INFORMATION TO USERS

This material was produced from a microfilm copy of the original document. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or patterns which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting thru an image and duplicating adjacent pages to insure you complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a large round black mark, it is an indication that the photographer suspected that the copy may have moved during exposure and thus cause a blurred image. You will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., was part of the material being photographed the photographer followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin photoing at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue photoing from left to right in equal sections with a small overlap. If necessary, sectioning is continued again — beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. The majority of users indicate that the textual content is of greatest value, however, a somewhat higher quality reproduction could be made from "photographs" if essential to the understanding of the dissertation. Silver prints of "photographs" may be ordered at additional charge by writing the Order Department, giving the catalog number, title, author and specific pages you wish reproduced.

5. PLEASE NOTE: Some pages may have indistinct print. Filmed as received.

Xerox University Microfilms
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
OKADA, Victor Noboru, 1941-
A CRITICAL STUDY OF JONATHAN SWIFT'S POETRY.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1973
Language and Literature, general

University Microfilms, A XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Copyright by
Victor Noboru Okada
1973

THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN MICROFILMED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED.
A CRITICAL STUDY OF JONATHAN SWIFT'S POETRY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Victor Noboru Okada, B.A., M.A.

The Ohio State University
1973

Approved by

Edward P. Corbett
Adviser
Department of English
PREFACE

All quotations from Swift's poems are taken from the revised three-volume edition by Harold Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958). Lines quoted in the text are followed by line numbers and page numbers. In the footnotes, the edition is referred to as Poems.

I would like to thank my adviser, Dr. Edward P. J. Corbett, for his immeasurable help in guiding my dissertation to completion.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Event/Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 15, 1941</td>
<td>Born—Waipahu, Hawaii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June, 1964</td>
<td>B.A., University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September, 1965 to August, 1970</td>
<td>Teaching Assistant, Department of English, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September, 1970 to present</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of English and Modern Languages, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, California</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Major Field of Study:** Eighteenth-Century English Literature
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction ........................................ 1

Chapter Two: Swift as an Encomiast and Friend ........ 11
   A. Vanessa .......................................................... 15
   B. Stella ............................................................. 48
   C. Harley ........................................................... 79

Chapter Three: Swift as a Satirist .......................... 97
   A. Satires on Individuals ................................. 100
      1. John Cutts ................................................ 100
      2. John Partridge ......................................... 104
      3. Sidney Godolphin ..................................... 111
      4. John Churchill ......................................... 115
      5. William Wood .......................................... 133
      6. Richard Tighe ........................................... 145
   B. General Satires ........................................... 153
      1. Satires on Women ...................................... 153
      2. Satires on Grub-Street Poets .................... 173
      3. Three Final Poems ................................... 191

Chapter Four: Conclusion .................................. 220

Bibliography .................................................. 228
INTRODUCTION

Of himself as a poet, Jonathan Swift wrote to Charles Wogan in 1732, "I have been only a Man of Rhimes, and that upon Trifles, never having written serious Couplets in my Life."\(^1\) Swift has too often been taken at his own word; his poetry has not attracted the same kind of scrutiny that his prose has. For too many students of the Dean, Dr. Johnson's casual dismissal of the poetry—"IN the Poetical Works of Dr. Swift there is not much upon which the critick can exercise his powers"\(^2\)—is the final word. That Swift's poetry has been so neglected—even despised—is unfortunate, for although Swift's poetry does not entitle him to be ranked with the greatest poets, it is far better than the rather meager commentary would seem to suggest.

When Swift's poems have been examined, the emphasis has usually been on the biographical and historical aspects. That this should be so is hardly surprising, since Swift's poetry is not only highly topical but, in the view of some

---


critics, "unmasked." F. Elrington Ball, for example, says that in his poetry Swift "shows more clearly than in his prose his peculiar turn of thought, and he reveals his character in all its phases from the most attractive to the most repellent."\(^3\) Harold Williams agrees that the reader is "closer to Swift in his verse, and in his letters, than in his prose-writings."\(^4\) And, finally, Herbert Davis echoes both men when he states that it is in his poetry that "Swift sometimes seems to throw off all his disguises and speak with great directness."\(^5\) However, although such studies help to increase our understanding of Swift's biography and his political and social milieu, they do not concentrate sufficiently on Swift's poems as poems, as finished literary artifacts. Hence, they do little to strengthen our appreciation of Swift as an artist, a craftsman.

One cannot, of course, separate the kind of analysis I present from other concerns, both biographical and historical. The poems were all written in some kind of context, particularly a political one, and this context cannot be ignored. But I shall try in my dissertation to fix my

---


\(^4\) Poems, I, xlvi.

attention mainly on the most neglected aspect in the study of Swift's poetry—his techniques, his methodology.

Although the student who wishes to study the techniques that Swift employs in his prose works can consult a number of studies—each with its own emphasis—he is not so fortunate when it comes to his poetry. Maurice Johnson's The Sin of Wit: Jonathan Swift as a Poet (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1950) is the only modern book devoted entirely to the poetry. Why, the question arises, has Swift's poetry been so neglected? While the question cannot be completely answered, a few comments can be made.

Perhaps the chief reason for this neglect is that Swift wrote verses that many critics hesitate to even call "poetry." Dean Smedley in Gulliveriana (1728) described Swift's poetry thus: "Low, groveling Poetry all of it; and I challenge all the World, to show one good Epic, Elegiac or Lyric Poem of his; one Eclogue, Pastoral, or anything like the Antients." A critic in the European Magazine complained in 1790 that


7 Quoted in Davis, Jonathan Swift, p. 191.
Swift's verses "are nothing more than prose in rhyme. Imagination, metaphor, and sublimity constitute no part of their merit. Sir Isaac Newton was within a trifle as great a poet as Dr. Swift."8 In 1816, Francis Jeffrey wrote in the Edinburgh Review, "Of his Poetry, we do not think there is much to be said;--for we cannot persuade ourselves that Swift was in any respect a poet."9 According to H. A. Taine, "what is wanting most in his verses is poetry."10 Leslie Stephen called Swift's poems "rhymed prose" and declared that if Swift is to be called a poet, "he requires a new class to be made for him."11 More recently, John Sparrow has written that Swift "was not a poet. Neither in matter nor in manner nor in spirit did he show a poet's gifts."12 Sparrow even went so far as to insist that Harold Williams' edition of the poems is mainly valuable only "for the light that it throws on biographical problems" and that much of the poetry remains unreadable unless placed in its biographical setting.13

9 Ibid., p. 321.
12 Rev. of The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams, RES, 15 (1939), 226.
13 Ibid.
Quintana uses the term *verse* rather than *poetry*, because, in his words, "Those who are committed to 'high seriousness' as a touchstone will deny that Swift ever wrote so much as a line of true poetry." In short, Swift has disappointed some critics because he failed to write the kind of poetry they would find acceptable.

To be sure, Swift distrusted sublime poetic effusions. He explains as much in his "Epistle to a Lady who desired the Author to make Verses on Her in the Heroic Style":

```
    THUS, Shou'd I attempt to climb,
      Treat you in a Stile sublime,
      Such a Rocket is my Muse,
      Shou'd I lofty Numbers chuse,
        E'er I reach'd Parnassus Top
          I shou'd burst, and bursting drop.
```

(11. 257-262, p. 638)

Swift discovered, in his early experiments with the Pindaric odes, that "Parnassus Top" was not for him. Herbert Davis thus concludes that Swift is "in his casual and contemptuous manner the most extreme example that we have ever had in England of reaction against the heroic or romantic view of the poet's function and art." If Swift had sought "Parnassus Top," perhaps he would have better pleased his critics.

Another reason why Swift's poems have not been thoroughly

---


15 *Jonathan Swift*, p. 163.
and critically examined is the fact that critics are sometimes too quick to judge his poems—or at least some of them—on political or moral grounds. They object to Swift's abusive treatment of Marlborough. They object to his vilification of John Cutts. Most of all, they object to his use of scatology. Some of the satiric poems, it is true, are not for sensitive readers. Letitia Pilkington reports that her mother, after reading "The Lady's Dressing Room," promptly threw up her dinner.\(^{15}\)

The response of critics in the past has been no better than that of Mrs. Pilkington's mother. H. A. Taine wrote that Swift "drags poetry not only through the mud, but into the filth; he rolls in it like a raging madman, he enthrones himself in it, and bespatters all passers-by. Compared with his, all foul words are decent and agreeable."\(^{16}\)

In his review of Harold Williams' edition of the poems, John Sparrow, who has already been quoted, declared, "Reading the last page of the last volume one breathes a sigh of relief... at having come to the end of so much lewd and tedious rubbish."\(^{17}\) George Orwell, in his "Politics vs. Literature," charged that in "The Lady's Dressing Room"

\(^{15}\) Johnson, The Sin of Wit, p. 116.

\(^{16}\) History of English Literature, II, 177.

\(^{17}\) Rev. of The Poems of Jonathan Swift, p. 225.
and "Upon a Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed" Swift falsifies his picture of the world by refusing to see anything in human life except dirt, folly and wickedness.18 D. H. Lawrence, in describing Swift's "Cassinus and Peter," resorted to such words as mad, gnashing insanity, lunatic, deranged, and monstrous.19 And, finally, John Middleton Murry, in response to "Strephon and Chloe," called it "so perverse, so unnatural, so mentally diseased, so humanly wrong."20

Such remarks are, of course, familiar to the readers of Swift's prose, for the prose has been even more frequently maligned. But while Swift's prose works have been rescued from such harsh judgments, the same cannot be said for the poetry. Critics, in short, sometimes fail to analyze Swift's techniques, his means, because they object, on moral or political grounds, to his ends.

Such remarks have led to a distorted view of Swift's achievement in poetry. His poetry is far more varied than these comments would seem to indicate. Dr. Johnson's divi-


sion of the poems into two groups, those that are "gross" and those that are "trifling," is highly unfair.21 So varied is Swift's poetry that Denis Donoghue has said, "Indeed, to go through Swift's entire poetry is to be astonished by its variety, the range of feeling invoked,"22 and Herbert Davis has remarked, "It is not easy to decide how best to approach Swift's poetry; it is so occasional, so varied in form and in mood."23

While Swift's poetry is indeed quite varied "in form and in mood," that Swift wrote basically two kinds of poems has been recognized from the beginning. The Earl of Orrery explained the purpose of Swift's poems thus: "The poetical performances of Dr. SWIFT ought to be considered as occasional poems written either to please, or vex some particular persons."24 Swift himself indicated the two-fold function of his poems:

True Poets can depress and raise;  
Are Lord of Infamy and Praise;  
They are not scurrilous in Satire,  
Nor will in Panygryck flatter.  
Unjustly Poets we asperse;  
Truth shines the brighter, clad in Verse;

And all the Fictions they pursue
Do but insinuate what is true.

(11. 53-60, p. 729)

My dissertation is thus divided into two sections. In
the first section ("Swift as an Encomiast and Friend"), I
shall examine Swift's poems to his friends, namely, the
poems addressed to Esther Vanhomrigh, Esther Johnson, and
Harley, first Earl of Oxford. While Herbert Davis has
already discussed the poems addressed to Stella, his ap­
proach has been to demonstrate that Swift in these poems
presented "a study of the English gentlewoman, and her
place in an enlightened and civilized society."²⁵ I shall
try to examine the poems more closely, not as a facet of
social history or a chapter in Swift's biography, but as
poems. In discussing Swift's poem to Esther Vanhomrigh,
"Cadenus and Vanessa," I shall again not be chiefly con­
cerned with the biographical aspects of the poem. I shall,
however, examine such matters as the "court of love" setting,
the mythological machinery, the legal diction, the structure
of the poem, and Swift's self-dramatization. The remainder
of my dissertation is devoted to the satiric poems ("Swift
as a Satirist"). In this second section, I shall examine
both Swift's attacks on individual targets, such as "A
Description of a Salamander," "Mad Mullinix and Timothy."

²⁵ Jonathan Swift, pp. 31-97.

My study does not include a discussion of such familiar poems as "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," "A Description of a City Shower," "A Description of the Morning," and the so-called "unprintable" poems because these poems have received most of the attention of critics thus far. While some of the poems I do discuss are not so well known, I believe that they should be more widely studied. Hence their inclusion in this dissertation.

In my analyses of all the poems, I have had one principal goal in mind—-to demonstrate that Swift was a skillful and talented poet. That Swift was aware of the poet's need to develop his techniques is evidenced in his "Prefatory Letter to Poems on Several Occasions by Mrs. Mary Barber": "She [Marby Barber] never writes on a Subject with general unconnected Topicks, but always with a Scheme and Method driving to some particular End; wherein many Writers in Verse, and of some Distinction, are so often known to fail."26 Swift, in his best poems, seldom fails.

SWIFT AS AN ENCOMIAST AND FRIEND

In one of his very early poems, the unfinished "Ode to Dr. William Sancroft" (1692), Swift complained that the times were not conducive to the writing of encomiastic poetry:

Forgive . . . this ill-govern'd zeal,
'Tis all the angry slighted Muse can do
In the pollution of these days;
No province now is left her but to rail,
And Poetry has lost the art to praise,
Alas, the occasions are so few:

(11. 107-112, p. 38)

That Swift was premature in his judgment is amply demonstrated by the fact that much of the poetry he wrote later was poetry of praise; the occasions, he discovered, were hardly "so few." He commenced his poetic career with verses praising King William, the Athenian Society, Dr. Sancroft, William Congreve, and Sir William Temple, and, in his long career, he continued with poems honoring a number of friends: Delany, Sheridan, Harley, Esther Vanhomrigh, and, of course, Stella. Poetry, Swift proved, had not "lost the art to praise."

Thackeray maliciously declared that Swift was incapable of friendship: "Would you have liked to be a friend of the
great Dean? . . . If you had been his inferior in parts (and that . . . I fear is only very likely), his equal in mere social station, he would have bullied, scorned, and insulted you; if, undeterred by his great reputation, you had met him like a man, he would have quailed before you, and not had the pluck to reply, and gone home, and years after written a foul epigram about you--watched for you in a sewer, and come out to assail you with a coward's blow and a dirty bludgeon."¹ Thackeray was mistaken. So was Francis Jeffrey, who maintained that Swift was "the greatest and most efficient libeller that ever exercised the trade" because he had "a cold heart," "no sympathy with suffering," and "no admiration of noble qualities."² Swift demonstrates in his encomiastic poetry that he was capable of offering warm and genuine tribute to his friends.

In a famous letter to Pope, Swift wrote: "I have ever hated all Nations professions and Communityes and all my love is towards individualls."³ Three such individuals who stand out are Esther Vanhomrigh, Esther Johnson, and Robert Harley, first Earl of Oxford. And Swift's friendship with these three individuals gave rise to some of his

---

¹ The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray, 24 volumes (London: Smith, Elder, 1879-1886), XXIII, 123.
³ Correspondence, III, 103.
finest poems.

Swift took the writing of encomiastic poetry seriously. He realized that good encomiastic verse was rare indeed. To Thomas Beach he wrote in 1735, "I have seen fewer good panegyrics than any other sort of writing, especially in verse." Very little vexed him more than hollow and unearned praise from the pens of Grub-Street scribblers:

"And, Praise bestow'd in Grub-Street Rimes, / Would vex one more a thousand Times" (ll. 165-166, p. 505). He would doubtless have agreed with Dr. Johnson, who said, "he that has flattery ready for all whom the vicissitudes of the world happen to exalt must be scorned as a prostituted mind that may retain the glitter of wit, but has lost the dignity of virtue." Swift was not, as he himself described Gulliver, "a prostitute Flatterer." If he praised his

---

4 The "Letter to a Young Poet" contains this passage: "As for your choice of Subjects, I have only to give you this Caution: That as a handsome way of Praising is certainly the most difficult point in Writing or Speaking, I wou'd by no means advise any young Man to make his first Essay in PANEGYRICK" (Prose Works, IX, 339). While Swift's authorship of this essay has been questioned, Louis T. Milic argues that the work is Swift's, though "probably subject to the influence of another hand." See his A Quantitative Approach to the Style of Jonathan Swift (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), pp. 237-269.

5 Correspondence, IV, 320.


7 Correspondence, III, 187.
friends, it was because he believed that they merited such praise.

Throughout his life, Swift devoted himself to the well-turned compliment in verse. If his Muse was often "angry," he just as often invoked a gentler Muse, the Muse of friendship. The present chapter is devoted to an analysis of the best of these poems, the poems addressed to Esther Vanhomrigh, Esther Johnson, and Robert Harley, first Earl of Oxford.
So intriguing and baffling is the fragmentary story of Swift's relationship with Esther Vanhomrigh—Vanessa—that some critics seem to regard "Cadenus and Vanessa" primarily as a document in Swift's biography. Leslie Stephen remarked, "A full account of their relations is given in the remarkable poem called Cadenus and Vanessa, less remarkable, indeed, as a poem than as an autobiographical document." And A. Martin Freeman obviously values the poem more for its biographical clues than for its artistry. He accepts the poem as "authentic biographical material" and believes that were the poem "not strictly true" it would be "unmeaning" and "futile." Although such statements seriously underestimate the artistry of the poem and, one might add, seriously overestimate the value of the poem as a true-to-life account, few readers today seem to hold views very different from these.

It is not difficult to see why the poem has exerted this power over many of its readers. The real life story of Swift and Esther Vanhomrigh—Cadenus and Vanessa—is indeed fascinating, and one wishes that Swift had written the verse memoir he once mentioned to Vanessa:

1 Swift, p. 128.

2 Vanessa and Her Correspondence with Jonathan Swift (London: Selwyn and Blount, 1921), pp. 24-25.
What would you give to have the History of Cad--and Vanessa exactly written through all its steps from the beginning to this time. I believe it would do well in Verse. . . . I hope it will be done. It ought to be an exact Chronicle of 12 Years; from the Time of spilling the Coffee to drinking of Coffee, from Dunstable to Dublin with every single passage since. There would be the Chapter of the Blister, the Chaptr of Mad going to Kensington the Chaptr of the Colonells going to Franc the Chaptr of the Wedding with the Adventure of the lost Key. Of the Strain, of the joyfull Return two hundred Chapters of madness. The Chaptr of long walks. The Berkshire Surprise. fifty Chapters of little Times: The Chaptr of Chelsea; The Chapter of Swallow, and Cluster: A hundred whole Books of my self and so low. The Chaptr of hide, and whisper.³

The exact relationship that Swift maintained with Vanessa after meeting her--probably at an inn in Dunstable on his way to London in 1707⁴--is still shrouded, and this mystery has led to much speculation. Thackeray, for example, presents a rather suggestive picture: "The pupil and teacher are reading together, and drinking tea together, and going to prayers together, and learning Latin together, and conjugating amo, amas, amavi together."⁵ Sybil Le Brocquy goes so far as to maintain that Swift fathered a son by Vanessa, the Bryan M'Loghlin whom Stella cared for

³ Correspondence, II, 356.
⁵ The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray, XXIII, 151.
during her last years. Such interpretations and theories, however, remain rather fanciful in light of the meager evidence that we possess.

We do know that Swift passed many of his days in the Vanhomrigh household—dining, playing ombre, reading, writing, conversing, and drinking coffee. His visits became particularly frequent after his return to London in 1710. In December of that year, he moved to lodgings five doors from the Vanhomrighs. And although he moved to Chelsea in 1711, he kept his best gown and wig in the Vanhomrigh house and visited the family twice a day to change his attire.

Before long—exactly when we do not know—Vanessa formed a romantic attachment for Swift. When Swift returned to Ireland in 1713 to be installed Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral, she was disconsolate, and her letters to him reveal the passion she was unable to quell. When she discovered, soon after he left, that Swift was ill, for example, she wrote, "oh what would I give to know how you doe at this instant my fortune is to hand [too hard?] your absence was enoogh without this cruill addition." She begged Swift

---


8 Ibid.

9 Correspondence, I, 369.
to make Isaiah Parvisol, who collected his tithes, write to her of his condition. When she failed to hear from Parvisol or Swift, she wrote, "pray why would not you make paruisole write me word when you did when I beged it so much and if you were able your self how could you be so cruel to defer telling me the thing of the world I wish(ed) most to know." 10 Vanessa pursued Swift to Ireland in 1714, there to die disillusioned in 1723.

Although Swift obviously thought highly of Vanessa and was probably flattered by the attention of so attractive a young lady, they were hardly compatible. Swift did not wish to become romantically entangled, perhaps because he was sensitive to gossip, perhaps because, as Irvin Ehrenpreis suggests, he was psychologically incapable of such a relationship, 11 perhaps because he already had a gratifying relationship with Stella. Whatever his reason, he tried to disengage himself. To Vanessa's letter, quoted immediately above, he responded, "I had your last spleenatick Letter: I told you when I left England, I would endeavor to forget every thing there, and would write as seldom as I could." 12

When Vanessa apparently paid him a surprise visit in 1714,

10 Correspondence, I, 371-372.
11 Dr. Swift, pp. 647-651.
12 Correspondence, I, 373.
Swift wrote angrily, "You should not have come by Wantage for a thousand Pound. you used to brag you were very discreet; where is it gone?"¹³

Before Vanessa died in 1723, their relationship acquired the overtones of pathos. Although Swift assured her "soyez assuré que jamais personne du monde a été aimée honorée estimée adorée par votre amie [sic] que vous,"¹⁴ Vanessa was not satisfied. In an extraordinary letter to Swift, she confessed:

I was born with violent passions which terminate all in one that unexpressible passion I have for you consider the killing emotions which I feel from your neglect of me and shew some tenderness for me or I shall lose my senses sure you can not possibly be so much taken up but you might command a moment to write to me and force your inclinations to do so great a charity.

I firmly believe could I know your thoughts (which no humane creature is capable of guessing [sic] at because never any one living thought like you) I should find you have often in a rage wished me religious hopeing then I should have paid my devotions to heaven but that would not spair you for was I an Enthusiast still you'd be the Deity I should worship.¹⁵

Swift, in turn, urged Vanessa to "grow less Romantick"¹⁶ and not to make both of them "unhappy by Imaginations."¹⁷ He

---

¹³ Correspondence, II, 123.
¹⁴ Ibid., p. 393.
¹⁵ Ibid., p. 364.
¹⁶ Ibid., p. 427.
¹⁷ Ibid., p. 392.
and Vanessa were, in all the years they knew each other, hopelessly at cross-purposes.

After placing the poem, which was probably written in 1713, in this context, what are we to make of it? As the Earl of Orrery recognized some time ago, "Cadenus and Vanessa" is "of a very extraordinary nature, and upon a very extraordinary subject."\(^{18}\) Swift himself, in a letter to Knightley Chetwode in 1726, dismissed the poem as "a trifle."\(^{19}\) Chetwode had written to warn him that copies of the poem were being circulated, and he urged Swift to print immediately an authorized version of the poem. Swift replied that he would do no such thing, that he was unafraid of malicious gossip--that, indeed, he expected it--and that the poem was merely "a task performed on a frolic among some ladies."\(^{20}\) He even went so far as to maintain, "I forget what is in it, but believe it to be only a cavalier business."\(^{21}\)

The care with which Swift wrote "Cadenus and Vanessa," however, belies his depreciation of the poem as merely a "private humorsome thing." While Francis Jeffrey has called

\(^{18}\) Remarks, p. 66.
\(^{19}\) Correspondence, III, 130.
\(^{20}\) Ibid.
\(^{21}\) Ibid.
the poem "a frigid, mythological fiction" that is "as cold and as flat as the ice of Thule" and has cited it as "complete proof that he had in him none of the elements of poetry," the poem, as Maurice Johnson says, "has sometimes been considered the height of Swift's accomplishment in rhyme." Ball and Davis both agree that the poem is perhaps Swift's best, and Quintana has noted that "its subtle craftsmanship is the result of a concern far in excess of that evidenced in any of Swift's other metrical compositions."

Although critics are not agreed upon all of the details in the poem, they generally concur that the poem was Swift's response to a difficult personal predicament. Williams writes, "There is little reason to doubt that, embarrassed but unwilling to end the situation, Swift found an outlet in penning 'Cadenus and Vanessa.'" Ehrenpreis declares, "He did not wish to end the exciting friendship, but neither was he willing to let it follow the normal, sexual path.

23 The Sin of Wit, p. 43.
24 Davis, Jonathan Swift, p. 66; Ball, Swift's Verse, p. 134.
26 Poems, II, 684.
His poem, therefore, was meant to reconcile Hessy to an
equilibrium already established."27 Murry concurs: "In
the poem he does the best he can to put the situation in
a true perspective—or at least one which would at once
gratify Vanessa and reconcile her to her disappointment."28
And, finally, Quintana maintains that the poem was "designed
to resolve all difficulties into high comedy."29

Swift's probable purposes in the poem are to define
his relationship with Vanessa, to flatter her, to persuade
her that although he could offer her friendship, "A constant,
rational Delight," he was, because of his own inadequacies,
incapable of loving her, and—this is often forgotten in
the search for biographical and Freudian clues—to entertain
her. To meet these ends, Swift created a poem that exhibits
great artistry.

The poem is carefully structured, and a quick glance
at the narrative sequence will demonstrate the care with
which Swift wrote the poem. The Cadenus-Vanessa episode is
actually an interlude enveloped by a larger drama performed
by Venus, Pallas, Cupid, and some shepherds and nymphs.

As the poem opens, we learn that Venus sits in judgment

27 Dr. Swift, pp. 647-648.


at the court of love, where shepherds and nymphs trade recriminations. The counsel for the nymphs speaks first, arguing

That Cupid now has lost his Art,
Or blunts the Point of ev'ry Dart;
His Altar now no longer smokes,
His Mother's Aid no Youth invokes:
This tempts Free-thinkers to refine,
And bring in doubt their Pow'r divine;
And Love is dwindled to Intrigue,
And Marriage grown a Money-League.

(ll. 7-14, p. 687)

Through the words Free-thinkers and refine, the lawyer identifies the shepherds with the deists, who were similarly bringing the divinity of Christ in doubt. For the deplorable condition that has just been described, the nymphs blame the shepherds. The shepherds, however, freely admitting "That modern Love is no such Thing / As what those antient Poets sing," "Laid all the Fault on t'other Sex" (ll. 26-28, p. 687). They insist that the nymphs are no longer worthy of the kind of love they profess to desire:

But Women now feel no such Fire,
And only know the gross Desire;
Their Passions move in lower Spheres,
Where-e'er Caprice or Folly steers.

(ll. 35-38, p. 687)

Although both sides are adamant, the shepherds seem to present the stronger case. They are, at least, given more lines in the poem to present their arguments, and they do a good job of dissecting the female mind. In an extended
simile that the shepherds use to describe the nymphs, Swift demonstrates his deft ability to convey a vivid picture:

In a dull Stream, which moving slow
You hardly see the Current flow,
If a small Breeze obstructs the Course,
It whirls about for Want of Force,
And in its narrow Circle gathers
Nothing but Chaff, and Straws, and Feathers:
The Current of a Female Mind
Stops thus, and turns with ev'ry Wind;
Thus whirling round, together draws
Fools, Fops, and Rakes, for Chaff and Straws.

(11. 51-60, p. 688)

Comparing the "Current of a Female Mind" with a tiny whirlpool that gathers nothing but debris is an effective diminutive conceit for two reasons. First, the conceit vividly suggests the aimlessness, sluggishness, fickleness, and narrowness of the female mind. Second, in showing that the female mind draws "Fools, Fops, and Rakes" just as a whirlpool draws "Chaff, and Straws, and Feathers," the conceit suggests that such men are little better than debris.

The men also catalogue the kinds of trivial activities with which the women preoccupy themselves:

A Dog, a Parrot, or an Ape,
Or some worse Brute in human Shape,
Engross the Fancies of the Fair,
The few soft Moments they can spare,
From Visits to receive and pay,
From Scandal, Politicks, and Play,
From Fans, and Flounces, and Brocades,
From Equipage and Park-Farades,
From all the thousand Female Toys,
From every Trifle that employs
The catalogue reveals that the interests of the women are either superficial ("A Dog, a Parrot," "Fans, and Flounces, and Brocades") or unpraiseworthy ("Visits to receive and pay," "Scandal"). They preoccupy themselves with cosmetics and senseless activities, and hence both the "out" and "inside" of their heads reveal their deficiencies. This kind of piling on of details is one of Swift's favorite satiric techniques, and we shall see further examples of this technique in the satiric poems.

To settle the case, Venus decides to try "a new Experiment." Since the shepherds complain that "The Fault must on the Nymphs be plac'd, / Grown so corrupted in their Taste" (ll. 65-66, p. 688), she decides "To form a Nymph of Wit and Sense; / A Model for her Sex design'd" (ll. 865-866, pp. 713-714). She would thereby be able to test the sincerity of the men. She even tricks Pallas into bestowing upon the nymph "Seeds long unknown to Womankind, / For manly Bosoms chiefly fit, / The Seeds of Knowledge, Judgment, Wit" (ll. 203-205, p. 693). This maiden is Vanessa.

However celestial and auspicious her origin, Vanessa is a failure on earth. Both the men and the women she encounters find her unappealing. Because she refuses to join
the men in their trivial chatter, the men conclude that "That Lady is the dullest Soul" (l. 359, p. 698). She is no more successful with the ladies. She is unable to participate in their talk of "Rich Flanders Lace, and Colberteen," and they discover that, despite her judgment, she cannot even place a patch on her face properly. The women conclude that "The Girl might pass, if we cou'd get her / To know the World a little better" (ll. 428-429, p. 700). In this section, Swift is obviously satirizing the women for failing to recognize and emulate a woman of great virtue and the men for failing to love her.

Thus far, Vanessa has not met her equal, a man worthy of her "Knowledge, Judgment, Wit." The men have been "fashionable Fops" and the women "glitt'ring Dames." Hence when Vanessa encounters Cadenus, her tutor, she is put to a real test. Cadenus is able, unlike the others, properly to appreciate and value Vanessa's attractive qualities. But even with Cadenus, Vanessa fails, though through no fault of her own. When she declares her love to him, Cadenus offers friendship in return. Cadenus, who has "Grown old in Politicks and Wit," "understood not what was Love."

After the Cadenus-Vanessa interlude is completed, the poem once again returns to the frame. Venus decrees "the Cause against the Men," since, despite their complaint
that "they ne'er can find / Those Beauties in a Female Mind, / Which raise a Flame that will endure / For ever, uncorrupt and pure" (ll. 142-145, p. 691), they jeered at the very woman who possesses all of these qualities. Although the women no less than the men rejected Vanessa, it is the shepherds' charge that has been tested in the "Experiment." Thus Venus rightly complains that

She was at Lord knows what Expence,
To form a Nymph of Wit and Sense;
A Model for her Sex design'd,
Who never cou'd one Lover find.
She saw her Favour was misplac'd;
The Fellows had a wretched Taste;
She needs must tell them to their Face,
They were a senseless, stupid Race:

(ll. 864-871, pp. 713-714)

Venus then, in sheer exasperation, flies off to heaven.

Even in this skeletal outline of the narrative, we can see how tightly unified the poem is. The Cadenus-Vanessa episode is an integral part of the total story, and all parts of the poem—as we shall see—fit into the overall structure. The poem can also be viewed as a series of conflicts or confrontations, beginning with the initial conflict between the shepherds and the nymphs and continuing with conflicts involving Venus and Pallas, Vanessa and the fops, Vanessa and the dames, and, of course, Vanessa and Cadenus. These confrontations enliven the story and give the poem a continuing tension.

Readers often disparage the elaborate mythological
framework and the accompanying legal setting and diction because their primary interest in the poem is in the Cadenus-Vanessa episode. Their interest, in short, is centered on the biographical import of the poem, and they dismiss the other parts as extraneous. Leslie Stephen calls the mythological framework "superfluous."

and this judgment is in keeping with his other assertion that the poem is less remarkable as a poem than as an autobiographical document. Padraic Colum, although very sympathetic toward his fellow countryman's poetry, dismisses the mythological machinery as "cumbersome." Quintana complains that the mythological story is unnecessary and only "diverts attention from self-contained drama of unusual character." And Maurice Johnson writes, "Within its elaborate framework of goddesses, cupids, shepherds, harnessed doves, and long pleas heard by the Queen of Love, Vanessa's little story is almost lost in the paper lace of an unwieldy valentine."

Perhaps the strongest defense of the mythological machinery has been offered by Peter Ohlin, who writes, "The mythological framework to the story is necessary because

30 Swift, p. 128.  
32 The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift, p. 222.  
33 The Sin of Wit, p. 43.
it imposes on the characters, with almost impersonal force, the constrictions of the human condition."  

Ohlin is not, however, altogether convincing in his attempt to bring the framework in line with his thesis that "Cadenus and Vanessa" becomes, "in outlining the story of Vanessa, one long metaphor for the fall of man."  

