CHAPTER IV

GILES GOAT-BOY: EPIC AS PARODY

Tracing the development from An American Tragedy to Giles Goat-Boy, we can see the similarity in length, since it is rare for a twentieth century writer to produce a work of such great length. Where, Dreiser used a serious vein to portray the ills of contemporary society, Barth uses parody and is comic in portraying the condition of modern man and his world of the computer age. "Just as the realistic novel was rooted in the conflict between the individual and society, fabulation springs from the collision between the philosophical and mythic perspectives on the meaning and value of existence, with their opposed dogmas of struggle and acquiescence." Barth represents a world where there is competition for each one to outdo another. Science and knowledge have taken the place of religion and mythology. "Barth's parody of passing and failing demonstrates what proportions the American Dream has shrunk to -

aspiration in a world with no values and no ends becomes an end in itself, a substitute for a meaningful life."  

The novelists of the nineteen-sixties made heavy use of the burlesque to present their material, as this was their way of presenting the contemporary chaotic world. "The American writer in the middle of the twentieth century has his hands full in trying to understand, and then describe, and then make credible much of the American reality. It stupefies, it sickens, it infuriates and finally it is even a kind of embarrassment to one's own meagre imagination. The actuality is continually outdoing our talents and the culture tosses up figures almost daily that are the envy of any novelist." In their novels there is a blending of fact and fiction which results in a fabulous and comic atmosphere. The fiction is treated to accentuate the comic. "Forced beneath the surface, the hero in a mass society lacks some measure of definition, lacks the basis to distinguish between illusion and reality which the traditional novel afforded. It is this, rather than the absence of conflict between inner dream and public fact that prescribes the moral ambiguities of the recent novel and determines the


involution of its form: the vague present or undated yesterdays of so many novels, their unworldly settings and symbolic actions, their submersed point of view, eccentric characters, and decorous structure. Most of the novelists of the nineteen-sixties treat sex comically. We find in Donald Barthelme's *Snow White* that the heroine has seven lovers whom she allows to make love to her only in the bath with the shower sprinkling water on her back. The absurdity of the situation is further pointed out when we are told that whenever the lovers want to attain her favours, they present her with a new shower curtain. Similar cases of comic treatment of sex may be discerned in Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant*, *A New Life* and Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy*.

In the novels of the nineteen-sixties "Eden, Utopia, and the New Adam have no major significance" writes Olderman, further stating that, "if the memory of Eden and a related sense of loss continue to appear, they appear only as the universal remembrance of the Eden of childhood - a memory as vital to William Wordsworth, to international modern psychology, and to the modern European novel as it is to American novels." The novels of the sixties deal with the theme of man questing for an understanding of the self and

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4 Raymond M. Olderman, p. 6.

5 Ibid., p. 9.
a kind of rejuvenating salvation. One common and prominent characteristic of these novels is that they are serio-comic studies of the times. The themes are dealt with in comic, fabulous terms conveying serious philosophic issues. This juxtaposition of laughter and pain is commonly referred to as black humour which is employed in the novels of Pynchon, Barth, Elkin and Vonnegut.

The publication of *Giles Goat-Boy* evoked wide applause. It was discussed at length in magazines and Sunday supplements. Despite its being critically analysed with such frequency, there has been no consensus as to what kind of novel it really is. James L McDonald remarks "*Giles Goat-Boy* has been called many things: gothic allegory, mythic fantasy, cosmic fable, comic epic. The labels indicate its richness and complexity, and help to suggest the magnitude of John Barth's achievement." The comic-epic allows a mixture of the profound and the comic. It deals with man, society and related philosophical subjects, but the treatment of material is ludicrous. The most apt way to describe *Giles Goat-Boy* would be to call it a comic epic in prose or an epic parody:

John Barth's fourth work of fiction is a focus for our times, an epic to end all epics, and a sacred book to end all sacred books... It is a work of genuine epic vision, a fantastic mosaic constructed from...

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the fragments of our life and
traditions, calculated to startle
us into new perceptions of the
epic hero and savior. It is epic
in its scope: in its combination
of myth and history, of the ideal
and the actual. And it is a
sacred book because it is concerned
with the life of a religious hero
and with the way to salvation. True,
it treats these matters comically,
even farcically at times; and it is
militantly fabulative, insisting
on its fabulous dimension, its
unreality. But this insistence is
part of the book's point: In our
time any sacred book must be a work
of fiction.*

To enhance George's epic stature, Barth uses the
myth of the wandering hero, as enumerated by Lord Raglan
in The Hero. Barth's use of this myth has been cate-
gorically stated by David Morrell in his book John Barth:
An Introduction. Lord Raglan wrote that the classical
hero in the ancient legends was usually the son of a mother
who was royal and a virgin. His father was a king and the
mother and father would usually be closely related. He
would be conceived under unusual circumstances, and was
reckoned to be the son of a god. At birth an attempt
was made, normally, by his father or maternal grandfather to
do away with him, but was saved and carried away to be
protected. After which he is reared by foster parents in

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7 Robert Scholes, p. 75.
an alien country. In the course of the narrative, we are given very little knowledge of his childhood. When he grows up and attains manhood, he returns to his future kingdom, where he overcomes obstacles and defeats the reigning king and becomes the king. He marries a princess, who usually, is the daughter of his predecessor and rules for sometime during which he lays down the rules of law. After sometime he is unable to retain his popularity among his subjects and also loses the favour of the gods, and is driven away from the city and ultimately dies a mysterious death at the top of a hill and his body is not buried. If the hero has any children, they are not successors to his throne. Lastly, the hero possesses one or more holy sepulchres.

The above characteristics stated by Lord Raglan are applied to George, the hero of *Giles Goat-Boy*, not in a serious vein, but on a burlesque pattern. The application of this myth to George is categorically pointed out by David Morrell; we are told that George's mother is a virgin as she has been impregnated by the method of osmosis by the computer WESCAC which is the all powerful ruler of the University, like a king or a god. She is considered royal in the University campus, being the daughter of the former Chancellor of New Tammany College, but it has been falsely rumoured that his father was his mother's uncle. When he is born, his maternal
grandfather arranges for his being sent into the belly of WESCAC where he would certainly be killed, as his birth would spell social disgrace for his daughter. He is saved by a Negro who pulls him out of the computer's belly and takes him to Max Spielman, a former professor who has been expelled from the University campus and is now a goat herder. Here George is raised in the goat barns far from the New Tammany College by a foster father, that is, Max. We meet him when he comes of age and most of his childhood is obscure. He sets out for New Tammany College, the place from which he came, to establish himself as a Grand Tutor. He marries Anastasia, who is a kind of goddess. After having passed all the tests, many students accept him as their messiah and he reigns over them and gives them certain rules to follow. This soon ends and he is thrown into jail. His being driven away and his impending mysterious death are foreseen by him in a vision and he predicts that he will die far away on the top of the sacred Founder's Hill. His body is not buried, but what fate it meets is not clear, and the sepulchre possessed by the wandering myth hero, is in George's case the Founder's Hill.

