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The personal and literary relationship of Matthew Prior and Jonathan Swift.

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The Personal and Literary Relationship

of

Matthew Prior and Jonathan Swift

by

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Introduction

It is curious that Bonamy Dobrée, in his history of the period, should choose Swift as a point of comparison in his discussion of Matthew Prior, although Dobrée was not the first to realize that "it was more than political affinities and their both dining at Harley's table that made them exercise together in the park, the one to get fat, the other to get thin."1 After noting that "the poetical development of the two men runs remarkably parallel" and that there "was much in Prior's approach to poetry to commend him to Swift," Dobrée acknowledges that "in some ways comparison would be absurd."2 His discussion of the relationship of Prior and Swift, brief as it is, is the only attempt I have found that utilizes this personal and literary friendship as a means to better comprehension of either of these men or their work. He is taking advantage of the reader's supposed greater familiarity with Swift (although a more than passing acquaintance with Swift's poetry by many readers is not likely) to make his remarks on Prior more easily understood, but the critical assessment of Swift and especially of his poetry is not so firmly established that a study of these two men would illuminate Prior more than it would Swift.

Although the title indicates that this is a study in literary relationship, for several reasons the investigation is directed more towards the poetry of Prior and Swift than towards their complete works. Most of Prior's prose was written during the last years of his life, and many of these late productions were not published until 1907. Some of Prior's
contemporaries saw or had access to these writings, but it is not
certain how widely they were known or if Swift ever saw them. Swift's
greatest prose works were not written during the period of his friend-
ship with Prior, but some of his best poetry belongs to this era. The
fact that the main literary result of their association would appear to
be poetry rather than prose makes the focus on the poetry a natural
one. There also seems to be more room for a study of Swift's verse
than one of his prose, and Prior's poetry far outweighs his prose.
These combined factors led me to concentrate on the poetry for the
study of the literary relationship. This focus does not exclude consid-
eration of the prose, however, and reference to the prose works is
sometimes enlightening.

This study of the personal and literary relationship of Matthew
Prior and Jonathan Swift has two basic parts. The first section deals
with the training, background, habits and personal characteristics of
Swift and Prior as these features bear on their friendship, and the
second is concerned with the relationship of the writers and their works.
Admittedly, this structure is an arbitrary one that makes an artificial
division between the man and his work and seems to indicate that the
personal relationship is prior to the literary one. As a matter of fact,
the literary relationship, or at least their awareness of each other as
writers, antedates the personal one, and Swift and Prior are two of
the eighteenth century writers whose poetry comes closest to reflecting
their life styles and attitudes. But since there are fewer problems in
the personal relationship than in the literary one, since a basic
understanding of the men seems to help comprehension of their works, and, finally, since this arrangement has the greatest clarity and simplicity, it has been retained.

Dobrée's comments suggest some of the rewards and difficulties of a study of Swift and Prior. Their friendship and the striking similarities in certain aspects of their poetry make such a study as worthwhile as the differences between the men and their works and their resistance to simple critical interpretations make it problematic. One indication of the similarity of their work is the frequent contemporary attribution of unsigned pieces of verse and prose to wither Prior or Swift or even both. This difficulty of discriminating between their productions remained until the modern definitive editions resolved most but not all of the instances of confusion in the canons of Swift and Prior. 3 The position of both men in the literary tradition of the early eighteenth century is also interesting: Swift's poetry is more like Samuel Butler's or Rochester's than like that of Pope, Prior's lyrics are more like those of Ben Jonson than like anything from his time or even from the Restoration, and Prior also chronologically links the ages of Dryden and Pope. Prior and Swift are the best representatives of the Hudibrastic, anti-Petrarchan, colloquial poetic tradition in the early eighteenth century, Swift assuming most of the satiric burden of that tradition, Prior the lyric and narrative. Their poetry is by no means restricted to this mode (Prior's variety is especially great), but their best work and what seems to be their unique contribution to English poetry is characteristically in this vein. Therefore, a fuller understanding of
the relationship of these men and their works should shed light not only on their achievement, but on a part of the poetic tradition outside Pope in the early eighteenth century.
Notes to the Introduction

1. F.E. Ball, in Swift's Verse (1929), treats Prior as a major influence on Swift, although he does little to support this view. He also points out some of the similarities in the development of the careers of both men but does not give any extended comparisons of their poetry. Monroe K. Spears mentions the similarity of their tempers in his article, "Some Ethical Aspects of Matthew Prior's Poetry," S P, XLV (1948), 606-629. C.K. Eves, in Matthew Prior: Poet and Diplomatist, Columbia Studies in English and Comparative Literature, No. 144 (New York, 1939), briefly discusses the pair's friendship and compares some of the interests and activities of both men. As to their poetry, he writes: "There is little to compare in their writing. Prior's prose was the more charming; Swift's the more vigorous. The friendship proved more profitable to Swift than to Prior, for under Prior's influence, Swift wrote some of his easiest and most graceful verse and several political lampoons"(p. 230).


3. Swift's Journal to Stella, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford, 1948) mentions the confusion among contemporaries several times. For instance, in reference to his satiric poem on Godolphin, Swift writes: "Have you heard of the verses about the Rod of Sid Hamet? Say nothing of them for your life. Hardly any body suspects me for them, only they think no-body but Prior or I could write them"(p. 65). Or, while writing about The Examiner, which Swift managed and wrote for early in its history: "--The account you give of that weekly paper agrees with us here. Mr. Prior was like to be insulted in the street for being supposed the author of it; but one of the last papers cleared him"(p. 185). See the notes and especially the sections on attributions in The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford, 1958), and The Literary Works of Matthew Prior, ed. H. Bunker Wright and Monroe K. Spears (Oxford, 1959). These works will hereinafter be referred to as Swift's Poems and Wright and Spears.
Chapter I

The Men: A Comparison of the Personalities and Early Careers of Prior and Swift

Ceux qui s'exercent à contreroller les actions humaines, ne se trouvent en aucune partie si em-pechez, qu'à les r'appiesser et mettre à mesme lustre; car elles se contredissent communément de si estrange façon, qu'il semble impossible qu'elles soient parties de mesme boutique.