What, then, is the function of this elaborate mythological framework, this story of goddesses, nymphs, shepherds, and harnessed doves? First, the story is entertaining in itself. In the bare outline that I have presented, many touches go unnoticed. There is, for example, much humor and satire in Venus's plea to the clamorous nymphs and shepherds  

not to talk so loud,  
Else she must interpose a Cloud;  
For if the Heav'nly Folk should know  
These Pleadings in the Courts below,  
That Mortals here disdain to love;  
She ne'er could shew her Face above.  
For Gods, their Betters, are too wise  
To value that which Men despise.  
And then, said she, my Son and I  
Must stroll in Air 'twixt Earth and Sky;  
Or else, shut out from Heaven and Earth,  
Fly to the Sea, my Place of Birth;  
There live with daggl'd Mermaids pent,  
And keep on Fish perpetual Lent.  

(11. 77-90, p. 689)  

34 "Cadenus and Vanessa": Reason and Passion," SEL, 4 (1964), 495.  
35 Ibid.
Although Venus claims that gods are better and wiser than mortals, her own duplicity in the poem belies these claims. Indeed, through her pride and trickery, she reveals how very much alike "Heav'nly Folk" and "Mortals" really are. If Swift wished to entertain Vanessa--and this intention seems clear--he must certainly have succeeded.36

The "unreal" setting of the poem probably performed another function for Swift. The poem, of course, is Swift's response to a very sensitive and personal matter. The mythological framework thus provides Swift with a means of detachment, of removing any uncomfortable or even personal elements.

Literary parody was never far from Swift's mind, and the setting of the poem--the court of love--has a parodic function. Maurice Johnson hints at this function: "Andreas Capellanus's account of medieval Courts of Love, adapted to suit the Age of Reason, if such a thing can be imagined, would probably resemble this poem."37 But Johnson does not pursue this point to reveal the underlying parody in the poem. Ohlin also says, "The function of the mock trial is to establish that the Petrarchan ideal of love has disappeared."38 The shepherds, indeed, do claim "That

36 We have, unfortunately, no record of Esther Vanhomrigh's reaction to the poem.
37 The Sin of Wit, p. 44.
38 "'Cadenus and Vanessa': Reason and Passion," p. 487.
modern Love is no such Thing / As what those antient Poets
sing" (11. 26-27, p. 687).

What Swift also appears to be doing in the poem is
parodying pastoral love poetry (as he was to do again in "A
Pastoral Dialogue"). According to Pope, a "truly pastoral"
poem must meet several criteria. It should present "an image
of what they call the golden age," a "perfect image of that
happy time." The language of the poem is to be "humble, yet
as pure as the language will afford; neat, but not florid;
easy, and yet lively," and it should be "full of the greatest
simplicity in nature." An "air of piety to the Gods should
shine through the Poem." Moreover, the pastoral poem should
expose "the best side only of a shepherd's life" and conceal
its "miseries." Finally, the pastoral poem should give
us "an esteem for the virtues of a former age" and
"recommend them to the present." Swift, in this poem,
will have none of Pope's dicta. His shepherds and nympha
do not live in a happy "golden age" but in the present.

39 Alexander Pope, Selected Poetry and Prose, ed.
William K. Wimsatt, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., p. 9.
43 Ibid., p. 8.
Their language is rancorous, and the language of their lawyers is full of legal jargon. They do not exhibit any piety toward Venus, and, moreover, she does not deserve reverence. We get, not "the best side only of a shepherd's life," but only its "miseries." And, finally, we do not develop any "esteem" for the "virtues" of the shepherds. The poem, in short, is a delightful parody of a kind of poetry that was very popular in the period.

In presenting Venus's court of love as a court of law, Swift succeeds so well that F. Elrington Ball has written, "From the description of the procedure in Vanessa's [Sic] court one might suppose Swift to have been a lawyer." Legal diction abounds. The courtroom battle pits the "Council for the Fair" against "the Defendant's Council." Venus is called the "Judge," and the advocates for each side in the dispute are called "lawyers." The women charge that the men, in rejecting romantic love, are acting "Against the Statutes in that Case": "The Brief with weighty Crimes was charg'd, / On which the Pleader much enlarg'd" (ll. 5-6, p. 686). The lawyer for the shepherds similarly

Had Witness ready to attest,  
Who fairly could on Oath depose,

44 Swift's Verse, p. 136.
When Questions on the Fact arose,
That ev'ry Article was true;
Nor further those Deponents knew;
Therefore he humbly would insist,
The Bill might be with Costs dismist.

(ll. 68-74, p. 688)

After listening to the conflicting testimony, Venus consults her books—"The Lovers Fleta's, Bractons, Cokes."
The allusions are to Fleta, a Latin treatise on English law, which John Selden edited in 1647, Henry de Bracton's De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae, and Sir Edward Coke's Institutes. The second edition of the poem by T. Warner, in fact, carried the subtitle "a Law Case." Whether or not Swift authorized the subtitle we do not know.

Although Ohlin is probably right when he argues that Swift presents "a light and humorous satire on legal proceedings" in the courtroom scenes, another reason can be found for the consistent legal setting and diction of the poem. Judging by her correspondence with Swift, Esther Vanhomrigh—the woman to whom the poem is addressed—was fond of legal matters. She became familiar with the law out of necessity; her family's financial affairs were tangled, and her contact with lawyers was protracted. To Swift she

45 Poems, II, 689-690.  
46 Ibid., p. 683.  
47 "'Cadenus and Vanessa': Reason and Passion," p. 486.
wrote in June, 1713—at about the time that the poem was composed—"you know I love law business I have been with Lawyers since I saw you." And Swift, on several occasions, alluded to Vanessa's familiarity with legal procedures. On August 1, 1714, he wrote, "'Tis well you have been a Lawyer so long." In 1721, he asked, "How go your Law Affairs. You were once a good Lawyer, but Cad—hath spoiled you." And in 1722, he wrote, "I had yr last with a spleenatick account of yr Law Affairs, you were once a bettr Sollicitor, when you could contrive to make others desire your consent to an Act of Parlmt against their own Interest to advance yours."51

We can thus conclude that the legal machinery of the poem not only involves parody and satire of legal proceedings but was also chosen to please and entertain the woman to whom the poem is addressed. We do not know how Vanessa reacted to the poem, but I suspect that she may have been pleased with the legal machinery because it seemed so tailor-made to suit her interests. The elaborate mythological and legal machinery, then, is hardly "super-

48 Correspondence, I, 372.
49 Ibid., II, 97.
50 Ibid., p. 393.
51 Ibid., p. 432. The Vanhomrigh family had to obtain a special Act of Parliament in 1712 to sell their estate.
fluous." Swift, after determining his purpose, "invented" the right material to fulfill that purpose.

The portrait of Vanessa that Swift draws in the poem has also led to some debate. Some critics are still wondering whether or not the portrait is truthful. Ehrenpreis writes, "Swift eventually came to praise the girl for so many virtues that one might wonder whether she possessed any at all."52 Because our information is so scanty, there is no telling how closely the real Vanessa measured up to the fictitious, idealized Vanessa of the poem.

Through studying and comparing the poem and the correspondence that passed between Swift and Vanessa, we can, of course, discover some parallels. In a letter dated September 3, 1712, Swift acknowledged that Vanessa was able to "rally very well."53 This attribute also appears in the poem: "She rally'd well, he always knew" (l. 660, p. 707). In 1722, Swift told Vanessa, "I remember your detesting and despising the Conversations of the World."54 In the poem, Vanessa despises the conversation of the "fashionable Fops" and "glitt'ring Dames." In 1713, Vanessa wrote to Swift, "Lord! how much we differ from the ancients, who used to sacrifice everything for the good of the commonwealth; but

52 Dr. Swift, p. 312.
53 Quoted in Poems, II, 707.
54 Correspondence, II, 427.
now our greatest men will, at any time, give up their
country out of pique, and that for nothing."55 In the
poem, Vanessa declares

That, present Times have no Pretence
To Virtue, in the Noblest Sense,
By Greeks and Romans understood,
To perish for our Country's Good.

(ll. 346-349, p. 697)

The reader, however, meets with only limited success
in searching for such parallels and must, in the end, concur
with John Middleton Murry's conclusion: "Whether the eulogy
was extravagant, we have no means of telling--no one except
Swift himself seems to have known Vanessa intimately."56
Even Lord Orrery's unflattering description of Vanessa can
be neither accepted nor rejected: "VANESSA was excessively
vain. The character given of her by CADENUS is fine
painting, but, in general, fictitious. She was fond of
dress: impatient to be admired: very romantic in her turn
of mind: superior, in her own opinion, to all her sex:
full of pertness, gaiety, and pride: not without some
agreeable accomplishments, but far from being either beauti-

55 Quoted in Poems, II, 697.

Freeman, however, uses the parallels between the corres-
pondence and the poem to argue, unconvincingly, that the
portrait is entirely truthful and accurate (Vanessa and
Her Correspondence with Jonathan Swift, p. 25).
ful or genteel." 57

One wonders, indeed, whether or not the entire question of how closely the real Vanessa corresponded to the idealized heroine of the poem is even very relevant. The poem, we must remember, is not the "exact Chronicle" that Swift mentioned to Vanessa but an artistic creation.

How, then, does Vanessa come through in the poem? Padraic Colum writes, "For all his invention and wit, the poem brings Vanessa over to us as a pedant and a prude. . . . Vanessa comes out as a spoiled youngster, a brat, if ever there was one." 58 Carl Van Doren characterizes Vanessa's conversation with the fops as "hermaphroditic" and suggests that Vanessa, upon reading some of the lines describing her, might have "twisted in her chair." 59 Such judgments, however, are colored by the standards of the critics themselves and the standards, moreover, of our own age. As Ohlin argues in his essay, "if Vanessa seems a trifle too wholesome for modern tastes, she conforms perfectly to Swift's understanding of what is admirable in a woman." 60

But even Ohlin believes that the Vanessa that Swift

57 Remarks, p. 68.
60 "'Cadenus and Vanessa': Reason and Passion," p. 489.
presents in the poem is flawed. In his detailed study, he argues that the poem is "a delicately executed dialogue between reason and passion, utilizing the conflict between those two principles as the controlling device."\textsuperscript{61} Vanessa's act of falling in love with Cadenus is "her fall from grace."\textsuperscript{62} Ohlin goes on to conclude, "Thus, the poem becomes, "in outlining the story of Vanessa, one long metaphor for the fall of man."\textsuperscript{63} After a close examination of the ways in which Swift portrays Vanessa in the poem, I shall return to Ohlin's thesis.

Swift's praise of Vanessa begins before her actual appearance in the poem. The shepherds, it will be recalled, complain before her creation about the debased tastes of the nymphs. These complaints serve to prepare the reader for the ideal because they dissect the actual. The men, for example, complain that women spend too much of their time attending plays and parading in parks. Vanessa, in contrast, "Wou'd seldom at the Park appear, / Nor saw the Play-House twice a Year" (ll. 312-313, p. 696).

The mythological story also helps to portray an idealized Vanessa. To heap praise on her, Swift makes

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{61} "'Cadenus and Vanessa': Reason and Passion," p. 486.
\item\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., p. 491.
\item\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., p. 495.
\end{itemize}
Vanessa a goddess—or, at least, a creation and gift of goddesses. Because she is the product of both Venus and Pallas, Vanessa is both beautiful and virtuous, feminine and manly. Venus bestows upon Vanessa beauty, sweetness, and cleanliness:

she plucks in Heav'ns high Bow'rs
A Sprig of Amaranthine Flow'rs,
In Nectar thrice infuses Bays,
Three times refin'd in Titan's Rays;
Then calls the Graces to her Aid,
And sprinkles thrice the new-born Maid.
From whence the tender Skin assumes
A Sweetness above all Perfumes;
From whence a Cleanliness remains,
Incapable of outward Stains;
... . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
The Child with native Beauty shone,
The outward Form no Help requir'd:

(11. 154-163, 175-176, pp. 691-692)

Since Venus performs each act three times and since "triple repetition is common in epic poetry," Vanessa's origin seems to assume epic significance. After having acquired these distinctly feminine traits, Vanessa acquires from Pallas traits that are characterized as manly:

Seeds long unknown to Womankind,
For manly Bosoms chiefly fit,
The Seeds of Knowledge, Judgment, Wit.
Her Soul was suddenly endu'd
With Justice, Truth and Fortitude;
With Honour, which no Breach can Stain,
Which Malice must attack in vain;

(11. 203-209, p. 693)

---

Vanessa, then, is both physically and morally stainless. It is significant to note that, in his portrayal of Vanessa, Swift makes the outside correspond to the inside, the appearance to the reality. Swift elsewhere argues that "in most Corporeal Beings, which have fallen under my Cognizance, the Outside hath been infinitely preferable to the In."65 In Vanessa, however, there is no difference between the two. These traits that Pallas bestows upon Vanessa, it may be noted in passing, are the very same ones for which Swift celebrates Stella.

That Vanessa acquires these manly virtues through Venus's guile may seem to complicate the portrait of Vanessa. Venus, after all, tricks Pallas into thinking that Vanessa is a boy. Venus's project, moreover, is called an "abortive Scheme," an "Experiment," and a "Project" in her brain. Anyone familiar with the third voyage in Gulliver's Travels will immediately recognize that these are suspect terms. Pallas, who represents heavenly wisdom, understands the fallacy of Venus's plan:

She study'd well the Point, and found
Her Foe's Conclusions were not sound,
From Premisses erroneous brought,
And therefore the Deductions nought,
And must have contrary Effects
To what her treach'rous Foe expects.

(11. 278-283, p. 695)

Venus's faulty assumption is that Vanessa, since she embodies every virtue, would prove to be irresistible among mortals, that "Heav'nly Wisdom [can] prove / An Instrument to earthly Love" (ll. 294-295, p. 695). Despite the fact that Vanessa has her origin in such treachery, however, she is by no means held culpable. Her behavior in the rest of the poem is such, indeed, that even Pallas would approve.

Vanessa's encounters with the "fashionable Fops" and "glitt'ring Dames" also help to enhance her character. Swift's basic technique in both of these encounters is to demonstrate Vanessa's superiority by making her, paradoxically, an utter failure in worldly affairs. From this point on, we recognize that it is clearly Pallas's rather than Venus's influence that predominates.

Vanessa's encounter with the men reveals that she possesses a sound judgment. She is immune to typical female vanity:

Then in soft Voice and Speech absurd,
With Nonsense ev'ry second Word,
With Fustian from exploded Plays,
They celebrate her Beauty's Praise,
Run o'er their Cant of stupid Lies,
And tell the Murders of her Eyes.

(11. 328-333, pp. 696-697)

Vanessa rejects this romantic nonsense, dismisses it as the "idle Chat" it is, and listens with "silent Scorn."

She tries unsuccessfully to convince her foils that "Merit
should be chiefly plac'd / In Judgment, Knowledge, Wit, and Taste" (ll. 342-343, p. 697) and maintains that "she valu'd nothing less / Than Titles, Figure, Shape, and Dress" (ll. 340-341, p. 697). Vanessa, in short, is shown to be able to distinguish between the trivial and the significant, surface attractiveness and inner worth.

The women also serve as Vanessa's foils. When they come to visit her, they find her reading Montaigne, a writer Swift admired. Between Vanessa, who reads to improve her mind, and the women, who chat "with important Face, / On Ribbons, Fans, and Gloves and Lace" (ll. 376-377, p. 698), there is a great contrast. Swift here puts the praise of Vanessa, though indirectly, in the mouths of the gossipy women. When they complain that Vanessa "Scarce knows what Diff'rence is between / Rich Flanders Lace, and Colberteen," that she lacks sufficient "Judgment, how to buy a Mask," and that in judging "Ribbons, Fans, and Gloves and Lace" she always "lik'd the worst," they actually enhance her character (ll. 416-417, 421, 383, pp. 698, 700). It is her very inability to fit in with the women that earns--or should earn--the reader's esteem. Vanessa, to her own credit, is an alien in the world of "Visits, Ombre, Balls and Plays."

Vanessa's encounters with the fops and dames serve as a prelude to the central episode of the poem, her encounter
with Cadenus. And, again, as in her first two encounters with mortals, it is chiefly through being contrasted with a foil that Vanessa emerges triumphant. Cadenus is Vanessa's most significant foil.

To understand Swift's encomiastic strategy in this crucial section, one must carefully examine his portrait of Cadenus. He first calls attention to Cadenus's age; Cadenus is "a Ship decay'd," "a falling Oak": "As Years increase, she brighter shines, / Cadenus with each Day declines" (ll. 536-537, p. 703). The juxtaposition of Years and Day only serves to exaggerate Cadenus's age. So old is he, indeed, that "Her Sex, with universal Voice, / Must laugh at her capricious Choice" (ll. 508-509, p. 702).

Cadenus, moreover, is incapable of loving a woman, even so perfect a woman as Vanessa. He finally rejects Vanessa's offer of love, not because she is unworthy or deficient, but because he lacks the capacity to love:

Love, hitherto a transient Guest,  
Ne'er held Possession of his Breast;  
So, long attending at the Gate,  
Disdain'd to enter in so late.  

(ll. 768-771, p. 711)

Cadenus could "praise, esteem, approve, / But understood not what was Love" (ll. 546-547, p. 703).

Perhaps the two traits that seem most antithetical to those of Vanessa are Cadenus's pride and his fear of scandal.
As is clear from her previous encounter with the fops, who tried unsuccessfully to flatter her with nonsense about the "Murders of her Eyes," Vanessa lacks vanity. Not so Cadenus; his reaction to Vanessa's attention reveals his susceptibility to vanity:

His Pride began to interpose,  
Preferr'd before a Crowd of Beaux,  
So bright a Nymph to come unsought,  
Such Wonder by his Merit wrought;  
...... Constr'ing the Passion she had shown,  
Much to her Praise, more to his Own.  
Nature in him had Merit plac'd,  
In her, a most judicious Taste.

(ll. 750-753, 764-767, pp. 710-711)

Cadenus's fear of gossip and scandal also serves to increase Vanessa's stature, since she, unlike her foil, is oblivious to what busybodies may say about the match. She reminds Cadenus of a maxim that he himself had taught her:

That Virtue, pleas'd by being shown,  
Knows nothing which it dare not own;  
Can make us without Fear disclose  
Our inmost Secrets to our Foes;  
That common Forms were not design'd  
Directors to a noble Mind.66

(ll. 608-613, p. 706)

Cadenus, on the other hand, is preoccupied with public appearance, even though the laughter and scorn would be

66 An interesting parallel can be found in a letter from Vanessa to Swift (1714): "you once had a maxime (which was to act what was right and not mind what they [sic] world said) I wish you would keep to it now" (Correspondence, II, 148-149).
directed more at Vanessa than at Cadenus ("Her Sex, with universal Voice, / Must laugh at her capricious Choice");

Appearances were all so strong,
The World must think him in the Wrong;
Wou'd say, He made a treach'rous Use
of Wit, to flatter and seduce;
The Town wou'd swear he had betray'd,
By Magick Spells, the harmless Maid;
And ev'ry Beau wou'd have his Jokes,
That Scholars were like other Folks;
That when Platonick Flights were over,
The Tutor turn'd a mortal Lover.

(11. 642-651, p. 707)

These lines reveal not only Cadenus's pride but his obsession with his public image. While Vanessa is willing to risk scandal for the sake of Cadenus, Cadenus is afraid of being made the butt of jokes by "ev'ry Beau."

Peter Ohlin argues that when Vanessa falls in love with Cadenus, she abandons her reason and succumbs to passion. There is some basis for such a thesis. Vanessa is, after all, under the influence of the irrational Cupid. And, moreover, some passages suggest the validity of such a view:

Vanessa, not in Years a Score,
Dreams of a Gown of forty-four;
Imaginary Charms can find,
In Eyes with Reading almost blind;
Cadenus now no more appears
Declin'd in Health, advanc'd in Years.
She fancies Musick in his Tongue,
Nor further looks, but thinks him young.

(11. 524-531, p. 703)

Such words as Dreams, Imaginary Charms, appears, and fancies do seem to suggest that Vanessa has perhaps taken leave of
her senses. Cadenus's initial conclusion, at any rate, is that Vanessa suffers from a "distracted Mind."

Despite such passages and despite Swift's use of the word *passion* several times in this section, however, I believe Ohlin goes too far when he says that Vanessa thereby falls from grace. Vanessa, after all, has good reason for falling in love with a man like Cadenus, despite his age. Earlier in her encounter with the fops, she declared that "Merit should be chiefly plac'd / In Judgment, Knowledge, Wit, and Taste" (ll. 342-343, p. 697). These are clearly the qualities that attract Vanessa to Cadenus. She "much esteem'd his Wit." And her declaration of love resolves around these qualities:

The utmost her Desires will reach,
Is but to learn what he can teach;
His Converse is a System, fit
Alone to fill up all her Wit;

(ll. 706-709, p. 709)

Indeed, Vanessa anticipates and refutes Ohlin's thesis:

Vanessa finish'd the Dispute,
Brought weighty Arguments to prove
That Reason was her Guide in Love.
She thought he had himself describ'd,
His Doctrines when she first imbib'd;
What he had planted, now was grown;
His Virtues she might call her own;

(ll. 675-681, p. 708)

Such lines indicate that Vanessa has not abandoned her reason; she loves Cadenus on rational grounds. Here she demonstrates
most forcefully that she is Pallas's progeny.

Although Cadenus declares that Vanessa's falling in love with him was "an unforeseen Event," Swift clearly prepares the reader for Vanessa's declaration. We would, indeed, be surprised had she not fallen in love with Cadenus. That Vanessa is "fallen" is far from the case, for the satire in this section is obviously directed not at Vanessa but at Cadenus.

If Swift's purpose in the poem was to ward off the real Vanessa's passion--by revealing his own inadequacies--"Cadenus and Vanessa" must be considered a rhetorical failure. We know from the unhappy denouement of Swift's relationship with Esther Vanhomrigh that the poem failed to cool her ardor. Thomas Sheridan thus wished that Swift had concluded the poem "with a denial in such express and peremptory terms, as would have left her no ray of hope."67

To suggest, however, that parts of the poem are "cumbersome" or "unwieldy" or "superfluous" is, I think, to misjudge the poem rather seriously. Each part--the mythological framework, the legal diction, the preliminary encounter of Vanessa and the fops and dames--carefully fulfills a function in the overall scheme. Swift's faculty for "invention" did not fail him.

The annual poems that Swift unfailingly presented to Esther Johnson between 1719 and 1727, the year before her death, are among his most famous—and deservedly so. These poems, which Maurice Johnson says "contain his most gravely musical, most affecting phrases,"¹ are unique not only in Swift's canon but in the age. Robert Graves has written, "although the age abounded in impersonal Chloes, Amandas, and Belindas, the only personal Muse I can recall was Swift's Stella."²

In the past, however, these poems have attracted the interest of scholars principally because of their biographical import. As Quintana has remarked, "If there is anywhere a key to the enigmatic relations between Swift and Stella, it lies in these extraordinary occasional pieces."³ Together with the Journal to Stella, these poems reveal an important facet of Swift's character, and to ignore these works would be seriously to distort his personality.

The Stella poems, however, have not been sufficiently

¹ The Sin of Wit, p. 45.
³ The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift, p. 278.
analyzed as literary works. Critics have been content to deal with the general themes and characteristics of the poems. Thus, Herbert Davis, in an early and important study, divided his analysis of these poems into three sections, dealing in turn with satire, comedy, and sentiment—the three basic "tones." In demonstrating that Swift in these poems presented "a study of the English gentlewoman, and her place in an enlightened and civilized society," however, Davis failed to analyze the poems closely enough not only to capture the spirit but to assess the methods. More work is needed to demonstrate the rhetorical strategies that make the poems work.

The central theme of these "extraordinary occasional pieces" is, of course, well-known. Ronald Paulson has shown that in these poems "the discord of body and the unity of soul are increasingly contrasted as she ages year by year." Swift consistently praises Stella for her "Breeding, Humor, Wit and Sense": "Your Virtues safely I commend, / They on no Accidents depend" (ll. 79-80, p. 730). Unlike poets who worship their mistresses' pearly teeth, alabaster complexion, ruby lips, and starry

4 Jonathan Swift, pp. 31-97.
5 Ibid., p. 36.
eyes, Swift realizes that because such beauties are fleeting, a woman must base her appeal on more lasting qualities. In his "A Letter to a Young Lady, on Her Marriage," he advised, "you will, in Time, grow a Thing indifferent, and perhaps contemptible, unless you supply the Loss of Youth and Beauty with more durable Qualities." In his "Character of Mrs. Howard," he wrote, "Besides, beauty being transient, and a trifle, cannot justly make part of a character." And in "To Stella, Visiting me in my Sickness," he put the matter even more succinctly: "Nor is Complexion Honour's Place" (l. 22, p. 724).

The theme of the poems, then, remains more or less constant through the years. All of the poems, in one way or another, celebrate Stella for her character rather than for her physical charms. And, as the Earl of Orrery has remarked, the Stella poems are alike in that they are all "fuller of affection than desire, and more expressive of friendship, than of love." An examination of Swift's strategies or methods of stating his theme, however, will reveal great diversity and versatility.

The first of the birthday poems, "On Stella's Birth-

---

7 Prose Works, IX, 89.
8 Ibid., V, 213.
9 Remarks, p. 77.
"provides an opportunity to examine some of the techniques that Swift uses in the later poems. Its purpose is to console the middle-aged Stella:

However Stella, be not troubled,
Although thy Size and Years are doubled,
Since first I saw Thee at Sixteen
The brightest Virgin of the Green,
So little is thy Form declin'd
Made up so largely in thy Mind.

(11. 3-8, pp. 721-722)

Instead of ignoring Stella's advancing age, Swift emphasizes it. Stella, Swift hints, is no longer capable of attracting Astrophils as the other famous Stella was. She is, however, just as worthy of "Worship," if not more so:

Oh, would it please the Gods to split
Thy Beauty, Size, and Years, and Wit,
No Age could furnish out a Pair
Of Nymphs so gracefull, Wise and fair
With half the Lustre of Your Eyes,
With half thy Wit, thy Years and Size;
And then before it grew too late,
How should I beg of gentle Fate,
(That either Nymph might have her Swain,)
To split my Worship too in twain.

(11. 9-18, p. 722)

Although Swift here uses the vocabulary of conventional love poetry—Nymph, Swain, Worship—the poem develops a serious theme that Swift expressed in a letter to the Reverend William Tisdall: "time takes off from the lustre of virgins in all other eyes but mine."\(^{10}\)

Oswald Johnston offers an acute analysis of Swift's

---

\(^{10}\) Quoted in Quintana, *Swift: An Introduction*, p. 11.
method in the poem: "Swift is evidently making fun of elegant poetic compliments. Along with the easily recognizable mock-pastoral talk about nymphs ... one can observe inelegantly precise references to the lady's age and shape; a characteristically impolite word, 'split,' which is used twice; and an extended joke at the expense of poetic conceits that quite literally equates increased virtue with enlarged size and additional years." The mock-pastoral elements, however, are actually integrated with the purpose of the poem and serve a useful function: "In this poem the clumsy variations from the manner of poetic compliment that Swift pretends to assume—the size, the years, the 'Form declin'd'—only serve to make the compliment more genuine."

Certain realities, of course, governed the nature of this poem and the subsequent poems. Swift and Stella were no longer very young when he penned the first of the poems; he was fifty-one, and she was thirty-seven. To pretend

---


12 Ibid.

13 Although the first line of the first poem reads "Stella this Day is thirty four," she was actually at least thirty-seven. Swift was not always very accurate with dates. In this case, he may have lowered Stella's age in a teasing display of his charity.
that Stella had escaped "Times winged Charriot" would have been ludicrous:

Thou Stella, wert no longer young,
When first for thee my Harp I strung:

(11. 9-10, p. 728)

Nor ever Nymph inspir'd to Rhyme,
Unless, like Venus, in her Prime.
At Fifty six, if this be true,
Am I a Poet fit for you?
Or at the Age of Forty three,
Are you a Subject fit for me?
Adieu bright Wit, and radiant Eyes;
You must be grave, and I be wise.

(11. 21-28, p. 757)

Because they were no longer young and because of the age in which they lived, "There is no room here," as Herbert Davis observes, "for the conventions of the tradition of courtly love, or for the ecstasies of passion and the worship of beauty belonging to that world of romance where moved the radiant figures of Sidney and his Stella."^14 Davis further suggests that given Esther Johnson's age, Swift may have chosen the name Stella "in pleasant mockery of Sidney and his Stella, and intended it as a little joke at the expense of all romantic nonsense, particularly romantic love poetry."^15

^14 Jonathan Swift, p. 38.

^15 Ibid., p. 37. Since stella is the Latin word for star, many of the lines in the poems addressed to Stella give rise to additional humor (for example, the above lines in which Swift bids adieu to Stella's "radiant Eyes").
In 1720, Swift presented Stella with "To Stella, Visiting me in my Sickness" instead of a birthday poem. Swift at the time was quite ill, and Stella was at his side, nursing him back to health. The basic purpose of this poem is to define and praise Stella's "True Honour":

Heroes and Heroins of old,
By Honour only were enroll'd
Among their Brethren of the Skies,
To which (though late) shall Stella rise.

(ll. 51-54, p. 725)

Because "Honour" is an abstraction, Swift devotes a number of lines to defining the concept. His basic technique is elimination; to indicate what Stella's "Honour" is, Swift explains what it is not:

But, lest we should for Honour take
The drunken Quarrels of a Rake,
Or think it seated in a Scar,
Or on a proud triumphal Car,
Or in the Payment of a Debt
We lose with Sharers at Piquet;
Or, when a Whore in her Vocation,
Keeps punctual to an Assigment;
Or that on which his Lordship swears,
When vulgar Knaves would lose their Ears:
Let Stella's fair Example preach
A Lesson she alone can teach.

(ll. 23-34, p. 724)

Juxtaposed against drunken rakes, sharers, and whores, Stella shines even more illustriously. While the primary purpose of the poem is to praise Stella, Swift here satirizes those who engage in disreputable activities. In this poem, as in "Cadenus and Vanessa" and in other poems to Stella,
Swift makes clear the ideal by laying its contraries.

"True Honour," it turns out, is primarily a masculine trait, and part of Swift's technique of praise is to argue that Stella is more than woman. Like the heroine in "Cadenus and Vanessa," Stella acquires the masculine traits from Pallas:

PALLAS observing Stella's Wit
Was more than for her Sex was fit;  
And that her Beauty, soon or late,  
Might breed Confusion in the State,  
In high Concern for human Kind,  
Fixt Honour in her Infant Mind.

(11. 1-6, p. 723)

Swift then implicitly compares Stella with some honorable men of the past. He says that to be honorable requires the laying aside of passions and the emulation of the highest standards of conduct:

How shall I act? is not the Case,  
But how would Brutus in my Place?  
In such a Cause would Cato bleed?  
And how would Socrates proceed?

(11. 39-42, p. 724)

To rank Stella with these men is to praise her highly indeed.

After defining the concept of "Honour" that is to be applied to Stella, Swift devotes most of the remainder of the poem to defining one of its chief components—courage. Once again, Swift relies upon the technique of elimination:

She thinks that Nature ne'er design'd  
Courage to Man alone confin'd;
Can Cowardice her Sex adorn,
Which most exposes ours to Scorn?
She wonders where the Charm appears
In Florimel's affected Fears:
For Stella never learn'd the Art,
At proper Times to scream and start;
Nor calls up all the House at Night,
And swears she saw a Thing in White.
Doll never flies to cut her Lace,
Or throw cold Water in her Face,
Because she heard a sudden Drum,
Or found an Earwig in a Plum.

(11. 65-78, pp. 725-726)

We learn more about the nature of Stella's courage by noting what she does not do than what she does. As in the section defining Stella's "Honour," moreover, Swift here celebrates Stella by flaying her foils. Indeed, it may be said that in this passage, we learn more about the affectations of other women than the courage of Stella.

The above passage also suggests that Stella is more "natural" than the Florimels of the world. The diction clearly demonstrates the accuracy of what John M. Bullitt says: "Of the many ways in which men's awareness is misdirected from what is essential to what is nonessential, the false emphasis upon the artifice of methods and schemes is, in Swift's satire, among the most prominent."16 Whereas Stella is governed by "Nature" and whereas she "never learn'd the Art, / At proper Times to scream and start," the other women "adorn" their sex with cowardice.

16 Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire, p. 158.
and Florimel's fears are not natural but "affected." 17

Stella, then, is celebrated both for her "Honour" and her courage, and these two traits Swift identifies as masculine traits. Irvin Ehrenpreis offers an ingenious conjecture to explain why Swift frequently "praised in women traits often classified as masculine: these facilitated his identification with them." 18 Such a view, however, ignores the fact that Stella is not deprived of her femininity. One need only note the following lines:

Say, Stella, was Prometheus blind,
And forming you, mistook your Kind?
No: 'Twas for you alone he stole
The Fire that forms a manly Soul;
Then to compleat it ev'ry way,
He molded it with Female Clay;
To that you owe the nobler Flame.
To this, the Beauty of your Frame.

