* 38). This criticism better fits Kraus’ texts than Beerbohm, for *Zuleika Dobson* never quite loses its joyful tone. But, at points, it does feel that this tone is the only mechanism Beerbohm’s satire has; often there is little substance behind the humor, no carnival spectacle to speak of.

Therefore, though Beerbohm is ironic, the whole text is steeped in irony and fails to provide the grotesque realism necessary for the rejuvenation of Oxford. For example, the Duke is enamored by his own thoughts, “It was a fine thing to be a savior...He was glad that his death would be a public service to the University” (105). The irony is palpable: the Duke tells himself he is a protector of Oxford when he clearly is not, and, additionally, he will turn out to be its downfall. Therefore, while we see a satire of narcissism, what Beerbohm does not prescribe is how to counteract the problems in Oxford. Certainly, the mass suicides offer no form of rejuvenation. This conclusively brings the text closer to Bakhtin’s dreaded Romanticism, and the book is ultimately too heavily constructed in a romantic, Oxford background to offer any genuine regenerative powers in Bakhtinian terms. Beerbohm is guilty of an absence of ameliorative satire throughout the text and part of the reason for the lack of instruction is a byproduct of the abstractions that are constructed in his satire and the inherent locality of his text.

The divine versus human aspect is also apparent in the satire of Beerbohm and is perhaps the antimony that is most relatable to the abstract construct, power. For the majority, if not all of the novel, Zuleika is regarded as divine. This, evidently, supports Bakhtin’s theory that modern satire shows a worrying propensity for submitting to idealism rather than subverting the norm. When the Duke and Zuleika head towards the river, for example, two masses of people, one coming and one leaving, swarm around Zuleika and the Duke. Zuleika causes this incident because the men of Oxford attempting to get “one glimpse of the divine Miss Dobson” (Beerbohm 96). Yet at other times in the novel, Zuleika appears rather plain and rather human, with Beerbohm describing her on two occasions as “not strictly beautiful” (9, 210). Indeed, the first time Beerbohm describes her appearance, he does so in unflattering terms:

Zuleika was not strictly beautiful. Her eyes were a trifle large, and their lashes longer than they need have been. An anarchy of small curls was her chevelure, a dark upland of misrule, every hair asserting its rights over a not discreditable brow. For the rest, her features were not at all original (9)

The words and phrases that stand out here are “not discreditable” and “not at all original.” Simply, Zuleika is attractive but she is not perfect and she is certainly not unique. There is no sense of divinity derived from her looks alone; she is an ordinary, if striking, woman. The laughter here is found in her unoriginality and, for the first time, Beerbohm heads towards the carnivalesque and grotesque because of his subversion of the typecast. His satire is no longer just a satire on humanly constructed abstracts such as the *femme fatale*, herd mentality, and power relationships, where absurd situations consist of the only basis for satire and where irony provides the only reason for laughter. The unoriginality of Zuleika is a technique comparably grotesque; instead of a wildly attractive female with a persuasive, silver tongue, we encounter a more ordinary looking woman, distinctly deficient of a charming personality.

Falling short of perfection is nothing new in romantic literature; Shakespeare most famously wrote that “My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun; / Coral is far more red than her lips’ red, / If snow be white, why then her breast are dun” (130. 1-3). But the lack of originality that Zuleika possesses perhaps is imperfection. Beerbohm satirizes her lack of originality by literally claiming that her bodily features have been borrowed, stolen or bought from other beautiful women—“from Madame la Marquise de Saint-Ouen came the shapely tilt of the nose. The mouth was a mere replica of cupid’s bow...no apple tree, no wall of peaches, had not been robbed, nor any Tyrian rose-garden, for the glory of Miss Dobson’s cheeks. Her neck was imitation-marble” (10). God has not divinely created her nor, conversely, is she a flawless

devilish creation that deceitfully appears as something close to perfection, in the fashion, say, that Goethe's Mephistopheles makes Gretchen appear to Faust. F.W. Dupee called this "comic literalization" and said that "in *Zuleika Dobson* the same mechanism is flagrantly at work and the victims are many" (183). Beerbohm's comic literalization is to create an unoriginal character that is rooted in this unoriginality, in spite of the opinion of others, and her own, that consider Zuleika to be so divine she is worth dying for. But, in this instance, Beerbohm offers more than merely comic literalization. He conceives the subverted idea of a completely unoriginal *femme fatale* among a completely unoriginal crowd, in a completely unoriginal town. Primarily because of this, he moves away from the modern, idealistic spirit and towards the original carnival because of the suspension of hierarchy (all men are Zuleika's victims) and the subversion of the qualities of a lead character.