Nous sommes tous de lopins et d'une contexture si informe et diverse, que chaque piece, chaque momant, facit son jeu. Et se trouve autant de difference de nous à nous mesmes, que de nous à autruy.

Swift and Prior are in many ways profoundly different men, but in their delight in Montaigne they are identical. They share his sceptical attitude and, one is tempted to add, his inconsistency. For all their differences, at the right time and from the proper perspective Swift and Prior can be seen in similar stances, using the same expressions. The course of their relationship can be compared to the paths of two objects which are in close proximity but which are governed by some identical and some different forces. The two objects sometimes travel together, often meet when going in different directions, and occasionally fly off in opposite directions. The first of these configurations can be seen in their political views, the second in their bachelorhood and their walks in the park--identical actions with different motives--and the third in their attitudes toward women, their use of satire, and a
number of other points.

The purpose of this chapter is to present briefly the portions of the early lives and habits of these men that best indicate the characters of Prior and Swift in relation to each other. Points of opposition, similarity, and more oblique lines of relationship will be presented in order to furnish some background and a sense of the whole to the more detailed examinations of their friendship and poetry. The friendship of Prior and Swift assumes a different meaning when seen with a full awareness of their differences and similarities, and much of the poetry of both men is closely related to its immediate context. Therefore, a brief survey and evaluation of the personalities of Prior and Swift will provide an informative base for the study of their relationship.

One's initial impression of Matthew Prior and Jonathan Swift is that their personalities are almost antithetical. Prior is an easy-going, cosmopolitan diplomat who takes refuge in aesthetic pursuits and whose approach to serious questions is likely to be light-handed, witty, and humorous. Swift, on the other hand, is a moralist and priest first and a lover of la bagatelle second. Much of Swift's joking has the desperate quality of black humor, and a barely suppressed rage lies just under the surface of his jests. Swift's moods of gentleness seem to appear only in his dealings with Stella, and even there his obviously deep feeling for her is often concealed by a surface gruffness.² He also has none of the interests or instincts his virtuoso friends possess and has been characterized as being of the same type as Bunyan and
Dr. Johnson, "for whom the moral order is all-engrossing, and literature—which can deal with ethics more directly than any other art—the only creative, symbolic activity that impinges truly and without radical distortion (whether they know it or not) upon their sensibility." In impressionistic terms, Swift is darker, heavier, a more volatile and stronger figure; Prior is gayer, lighter, less extreme in either rage or despair. Prior is the more thorough-going sceptic and is still in the process of discovering or modifying principles, while Swift, not content to withhold judgment as long as Prior, early in life established the limits and identified the worthwhile objects of his world and from that rather small domain wages constant battle against the forces pitted against him. Although a more thorough investigation of the men qualifies these generalizations, it does not appreciably lessen the sense of the basic differences between Swift and Prior.

In light of these differences, it is slightly disconcerting to find that the early life, training, and career possibilities of Prior and Swift are almost identical. While an explanation of the personality differences based on the effect of different environments is ruled out, the similarities in their situations do offer an opportunity for comparing the responses of each man in the same set of circumstances. Since it is in this area that differences begin to appear, such a comparison provides probable insights into the basis of the personality differences of Prior and Swift. Many of the responses and decisions made during this period reveal tendencies or set courses that become characteristic or establish guidelines for later actions.
Both Prior and Swift were deprived of a normal home environment, although Swift's deprivation was more severe and began earlier than did Prior's. George Prior died when Matthew was eleven or twelve years old and "just as he Matthew reached the middle of the third form" at Westminster School. His formal education was apparently at an end, for he was taken into the household of his uncle Arthur, who was proprietor of the Rhenish Wine Tavern, and began helping at the family business. However, the Rhenish was the meeting-place "of persons of the greatest figure in those days; for the Earl of Dorset, and such as he most commonly kept company with, generally came to this eating-house," and this led to the continuation of Matthew's education, according to Sir James Montague. As the story goes, Dorset discovered young Matthew reading Horace one day at the Rhenish and was surprised at the boy's aptitude for Latin and his skill at turning the Horace into English verse. Dorset subsequently decided to sponsor Matthew at Westminster while Arthur Prior furnished board and clothing. Thus at an early age Matthew learned the value of a patron and the advantages which his wit and learning might secure. 4

The elder Jonathan Swift died in March or April before the birth of his son on 30 November 1667, and as if that were not sufficient hardship for the boy, he was separated from his mother and sister when he was about one year old. As Swift's fragmentary autobiography has it, his Irish nurse had become so fond of young Jonathan that, when she had to go to England to see a sick relative, she took her charge with her rather than leave him behind. When Mrs. Swift discovered the
the fact, she sent orders to the nurse at Whitehaven that a second journey must not be attempted until the child was better able to endure it, so Jonathan remained with his nurse for almost three years. Shortly after his return to his mother, he was sent to the excellent grammar school at Kilkenny, and, so the account goes, his mother and sister moved to Leicester, England, soon after he entered school. Swift was therefore deprived of almost all contact with his immediate family quite early in life, and like Prior became dependent upon his relatives for support.\textsuperscript{5}

An essential difference between the domestic relations of the two men is that Prior's relations with the members of the Arthur Prior household were close,\textsuperscript{6} while Swift has only bitter comments about his Dublin uncles. It is true that Swift's education was provided by those uncles, at Kilkenny and Trinity College, Dublin, but they do not appear to have furnished him with any sense of a family. Swift's attitude toward them can be seen in the fact that he even blamed them for his lack of distinction at college, saying that his poor marks were due "to the ill treatment of his nearest relatives." Ehrenpreis points out that Swift's record was by no means as poor as he pretends in his reconstruction, at past seventy, of his college days. "Perhaps the old Dean Swift of 1738 felt embarrassed by his college record but remembered the dreariness of his student budget and justified one fact by the other."\textsuperscript{7} Whatever value the comment has regarding Swift's performance in college, it indicates that his feelings for his relatives have none of the warmth of Prior's feelings for his. Although this difference
seems primarily due to the difference in the way in which Swift and Prior were treated, it also indicates a little of the difference in their temperaments.