It is apparent as we have a great deal of evidence that Barth followed Lord Raglan's twenty-two stage pattern of the wandering hero myth. But, these are put to comic use. He achieves the effect by depicting an improbable situation, for instance, Virginia Hector is seduced by a computer and
then a human child is brought up as a goat, demonstrating how the modern writer is utilizing the situations of the ancient epic for comic effect. These incidents are comic-like Don Quixote and Parson Adams. George wins and keeps the affections of the reader even while the reader laughs at him. In this aspect Barth's vision is similar to Joyce's, who also puts myth to comic use. Another influence on Barth, beside Lord Raglans, is Joseph Campbell. In Campbell's book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* he writes about the hero's mythological journey which is made to an unknown place. We see this case in George who makes his journey into the unknown world of humans, "I want to be a man," he declares, signalling the start of his adventure. "The goats still struck me as far superior in almost every respect to the humans I'd seen and heard of: stronger, calmer, nobler; more handsome, more loving, more reliable. But the humans for better or worse, were vastly more interesting." By paralleling the life history of George to classical myth, Barth is able to convey comically, the tragic and complex modern world. "What distinguishes 'mythic' or epic fiction from, say, allegory, satire or the novel is simply that the creator of true myths and, to a lesser degree, the great epic

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8John Barth, *Giles Goat - Boy* or the Revised New Syllabus (London: Secker and Warburg, 1967), pp. 24-25. All subsequent quotations from the novel are from this edition and will be indicated by the initials GG and a page number in parentheses.
poet are more consciously involved in the recreation of the archetypes, and thus give us fictions which hew closer to the spare outlines of the monomythic acts.*9

* Giles Goat-Boy is a novel about the modern world represented as a university. Barth emphasizes the vital role of scientific mechanism by making WESCAC, a computer which is powerful and controls the functioning of the University. The University's present state reflects the world situation during and after World War II. There is a restive peace and constant apprehension of another World War. The prevailing anarchy represents the modern mind which is beset by varying philosophies; religious and political ideologies which totally confuse it. The representation of facts relating to the modern world are allegorized in fantastic and comic terms. Barth's attitude towards fact and fiction seem to be put in George's mouth:

for the most part I regarded natural laws with the same provisional neutrality with which one regards the ground-rules of a game or the exposition of a fable, and the reflection that one had no choice of games whatever (when so many others were readily imaginable) could bring me on occasion to severe melancholy. Indeed, if I never came truly to despair at the awful arbitrariness

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of Facts, it was because I never more than notionally accepted them. The Encyclopedia Tammanica I read from Aardvaark to Zymurgy in quite the same spirit as I read the Old School Tales, my fancy prefacing each entry "Once upon a time..." (GG, pp. 80-81).

Barth uses fiction to express the modern confusion of reality. "Frame and fable combine to form Barth's Revised New Syllabus. A sacred book containing another sacred book, it persistently affirms its artificiality and artifice... as fiction, artifact, constructed absolute, it triumphs over what is controversial, discrepant, and problematic by creating and containing it. In the modern world - a world riddled with uncertainty, relativity, incoherence - the novel emerges as an alternative. Barth commits himself to the reinvention of the world, to the creation out of the fragmentation and disorder of life the wholeness and order of art - a revised, new syllabus which becomes a single object of knowledge, judgement, and enlightenment."¹⁰

Although the metaphysics of Barth's novel may be modern and original, the structure is traditional. The vehicle of epic parody is a genre which has traditionally allowed a blending of the comic and the profound. Many of the novelists of the nineteen-sixties inserted mock -

¹⁰James L. Mc Donald, p. 10.
historical prefaces before the beginning of the story. We see examples of these in Thomas Berger's *Little By Man*, Burt Blechman's *The Octopus Papers*, Kurt Vonnegut's in *Mother Night* and Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy* which is in keeping with the mock epics of the eighteenth century. Barth follows in the tradition of Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* as *Giles Goat-Boy* is a comic piece of work conveying a philosophical, serious statement about society and the plight of man. Barth is also indebted to Fielding's *Tom Jones* wherein absurdity is used to mock at the vanities and hollowness of eighteenth century society. Like Tom, George is a picaresque hero venturing and travelling to give the novel a comprehensive scope. Like Swift, Barth lays great stress on man's physical and emotional nature. In *Giles Goat-Boy* George gains enlightenment when he and Anastasia are interlocked in a sexual embrace; "In the sweet place that contained me there was no East, no West, but an entire, single, seamless campus: Turnstile, Scrapegoat Grate, the Mall, the barns, the awful fires of the Powerhouse, the balmy heights of Founder's Hill— I saw them all; rank jungles of Frumentius, Nikolay's cold fastness, teeming T'ang—all one, and one with me. Here lay with there, tick clipped tock, all serviced nothing; I and My Ladyship, all, were one" (GG, pp. 672-673). George's gaining knowledge when embracing Anastasia, reflects Barth's view that love as a redeeming factor, may be an answer, a
solution to the problems of a world that has turned away from morals and religion.

We first meet George in Max Spielman's experimental goat farm, where he is being raised as a goat, under the name of Billy Bocksfuss. It is only when he approaches his teen years that he questions his being. He comes to the conclusion that he is neither goat nor human and so calls himself a goat-boy. He then names himself George and attempts to repress his goatish instincts. On hearing about the University, he sets off to proclaim himself as a Grand Tutor. He wishes to deliver a message to the student community. In order to establish himself as the Grand Tutor he must overcome and control the gigantic computer WESCAC, that is, the Western Campus Computer. Three times George goes into the WESCAC's belly to get himself passed as the Grand Tutor. The first two times he fails and gives messages to students which end up in being the cause of much chaos. It is the third time, after wrecking the WESCAC that he achieves his required certificate, but then he realizes that he has no message to deliver, thereby conveying the futility of his epic quest. George's final descent into WESCAC's belly is a parody of the traditional "voyage to the underworld." Here George, comically copulates with Anastasia in the computer and is released after a short circuit. George's head is covered with his mother's purse when he discovers, "the University whole and clear." Like Oedipus, he is able to see "In the
darkness, blinding light! The end of the University!
Commencement Day" (GG,p.673). When he enters WESCAC
the last time, he gains the knowledge of unity in mutlipli-
city which is the ultimate understanding of the hero.