Furthermore, her unoriginality is so imitative that it can be similarly be copied and used by other people. Her mistress, Melisande, while not possessing the same powers of attraction as Zuleika and despite being a "plain looking woman" (Beerbohm 210), enjoys many of the same characteristics as Zuleika—"the poise of her head, the boldness of her regard and brilliance of her smile, the leisurely and swinging way in which she walked, with a hand on the hip—all these of hers were Zuleika's" (210). So why does Zuleika, a woman who makes men kill themselves, fall so short of uniqueness? Perhaps there is another level of satire at work here. Beerbohm is satirizing the epic novel in general for its portrayal of the woman as something either perfect, unique or both. But he is also satirizing the human nature, of the Oxford undergraduates specifically, to create this abstraction when an impartial party (a narrator, say, who is touched by the divine) can clearly see that she is not deific. For, in the biased and subjective eyes of humans (who are not divine), in the right light, anyone and anything can be celestial, even the hapless

Noaks, who, in a moment of weakness, Zuleika describes as “divine” (325). Beerbohm “plays with paradox” (Lodge 40) because as much as Zuleika reeks of unoriginality, she is utterly irresistible. This is the ambivalence that Bakhtin laments the loss of in modern culture. Bakhtin states, “In the new official culture there prevails a tendency toward the stability and completion of being, toward one single meaning, one single tone of seriousness. The ambivalence of the grotesque can no longer be admitted” (*Rabelais* 101). But like the scene involving the mental patient in *The Last Days of Mankind*, the imitateness of Zuleika’s character and appearance provides the ambivalent laughter for which Bakhtin longs.

Therefore, in both *The Last Days of Mankind* and *Zuleika Dobson* include elements that underscore Bakhtin’s doctrine because they are modern texts that relate to the carnivalesque, a point Linda Hutcheon supports, “there are close links between what he (Bakhtin) called carnivalesque parody and the authorized transgression of parodic texts today” (26). However, though there are elements and sections of each text that relates to carnivalesque, the majority of each text is not carnivalesque. Both fall foul to the abstractive qualities that Bakhtin is quick to loathe because the abstract does not allow the text to regenerate positively. This happens for different reasons in the two texts; Beerbohm’s is too lightheartedly local and contingent on the Oxford he knows and consequently lowers the potential for universality and increasing the potential for abstractions. Kraus’ suffers the same end but by different means. His play becomes too serious and less satirical than straightforward, conservative criticism. As a result, the abstract is all that remains of what Bakhtin dictates on modern satire.

However, is it a distinct concern of the reader and critic that we are left with just abstractions? Chapter II argued that these abstractive qualities were the only elements of satire that were potentially transferable to other cultures precisely because they do not rely on

contingencies. In contrast, Bakhtin sees these abstractions as a sad byproduct of modern satire because they do not possess the ability to positively instruct. This is where Bakhtin's argument falters. By these abstractive elements, we can learn more about the follies of human nature (without ever quite perhaps, becoming universal), something that is not possible if we are left with a commentary on local contingencies (World War I, Oxford in 1911). Though satire may not possess the positive ameliorative qualities that defined it in the Middle Ages, the carnivalesque can still be manipulated (mental patient, unoriginality of Zuleika) to instruct the reader, even if the instruction arises from negative literature. Because of the ability of abstraction to overcome locale and period we witness universality (and, hence, the tenuous possibility of instruction) without being positive. If most of the satire in these two texts is contingently local (and this is where most of what is the humorous portion resides), then the less humorous and more universal abstractions function together with inherent locality to produce the satire. Both satires in Bakhtinian terms are not perfect, but the abstractions found in each should not be considered as degenerative as Bakhtin would treat them.