Although Swift was nearly three years younger than Prior, he entered Trinity College, Dublin, a year before Prior matriculated at St. John's, Cambridge, on 2 April 1683. Prior broke with tradition and angered Lord Dorset by following his friends to Cambridge rather than going to Christ Church, Oxford, which was the usual destination of Westminster's King's Scholars. Prior's association with Charles and James Montagu and George Stepney was not always pleasant, but his choice of St. John's was fortunate. As the only Westminster boy at that college, he was brought into greater prominence than he would have gained at Christ Church, and Prior kept his connection with St. John's until his death. Lord Dorset's displeasure was finally conquered by a peace offering of several Latin poems from Prior.  

One of life's little ironies is present in the benefactress who established the scholarship Prior held at St. John's—Elizabeth Percy, the Duchess of Somerset, who was a violent Whig and who became the closest confidante of Queen Anne. She was unwittingly a great help not only to a future Tory, but to the very one who was instrumental in the negotiations leading to the peace with France against which she fought so hard. It was Swift rather than Prior who engaged the attention and earned the undying hatred of this formidable woman, however. Swift allowed his resentment of the "old redhair'd, murd'ring Hag," as he is supposed to have called her once, to overflow into several
poems, the most notable of which is "The Windsor Prophecy." Swift attributed his lack of success at court to the Queen's dislike of A Tale of a Tub and to the Duchess's anger over "The Windsor Prophecy."  

Both Swift and Prior were uncertain about what career to pursue after finishing their education, and the different ways in which each met this problem illuminate some of the basic differences between them. After Prior received his B.A. on 9 February 1687, he went to London to visit Charles Montagu, who was studying at the Middle Temple. During this visit the two collaborated on the very successful parody of Dryden's "The Hind and the Panther," and Montagu's and Prior's reputations as wits were secured. After this episode, Prior returned to Cambridge and applied for a fellowship at St. John's; he was eventually successful and retained the Keyton fellowship—a "medical fellowship" which required him to lecture on Galen as the Linacre Lecturer from 1706 until 1710—for the remainder of his life.  

Swift was forced to leave Trinity College, Dublin, while he was a candidate for the M.A. because of the disturbances accompanying the Glorious Revolution in Ireland and stayed with his mother in Leicester for a time. The church appeared to be the best place for someone in Swift's position, but he deferred his decision on a career (or at least deferred taking orders) by accepting a position as secretary to Sir William Temple, who had just retired to his country estate, Moor Park. After a year of service under Temple, Swift was forced by ill health to seek a change of climate, and he returned to Ireland and applied for a fellowship at Trinity College. At this point the similarity
to Prior's actions ends, however, for Swift was unsuccessful, and finding Ireland worse than England for his health, he accepted Temple's invitation to return to Moor Park in August 1691. 11

Swift's sojourn in the country with Temple is paralleled by Prior's year of retreat as tutor to the Earl of Exeter's son, after Prior had received his fellowship at St. John's and while he was waiting for a preferment to a lucrative post--the fellowship being a temporary supplement, designed to supply Prior with a little means without saddling him with a major responsibility. Apparently Prior was recommended for the position by Dr. Gower, Master of St. John's, and by his ode "On Exodus iii.14," which was supposedly part of St. John's annual tribute to the Earl of Exeter in the fall of 1688. At any rate, by the end of 1688, Prior was in residence at Burleigh as tutor to the sons of the Earl. After about a year in this position, Prior was appointed secretary to Lord Dursley at The Hague in October or early November, 1690. Prior's search for a career was at an end, and his long and distinguished record as a diplomat was beginning. 12

Both Swift and Prior delayed the choice of a vocation for as long as practicable, but their hesitation seems to result less from indecision than from a reluctance to accept what was certainly the obvious way out--the church. One biographer notes that "the church was a very natural haven for a young man who had little money, social position, or influence,"13 and that is an apt description of both men's circumstances. In addition, the tradition of clergymen in Swift's family (on both sides) and Prior's scholastic record make the church
nearly an automatic choice. However, Prior apparently realized that
he was temperamentally unsuited for the cloth and indicated on several
occasions that taking orders would be a last resort. 14 Swift's reluctance
to enter the profession springs from an entirely different set of motives
and reasons, and in these attitudes is probably the basis for the
greatest difference and possibly the basis for most of the differences
between Swift and Prior.

While Swift was still in Temple's service, he took his M.A. at
Oxford by incorporation from Hart Hall on 5 July 1692, which normally
would be the first step in entering into orders. However, Swift was
not ordained as deacon until 28 October 1694 and as a priest on 13
January 1695. What lies behind this long interval between his taking
of the degree and his ordination is an extremely complex situation.
Swift was faced with the decision whether he should remain with
Temple or seek a more substantial (and possibly more permanent and
less dependent) position elsewhere; if he left, whether to enter the
priesthood or some other profession; and, finally, if he did choose the
church (which was the most likely and logical choice) whether to act
immediately when he had little real choice or to wait until his decision
could be made as an act of free will rather than one which might seem
to be motivated by practical necessity. Swift's account of the situation
and his attitude in his fragmentary autobiography is revealing:

Mr Swift lived with him [Temple] some time,
but resolving to settle himself in some way of living,
was inclined to take orders. However, although his
fortune was very small, he had a scruple of entering
into the Church merely for support, and Sr Wm Temple then being Master of the Rolls in Ireland offered him an Employ of about 120 pounds a year in that office, whereupon Mr Swift told him, that since now he had an opportunity of living without being driven into the Church for a maintenance, he was resolved to go to Ireland and take holy Orders.\textsuperscript{15}