In keeping with the ambitiousness of his intent,
Barth relies far more heavily on the use of symbolism to
associate George and the University campus with national
and cosmic events than do any of the previously discussed
epic writers, with the exception of Melville. The dominant
symbol in the novel is WESCAC. It is the tyrannical computer
which is all powerful, it has taken the place of God in
America. It is symbolic of modern technology. However it
has another aspect, that is, its psychological dimension,
it is a part of the modern mind that discriminates and
differentiates. Max tells George that WESCAC, "had existed
as it were in spirit among men from the very founding of
the University, especially in West Campus" (GG,p. 51). Here
West Campus is symbolic of America. Max also says "there's
some WESCAC in the head of every student that ever was"
(GG,p.52). It is a symbol of advancement and industrialization
at the cost of religion and morality:

Yet though it possessed the power
not only to EAT all studentdom but
to choose to do so, there were
respects in which the callowest new
freshman was still its better:
mighty WESCAC was not able to enjoy
for example, as I enjoyed frisking
through the furze; nor could it
contemplate or dream. It could
excogitate, extrapolate, generalize and infer, after its fashion; it could compose an arithmetical music and a sort of accidental literature (not often interesting); it could assess half a hundred variables and make the most sophisticated prognostications. But it could not act on hunch or brilliant impulse; it had no intuitions or exaltations; it could request, but not yearn; indicate, but not insinuate or exhort; command, but not care. It had no sense of style or grasp of the ineffable; its correlations were exact, but its metaphors wretched; it could play chess but not poker. The fantastically complex algebra of Max's Cyclology it could manage in minutes, but it never made a joke in its life (GG, pp. 60-61).

Barth was of the opinion that much of man's problems arose out of insistence on differentiation and categorization.

In Giles Goat-Boy he portrays the conflict between East and West, between Russia and America. It is a novel about the possible future relations between the two power blocks. Croaker is symbolic of the emerging black nations. Campus Riot I and II refer to World War I and II. The Campus Riot is a mock heroic war reminiscent of Fielding's mock-heroic battles. Student unionism symbolizes communists. Lucius Rexford reminds us of J.F. Kennedy. The power of WESCAC to EAT is a reference to the powerful atomic bomb. Peter Greene is symbolic of the modern American culture and the contradictions prevalent in it, he is a comically portrayed character as are commonly present in mock-epics, in Fielding's Tom Jones for example. He is the typical American opportunist who has forsaken his own religion and community,
"The actual nature and location of his birthplace I (George) could not discern: sometimes it appeared to have been the meanest hovel, sometimes a place of ancient grandeur. In any case he'd abandoned it, his parents, and his patrimony and hied him into wilderness departments, to live off the land" (GG, p. 227). He justifies that it was for his wife, "It was chiefly for her sake," that he "laid waste the wilderness" (GG, p. 229). Together they raised children "tall and handsome, their teeth uncarious, their underarms odorless; yet they seemed not interested in anything" (GG, p. 242). Enos Enoch is a Christ figure, Stoker represents the devil and his Power House is symbolic of Hell. And Harold Bray, 'shadows the tragic pattern of George's pilgrimage. Against a Western conception of tragedy, he flaunts a malign transcendental mystery; against George's serious vocation as Grand Tutor, he pits a talent for metaphysical mockery as he shifts from pose to pose; against George's hard-won integrity, he brays forth his magical proliferation into the many.'

Barth gives many of his characters supernatural and divine like qualities, they perform the role of Homer and Virgil's gods and goddesses, in keeping with the epic tradition. "Giles Goat-Boy is, among many other things, an

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outrageous allegory which takes University to mean universe, which imagines the entire contemporary scene and history of Western civilization - culture, politics, even sexuality - as a gigantic university whose countries are separate 'colleges', where the economic structure is based, not on currency, but on information, and where men and women, instead of seeking to save their souls, are obsessed with passing their finals.\textsuperscript{12} The novel presents the modern, industrialized world of competition, making an epic representation of the contemporary scene.

Barth has a fine comic sense which enables him to endow the typical characters with quirks or eccentricities which immediately individualise them, even though they may be intended as representative of some larger type. For instance, Peter Greene, the representative of twentieth century American opportunist and optimist, whose blindness is treated comically, "The loss of each of Greene's eyes, for example, is a bizarre and improbable event, important in its ethical implications, comic and pathetic in its immediate narration, and presented with an emotional appropriateness that justifies the improbability of the actual event and the weight of allegory that it supports."\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} Frank D. McConnel, p. 112.

\textsuperscript{13} Robert Scholes, p. 93.
When Greene narrates how he lost an eye and gained knowledge, Barth is particular that his story is harmoniously weaved into the main texture. This story is shown having an impact on George and increasing his experience and knowledge and not merely as a source of entertainment.

George starts his journey from the goat farm for the University campus, leaving behind the happy animal existence:

Who neglects his appetites suffers their pangs; Who presumes incautiously may well be butted; Who fouls his stall must sleep in filth. Cleave to him, I learned, who does you kindness; Avoid him who does you hurt; Stay inside the fence; Take of what's offered as much as you can for as long as you may; Don't exchange the certain for the possible; Boss when you're able, be bossed when you aren't, but don't forsake the herd. Simple lessons, instinct with wisdom, that grant to him who heeds them afternoons of browsy bliss and dreamless nights. Thirteen years they fenced by soul's pasture; I romped without a care. In the fourteenth I slipped their gate - as I have since many another - looked over my shoulder, and saw that what I'd said bye-bye to was my happiness (GG, pp. 8-9).

The process of adapting human ways involves accepting certain modes of conduct and speech. Max's research in Psychoproctology, as well as his experience of life, have brought him to the conclusion that, "Der goats is humaner than der men, und der men is goatisher than der goats" (GG, p. 7). He tells George that, "Every man's part goat and part Grand Tutor"; (GG, p. 82). When George decides to leave the farm for the university, he does so with Max's approval and guidance. "Like Dante's Vergil, he reveals to his pupil the soul's
darkness; but instead of a girdle of rush emblematizing humility, he ritualistically signifies George's passage into the human condition by hanging around his neck an amulet of the withered testicles of a particularly lusty goat named Freddie.... they serve as a warning to George to curtail his passions, to put aside the 'stud-buck' in him in order to become a man. Barth allocates to sex a prominent place in Giles Goat-Boy. It "presents so many and such a variety of sexual encounters that it slips entirely over to the absurd, intending neither titillation nor "serious" nature man-woman love, or man-man love, or even man-goat love." It adds to the complexity of the novel, dealing with the grief and jealousy associated with sexual possession. He deals with the sex instinct, wishes and desires which not only allow sex a mysteriousness, but also bring us into the realm of psychology, and "modern psychologies are great epics of human activity."