(11. 85-92, p. 726)

Swift, then, presents Stella as a perfect synthesis of male and female virtues, the noble "Flame" and the beautiful "Frame." She thus resembles Vanessa.

Only after defining and lauding Stella's "Honour" and courage does Swift turn to the specific occasion that gave

17 Cf. these lines that praise Vanessa in "Cadenus and Vanessa":

Vanessa, fill'd with just Disdain,
Wou'd still her Dignity maintain,
Instructed from her early Years
To scorn the Art of Female Tears.

(11. 594-597, p. 705)

rise to the poem. Stella's devotion to him at his sick-bed. The poem here moves to a very concrete, persona, and domestic scene, and it is usually in such passages that Swift is tenderest:

When on my sickly Couch I lay,  
Impatient both of Night and Day,  
Lamenting in unmanly Strains,  
Call'd ev'ry Pow'r to ease my Pains,  
Then Stella ran to my Relief

(ll. 97-101, p. 726)

These lines are characteristic of the poems to Stella, for here he presents himself as Stella's foil. She is "manly"; he is "unmanly." She is courageous; he is not. To make Stella's patience and tenderness even more emphatic, Swift portrays himself as a stubborn child who needs to be shamed into taking his medicine:

I see her taste each nauseous Draught,  
And so obligingly am caught.  
I bless the Hand from whence they came,  
Nor dare distort my Face for shame.19

(ll. 113-116, p. 727)

As in "Cadenus and Vanessa," Swift's self-dramatization helps to heighten his praise of the woman to whom the poem is addressed.

In this poem and in "To Stella" (1724), which is also centered on his ill health, Swift speaks of Stella as

19 Cf. these lines from "To Stella" (1724) in which Swift also assumes a child-like pose:

But when I once am out of pain,  
I promise to be good again:

(ll. 33-34, p. 755)
slave. In this poem, he writes:

She suffers hourly more than me,  
No cruel Master could require  
From Slaves employ'd for daily Hire  
What Stella by her Friendship warm'd,

(ll. 104-107, p. 726)

In "To Stella," he says that Stella attends to Swift "like an humble slave" (l. 9, p. 754). Whereas in Sidney's poems it is Astrophil who is like a "slave-born Muscovite" who calls it "praise to suffer tyranny," the roles in Swift's poems are reversed.

The concluding section of this poem provides a convincing illustration of Swift's theme. Earlier in the poem, Stella's "Honour" and courage are highly praised; she is ranked with "Heroes and Heroins of old." That she would nonetheless act the role of a slave to take care of so petulant and difficult a patient as Swift is perhaps the most convincing proof of her "Honour." Stella, Swift seems to be saying, should not even bother with so unworthy a person as Swift; that she does is a reflection of her "True Honour":

Best Pattern of true Friends, beware;  
You pay too dearly for your Care;  
If, while your Tenderness secures  
My Life, it must endanger yours.  
For such a Fool was never found,  
Who pull'd a Palace to the Ground,  
Only to have the Ruins made  
Materials for an House decay'd.

(ll. 117-124, p. 727)
Swift's metaphors are striking. Stella is "a Palace"; Swift is "an House decay'd." Stella's act of ministering to Swift at his bedside is comparable to the act of tearing down a beautiful palace only to get the materials to build a "decay'd" house. The metaphors indicate that Swift is not worthy of Stella's self-sacrifice. However, if Stella is a "Fool" for sacrificing her own well-being in order to look after Swift's welfare, she is so only because she is completely selfless. A "wise" person would know better where his own self-interest lies. The concluding section, perhaps even more than the earlier and more abstract sections, demonstrates "Stella's fair Example" and "True Honour."

Swift's gift to Stella in 1720 was "To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed His Poems." The poem deals primarily with the nature of his own poems to Stella and her worthiness as a subject for such poetry. Through this poem, Swift examines the relationship between himself, the poet, and Stella, his subject.

His poems to Stella, Swift insists, are not love poems but friendship poems. To indicate the nature of his friendship with Stella, Swift dismisses the conventional symbols of earlier love lyrics:

Without one Word of Cupid's Darts,  
Of killing Eyes, or bleeding Hearts;
With Friendship and Esteem possesst,
I ne'er admitted Love a Guest.

(11. 11-14, p. 728)

References to a woman's "killing Eyes" would be appropriate in a love poem such as Sidney's Sonnet 42, in which Astrophil implores Stella's eyes to "Keep still my zenith, ever shine on me."  

Swift proclaims his own good fortune in having so worthy a subject as Stella, since his poems of praise consequently do not "owe their Truth / To Beauty, Dress, or Paint, or Youth" (11. 61-62, p. 729). Her virtues can be safely commended because they do not depend on "Accidents." To praise Stella better, Swift shows how she differs from those women whose only claim to esteem lies in their "Beauty, Dress, or Paint, or Youth":

Or should a Porter make Enquiries
For Chloe, Sylvia, Phillis, Iris;
Be told the Lodging, Lane, and Sign,
The Bow'rs that hold those Nymphs divine;
Fair Chloe would perhaps be found
With Footmen tippling under Ground,

20 In other poems to Stella, Swift again centers on Stella's no longer lustrous eyes:

And ev'ry Virtue now supplyes
The fainting Rays of Stella's Eyes:

(11. 21-22, p. 735)

Adieu bright Wit, and radiant Eyes;

(1. 27, p. 757)
The charming Silvia beating Flax,  
Her Shoulders mark'd with bloody Tracks;  
Bright Phillis mending ragged Smocks,  
And radiant Iris in the Pox.

(11. 39-48, p. 729)

Although Chloe is "Fair," Sylvia "charming," Phillis "Bright," and Iris "radiant," they are morally and spiritually bankrupt. Just as Swift in "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed" reveals Corinna's real ugliness by showing us how she appears in "her Bow'r," he reveals the depravity of the lives of these "Nymphs divine" by examining their "Bow'rs" and their activities. The women in this poem are shown to be no better than Corinna. Corinna is tormented by "Pains of Love"; "radiant" Iris suffers from the "Pox." Corinna dreams of Bridewell, a correctional institution, and "feels the Lash, and faintly screams"; "charming" Sylvia is seen in just such an institution, where she is lashed and made to beat flax.

If these nymphs have a fraudulent appeal, the poets who celebrate such women are no better. They are merely hack-writers in garrets who repeat "old Topicks like a Parrot." Because Swift realizes that encomiastic poetry is always in danger of sounding insincere or false, he makes an ethical appeal to the reader to accept his own honesty as a poet:

True Poets can depress and raise;  
Are Lords of Infamy and Praise.
They are not scurrilous in Satire,
Nor will in Panygyrick flatter.
Unjustly Poets we asperse;
Truth shines the brighter, clad in Verse;
And all the Fictions they pursue
Do but insinuate what is true.

Now should my Praises owe their Truth
To Beauty, Dress, or Paint, or Youth,
What Stoicks call without our Power,
They could not be insur'd an Hour;
'Twere grafting on an annual Stock
That must our Expectation mock,
And making one luxuriant Shoot
Die the next Year for want of Root:
Before I could my Verses bring,
Perhaps you're quite another Thing.

(11. 53-70, pp. 729-730)

Swift's "Praises" of Stella will always be true because Stella's moral integrity is like a "Root" rather than "one luxuriant Shoot" that will quickly die. In the above lines, Swift seems to be saying what Astrophil, in Sidney's poem, said to Stella: "Only to you the flatterer never lieth" (First Song).

As if to prove his own commitment to truth, Swift, in this encomium, goes on to point out Stella's "only Fau't." Her flaw is an occasional lapse in keeping her passion under control. Swift believed, in the words of Charles Peake, that "Evil passions were not passions intrinsically bad, but passions which were not properly controlled and directed."²¹

To suggest the destructiveness and perversity of

Stella's unbridled passion, Swift uses two kinds of images. First, he suffuses the poem with fire imagery. In "To Stella, Visiting me in my Sickness," we saw that Swift can use fire imagery to suggest positive qualities. Prometheus, we are told, stole "The Fire that forms a manly Soul" for Stella alone; Stella has a "nobler Flame." Stella's friendship also was able to "warm." In this poem, however, the fire imagery suggests negative qualities. Stella's "Spirits kindle to a Flame, / Mov'd with the lightest Touch of Blame" (ll. 87-88, p. 730). Her passion makes her "Anger burn." Swift even compares Stella's ungoverned passion with "Aetna's Fire." Other allusions to fire are less obvious. The line "And Anger sparkling in your Eyes" (l. 114, p. 731) ties in with the rest of the fire imagery because of the kinship between sparkling and spark. The following lines also contribute to the fire imagery:

And when a Friend in Kindness tries
To shew you where your Error lies,
Conviction does but more incense;

(ll. 89-91, p. 730)

The word incense comes from the Latin word incendere, meaning "to set on fire."

The fire imagery is effective and appropriate for at least two reasons. First, it is appropriate because fire is both beneficial when controlled and destructive when misused or uncontrolled. As such, the nature of fire
corresponds with the nature of the passions. Second, the fire imagery is appropriate because fire is, according to medieval and Renaissance thinking, the element that corresponds with the kind of unrestrained passion that Stella possesses and that Swift calls *Spleen*. Renaissance thinkers also called Stella's kind of passion *choler* or *bile*.

The second kind of imagery that Swift uses to describe Stella's passion is wine imagery, particularly of wine gone sour. He compares Stella's anger with "Ferment":

> For should this Ferment last too long,  
> By Time subsiding, you may find  
> Nothing but Acid left behind.

(11. 132-134, p. 731)

The imagery is again appropriate and fits in with medieval and Renaissance moral philosophy, for not only does the passion of choler correspond with the element of fire but it is also supposed to be bitter in taste. In his poem, Swift aptly stresses the unpleasant taste of the wine.

---

22 For a discussion of Swift's view of the passions, see Charles Peake's essay "Swift and the Passions" (see note 21 above).

23 That Swift was familiar with the theory of humors and elements is shown in "To Stella, Visiting me in my Sickness": "Let Melancholy rule supreme, / Choler preside, or Blood, or Phlegm" (11. 19-20, p. 724).

Stella's passion "the Liquor sours" until "Nothing but Acid left behind" (l. 134, p. 731).

Murry and Davis both speculate that Stella's outbursts of anger at this time must have stemmed from her jealousy of Esther Vanhomrigh. Their explanation is certainly plausible. One should note, however, that Swift's criticism is not very harsh, for Stella's passion is "a Fault we often find / Mix'd in a noble generous Mind" (ll. 103-104, p. 731). Indeed, Swift seems to be citing Stella's one weakness primarily to prove that he is an honest poet and that the poem contains generous but just praise: "Let Malice look with all her Eyes, / She dares not say the Poet lyes" (ll. 81-82, p. 730).

Swift concludes the poem with banter. To Stella, who regularly transcribed his poems, Swift offers a stern test:

Say, Stella, when you copy next,
Will you keep strictly to the Text?
Dare you let these Reproaches stand,
And to your Failing set your Hand?
Or if these Lines your Anger fire,
Shall they in baser Flames expire?
Where'er they burn, if burn they must,
They'll prove my Accusation just.

(ll. 137-144, p. 732)

Swift again uses fire imagery to indicate Stella's destructive anger and argues wittily that should Stella lose her temper and burn the poem, she will only provide a vivid

---

and self-incriminating demonstration of her passion. 26

The poem Swift wrote for Stella's fortieth birthday in 1721, simply entitled "Stella's Birth-day," is surely one of his most anthologized poems. It is justly famous, for it epitomizes Swift's encomiastic art. It also contains many of the characteristics and strategies of the other poems to Stella.

The whole poem revolves around the metaphor of an inn. In this poem, Swift compares the middle-aged Stella to an old inn, "the true old Angel-Inn." The analogy, Swift insists, is appropriate because Stella's physical appearance is deteriorating like the exterior of the inn. Just as the painting of the inn "grows decayd," Stella's face is "a little crack't."

This extended analogy, although at first glance it may seem unflattering, is used to praise Stella. Though other inns may be more beautiful on the outside, the "old Angel-Inn" is superior on the inside. Comparing Stella with an old inn is highly effective, since the inn suggests warmth, hospitality, good company, and congenial conversation. The analogy, in short, is an effective device for demonstrating the difference between the outward appearance and the inner reality.

26 Stella did not transcribe this poem into her book (Poems, II, 732).
In Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, much attention is devoted to Stella's heavenly face. Astrophil declares "in Stella's face I read / What love and beauty be" (Sonnet 3) and "Let eyes / See beauty's total sum summ'd in her face" (Sonnet 35). Swift in this poem also calls attention to Stella's face, but her face is "a little crack't" and wrinkled: "Could Poets or could Painters fix / How Angels look at thirty six" (ll. 17-18, p. 735).27 If Stella is not angelic in appearance, however, she is, because of her inner qualities, even more deserving of the title Angel.

Stella is again, as in other poems, contrasted with a foil, this time Chloe, and this juxtaposition helps to enhance her even more. Chloe is compared with an inn which, though fairer on the outside, has inferior provisions. Stella, although her face is beginning to wrinkle, will always remain angelic; Chloe, although physically attractive, has "Cracks and Wrinkles" in her mind. And while Chloe may "prate" about Stella's age and insinuate that she is "no Chickin," all men of sense will pass by her door "And crowd to Stella's at fourscore" (l. 58, p. 736).

John Middleton Murry complains that the poem is "a little ruthless."28 I am convinced that Stella would not

27 Stella was forty, not thirty-six.

have so complained. A woman who, in the Journal to Stella, was accustomed to being called a monki, a naughty rogue, a saucy Jade, a lazy Sluttikin, a wheedling Slut, and an agreeable Bitch must surely have delighted in Swift's own particular vein of flattery. Swift in this poem turns humor and raillery into high praise. Indeed, the very inclusion of such phrases as no Chickin and a little crack't becomes part of the strategy of praise, for Swift thereby demonstrates that Stella is not so vain as to be offended by such gentle teasing.

Another poem that contains a good deal of raillery is the poem Swift presented to Stella in 1723, "Stella at Wood-Park." In that year, Stella visited Charles Ford, the Don Carlos of the poem, at his residence at Wood-Park. The contrast between life at Wood-Park and life in Dublin provided Swift with an opportunity for raillery. The purpose of this raillery, however, does not become clear until the end of the poem.

Life for Stella at Wood-Park is edenic. Because Don Carlos is such an attentive host, Stella lacks nothing; "He entertain'd her half a Year / With gen'rous Wines and costly Chear" (ll. 3-4, p. 749). So well treated is she that she becomes insufferable. She grows "prouder than the Devil," and she would "o'er the Servants hector." Her taste buds also become fastidious;
She look'd on Partridges with scorn,
Except they tasted of the Corn;
A Haunch of Ven'son made her sweat,
Unless it had the right Fumette.
Don Carlos earnestly would beg,
Dear Madam, try this Pigeon's Leg;
Was happy when he could prevail
To make her only touch a Quail.

(11. 11-18, p. 750)

At last, however, she must return to Dublin. Her
departure from Wood-Park is described with mock-seriousness.
The day she returns to Dublin is a "dismal Day." Perhaps
Swift even expected Stella to detect an analogy between her
own situation and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden.
To depict forcefully and vividly the great contrast between
life at Wood-Park and life in Dublin, Swift dwells on
specific differences:

Poor Stella must pack off to Town.
From purring Streams and Fountains bubbling,
To Liffy's stinking Tide in Dublin;
From wholesome Exercise and Air
To sissing in an easy Chair;
From Stomach sharp and hearty feeding,
To piddle like a Lady breeding;
From ruling there the Household singly,
To be directed here by Dingly;

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...
From Ford, who thinks of nothing mean,
To the poor Doings of the D—n.

(11. 26-34, 41-42, p. 750)

Although Stella tries for a while to "ape Wood-Park," she
once again "fell" into her former ways: "Small Beer, a
Herring, and the D—n" (1. 72, p. 751).

This extended raillery is not pointless, for it actually
serves to flatter Stella. At the end of the poem, Swift acknowledges that the account is highly exaggerated:

Yet Raillery gives no Offence,
Where Truth has not the least Pretence;
Nor can be more securely plac't
Than on a Nymph of Stella's Taste.

(11. 77-80, p. 752)

Stella comes out of the poem all the more pleasing because she is portrayed as the kind of woman who appreciates wit and humor, even at her own expense.

All the raillery is but necessary preparation for the last line of the poem. Without the edenic description of Wood-Park, the line would be utterly meaningless. These are the final lines of the poem:

Yet, when you sigh to leave Wood-Park,
The Scene, the Welcome, and the Spark,
To languish in this odious Town,
And pull your haughty Stomach down;
We think you quite mistake the Case;
The Virtue lies not in the Place;
For though my Raillery were true,
A Cottage is Wood-Park with you.

(11. 85-92, p. 752)

No higher praise than the exquisite metaphor "A Cottage is Wood-Park with you" is possible.

Because Swift had intimations of Stella's impending death, the last of the birthday poems, written the year before her death, contains no raillery and no humor. The mood, unlike that of some of the earlier poems, is somber and meditative; it is a poem in which he asks Stella to
accept for once "some serious Lines." Swift in his role as an Anglican divine is most apparent here.

The purpose of the poem is to praise Stella for the virtuous life she has led. Swift, in effect, is trying to help her "look with Joy on what is past" and to reflect "on a Life well spent." It is a great poem and a fitting climax to the whole series of poems to Stella.

Although Stella's steady decline sorrowed him, Swift emphasizes that this is a joyful poem. In the opening lines, we can see Swift struggling to keep the poem from descending to gloom: "THIS Day, whate'er the Fates decree, / Shall still be kept with Joy by me" (ll. 1-2, p. 763). He later urges Stella to "look with Joy on what is past" and says that "Virtue in her daily Race, / Like Janus, bears a double Face; / Looks back with Joy where she has gone, / And therefore goes with Courage on" (ll. 73-76, p. 765). By thrice repeating the word joy, Swift emphasizes the distinction between transient and superficial joys and the joy, like Stella's, that can be earned only through a lifelong devotion to virtuous conduct.

Why, Swift implicitly asks, should one live so consecrated a life as Stella's? He answers this question by appealing to Stella's (and the reader's) reason. He, in fact, uses the word reason three times in the poem. The argument of the poem has its origin in "Reason":
Yet, since from Reason may be brought
A better and more pleasing Thought,
Which can in spite of all Decays,
Support a few remaining Days;
From not the gravest of Divines,
Accept for once some serious Lines.

(11. 9-14, p. 764)

He argues further that even were there no likelihood of
God's reward and punishment after death, man's reason will
tell him that a virtuous life is a reward in itself. It
needs no further justification:

Were future Happiness and Pain,
A mere Contrivance of the Brain,
As Atheists argue, to entice,
And fit their Proselytes for Vice;
(The only Comfort they propose,
To have Companions in their Woes.)
Grant this the Case, yet sure 'tis hard,
That Virtue, stil'd its own Reward,
And by all Sages understood
To be the chief of human Good,
Should acting, die, nor leave behind
Some lasting Pleasure in the Mind,
Which by Remembrance will assuage,
Grief, Sickness, Poverty, and Age;
And strongly shoot a radiant Dart,
To shine through Life's declining Part.

(11. 19-34, p. 764)

Virtue, Swift insists, is like food, and the mind thrives
on the virtuous conduct of the past just as the body thrives
"By Food of twenty Years ago" (l. 56, p. 765). For accep-
tance of this idea, Swift again appeals to man's reason:

Then, who with Reason can maintain,
That no Effects of Food remain?
And, is not Virtue in Mankind
The Nutriment that feeds the Mind?
Upheld by each good Action past,
And still continued by the last;
Then, who with Reason can pretend,
That all Effects of Virtue end?

(11. 59-66, p. 765)

Yet while reason alone should be a sufficient induce-
ment to a virtuous life, Swift is unwilling to concede that
virtue goes unrewarded after death. Stella must surely
have been familiar with Swift's views of "future Happiness
and Pain"; he clearly did not believe them to be "A mere
Contrivance of the Brain." He argues here that atheists
will meet with "their Woes."

And what of Stella? Although Swift says that he is
"not the gravest of Divines," he does write gravely when
he says, "She \(\text{Virtue}\) at your sickly Couch will wait, /
And guide you to a better State" (11. 77-78, p. 766).
Though the emphasis in the poem is on the present, these
lines come close to suggesting that Stella will be rewarded
by eternal happiness. With this assurance of redemption,
Stella, Swift maintains, can indeed "look with Joy on what
is past."

In his undated "A Sermon upon the Excellence of Chris-
tianity," Swift tries to demonstrate that "Christian
philosophy is in all things preferable to Heathen wisdom." 29
A prime reason for the superiority of Christianity is that

\[^{29}\text{Prose Works, IX, 243.}\]
it fosters virtuous conduct through its promises of punishment or bliss. He states that "human nature is so constituted, that we can never pursue any thing heartily but upon hopes of a reward." The whole foundation of heathen philosophers, according to Swift, was flimsy: "But some of the philosophers . . . pretended to refine so far, as to call virtue its own reward, and worthy to be followed only for itself: Whereas, if there be any thing in this more than the sound of the words, it is at least too abstracted to become an universal influencing principle in the world, and therefore could not be of general use." To encourage virtuous conduct among men, one must have a "settled principle" of "rewards and punishments in another life" by which men could be coerced into governing their actions. Swift's sermon departs from the position of the deists (notably Shaftesbury), who believed that virtue should not be pursued for such rewards.

We are confronted with an apparent contradiction in Swift's thinking, or at least a change, for while he argues in the sermon that anything short of the direct threat of celestial punishment is insufficient inducement for regu-

30 *Prose Works*, IX, 244.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., p. 245.
lating human conduct, in the poem he appeals to the human reason. Reason, he says, will convince men of sense that virtue is its own reward.

The contradiction is more apparent than real, however, because Swift in this poem is talking primarily about Stella's life. She has lived a virtuous life for its own sake, and in this respect she is separated from the bulk of mankind. She therefore emerges from the poem more deserving of esteem than one who lives well only because of his fear of divine wrath. Stella, we may imagine, must have been deeply moved by the poem since she was familiar with the Dean's religious ideas and realized how highly he praised her in excepting her from the human condition.

Swift concludes the poem with a request for Stella's pity and a tender tribute to her friendship:

O then, whatever Heav'n intends,
Take Pity on your pitying Friends;
Nor let your Ills affect your Mind,
To fancy they can be unkind.
Me, surely me, you ought to spare,
Who gladly would your Suff'ring's share;
Or give my Scrap of Life to you,
And think it far beneath your Due;
You, to whose Care so oft I owe,
That I'm alive to tell you so.

(11. 79-88, p. 766)

The poem here loses all its abstractness and philosophical mood and descends (or rather ascends) to Swift's own reason for celebrating Stella. The most convincing evidence of
Stella's magnanimity is to be found in the manner in which she cared for Swift despite her own suffering. We recall that the occasion for an earlier poem—"To Stella, Visiting me in my Sickness"—was Swift's own illness. Swift concluded that poem by saying that Stella, in ministering to Swift at his sickbed, was like a "Fool" who "pull'd a Palace to the Ground, / Only to have the Ruins made / Materials for an House decay'd" (ll. 122-124, p. 727). The occasion for the last of the Stella poems is Stella's illness, and Swift wishes, in the final lines of the poem, that he could return the kindness that Stella had earlier shown. Of all Swift's poems, this one is the most affecting. And, in its own way, it is his most "joyful."

In 1692, many years before he wrote the first of the poems to Stella, Swift wrote to his cousin Thomas Swift, "I take that to be a part of the Honesty of Poets that they can not write well except they think the subject deserves it."33 When he wrote this, he was thinking primarily of his "Ode to the Athenian Society." Since that ode is, in the words of Ricardo Quintana, "unquestionably the worst thing Swift ever wrote,"34 the statement is far more appropriate in a discussion of the poems to Stella. That Stella was, in Swift's eyes, a most deserving subject goes

33 Correspondence, I, 8.
34 The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift, p. 33.
without saying, for, in his own words, she was "the truest, most virtuous, and valuable friend, that I, or perhaps any other person ever was blessed with."\textsuperscript{35} It was perhaps for this reason, above all, that in these poems Swift wrote exceedingly well, whether that writing consisted of raillery or "serious Lines."

\textsuperscript{35} Prose Works, V, 227.
C. HARLEY

The story of Swift's close friendship with Robert Harley, first Earl of Oxford, is, of course, familiar to students of Swift. The alliance that began late in 1710 and that weathered a number of crises is significant not only because of the political ramifications it had at the time but also because it gave rise to a number of Swift's poems, including one of his finest, "Part of the Seventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated."

In 1712, Swift wrote the brief poem entitled "Atlas." The purpose of the poem apparently was to convince Harley to divide his labors, to share his responsibilities. F. Elrington Ball notes the connection between the theme of the poem and a passage in the Journal to Stella (March 4, 1711-12). Swift there says that Harley "cannot do all himself, and will not employ others: which is his great Fault."¹

In "Atlas," Swift uses the myth of Atlas to try to convince Harley of his "great Fault." His method is to remind Harley that even the superhuman Atlas had to rest from his labors: "So Atlas, lest the pondrous Sphears / Should sink and fall about his Ears / Got Hercules to bear the Pile / That he might take his Rest awhile" (11. 9-12,

¹ Quoted in Poems, I, 159.
Harley, Swift points out, is no different; he should share his heavy burden with St. John (who corresponds to Hercules). Such an act, Swift assures Harley, would not be taken as a sign of weakness because "Hercules was not so strong, / Nor could have borne it half so long" (ll. 13-14, p. 160). Hercules is "one of second Rate."

The poem is divided into two sections. The first fourteen lines present Swift's condensed version of the Atlas myth. In the remaining lines (15-22), Swift draws a moral that he applies directly to Harley:

All Statesmen are in this Condition,  
And Atlas is a Politician  
A Premier Minister of State  
Alcides, one of second Rate.  
Suppose then Atlas ne'er so wise,  
Yet when the Weight of Kingdoms lye  
Too long upon his single Shoulders  
He must sink down, or find Up-holders  

(11. 15-22, p. 160)

The phrasing of this section suggests a syllogism, and the appeal of the poem thus becomes an appeal to Harley's reason. Line 15 ("All Statesmen are in this Condition") can be expanded to form the major premise: "All statesmen should share their burdens with others lest they 'sink down.'" Line 16 is the minor premise: "And Atlas [Harley] is a Politician." Once Harley accepts both premises, he must accept the conclusion. Another way of stating Swift's method is to say that he develops an analogy between Atlas
and Harley. The message is clear: unless Harley finds "Up-holders" to help him, he will fail.

After being installed Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral on June 13, 1713, Swift returned to England. Upon his return, he wrote a Horatian imitation, "Part of the Seventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated." First published on October 23, 1713, this poem has elicited from Quintana the high and warranted praise that it "must rank as one of his notable compositions in verse."3

The critic's first task is to compare carefully Swift's imitation with his Horatian model, since the similarities and, in particular, the differences will help to make clear Swift's purpose. As Swift himself explains in his title, he is imitating only "Part" of Horace's epistle; to be more specific, Swift imitates Horace's anecdote of Phillipus and Volteius Mena. Before I examine Swift's poem, a few comments on Horace's poem would be in order.

The tone of Horace's poem is serious. Horace's patron, Maecenas, had apparently chided Horace for not returning to Rome sooner. In his poetic response, Horace defines his relationship with his patron. He explains that while he is grateful for the benefits that Maecenas has bestowed upon him, he cannot automatically do as his patron bids; he must

---

2 Poems, I, 170.

3 The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift, p. 220.
consider his own welfare and health, too. Personal considerations, he explains, make it impossible for him to return to Rome at the moment.

Of the several anecdotes that Horace uses to illustrate his point, the story of Phillippus and Volteius Mena is the most extensively developed and, hence, the most significant. Briefly, the tale goes thus. While on his way home one day, Phillippus, a famed pleader, catches a glimpse of Volteius sitting in a barber's booth. He sends his slave Demetrius to inquire about the man. Intrigued by what Demetrius has to say, he sends Demetrius back to invite Volteius to dinner. He is greatly offended when Volteius declines the invitation, apparently because he does not believe it was sincerely rendered. The next day, however, Phillippus succeeds in getting Volteius to come to supper. After some time, Phillippus, partly for his own amusement, persuades Volteius to purchase a farm with money that he gives and loans him. As a farmer, however, Volteius is a failure: his sheep are stolen, his goats die of disease, and his ox dies from overwork. He hurry to Phillippus and asks to be restored to his former life.

This anecdote serves beautifully to illustrate and reinforce Horace's central idea, which is expressed at the very end of the poem: "'Tis right that each should measure
himself by his own rule and standard." Volteius is chiefly responsible for his own misfortunes because he fails to assess carefully his own capabilities and prospects before he ventures into farming. In Howard D. Weinbrot's words, Philippus and Volteius Mena "are thus projections of an undesirable relationship between Horace and Maecenas; by way of masks, the situation shows what might occur if the client does not measure his own needs."5

This essentially serious and didactic poem Swift adapts for his own purposes. While some critics might complain that Swift's imitation lacks the universal applicability—the meaningful generalization—of Horace's epistle, this loss, as we shall see, is amply compensated for in the resulting comic masterpiece.

Quintana has remarked that Swift's poem is only "half-humorous," that it is, at the same time, "half-bitter."6 He says of the poem, "it is the sense of defeat that is expressed—if he seemed all unction when addressed by his new title, inwardly he writhed at those words which spelt


6 The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift, p. 220.
There is no doubt that Swift was unhappy about his present situation, and Quintana reminds the reader that the poem is based on a rather disappointing episode in Swift's career. In the poem, Harley (who corresponds to Phillippus) offers Swift (who corresponds to Volteius Mena) not money to start a farm but the deanery of St. Patrick's Cathedral. As can be seen in his correspondence with various friends, Swift was not happy to be exiled to Ireland. To Stella he wrote in April of 1713, "neither can I feel Joy at passing my days in Ireland, and I confess I thought the Ministry would not let me go; but perhaps thy cant help it." To the Reverend William Diaper he wrote on August 30, 1713, "the Prints will tell you that I am condemned to live again in Ireland, and all that the Court and Ministry did for me, was to let me chuse my station in the country where I am banished." To Esther Vanhomrigh he wrote of the state of his mind while being installed: At my first coming I thought I should have dyed with Discontent, and was horribly melancholy while they were installing me, but it begins to wear off, and change to Dullness." If the critic reads Swift's poem with one eye

7 The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift, p. 194.
9 Correspondence, I, 345-346.
10 Ibid., p. 373.
fixed to the correspondence—as Quintana apparently has done—he might very well detect a "half-bitter" tone. But the bitterness would be an interpolation of the reader rather than a genuine ingredient of the poem.

Just as Horace's poem tries to define the relationship between the poet and his patron, Swift in his poem tries to portray the relationship between Harley and himself. The relationship that Swift depicts is—as the following analysis will demonstrate—both intimate and comic. While Horace tried to teach Maecenas a somber lesson, Swift is not interested in so serious a purpose. Horace's earnest tone is thus replaced in Swift's poem by a bantering one.

Swift's poem carefully follows the Horatian model in many details, and the cleverness with which Swift adapts Horace's epistle for his own humorous purposes is the source of much of the delight of the poem. A brief synopsis of Swift's poem will help to point out the structural similarities between the two works. As Harley returns home one day, "His Mind with Publick Cares possest," he spies a parson at a bookstall, bargaining with the proprietor. He asks his friend Lewis to discover more about the parson and learns from Lewis that the parson is none other than Dr. Swift. Harley sends Lewis to invite Swift to dinner and is insulted when Swift declines his invitation. A few days later, Harley again sees Swift and this time personally
extends the invitation, but only after Swift delivers his apologies shamefacedly:

My Lord--The Honour you design'd--
Extremely proud--but I had din'd--
I'm sure I never shou'd neglect--
No Man alive has more Respect--

(ll. 67-70, p. 173)

After offering "many a lame Excuse" for his earlier offence, Swift accepts the invitation. Harley and Swift soon become close friends since they enjoy each other's company; Swift "Came early / to Harley's home", and departed late." After a while, Harley makes Swift Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral. Like Volteius Mena, Swift is plagued by misfortunes in his new calling:

Suppose him gone through all Vexations,
Patents, Instalments, Abjurations,
First-Fruits and Tenths, and Chapter-Treats,
Dues, Payments, Fees, Demands and Cheats,
(The wicked Laity's contriving,
To hinder Clergymen from thriving);
Now all the Doctor's Money's spent,
His Tenants wrong him in his Rent;
The Farmers, spightly combin'd,
Force him to take his Tythes in kind;

(ll. 101-110, p. 174)

Swift thus discovers that Harley's promise--"You need but cross the Irish Seas, / To live in Plenty, Power and Ease"--was quite empty (ll. 91-92, p. 173). Again like Volteius, Swift hurries to his "benefactor" and asks, "Pray leave me where you found me first" (l. 138, p. 175).