The mixture of idealism, practicality, and a stubborn refusal to let events or reality dictate his actions is typical of Swift. His high-minded rejection of any course of action which might cast a slur on his motives is indicative of the strength of his principles, his sensitivity to criticism, and his attitude toward the priesthood. Ehrenpreis' evaluation of this episode is worth citing:

\begin{quote}
Until the end of the eighteenth century a young man with Swift's education and attachments would have seemed fated to take up the vocation. One can only salute the integrity with which he deferred the obvious until it should possess the purity of a free decision. In his power of recognizing the tough, nasty facts of a case at the same time as he chose the high-minded, rather than 'realistic', resolution of it, Swift reveals his finest (and most poetic) trait.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Swift's integrity is commendable, but one cannot be sure whether he acted this way despite the fact that such actions would not win him the position he wanted or because he secretly cherished the thought that at least in his case one did not have to play the game to win a prize. If he had examined his posture and its probable consequences in the same cold light that he used to scrutinize the behavior of others, he might not have been disappointed. But that is asking for an unusual amount of objectivity. Prior, on the other hand, had few illusions about the means necessary to win advancement, and his approach to the problem provides an interesting contrast to Swift's conduct.
Prior's hold on a living was never completely secure, and the first and most important reason for this was his lack of social position. Whenever his name was mentioned and especially when an advancement was in the offing, the Rhenish Wine Tavern was sure to be mentioned. During William's reign, such matters were often passed over if the man were competent and witty, but under Queen Anne one's social status was of major importance. Prior found favor under William, for the King requested Prior specifically for some important diplomatic missions. 17

The second reason for the instability of Prior's career was his lack of success at maneuvering in the shifting winds of political change. His friend George Stepney, for instance, shrewdly and unobtrusively remained on his feet and on the right side of the fence throughout his career, which was unfortunately cut short by an illness. 18 Prior's problem was that he changed positions (actually, patrons is more accurate) at the wrong time and then did not change when such a move might have benefitted his career. Thus he is open to the charges of being both a fickle opportunist and an inflexibly stupid idealist. The first of these is more damaging and is the one usually leveled, but as this situation is almost as complex as Swift's entering the church and is as essential to an understanding of Prior as that action is for the understanding of Swift, it should be examined in detail.

While Prior was still at The Hague, Lord Dursley was succeeded in September 1695 by Lord Edward Villiers, the Earl of Jersey, who became a close friend and constant supporter of Prior's
fortunes. But Jersey's influence on Prior's politics was even more important than his effect on Prior's advancements. Jersey's influence with the court gradually dwindled—he resisted Godolphin over foreign policy in 1704 and never held office afterwards—but the effect that he had on Prior's political thinking and his eventual party alignment was pervasive and long-lasting. Eves suggests that under the influence of Jersey Prior "evolved a theory of statecraft . . . which called for a strong and beneficent monarchy free from the ills of party factions."

On such issues as the power of the king and the role of the established church, Prior was closer to the Tories than to the Whigs, who were primarily responsible for helping Prior get a start. The influence of Jersey and Prior's change in political thinking play an important part in the next series of events.

After Prior returned from Paris in 1700, he was elected the representative to the House of Commons from East Grinstead, a pocket borough of the Earl of Dorset's. In April 1701, the Tory Commons pushed through a motion to impeach some of the ministers involved in the signing of the Second Partition Treaty. Prior himself had been involved in the negotiations, and Jersey had signed the treaty and, unlike the Whigs who were being impeached, had known about the secret negotiations. Jersey approved of the impeachment, and Prior voted with the majority to impeach. Included among those who were being impeached was Prior's childhood friend, Charles Montagu, the Earl of Halifax. Sir James Montagu, brother of Charles and one of the boyhood chums, generously explained Prior's actions as arising
from the desire to protect King William, even at the cost of abandoning his ministers and one of Prior's oldest friends. Eves feels that Prior's loyalty to the King was not a major consideration, but that his standing with Jersey and the majority of Parliament was. Prior's old friends and the Whigs certainly did not view the action with the equanimity of James Montagu, and Dorset apparently did not put Prior up for representative again. Prior was included on a Whig list of especially undesirable Tories which came out before the December 1701 election, and he was never returned to the House of Commons. About this time another writer began to attract the attention of the Whigs, and Joseph Addison's rise coincided with Prior's fall from favor.

Prior's setback at this time was only temporary, although it was a sign of things to come. Jersey was still in power, and Prior's commission of the Board of Trade and Plantations was renewed in 1702. But when Jersey fell in 1704, Prior had unfortunately drawn the anger of Sarah, the Duchess of Marlborough, and even though he did not lose his position on the Board of Trade and Plantations until April 1707, from 1704 until the fall of Godolphin in 1710, Prior's life was a continual struggle to placate Sarah and the Whigs.

The source of Sarah's anger was a Tory satire, "Faction Display'd," which she held Prior responsible for, despite his frequent protestations to the contrary and his numerous poems celebrating her husband's military victories. The spectacle of Prior unsuccessfully courting Marlborough and his wife is a disconcerting one when compared to Swift's pride under similar circumstances, even though Prior was in
desperate financial straits during this time. But Sarah never relented, and her feeling against Prior was so strong that she may have had a part in shutting him off from any preferment. A passage from her Correspondence is enlightening:

Nay, before this [referring to the Examiner], the Duchess thought she had good reason to think him the author of a vile libel against herself. And notwithstanding all his submissions and all his protestsations (of which he was very free) she continued still to think so. . . . But it is enough to say, that the first part of his education was in a tavern, and that he had a soul as low as his education, incapable of anything truly great or honourable.  

As could be expected, Swift did not escape the observation of the Duchess; in her discussion of the Examiner, she describes Prior and Swift as "under-workmen of prostituted consciences and hardened faces." She seems particularly fond of this figure of speech, for her further comments on the pair repeat it: "The Rev. Mr. Swift and Mr. Prior quickly offered themselves to sale, (besides a number of more ordinary scribblers,) both men of wit and parts ready to prostitute all they had in the service of well-rewarded scandal. . . ." At least she paid Prior and Swift the compliment of singling them out for special comment, for their writing abilities and, presumably, for their low morals.