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15 Raymond M. Olderman, p. 20.

so extensively about sex, Barth, "more than any of his colleagues - more perhaps than any writer since Byron - manages to remind us of the essential fact that sex is, whatever else, great fun." 17

George's close examination of Anastasia's body can hardly be called an ordinary love scene; "A slender bagful of meaty pipes and pouches, grown upon with hairs, soaked through with juices, strung up on jointed sticks, the whole thing pulsing, squirting, bubbling, flexing, combusting and respiring in my arms; doomed soon enough to decompose into its elements, yet afflicted in the brief meanwhile with mad imaginings, so that, not content to jelly through the night and meld, ingest, divide, it troubled its sleep with dreams of passedness, of love" (GG, p. 616). The details signify that life is intricately intermingled with decomposition and disease. Thus, a scene which on the surface is comically physical, conveys serious philosophies, in keeping with the mock-epic genre.

According to Olderman, "The University is an apt image of the waste land not only because it creates the illusion that conceptual knowledge can lead to salvation, but also because it is another of those institutions which our age has come to view as the enemy. It too seizes control

17 Frank D. McConnel, p. 114.
over man's life. The campus demonstrations in the late sixties indicate, at least, that students have seen the university as a representative institution, so that revolt against the university is revolt against the system.\textsuperscript{18}

The portrayal of the university presents the world and educational system as it exists today. The universities function to give degrees, and not practical knowledge, or improvement of the self. These aspects are seen in the words of Harold Bray who speaks for the University as we find them in the United States today:

> For those with eyes to see, New Tammany abounds with voiceless admonitions to humility. Not for nothing are 'Staff' and 'Faculty' equally privileged, so that groundskeepers and dormitory-cooks are affluent as new professors; not for nothing does custom decreee that our trustees be unlettered folk, and that our chancellor be selected not from the intelligentsia but by ballot, from the lower percentiles: tinkers and tillers and keepers of shops. For the same reason one observes among the faculty not graybeard scholars only, their cowls ablazon with exotic marks of honor, but men of the people: former business-majors, public-relations clerks, gentle carpenters and husbandmen (\textit{GG}, p. 403).

Then Bray goes on to comment on the libraries comparing them with 'cow-barns' and 'skating-rinks,' and

\textsuperscript{18} Ramond M. Olderman, p. 90.
further adds, "Was not Enos Enoch, the Founder's Boy, by nature an outdoor type, a do-it-Himselfer who chose as His original Tutees the first dozen people He met; who never took degree or published monograph or stood behind lectern, but gathered about Him whoever would listen, in the buckwheat valleys or the wild rhododendron of the slope, and taught them by simple fictions and maxims proof against time, which now are graved in the limestone friezes of our halls?" (GG, pp. 403-4). Amidst these conditions in the world, Barth has depicted the plight of man. The University itself depicts the human condition. This is in keeping with the epic tradition which is ideally designed to appeal to a single people at a specific time in history, and yet understood by future generations because of its depictions of universal human feelings and situations. George sets out to redeem studentdom and himself. His story though comical in the beginning turns tragic as he tries and fails to become a saviour. His attempt is heroic, but the philosophy implied underscores the impediments to success, its hardships and the loneliness of its path. The tragic element is veiled by a comic exterior; the fact that George is midway between goat and boy, then the way he keeps changing his advice in an attempt to proclaim his Grand Tutorship. George is comic like Parson Adams in Fielding's comic-epic Joseph Andrews. The
comic element does not stop here, it extends to emotions as well. Love is mocked at in its comic absurdity; Maurice Stoker gains sexual satisfactions in arranging various sex-mates for his wife, "The ordinary moral and psychological don't count here at all. What immediately counts is, on the level of plot, the entanglements; on the level of meaning, the nuttiness. But what also counts, beyond immediate laughter, is a lingering sorrow, an underlying disgust, and a metaphor for the impossible strain of human attachment and commitment."¹⁹ The novel, therefore, is a history of culture along with philosophical implications presented comically which go to make it a comic-epic or mock-epic.

The chaotic disorder in the campus is comic. It is through order, disorder, physical and intellectual, obscene and sacred experiences that George is able to experience human life in its many aspects. Many of the major characters define graduation or spiritual salvation in their own terms and their answers are mere distortions which do not reflect the real truth. This is exemplified in the character Eblis Eierkopf, who is involved in a project of reductive empiricism, which involves the measuring of that point in time "where Tick becomes Tock" (GG,p.434).

He tells George, "There aren't any mysteries; just ignorance. When something looks miraculous it's because we're using the wrong lenses......................... Mirrors and lenses are my favourite things" (GG,p. 336).
Later, in the narrative, when George is examining a gift from Sear through a lens belonging to Eierkopf, he sees,"the magnified reflection of my own eye" (GG,p.361). Here Barth is conveying the idea that often external reality is deceptive, and may conceal hidden truths. "Such is the implication of modern relativity theory, which acknowledges the subjectivity of all formulations of external reality, formulations that measure not the intrinsic properties of things, but merely the way we see them. 'Truth' thus becomes a matter of perspective, and the number of perspectives from which reality can be viewed varies indefinitely."20 Discussion of such transcendental subjects not only point out man's limitations but also impart an epic sense of reality and temporality.

Giles Goat-Boy may be read as a parody on the Bible with George imitating Enos Enoch, whose life in the University parallels the life of Christ. There are many analogies to the Bible and to Christianity. School children are taught, "the moral principles of Moishe's Code and the Seminar-on-the-Hill"(GG,p. 55). Enos Enoch, we learn has "enrolled in the

manual - training course taught by His mother 's humble husband " (GG, p. 398). And then " John the Bursar had been necessary to declare Enos Enoch ' s matriculation and administer to him the rites of enrollment " (GG, pp. 510 - 11). Furthermore, even the prayers go as; " Unto the Chancellor that which is the Chancellor ' s; unto the Founder that which is the Founder ' s. " (GG, p. 326) and " Our Founder, Who art omniscient, / Commenced be Thy name / Thy college come; Thy assignments done / On Campus as beyond the Gate " (GG, p. 363). When in the beginning of the novel we are introduced to Max on his farm it seems to be a paradise which is intruded upon by Lady Creamhair, who reads to George, " such heady fare as Tales of Trustees, The Founder-Saga, and the exploits of legendary scholars who had wandered through the wilds of the ancient campus " (GG, p. 22), which corrupts the Goat-Boy ' s mind and leads to his killing a rival goat and desire to leave the farm for the University campus. " Thus the book begins with a familiar, if lively, loss of Eden, as the narrative disjunction between voice and action creates a sense of parody. " 21 These constant allusions to the Bible keep the idea of epic before us, and is a popular device among modern epic writers. Barth ' s parody of Biblical allusions accentuates its mock-epic character.