Much of the humor of the poem arises from Swift's self-
dramatization. Swift portrays himself as the innocent victim of one of Harley's pranks. We are reminded several times in the poem that Harley's only possible interest in Swift is as the victim of his joke. Harley sets up the meeting with Swift in this spirit:

MY LORD, who (if a Man may say't)
Loves Mischief better than his Meat,
Was now dispos'd to crack a Jest;

(ll. 13-15, p. 171)

In real life, of course, Harley had sought out Swift because he rightly foresaw the value of having Swift in the Tory camp. Later in the poem, we are told, "MY LORD wou'd carry on the Jest, / And down to Windsor takes his Guest" (ll. 81-82, p. 173). After his catastrophe, Swift finally learns a valuable lesson. He says to Harley:

I have Experience dearly bought,
You know I am not worth a Groat;
But you resolv'd to have your Jest,
And 'twas a Folly to Contest;

(ll. 133-136, p. 175)

The statement "I am not worth a Groat" again underplays Swift's actual value as Harley's ally. This self-portrait is part of Swift's encomiastic strategy, as Irvin Ehrenpreis has perceptively observed: "The poet is thus the victim rather than the perpetrator of a hoax. It was commonplace for expectant protégés to flatter their patrons by calling them Maecenas, but Swift's reversal of the usual relation
between his witty self and a naïve butt seems a more
delicate compliment."\(^{11}\)

Swift, indeed, portrays himself as an even more gullible victim than Volteius Mena. For example, he compares himself to a gudgeon that "took the Bait" to describe how he fell prey to Harley's practical joke. Horace, in his poem, had used the fish-hook metaphor, but Swift heightens the effect—at his own expense—by comparing himself with a particular kind of fish—a gudgeon, a small European fish of the minnow family that is often used as bait since it is so easily caught. The gudgeon, because of its diminutive size, is also a humorous metaphor since it clashes with the description of Swift elsewhere as "Of Size that might a Pulpit fill" (l. 11, p. 170).

To emphasize the effect of Harley's friendship on him, Swift sharply contrasts the description of himself both before and after his involvement with Harley. He portrays himself at the beginning of the poem as both complacent and indolent:

The Priest was pretty well in case,
And shew'd some Humour in his Face;
Look'd with an easie, careless Mien,
A perfect Stranger to the Spleen;
Of Size that might a Pulpit fill,
But more inclining to sit still.

\(^{11}\) Dr. Swift, p. 676.
No Libertine, nor Over-nice,
Addicted to no sort of Vice;
Went where he pleas'd, said what he thought,
Not Rich, but ow'd no Man a Groat.

(11. 31-34, p. 171)

All of this, of course, changes once he becomes Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral. While he would rather be "Devoutly lolling in his Seat," he soon "Takes Horse, and in a mighty Fret / Rides Day and Night at such a Rate, / He soon arrives at HARLEY's Gate; / But was so dirty, pale and thin, / Old Read /Harley's porter/ would hardly let him in" (11. 116-120, p. 174). This picture of Swift hurrying off to see Harley is especially humorous because of the prior description of him as preferring sedentary pleasures. After his installation and the attendant problems, Swift also loses his rotundity. Harley asks, "What makes your Worship look so lean"? (1. 122, p. 174) And while earlier he "ow'd no Man a Groat," at the conclusion of the poem he is, of course, financially ruined. Hence the witty irony in Harley's comment to Swift: "Why sure you won't appear in Town, / In that old Wig and rusty Gown! / I doubt your Heart is set on Pelf / So much, that you neglect your Self" (11. 123-126, p. 175). The description of Swift as a fallen man--fallen as a result of his friendship with Harley--is, it is evident, carefully prepared for in the previous description of him.
Irvin Ehrenpreis sees in the poem a rather specific purpose: "The emphasis, in the last third of the poem, on money troubles suggests that the writer hoped the politician would respond to an implicit plea for the thousand pounds Swift thought he had been promised by Oxford."\(^\text{12}\) Perhaps so. To Stella Swift had written on April 7, 1713, "But you see what a Condition I am in. I thought I was to pay but 600 ll for the House but Bp Cl. Bishop of Clogher\(^\text{7}\) says 800 ll. First Fruits 150 ll and so with Patent, a thousand Pounds in all, so that I shall not be the better for this Deanery these 3 years. I hope in some time they will be persuaded here to give me some money to pay off these debts."\(^\text{13}\) We should not, however, lose track of the overall purpose of the poem--to please and entertain the man to whom it is addressed.

We might, indeed, go so far as to say that the entire poem is ironic. While Swift ostensibly is complaining that Harley's friendship has only brought him discomfort and misfortune--like a nut that "may cost you a Tooth, and pays you nothing but a Worm"--it is Swift's way of saying the reverse--that he is, indeed, grateful for his friendship with Harley. Swift would not have portrayed himself as he

\(^\text{12}\) Dr. Swift, pp. 675-676.

\(^\text{13}\) Journal to Stella, II, 664.
does if the poem were not addressed to an intimate friend. "Part of the Seventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated," in short, is a fine tribute to his friendship with Harley.

Swift's imitation of the Sixth Satire of the Second Book of Horace was completed in Letcombe by August 3, 1714.14 Like "Part of the Seventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated," "Horace, Lib. 2. Sat. 6." is an adaptation of only a portion of Horace's poem (Swift omits the fable of the city mouse and the country mouse). And again like the earlier poem, this poem has for its subject the relationship between Swift and Harley.

Horace's poem has for its theme the superiority of country living to city living, a theme that many of Swift's contemporaries would have found unattractive. The poet expresses his desire to live in retirement in the country, with its ease, quiet, and comfort. While he finds pleasure in being envied by others for his friendship with Maecenas, he complains that as soon as he goes to Rome "a hundred concerns of others dance through my head and all about me."15 He thus would gladly forsake the maddening pace of life in Rome.

14 Poems, I, 197.

15 Horace, trans. Fairclough, p. 213.
Swift's imitation ostensibly has the same purpose—to glorify retirement in the country. The speaker of the poem states this theme both at the beginning and at the end. At the beginning, he says he "should be perfectly content, / Could I but live on this side Trent; / Nor cross the Channel twice a year, / To spend six months with Statesmen here" (ll. 9-12, p. 199). After cataloguing the vexations of the city—"th' ambitious Scene"—he expresses his longing for another scene:

Oh, could I see my Country Seat,  
There leaning near a gentle Brook,  
Sleep, or peruse some antient Book;  
And there in sweet Oblivion drown  
Those Cares that haunt the Court and Town.  

(ll. 108-112, p. 202)

His celebration of retirement, while conventional, however, does not appear to carry much conviction. Swift describes his activities in the company of Harley with too much zest and relish.

As in "Part of the Seventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated," Swift's self-dramatization is the source of much of the humor of the poem. He again mocks himself through the persona he has created. For one thing, he calls attention to his exaggerated estimate of his own importance. He imagines that he must hurry off to London to advise Harley on some weighty matters: "I must by all means come to Town, / 'Tis for the Service of the Crown"
(ll. 13-14, p. 199). Once in London, however, he has to jostle among a crowd of favor-seekers for Harley's attention. No great urgency requires his presence in London, after all, since Harley carries on as usual—dispensing favors on "Levee-Day."

Rather than portray himself as a political adviser to Harley, then, Swift depicts himself as a convivial companion—nothing more. Political matters do not intrude in their conversation. Instead of gravely asking him for advice on various state matters, Harley humorously asks him such trivial questions as "How's the Wind? and "Whose Chariot's that we left behind?" (ll. 69-70, p. 201) Swift is quite faithful to this section of Horace's poem. In that poem, Maecenas asks the poet such questions as "What's the time?" and "Is the Thracian Chicken a match for Syrus?" The reference is to a sports event.16 As they ride a carriage, Swift and Harley "gravely try to read the Lines / Writ underneath the Country Signs" (ll. 71-72, p. 201). The adverb gravely is humorously inappropriate; it would be appropriate if they were deliberating on important governmental issues. Harley, indeed, does not seem to entrust Swift with any secrets; as Swift complains, "all that passes, inter nos, / Might be proclaim'd at Charing-Cross" (ll. 79-80, p. 202).

Ehrenpreis thus suggests the following interpretation of the poem:

What charm the poem has, depends on the symmetrical tonal pattern. For at the centre of all is the scene of Swift and Oxford relishing each other's company without ever touching on the politics that meaner people might imagine them to be discussing. This intimate, innocent friendship is therefore set against the preceding and following episodes of false friends seeking to make use of a dean who has not himself made any "use" of the statesman. The idyllic, framing passages which open and close the poem are a further contrast of a more traditional sort; and they present the circumstances in which true friendship can best flower.\textsuperscript{17}

There is still another way in which Swift, through the poem, demonstrates his "true friendship." Throughout the poem, he complains about the inconveniences and problems that arise merely because he is Harley's friend. First of all, he has to go to London at Harley's bidding, and the trip involves considerable risk and sacrifices:

\begin{quote}
The Toil, the Danger of the Seas;  
Great Ministers ne'er think of these;  
Or let it cost Five hundred Pound,  
No matter where the Money's found;  
It is but so much more in Debt,  
And that they ne'er consider'd yet.  
\end{quote}

(11. 17-22, pp. 199-200)

Then, too, he is pestered by seekers of Harley's favor who think that one word from the Dean would assure fulfillment of their wishes:

\textsuperscript{17} Dr. Swift, p. 743.
This, humbly offers me his Case---
That, begs my Interest for a Place---
A hundred other Men's Affairs
Like Bees, are humming in my Ears.
"To morrow my Appeal comes on,
"Without your Help the Cause is gone---

(11. 47-52, p. 200)

Everywhere he goes, he complains, "I'm stopt by all the
Fools I meet, / And catechis'd in ev'ry Street" (ll. 91-92, p. 202).

Swift, however, obviously exaggerates "Those Cares that
haunt the Court and Town," primarily, I suspect, to indicate
what hardships his friendship with Harley entails. But there
is no bitterness; he seems to enjoy Harley's companionship
too much. Hence this poem, like "Part of the Seventh Epistle
of the First Book of Horace Imitated," can be viewed as
basically ironic. The mood of the poem certainly contrasts
with that of "The Author upon Himself," which was written
at about the same time. The concluding lines of that poem
do reflect a weariness and a longing for retirement:

By Faction tir'd, with Grief he waits a while,
His great contending Friends to reconcile.
Performs what Friendship, Justice, Truth require:
What could he more, but decently retire?

(11. 71-74, p. 196)

Such, however, is not the mood of this delightful imitation
of Horace's poem.

On July 3, 1714, Swift wrote to Harley, "in your
publick Capacity you have often angered me to the Heart,
but, as a private man, never once."\textsuperscript{18} And in "A Letter to the Lord Chancellor Middleton," he called Harley the "greatest, the wisest, and the most uncorrupt Minister, I ever conversed with."\textsuperscript{19} His affection for Harley is no less evident in the poems that he addressed to him.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Correspondence}, II, 44.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Prose Works}, X, 102.
Seldom was Swift more prophetic than when he wrote in one of his earliest poems, "To Mr. Congreve": "My hate, whose lash just heaven has long decreed / Shall on a day make sin and folly bleed" (ll. 133-134, p. 47). Although he was to drop this Juvenalian posture in some of his later poems, Swift was a relentless enemy of "sin" and "folly," at least as he saw them, and he did use his poetic talent as a "lash."

In two of his later poems, Swift attempts to set forth his satiric creed. In "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," he justifies his satire by pointing out its aim in traditional terms. His poetry and prose, he maintains, are written "with a moral View design'd / To cure the Vices of Mankind" (ll. 313-314, p. 565). He claims that "His Satyr points at no Defect, / But what all Mortals may correct" (ll. 463-465, p. 571). "Malice," we are told, "never was his Aim" (l. 459, p. 571). In "An Epistle to a Lady," Swift explains his method. He argues, first, that he always tried to laugh people out of their folly. His "Method of Reforming, / Is by Laughing, not by Storming" (ll. 229-230, p. 637). Swift thus pictures himself as following the example of
Horace rather than Juvenal: ¹

For, as
It is well observ'd by HORACE,
Ridicule has greater Pow'r
To reform the World, than Sour.
Horses thus, let Jockeys judge else,
Switches better guide than Cudgels.
Bastings heavy, dry, obtuse,
Only Dulness can produce,
While a little gentle Jerking
Sets the Spirits all a working.

(11. 197-206, p. 636)

In short, Swift maintains that he "can easier scorn than hate" (l. 144, p. 634).

Because Swift's satiric poems are so varied in their aims and methods, the above generalizations--advanced by Swift himself--cannot be made to fit all of them. In some of the poems, his aim does seem to be reformation; in others, he seems to be motivated by revenge and "Malice." Similarly, while his method does seem to be Horatian in some of the poems, in others it is Juvenalian: he sometimes prefers cudgels to switches. Each poem, then, must be approached separately.

In the following section of my dissertation, I shall examine, first, those poems in which Swift attacks individual men, such as the Duke of Marlborough and John Partridge, the

¹ In 1728, Swift distinguished between Horatian and Juvenalian satire. He said that Horace's method is preferable to Juvenal's method because it is "most useful," "gives the least Offence," and "instead of lashing, laughs Men out of their Follies, and Vices" (Prose Works, XII, 33).
astrologer. While some of these poems have been decried as being "ungenerous" and "ignoble," I shall try to demonstrate that Swift usually accomplished the ends he sought to achieve. I shall also examine those poems in which Swift attacks the vices and foibles of certain groups of people or human beings in general. Among this group are some of Swift's most effective satires.
A. SATIRES ON INDIVIDUALS

John Cutts

Swift's "The Description of a Salamander," which he wrote in 1705, is sometimes dismissed as an unworthy poem. Harold Williams says that Swift's "scurrilous invective against a brave man is inexcusable,"¹ and John Middleton Murry calls the poem "horrid" and "unpleasant."² While the reader may agree with Williams and Murry, he will have to admit that Swift's techniques are rhetorically effective. It is simply not enough to cast a moral judgment on the poem; one must go on to assess its techniques, to show how it operates.

The target of Swift's poetic invective was John Cutts, a distinguished soldier of the day, who in 1705 was appointed commander-in-chief of Ireland.³ Exactly how Cutts earned Swift's enmity is not known. Murry, however, offers the following speculation:

Precisely at this time, Cutts was engaged in repudiating a claim which Steele had made upon him for services rendered while he was Cutts's secretary. Steele had sensibly chosen the moment of Cutts's appointment to a very lucrative post, to ask him to pay his debt. At this time Swift and Steele were good friends. Possibly Steele asked Swift, who would meet Cutts in the Ormond entourage, to give him a reminder; certainly, Steele would have told

---

¹ Poems, I, 82.
³ Poems, I, 82.
Swift of Cutts's refusal to pay, and perhaps he commented bitterly on the fact that he had dedicated his Christian Hero to him. That would have been more than enough to set Swift throwing vitriol.  

At the siege of Namur in 1695, Cutts won the honorific sobriquet Salamander for his fearlessness under fire; surely only a salamander, which was believed to have so cold a body that when placed in a fire it would douse it, could have survived the fire. Those who sought to glorify Cutts with this title played into Swift's hands, for while they meant the title to be taken metaphorically, Swift applies it almost literally. In the words of Martin Price, "the primary device is Swift's arguing from irrelevant attributes of a metaphor to reverse the customary judgment."  

To give his poem a pseudo-scientific basis, Swift refers the reader to Pliny's supposedly scientific and objective description of salamanders in his Natural History:

\[
\text{Pliny shall prove what we affirm;} \\
\text{Pliny shall prove, and we'll apply,} \\
\text{(11. 26-27, p. 83)}
\]

Swift says that he will only apply Pliny's statements about salamanders in general to a very particular case, "Salamander" Cutts.  

Swift begins his poem in the same manner that Pliny

\[4 \text{ Jonathan Swift: A Critical Biography, p. 123.} \]
\[5 \text{ Swift's Rhetorical Art, p. 47.} \]
began his description—with definition:

FIRST then, our Author has defin'd
This Reptil, of the Serpent kind,
With gawdy Coat, and shining Train,
But loathsom Spots his Body stain:

(11. 29-32, p. 83)

Swift adheres to the requirements of logical definition. He first places the object to be defined (the definiendum) into its genus ("Reptil, of the Serpent kind") and then presents its differentiae. Swift shows by definition that the salamander is, whatever else it may be, still a serpent—with all the pejorative connotations that the word evokes. One may perhaps even recall Milton's Satan, who, in the Garden of Eden, disguised himself as a creature "of Serpent kind" (Bk. IX, l. 504).

Swift then draws an analogy between the behavior of salamanders and the behavior of Cutts. Pliny remarked that salamanders never come out except during heavy showers and that they disappear the moment the weather clears up. So, too, Cutts:

SO when the War has rais'd a Storm
I've seen a Snake in human Form,
All stain'd with Infamy and Vice,
Leap from the Dunghill in a trice,
Burnish and make a gaudy show,
Become a General, Peer and Beau,
Till Peace hath made the Sky serene,
Then shrink into it's Hole again.

(11. 37-44, p. 84)

Swift here pushes the analogy for all it is worth. Just as
the salamander's body is stained with "loathsom Spots," Cutts is "All stain'd with Infamy and Vice." Just as the salamander impresses one with a "gawdy Coat, and shining Train," Cutts makes "a gaudy show." Just as the salamander seems perverse because it prefers stormy weather, Cutts seems perverse because he prefers the tempest of war to the serenity of peace. If the salamander leaps out of a hole, Cutts leaps forth "from the Dunghill."

The last stanza of the poem is the most debasing; it reveals the full intensity of Swift's hatred of Cutts. In his treatise, Pliny noted that a salamander "spits forth a milky matter from its mouth; and whatever part of the human body is touched with this, all the hair falls off, and the part assumes the appearance of leprosy." This passage Swift applies to Cutts:

And should some Nymph who ne'er was cruel,  
Like Carleton cheap, or fam'd Duruel,  
Receive the Filth which he ejects,  
She soon would find, the same Effects,  
Her tainted Carcase to pursue,  
As from the Salamander's Spue;  
A dismal shedding of her Locks  
And, if no Leprosy, a Pox.

(11. 61-68, p. 85)

The satire here becomes vicious indeed. As we shall see in

other poems, Swift was not above using such debasing images to degrade his victims.

Swift once called John Cutts "the vainest old fool alive."\(^7\) In "The Description of a Salamander," he found an effective way to condemn the great military hero. Wittily, he does so not by denying him the sobriquet he had earned but by revealing in how many unsuspected ways it is the fitting one.

John Partridge

Students of Swift are, of course, familiar with his Bickerstaff papers, through which Swift perpetrated a huge hoax at the expense of John Partridge, a shoemaker turned astrologer. Partridge was one of the most famous astrologers of his time--by 1700 he "stood without a peer"\(^8\)--and Swift was always eager to expose cheats, especially one who had appropriated such vain titles as "A Lover of Truth," "Doctor Partridge," and "The Infallible Astrologer."\(^9\)

But Swift had still another reason for satirizing Partridge: Partridge had, on numerous occasions, attacked the Church of England.\(^10\) That religious matters were on Swift's mind is made clear in The Accomplishment of the

---

\(^7\) Prose Works, V, 261.

\(^8\) William Alfred Eddy, "The Wits vs. John Partridge, Astrologer," SP, 29 (1932), 34.

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 29.

\(^10\) Prose Works, II, x.
First of Mr. Bickerstaff's Predictions, in which it is revealed that Partridge, on his deathbed, "declared himself a Nonconformist, and had a fanatick Preacher to be his spiritual Guide." Throughout his life, Swift hated dissenters.

Swift's "An Elegy on Mr. Patridge, the Almanack-maker" was an integral part of his hoax. It will be recalled that in Predictions for the Year 1708 Isaac Bickerstaff had made the prediction—a "Trifle" he called it—that Partridge would soon die: "I have consulted the Star of his Nativity by my own Rules; and find he will infallibly die upon the 29th of March next, about eleven at Night, of a raging Fever." The Accomplishment of the First of Mr. Bickerstaff's Predictions announced Partridge's death, though the persona of that piece argues that Mr. Bickerstaff "was mistaken almost four Hours in his Calculation." "An Elegy on Mr. Patridge, the Almanack-maker" appeared at about the same time—1708—to further memorialize the hapless quack. This mock-elegy is one of Swift's gayest poems.

After the simple announcement of Partridge's demise, the reader is told of a curious circumstance:

11 Prose Works, II, 155.
12 Ibid., p. 145.
13 Ibid., p. 155.
Strange, an Astrologer should Die,
Without one Wonder in the Sky;
Not one of all his Crony Stars,
To pay their Duty at his Hearse!
No Meteor, no Eclipse appear'd!
No Comet with a Flaming Beard!
The Sun has rose, and gone to Bed,
Just as if Patrige were not Dead;
Nor hid himself behind the Moon,
To make a dreadful Night at Noon:

(ll. 5-14, p. 98)

These lines should remind the reader of the natural upheavals that sometimes accompany the deaths of noteworthy men—at least in literature. For example, the heavens sympathize with the death of Julius Caesar in Shakespeare's tragedy. In Antony and Cleopatra, Octavius remarks, upon learning of Antony's death:

The breaking of so great a thing should make
A greater crack: the round world
Should have shook lions into civil streets,
And citizens to their dens; the death of Antony
Is not a single doom; in the name lay
A moiety of the world.  

Another example can be found in Edmund Waller's elegy on Oliver Cromwell, "Upon the Late Storm, and of the Death of His Highness Ensuing the Same." Waller exploited the coincidence of two events—a storm and Cromwell's death:

WE must resign! Heaven his great soul does claim
In storms, as loud as his immortal fame;
His dying groans, his last breath, shakes our isle,
And trees uncut fall for his funeral pile. 

---

In Waller's elegy, nature herself shares the grief of men:

Nature herself took notice of his death,
And, sighing, swelled the sea with such a breath,
That, to remotest shores her billows rolled,
The approaching fate of her great ruler told.16

If such planetary and interplanetary agitations are appropriate manifestations of the deaths of truly great men, then, Swift says, it is not surprising that no such events should mark the death of Partridge. As Calpurnia says to Caesar in Julius Caesar, though "The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes," "When beggars die, there are no comets seen."17

These opening lines are even more hilarious because Partridge's lucrative business was based on the premise that there is a fundamental sympathy between the heavens and human destiny. Where, the poet asks, is this bond to be seen if the death of so illustrious a true believer passes on unmarked by even the slightest hint of heavenly sympathy? If ever the sky should vividly grieve over the death of a mortal, now is the time. The fact that there is no celestial sign of sorrow indicates that Partridge is a fraud. The opening lines, then, present a particularly appropriate departure from elegiac convention.

16 The Poems of Edmund Waller, p. 163.
In the next few stanzas, Swift presents a playful demonstration of the alliance of cobbling and astrology, the two "Arts" that Partridge was able to master:

Some Wits have wondred what Analogy There is 'twaixt Cobling and Astrology; How Patridge made his Opticks rise, From a Shoe Sole to reach the Skies;  

(11. 19-22, p. 98)

The kinds of analogies that Swift presents are patently absurd. For example:

A List the Coblers Temples ties, To keep the Hair out of their Eyes; From whence 'tis plain the Diadem That Princes wear derives from them; And therefore Crowns are now-a-days Adorn'd with Golden Stars and Rays, which plainly shews the near Alliance 'Twixt Cobling and the Planet Science.  

(11. 23-30, p. 98)

Swift also points out that both cobblers and astrologers use leather; thus, another link between the two "Arts" is discernible:

A Scrap of Parchment hung by Geometry, A great Refinement in Barometry, Can like the Stars foretel the Weather; And what is Parchment else but Leather? Which an Astrologer might use, Either for Almanacks or Shoes.  

(11. 41-46, p. 99)

Swift's real purpose in presenting these tongue-in-cheek arguments is, of course, to demonstrate how little in common the two callings have. That Partridge could have mastered
both "Arts" is as incredible as the analogies Swift has presented. Only one gullible enough to believe these arguments that purportedly prove the alliance of cobbling and astrology will be gullible enough to believe in Partridge's reading of the stars. Partridge is thus exposed as a cobbler posing as an infallible astrologer.

In the conventional elegy, the dead person was commonly metamorphosed into a star. For example, Abraham Cowley, in his poem "On the Death of Mr. William Hervey," transforms Hervey into a star:

There 'mong the Blest thou dost for ever shine,  
And wheresoere thou casts thy view  
Upon that white and radiant crew,  
See'st not a Soul cloath'd with more Light then Thine.  

In a travesty of this elegiac convention, Partridge, too, "is Install'd as good a Star, / As any of the Caesars are" (ll. 71-72, p. 100). Because Partridge, as a star, will be able to influence human affairs, his aid and benevolence are besought:

Triumphant Star! Some Pity show  
On Coblers Militant below,  
Whom Roguish Boys in Stormy Nights  
Torment by pissing out their Lights;  
Or Thro' a Chink convey their Smoke,  
Inclos'd Artificers to Choke.  

(11. 89-94, p. 100)

While these lines are funny enough, they are even funnier when the reader realizes that Swift is parodying some lines from Cowley's little-known poem "On the Death of Mr. Crashaw":

Hail, Bard Triumphant! and some care bestow
On us, the Poets Militant Below!
Oppos'd by our old En'emy, adverse Chance,
Attacqu'd by Envy, and by Ignorance,
Enchain'd by Beauty, tortur'd by Desires,
Expos'd by Tyrant-Love to savage Beasts and Fires.¹⁹

Cowley's poem is a sincere, if unremarkable, elegy on the death of Crashaw, and the poet's supplication to Crashaw (similarly transformed into a star) is meant to be taken seriously, if not literally. The evils and temptations that beset poets are real ones. In Swift's mock-elegy, however, the evils that beset "Coblers Militant" are ludicrous, though no less real. Crashaw, because he was a great poet, was deserving of a sincere elegy. But Partridge, because he is a fraud, deserves only a parody. Through this hilarious parody, Swift effectively reduces Partridge's stature.

The poem concludes, appropriately enough, with a mock-epitaph. The epitaph was, of course, one of the established "kinds" of poetry being written during the period. If Pope showed his contemporaries how to write a sincere epitaph in his epitaph on Gay, Swift demonstrated his satiric skill

¹⁹ The English Writings of Abraham Cowley, I. 49.
in this mock epitaph on Partridge:

HERE Five Foot deep lyes on his Back
A Cobbler, Starmonger, and Quack.
Who to the Stars in pure Good-will,
Does to his best look upward still.
Weep all you Customers that use
His Pills, his Almanacks, or Shoes.
And you that did your Fortunes seek,
Step to this Grave but once a Week,
This Earth which bears his Body's Print,
You'll find has so much Virtue in't,
That I durst Pawn my Ears, 'twill tell
Whate'er concerns you full as well,
In Physick, Stolen Goods, or Love,
As he himself could, when above.

(11. 103-116, p. 101)

The satire in the epitaph is still directed against Partridge, but, in addition, Swift here satirizes those people who are gullible enough to believe in so obvious a fraud as Partridge. He points out that dirt has as much prophetic power as Partridge. Swift's derision of Partridge is complete.

In his discussion of Swift's Bickerstaff papers, Eddy says, "for many of us, the Partridge affair remains the supreme manifestation of that mood of Swift in which at one stroke he could deal death to dunces and life to 'la bagatelle.'"20 Swift's "An Elegy on Mr. Patridge, the Almanack-maker" was an essential constituent of that famous affair.

Sidney Godolphin

Swift did not try to disguise his motive for writing

"The Virtues of Sid Hamet the Magician's Rod," his diatribe against Sidney Godolphin. He was obviously motivated by the spirit of revenge. In September of 1710, Swift met with Godolphin, who had become Lord Treasurer in 1702, to solicit firstfruits for the Irish clergy. Godolphin's reception was evidently inhospitable, for Swift wrote to Stella, "my lord treasurer received me with a great deal of coldness, which has enraged me so, I am almost vowing revenge."21 After the poem was published in 1710, Swift again wrote to Stella and reaffirmed his motive: "My lampoon is cried up to the skies. . . . Did not I tell you of a great man who received me very coldly? . . . 'twas only a little revenge."22

The occasion for the poem was Godolphin's removal from office in 1710. In August of that year, Godolphin was ordered by Queen Anne to break his staff of office. In a letter to Archbishop King, Swift explained that Godolphin not only broke his staff but "flung the Pieces in the Chimney."23

It was this exhibition of pique by Godolphin that Swift seizes upon for the conclusion of the poem:

21 Jonathan Swift: Journal to Stella, I, 6.
22 Ibid., p. 59.
23 Correspondence, I, 174.
DEAR Sid, then why wer't thou so mad
To break thy Rod like naughty Lad?
You should have kiss'd it in your Distress,
And then return'd it to your Mistress,
Or made it a Newmarket Switch,
And not a Rod for thy own Breech.
For since old Sid has broken this,
His next will be a Rod in Piss.

(11. 79-86, p. 135)

Swift treats Godolphin's symbolic act with utter contempt. He portrays Godolphin as a misbehaving child who indulges in a tantrum. He compares the act symbolizing Godolphin's removal from a position of great political power to a naughty lad's destruction of his toy. He ridicules Godolphin's fondness for horse racing in the phrase Newmarket Switch, 24 and he uses a more intense version of rod in pickle to indicate the punishment that awaits Godolphin for his destructive act.

In the preceding stanzas, Swift likens Godolphin's staff to other rods. For example, Godolphin's staff is compared with a divining rod that "bending down it's Top,
divines / Where e'er the Soil has Golden Mines" (11. 23-24, p. 133). The comparison, Swift asserts, is apt because Godolphin was able to find "precious Ore" in "Scottish Hills," an allusion to Godolphin's role in securing the Act of Union between England and Scotland. 25

24 Poems, I, 135.
25 Ibid., p. 133.
staff is also likened to a witch's broomstick, the rod of Hermes (since Godolphin had the Hermes-like power to put people to sleep with his oratory), a hobby-horse, and a fishing rod.

Perhaps the most effective of the comparisons is the initial one. Swift first alludes to the biblical account of Moses' rod:

THE Rod was but a harmless Wand,
While Moses held it in his Hand,
But soon as e'er he lay'd it down,
'Twas a devouring Serpent grown.

(11. 1-4, p. 132)

It will be remembered that God bestowed several miraculous powers upon Moses to help him convince the Israelites and the Pharoah that he was God's spokesman. One of these powers was the ability to turn his rod into a serpent by casting it upon the ground. When Moses picked up the serpent by its tail, it became a rod again. This story Swift applies to Godolphin, but with an important difference:

OUR great Magician, Hamet Sid,
Reverses what the Prophet did;
His Rod was honest English Wood,
That, senseless, in a Corner stood,
Till Metamorphos'd by his Grasp,
It grew an all-devouring Asp;
Would hiss, and sting, and roll, and twist,
By the meer Virtue of his Fist;
But when he lay'd it down, as quick
Resum'd the Figure of a Stick.

(11. 5-14, p. 132)

Juxtaposed against Moses, who was divinely ordained to deliver God's people from the tyranny of the Pharoah,
Godolphin is effectively depreciated.

John Churchill

Swift's intense hatred of John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough, was centered on one principal trait—Marlborough's alleged covetousness. Marlborough, in Swift's eyes, was ruled by this one overpowering passion. In the February 8, 1710 issue of the Examiner, Swift portrayed Marlborough as Marcus Crassus, a man "deeply stained with that odious and ignoble Vice of Covetousness." On another occasion, he characterized the Duke succinctly as "detestably covetous," and to Stella he wrote, "He is covetous as Hell, and ambitious as the Prince of it: he would fain have been general for life, and has broken all endeavours for Peace to keep his greatness and get money." Here was a man who, Swift believed, would sacrifice the good of his country for personal gain.

That Swift should single out covetousness for special censure in the lampoons upon Marlborough that he wrote is thus not very surprising. Whether or not Marlborough

---

26 For a discussion of Swift's attitudes toward Marlborough, see Ehrenpreis, Dr. Swift, pp. 526-535.

27 Prose Works, III, 84.

28 Poems, I, 155.

29 Jonathan Swift: Journal to Stella, I, 145.
deserved the harsh treatment he received from Swift is for historians to determine. My concern is only with the effectiveness of Swift's poetic expression.

"A Fable of the Widow and her Cat" appeared a few days after Queen Anne stripped Marlborough of all his appointments on December 30, 1711. He had been charged with embezzlement, and some Commissioners were appointed to investigate the charges. Queen Anne dismissed Marlborough so that "the matter might take an impartial examination." To recount these events, Swift employs the fable motif. The fable is rather transparent. It concerns a widow who "kept a Favourite Cat." The widow is Queen Anne, and the cat is Marlborough. Though gentle enough in the beginning, the cat "soon disclos'd his Nature":

He scratch'd her Maid, he stole the Cream,  
He tore her best lac'd Pinner;  
Nor Chanticleer upon the Beam,  
Nor Chick, nor Duckling 'scapes, when Grim  
Invites the Fox to Dinner.  