Until the fall of the Tories and Prior's courageous stand before the bloodthirsty Whig Secret Committee in 1715, his bearing toward those who were or might be in positions to affect his career is cautious and conciliatory. This is true of those whom he is trying to win over, such as the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, and those already
disposed to help him, such as Jersey and Oxford. Some of Prior's comments in his essay "Learning" (1721) are quite revealing:

... So that Poetry which by the bent of my Mind might have become the business of my Life, was by the happyness of my Education only the amusement of it, and this too, having the Prospect of some little Fortune to be made, and Friendship to be cultivated with the great Men, I did not launch much out into Satyr; which however agreeable for the present to the Writers or Incouragers of it does in time do neither of them good, considering the uncertainty of Fortune, and the various change of Ministry, where every Man as he resents may punish in his turn of Greatness; and that in England a Man is less safe as to Politics, than he is in a Bark upon the Coast in regard to the Change of the Wind, and the Danger of Shipwreck. 26

Prior certainly had enough wit to be satiric, and he seems from this statement to have avoided satire almost solely for reasons of practical necessity. There may be other considerations in Prior's avoidance of satire which are related to his scepticism and which will be dealt with in the discussion of the poetry, but at least consciously Prior felt that the roles of a courtier and a satirist were not compatible.

Swift, however, is a satirist. He also is never a courtier. Swift was proud of his independent status yet had a courtier's pride whenever he was slighted. For instance, the reception which Godolphin gave Swift upon Swift's arrival from Ireland in September 1710 was so disappointing that Swift mentions it in letters to Archbishop King and to Esther Johnson. In the Journal to Stella, Swift writes, "But my lord treasurer received me with a great deal of coldness, which has enraged me so, I am almost vowing revenge." 27 Swift is never one to withhold his fury, and "The Virtues of Sid Hamet the Magician's Rod" was sent
to the printer on October 4. Of course, Godolphin was on the way out and was not in a position to harm Swift or his business with the remission of the First-Fruits, but Swift's reaction to the slight demonstrates his pride and willingness to strike back. Prior was rejected as coldly by the Whigs during the dark days from 1707, after he lost his position, until 1710, when the Tories gained power and took Prior in, but he swallowed his pride or let prudence rule any impulse to attack those who turned him away.

Swift's relationship with and his attitude toward his relationship with Sir William Temple is another instance of his determination to avoid becoming dependent upon patronage. The arrangement of the Temple household at Moor Park, the nature of Swift's duties as secretary to Temple, and Swift's abilities seem to have made him more a member of the family than an employee. Something of this idea is seen in Temple's behavior toward Swift, for Temple did not act in the usual fashion that a patron would normally adopt toward a promising protégé; to the contrary, Temple seemed reluctant to aid Swift's advancement. The reasons for this lack of ambition in Temple for his secretary probably include his reluctance to part with such an accomplished and witty companion, his dislike of the church and his likely disagreement with Swift over its suitability as a career, and possibly even his desire to shelter Swift from the disappointments that had led to the recent suicide of Temple's only son and sole remaining child, John.

On Swift's side, he could be both flattered and disappointed that
his relationship with Temple was closer to that of friendship than patronage: flattered that such a great man would value his companionship and that he could claim such a friend, disappointed that such a relationship was to produce so little in the way of material benefits. Both of these feelings are evident in this excerpt from a letter Swift wrote to Temple's nephew, Viscount Palmerston, in 1726:

I own myself indebted to Sir William Temple, for recommending me to the late King, although without success, and for his choice of me to take care of his posthumous writings. But, I hope you will not charge my living in his family as an obligation, for I was educated to little purpose, if I retired to his house, on any other motives than the benefit of his conversation and advice, and the opportunity of pursuing my studies. For, being born to no fortune, I was at his death as far to seek as ever, and perhaps you will allow that I was of some use to him.\textsuperscript{30}

Despite the differences in the relationships, the effect that Jersey had on Prior and the importance of Temple in Swift's development are similar. Jersey's effect on Prior has been mentioned, and the result of Swift's long association with Temple, and, after Temple's death, with his literary works--Swift transcribed, edited, and saw those works through the press over a period of twenty years--cannot be overestimated. As Ehrenpreis notes, "Temple's literary style, political philosophy, moral outlook, and aesthetic judgment became either models or points of departure for Swift's own."\textsuperscript{31} Although Jersey's influence on Prior's political views and career was great, he does not fill the same role that Temple does for Swift. The man for whom Prior has the same personal affection as Swift does for Temple is probably the Earl of Dorset. Prior and Dorset did not share the same political
views after Prior's break with the Whigs (Swift says some harsh things about Temple's effectiveness as a patron), but it was Dorset who had the first responsibility for helping Prior to be something other than a tavern boy. Prior's regard for Dorset can be seen in the dedication of the first volume of his poetry in 1708 to Dorset's son, Lionel, while the dedication itself is almost entirely taken up with the praise of the father. One of Prior's essays, written near the end of his life, presents Dorset as the perfect example of the man of wit. Swift's irritation at the conduct of Temple is only one facet of his attitude toward the man, as his note upon the death of Temple shows: "He dyed at one o'clock in the morning and with him all that was great and good among men." And last of all, it was in connection with these men that Prior and Swift were to have some of their closest personal relationships. Prior's favorite cousin—and probably his favorite relative—Katherine, daughter of Arthur Prior, married Jersey's cousin, Colonel George Villiers. Moor Park was the scene of Swift's first acquaintance with a young girl who was to be his closest friend, Esther Johnson.

The few similarities in Prior's and Swift's relationships with and attitudes toward women could probably be summed up in the statement that they both remained bachelors and had close feminine friends. Swift's friendships seem from all available evidence to have been chaste, but Prior kept a mistress for most of his adult life. It should be said that Prior's treatment of his companions appears to have been considerate. One might assume that Prior's avoidance of marriage signifies a strong dislike of the state, but beyond a few conventional
poems dealing with the domestic problems of married couples (especially older ones) and some equally conventional cynical poems on the constancy of women, there is little evidence that his bachelor status was motivated by anything other than a practical matter. Prior would have lost his Fellowship at St. John's if he had married, and he was determined to retain that as one assured source of income.