Barth shows his consciousness of the epic tradition in many ways. He keeps referring to the great heroes of epic literature, even though the references are subtle and indirect. He often suggests that his hero is akin to these epic heroes. George's circumstances of birth are similar to those of Christ. Like Jesus he is born to a virgin mother. Even though his father is WESCAC, we are told his real father is mankind, "the eugenical specimen whereof I was the issue had been drawn as it were from all studentdom, whose scion therefore I was; WESCAC's role has been merely that of an inseminatory instrument" (CC, p.638).

Thereby George is actually the son of man, a product of the various genes of "studentdom." He is representative of Everyman, tracing the process of development from childhood innocence when man is animal like and a mere synthesis of instincts to adult-life with all its inherent conflicts and problems. George questing for maturity and solutions after "dissociation of sensibilities" hankering for that state of being which Wordsworth referred to as "abundant recompense" for the innocent, happy childhood that has been lost, is to achieve tranquility. When George leaves the farm he does not realize that he is leaving behind his happy years. It is only after he has attained his thirteenth year that he displays 'ungoatish' streaks of intelligence and perception. When the goats play a game called 'Dean of the Hill' in which they compete for possession of a barret top approached by two planks leaned on opposite sides, "The plankway was too steep then for the others; they could only adore me from below as I teetered on my perch,...But I knew their
hearts were filled with envy" (GG, p. 12). Here we see that not only is he different from the rest of the herd, but is proud as well. This pride evokes in another goat, Redfearn Tom, to run into, "And then my tower came a-topple" (GG, p. 13), and he falls in the "people" side of the fence. In the words of Walter, "George's construction, however, though proof of his intelligence, is also index of his pride; and like the first parents who aspired beyond their nature he is destined for a fall.... The bruises and humiliation that George suffers at the hands of the people are a first taste of that undercurrent of tragic suffering, like Taliped's which is inseparable from life on the human side." 22

Barth keeps the idea of epic before his readers in yet another way, that is, by referring to epic literature, to the genre. When George is being educated he shows inclination towards various subjects like mathematics, logics and theoretical science, but his real interest lies in literature, mainly the epics and romances that focus on the hero. To him, "all that mattered was the hero's performance" (GG, pp. 79-80). These heroic tales influence him and inspire him to declare, "I'm going to be a hero," he tells Max. "If a man knows he's a hero, can't he always find himself a dragon?" (GG, p. 90). The

22 James F. Walter, p. 397.
dragon of George's quest is in the individual soul when the WESCAC in each of us deracinates itself from natural feeling and holistic intuition in an attempt to become the sole censor of truth. The result is a rejection of what our hearts and spirits know, particularly the knowledge of value, which alone gives meaning and purpose to our lives. As this schism spreads to the social order, it manifests itself in a variety of ways: in religion it is the proliferation of sects, secular and otherwise, which rush in to fill the moral vacuum once faith has been lost; in education it is the bureaucratization of curricula into increasingly specialized and exclusive departments, each with its own method, even when the subject of study, the nature of man, remains unitary; in politics it is the conflict of the urban intellectual against the rural folk; in economics it is capitalism's glorification of private greed against socialism's glorification of public greed; and in personal relationships it is the harsh scrutiny of all motives by the method of psychological analysis and the consequent formulation of individuals into types.*

Max Spielman spells out two statements about the world for George's benefit, that is, "Spielman's law of Cycology," and "West Campus as a whole was in mid-adolescence" (GG, p. 254). The first statement in which "Ontogeny recapitulates cosmogeny" (GG, p. 7) meaning that

*23 James F. Walter, pp.400-401.
in the history of the individual is summarized the history of the university/world. His epic quest is a search for maturity, his and the world's, "What hope there was that such an adolescent would reach maturity (not to say Commencement) without destroying himself was precisely the hope of the University" (GG,p. 255).

George's quest for maturity and redemption is to re-program the tyrannical computer WESCAC which has the power to EAT (Electroencephalic Amplification and Transmission - the ultimate weapon) mankind. He is supposed to descend into the belly of the WESCAC to change its AIM. The first time he is rejected because in his answers he makes rigid distinctions between good and evil. The second time he fails again, this time because he makes no distinctions and offers the answer that 'failure is passage'. It is on his third descent that George finally succeeds. He realizes that good and evil exist simultaneously, they are different aspects of a being which unite to make a whole; "Pass All/Fail All." George's descent into the belly of the WESCAC is reminiscent of the traditional epic hero's descent into the underworld. A similar case can be seen in Thomas Wolfe's You Can't Go Home Again. The hero's visit to the latrines represents a kind of epic descent into the underworld where he is made aware of almost unbearable horror. The remainder of his quest involves an attempt to integrate that vision of hell with some sort of epic affirmation of
America. George's initial descent into Stoker's Power Plant does not bear any fruit in his search for maturation as it is similar to Dante's descent into hell, more for acquaintance with evil than good. Here his "service" of Anastasia is "because she was altogether in my power, subject absolutely to my will" (GG, p. 98), and not out of love. "Stoker's Power Plant then, besides being an emblem of the tremendous forces in physical nature, also represents the subconscious psychic energies, often lawless and destructive, in man. George's journey into that region is a parody of all similar epic and romance descents, which ritualistically enact and signify the hero's coming to terms with the various parts of the self - the evil and the good, the flesh and the spirit, the light and the dark".²⁴ George's experience in Stoker's Power Plant is important as at this point he has not been able to attain a higher level of understanding and maturity, which he gains in his third descent into the WESCAC's belly with Anastasia. There George gains true union with and understands the "female elements" in himself. "Indeed suffering is useless if it is not accompanied by a reach beyond the self in love. This is the significance of Anastasia in the satire. Besides being a simple female person, her couplings with an epic variety of characters suggest that

²⁴ James F. Walter, p. 400.
she embodies a universal principle of being: she is the eternal feminine foil to the self-aggrandizing impetus of WESCAC.  

One of the aims to be fulfilled by George in the course of his quest is to "See Through Your Ladyship" (GG,p. 469). This is accomplished in the belly of the WESCAC when they both act with love in their heart. Here they represent and know each other as Adam knew Eve. Here George realizes the superiority of the feelings of the heart. He learns that he is loved; "Wonderful!" I cried. For though the place was lightless, and my head pursed, in Anastasia I discovered the University whole and clear" (GG,p. 672). Then, when WESCAC asks its usual question - "ARE YOU MALE OF FEMALE?" (GG,p.672), George does not feel the need to answer as he has understood that united with Anastasia, having gained maturity, that there is no differentiation. It was his mission to gain this knowledge and then convey it to studentdom. In the beginning he wanted them to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

For instance, he tells Greene to get a pair of high resolution lenses, "to help you see the difference between things," and a mirror, "to take a closer look at yourself in" (GG,p.427). George desires to make an effort to make the 'students' learn of their shortcomings which hinder their spiritual growth.