(11. 11-15, p. 153)

30 It might be noted that historians, in the main, have not adopted Swift's views.

31 This poem cannot be positively attributed to Swift. Williams includes the poem in his edition and says that "The evidence is strong . . . that Swift had a hand in it" (Poems, I, 151). I therefore include the poem in my discussion. The reader should, however, remember that doubt about Swift's authorship of the poem exists.

32 Poems, I, 151.
When the widow decides to put a stop to the cat's mischief, the cat asks:

Must I, against all Right and Law,
Like Pole-Cat vile be treated?
II who so long with Tooth and Claw
Have kept Domestick Mice in awe,
And Foreign Foes defeated!

(11. 21-25, p. 154)

The widow, however, is not placated. She accuses the cat of thievery and, in the final line of the poem, cries, "Here, Towzer!--Do Him Justice." Towzer apparently represents Parliament.

The rhetorical effect of the fable motif is, essentially, diminution. The great military hero is reduced to an unmanageable household pet, a "Pole-Cat vile" and nothing more. Even his brilliant military successes are slightly alluded to; they can be attributed to his ability to use "Tooth and Claw." Indeed, Swift insinuates that Marlborough may not even have defeated "Foreign Foes" fairly, for the widow says, "What'er you did in Battle slay, / By Law of Arms became your Prey, / I hope you won it fairly" (11. 33-35, p. 154). Marlborough is stripped of all his grandeur, just as Queen Anne had stripped him of his appointments.

The fable also helps to reveal one of Marlborough's principal flaws--his overweening pride and arrogance. He is portrayed as a cat that is so successful at devouring lambs, chicks, and ducklings that he "grew Lion-hearted."
When he addresses the widow, he speaks in "a sawcy manner." Swift always delighted in showing the absurdity of such posturing. It is only poetic justice that he should be set upon by Towzer.

Although Marlborough is the primary satiric target in the poem, the Englishmen whom he victimized are also criticized. The cat boasts that he has "kept Domestick Mice in awe." If Marlborough was so successful in abusing his powers, it is only because other men were cowered by him.

A second poem on Marlborough, "The Fable of Midas," was first published on February 14, 1712. While Martin Price cites the poem as a good example of Swift's wit, Ricardo Quintana complains that the spirit of the poem is "thoroughly ignoble" and Irvin Ehrenpreis declares that the poem is "stingless" and not very ingenious.

In this poem, Swift applies the legend of Midas to Marlborough, the "modern Midas." There are two principal stories about Midas; both appear in Ovid's Metamorphoses and both illustrate Midas's stupidity. Since Swift applies both of these tales to Marlborough, I shall briefly summarize these tales before I analyze Swift's poem.

---

33 Poems, I, 155.

34 Price, Swift's Rhetorical Art, pp. 47-48; Quintana, The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift, p. 189; Ehrenpreis, Dr. Swift, p. 533.
On one occasion, Midas, the king of Phrygia, returns Silenus, who had wandered off, to Dionysus. To reward Midas for returning his foster-father safely, Dionysus tells Midas that he will grant any wish that he makes. The foolish king greedily asks, "Grant that whatsoever I may touch with my body may be turned to yellow gold." It is not long before he realizes his stupidity; he is unable to eat or drink because even his food turns into gold. The golden touch becomes a curse rather than a boon. He thus returns to Dionysus and asks to be relieved of his magical power. Dionysus instructs Midas to bathe in the Pactolus River. When Midas does, the power of the golden touch is transferred to the water, and it is for this reason that the sands of the Pactolus have since that time contained gold.

On another occasion, when Pan challenged Apollo to a musical duel, all listeners concurred with the judge Tmolus's decision in Apollo's favor—all, that is, except the tin-eared and imprudent Midas. To symbolize his stupidity, Apollo appropriately turned Midas's ears into those of an ass.

In the first section of the poem (ll. 1-40), Swift narrates these two episodes in Midas's life. Not satisfied with merely retelling Ovid's story, he embellishes the tale. For example, he injects his own brand of scatological humor.

In order to fill "His empty Paunch," Midas, we are told, "suck't his Vittels thro' a Quill; / Untouch't it pass't between his Grinders, / Or't had been happy for Gold-finders" (ll. 10-12, p. 156). A gold-finder is not only one who finds gold but, in the eighteenth-century sense, one who empties privies.36 The meaning is clear: if the "Vittels" do touch Midas's "Grinders," they will turn into gold, and the person who empties Midas's privy will find gold there. Swift also equates Midas's power with a disease. When Midas swims in the Pactolus River, "The Golden Scurf peels off his Limbs" (l. 36, p. 157).

Swift also adds to Ovid's account of how Midas turns everything he touches into gold:

Whene'er he chanc'd his Hands to lay,  
On Magazines of Corn or Hay,  
Gold ready Coin'd appear'd, instead  
Of poultry Provender and Bread:  
Hence we are by wise Farmers told,  
Old Hay is equal to old Gold;  
And hence a Critick deep maintains,  
We learn't to weigh our Gold by Grains.

(ll. 15-22, p. 156)

The original Midas was able to turn bread into gold, but Swift's Midas can do better: he can turn corn and hay into "Gold ready Coin'd." The meaning here is quite transparent; these lines refer less to the Midas of fable than to "modern Midas," Marlborough. In addressing Marlborough as Marcus Crassus in the Examiner (February 8, 1710), Swift had written:

36 See Oxford English Dictionary.
"Besides, we know the Consequences your Avarice hath often occasioned. The Soldier hath been starving for Bread, surrounded with Plenty, and in an Enemies Country, but all under Safeguards and Contributions; which, if you had sometimes pleased to have exchanged for Provisions, might at the Expense of a few Talents in a Campaign, have so endeared you to the Army, that they would have desired you to lead them to the utmost Limits of Asia."  

On December 21, 1711, government officials disclosed that Marlborough had received over 63,000 pounds from bread contractors for the allied armies during the period between 1702 and 1711. Marlborough fully confessed to this charge and, in his own defense, claimed that there was a precedent for his action and that the money had been used to promote public services. Such an argument evidently did not placate Swift; he saw Marlborough's action as only one more example of the man's incredible avarice. In the lines quoted above, Swift is obviously alluding to this major accusation against Marlborough. To make sure that the meaning does not escape his reader, he uses the word Magazines, a word that is often used to refer to a place where military arms and provisions are stored.

37 Prose Works, III, 84.
38 Correspondence, I, 294.
In the remainder of the poem (ll. 41-82), Swift applies the fable to Marlborough; that is, he points out the parallels between the two men. He begins by pointing out Marlborough's Midas-like ability to turn everything into gold:

This Tale inclines the gentle Reader,
To think upon a certain Leader,
To whom from Midas down, descends
That Virtue in the Fingers ends;
What else by Perquisites are meant,
By Pensions, Bribes, and three per Cent?
By Places and Commissions sold,
And turning Dung it self to Gold?

(ll. 41-48, p. 157)

There is, however, a significant difference between the two men. While the original Midas was greedy and stupid, he did not resort to dishonesty, bribery, and corrupt methods. His shortcomings were perhaps venial. Marlborough, in contrast, is portrayed as having committed moral wrong. Moreover, while Midas was greedy, he did not, like Marlborough, try to turn "Dung it self to Gold." Marlborough is hence held even more guilty of avarice than the mythical Midas.

The reference to Dung is consistent with the diction elsewhere in the poem. Swift, through his diction, tries to convince the reader of the utter foulness of Marlborough's passion for money. Later in the poem he writes: "But Gold defiles with frequent Touch, / There's nothing fouls the Hands so much" (ll. 67-68, p. 158). Marlborough's hands
are also called "dirty Paws." Words like defiles, fouls, and dirty point out the almost sinful nature of Marlborough's insatiable greed. Not only does Marlborough try to turn filth ("Dung itself") into gold, but the gold also transforms him into filth.

Swift relates the story of how Marlborough was deprived of all his ill-gotten gains with a great deal of wit. He cleverly adapts the Midas myth and, in so doing, demonstrates that Marlborough deserves even greater reproach than Midas:

But Gold defiles with frequent Touch
There's nothing fouls the Hands so much;
And Scholars give it for the Cause,
Of British Midas dirty Paws;
Which while the Senate strove to scower,
They washt away the Chymick Power.
While He his utmost Strength apply'd
To Swim against this Pop'lar Tide,
The Golden Spoils flew off apace,
Here fell a Pension, there a Place;
The Torrent, merciless, imbibes
Commissions, Perquisites, and Bribes,
By their own Weight sunk to the Bottom;

(11. 67-79, p. 158)

In Swift's poem, the cleansing agent becomes the Senate, which like the Pactolus River washes away a greedy man's "Chymick Power." And whereas Midas lost his golden touch in the river, Marlborough loses his "Golden Spoils."

Again, an important difference between Midas and Marlborough ought to be noted. Midas, it will be recalled, soon discovered how foolish he had been. He thus went to Dionysus and begged to be relieved of his magical power. He
repented as a sinner repents: "Oh, pardon me, Lenaeus, father! I have sinned. Yet have mercy, I pray thee, and save me from this curse that looks so fair." Marlborough, in contrast, does not examine his own conduct and, hence, does not arrive at any self-enlightenment. He certainly does not evidence any contrition. Unlike Midas, indeed, Marlborough tries strenuously to retain his powers. He has to be forced to give up his "Golden Spoils." Though Swift obviously uses the Midas myth to demonstrate—rather wittily—an analogy between Midas and Marlborough, the critic learns as much through examining the differences between the two figures as the similarities between them.

Swift's application of the second story about Midas to Marlborough is neither as elaborate nor as effective as his application of the first story. He offers two basic reasons why Marlborough, too, has ass-like ears. First, Marlborough, like Midas, chooses to honor Pan rather than Apollo: "To Pan alone rich Misers call, / And there's the Jest, for Pan is ALL" (ll. 57-58, p. 157). These lines are explained in the subsequent ones: "Here English Wits will be to seek, / Howe'er, 'tis all one in the Greek" (ll. 59-60, p. 158). That is, the word pan is derived from the Greek word for "all" or "everything." What Swift seems to be suggesting

by this far-fetched pun is that Marlborough calls out to Pan because he seeks everything, so greedy a man is he. Marlborough "values not the Poet's Praise, / Nor will exchange his Plumbs for Bays" (ll. 55-56, p. 157). Just as Midas preferred Pan to Apollo because he had a bad ear for music, Marlborough prefers pan—or everything—to the praise of poets, the sons of Apollo. The second reason why Marlborough has the ears of an ass is that he listens to bad advice:

Besides, it plainly now appears,
Our Midas too has Asses Ears;
Where every Fool his Mouth applies,
And whispers in a thousand Lies;
Such gross Delusions could not pass,
Thro' any Ears but of an Ass.

(ll. 61-66, p. 158)

It is also possible, though perhaps unlikely, that Swift is trying to suggest that Marlborough makes Apollo "give Place to Pan" because Apollo symbolized virtues that Marlborough lacks. Apollo "was regarded as a type of moral excellence, and his influence . . . was a beneficent and elevating one; for it prescribed purification and penance for the expiation of crime."40 It should come as no surprise that Marlborough should spurn Apollo.

Though Ehrenpreis found "The Fable of Midas" to be "stingless" and not very ingenious, the poem does effectively

satirize Marlborough's covetousness. Swift effectively adapts the Midas myth for his own purposes. Marlborough could not have been pleased.

The Duke of Marlborough died on June 16, 1722, after a stroke of paralysis. He was buried in a manner befitting a great soldier in Westminster Abbey. His personal shortcomings were momentarily overlooked, for Englishmen realized that the country had lost its most illustrious soldier.

Such was not, however, the manner in which Swift marked the occasion. Swift's "A Satirical Elegy on the Death of a late Famous General" has not always pleased modern readers. Williams calls the poem an "ungenerous attack," and Quintana laments, "It is a pity that Swift, who in the Examiner had attacked the great soldier ignobly, was not magnanimous enough at least to remain silent at his enemy's death." Such comments, however, are moralistic rather than aesthetic. While the poem cannot be pointed to as an example of Swift's charitableness, it can be cited as one of his best satiric poems.

The poem contains three basic sections. In the first section (ll. 1-16), the persona of the poem learns of Marlborough's death and gives his immediate reactions. The poem begins very abruptly, as if the speaker had just been

---

41 Poems, I, 296.
42 The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift, pp. 276-277.
informed of Marlborough's death: "His Grace! impossible! what dead! / Of old age too, and in his bed!" (ll. 1-2, p. 296) The exclamation points reinforce the sense of immediacy that these lines convey. The speaker realizes the irony of the "Mighty Warrior" meeting his "fall," not on the battlefield, but "in his bed." His death is "so inglorious, after all!" The speaker rejoices that the world is finally rid of the man who was the cause of so much grief. The second section (ll. 17-24) presents a description of the funeral procession, and the third section (ll. 25-32) points out a very explicit moral on the folly of human pride.

Charles Peake offers a very ingenious suggestion on the structure of Swift's poem:

In the Satirical Elegy the succession of events . . . is clearly marked and fundamental to the poem's structure and significance. In the first eight lines we hear the rumour of the Duke's death circulating the town; in the next eight the confirmatory detail of the newspapers' obituary notices, and the comments arising from them; we see the cortège pass, unattended by tears. Then, in the words "Come hither, all ye empty things," we hear the funeral sermon (with echoes of the voice of the Preacher crying "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity"); and finally in the last line comes a distorted reminiscence of the burial service, as the priest casts earth on to the coffin and says, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust."43

While I would generally concur with this description of the

43 "Swift's 'Satirical Elegy on a Late Famous General,'" REL, 3 (1962), 84.
chronology of events in the poem, I think Peake is perhaps a bit rigid. For example, the lines beginning "Come hither, all ye empty things" do not have to be identified with the funeral sermon. Nor do I think it necessary to assign the lines of the poem to different voices.

Swift called his poem a "satirical" elegy. Hence, a familiarity with the elegiac conventions of the period will enhance our appreciation of Swift's poetic skills, for in the poem he overturns these conventions. First, the elegy required an elevated and solemn tone. An anonymous poem, "To the Memory of the Duke of Buckingham," which was published in 1674, illustrates the somber manner in which the death of a noteworthy man was lamented:

When the dread summons of commanding Fate
Sounds the last Call at some proud Palace Gate;
When both the Rich, the Fair, the Great, the High;
Fortunes most darling Favorites must die;
Straight at the Alarm the busie Heralds wait,
To fill the solemn Pomp, and mourn in State,
Scutcheons and Sables then make up the Show,
Whilst on the Hearse the mourning Streamers flow,
With all the Rich Magnificence of Woe.\(^4^4\)

It is this "Rich Magnificence of Woe" that is so noticeably missing in Swift's poem. How does Swift achieve this tone? Peake offers us valuable insight into Swift's general method when he says, "The familiar metaphor for a man who has led a full life—'He burnt his candle to the end'—is deflated

by the substitution of the low word 'snuff,' and by ex-
tension of the image to include the consequent stink."^{45}
Herbert Davis also points out that if we substitute the
phrases *earthly honours* and *to that dust* for *ill-got
honours* and *to that dirt* the poem would end on a conven-
tional note."^{46} It is partly through such inversions that
Swift is able to maintain his derisive tone.

The conventional elegy also frequently glorified the
major accomplishments of the dead person. Dryden's "Heroick
Stanzas" on the death of Cromwell provides us with a good
example of this convention:

His grandeur he deriv'd from heav'n alone;
For he was great ere fortune made him so:
And wars, like mists that rise against the sun,
Made him but greater seem, not greater grow.

War, our consumption, was their "our former
chiefs" gainful trade;
We inward bled, whilst they prolong'd our pain;
He fought to end our fighting, and assay'd
To stanch the blood by breathing of the vein."^{47}

Swift does not remind the reader of Marlborough's great
military victories because that would work against his pur-
pose. As Herbert Davis says, "There is no word of extenuation,
no mercy, no pity. We are not allowed for a moment to
remember the late famous General, the brilliant strategist,

^[45] "Swift's 'Satirical Elegy on a Late Famous General,'" p. 86.


^[47] *The Poetical Works of Dryden*, ed. George R. Noyes,
the oft-repeated successes of his splendid campaigns, the great reputation that made his name envied and feared and marvelled at in all the courts of Europe." Such a review of Marlborough's deeds would have been appropriate only if Swift were writing a sincere elegy.

The traditional elegy, moreover, included the lamentations of the living. Indeed, a man's greatness in life could be measured in part by the breadth and depth of the mourning that follows his death. Dryden tells us that when Cromwell died, "th' isle ... Upon his obsequies loud sighs con-ferr'd." A "Pindarick Ode" on the death of Charles II by "Sir F. F., Knight of the Bath," depicts the mourning of Charles's subjects in this manner:

Horror and Cryes fill all around.
Distraught looks, and Throbbing hearts,
In every dismal place are found.

Charles Cotton, to cite another example, penned these conventionally plaintive lines on the death of Lord Hastings:

Weep, Ladies, weep, lament great Hastings Fall;

Bathe him in Tears, till there appear no trace
Of those sad Blushes in his lovely face:

48 Jonathan Swift, p. 252.
49 The Poetical Works of Dryden, p. 6.
50 Quoted in Draper, The Funeral Elegy, p. 148.
51 Poems of Charles Cotton, ed. John Buxton (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 129. The "sad Blushes in his lovely face" apparently refer to the smallpox pustules that Dryden, in his elegy, likened to "rose-buds, stuck i' th' lily skin about."
At times, indeed, the expression of grief was so inordinate as to border on the ludicrous, as these lines from "An Ocean of Pious Tears" (1699), an anonymous elegy on the death of the Reverend Matthew Mead, show:

And here his Children, they poor Babes, behold
His worthy Carcass, and their Hands unfold,
With weeping Tears, and nashing Teeth, they cry
"Gainst Death their Father's furious enemy."

In addition, the lamentations of the clergyman's wife and congregation are presented. No such mourners attend the hearse of Marlborough in Swift's poem:

Behold his funeral appears,
Nor widow's sighs, nor orphan's tears,
Wont at such times each heart to pierce,
Attend the progress of his herse.

(11. 17-20, p. 296)

The widows and orphans, Swift tells us, did their weeping "before he dy'd," because Marlborough prolonged the war for "his profit and his pride." Moreover, they did their weeping for their own husbands and fathers, not for Marlborough.

Finally, the traditional elegy often held up the dead person's life for the reader's edification. The reader is urged to follow the deceased person's example. Dryden, for instance, concludes his "Heroick Stanzas" with these lines:

His ashes in a peaceful urn shall rest;
His name a great example stands, to show

52 Quoted in Draper, The Funeral Elegy, p. 190.
How strangely high endeavours may be blest,
Where piety and valor jointly go.  

Swift, too, holds up Marlborough's life for the reader's edification, but Marlborough's life is a negative example. The reader is warned against following Marlborough's example:

Come hither, all ye empty things,
Ye bubbles rais'd by breath of Kings;
Who float upon the tide of state,
Come hither, and behold your fate.
Let pride be taught by this rebuke,
How very mean a thing's a Duke;
From all his ill-got honours flung,
Turn'd to that dirt from whence he sprung.

(11. 25-32, pp. 296-297)

Comparing Marlborough with a bubble "rais'd by breath of Kings" is a striking way of showing how empty and impermanent Marlborough's accomplishments were. Indeed, Marlborough is not even given credit for his own rise to fame because he was "rais'd by breath of Kings." He is so "mean" that he deserves to be "flung" into a grave, not slowly lowered with ceremonial pomp and reverence. While the reader may not choose to identify these lines with the funeral sermon, as Peake does, he will see in these powerful lines that Swift does try to give his poem a universality that some of his other satiric poems lack.

Since the meaning of Swift's "Satirical Elegy on the Death of a late Famous General" is so clear, perhaps it does not require the detailed discussion that I have devoted

to it. I hope, however, that by placing the poem in the elegiac tradition, I have demonstrated in how many ways it is a "satirical" elegy.

William Wood

The several poems that Swift wrote to satirize and ridicule William Wood and his abortive scheme to flood Ireland with his debased copper coins have always been overshadowed by his Drapier's Letters—and rightly so. His poems are not as carefully conceived and executed as the letters. Swift obviously put most of his energy into his famous letters. Whereas in the Drapier's Letters he fully analyzed the issues and tried to convince his fellow countrymen of the need for a national boycott against Wood's half-pence, in the poems he makes no efforts at persuasion. He assumes that the reader is already on his side and proceeds to heap abuse upon his victim. While the prose writings are therefore more interesting rhetorically, the poems are not, however, without merit. If they are not among his finest poems, they do provide us with a glimpse of Swift's satiric techniques.

The first of the poems Swift wrote is "A Serious Poem

---

Upon William Wood, Brasier, Tinker, Hard-Ware-Man, Coiner, Counterfeiter, Founder and Esquire," which was published in December of 1724. The title, of course, is ironic, for the poem can hardly be called very "serious."

The basic technique of the poem is to make fun of Wood's surname. The poem literally equates Wood with wood and dwells on the evil properties and uses of the latter (and, by association, the former). For example, there is speculation about the precise "Kind of Tree" Wood is made of:

Teague made a good PUN by a Brogue in his Speech, And said: By my Shoul he's the Son of a BEECH; Some call him a Thorn, the Curse of a Nation, As Thorns were design'd to be from the Creation. Some think him cut from the Poisonous Yew, Beneath whose ill Shade no Plant ever grew. Some say he's a Birch, a Thought very odd, For none but a Dunce would come under his Rod.

(11. 27-34, pp. 334-335)

The speaker of the poem calls all of these guesses wrong, however. William Wood is actually "an old Stump cut out of a Crab, / And England has put this Crab to hard Use, / To Cudgel our Bones, and for Drink give us Verjuice" (11. 36-38, p. 335).

To further point out the evil uses to which wood can be put, Swift relates "an old Tale." It is an intriguing and, at first, baffling tale:

There antiently stood (I forget in what Church) an Image of Wood; Concerning this Image there went a Prediction, It would Burn a whole Forest; nor was it a Fiction;
'Twas cut into Faggots, and put to the Flame,  
To burn an old Fryer, one Forrest by Name.  
My Tale is a wise one if well understood,  
Find you but the Fryer, and I'll find the WOOD.  

(11. 17-24, p. 334)  
The allusion is to John Forest (1474?-1538), who at one  
time was confessor to Catherine of Arragon. Because of  
his opposition to Henry VIII, he was burned to death on  
May 22, 1538, in Smithfield. A wooden image called  
"Dderfel Gadern" was used to set the fire. His executors  
used the wooden image to fulfill a Welsh prophecy that  
it would one day begin a forest fire.55 Swift thus equates  
William Wood with the Dderfel Gadern, an instrument that  
had been used to perpetrate a horrifying execution.  

Swift gives Wood a chance to defend himself in the  
poem, and this "defense"—which Swift puts into his mouth—  
reveals his real foolishness and unscrupulousness. Like  
the cobbler-turned-almanack-maker John Partridge, who in  
1708 protested that Mr. Bickerstaff had erred in proclaiming  
him dead, Wood is made to complain that "Though he may be  
a Block-head, he is no real Block" (l. 42, p. 335). Wood  
then proceeds to cite the evidence to demonstrate that he  
is not really made of wood:  

He can Eat, Drink and Sleep; now and then for a Friend  
He'll not be too proud an old Kettle to mend.  

55 C[Harles] T[Rice] M[artin], "Forest, John," DNB  
(1949-1950).
He can lie like a Courtier, and think it no Scorn, when Gold's to be got, to FORSWEAR and SUBORN. He can RAP his own RAPS, and has the true Sapience to turn a Good Penny to Twenty Bad Ha'pence.

(ll. 43-48, p. 335)

Wood is made to condemn himself with this self-defense, for these lines reveal the utter perversion of his values.

Because Wood so embodies the evil properties of wood, it is only appropriate that the poet should have the following dream:

I dream'd WOOD was told he should Dye by a Drop So methought, he resolv'd no Liquor to taste, For fear the First Drop might as well be his Last, But Dreams are like Oracles, hard to explain 'em, For it prov'd that he dy'd of a DROP at Killmainham.

(ll. 110-114, p. 337)

Killmainham was the place of execution outside of Dublin. The poet awakes, gleefully hoping to see Wood "Drop down from a Rope." Then it will be, he says, "WOOD upon WOOD."

The humor in "A Serious Poem Upon William Wood," as we have seen, is not very subtle. Its humor arises from a number of outrageous puns. Still, some of the puns are amusing, and the poem can thus be called "witty." Swift did give his readers a good laugh at the expense of Wood.

Swift's "Prometheus, A Poem," which was probably published in November of 1724, is a far better poem than "A Serious Poem Upon William Wood." In this poem, he again

56 Poems, I. 337.
demonstrates that he could adapt classical mythology for satiric purposes. He significantly adapts the Prometheus myth to produce a witty attack on Wood.

The poem is divided into three basic sections, and in the 1727 Miscellaneies by Pope and Swift, the poem's divisions were marked by Roman numerals at lines 1, 31, and 53. The third section, however, does not begin until line 57.

In the first section, Swift tries to demonstrate that there is universal opposition to Wood's project. About the time that "Prometheus" was published, an attempt was apparently made to divide the opposition to Wood's half-pence along party lines. Supporters of Wood tried to gain adherents by implying that the Tories and Papists were trying "to foment sedition in Ireland and to bring in the Pretender." The Drapier writes that in one of the papers supporting Wood "we are told, that the Papists in Ireland have entered into an Association against his Coin; although it be notoriously known, that they never once offered to stir in the Matter: So that the two Houses of Parliament, the Privy-Council, the great Number of Corporations, the Lord-Mayor and Aldermen of Dublin, the Grand-Juries, and principal Gentlemen of several Counties, are stigmatized

57 Poems, I, 344.
58 Prose Works, X, xxiv.
in a Lump, under the Name of Papists."\(^{59}\) To counter Wood's charge, Swift exaggerates the unanimity with which men opposed Wood's scheme:

So to confound, this hated Coin
All Parties and Religions joyn;
Whigs, Tories, Trimmers, Hannoverians,
Quakers, Conformists, Presbyterians,
Scotch, Irish, English, French unite

(11. 11-15, p. 345)

That men of such differing political parties, religions, and nationalities should be so united in their opposition to Wood, the poet suggests, is "A strange Event!" Only the most villainous scheme can bring these antagonists together, and Wood's project is just that.

The second section presents Swift's adaptation of the Prometheus myth. According to classical mythology, it will be recalled, Prometheus stole fire from heaven for mankind after Zeus had deprived the earthlings of fire. To punish him, Zeus had him chained to a rock in the Caucasus, where an eagle (or a vulture) fed on his liver every day. The liver grew back each night.

Two views toward Prometheus have always existed since ancient times. According to one view, Prometheus was a benefactor of mankind. He was the giver of light, and he did so at considerable risk to himself. According to the second view, Prometheus was a trickster who delighted in

\(^{59}\) \textit{Prose Works, X, 53-54.}
outsmarting Zeus. Swift adopts the second of these views for his poem. His Prometheus is motivated not by benevolence but by greed, and he steals gold for himself, not fire for mankind.

According to the poem, Jove possessed a golden chain that was fastened on one end to his throne and at the other to earth. Prometheus purloined the golden chain, dissolved it, and made coins from it. He then substituted a brass chain in its place, with the following results:

Now while this *Brazen Chain* prevail'd,
Jove saw that all *Devotion* fail'd;
No *Temple*, to his *Godship* rais'd,
No *Sacrifice* on *Altars* blaz'd;
In short such *dire Confusions* follow'd
*Earth* must have been in *Chaos* swallow'd.

(11. 41-46, pp. 345-346)

Jove discovered Prometheus's trick and punished him by fettering with the brass chain to a rock in the Caucasus "While *Vultures* eat his growing Liver" (1. 56, p. 346).

In the third section of the poem, Swift explicates the meaning of the tale that he has just spun. He makes sure that the meaning behind the allegory does not escape the reader. Wood, he explains, can be likened to "that old *Thief Prometheus,*" and the king can be likened to Jove. The parallels are made clear in the following lines:

This *Thief* and *Black-Smith* was so bold,
He strove to steal that *Chain of Gold*,
Which links the *Subject* to the *King*;
And change it for a *Brazen String*. 
But sure if nothing else must pass,
Between the K-- and US but Brass,
Altho' the Chain will never crack,
Yet Our Devotion may Grow Slack.

(11. 63-70, p. 346)

Notice that Wood is made the sole culprit. Although Zeus was sometimes portrayed as a tyrant in mythology, no such hint can be found in Swift's poem. It was obviously imprudent to attack the king himself.

The poem does, however, tactfully suggest that unless the king takes strong measures to suppress Wood's brass coinage, the devotion of his subjects in Ireland "may Grow Slack." Only the chain of gold can firmly link "the Subject to the King." Swift, in other words, is contending that business transactions between Ireland and England must be conducted with gold or silver currency, an argument he frequently advanced in the Drapier's Letters.

Swift concludes the poem with a wish that the king will wake up to the danger soon and, like the earlier Jove, put the brass chain to good use:

But Jove will soon convert I hope,
This Brazen Chain into a Rope;
With which Prometheus shall be ty'd,
And high in Air for ever ride;
Where, if we find his Liver grows,
For want of Vultures, we have Crows.

(11. 71-76, p. 347)

The want of vultures is no reason to let the culprit escape the punishment he deserves.
While there is temptation, if one accepts the first view of Prometheus discussed earlier, to admire him for what he did and to despise Zeus for punishing him, there is no room for admiration of Swift's Prometheus. His Prometheus is no benefactor of mankind. Indeed, Swift, through distorting the classical account of Prometheus's "sin" and punishment, may be trying to suggest subtly the disparity between the Prometheus of legend and William Wood, the counterfeit Prometheus who, though professing to be working for Ireland's good, was motivated by private greed.

While Swift was genuinely alarmed by Wood's scheme and believed him to be a dangerous foe, he seldom passed up the opportunity to point out the irony of Ireland's plight. Here was a hitherto unknown and insignificant rascal who had managed to inflict a great deal of fear on Ireland. As he expressed himself in "A Serious Poem Upon William Wood," "I own it hath often provok'd me to Mutter, / That, a Rogue so Obscure should make such a Clutter" (ll. 5-6, p. 334). In the Drapier's Letters, he contemptuously calls Wood "a mean ordinary Man," an "obscure Ironmonger," and a "Single, Rapacious, Obscure, Ignominious PROJECTOR." In

60 Prose Works, X, 4.
61 Ibid., p. 54.
62 Ibid., p. 35.
the second of the Drapier's Letters appears this scornful passage—scornful toward both Ireland and Wood:

FIRST, Observe this little impudent Hard-ware-Man turning into ridicule the Direful Apprehensions of a whole Kingdom, priding himself as the Cause of them, and daring to prescribe what no King of England ever attempted, how far a whole Nation shall be obliged to take his Brass Coin. And he has Reason to insult; for sure there was never an Example in History, of a great Kingdom kept in Awe for above a Year, in daily Dread of utter Destruction; not by a powerful Invader at the Head of Twenty thousand Men; not by a Plague or a Famine; not by a tyrannical Prince (for we never had one more Gracious) or a corrupt Administration; but by one single, diminutive, insignificant Mechanick.63

He continues, "It is no Loss of Honour to submit to the Lion: But who, with the Figure of a Man, can think with Patience of being devoured alive by a Rat?" The word Rat suggests that Wood is far less dangerous than he himself and the Irish believed, though he was certainly repulsive.

What infuriated Swift even further was the fact that Wood apparently was not lacking in hubris; he boasted of his own power. The Drapier reports that Wood published a paragraph in a newspaper "to let us know, that the Lord Lieutenant is ordered to come over immediately to settle his Half-pence."64 He scoffs at the suggestion "that so

63 Prose Works, X, 18-19.
64 Ibid., p. 54.
little a Creature as Wood could find Credit enough with the King and his Ministers, to have the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland sent hither in a Hurry, upon his Errand.\textsuperscript{65}

Swift found an effective and clever way to mock Wood's apparent pretensions in his poem "On Wood the Iron-monger," which was probably written after Wood's patent had been revoked. Swift in this poem demonstrates the same ability to adapt classical mythology for satiric purposes that he had earlier revealed in "The Fable of Midas" and "Prometheus."

This time, Wood is compared with Salmoneus, the legendary king of Ellis who was both foolish and pretentious. Emulating Zeus, he drove about in a chariot made of brass so that he could create thunder-like noise, and he flung torches about to imitate Zeus' thunder and lightning. Infuriated, Zeus struck him down with a real thunderbolt.