Swift's views of marriage and of most women furnish clear and forceful evidence of his distaste for what seemed to him to be utter folly in a majority of the cases of matrimony. His comments on his parents' union reveal a great deal of his feeling and reaction:

This marriage was on both sides very indiscreet, for his wife brought her husband little or no fortune, and his death happening so suddenly before he could make a sufficient establishment for his family: And his son (not then born) hath often been heard to say that he felt the consequences of that marriage not only through the whole course of his education, but during the greatest part of his life.36

Swift's strong practical streak and his view of the effects of an ill-considered marriage, not only on the couple, but also on the children who would be the most directly affected by an indiscreet marriage, are the basic reasons for his repeated reflections on marriage—in his prose, poetry, and in many letters. There seems to be little point in the endless speculation about the exact nature of Swift's relationship with Esther Johnson, especially when no solid evidence of a marriage ceremony and certainly no evidence of any actual cohabitation have been presented. In the light of Swift's definite views on marriage, the improbability of his being married is quite strong. The type of
relationship which Swift established most successfully with Esther Johnson, and less successfully (with less stability) with Esther Vanhomrigh, seems to have answered most of the needs of close companionship and love which marriage usually satisfies without the practical disadvantages which Swift saw in any marriage. 37

Thus far the comparison of Swift and Prior has produced more differences than similarities, but these essential differences need to be stressed. Swift's fierce independence is a characteristic of every phase of his activities, even to his denial of borrowing hints from other writers. Prior accepts dependence as one of the "données" of his place in life and takes a more liberal (and conventional) view of the use of others' writings. Prior is more sceptical and cautious and less apt to judge than Swift, who can hardly avoid evaluating everything he comes into contact with. Swift seems to expect more of himself and, consequently, of others; Prior is more relaxed in his attitude toward his own performance and also seems to be more tolerant than Swift in his attitude toward others. The underlying causes for these differences may be the same, however. Swift's strong defense of certain institutions and his equally strong attack on other features of his society are probably a defensive reaction to the same feelings of doubt and insecurity which Prior manifests in his questioning and unsettled outlook. There is also a common source for the humor of both, for Prior's "love of la bagatelle, like Swift's sprang from a deep melancholy: to pursue la bagatelle was to escape momentarily the awareness of man's inevitable misery."38
There are other features which Prior and Swift share: both were troubled by illness, Swift by Meniere's syndrome, Prior by what was probably consumption. Their experience with politics is similar, for both began as Whigs, became moderate Tories, and remained Tory for the rest of their lives. Swift was from the beginning unsuited to be a Whig, primarily because of his views on the role and nature of the church, but he did not break with the Whigs until Harley convinced him that the Tories had the interests of the church in mind. Prior's estrangement from the Whigs has been discussed. An important feature of Prior's and Swift's politics is their insistence on moderation; they believed (with some justification) that Harley's government was one that tried to stay above party politics. Harley himself was a moderate who tried to keep the high-flying Tories in check by using a form of coalition of moderate Tories and Whigs, and most of his governmental policies are similar to the political theories of Prior and Swift.

In religion, Prior and Swift both had a strong aversion to Dissenting groups: Swift mainly because of the Irish situation and his belief in the importance of the Anglican Church, Prior because of his distrust of reason as a guide in religious matters and his dislike of some of the habits which appeared essential to the practice of Dissenting parties. Swift also detested many of the manners and practices of the Dissenters, or at least he used these mannerisms to emphasize the absurdity of many of their beliefs as well as their actions. Both viewed the Anglican Church as the proper agent for the preservation of Christianity and thus were alarmed by attacks on the Church; they both seem to have
felt that the Dissenters posed a stronger threat against true religion than did the Roman Catholics. 39 Finally, and not the least important, Prior and Swift shared many of the small pleasures of life; as Ehrenpreis phrases it, "Prior shared Swift's addiction to puns though surpassing him as a lover of wine," and "they had poetry in common as well as politics, and took care to praise one another's lines." 40
Notes to Chapter I


2. Swift's birthday poems to Esther Johnson combine understatement with an anti-Petrarchan attitude and create an effect of simplicity and total sincerity. The teasing and "little language" of the Journal might also be regarded as a means of expressing deep emotion without being too direct, making the conventional response unique and private by the use of a code.


7. Ehrenpreis, I, 60, 71.


to get the kind of preferment he wanted is due more to the strength of
Queen Anne's affection for the Duchess of Somerset and the effect and
bad timing of "The Windsor Prophecy" than to the general impact of
A Tale of a Tub and the poem. Based on a copy of the diary of Sir
David Hamilton, physician to the Queen, the article points out that
Swift was up for preferment for one of several positions open just one
week after the Queen had seen the poem, which apparently angered
her a great deal. The pressure from Tories to give Swift a good posi-
tion might have succeeded except for the Queen's recent reading of the
attack on her friend and her control over the bishoprics of both Ireland
and England.


12. Wright and Spears, pp. 843-844 and 850.


14. Eves, pp. 31, 38, 44, 200-201. One of the narrowest escapes
Prior had from becoming a clergyman was shortly after he had lost his
position on the Board of Trade and Plantations in April, 1707. Rumors
had him as the head of Eton college, and he did accept a position as
secretary to the Bishop of Winchester, both of which would have required
him to take orders. He did not realize that the job as secretary was
not a kind of sinecure which he could hold without hampering his plans
"at Court, from whence I had every good reason to expect some pre-
sent favour"(Eves, p. 201), and upon discovering his error, quickly
resigned.

15. Jonathan Swift, "Family of Swift," The Prose Works of

16. Ehrenpreis, I, 150.

17. See Eves, pp. 102-103, 146.


21. Eves, p. 175, 192; Ehrenpreis, II, 233.

22. For Prior's relationship with the Duchess of Marlborough, see Albert Rosenberg, "Prior's Feud with the Duchess of Marlborough," and H. Bunker Wright, "A further note on Prior and 'Faction Display'd'," in JEGP, LII (1953), 27-30 and 30-31. These scholars cite William Shippen as the probably author of 'Faction Display'd.'