Conclusion

In 1957, Alvin B. Kernan said that the preeminent satire is the satire that is solidified “by a firm, definite understanding of the moral issues involved” (*The Cankered Muse* 88-89). Just two years beforehand, Northrop Frye stated that the Juvenalian view of satire is defined by “an interest in anything men do” (229). Evidently, there are many more layers to satire than this, but, by combining Kernan’s and Frye’s observations, satire can be viewed as a literary topic that focuses on the moral actions of humanity. In contrast, in a recent (2007) study of satire, Charles A. Knight provides another observation concerning satire, “satire is independent of moral purpose. Its purpose...is perception rather than changed behaviour, although change in behaviour may well result from change in perception” (5). Knight continues, “but if it insists on such (moral) values, it must give them enough force to encourage readers to transfer them beyond the text” (5). Knight appears to contradict himself in the first quoted passage or, at the very least, express that despite the absence of ameliorative purpose in satire, to ameliorate is a potential byproduct of satire. But common themes in satirical texts should not be confused with true universality in satire. Satire, Knight claims, is universal not in its instruction but in its inquiry and provocation (5). This is significant because, although Knight agrees that satire cannot universally instruct, it potentially contradicts the idea that a local base permits satire. As we have seen in both Kraus and Beerbohm, there is a distinct moral purpose on the author’s behalf, even if, and this point now contradicts Knight’s second quoted passage, these morals do not extend beyond the boundaries of locality and topicality.

Nevertheless, Knight’s second point is relevant because it relates to the universality of satire. Knight suggests that to involve morals and values in a satirical text is to by necessity to enter the satire in a mode that can span time and space. For example, in *The Last Days of*

Mankind, Kraus presents a crucial contradiction relating to the virtues of fighting for one's country and the perception of what it means to be honorable, heroic, and to die for one's country,

GRUMBLER: The fatherland considers the opportunity of dying for the fatherland a punishment, the most severe punishment to boot. The citizen thinks of it as the highest honor. He wants to die a hero's death. He wants to enlist, but he is enlisted instead (96)

The suggestion of confused morals is the object of satire here. It is honorable to die for one's country but simultaneously the punishment for being radically unpatriotic is to die for one's country. The satire works against the perception of morality here, just as Swift presents Gulliver's confused morality in Book IV of *Gulliver's Travels*, but to say that satire is therefore independent of moral purpose, as Knight does, is incorrect. The role of satire in this example is to redefine the morals of the Austrian people and show the conflicting nature of human values.

Furthermore, the moral component of satire can assume a universal quality. The quoted excerpt above preempts Joseph Heller's war satire, and Kraus' scene eerily resonates Heller's now famous phrase, "Catch-22." Heller explains the meaning of the phrase in *Catch-22*:

There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, which specified that a concern for one's own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't; but if he was sane he had to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was sane and had to. Yossarian was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of this clause of Catch-22 and let out a respectful whistle (46)

Anyone who wants to get out of combat duty is not crazy, but you have to be crazy to participate in combat duty. This is comparable to Kraus' own catch: to fight and die for the fatherland is the greatest honor; those who refuse to fight and die for the fatherland are without honor and are punished by being forced to fight and die for the fatherland. The mere fact that both Kraus and Heller explain the futility of the common man in war, hints at the universality of this segment of each text. However, crucially, these "catches" do not instruct, they merely perceive. There is no way out of these cyclical clauses, no remedy provided in the satire. The clauses remain abstract because of the absence of a solution for humanity. They are not definitive truths that humans can rely on or prescribe. The two "catches" are a product of circumstantial creation that happens to apply to other situations but not as a truth, simply as an insight into the folly of human nature. This once again indicates that the abstract elements perceived by the satirist are the most easily transferable elements of satirical texts.