Swift alters some of the details of the myth to give it a more contemporary flavor. We are told, for example, that Salmoneus "Would sit whole Ev'nings at the Ale-house" (l. 6, p. 352). Instead of firebrands, Salmoneus hurls "Squibs and Crackers" at the "trembling Croud below." After he is struck down by Jove, the people "laught at such an Irish Blunder, / To take the Noise of Brass for Thunder!" (ll. 29-30, p. 353). These alterations are necessary if Swift's satire is to be effective.

The poet concludes with "THE Moral of this Tale," and

\textsuperscript{65} Prose Works, X, 57.
it is in this section that he draws the analogy between Salmoneus and Wood:

THE Moral of this Tale is proper,
Apply'd to Wood's adult-rate Copper;
Which, as he scatter'd, we like Dolts,
Mistook at first for Thunder-Bolts;

(11. 31-34, p. 353)

Swift satirizes two targets in these lines. First, he satirizes Wood for pretending to have more power than he really did. Second, he satirizes the Irish for behaving "like Dolts." The Irish had nothing to fear. As the Drapier explained in his fourth letter, the people of Ireland were as "Remote from Thunder ... as from Jupiter." When they trembled before Wood, they trembled before an impostor.

The Salmoneus of classical mythology was struck down by Zeus's thunder. Wood's fate is no less amusing: "the Drapier shot a Letter, / (Nor Jove himself could do it better) / Which lighting on th' Impostor's Crown, / Like real Thunder knock't him down" (ll. 35-38, p. 353). The word Crown is a synonym for head, but it also reminds us of the similitude between Wood and King Salmoneus. These lines reveal that Swift has to have the last laugh. He gloats over Wood for having defeated him just as Zeus had defeated Salmoneus.

66 Prose Works, X, 68.
Richard Tighe

Richard Tighe, a privy councillor and a member of the Irish Parliament, was the target of some of Swift's most vindictive satires. In 1725, Tighe provoked Swift's anger by informing on Thomas Sheridan, who had preached a most injudicious sermon on the anniversary of King George's accession. Swift explains the circumstances in "A Vindication of His Excellency John, Lord Carteret." Dr. Sheridan, enroute "to take Possession of his Parish," stopped in Cork, where he was invited by the minister of the parish to preach the Sunday sermon. Tighe was among the listeners.

Swift narrates the episode:

It happened to be the First of August, and the First of August happened that Year to light upon a Sunday; And it happened that the Doctor's Text was in these Words; sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof; And lastly, it happened that some one Person of the Congregation, whose Loyalty made him watchful upon every Appearance of Danger to his Majesty's Person and Government, when Service was over, gave the Alarm. Notice was immediately sent up to Town; . . . such a Clamour was raised, that we in Dublin could apprehend no less than an Invasion by the Pretender, who must be landed in the South. The Result was, that the Doctor must be struck out of the Chaplains List, and appear no more at the Castle.

According to Swift, "there was not a Syllable relating to Government or Party, or to the Subject of the Day" in

---

67 Poems, III, 773.

68 Prose Works, XII, 163-164.
Sheridan's sermon.69

Swift himself had helped to advance Sheridan, one of his closest friends. Thus, when Tighe tried to impede Sheridan's advancement, Swift was furious and vowed revenge. To Sheridan he wrote on September 25, 1725:

I do think it is agreed, that All Animals fight with the Weapons natural to them . . . and the Devil take that Animal, who will not offend his Enemy, when he is provoked, with his proper Weapon; and though your old dull Horse little values the Blows I give him with the Butt-end of my Stick, yet I strike on and make him wince in Spight of his Dulness; and he shall not fail of them while I am here; and I hope you will do so too to the Beast who has kick'd against you, and try how far his Insensibility will protect him, and you shall have Help, and he will be vexed. . . . I will kill that Flea or Louse which bites me, though I get no Honour by it.70

Swift's revenge took the form of several verse satires, poems that Quintana characterizes as possessing "unbounded virulence."71 In "Tim and the Fables," Swift compares Tighe with a monkey. He uses an even less flattering analogy in "Dick, A Maggot." "Clad all in Brown" artfully parodies Cowley's "Clad all in White" at the same time that it abuses Tighe. In these poems, Swift resorts often to the coarse image. In "Dick, A Maggot," for example, he likens Tighe to "a fresh T--d just dropt on Snow." Swift also attributes

69 Prose Works, XII, 164.
70 Correspondence, III, 101.
to Tighe a propensity for flatulency:

But Dick can f--t, and dance and frisk,
No other Monkey half so brisk;

(l. 25-26, p. 788)

Tom was held the merrier Lad,
But Dick the best at f--rting.

(l. 7-8, p. 784)

Probably the most interesting and effective of the poems that satirize Tighe is "Mad Mullinix and Timothy," which was first published in the *Intelligencer* in 1728. While Quintana's assessment of the poem as "wonderfully colloquial" is certainly accurate, it scarcely does the poem justice. Swift's strategy in the poem is to reduce Tighe to a raging madman. He accomplishes this diminution by making the poem take the form of a dialogue between Mullinix, a crazy beggar who haunted the Dublin streets, and Timothy (Tighe). While it is Mullinix who is supposed to be mad—as the title of the poem indicates—it is Timothy who appears deranged. Mullinix, in contrast, appears to be the voice of reason and moderation as he attempts to keep Timothy's intemperate outbursts about Jacobite intrigue in check. Swift, through this reversal of roles, suggests that Tighe is fit company for madmen. Indeed, Tighe is madder than ordinary madmen like Mullinix.

---

72 *Swift: An Introduction*, p. 178.
73 *Poems*, III, 772.
Swift denotes Timothy's delirium with his language. Timothy's utterances are notable on two counts. First, they are permeated by oaths. Timothy's first words in the poem are "'Twixt you and me G-- Damn the Lyers." His next remark begins "G-- Damn the Lyars again." As the poem progresses, Timothy is made to swear "Z--ds," "D-- my Blood," "D-- me," and "G-- d-- the Whigs and Tories too." He even prides himself on his ability to curse; he asks Mullinix, "Must all my D--mee's, Bl--s and W--ds / Pass only now for empty sounds?" (ll. 187-188, p. 779). Second, Timothy's utterances are characterized by such words as the following: Clutter, raging Fits, brangling jars, noisy, peevish, and Nonsense wrapt up in a Stink. Indeed, his fulminations are equated with flatus:

And while this Vital Breath I blow,
Or from above, or from below,
I'll Sputter, Swagger, Curse and Rail,
The Tories Terror, Scourge and Flail.

(ll. 83-86, p. 776)

No wonder Mullinix exclaims, "Lord how this Frothy Coxcomb frets!" (l. 16, p. 774)

Although Mullinix is supposed to be similarly deranged, his utterances often reveal an underlying sanity. Hence, Mullinix at times seems to serve as Swift's spokesman. For example, Mullinix effectively ridicules Timothy's ability to find Jacobitism in the unlikeliest places:
In every A-- you run your Snout,
To find this Damn'd Pretender out,
While all the silly Wretch can do
Is but to frisk about like you.
But Tim Convinc't by your Perswasion,
I yield there might be an Invasion,
And you who ever F-- in vain,
Can F-- his Navy back again.

(ll. 25-32, p. 774)

So much for the accuracy of Tighe's accusation against Sheridan.

Timothy, then, is portrayed as a man who is politically and rhetorically impotent. Mullinix explains to him that even the members of his own party find him a nuisance: "So thou art grown the Detestation / Of all thy Party through the Nation" (ll. 55-56, p. 775). His wild talk of "Plots; and Jacobites and Treason" is so embarrassing that he is to his "own Side so Damn'd a Nuisance" (l. 66, p. 775). This portrayal is enough to rankle any politician, especially one who postures as the guardian of his country ("The publick Safety I foresee, / Henceforth depends alone on me," Timothy intones in the poem). John M. Bullitt says that "One of Swift's most expert devices of direct diminution was the attribution of failure and impotence to an opponent."74 Swift, that is, often sought to "disable" an opponent "by showing him to be not dangerous but merely offensive and disgusting."75 Bullitt's comments can be applied to Swift's

74 Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire, p. 46.
75 Ibid.
technique in this poem.

A major portion of the poem is devoted to portraying 
Timothy as the puppet Punch. Mullinix explains:

Thus Tim, Philosophers suppose,
The World consists of Puppet-shows;
Where petulant, conceited Fellows
Perform the part of Punchinelloes;
So at this Booth, which we call Dublin,
Tim thour't the Punch to stir up trouble in;
You Wrigle, Fidge, and make a Rout
Put all your Brother Puppets out,
Run on in a perpetual Round,
To Teize, Perplex, Disturb, Confound,
Intrude with Monkey grin, and clatter
To interrupt all serious Matter,
Are grown the Nuissance of your Clan,
Who hate and scorn you, to a Man;

(11. 133-146, p. 777)

That Swift selects Punch to represent Tighe is not sur-
prising, since Punch was not only the most popular and most
amusing of the puppets of the period but was also a symbol
of vice. Dr. Johnson, in his note on Hamlet, argues that
"The Vice is the fool of a farce; from whom the modern
Punch is descended." He argues the same point in notes
on Henry V and Richard III. That view was probably not
uncommon in Swift's day.

In his description of Punch, Swift does not strive for
originality. His description, indeed, is rather routine,
as will be seen when it is compared with these lines from

76 Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. Arthur Sherbo, 2 volumes
77 Ibid., pp. 559 and 632.
Addison's "Machinae Gesticulantes, anglice A Puppet Show" (1698):

But one there is, that lords it over all,
Whom we or Punch, or Punchannello call,
A noisy wretch, like boatswains always hoarse,
In language scurrilous, in manners coarse;

... ........................................
And uncontrolled he struts, and rules the roost,
Chatters, and laughs immoderately loud,
And scolds and swaggers at the pigmy crowd.
E'en when some serious action is displayed,
And solemn pomps in long procession made,
He uncontrollable, of humour rude,
Must with unseasonable mirth intrude.
Scornful he grins upon their tragic rage,
And disconcerts the fable of the stage.\textsuperscript{78}

By Swift's time, the portrayal of Punch as a loud and coarse buffoon had already been established. Swift exploits the reader's familiarity with Punch. He expects his reader to recognize in Tighe the stock characteristics of the Punch to which he had grown accustomed.

In discussing some of Swift's other works, Bullitt makes a perceptive observation about Swift's use of the puppet symbol: "There is potential comedy in any personal description which so exaggerates a posture, or gesture, or other physical attributes that one's sense of the natural mobility of man is supplanted by a distinct impression of his physical artificiality."\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{78} Addison's poem is written in Latin. The translation given here is from George Speaight, The History of the English Puppet Theatre (New York: John De Graff, 1955), p. 89.

\textsuperscript{79} Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire, p. 171.
a puppet not only suggests his artificiality but also his impotence and ridiculousness. He is presented as an absurd puppet that merely amuses:

    Observe, the Audience is in Pain,
    While Punch is hid behind the Scene,
    But when they hear his rusty Voice,
    With what Impatience they rejoice.

(11. 93-96, p. 776)

Swift is, in this manner, able to accord Tighe with the contempt that Swift thought he richly deserved.
B. GENERAL SATIRES

Satires on Women

Addressing Lady Acheson in "The Journal of a Modern Lady," Swift playfully denies the charge that he is a misogynist:

How cou'd it come into your Mind,
To pitch on me, of all Mankind,
Against the Sex to write a Satyre,
And brand me for a Woman-Hater?
On me, who think them all so fair,
They rival Venus to a Hair;
Their Virtues never ceased to sing,
Since first I learn'd to tune a String.

(11. 5-12, p. 445)

Swift cannot, of course, be branded "a Woman-Hater." He demonstrates emphatically in both "Cadenus and Vanessa" and the poems addressed to Stella that he is able to sing the praises of deserving women. However, even in exalting Esther Vanhomrigh and Esther Johnson, he praises, as we have seen, by excoriating their foils, the countless Florimels and Chloes who fail to measure up to his exacting standards. In "A Letter to a Young Lady, on Her Marriage," Swift writes that women fall into "many Errors, Fopperies, and Follies." He deals with these shortcomings in a number of generally light-hearted poems. It is to these fine

2 Prose Works, IX, 85.
satiric poems that I now turn.

The first poem that I shall discuss is "Verses Wrote in a Lady's Ivory Table-Book," which was probably written in 1698. Ricardo Quintana remarks that the poem is "the earliest of a whole group of poems in which Swift sets some observer loose in a woman's dressing-room to make the closest of observations and to render a point by point account of his curious findings." This poem is indeed a precursor of the so-called "obscene" or "unprintable" poems. However, it merits attention not so much for that reason as for the reason that it is a splendid satire. While it lacks the intensity of the later poems, there is ample compensation in its humor.

In the poem, Swift exposes the shallowness of the typical coquette. He does so by equating the woman's heart with her table-book, a book in which she jots down various memoranda and in which her admirers flatter her with romantic nonsense (Swift calls these scribblings "verses"). This equation is drawn in the first few lines:

PERUSE my Leaves thro' ev'ry Part,
And think thou seest my owners Heart,
Scrawl'd o'er with Trifles thus, and quite
As hard, as sensless, and as light:

(11. 1-4, p. 60)

The reader is reminded of this equation in the later phrase

3 Swift: An Introduction, p. 52.
such a Book and such a Heart (l. 26, p. 61). Swift thus exposes what is hidden (the lady's heart) by exposing what is there for all to see (her book).

In the climactic ninth section of his Tale of a Tub ("A Digression concerning the Original, the Use and Improvement of Madness in a Commonwealth"), Swift vividly demonstrates that the reality is very often quite different from the appearance. This discrepancy between reality and appearance is most evident in human beings. He writes, "in most Corporeal Beings, which have fallen under my Cognizance, the Outside hath been infinitely preferable to the In."4 He expresses the same theme in the memorable line "Last Week I saw a Woman flay'd, and you will hardly believe, how much it altered her Person for the worse."5 The heart-book analogy that Swift draws in the poem is his way of showing the reader the reality behind the facade of the coquette. Her table-book, which she cautiously hides "from the Wise," reveals how senseless and superficial she is.

In roughly the first half of the poem (ll. 1-16), Swift presents an inventory of some of the jottings in the lady's book. He juxtaposes the absurd romantic cant of the woman's admirers against her own mundane notes on cosmetics and halitosis. Irvin Ehrenpreis has noted that

5 Ibid.
the poem "is based on the device of ironical bathos: a list of incongruous phrases presented in a series of incongruous rhymes, so that a moral chaos is suggested by the verbal discords."⁶ A reading of the following lines will quickly establish Ehrenpreis's point:

Here you may read (Dear Charming Saint)
Beneath (A new Receipt for Paint)
Here in Beau-spelling (trul tel deth)
There in her own (far an el breth)
Here (lovely Nymph pronounce my doom)
There (A safe way to use Perfume)
Here, a Page fill'd with Billet Doux;
On t'other side (laid out for Shoes)
(Madam, I dye without your Grace)
(Item, for half a Yard of Lace.)

(11. 7-16, p. 60)

The proximity of the scribblings of the woman and those of her admirers is indicated by the words Beneath, on t'other side, Here, and There. The incongruous and humorous rhymes reveal that though the men indulge in romantic flights and though the woman is preoccupied with mundane matters, they belong to the same world. Swift deflates the "exalted" utterances of the men by juxtaposing them against the woman's notes on perfume, shoes, and halitosis. Both the men and the woman are revealed to be bathetic.

Even the spelling used in the table-book is revealing. Swift points out that when the fop writes trul tel deth, he is using "Beau-spelling." In his "A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue,"

⁶ Dr. Swift, p. 28.
Swift condemns such spelling as a "Conceit" and a "false" refinement: "ANOTHER Cause . . . which hath contributed not a little to the maiming of our Language, is a foolish Opinion, advanced of late Years, that we ought to spell exactly as we speak."7 While the fop's spelling may indeed be phonetic, it also reveals his affectation. The spelling, then, belies the hyperbolic, romantic sentiment that the admirer is trying to convey to the woman.

The second half of the poem (ll. 17-30) draws a conclusion for the reader. Swift directs the reader's attention principally to the fops who pen such cant in the lady's book:

Who that had Wit would place it here,  
For every peeping Fop to Jear. 
To think that your Brains Issue is  
Expos'd to th' Excrement of his, 
In power of Spittle and a Clout  
When e're he please to blot it out;  
And then to heighten the Disgrace  
Claps his own Nonsense in the place.

(11. 17-24, pp. 60-61)

These lines, however, also reveal the impermanence of the woman's affections. The book, we must remember, represents her heart. The woman's affections are only as lasting as the jottings in her book, which can be erased by any fool with his "Spittle and a Clout." Moreover, to discredit the jottings of the men, Swift uses the words Issue and

---

7 Prose Works, IV, 11.
Excrement. The scribbling of one fop is termed an Issue while the saliva that another fop uses to erase it is termed Excrement. The word Issue not only refers to an offspring (in the eighteenth century a poem was sometimes likened to the offspring of a poet) but a discharge due to a disease. Swift uses the word in that sense to describe the "running Sores" of Corinna in "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed." The scatological word Excrement further depreciates the contents of the table-book. Indeed, the use of both words suggests that the lady's table-book, though it may be made of fine ivory paper, is full of filth. That she welcomes such foulness reveals the utter perversity of her values.

Swift concludes the poem with a witty epigram that is reminiscent of metaphysical wit:

Whoe're expects to hold his part
In such a Book and such a Heart,
If he be Wealthy and a Fool
Is in all Points the fittest Tool,
Of whom it may be justly said,
He's a Gold Pencil tipt with Lead.

(11. 25-30, p. 61)

Just as the woman has been equated with a book, the fop who would address such nonsensical utterances to her is equated with a pencil. While Ehrenpreis says that Swift's conclusion is "unintentionally anti-climactic,"8 I find it

8 Dr. Swift, p. 29.
a fitting conclusion to the poem, for Swift rounds out the heart-book analogy that he has been drawing. Because the fop's wealth is signified by gold and his foolishness by lead, the "Gold Pencil tipt with Lead" is an appropriate metaphor for him.

"Verses Wrote in a Lady's Ivory Table-Book," in conclusion, is a comic and satiric poem in which the elements are well unified. The analogy between the woman's heart and the ivory table book and the analogy between the fop and the "Gold Pencil tipt with Lead" complement each other. Through the use of these two analogies, Swift effectively satirizes unpraiseworthy women and the men who would woo them. Such men and such women deserve each other.

"The Furniture of a Woman's Mind," which was written in 1727, is another of the poems in which Swift satirizes the female sex. The woman he depicts in this poem is the very antithesis of Vanessa and Stella. Because the poem antedates "The Journal of a Modern Lady," with which it shares some similarities, F. Elrington Ball suggests that it was a study for the later poem.9

The title of the poem, which may at first seem puzzling, has been ably explained by John Bullitt. According to him, Swift makes "symbolic use of 'furniture' to imply stock

---

9 Swift's Verse, p. 224.
methods of thought and general mental rigidity. The whole distinction so carefully preserved in Swift's mind between the natural reason and artificial reason operating mechanically by art and method seems to have been symbolized by this word.\textsuperscript{10}

A close examination of the poem will help to strengthen Bullitt's argument. Swift's primary target in the poem is indeed the artificiality of female behavior. It will be recalled that

\begin{verbatim}
  Stella never learn'd the Art,
   At proper Times to scream and start;
Nor calls up all the House at Night,
   And swears she saw a Thing in White.
Doll never flies to cut her Lace,
   Or throw cold Water in her Face,
Because she heard a sudden Drum,
   Or found an Earwig in a Plum.
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{(11. 71-78, pp. 725-726)}

It will also be recalled that Vanessa was "Instructed from her early Years / To scorn the Art of Female Tears" (11. 596-597, p. 705). In both of these passages, Swift does not censure other women for showing genuine emotions; he criticizes them for feigning these emotions in order to deceive those around them. The use of the word \textit{art} in both poems to describe an almost universal failing in women indicates that this defect is acquired and cultivated out of a false sense of proper and genteel behavior. It

\textsuperscript{10} Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire, p. 169.
is not natural.

Swift returns to this theme again and again as he relentlessly catalogues the defects of the coquette. The poem begins:

A Set of Phrases learn't by Rote;
A Passion for a Scarlet-Coat;
When at a Play to laugh, or cry,
Yet cannot tell the Reason why:

(11. 1-4, p. 415)

These lines already suggest that the woman is rather mechanical and automatic in her behavior; her responses are conditioned responses. She is not governed by natural reason for she "cannot tell the Reason why" she laughs or cries.

Swift reiterates and elaborates on this theme in the subsequent lines. The woman, we are told, "Can ready Compliments supply / On all Occasions, cut and dry" (11. 13-14, p. 416). The word ready and the phrase cut and dry undercut the seeming praise in the preceding line and reveal the woman's insincerity. Moreover, the modern lady "Has ev'ry Repartee in Store, / She spoke ten Thousand Times before" (11. 11-12, p. 416). The woman speaks in formulas, in trite phrases. In his "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation," Swift wrote: "Natural Elocution, although it may seem a Paradox, usually springeth from a Barrenness of Invention and of Words, by which Men who have
only one Stock of Notions upon every Subject, and one Set of Phrases to express them in, they swim upon the Superficies, and offer themselves on every Occasion; therefore, Men of much Learning, and who know the Compass of a Language, are generally the worst Talkers on a sudden, until much Practice hath inured and emboldened them, because they are confounded with Plenty of Matter, Variety of Notions, and of Words, which they cannot readily chuse, but are perplexed and entangled by too great a Choice." Note that Swift used similar words in this passage—Stock, Set of Phrases, readily, every Occasion—to indicate conversation that is reduced to empty formulas.

As in other poems that we have examined, Swift resorts to the technique of irony in further pointing out the woman's failings:

For Conversation well endu'd,
She calls it witty to be rude;
And, placing Raillery in Railing,
Will tell aloud your greatest Failing;
Nor makes a Scruple to expose
Your bandy Leg, or crooked Nose.

(11. 17-22, p. 416)

Conversation, for Swift, was an important art. What the woman in this poem engages in, however, is a perversion of that art. In his "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation,"

11 Prose Works, IV, 93.

Swift wrote: "It now passeth for Raillery to run a Man down in Discourse, to put him out of Countenance, and make him ridiculous, sometimes to expose the Defects of his Person, or Understanding."\textsuperscript{13} The woman in this poem reveals a distorted sense of the ridiculous. While she may rightly ridicule the acquired defects and affectations of a human being, she should not ridicule his physical and natural defects (his "bandy Leg, or crooked Nose"). In "the politer Age of our Fathers," Swift observed in the same essay, "Raillery was to say something that first appeared a Reproach, or Reflection; but, by some Turn of Wit unexpected and surprising, ended always in a Compliment, and to the Advantage of the Person it was addressed to."\textsuperscript{14} A good example of this kind of raillery is found in Swift's own poem "Stella at Wood-Park." When Swift says, then, that the woman in the poem is "For Conversation well endu'd," he is being obviously ironic.

In "Cadenus and Vanessa," we have seen, Swift heaps praise on Vanessa by paradoxically making her a failure in worldly affairs. The fashionable women soon discover that she knows nothing about "Ribbons, Fans, and Gloves and Lace." Since "The Furniture of a Woman's Mind" is a

\textsuperscript{13} Prose Works, IV, 91.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
satiric poem, Swift merely reverses the technique; he points out how artful the woman is in such matters:

In chusing Lace a Critick nice,
Knows to a Groat the lowest Price;
Can in her Female Clubs dispute
What Lining best the Silk will suit;
What Colours each Complexion match;
And where with Art to place a Patch.

(11. 27-32, p. 416)

In his essay "On Good-Manners and Good-Breeding," Swift defined pedantry as "the overrating of any kind of knowledge we pretend to. And if that kind of knowledge be a trifle in itself, the pedantry is greater." ¹⁵ And in the essay on conversation that I have quoted above, he defined pedantry as "the too frequent or unseasonable obtruding our Knowledge in common Discourse, and placing too great a Value upon it." ¹⁶ He went on to say that women, "when they are overcopious upon the Subject of their Petticoats, or their Fans, or their China," can be as pedantic as a philosopher or a divine. ¹⁷ A woman who will "dispute" such trivial matters as how to apply a patch can surely be called a pedant.

The woman is also depicted as a clever counterfeiter. Unlike Stella, the modern dame feigns fright out of a false

¹⁵ Prose Works, IV, 215.
¹⁶ Ibid., p. 90.
¹⁷ Ibid.
sense of femininity:

IF chance a Mouse creeps in her Sight,
She Can finely counterfeit a Fright;
So, sweetly screams if it comes near her,
She ravishes all Hearts to hear her.

(11. 33-36, p. 416)

Swift selects a conventional illustration to demonstrate the conventionality of the woman he exposes. The apparently paradoxical phrase sweetly screams exposes the calculated motives behind the woman's behavior.18

In his Rape of the Lock, Pope presents a splendid description of Affectation, whom Umbriel spies in the Cave of Spleen:

There Affectation with a sickly Mien
Shows in her Cheek the Roses of Eighteen,
Practis'd to Lisp, and hang the Head aside,
Faints into Airs, and languishes with Pride;
On the rich Quilt sinks with becoming Woe,
Wrapt in a Gown, for Sickness, and for Show.
The Fair-ones feel such Maladies as these,
When each new Night-Dress gives a new Disease.19

Swift's modern dame is no different; she, too, pretends to

18 In his "A Letter to a Young Lady, on Her Marriage," Swift similarly excoriates the affected fright of women: "Yet there should seem to be something very capricious, that when Women profess their Admiration for a Colonel or a Captain, on Account of his Valour; they should fancy it a very graceful becoming Quality in themselves, to be afraid of their own Shadows; to scream in a Barge, when the weather is calmest, or in a Coach at the Ring; to run from a Cow at an Hundred Yards Distance; to fall into Fits at the Sight of a Spider, an Ear-wig, or a Frog" (Prose Works, IX, 93).

be ill and thus reveals her affectation:

\[
\text{She} \quad \text{Can dext'rously her Husband teize,}
\]
\[
\text{By taking Fits when'er she please;}
\]
\[
\text{By frequent Practice learns the Trick}
\]
\[
\text{At proper Seasons to be sick;}
\]
\[
\text{Thinks nothing gives one Airs so pretty;}
\]
\[
\text{At once creating Love and Pity.}
\]
\[
\text{If Molly happens to be careless,}
\]
\[
\text{And but neglects to warm her Hair-Lace,}
\]
\[
\text{She gets a Cold as sure as Death;}
\]
\[
\text{And vows she scarce can fetch her Breath.}
\]
\[
\text{Admires how modest Women can}
\]
\[
\text{Be so robustious like a Man.}
\]

(11. 37-48, pp. 416-417)

Swift italicizes the word robustious for good reason. It is a word that only an affected society dame would use. The word appears in Swift's "A Compleat Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation," a series of dialogues in which Swift presents "a thousand shining Questions, Answers, Repartees, Replies, and Rejoynders, fitted to adorn every Kind of Discourse that an Assembly of English Ladies, and Gentlemen, met together for their mutual Entertainment can possibly want."20 The word robustious indicates that the woman possesses a false sense of how a woman should behave.

At the end of the poem, Swift suggests that the list of defects—"virtues" he calls them ironically—can be greatly augmented and invites the reader to submit suggestions so that they can be added to future printings of the

poem. Such a conclusion reveals that Swift's basic technique in the poem, aside from irony, is the relentless catalogue. By piling detail upon detail, Swift is able to present a biting and humorous portrait of the modern coquette.

"The Journal of a Modern Lady," which was written two years later, is one of Swift's finest poems. It is a light-hearted and entertaining satire on society women who foolishly squander their time by sitting up at quadrille all night. The "Modern Lady" may have been modelled after Swift's friend Lady Acheson, to whom it is addressed. In a letter to Charles Ford, Swift wrote that "She is an absolute Dublin rake, sits up late, loses her money, and goes to bed sick." The "Modern Lady" behaves no differently.

The poem contains two basic parts. In the first section (ll. 1-35), which is essentially an introduction, Swift establishes the tone of the poem. He ironically protests that he worships women. He explains that he writes the poem only at Lady Acheson's insistence. The woman who is already familiar with the Dean's earlier satires on the follies of the female sex will, of course, only laugh at this plea of innocence.

21 Quoted in Poems, II, 443.
Swift playfully undermines his own profession of unqualified admiration for women through three techniques. First, he compares female society with the Puritan Commonwealth and himself with a zealous supporter of that government. He writes to Lady Acheson:

IT was a most unfriendly Part  
In you, who ought to know my Heart,  
So well acquainted with my Zeal  
For all the Female Commonweal:

(11. 1-4, p. 444)

The combined use of the words Zeal and Commonweal would have immediately suggested Cromwell's government to Swift's reader. For Swift and for many of his readers, the words were charged with pejorative connotations. Swift had employed both terms a few years earlier to castigate Cromwell and his followers in his "A Sermon Upon the Martyrdom of K. Charles I."22 He uses the same words to satirize hack writers in "On Poetry: A Rapsody":

They plot to turn in factious Zeal,  
Duncenia to a Common-weal:

(11. 379-380, p. 653)

Any reader who knew of Swift's inimical attitudes toward the Puritan government would have realized that Swift's utterances to Lady Acheson are delivered with mock-sincerity. The second way in which Swift undermines his

22 Prose Works, IX, 219-231.
own protestation is through the hyperbolic claim that women "rival Venus to a Hair." The phrase to a Hair renders the entire compliment ridiculous because it is so patently extravagant and false. Besides, as the reader of Swift's poems to Stella and "Cadenus and Vanessa" knows, it is not enough that a woman emulate Venus; she would do better to emulate Pallas. Finally, Swift undercuts his own protestation by parodying the absurd cant of romantic writers:

Ah lovely Nymphs, remove your Fears,
No more let fall those precious Tears.
Sooner shall, &c.

\[\text{Here several Verses are omitted.}\]
The Hound be hunted by the Hare,
Than I turn Rebel to the Fair.

(11. 17-21, p. 445)

Swift mocks his romantic female readers by omitting the lines that they would most like to read. The three devices that Swift uses in the introductory section help to establish the bantering and genial tone of the poem. Swift's satire in the poem is certainly not harsh.

The remainder of the poem presents a chronological record of how the modern dame spends her day. Her day begins at noon because "She sat all Night up at Quadrill" and ends after four the next morning when she "With empty Purse, and aching Head, / Steals to her sleeping Spouse to Bed" (11. 41, 292-293, pp. 446, 453). The chief activities of the modern lady, if one were to judge from the
poem, are awakening, getting dressed, entertaining guests at "Ev'ning Tea," and, most important, playing cards. The relish with which Swift depicts each of these activities is so evident that his earlier profession of reluctance to write such a poem is quickly pricked.

While the poem deals with some of the same themes as "The Furniture of a Woman's Mind," it is a superior poem. The primary difference between the two poems is that in the earlier poem Swift merely tells the reader of the various foibles of the female sex; in this poem he more fully illustrates these foibles. For example, in the earlier poem Swift had written:

For Conversation well endu'd;
She calls it witty to be rude;
And placing Raillery in Railing,
Will tell aloud your greatest Failing;
Nor makes a Scruple to expose
Your bandy Leg, or crooked Nose.

(11. 17-22, p. 416)

Swift's description of the women's conversation in "The Journal of a Modern Lady" is much more vivid:

Mopsa, who stinks her Spouse to Death,
Accuses Chloe's tainted Breath;
Hircina rank with Sweat, presumes
To censure Phillis for Perfumes;

23 The activities of the modern dame in this poem so resemble those of Belinda in Pope's Rape of the Lock that Herbert Davis sees in Swift's poem "a kind of crude Hudibrastic burlesque" of Pope's poem. See Jonathan Swift, pp. 51-53.
While crooked Cynthia swearing says,
That Florimel wears Iron Stays:
Chloe's of ev'ry Coxcomb jealous,
Admires how Girls can talk with Fellows,
And full of Indignation frets
That Women should be such Coquets:
Iris, for Scandal most notorious,
Cries, "Lord, the World is so censorious!
And Rufa with her Combs of Lead,
Whispers that Sappho's Hair is Red:
Aura, whose Tongue you hear a Mile hence,
Talks half a Day in Praise of Silence;

(11. 156-171, pp. 449-450)

To cite another example, in the earlier poem Swift points out that the modern woman improves "hourly in her Skill, /
To cheat and wrangle at Quadrille" (11. 25-26, p. 416).
In this poem, we can actually hear the quarrelsome exchanges between the card-wielding women:

This odious Chair how came I stuck in't,
I think I never had good Luck in't.
I'm so uneasy in my Stays;
Your Fan, a Moment, if you please.
Stand further Girl, or get you gone,
I always lose when you look on.