24. Ibid., p. 129.

25. The Whigs set out to make reprisals immediately after gaining power upon the death of Queen Anne, and hoped to find evidence of treason in the correspondence between some of the ministers and parties in France. Prior's correspondence was seized, among others, but the Whigs were not able to find out what they wanted. They brought Prior back from France in 1715 expressly for his testimony, and Bolingbroke fled to France. Prior shielded his old friends in his testimony and earned the threats of the Whig Secret Committee which examined him and which had apparently hoped that they might get out of Prior what they had not found in the "fifteen volumes of letters and state papers"(Eves, p. 351). For a more detailed discussion of the episode, see Eves, pp. 327-356 and Prior's account in History of His Own Time (London, 1740), pp. 286-302.


27. Jonathan Swift, Journal to Stella, p. 6 (this work will hereinafter be referred to as Journal). Swift's remarks on the incident to Archbishop King are as follows: "I was to visit my Lord Godolphin, who gave me a reception very unexpected, and altogether different from what I ever received from any great Man in my Life; altogether short, dry, and morose, not worth repeating to your Grace, until I have the Honour to see you." This is in a letter dated 9 Sept. 1710, quoted from The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams, I (Oxford, 1963), 173.

29. Ehrenpreis has a full discussion of the Swift-Temple relationship and its implications; see specifically I, 91-101 and 142-149.

30. Swift's Correspondence, III (1963), 125-126.

31. Ehrenpreis, I, 92.

32. The Dedication of Poems On Several Occasions (1709--actually published 3 Dec. 1708) is found on pp. 248-258 of Wright and Spears. The following remark by the editors on the dedication is interesting: "The fact that it eschews conventional panegyric of the person addressed and presents instead a detailed analysis of the character of his father, Charles Sackville (1638-1706), sixth Earl of Dorset, who had been Prior's patron and friend for thirty years, has made it a primary source for biographers of that nobleman"(Wright and Spears, p. 900). The essay is "Heads for a Treatise upon Learning" (1721), Wright and Spears, pp. 578-586.

33. Quoted in Ehrenpreis, I, 257, from Swift's paper, "Journal d'Estat de Mr T--- devaunt sa Mort."

34. Eves, p. 66; Ehrenpreis, I, 104.

35. Prior's beautiful tribute to his first known housekeeper and mistress, "Jinny the Just," indicates that she held that position during his residence at The Hague and at Paris, which covers 1690-1699, and for some time after he returned to England. Anne Durham apparently succeeded Jinny about 1708 and was in turn succeeded by Elizabeth Cox around 1716. Eves speculates that the Jane Ansley who was Prior's housekeeper in 1721 and to whom he left one year's wages, mourning and fifty pounds may have been his Flanders Jane (Jinny). Anne Durham was given a legacy of three hundred pounds and the portrait of her by Hugh Howard which hung in Prior's bedroom. See Wright and Spears, pp. 907, 910-911; Eves, pp. 215-217; and H. Bunker Wright, "Matthew Prior: A Supplement to His Biography" in Summaries of Doctoral Dissertations, Northwestern University, V (1937), 34-38, and "Matthew Prior's Cloe and Lisetta," MP, XXXVI (1938), 9-23.

37. Without attempting to go into all of the controversy about this aspect of Swift's character, his views on marriage seem to appear most clearly in his relationship with Jane Waring and in the situation involving William Tisdall's proposal to Esther Johnson in April 1704. See Ehrenpreis, I, 165-168; II, 133-140 and the Introduction to the Journal, especially pp. xxxi-xlvii.


39. For Prior's views on Dissenters, see "Epistle to Fleetwood Shepherd" (Wright and Spears, pp. 84-91) and his correspondence with Elizabeth Singer in the Historical Manuscripts Commission, Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Bath. Preserved at Longleat, Wilshire, III, as well as H. Bunker Wright, "Matthew Prior and Elizabeth Singer," _P Q_, XXIV (1945), 71-82; and Monroe K. Spears, "Matthew Prior's Religion," _P Q_, XXVII (1948), 159-180, which has the best comprehensive analysis of Prior's religious views. Swift's attitude toward the Dissenters is most forcefully expressed in _A Tale of a Tub_ and _Gulliver's Travels_, but the subject is a common one in most of his writings.

40. Ehrenpreis, II, 447.
Chapter II

The Friendship:

A History of the Personal Relationship of Prior and Swift

Dans l'adversité de nos meilleurs amis, nous trouvons quelque chose qui ne nous déplait pas. 1

Swift's gnomish delight in deflating mankind's pretensions is one reason for his appreciation of La Rochefoucauld, and Swift undoubtedly saw this and other such cynical observations validated by the actions of his fellow creatures. But there is little reason to think that Swift's relationships with his friends followed this pattern, for rarely has there been a group of men for whom friendship meant so much. This can be seen in the flourishing of numerous clubs during the Augustan era and in the warmth and duration of many of the attachments of the time. The friendship of Prior and Swift is no exception; it was founded upon mutual interests in politics and poetry, strengthened by their mutual enjoyment of many small things, and sustained with an unusual vitality over a long period of separation. In this one instance can be seen a small measure of the importance of friendships to the men and the literature of the period.

This chapter is a detailed study of the circumstances, extent, and nature of the personal relationship of Matthew Prior and Jonathan Swift. For the historian there are fortunately many references to Prior or to meetings with Prior in the Journal to Stella and in the correspondence of Swift. The correspondence also furnishes letters
between the two which are the most valuable source of information. Unfortunately, the kind of mention in the Journal is of the briefest order, probably because Prior was unknown to Esther Johnson and thus intrinsically less interesting and also because there was so much going on at this busiest time in Swift's life that there was barely room in the Journal for mention of many of the people and activities he was involved in. There are a few references to Prior in the miscellaneous prose works of Swift, and surprisingly few references to each other in the poetry of either. Therefore, the circumstances of their friendship are fairly clear, but the nature and extent are not. A sizeable portion of their correspondence is missing, probably destroyed when Prior was recalled from France by the Whigs. What remains, along with a few third-person remarks, furnishes the only clues to the substance of the relationship.