Perhaps, then, this points once more to the significance of heritage in satire. Both Heller and Kraus relied on these circumstantial wars that were incidentally the only two truly global wars in human history. Only through their perception of humanity's propensity for the theoretical (in this case, morals) over any necessary truths does the satire begin to branch out from its birthplace. This locality is particularly felt in Beerbohm's satire on Oxford, yet there are instances of satirical texts displaying even more bias to their locale than Beerbohm. In a variety of small shtetl's (the Yiddish word for a small town with a large population of, often piously Orthodox, Jews) centred in Zamosc, in far eastern Poland, we can observe the true locality of satire. Isaac Leib Peretz, better known as I.L. Peretz, was a Jewish writer who wrote in nearly exclusively in Yiddish towards the turn of the century. Ruth R. Wisse describes him as "arguably the most important figure in the development of modern Jewish culture" with an

estimated hundred thousand people accompanying his remains to the Warsaw cemetery (xiii). Peretz is a writer, if there ever was, that epitomizes the exclusivity of a writer; the language and era he wrote in permitted only the Yiddish speaking areas of Poland, and especially those who had experienced Shtetl's, to read, let alone understand, his works. The text under investigation is *Bilder fun a Provints-Rayze (Impressions of a Journey through the Tomaszow Region)* that was set in 1890 and published in 1904. It features a narrator whom Wisse describes as being “very much like (Peretz) himself” (xviii). The narrator has been hired to compile statistics in attempt to disprove anti-Semitic allegations of Jewish parasitism and draft evasion (Peretz 19). But this is not the object of satire. The object of satire is turned not against the inhabitants of the shtetl, its extreme poverty, “he succeeds with great difficulty in eking out enough to feed wife and children” (Peretz 52), dearth of pleasure in the society, and the questionable desirability of living in the shtetl, “Jew, 82 years old; swollen feet; household of 17” (Peretz 64). Instead the satire is turned against “the narrator’s efforts to measure the shtetl’s poverty in statistical, scientific terms” (Caplan 76). The narrator, rather than bringing the shtetl into the twentieth century is himself brought backwards,

What will be the upshot of the statistics? Will statistics tell us how much suffering is needed—empty bellies and unused teeth; hunger so intense that the sight of a dry crust of bread will make the eyes bulge in their sockets, as if drawn out by pliers; indeed actual death by starvation—to produce an unlicensed gin mill, a burglar, a horse thief? (Peretz 60)

Thus, the narrator’s tentativeness becomes our own (Caplan 85). The satire is directed at the reader who is inevitably the outsider. Furthermore, in relation to the locality of satire, Peretz’s indebtedness to a very particular culture that has little contact with the modernized, outside

world provides an analogous situation for the reader. In Beerbohm's and Kraus' texts we are outsiders. But in Peretz's satire, the extreme locality of his text means the reader becomes the object of satire precisely because he is an outsider. In this sense, because Peretz has made the narrator analogous to the majority of readers, both are outsiders; we witness an underlying level of satire that satirizes the fact that locality is so vital to satire that the reader himself is consequently always destined to be an outsider. This is never quite felt to the same extent in either *The Last Days of Mankind* or *Zuleika Dobson* because the reader feels more included in the text. In Beerbohm, the reader is most likely himself an Oxford man, and his elitism permits him to feel included in the text. In Kraus, the views of the Grumbler are the opinion with which the reader is supposed to identify. But the important article is that the reader is still on the outside looking into the self-referential drama. If the satire is based in a particular locality, then the non-contemporary reader is always an outsider; in Peretz this is merely extended to include the reader in the story as the narrator and making him part of the art form. In Peretz we are truly treading the borderline between art and life, "Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people" (Bakhtin 7).

Despite Bakhtin's claim that modern satire is not universal because it is too negative, there are identifiable elements in both Kraus' and Beerbohm's texts that relate to carnivalesque. They are not the overwhelming foundation of the book but several passages (the mental patient acting as the Shakespearean "fool," the unoriginality of the *femme fatale*, and even the mass suicides in *Zuleika Dobson*) show elements of the grotesque, and constitute a purer, unadulterated satire removed from modern formalism. But these are not the primary functions of the two respective satires, and only go a short distance to proving the universality of satire. What is perhaps more pertinent here is the abstract qualities of satire that persist in both texts and

whether or not we can consider them universal. Bakhtin describes the power of grotesque imagery over abstract ideas:

The abstract idea distorts this nature (positivity) of the grotesque image. It transforms the center of gravity to a “moral” meaning. Moreover it submits the substratum of the image to the negative element. Exaggeration becomes a caricature...But here (in Rabelais’ writings) disintegration is still at its early stage. The grotesque images selected to serve an abstract idea are still too powerful; they preserve their nature and pursue their own logic, independently from the author’s intentions, and sometimes contrary to them
(Rabelais 62-63)

As discussed in Chapter II, the abstractions are very powerful in both texts and often become the dominant vehicle of satire. Indeed, they are so dominant that it was posited that they are perhaps responsible for the only universal qualities of Kraus’ and Beerbohm’s satire. Bakhtin disagrees with the universality of abstract ideas—they make the satire “moral,” which, in turn, makes it at once local and negative. Bakhtin claims that carnivalesque laughter is universal because everyone is included in the satire (*Rabelais* 11), something that does not hold for the satires of Kraus and Beerbohm that are heavily reliant on their locale and period. However, it is also possible to see morality through a universal lens and consider the abstractions that are satirized or otherwise attacked as somewhat transferable across time and location.

The moral issues that Kraus discusses are namely complicity, the state of German culture, and nationalism. In *Zuleika Dobson*, the primary objects of satire are the *femme fatale*, power structures, and the herd mentality. These are all universal abstractions (again, they are defined as abstractions because, although they can be measured in some form, they are not objects but purely a creation of human thought). The real question then concerns not their applicability to

other situations; despite their basis in locality, these are properties that are perhaps transitive. Instead, the question is whether these abstractions such as the warnings against nationalism and the degradation of culture can universally instruct the reader to be aware of or potentially avoid similar situations in the future. Can we or should we learn from this laughter? Dustin Griffin certainly thinks so, “Most satire, at least since the Renaissance, is polemical, ranging itself against some previous practice and attempting to displace it” (6). Beerbohm’s satire is less polemical than Kraus’ because he prescribes to the reader a caricatured Oxford in playful terms. If Kraus’ satire is polemical, which it almost certainly is, then the practices he attacks are the role of the press and nationalism in war. Bakhtin almost directly disagrees with Griffin, claiming, “the carnival is far distant from the negative and formal parody of modern times. Folk humor denies, but it revives and renews at the same time” (*Rabelais* 11). Griffin suggests the opposite, that modern satire displaces the old with a new system of morals and abstractions. But folk humor, says Bakhtin, relies on no such certainties, and is hence far more important than modern satire, because it relies on “regenerating ambivalence” (*Rabelais* 21). It is less polemical on the author’s behalf, but more of a presentation of the unmasking of human truths through the grotesque.

However, this is not to say that modern abstractions are necessarily coarse as Bakhtin wishes his readers to believe. If the abstractions themselves are critical of human nature and highlight our faults then we can react to this criticism. For example, following the herd, a major abstraction that characters blindly obey in both texts, is easily remedied. Admittedly, these abstractions must, as Bakhtin prescribes, be based in locality because of the moral nature of their birth, but this does not mean that there can sometimes be common elements drawn out of these abstractions.

Thus, through the satirical texts of Beerbohm and Kraus we witness the potential for universality that satire must reach towards. A truly universal satire may be impossible, but the abstract elements form the basis of transferable elements of satire. These abstractions are themselves satirized and because they rely less on the circumstances of the location and period that the author is writing in, they therefore pertain to the universal. Without them, the text may fall in to the trap of being purely incidental. But the most important and necessary aspect of satire still appears to be situational. Every satirical text must have a local foundation that it constantly refers back to. The heritage will not only drive the plot but, more significantly, also provide the grounds for the author to begin his scathing attack and subsequently impart the correct morals to the reader (even if these morals are not common enough to be deemed universal). Satire is, as Hutcheon determined, self-referential (85). Walter Benjamin deliberates on Kraus' motives, "Is he lamenting, chastising, or rejoicing? No matter—on this evanescent voice the ephemeral work of Kraus is modeled" (273). Satire metaphorically lives and dies in a day. So, while satire can be universal in its scope, any universality is born out of its locality and the transferable elements can only begin to thrive after the self-referentiality has been established.

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