(11. 240-245, p. 452)

We hear the women hurl charges of cheating at each other:

I saw you touch your Wedding-Ring
Before my Lady call'd a King.
You spoke a Word began with H,
And I know whom you mean to teach,
Because you held the King of Hearts.
Fie, Madam, leave these little Arts.
That's not so bad as one that rubs
Her Chair to call the King of Clubs,
And makes her Part'ner understand
A Matadore is in her Hand.

(11. 252-261, p. 452)
Like a gambler who complains of a marked deck, one of the women exclaims:

Spadillo here has got a Mark,
A Child may know it in the Dark:
I guess the Hand, it seldom fails,
I wish some Folks would pare their Nails.

(11. 266-269, p. 453)

Swift had a fine ear for colloquial speech, and his use of dialogue gives this poem greater vividness than "The Furniture of a Woman's Mind." Indeed, so vivid is Swift's dialogue that he hardly needs the verbs he uses to characterize the women's conversation—rail, scold, snarl, and squabble. The reader realizes that such undignified talk belies the gentility for which the women strive.

Prior to this description of the card match, Swift asks an amusing question:

How can the Muse her Aid impart,
Unskill'd in all the Terms of Art?
Or in harmonious Numbers put
The Deal, the Shuffle, and the Cut?

(11. 220-223, p. 451)

While Swift may not have described "The Deal, the Shuffle, and the Cut" in "harmonious Numbers," the jarring dialogue that follows this passage demonstrates Swift at his colloquial best. In short, "The Journal of a Modern Lady" is one of the finest light-hearted satires from Swift's pen.
Satires on Grub-Street Poets

Like Dryden and Pope, Swift was deeply distressed by the verse productions of Grub Street. While he, I believe, wrote nothing equal to "MacFlecknoe" and the Dunciad, he did give voice to his distress and annoyance in several satiric poems. "The Progress of Poetry" (1720) and "On Poetry: A Rhapsody" (1733) are the best of these poems.

Because Swift's aim in "The Progress of Poetry" is to deflate the outrageous pretensions of hack writers, he draws an unflattering analogy between a Grub-Street poet and a farmer's goose. This analogy is witty and devastating because the tuneless goose is often contrasted with the melodious swan, a graceful and beautiful bird that has been associated with poets since classical times, when it was considered sacred to Apollo. Through this technique of diminution, Swift is able to demonstrate that the Grub-Street poet is more like a domestic fowl than a Muse-inspired bard. Seldom does Swift use the technique of comparing man with an animal more effectively.

The first two stanzas are devoted to the goose. The first stanza describes a fat and indolent goose that can waddle to the pond only with considerable difficulty. The second stanza presents a turn in the goose's fate:

But when she must be turn'd to graze,
And round the barren Common strays,
Hard Exercise, and harder Fare
Soon make my Dame grow lank and spare.
Her Body light, she tries her Wings,
And scorns the Ground, and upward springs,
While all the Parish, as she flies,
Hears Sounds harmonious from the Skies.

(ll. 9-16, p. 230)

The goose, then, can achieve flight only when it has grown lank. Moreover, although her "Sounds" are described as being "harmonious," we realize that the word is being used ironically. A goose is not a swan.

In the next two stanzas, which repeat the pattern of the first two stanzas, Swift applies the humorous description of the goose to Grub-Street poets. In the third stanza, the poet is described as fat and phlegmatic:

Such is the Poet, fresh in Pay,
(The third Night's Profits of his Play;)  
His Morning-Draughts 'till Noon can swill,
Among his Brethren of the Quill:  
With good Roast Beef his Belly full,
Grown lazy, foggy, fat, and dull:

(ll. 17-22, pp. 230-231)

Although this hack writer may claim to be divinely inspired, he is here caught in embarrassingly sublunary activities. He is more interested in the state of his belly than the skill of his art. The word Quill reinforces the similitude between the poet and the goose. Like the goose, the poet is unable to achieve flight in this condition:

Deep sunk in Plenty, and Delight,
What Poet e'er could take his Flight?
Or stuff'd with Phlegm up to the Throat,
What Poet e'er could sing a Note?
Nor Pegasus could bear the Load,
Along the high celestial Road;
The Steed, oppress'd, would break his Girth,
To raise the Lumber from the Earth.

(11. 23-30, p. 231)

Poets, good ones as well as bad ones, have often compared the writing of poetry with flight, the greatest height that a poet can achieve being, of course, the sublime. In the above lines, Swift turns the cant of poets—Pegasus, Flight, the high celestial Road—against the hack writer. In the context in which they appear, these words are ludicrous. The words, indeed, remind us of the disparity between the hack poet and the true poet. Of course, the most effective diminution comes from the comparison of the poet's attempted flight with the flight of a goose.

In the fourth stanza, we find the poet, like the goose, "in another Scene." He is no longer so well off:

all his Drink is Hippocrene,
His Money spent, his Patrons fail,
His Credit out for Cheese and Ale;
His Two-Year's Coat so smooth and bare,
Through ev'ry Thread it lets in Air;

(11. 32-36, p. 231)

The first line, of course, indicates that the poet has nothing better to drink than water, but the word Hippocrene again demonstrates Swift's ability to use poetic cant against his target. The word tellingly reveals the disparity between the pretensions of the hack poet and his mundane but real preoccupations.
The goose was able to achieve flight only after it lost its excess fat. So, too, the poet. But Swift describes the poet's condition in greater detail:

With hungry Meals his Body pin'd,
His Guts and Belly full of Wind;
And, like a Jockey for a Race,
His Flesh brought down to Flying-Case;
Now his exalted Spirit loaths
Incumbrances of Food and Cloaths;
And up he rises like a Vapour,
Supported high on Wings of Paper;
He singing flies, and flying sings,
While from below all Grub-street rings.

(11. 37-46, p. 231)

The purported author of A Tale of a Tub explains in "The Preface" the origin of the work: "the shrewdest Pieces of this Treatise, were conceived in Bed, in a Garret: At other times (for a Reason best known to my self) I thought fit to sharpen my Invention with Hunger; and in general, the whole Work was begun, continued, and ended, under a long Course of Physick, and a great want of Money."24

Similarly, we discover that the poet's "inspiration" returns only when he is hungry; "Hunger" sharpens his "Invention," too. His flight is attributed to, not the Muse's inspiration, but "Guts and Belly full of Wind." Swift thus reduces poetic inspiration to lo y human—indeed physiological—terms. Again Swift mocks poetic cant in the ironic phrase exalted spirit; the poet's spirit is more aptly described

24 Prose Works, I, 27.
as rising "like a Vapour." Swift hardly presents a picture of soaring poetic imagination.

After this devastating satire on the "inspiration" of hack writers, Swift continued his satire with "On Poetry: A Rapsody." Although the second poem has yet to receive adequate explication, it ranks high among his poetic accomplishments. Oliver Goldsmith called the poem "the most masterly production of its author." Ricardo Quintana writes that the poem "rises to a level of satiric power and intensity seldom attained even by Swift." And Maurice Johnson says that the poem is "one of his chief claims to the title of poet." As I hope the following discussion will demonstrate, such praise is not exaggerated. "On Poetry: A Rapsody" is one of Swift's masterpieces.

In "The Progress of Poetry," we have seen, Swift focuses his satire on Grub-Street poets. In "On Poetry: A Rapsody," however, he widens his satiric attack to include the kind of society that nourishes such poets. His point is that a corrupt society breeds corrupt poets.

The basic technique of the poem is irony. The speaker of the poem, "an old experienc'd Sinner," teaches "a young

25 Quoted in Johnson, The Sin of Wit, p. 15.
26 The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift, p. 351.
27 The Sin of Wit, p. 15.
Beginner" how to write the kind of poetry that a corrupt society demands. His often cynical advice takes the reader through the several phases of the hack poet's career—from serious poet to party poet to critic to court flatterer. The "old experienc'd Sinner" realizes that serious and truthful poets do not prosper in such a society, and so he instructs the uninitiated poet in the techniques of prostituting his Muse. All the while, however, the reader realizes that Swift is being ironic. Swift believed that poetry should, above all, be truthful, and this ideal is implicit throughout the poem. As has already been pointed out, Swift intensely disliked the vacuous adulation of Grub-Street scribblers: "And, Praise bestow'd in Grub-Street Rimes, / Would vex one more a thousand Times" (ll. 165-166, p. 505).

In the first section of the poem (ll. 1-70), the "old experienc'd Sinner" elaborates on the theme that only man's pride, folly, and perverseness can account for his desire to become a poet. A technique used in this section is one that Swift uses elsewhere, notably "The Beasts Confession to the Priest"; through the persona, he compares man unfavorably to animals:

Brutes find out where their Talents lie;  
A Bear will not attempt to fly;  
A founder'd Horse will oft debate,  
Before he tries a five-barr'd Gate;  
A Dog by Instinct turns aside,  
Who sees the Ditch too deep and wide.
But Man we find the only Creature,
Who, led by Folly, fights with Nature;
Who, when she loudly cries, Forbear;
With Obstinacy fixes there;
And, where his Genius least inclines,
Absurdly bends his whole Designs.

(11. 13-24, pp. 640-641)

Through such an unfavorable comparison, Swift effects a devastating diminution. Man, who alone is equipped with the capacity to reason, is shown to be inferior to lowly "Brutes." Animals instinctively know their limitations, but man "fights with Nature." He does not follow Pope's dictum to "First follow NATURE."

After pointing out that the desire of all but a very few men to become poets is unnatural, the "old experienc'd Sinner" elaborates on two important points. First, he emphasizes that a man needs great genius to become a poet:

Not Empire to the Rising-Sun,
By Valour, Conduct, Fortune won;
Nor highest Wisdom in Debates
For framing Laws to govern States;
Nor Skill in Sciences profound,
So large to grasp the Circle round;
Such heavenly Influence require,
As how to strike the Muses Lyre.

(11. 25-32, p. 641)

Second, he points out that in a corrupt society poets are not properly valued. Indeed, poetic talent is an absolute liability to a man who would rise in ecclesiastical or political position:

Not Beggar's Brat, on Bulk begot;
Nor Bastard of a Pedlar Scot;
Nor Boy brought up to cleaning Shoes,
The Spawn of Bridewell, or the Stews;
Nor Infants dropt, the spurious Pledges
Of Gipsies littering under Hedges,
Are so disqualified by Fate
To rise in Church, or Law, or State,
As he, whom Phebus in his Ire
Hath blasted with poetick Fire.

(11. 33-42, p. 641)

The comparison of the poet's fate with that of illegitimate children emphasizes the speaker's point that poets are seriously handicapped in the world. To dramatize his point, the speaker indulges in hyperbole. The poet, he says, is in a worse position than the "Bastard of a Pedlar Scot."

That is, the poet is more hampered than a person who suffers three handicaps—illegitimacy, poverty, and a Scottish parentage. Indeed, the poet is more handicapped than illegitimate children whose births are described in animal terms—Spawn, dropt, littering. Poetry is thus seen not as a gift but as a curse; it is visited upon men by Phoebus "in his Ire."

In these opening verse paragraphs, the "old experienc'd Sinner" points out for the benefit of the "young Beginner" that a good, honest poet simply cannot prosper in a society that refuses to reward virtue. Because such a poet "cannot bribe, betray, or plot" and because he is "awkward" when he tries "to flatter" (unlike the "prostitute Flatterer"), he will become a "Poor starv'ling Bard." Swift, in this
manner, castigates a society that will not allow good poetry to flourish.

If despite the prospect of impoverishment and neglect the young man still wishes to pursue fame as a poet, he will have to learn how to make his poetry palatable to the society in which he lives. The "old experienc'd Sinner" thus commences to instruct the "young Beginner" on how to write poetry for consumption by modern readers, those readers who are accustomed to reading nothing but bad poetry. Not surprisingly, much of his attention is focused not on the poet's treatment of theme and subject matter but on various gimmicks. He advises the poet to use "num'rous Breaks—and Dashes—" because such devices will be taken for "modern Wit." He even explains the kind of type to use:

To Statesmen wou'd you give a Wipe,  
You print it in Italick Type.  
When Letters are in vulgar Shapes,  
'Tis ten to one the Wit escapes;  
But when in Capitals express,  
The dullest Reader smoaks the Jest;  
Or else perhaps he may invent  
A better than the Poet meant,  
As learned Commentators view  
In Homer more than Homer knew.  

(11. 95-104, p. 643)

So much attention is paid to such gimmicks as typography--the poem's "modish Dress"—that the poem is appropriately called "A Bastard of your own begetting" (l. 116, p. 644). The poet, as the producer of a "Bastard,"
is thus implicitly compared with such disreputable figures as beggars, Scottish peddlers, and gypsies. However, the point needs to be made that if the young poet is the "father" of the "Bastard," the society for which he writes is the "mother." Society is just as responsible for the production of bad poetry as the poet.

If the poet's initial effort is ridiculed, he is advised by the "old experienc'd Sinner" to give up his "fond paternal Pride"--the poem is a "Bastard" anyway--and try a second and third time. For these subsequent attempts, the old teacher offers additional advice. This time, however, the advice seems to be somewhat more sensible. The teacher warns the young poet to avoid

The trivial Turns, the borrow'd Wit,
The Similes that nothing fit;
The Cant which ev'ry Fool repeats,
Town-Jests, and Coffee-house Conceits;
Descriptions tedious, flat and dry,
And introduc'd the Lord knows why;

(11. 151-156, p. 645)

The teacher also complains that the poet's initial attempt failed because of obscurity. In his future poems, the young poet is advised to make sure that the reader can discover who is being satirized. The teacher complains that in the first poem

we find your Fury set
Against the harmless Alphabet;
On A's and B's your Malice vent,
While Readers wonder whom you meant.
A publick, or a private Robber;
A Statesman, or a South-Sea Jobber.
A Prelate who no God believes;
A Parliament, or Den of Thieves,
A Pick-purse at the Bar, or Bench;
A Duchess, or a Suburb-Wench.

(11. 157-166, p. 645)

Pope, Swift, and other satirists of the period used "A's and B's" (that is, initial letters of the names of people who are satirized) very effectively, but never did they seem to be setting their fury "Against the harmless Alphabet" itself. While the immediate target of criticism in the above lines is obscurity in poetry, Swift also offers some social satire. Through seemingly incongruous juxtapositions, he implies that members of Parliament often behave like thieves and that aristocratic ladies often carry on like wenches. Perhaps the most interesting bit of advice the "old experienc'd Sinner" offers is about epithets that serve no usefulness but are nevertheless inserted

In gaping Lines to fill a Chink;
Like stepping Stones to save a Stride,
In Streets where Kennels are too wide;
Or like a Heel-piece to support
A Cripple with one Foot too short;
Or like a Bridge that joins a Marish
To Moorlands of a diff'rent Parish.

(11. 168-174, p. 645)

The teacher further compares such a practice with the practice of cartographers who in their maps of Africa "With Savage-Pictures fill their Gaps; / And o'er unhabitable
Downs / Place Elephants for want of Towns" (ll. 178-180, pp. 645-646). Such comparisons should remind any serious poet that all the details in a poem should serve some essential function.

The "old experienc'd Sinner" informs the "young Beginner" that if after following this additional advice he still fails, he should put aside "all Thoughts of Fame" and try to write for money instead. Two careers are open to him. The first is to become a party poet:

From Party-Merit seek Support;
The vilest Verse thrives best at Court.
A Pamphlet in Sir Rob's Defence
Will never fail to bring in Pence;
Nor be concern'd about the Sale,
He pays his Workmen on the Nail.

(ll. 185-190, p. 646)

The old teacher advises the poet to employ his Muse only on "Kings alive." Dead kings, after all, are not able to reward the poet for his efforts. Moreover, the teacher instructs the young poet to ignore the fact that the fulsome praise is totally unwarranted:

A Prince the Moment he is crown'd,
Inherits ev'ry Virtue round,
As Emblems of the sov'reign Pow'r,
Like other Bawbles of the Tow'r.
Is gen'rous, valiant, just and wise,
And so continues 'till he dies.

(ll. 191-196, p. 646)

The persona, in short, is suggesting that the poet write panegyrics so vapid and general that if the monarch should
die, all he will have to do to adapt the poem for the new
monarch is "Change but their Names" in the poem.

The other course open to the young poet is to become
a critic. Again, he is advised to learn the jargon and
the formulas:

Then talk with more authentick Face,
Of Unities, in Time and Place.
Get Scraps of Horace from your Friends,
And have them at your Fingers End.
Learn Aristotle's Rules by Rote,
And at all Hazards boldly quote:
Judicious Rymer oft review:
Wise Dennis, and profound Bossu.
Read all the Prefaces of Dryden,
For these our Criticks much confide in,
(Tho' meerly writ at first for filling
To raise the Volume's Price, a Shilling.)

(11. 243-254, p. 648)

The critic—a "puny Judge of Wit"—does not have to under-
stand a word of the poem; all he need do is quote the
authorities—even bad authorities such as John Dennis,
whom Swift certainly did not think "Wise" at all. Swift
is not, of course, ridiculing all of the critics mentioned
above (certainly not Horace or Aristotle). Through the
persona of the "old experienc'd Sinner," he is ridiculing
those critics who see no distinction between great critics
such as Horace and Aristotle and disreputable critics such

28 Swift similarly pokes fun at Dryden's prefaces in
A Tale of a Tub: "He [Dryden] has often said to me in
Confidence, that the World would never have suspected him
to be so great a Poet, if he had not assured them so fre-
quently in his Prefaces, that it was impossible they could
either doubt or forget it" (Prose Works, I, 81-82).
as Rymer and Dennis, both of whom are ironically called "most profound Criticks" in A Tale of a Tub. The satire is directed against those critics who mechanically quote other critics without discrimination and judgment.

The "old experienc'd Sinner" then gives the "young Beginner" a description of the relationship among Grub-Street poets in Hobbesian terms:


(11. 319-326, p. 651)

The comparison of hack poets with vicious animals is satiric enough. However, "the old experienc'd Sinner" goes even further to demonstrate the perversity of such writers. If in the state of nature the small and weak are always preyed upon by the large and strong, among "the rhiming Race" the condition is reversed:

If, on Parnassus' Top you sit, You rarely bite, are always bit; Each Poet of inferior Size On you shall rail and criticize; And strive to tear you Limb from Limb, While others do as much for him.

(11. 329-334, p. 651)

---

29 Prose Works, I, 22.
This topsy-turvy state of affairs exists, of course, because the poets are motivated not by the need for food, as animals are, but by envy. The phrase tear you Limb from Limb, however, reveals that poets can be just as vicious as animals.

To further characterize the behavior of such poets, the old teacher compares the poets with fleas of varying sizes. Such a comparison is apt because fleas are both parasitical and odious. Moreover, they rank very low on the chain of being:

So, Nat'ralists observe, a Flea
Hath smaller Fleas that on him prey,
And these have smaller Fleas to bite 'em,
And so proceed ad infinitum;
Thus ev'ry Poet in his Kind,
Is bit by him that comes behind;
Who, tho' too little to be seen,
Can teaze, and gall, and give the Spleen;

(11. 337-344, p. 651)

The diminution that Swift effects through the above passage is quite unmerciful.

Following this vivid description of the state of war among poets, Swift introduces a lengthy section in which the "old experienc'd Sinner" discusses "the low Sublime," the kind of writing to which Grub-Street poets aspire. Like Pope, who in his Peri Bathous shows the writer how to get "to the Bathos; the Bottom, the End, the Central Point, the non plus ultra of true Modern Poesie," Swift, through

his persona, ironically suggests that the proper aim of poetry is bathos:

From Flecknoe down to Howard's Time,
How few have reach'd the low Sublime?
For when our high-born Howard dy'd,
Blackmore alone his Place supply'd:
And least a Chasm should intervene,
When Death had finish'd Blackmore's Reign,
The leaden Crown devolv'd to thee,
Great Poet of the Hollow-Tree.31

(11. 369-376, pp. 652-653)

Swift's basic technique in this section, in short, is inversion. For example, low Sublime is an inversion of true Sublime, and leaden Crown is an inversion of golden Crown.

Like Dryden in "MacFlecknoe" and Pope in the Dunciad, Swift uses political diction to describe the strife among poets in the realm of bad writing. Addressing the would-be Grub-Street versifier, the "old experienc'd Sinner" laments:

But, oh, how insecure thy Throne!
A thousand Bards thy Right disown;
They plot to turn in factious Zeal,
Duncenia to a Common-weal;
And with rebellious Arms pretend
An equal Privilege to descend.

(11. 377-382, p. 653)

The words plot, factious, Zeal, rebellious, and Common-weal

31 The writers whom Swift satirizes in this passage are Richard Flecknoe, Edward Howard or his brother Sir Robert Howard (or both), Sir Richard Blackmore, and William Luckyn Grimston, who in 1705 published a play entitled The Lawyer's Fortune, or Love in a Hollow Tree.
were, in Swift's time, charged with pejorative meaning. They invariably were associated with Cromwell's Puritan government. The poets in "Duncenia" are thus pejoratively equated with the treasonous usurpers who killed Charles I. However, since the monarch who sits on the throne in "Duncenia" is not someone who can be compared with Charles I but is the worst poet of all, the poets who seek to topple him are said to be seeking an "equal Priv'lege" not to ascend but to descend. Swift thus adapts the political metaphor for his own purposes. Since the Puritan Commonwealth symbolized chaos and the triumph of fanaticism to many of his readers, the allusion that Swift uses is quite effective in tarnishing the image of the poets.

Following this section, the "old experienc'd Sinner" presents the "young Beginner" with a vivid illustration of "Praise bestow'd in Grub-Street Rimes." Earlier in the poem, it will be recalled, the old teacher had said that

A Prince the Moment he is crown'd,  
Inherits ev'ry Virtue round,  
As Emblems of the sov'reign Pow'r,  
Like other Bawbles of the Tow'r,  
Is gen'rous, valiant, just and wise,  
And so continues 'till he dies.

(11. 191-196, p. 646)

In this section, the sinner presents just that kind of vapid praise. He ironically praises King George II, the other members of the royal family, and Sir Robert Walpole, citing virtues that they obviously lacked. King George is praised
for his "Magnanimity of Spirit" and "Lineaments divine."

So extravagant is the praise that it rings false:

Hydaspes, Indus, and the Ganges,
Dread from his Hand impending Changes.
From him the Tartar, and Chinese,
Short by the Knees intreat for Peace.

(ll. 421-424, p. 655)

Queen Caroline is deified as "A perfect Goddess born and bred" (l. 426, p. 655). She is pronounced the "Appointed sov'reign Judge to sit / On Learning, Eloquence and Wit" (ll. 427-428, p. 655). Frederick Louis, the Prince of Wales, is called "divine Ἰόλυς," and the princesses are called "Bright Goddesses, in Number five." If Walpole is not similarly divine, since he is not a member of the royal family, he is at least the "Atlas [who] stands to prop the Court" (l. 444, p. 656). He is praised, with devastating irony, for being the "chief Protector" of learning and the church. To get at Swift's real meaning, the reader merely needs to reverse what is stated. A curious footnote to the poem is the fact that the irony apparently escaped one of those who were manhandled through Swift's "praise." George P. Mayhew reminds us that "the greatest irony of all was that Queen Caroline at first was taken in by the surface meaning of the poem, until Lord Hervey taught her to look for the opposite of what was said."32

The ironic praise of King Charles II, the other members of the royal family, and Robert Walpole comes as a fitting climax to "On Poetry: A Rhapsody." In the poem, we have seen, Swift satirizes both the verses produced by Grub-Street poets and the society that fosters such vile writing. The ironic panegyric vividly illustrates the only kind of writing that is likely to be rewarded in such a society. After presenting this panegyric, the "old experienc'ed Sinner" can consider his tutelage of the "young Beginner" complete.

Three Final Poems

To further illustrate Swift's satiric manner, I shall conclude this chapter with a study of three poems: "The Bubble," "The Beasts Confession to the Priest," and "The Legion Club." The second and third poems in particular are very appropriate poems with which to conclude this chapter and study since these satiric poems are among Swift's most powerful poems.

In 1721, Swift published "The Bubble" as a broadside to denounce both the unscrupulous promoters of the get-rich scheme that came to be known as the South Sea Bubble and the greedy and gullible speculators who were their victims. To accomplish this purpose, Swift relies chiefly on a variety of analogies. While these analogies are drawn from a number of sources, among which are the Bible, clasi-
sical mythology, and contemporary life, they all have one purpose: to expose the vice of the promoters and the folly of the investors. In the following paragraphs, I shall analyze the kinds of analogies that Swift uses and, in the process, illustrate Swift's inventiveness.

A number of the analogies that Swift draws help to depict the gullibility of the speculators. For example, for his first analogy Swift draws upon a form of contemporary entertainment, the magician's show. He speaks as a magician might:

Put in Your Money fairly told;
Presto be gone--Tis here ag'\'en,
Ladyes and Gentlemen, behold,
Here's ev'ry Piece as big as ten.

(11. 5-8, p. 251)

By comparing the directors of the South Sea Company with magicians and the speculators with gullible spectators, Swift effects an amusing diminution. Through this technique, Swift is able to point out that the speculators are being taken in by masters of fakery without saying so in so many words.

A number of analogies are based on the ability of water to change the appearance of anything that is submerged in it. For example, to expose the magician's and, hence, the promoter's skill in deceiving people, Swift follows up the lines above with a homelier analogy:
Thus in a Basin drop a Shilling,
Then fill the Vessel to the Brim,
You shall observe as you are filling
The pond'rous Metal seems to swim;

It rises both in Bulk and Height,
Behold it mounting to the Top,
The liquid Medium cheats your Sight,
Behold it swelling like a Sop.

(11. 9-16, p. 251)

Because it is seen through a "liquid Medium," the shilling seems to be defying the laws of nature. But the appearance is a delusion. Driven by their desire for instant fortune, the speculators suffered from a similar delusion. Their sight, too, was cheated. Somewhat redundantly, Swift returns to the same kind of analogy later in the poem to reinforce his point:

A Shilling in the Bath You fling,
The Silver takes a nobler Hue,
By Magick Virtue in the Spring,
And seems a Guinea to your View;

But as a Guinea will not pass
At Market for a Farthing more
Shewn through a multiplying Glass
Than what it always did before;

So cast it in the Southern Seas,
And view it through a Jobber's Bill,
Put on what Spectacles You please,
Your Guinea's but a Guinea still.

(11. 113-124, p. 255)

To stress the delusion that overcame the speculators, Swift also draws an analogy from the medical books. Calenture is a disease that afflicts sailors in the tropics. Those who suffer from the disease are said to imagine that
the sea is a green field, and they may leap overboard without realizing the peril. Swift uses this information to draw another apt analogy:

Thus the deluded Bankrupt raves,
Puts all upon a desp'reate Bett,
Then plunges in the Southern Waves,
Dipt over head and Ears—in Debt.

So, by a Calenture misled,
The Mariner with Rapture sees
On the smooth Ocean's azure Bed
Enamell'd Fields, and verdant Trees;

With eager Hast he longs to rove
In that fantastick Scene, and thinks
It must be some enchanted Grove,
And in he leaps, and down he sinks.

(11. 21-32, pp. 251-252)

Because Calenture is a disease of the tropics and because the speculators lost their money in "Southern Waves," the analogy seems especially witty and appropriate.

Swift was, as we have already seen, familiar with classical lore, and he could apply these stories to current events quite effectively. In this poem, he applies the tale of Icarus, as it is related in Ovid's Metamorphoses, to the behavior of the speculators. Icarus's fate immediately suggests a parallel to the fate of the speculators who lost their money in the "Southern Waves":

Rais'd up on Hope's aspiring Plumes,
The young Advent'rer o'er the Deep
An Eagle's Flight and State assumes,
And scorns the middle Way to keep,

On Paper Wings he takes his Flight,
With Wax the Father bound them fast,
The Wax is melted by the Height,
And down the towring Boy is cast:

(11. 33-40, p. 252)

This analogy points out the "Rashness" of both Icarus and the speculators who, too, scorned "the middle Way to keep."
The analogy also suggests that the investors based their decisions on flimsy assurances of success; they, too, relied upon paper and wax to sustain an arduous flight.

The analogies that Swift draws to characterize the promoters are often less charitable than those which characterize the investors. This uncharitableness is especially seen in the similitudes involving animals. For example, there is this Hobbesian vision of the directors of the South Sea Company:

As Fishes on each other prey
The great ones swallow up the small
So fares it in the Southern Sea
But Whale Directors eat up all.

(11. 65-68, p. 253)

Elsewhere, he again uses animal imagery to portray the directors as predators:

Mark where the Sly Directors creep,
Nor to the Shore approach too nigh;
The Monsters nestle in the Deep
To seise you in your passing by:

(11. 173-176, p. 257)

Swift further compares the promoters and directors with swine, locusts, and crocodiles. As we have seen in several poems, Swift often uses the technique of le mythe animal
when his satiric target is particularly worthy of scorn
and a good lashing.

Two further examples will conclude this inventory of
analogies that Swift uses. The first of these analogies
has a fable-like quality:

One Night a Fool into a Brook
Thus from a Hillock looking down,
The Golden Stars for Guineaas took,
And Silver Cynthia for a Crown;
The Point he could no longer doubt,
He ran, he leapt into the Flood,
There sprawl'd a while, at last got out,
All cover'd o'er with Slime and Mud.

(11. 125-132, p. 255)
The target of the analogy is again the foolish and greedy
speculator. The second analogy is biblical, deriving as
it does from Psalm 107. The pertinent section of Psalm
107 reads:

23 They that go down to the sea in ships, that do
business in great waters;
24 These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders
in the deep.
25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind,
which lifteth up the waves thereof.
26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again
to the depths; their soul is melted because of
trouble.
27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken
man, and are at their wits' end.

Swift alludes to this passage when he describes the cata-
strophic fate of the speculators:

Now bury'd in the Depth below,
Now mounted up to Heav'n again,
They reel and stagger too and fro,
At their Wits end like drunken Men.

(11. 149-152, p. 256)
The important difference is that while God provides relief for the mariners in Psalm 107, no such relief is afforded the victims of the South Sea Bubble. The calamity that befalls the victims is, after all, of their own doing.

Swift brings together so many analogies in the poem--I have not mentioned them all\(^3\)\(^3\)--that he has some difficulty in unifying the various parts. The poem gives the impression of being desultory, since transitions between stanzas are often lacking. However, he does attempt to unify the poem thematically in two principal ways. First, it should be clear by now, many of the analogies have something to do with water, whether it be in a basin, a tub, a brook, or the ocean. The analogies involving the shilling in the basin and tub, Calenture, Icarus, the "Whale Directors," the fool who leaps into the brook, and the passage from Psalm 107 all deal with water. Since the poem is about speculation in "Southern Seas," such a unifying thread is altogether appropriate. Second, Swift achieves a degree of unity because the analogies have similar functions; some present instances of deception, delusion, and madness, while others present instances of greed. While "The Bubble" is not, by any means, a great poem, it effectively satirizes

\(^3\) For example, Swift also compares the directors with Midas and with savages who hope for shipwrecks so that they can "strip the Bodyes of the Dead."
the foolishness of the investors and the viciousness of the directors.

"The Beasts Confession to the Priest, on Observing how most Men mistake their own Talents" (1732) is a much better poem. In its aim of puncturing man's pride and satirizing his often irrational behavior and in its method of le mythe animal, this poem indeed resembles the fourth book of Gulliver's Travels, which was published earlier in 1726. But, as C. J. Horne points out, while there is "much contention about the position that Swift is taking in the last book of Gulliver's Travels because in it all is being delivered in the person of Gulliver," in the poem "there is no such concealment and the verdict is unambiguous."34

The poem was originally printed with a preface and an advertisement. In both preliminary pieces, Swift explains the purpose of his poem. In the preface he writes: "I HAVE been long of Opinion, that there is not a more general and greater Mistake, or of worse Consequences through the Commerce of Mankind, than the wrong Judgments they are apt to entertain of their own Talents."35 His emphasis on the


35 Poems, II, 599.
need of men to know themselves was commonplace in the
eighteenth century. In the advertisement, Swift reiterates
this view and implies that this self-deception is due to
man's pride, a trait that other poets of the age, notably
Pope, also excoriated.

Horne has already established that Swift's poem is
indebted to Aesop's fable of "A Plague among the Beasts"
as rendered into English in 1699 by Sir Roger L'Estrange.
He succinctly summarizes L'Estrange's rendition thus:

In a time of plague . . . the Lion, consulting
history, finds that plagues were a punishment for
wrong-doers. All the animals are summoned to
confession with the intention of sacrificing the
most guilty. The Lion begins with his own con-
fession, followed by the Fox, the Bear, the Wolf,
the Tiger, etc., but each turns his crime to his
credit, even priding himself on the basest of his
traits. The Ass confesses to the most venial
fault of all, but the rest make it out to be the
worst of sins, an act of sacrilege.36

Swift retains the basic structure of Aesop's fable. In his
poem as in Aesop's fable, during a time of plague the "King
of Brutes" commands all animals to confess their sins to
the priest.