He is successful with Greene, Eierkopf and Sear, but characters

like Lucius Rexford never attain spiritual maturity; "if Commencement was indeed attainable by human students; then the way led through the dark and bloody Deanery of Cadmus, there was no getting round it; not through the clean, well-windowed halls of Rexford's Chancellory" (GG,p.373). But, most of the other characters stand much improved as for instance Hedwig tells about Kennard, "He says that what he'd never seen till Croaker hit him, even though he thought he'd seen everything, was that a certain kind of spiritedness was absolutely good, no matter what a person's other Answers are" (GG,p. 691) and Peter Greene remarks, "I got right smart of work to do back home, George. Finish up inventory; try and set things right with Sally Ann" (GG,p. 652). However, the culminating point of George's education is when after a comprehensive survey of Anastasia's "every pore, hair, fold, crease, protuberance, process and orifice of her" (GG,p.618), he is united with her in loving embrace and is put at peace; "Mother of my soul, its pulse throbbed all around us; my Father's eye it was glowed near, whose loving inquiry I perceived through My Ladyship" (GG,p. 672). He finally sees the real nature of WESCAC, "although it stood between Failure and Passage, WESCAC therefore partook of both, served both, and was in itself true emblem of neither. I had been wrong... to think it Troll"(GG,p.676)

In portraying George in the end as a redeemer and parodying redeemers simultaneously, Barth presents before us Eliot's 'Wasteland'. Barth is toiling with the same question
as to what it is that has seized the mind of man and how can he attain salvation in these circumstances where morality and religion are fast losing their hold. This aspect was often dealt with by novelists of the nineteen sixties. George is transformed from Eliot's Grail Knight to the wounded Fisher King. We find George complaining about the dearth of morality and the worsening situation. We become aware of his affinity to the ailing Fisher King; "if New Tammany's new Auditorium has no flogging-room beneath it, neither has it a soaring campanile above" (GG,p. 707). He further parodies The Wasteland, as in place of the sacred words that pronounce peace and goodwill in the poem, "Shantih, Shantih, Shantih," Barth makes George anticipate his own crucifixion when; "The oak will yield, the rock know my embrace. Three times will lightning flash at a quarter after seven, all the University respeaking my love's thunder" (GG,p. 708), and then the sacred sounds "Teruah! Tekiah! Shebarim" sound from the shopar as George blows it through his ass. "By giving us the story of a redeemer from the first-person point of view, Barth is able to continue his parody of mythologies, of The Wasteland, of heroic Gospels, and of that favorite device in the novel of the sixties - symbolic resolution." 26 This aspect gives us

26 Raymond M. Olderman, p. 79.
knowledge of the contemporary situation and the response it evoked in the novelists of the nineteen-sixties making *Giles Goat-Boy* an epic representation of a body of persons and their environment.

George has many attributes of classical heroes, but has been transformed into a hero born in the age of computer and science. This allows the kinship between the classical hero and modern one to take on comic aspects. He is born of a virgin mother, but is fathered by a computer and not by the Gods Apollo or Zeus. In keeping with the epic tradition, the hero undertakes a journey in search of spiritual renewal or to regain the lost estate. Like Odysseus, George is an adventurer who sets out to establish himself as 'Grand Tutor'. Barth has achieved a prose Odyssey in *Giles Goat-Boy*. However, like Ulysses, George’s journey is futile. This instance is comparable to Fielding's Parson Adams in *Joseph Andrews* as the style and portrayal of the journeys and the heroes are so depicted as to present them comically. Two other epic heroes whom George has affinity with are Christ and Oedipus. Like them George is raised in a foster home by foster parents, and there is an element of mystery surrounding his birth and lineage. The Oedipal theme is explicit in the child in combat with the father for power. "George's quest for maturity demonstrates that both the individual and the world are somehow stuck in the Oedipal stage. Barth tells us this, still half in parody, as another
way of expressing the overriding concern in the novel of the sixties - the individual's desire to snatch mastery of his life away from whatever has gained control of it.  

Barth is able to bestow upon the quest epical dimensions by associating it with journeys mentioned in epic literature:

George is at the same time a representative of the Israelites crossing the River Jordan into the Promised Land and one of the Billy Goats Gruff passing the Troll into greener pastures. The Quixotic parallels are obvious as are those with Dante's descent. George is Sir Galahad faced with perilous ordeals, as he is Pilgrim faced by the Wicket Gate. And he is Aeneas dallying with Dido, as well as Odysseus the eternal adventurer.... George's deficiencies as a Grand Tutor, it is clear, are not merely goatish, they are also godlike: imagining that the world he has prefabricated in his mind is the real one, he operates on the dangerous assumption that the external world will readily conform itself to his will.

Barth intends for George to recreate personally the life of man in America and mankind on the earth, his own fall from innocence and subsequent disillusionment manifest individually both the the Adamic loss of paradise, and the history of the American Republic. George's life is associated with that of Oedipus, Adam, Odysseus, Aeneas

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27 Raymond M. Olderman, p. 84.
and Christ as well as with classical mythology which goes to enhance George's universal identity.

George, as epic hero, has started out in a kind of Adamic innocence which is gradually destroyed during his quest. His affirmation and maturity, at the end of the novel, is one learned through the humiliation at the hands of people and hurt of experience and is the more powerful and convincing because of this. George's quest leads him to a mature understanding of Passage, Failure, Answers and Assignments, and of the relationship between good and evil as they merge. When George has gained personal maturity, he feels he is ready to redeem the world. Barth affirms the present as the starting place for the future, to gain maturity now and save the world from self destruction. Because man's life is but a tiny flame in an illimitable darkness, he is born to die, so he must live in the present and must act significantly to try and conquer the evil prevalent. According to Barth, it is only through love that man can invest his short span on earth with meaning. Through death man becomes part of the universal cyclic life process. George achieves peace based on love and acceptance of death. He gives us a vision of man's life on the earth which began in the America of nineteen-sixties and concludes by embracing all men in all times. It is a heroic vision, for in it he recognises, and at the same time refuses to be defeated by, his own, and mankind's limitations.
However, George's tragedy is that he is not able to maintain, in Wordsworth's term, that 'spot of time' when he attains the maturity that love has supplied. The very best that man can do is to learn to live when and where they must with the tragic knowledge that their best efforts are defeated, unless they accept the fact that man is born to die. In the Post-tape we find that George has failed to redeem mankind. The quest involves an understanding of imperfect human life, and experience of birth, love, death and all significant human activities, on both a personal and universal level. To suggest both the personal and universal plane of experience, Barth relies on archetypes of symbolic death and rebirth. George is reborn several times after he enters the WESCAC's belly to lay claim on being Grand Tutor, and every rebirth in the course of the narrative increases his understanding of man's relation to the world. It is his journeys through history and time which allow him illogical confrontations and illuminate his universal character. He moves about in a world which is symbolically presented before us, a world and society with which we are familiar. "Therefore, the increasing solidity and complexity of George's character in relation to this recognizable society provides not merely a novelistic 'realism' in the book, but undoubtedly increases the reader's anxiety and the reader's inability to deny George's failure
to transform the world of the early nineteen-sixties. Clearly enough and indeed unfortunately, Barth is saying that a hero is not always a savior. The novel *Giles Goat-Boy*, to a certain extent revolves around a conflict between a sensitive personality, a man with ideals and beliefs about the way the world should be, who also has the ability to articulate and express those ideals, and the growing materialism and cynicism of the world as it is. George maintains his vision, though it has been shaped by experience and maturity at the end of the narrative. The work reflects particularly American ideas about innocence and experience and conveys a tragic sense of disillusionment, a feeling which is not uncommon in other modern epics of Eliot, Pound and Williams.