Swift does not, however, retain all of Aesop's animal
characters. He keeps the wolf and the ass; for the others,
he substitutes a swine, an ape, and a goat. The animals
that Swift uses are more suited to his satiric purpose.

36 Horne, pp. 202-203.
He explains in the advertisement that by "almost equalling them \(\text{men}\) with certain Brutes," he does "a great Honour to his own Species." He confesses, however, that "he hath gone as low as he well could." In short, to find animals that men "almost" equal, Swift has to look among the lowest beasts, not the noblest.

The selection of these animals is ingenious for yet another reason. By Swift's time, the words wolf, ass, swine, ape, and goat had come to represent not only animals but certain human types, all of them base. The word wolf was applied to a cruel and rapacious person; ass was applied to a stupid or ignorant person; swine was applied to a coarse person; ape was applied to a foolish person, and goat was applied to a licentious person. Hence as the reader listens to each animal's confession, he cannot help but think of the human types with whom the animals are associated. Swift indeed encourages this association. In the beginning of the poem, he playfully suggests that the behavior of men and animals is often so similar that they are difficult to tell apart:

WHEN Beasts could speak, (the Learned say They still can do so every Day) It seems, they had Religion then, As much as now we find in Men. It happen'd when a Plague broke out, (Which therefore made them more devout)

---

37 Poems, II, 601.
38 Ibid.
The King of Brutes (to make it plain,
Of Quadrupeds I only mean)
By Proclamation gave Command,
That ev'ry Subject in the Land
Should to the Priest confess their Sins;

(ll. 1-11, p. 601)

This similarity between man and beast persists in the poem. When the goat advances to confess that he is not too fond of "the Female Kind," for example, the reader cannot avoid the feeling that Swift is attacking hypocritical, licentious men rather than the ruminant quadruped. Indeed, the whole point of a beast fable is to comment on human behavior. Swift works in that tradition.

In the first section of the poem (ll. 1-72), each of the animals comes forward to confess his sins. Each one denies possessing the trait that is most characteristic of his species, at least in the literature of fable. The wolf denies that he ever wronged his neighbor or ever sought food "By Rapine, Theft, or Thirst of Blood" (l. 20, p. 602). The ass, who is fabled for his dim-wittedness, confesses

That in his Heart he lov'd a Jest;
A Wag he was, he needs must own,
And could not let a Dunce alone;

(ll. 22-24, p. 602)

He ignores the fact that usually he is the dunce himself. He claims that he was born and bred a wit and that "he's the Nightingal of Brutes" (l. 36, p. 602). The swine comes forward with this amusing confession:
His Shape and Beauty made him proud:
In Dyet was perhaps too nice,
But Gluttony was ne'er his Vice:
*
His Vigilance might some displea
'Tis true, he hated Sloth like Pease.

(ll. 38-40, 45-46, p. 602)

The ape confesses that he is too grave and strict in his morals, and the goat confesses that he has made a vow of chastity. Like Aesop, Swift uses the beast fable to expose the hypocrisy and dishonesty of men whom the animals so resemble. His transition to the second part of the poem makes this intention clear:

APPLY the Tale, and you shall find
How just it suits with human Kind.
Some Faults we own: But, can you guess?
Why?—Virtues carry'd to Excess;
Werewith our Vanity endows us,
Though neither Foe nor Friend allows us.

(ll. 73-78, p. 603)

In the second section of the poem, Swift allows representatives of various professions to come forward and make their confession as the beasts had done before them. Again, as in the first section, each of the confessors denies the trait that is most conspicuous in him. To demonstrate Swift's skill, I shall examine three of these ironic portraits.

The lawyer makes several points in his brief confession:

He never squeez'd a needy Clyent;
And, this he makes his constant Rule;
For which his Brethren call him Fool;
His Conscience always was so nice,
He freely gave the Poor Advice;
By which he lost, he may affirm,
A hundred Fees last Easter term.
While others of the learned Robe
Would break the Patience of a Job,
No Pleader at the Bar could match
His Diligence and quick Dispatch;
Ne'er kept a Cause, he well may boast,
Above a Term or two at most.

(11. 80-92, pp. 603-604)

The lawyer disclaims any spirit of gain and claims for himself the virtue of quickness and efficiency. Despite his claims, the lawyer is, as the reader realizes, both greedy and slow. Swift's general attitude toward lawyers is well known. In "Of Publick Absurdityes in England," he complains that the "proceedings at law are already so scandalous a grievance upon account of the delays."39 And, of course, few will forget his scathing portrait of lawyers in the fourth book of Gulliver's Travels, where he, among other things, excoriates the legal profession for its delays:

IN pleading, they studiously avoid entering into the Merits of the Cause; but are loud, violent and tedious in dwelling upon all Circumstances which are not to the Purpose. For Instance, in the Case already mentioned: They never desire to know what Claim or Title my Adversary hath to my Cow; but whether the said Cow were Red or Black; her Horns long or short; whether the Field I graze her in be round or square; whether she were milked at home or abroad; what Diseases she is subject to, and the like. After which they

39 Prose Works, V, 82.
consult Precedents, adjourn the Cause, from Time
to Time, and in Ten, Twenty, or Thirty Years come
to an Issue. 40

Gulliver also claims that because lawyers "have wholly con-
founded the very Essence of Truth and Falsehood, of Right
and Wrong . . . it will take Thirty Years to decide
whether the Field, left me by my Ancestors for six genera-
tions, belong to me, or to a Stranger three Hundred Miles
off." 41 The lawyer who steps forward in Swift's poem would
fit Gulliver's description. Indeed, not only is he revealed
to be greedy and slow but hypocritical as well. He is no
better than the ass.

The portrait of the physician is equally masterly.
Just as the animals in the first part of the poem profess
to have traits that the reader knows are alien to their
species, the physician claims to have virtues that physi-
cians notoriously lacked. Primarily, he claims that he is
perhaps too religious:

Sometimes to act the Parson's Part:
Quotes from the Bible many a Sentence
That moves his Patients to Repentance:
And, when his Med'cines do no good,
Supports their Minds with heav'nly Food.
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
In his own Church he keeps a Seat;
Says Grace before, and after Meat;

40 Prose Works, XI, 249-250.
41 Ibid., p. 250.
And calls, without affecting Airs,  
His Household twice a Day to Pray'rs.  

(11. 120-124, 129-132, p. 605)

He also claims that he "shuns Apothecary Shops; / And hates to cram the Sick with Slops" (11. 133-134, p. 605). Swift's attitudes toward physicians are also well known. As for the possibility that physicians are religious men, Swift says, "PHYSICIANS ought not to give their Judgment of Religion, for the same Reason that Butchers are not admitted to be Jurors upon Life and Death." 42 Moreover, Gulliver explains the physician's method of curing the sick in the following terms:

THEIR Fundamental is, that all Diseases arise from Repletion; from whence they conclude, that a great Evacuation of the Body is necessary, either through the natural Passage, or upwards at the Mouth. Their next Business is, from Herbs, Minerals, Gums, Oyls, Shells, Salts, Juices, See-weed, Excrements, Barks of Trees, Serpents, Toads, Frogs, Spiders, dead Mens Flesh and Bones, Birds, Beasts and Fishes, to form a Composition for Smell and Taste the most abominable, nauseous and detestable, that they can possibly contrive. 43

The longest portrait is reserved for one of Swift's favorite targets—the statesman. Swift's indictment of statesmen in Gulliver's Travels is familiar to every student of Swift. We recall that the King of Brobdingnag says to Gulliver, "You have clearly proved that Ignorance, Idleness,  

42 Prose Works, I, 244.  
43 Ibid., XI, 253-254.
and Vice are the proper Ingredients for qualifying a Legis-
lator."\(^{44}\) The statesman comes across just as unfavorably
in this poem. He denies the very vices that have gained
him notoriety. The statesman in this poem claims, among
other things, that he is "too Sincere," that he is above
party politics, that "He defeated the EXCISE," that he has
an aversion to a standing army, that he is free from the
charge of favoritism, and, most incredibly, that his years
of public service have impoverished him.

So far, then, Swift has shown that animals and men
behave somewhat similarly. Swift has reduced the stature
of the men to the level of the lowest beasts. Both beast
and man deny the traits most characteristic in them. Swift,
however, does not let the matter rest there. In a witty
reversal in the concluding section of the poem, Swift
claims that animals are superior to men. He points out
an essential difference between humans and animals:

the Tale is false in Fact;
And, so absurd, that could I raise up
From Fields Elyzian, fabling Esop;
I would accuse him to his Face
For libelling the Four-footed Race.
Creatures of ev'ry Kind but ours
Well comprehend their nat'ral Powers;
While We, whom Reason ought to sway,
Mistake our Talents ev'ry Day:

(11. 198-206, p. 607)

Swift then provides an illustration to demonstrate the

\(^{44}\) Prose Works, XI, 132.
superiority of beasts:

The Ass was never known so stupid
To act the Part of Tray, or Cupid;
Nor leaps upon his Master's Lap,
There to be strack'd and fed with Pap;
As Esop would the World perswade;
He better understands his Trade:

(11. 207-212, p. 607)

The allusion here is probably to Aesop's fable of "An Ass
and a Whelp" in L'Estrange's collection:

A Gentleman had got a Favourite-Spaniel, that would
be still Toying, and Leaping upon him, Licking his
Cheeks, and playing a Thousand pretty Gamboles, which
the Master was well enough pleas'd withal. This Wanton Humour succeeded so well with the
Puppy, that an Ass in the House would needs go the
same Gamesome Way to Work, to Curry favour for
Himself too; but he was quickly given to under­
stand, with a Good Cudgel, the Difference betwixt
the One Play-Fellow and the Other.45

Swift disputes the veracity of the fable, arguing that in
so portraying the ass Aesop libelled the quadruped. Even
the beast most fabled for its stupidity--the ass--is,
according to Swift, smarter than Aesop would have it.
Hence, though the animals and humans were earlier shown to
resemble each other, Swift shows the animals to be superior.

The essential difference between animals and man,
according to Swift, is that man is endowed with reason.
In his famous letter to Pope, Swift argues that man is an
animal rationis capax.46 Hence man's failure to lift

45 Sir Roger L'Estrange, Fable of Aesop and Other
Eminent Mythologists with Morals and Reflexions, 5th ed.
46 Correspondence, III, 103.
himself above the behavior of animals is even more reprehensible than it might otherwise be. Reason should serve man at least as well as instinct does an animal. Because it often does not, Swift is able to conclude his poem with an interesting reversal: "Beasts may degenerate into Men" (l. 220, p. 608).

Finally it may be said of "The Beasts Confession to the Priest" that it presents the reader with a fine example of what Akenside and Fielding meant by the ridiculous. Akenside argued that "the first and most general source of ridicule in the characters of men, is vanity, or self applause for some desirable quality or possession, which evidently does not belong to those who assume it." And Fielding wrote, "The only source of the true Ridiculous (as it appears to me) is affectation. . . . Now affectation proceeds from one of these two causes, vanity or hypocrisy; for as vanity puts us on affecting false characters, in order to purchase applause; so hypocrisy sets us on an endeavour to avoid censure, by concealing our vices under an appearance of their opposite virtues." The men whom Swift exposes and satirizes in this poem are truly ridiculous.

---

47 Quoted in Bullitt, Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire, p. 27.
48 Ibid., p. 28.
The final poem that I shall discuss in this study is "A Character, Panegyric, and Description of the Legion Club." Swift evidently was quite proud of this scathing assault on the Irish House of Commons. To Sheridan he wrote that "The Legion Club" is "a very masterly Poem." While critics disagree on the artistic merits of the poem, few have denied its vituperative force and emotional power. Harold Williams considers the poem the "bitterest of his satires." Herbert Davis says that the poem is an "invective as powerful as he ever wrote." Bonamy Dobrée writes that "The Legion Club" is Swift's "most terrible poem." And Maurice Johnson describes the poem as "a diatribe almost unequaled in the literature of the world."

Swift was not bitter without cause. Shortly before he composed the poem in 1736, the Irish House of Commons attempted to deprive the clergy of the tithe on pasturage or the "tithe of agistment," as it was commonly called. Swift saw the attempt as just one more in a long series of

49 Correspondence, IV, 480.
50 Poems, III, 828.
51 Jonathan Swift, p. 254.
53 The Sin of Wit, p. 100.
attempts to weaken and plunder the church. Louis Landa has written that in 1736 "Swift reached the apogee of his pessimism concerning the church." \(^{54}\) That being the case, it is not surprising that "The Legion Club" should be so charged with righteous anger.

Landa is quite right in pointing out that in the poem "we have no reasoned statement in which he \(\text{Swift}\) discusses the issues raised by the controversy over agistment." \(^{55}\) However, the poem is not, as Landa has argued, merely an emotional outburst. \(^{56}\) A detailed examination of Swift's major motifs will demonstrate his considerable skill in the poem.

The first verse paragraph of the poem introduces the reader to the two primary motifs of the poem: the Irish Parliament, Swift argues, can be likened to both an insane asylum and hell:

*AS I strole the City, oft I
Spy a Building large and lofty,
Not a Bow-shot from the College,
Half the Globe from Sense and Knowledge.
By the prudent Architect
Plac'd against the Church direct;
Making good my Grandames Jest,
Near the Church—you know the rest.* \(^{57}\)


\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 139.

\(^{56}\) Ibid.

Swift's point is that although the Irish House of Commons is situated near both a center of learning and religion, it is bereft of reason and Godliness. In the remainder of the poem, Swift develops these motifs. He demonstrates how antithetical to both sense and religion the Parliament is by comparing it with a bedlam and with hell.

The second verse paragraph reinforces the motifs introduced in the first verse paragraph. It begins:

TELL US, what this Pile contains?  
Many a Head that holds no Brains  
These Demoniacs let me dub  
With the Name of Legion Club.

(11. 9-12, p. 829)

Line 10 reminds the reader that the Parliament resembles an insane asylum, while lines 11 and 12 remind him that the Parliament is an ungodly assembly. Swift appropriately calls the assembly the "Legion Club" after the unclean spirit of Mark V. 9, who, when asked by Jesus for his identity, replied, "My name is Legion: for we are many."58 The "Demoniacs" of the Irish Parliament are thus damningly exposed as opponents of Jesus.

In the remainder of the second verse paragraph, Swift further deflateS the activities of Parliament by comparing them with disreputable activities of various sorts:

Such Assemblies, you might swear,  
Meet when Butchers bait a Bear:

58 Poems, III, 829.
Such a Noise, and such haranguing,
When a Brother Thief is hanging,
Such a Rout and such a Rabble
Run to hear Jackpudding gabble;
Such a Croud their Ordure throws
On a far less Villain's Nose.

(11. 13-20, pp. 829-830)

The mention of bear-baiting reveals the mindless cruelty
of the Parliament; the phrase Brother Thief reveals Swift's
belief that the members were out to rob the church. Swift
was a master of such diminution.

In the third verse paragraph, Swift allies himself with
God just as he has allied his opponents with the devil in
the preceding verse paragraph. Such a religious tone is
entirely appropriate to the poem, since Swift saw the
Parliament as opposing God in trying to deprive the clergy
of tithes legally due them. Calling the Parliament both
a "Den of Thieves" (a phrase with biblical overtones) and
a "Harpies Nest," Swift warns that God "can punish Sins
enormous." The use of the word Sins reminds the reader,
if he needs such a reminder, that Swift is here excoriating
not a minor failing or folly but a grievous and unforgivable
offense against God. The rhetorical effect is to ally the
Parliament with an untenable opposition to God.

In the next three verse paragraphs, Swift develops at
length the first motif—that the Parliament is indistinguish-
able from a madhouse. He describes the activities of the
inmates thus:
LET them, when they once get in
Sell the Nation for a Pin;
While they sit a picking Straws
Let them rave of making Laws;
While they never hold their Tongue,
Let them dabble in their Dung;
Let them form a grand Committee,
How to plague and starve the City;
Let them stare and storm and frown,
When they see a Clergy-Gown.

(11. 47-56, p. 831)

In these lines, Swift effectively punctures the pretensions of the House of Commons. Its members behave like lunatics rather than responsible public officials. The juxtaposition of picking Straws and making Laws implies that the officials are better equipped for the former activity than the latter. Indeed, the juxtaposition suggests that the members make laws as carefully and thoughtfully as they pick straws. The juxtaposition of Tongue and Dung similarly diminishes the forensic ability of the politicians. Swift also indulges in exaggeration to make his point. To emphasize the civic irresponsibility of the Parliament, he says that the members would "Sell the Nation for a Pin"; moreover, their reaction to the sight of a clergyman is surely exaggerated. While, to be sure, they did wish to deprive the clergy of fees due them, Swift depicts their behavior in almost pathological terms.

Before he leaves the asylum, Swift focuses on one of the inmates, Sir Thomas Prendergast, the M.P. for Chichester and Clonmel, whom he also satirizes in "On Noisy Tom." He
portrays Prendergast thus:

LET Sir T--, that rampant Ass,
Stuff his Guts with Flax and Grass;
But before the Priest he fleeces
Tear the Bible all to Pieces.
At the Parsons, Tom, Hallow Boy,
Worthy Offspring of a Shoeboy,
Footman, Traytor, vile Seducer,
Perjur'd Rebel, brib'd Accuser;
Lay thy paltry Priviledge aside,
Sprung from Papists and a Regicide;
Fall a Working like a Mole,
Raise the Dirt about your Hole.

(ll. 63-74, pp. 831-832)

The second line no doubt alludes to the tithe on pasturage. These lines again show us that Swift blends two motifs in the poem. Prendergast, like the other members of Parliament, is not only afflicted with lunacy but is ungodly as well. Swift not only accuses Prendergast of being anti-clerical but he gives us a vivid image of the culprit physically manifesting his sinfulness by tearing up a Bible. Moreover, to finish Prendergast off, Swift ungenerously attacks his genealogy (we recall that Swift also thought it legitimate to castigate Tighe for being the descendant of a bread contractor). 59

In the remainder of the poem, Swift develops at length the second principal motif: Bedlam becomes hell as well. He effects the transition quite smoothly by invoking the Muse:

59 For a brief biography of Prendergast's father, see Thomas Eccombe, "Prendergast, Sir Thomas," DNB.
COME, assist me, Muse obedient,  
Let us try some new Expedient;  
Shift the Scene for half an Hour,  
Time and Place are in thy Power.  
Thither, gentle Muse, conduct me,  
I shall ask, and you instruct me.

(11. 75-80, p. 832)

This passage effectively unites the two major sections of the poem.

The invocation of the Muse is also appropriate because in the remainder of the poem Swift escorts the reader on a tour of Hades. The Hades that Swift depicts is primarily Virgil's Hades, and Swift seems here to be invoking Virgil's Muse. In Faulkner's edition of the poem, the parallels between Swift's and Virgil's poems were clearly indicated. Swift, however, does not merely translate Virgil's passages; he adapts them for his own purposes. For example, Virgil describes the scene at the entrance to Hades thus:

Just before the entrance, even within the very jaws of Hell, Grief and avenging Cares have made their bed; there pale Diseases dwell, and sad Age, and Fear, and ill-counselling Famine, and loathly Want, shapes terrible to view; and Death and Distress: next, Death's own brother Sleep, and the soul's Guilty Joys, and, on the threshold opposite, the death-bearer War, and the Furies' iron cells, and savage Strife, her snaky locks entwined with bloody fillets. 60

Following is Swift's abbreviated adaptation:

NEAR the Door an entrance gapes,
Crouded round with antic Shapes;
Poverty, and Grief, and Care,
Causeless Joy, and true Despair;
Discord periwigg'd with Snakes,
See the dreadful Strides she takes.

(11. 87-92, p. 832)

Swift's catalogue of allegorical figures is obviously not so inclusive as Virgil's, since Swift wants his Hades to be a fitting habitat for particular enemies. While the members of Parliament could be blamed for discord, poverty, grief, and even despair, they could not be held accountable for such misfortunes as disease, old age, and war. Hence, in Swift's version, these allegorical figures vanish. In short, Swift adapts Virgil's nether world to suit his own needs.

The shift from the largely Christian context of the first part, in which Swift portrays the Parliament as an insane asylum, to the largely classical context of the second part might initially strike the reader as incongruous. A more biblical hell might seem more consistent and appropriate. Milton, however, did not see any incongruity in drawing together both biblical and classical sources to depict hell in Paradise Lost. Neither does Swift. Besides, what better hell could be imagined for these men than a pagan hell?

As to be expected, the inhabitants of Swift's hell are various members of the Irish Parliament. Swift abuses each
in turn and, in so doing, shows a range of tones. His portrait of Richard Tighe and Richard Bettesworth is scathing:

KEEPER, shew me where to fix
On the Puppy Pair of Dicks;
By their lanthorn Jaws and Leathern,
You might swear they both are Brethren:
Dick Fitz-Baker, Dick the Player,
Old Acquaintance, are you there?
Dear Companions hug and kiss,
Toast old Glorious in your Piss.
Tye them Keeper in a Tether,
Let them stare and stink together;
Both are apt to be unruly,
Lash them daily, lash them duly,
Though 'tis hopeless to reclaim them,
Scorpion Rods perhaps may tame them.

(11. 145-158, pp. 835-836)

Both men are depicted as animals that are so dangerous that they need to be kept "in a Tether." Their very appearance ("lanthorn Jaws and Leathern") also suggests that they are animals more than human beings. Like some animals, they wallow in filth and their own excrement. And like incorrigible brutes, they deserve a severe whipping.

Swift, however, does not treat all his enemies in the same way. In the next verse paragraph, the tone shifts abruptly. His portrait of Wynne is hilarious:

KEEPER, yon old Dotard smoke,
Sweetly snoring in his Cloak.
Who is he? 'Tis hum-drum W—,
Half encompass'd by his Kin:
There observe the Tribe of R—m, 61
For he never fails to bring 'em;

61 The "Tribe" consisted of Sir John Bingham and his brother Henry (Poems, III, 836).
While he sleeps the whole Debate,
They submissive round him wait;
Yet would gladly see the Hunks
In his Grave, and search his Trunks.
See they gently twitch his Coat,
Just to yawn, and give his Vote;
Always firm in his Vocation,
For the Court against the Nation.

(11. 159-172, p. 836)

Until the final line of this passage, we get the impression that Wynne is a harmless, senile fool who does not know how to choose his friends. Swift's treatment of Wynne is quite different from his treatment of Tighe and Bettesworth.

The longest portrait in the poem is reserved for Marcus Antonius Morgan, the M.P. from the borough of Arthy. He served as chairman of the committee that recommended the termination of the tithe of agistment. While the portrait of Tighe and Bettesworth was harsh and pitiless, Swift's portrait of Morgan is less vituperative. Swift begins by registering incredulity at the fact that someone like Morgan could serve such evil ends:

BLESS us, Morgan! Art thou there Man?
Bless mine Eyes! Art thou the Chairman?
Chairman of yon damn'd Committee!
Yet I look on thee with Pity.
Dreadful Sight! What learned Morgan
Metamorphos'd to a Gorgan!

(11. 189-194, pp. 837-838)

Morgan is deemed a puzzling opponent of the clergy, since as a student he was a classmate of many future divines.

While the two principal motifs of the poem blend
together well, Swift's use of animal imagery throughout the poem also helps to give the poem thematic unity. We have already seen that Sir Thomas Prendergast is described as a "rampant Ass" and a mole and that Richard Tighe and Richard Bettesworth are described as a "Puppy Pair" with "Leathern" for skin. In addition, Swift applies to the members of Parliament such pejorative words as Monkeys, Harpies Nest, Beasts, and Brutes. Such labels indicate that the officials are bereft of both reason and decency. Such animal imagery suggests a kinship between "The Legion Club" and "The Beasts Confession to the Priest." However, "The Legion Club" is certainly the more violent poem.

"The Legion Club" was the last of Swift's major poems. It antedated by several years the insanity that gradually overtook him. Readers who find evidence of Swift's impending insanity in the poem are mistaken. Though angry and often violent, it is not the product of a raging madman. Rather, it is the carefully structured product of a man who saw his church deeply wronged and who tried to lash those who would oppose God.
CONCLUSION

I began this study with Dr. Johnson's casual dismissal of Swift's poetry: "IN the Poetical Works of Dr. Swift there is not much upon which the critick can exercise his powers."¹ And I have tried, throughout this dissertation, to demonstrate that such an assessment is both erroneous and unjust. While Dr. Johnson's comment might be applicable to some of Swift's poems, it is not applicable to many of his poems. To reinforce my thesis that a detailed analysis of Swift's poetic techniques will enhance our appreciation of his poetry, I shall in this chapter summarize some of the techniques upon which he most relies--diverse techniques that the critic must understand before he can fully assess Swift's equally diverse poetry. I shall close my study with a few general comments about Swift's poetic achievement.

One technique upon which Swift relies heavily is irony. Since irony is a technique that Swift utilizes frequently in his prose, it is no surprise that his poetry is also frequently ironic. Swift, moreover, can employ irony for

both encomiastic and satiric purposes. For example, in his warm tributes to Harley—"Part of the Seventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace" and "Horace, Lib. 2. Sat. 6."—Swift ostensibly complains that his friendship with Harley entails severe hardships and personal sacrifices. However, the reader realizes—as Harley must surely have realized—that Swift is actually saying the opposite. Through irony, Swift records in both poems his deep gratitude for Harley's friendship. That Swift can use irony equally well for satiric purposes is shown in "The Beasts Confession to the Priest," with its ironic "confessions" from the lawyer, the doctor, the patronage seeker, the politician, and the gambler, and in "On Poetry: A Rapsody," with its ironic instruction on the writing of poetry in a corrupt society and its stinging ironic praise of George II, the other members of the royal family, and Walpole.

Another technique that Swift relies upon is parody. On rare occasions, Swift parodies specific poems. For example, "Clad All in Brown" and "An Elegy on Mr. Patrige, the Almanack-maker" both parody poems by Abraham Cowley. Usually when Swift indulges in parody, however, he parodies certain traditions rather than specific poems. For example, he parodies the pastoral tradition in "Cadenus and Vanessa," and he parodies the tradition of Petrarchan love poetry in the poems he addressed to Stella. Perhaps Swift's
most effective parody is "A Satirical Elegy on the Death of a late Famous General," a devastating satire in which he overturns the conventions of the traditional elegy of the period.

One of Swift's favorite poetic techniques is the extended analogy. While Swift could use this technique effectively for encomiastic purposes—as in "Stella's Birth-day," where he likens Stella to "the true old Angel-Inn," and in "Atlas," where he likens Harley to Atlas—he uses it more frequently for satiric purposes. In "Mad Mullinix and Timothy," he compares Timothy (Richard Tighe) with the puppet Punch. In "The Legion Club," he likens the Irish Parliament to both Hades and an insane asylum. In "The Virtues of Sid Hamet the Magician's Rod" and "The Bubble," Swift draws a series of analogies to satirize the ousted Lord Treasurer and the participants of the South Sea Bubble.

In many of his poems, Swift draws a comparison between humans and animals. This type of analogy (le mythe animal) is used so pervasively in his poetry that only a few instances can be recalled in this summary. In "The Description of a Salamander," Swift draws a detailed analogy between the behavior of salamanders and the behavior of John Cutts. In "The Progress of Poetry," he compares the Grub-Street poet with a tuneless goose. In "A Fable of
the Widow and her Cat," Swift reduces Marlborough, the
great military hero, to an unmanageable and ungrateful
domestic animal, a "Pole-Cat vile." In "The Beasts Con-
fession to the Priest," he first reveals a kinship between
animal and human behavior and then demonstrates that
animals are often superior. And in "On Poetry: A Rapsody,"
Swift characterizes the behavior of Grub-Street poets by
comparing them with fleas. In each case, the purpose of
comparing humans with animals is satiric diminution. This
technique is, in Swift's hands, a potent weapon against
human pride.

Some of Swift's analogies are of a special kind: they
are based upon classical mythology. In "The Fable of Midas,"
Swift carefully shows why Marlborough was both like Midas
and worse than Midas. In "Prometheus," he likens William
Wood to the thief Prometheus. And in "On Wood the Iron-
monger," he compares Wood with Salmoneus to ridicule his
pretentiousness. What is significant about all of these
poems is that Swift usually adapts the myths to suit his
own satiric purposes.

Self-dramatization is a technique that Swift employs
particularly well in the encomiastic poems. In "Cadenus
and Vanessa," for example, he portrays his own behavior
unflatteringly to better praise Esther Vanhomrigh. In
"Part of the Seventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace
Imitated," he makes himself the butt of Harley's joke and, in so doing, offers Harley a fine tribute. Finally, in "To Stella, Visiting me in my Sickness," Swift portrays himself as an unmanly and stubborn child to better emphasize Stella's manliness and patience.

Another technique that we encounter often in Swift's poems is the catalogue. To satirize his target, Swift frequently presents a seemingly endless catalogue of defects. In "Cadenus and Vanessa," for example, he catalogues the trivial activities with which women preoccupy themselves in the following manner:

A Dog, a Parrot, or an Ape,
Or some worse Brute in human Shape,
Engross the Fancies of the Fair,
The few soft Moments they can spare,
From Visits to receive and pay,
From Scandal, Politicks, and Play,
From Fans, and Flounces, and Brocades,
From Equipage and Park-Parades,
From all the thousand Female Toys,
From every Trifle that employs
The out or inside of their Heads,
Between their Toylets and their Beds.

(11. 39-50, pp. 687-688)

Swift utilizes the same device to ridicule the bathetic thoughts and trivial activities of fashionable women in "Verses Wrote in a Lady's Ivory Table-Book" and "The Furniture of a Woman's Mind."

The final technique that I shall summarize is the use of the foil. In the encomiastic poems, Swift often contrasts the person being praised with a foil. In "Cadenus
and Vanessa," for example, Vanessa (Esther Vanhomrigh) is enhanced through being contrasted with the "fashionable Fops," the "glitt'ring Dames," and Cadenus. In the poems addressed to Stella, Swift more clearly shows why Stella is praiseworthy by contrasting her with Chloes, Phillises, Sylvias, and Irises. In the satiric poems, the foil is usually implicit. That is, Swift satirizes such targets as Walpole, Marlborough, and lawyers by demonstrating the disparity between their behavior and the behavior of the ideal statesman, the ideal soldier, and the ideal lawyer.

I should conclude this inventory of poetic techniques with two comments. First, the list that I have supplied above is, of course, far from exhaustive. I have only summarized the most basic techniques. Second, I do not mean to suggest that Swift confines himself to just one or two techniques in a single poem. In his best poems, such as "Cadenus' and Vanessa," "The Beasts Confession to the Priest," and "On Poetry: A Rhapsody," Swift utilizes a combination of techniques.

Though it is fashionable to reassess the work of a minor poet and to claim for him a greatness that he does not deserve, I make no such claim for Swift's poetry. Swift himself realized his limitations as a poet. In his best known poem, "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," he admits his inferiority to Pope:
In POPE, I cannot read a Line,
But with a Sigh, I wish it mine:
When he can in one Couplet fix
More Sense than I can do in Six:

(ll. 47-50, p. 555)

We have no reason to suspect that Swift is being ironic in these lines. Some of Swift's poems, it is true, do resemble Pope's poems. For example, "On Poetry: A Rapsody" shares a kinship with both "Epistle to Augustus" and the Dunciad. "The Journal of a Modern Lady" shares a kinship with the Rape of the Lock. Even so, however, few will concede that Swift ever surpassed Pope's poetic achievement. Nothing can alter the fact that Swift was the lesser poet. Still, as I hope this study helps to demonstrate, he wrote a sufficient number of superb poems to assure his standing as one of the fine minor poets of the eighteenth century.

Swift's achievement is all the more remarkable when it is remembered that he devoted most of his energy to prose. His Bickerstaff papers thus reveal greater wit, comic energy, and finesse than his "An Elegy on Mr. Patrigge, the Almanack-maker." His Drapier's Letters reveal far greater care and argumentative skill than his satiric poems on William Wood. However, while the prose works often outshine the poems on the same themes, we frequently see in the poems the same forceful expression. Also, in his best poems, such as "On Poetry: A Rapsody" and "The Beasts Confession to the Priest," Swift is just as much a craftsman
as in his prose.

Swift's poems, then, are not the finest poems that the century has to offer. Moreover, his poems are often inferior to his prose works. However, Bonamy Dobrée has written, "Though he may not have added anything of the utmost importance to our poetic canon, much of what he did is individual, unmatched, while a little of it has something of that kind of value we should feel poorer for being without." I agree. That Swift "sometimes dealt in Rhime" is one of the happiest truths in English literature.

---


.readline


Freeman, A. Martin. Vanessa and Her Correspondence with Jonathan Swift. London: Selwyn and Blount, 1921.


———. "Swift's 'Satirical Elegy on a Late Famous General.'" *REL,* 3 (1962), 80-89.