The cycle of birth and rebirth that George undergoes, as the novel reads on, is significant on yet another plane. Besides it being a traumatic experience by which he develops an understanding of the fragility of human life, his rebirth has mythic connotations. His mythic births are an emergence into a collective unconscious where he possesses all the experience mankind has ever had. His quest is merely an archetypal reenactment of something he has done before. His quest is a universal one, and the

29 Scott Byrd, p. 112.
pattern of the ritual is already implanted in that part of his mind which he shares with all men. In his mythic identity as Adam, George's quest is a desire to return to a lost Eden. His return to Eden would rejoin all objects at their source and do away with differentiations and distinctions. A return to Eden would once again put life in its proper perspective, and reestablish the primary relationship of man to the earth. George's third re-birth within the novel is more historic, being symbolic and mythic, and establishes his epic universality as a particular American figure and also reemphasizes the inseparable meaning of the events of his own life with those of America as they lose their Adamic innocence.

In the words of Hauck, *Giles Goat-Boy* is a "serio-comic study of the reoccurrence of the Christ figure in a world whose history is forever doomed to be cyclical."30 George is seen Christ-like, but with a difference, he is a modern Christ, a Christ in a twentieth century world where science, military and industry have reached a high level of sophistication. The affinity between George and Christ is conveyed in mock-epic terms:

> I shall make my way, in lowest gear, to the first spring of the last freshet on the highest rise of Founder's Hill. There, in a riven grove beyond the Shaft, one oak

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stands in the rock: its top is
crowned with vine, its tap-root
cleaves to the spring beneath
and drives I think to the fiery,
bowels of the campus. At that
day's dusking, when lights come
on in Faculty Row and my enemies
raise their liquor, I'll make a
goblet of my hands, drink hot
toddlies from that spring. My
parts will be hung with mistletoe,
my cleft hold the shophar fast;
the oak will yield, the rock know
my embrace. Three times will
lightening flash at a quarter after
seven, all the University respeaking
my love's thunder-Teruah! Tekiah!
Shebarim! - and it will be finished.
The claps will turn me off. Passed,
but not forgotten, I shall rest
(GG, p. 708).

The association of George to Christ and to Adam
add a dimension of epic complexity to his character. His
youth passing in a type of pastoral innocence, allowed him
to be the mythic god of innocence, but the new, crude,
impersonal university campus will demand from him more
contemporary ways of promulgating his epic truths; and so
he tries his hand at politics to establish himself as Grand
Tutor.

George is a more fully developed epic figure than
any of the previously discussed heroes. They are sensitive,
extra-ordinary human beings who can understand the signifi-
cance of local event and who, through the use of that
particular ability, immortalize otherwise transient times
and places. George, however, in addition to this ability,
is a redeemer. His epic stature is enhanced through his
awareness of the fact that his own life, is an epic in so far as it can recreate, through conversation and events the life of mankind. Barth's epic is George's autobiography in which he states and summarizes all those things he sees and feels. His epic realizations are largely expressed after his ritualistic births from the belly of the WESCAC, for then he is able to understand man's universal problems and the answer to them, and has accomplished true herohood. We find that Enos Enoch was aware of the mythic ideal he had to follow in order to become a hero as related to the reader by Max Spielman, "The fact was, he declared, Enos Enoch like other Grand Tutors had had His advising as it were in advance, and did what he did in many cases precisely because He knew it to be prescribed that 'A Grand Tutor shall do such-and-so'. It was not the fulfillment of predictions that made Enos Enoch Grand Tutor; it was the prior condition of Grand Tutorhood that led Him to search out the predictions and see to it they were fulfilled" (GG,p.111). Max Spielman also remarks that George is a hero and fulfills, "nearly all the prerequisites of herohood, as far as could be judged" (GG,p.108). Inspite of Max's efforts, ironically, George attains the maturity and insight a pre-requisite for herohood. "Dante's mythic trip through Hell and Purgatory to Paradise, have contributed heavily to Barth's vision in Giles Goat-Boy. Just as Dante must learn to abandon reason for revelation when reason has taken him as far as it can,
leaving his old guide, Vergil for his new one, Beatrice; so George, separated from his mentor, Max, gains his greatest insight when he sees through his ladyship: in the dark of WESCAC’s belly, his head covered by his mother’s purse and his body united with Anastasia’s in conjugal embrace.  

The single narrative voice, bestows an epic unity on the plot. The language is elevated and serious at first glance, but used to describe low rather than elevated subjects. In the first paragraph may be discerned rhetoric and sublimity playing upon comic subject matter:

George is my name; my deeds have been heard of in Tower Hall, and my childhood has been chronicled in the Journal of Experimental Psychology. I am he that was called Billy Bocksfuss—cruel misnomer. For had I indeed a cloven foot I’d not now hobble upon a stick or need ride pick-a-back to class in humid weather. Aye, it was just for want of a proper hoof, that in my fourteenth year I was the kicked instead of the kicker; that I lay crippled on the reeking peat and saw my first love tupped by a brute Angora. Mercy on that buck who butted me from one world to another; whose fell horns turned my sweetheart’s fancy, drove me from the pasture, and set me gimping down the road I travel yet. This bare brow, shame of my kidship, he crowned with the shame of men: I bade farewell to my hornless goathood and struck out, a horned human student of Commencement Gate (GG,p.5)

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31Robert Scholes, pp. 81-82.
Such disparity between the diction and the subject is a traditional device, one particularly suited and often employed in the mock-epic genre. The entire book is written referring to religious allegory. The prose is a mixture of wit, irony and elegance, there are many classical allusions and Biblical references as well. All these elements allow the narrative to inherit the tone of epic elevation. In keeping with the eighteenth century mock-epic this elevated style is used to describe incidents and characters that are ludicrous.

Each of the important secondary characters in the novel speaks or is described, in such a way as to indicate his own beliefs and attitudes, as well as to illustrate a cultural force or interest. The language of Giles Goat-Boy is truly epic in that it manifests, through the characters, both individual and universal traits. Because Barth does blend individual and universal so skillfully, the characterization and diction of Giles Goat-Boy has a richness of texture so vital for the epic novel. An example of this style is when Barth writes about Max's experiments:

(Max) founded the sciences of analogical proctoscopy and psychosymbolistic cosmography, developed the Rectimetric Index for "distinguishing, arithmetically and forever, the sheep from the goats," and explored the faint initial insights of what was to become Spielman's Law, his last and farthest-reaching contribution to man's understanding of the University. That capstone on the temple of his genius, climax of his epic quest for Answers: how commonplace it sounds already, very nearly banal; and yet what dash, what vaulting insight! In three words Max Spielman synthesized all the fields which thitherto
he'd browsed in brilliantly one
by one - showed the "sphincter's
riddle" and the mystery of the
University to be the same. Ontogeny
recapitulates cosmogeny - what is
it but to say that proctoscopy
repeats hagiography? That our
Founder on Founder's Hill and the
rawest freshman on his first
mons veneris are father and
son? (GG,p.7).

Here Max's individual efforts and discovery are
reminiscent of legendary journeys undertaken by epic heroes;
his discovery is the result of an "epic quest". In the words
of Mercer, "All this is immediately comic and parodic and yet
it prefigures, in its stylistic inclusiveness, the whole
synthesizing effort of the book: an effort to relate the
traditional dimensions of human experience - the intellectual
and the physical, the heroic, the tragic, and the comic."32
So, we find that Barth has the ability to unite universal
meaning with personal identity, avoiding the use of stereotyped
or one-dimensional characters which exist solely as vehicles
for the expression of ideas. It is this ability in particular
which shows the superiority of Giles Goat-Boy as an epic.
Since the interests are shown to be of the low kind, as for
example, in the above passage, Max's discovery of distinguishing
"sheep from the goats" and the result is pure comedy. This
rhetoric and tone which elevate a work of literature are
subject to low and often scandalous conditions which result

32 Peter Mercer, "The Rhetoric of Giles Goat - Boy," Novel,4
(1971) p. 150.
in a comic disparity which is the hall-mark of a mock-epic.

As an epic hero, George is and must be a child of his own time. Because his life is naturally influenced by the society he lives in Barth should, if the epic is to be effective, evoke and recreate that time through character and event, and through the use of descriptive language which imparts a sense, not only of how people talked, but what they meant and what they believed in. Most of the people George comes in contact with either provide him with an introduction to new ideas or unfamiliar value systems, or force him into defending his own ideas. In accomplishing these kind of confrontations, Barth combines the epic technique using language both as a means of depicting time and locale, and also as a way of indicating the growing corruption of humanity. The language is reflective, of the disparity between Homer’s world and the contemporary situation, thereby evoking humour, and simultaneously portraying the corruption. For instance, George after adopting a fatalistic view is confronted with blind Peter and Leonid sitting together in Stoker’s side car as they have been handcuffed together. Stoker asks George, "So here they sit, Goat-Boy : two blind bats! Are they passed or failed?" (GG, p. 649) And George concentrates:

Indeed,... it was not I concentrating, but something concentrating upon me, taking me over, like the spasms of defecation or labour-pains. Leonid Andreich and Peter Greene - their estates were rather the occasion than the object of this concentration,
whose real substance was the fundamental contradictions of failure and passage. Truly now those paradoxes became paroxysms... That circular device on my Assignment sheet—beginningless, endless, infinite equivalence constricted my reason like a torture-tool from the Age of Faith. Passage was Failure and Failure Passage; yet Passage was Passage, Failure Failure! Equally true, none was the Answer; the two were not different, neither were they the same; and true and false, and same and different—Unspeakable! Unnamable! Unimaginable! Surely my mind must crack! (GG,p.650).

The above lines may be seen as indicative of contemporary dilemma and confusion and the need for spiritual salvation and theological clarity. The style breathes a sense of life into the skeleton of prose, to show and recreate the era. Barth is not content to let language serve him merely as a means of adding local colour and human interest to his story, but makes it indicative of the value system of the whole modern world.

Barth demonstrates precise use of language in lending Giles Goat-Boy an epic verisimilitude by using puns and metaphors to reveal new and mysterious hidden meaning's. "In three words Max Spielman.... That my day, my year, my life, and the history of the West Campus are wheels within wheels?"(GG,p.7). Here Barth is referring to Oedipus who solved the sphinx's riddle and saved his city. Barth's "sphincter's riddle" deals with mystery associated with love and evolution; "The mystery of the
universe and the sphincter's riddle are the same because the
 genesis of the individual and the genesis of the cosmos are
 aspects of the same process.... The greatness of Max Spielman
 is in seeing the connection. That is epic vision.\footnote{Robert Scholes, p. 80.} The
diction of Giles Goat-Boy is a unique mixture in which there
are frequent references to goats and inserted would be a
scientific, human terminology; "I had been tasteless; no
doubt she'd wanted to breed with Stoker, if only for the
improvement that lactation would work upon her udder. I
apologised sincerely.... I'd heard it claimed (by the free
speaking inmates of Main Detention), that there were men who
actually preferred udderless women." The word "lactation"
being a scientific term, in the words of Mercer, "combines
with the rationality of the two sentences to add to our
growing sense of the inhuman, and ultimately terrifying,
objectivity of radical innocence.\footnote{Peter Mercer, p. 152.} Besides conveying
such philosophies it provides the reader with comic effect.
The pomp and dignity of words, sometimes used for animal
and low subjects is typical of the mock-epic genre.
Fielding, too, has often used this technique in his comic-
epics, Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones.
Giles Goat-Boy is a novel which deals with the history of human culture on the universal plane. On the individual level it is the heroic quest to find an answer to the mysteries that shroud life, and, if possible a solution to the problems facing industrially developed, scientific communities, to save them from the process of obliteration by their own novel devices. In the words of Scholes, *Giles Goat-Boy,* "is not a catechism, but the story of one man's heroic attempt to work out his own life and find out his own truth." George's own life is an epic because of his steadfast endurance in his quest, inspite of the regrettable changes he sees around him, and is the highest form of epic heroism. If the only important history is individual experience and if that becomes, with the dissolution of the individual, a part of the vast historic myth that is passed on, in the racial unconscious, to the succeeding individual in the continuing process of humanity, then nothing of value is ever really lost. George could not reach a specific answer to his quest, but his epic talent, his outstanding heroism, will not die, as he foresees that he will be remembered by posterity. George is a testament to the undefeatable persistence of the American Dream of the sacredness of the individual. The fact that he cannot realise his dream without compromising or surrendering his ideals make his faith in American, and, more importantly, human potential an ultimate act of epic heroism.

\[35\] Robert Scholes, p.97.