The biographies of both men have avoided dealing with their relationship in any depth. Swift's biographers probably have had too many other fish to fry or considered Swift's association with Prior too brief; Prior's biographers have had enough difficulties without attempting such a peripheral investigation. In short, only a specialized study in which the relationship between these two is important will provide the proper focus and maintain the balance essential in a study which involves more than one figure.

The greatest hindrance to the development of the relationship of Swift and Prior was the lack of time together--the period of personal contact between them was only two years. There is an irony here,
for Prior almost went to Dublin as chief secretary to the Lords Justices in May 1697, when Jersey was appointed one of the Lords Justices of Ireland. But diplomatic duties kept postponing Prior's return to England, and he never took up the duties of that post or go to Ireland, and an early opportunity for them to meet never materi-
alyzed.  

The first decade of the eighteenth century saw both men in London for extended periods at the same time, but the chances of their meeting during those times were not very good. Prior was home for almost twelve years, from 1700 until 1712, and Swift came to England three times during this interval. Swift's first visit was from November 1703 until May 1704, his second was from December 1707 until June 1709, and his third and longest began in September 1710 and marks the first known meeting between Swift and Prior. To return to the two earlier visits, there are several factors that make a meeting between Prior and Swift unlikely. Swift was primarily interested in church business and in furthering his own career, and there would have been no official reason for Swift to seek out Prior as a member of the Board of Trade and Plantations, and still less reason after Prior lost that position in 1707. Business aside, Swift's own interests were at this time still tied to the Whigs, and Prior's infamous vote against Halifax and his known connection with Jersey made him persona non grata with the Whigs. In fact, both men were probably so busy trying to advance their own interests during this period that they would have been of little use and less comfort to each other. In addition to these
considerations, Swift's circle of intimates at this time included many
with whom Prior was not acquainted--Sir Andrew Fountaine, Charles
Ford, Anthony Henley, and others--as well as some whom Prior
would have gone out of his way to avoid, such as Addison and Steele.

Swift does mention Prior in a letter from London during his second
visit, and the nature of the reference confirms that they had not yet
met. While giving the news, Swift writes: "Lord Dorset is nobody's
Favorite but yours and Mr Prior's, who has lately dedicated his Book
of Poems to him, which is all the Press has furnisht us of any value
since You went." This is a nice compliment for Prior's poetry, and
it indicates that Swift was at least familiar with the work of the older
man. That Prior was as familiar with some of Swift's writing is seen
in the only remark linking Prior to Swift before they meet. In a letter
to Robert Harley in 1704, Dr. Francis Atterbury makes the following
remark: "I cannot close this letter, without expressing the satisfac-
tion I had last night in perusing Mr. Swift's book, which Mr. Prior
showed us. 'Tis very well written and will do good service, but I'm
afraid by the peculiar manner of writing he will too easily be discov-
ered." Atterbury apparently is referring to the volume containing
A Tale of a Tub, the Battle of the Books, and the Mechanical Operation
of the Spirit, but unfortunately Prior's comments on Swift's first
major work are not recorded. Prior must have been unusually inter-
ested in the work or was more prompt than his friends in getting a
copy of it if his copy was being examined so eagerly, especially by
someone such as Atterbury, who was directly embroiled in a dispute
which Swift's work dealt with. Prior's alacrity may not have been unique, in view of the reception of the volume, but at least the two incidents reveal that Swift and Prior were aware of and apparently interested in each other's work.

The process which brings about the meeting between the principals of this study is not only interesting in its own right but is important because it sets the tone for the conduct and attitudes which the consequent relationships assume. Swift came to England in September 1710 with a new sense of anticipation and a new hope of success, both for his mission for the Church of Ireland and for himself. Although the political climate in England was changing, Swift did not abandon his old friends among the Whigs. He was aware of his bargaining power, however, and was amused by the difference between previous receptions and this one: "Upon my Arrival hither, I found myself equally caressed by both Parties, by one as a Sort of bough for drowning men to lay hold of; and by the other as one discontented, with the late Men in Power, for not being thorough in their Designs, and therefore ready to approve present Things." The one Whig from whom Swift might have welcomed some attention also happened to be the one who morosely refused to act such a part when he was losing his office; Godolphin's reception of Swift and Swift's reaction to it have already been cited, however. Swift's pique at Godolphin was more than assuaged by the deference paid him by Harley and other important figures among the Tories. At the same time, the circumstances surrounding Swift's distrust and personal rancor toward the Whig leaders, who had
disappointed him repeatedly in the past and some of whom persisted in alienating him in their hour of need, could not but affect his relations with his former friends, many of whom were politically active and espoused causes and persons now distasteful to Swift.

Swift calls attention to the change in his circle of friends in one of his letters to Esther Johnson and Rebecca Dingley: "--Prithee, don't you observe how strangely I have changed my company and manner of living? I never go to a Coffee-house; you hear no more of Addison, Steele, Henley, lady Lucy, Mrs. Finch, lord Somers, lord Hallifax, &c. I think I have altered for the better." This remark is not altogether accurate, for Swift's social circles did not change overnight. As Ehrenpreis remarks, "If he did not cling to all his familiar comrades, he did not easily abandon them, even when politics and friendship were directly at odds with one another." But Swift's increasingly close association with the Tories did have an effect on his friendships, not only that he found it irritating to be around extreme Whigs, but that some men whose company he would have enjoyed were constrained by his involvement (and even more by the suspicions of his involvement) in the Tory government and its publications.

Swift's change in politics thus created a social vacuum of sorts around him while he was in London. Although he was on good terms with both Robert Harley and Henry St. John, his associations with them and the lesser men around them did not furnish him with the kind of companionship he had enjoyed with Addison or Ford. In the group of Tories who were neither too great nor too low to be a
suitable companion for Swift, the "one who might really have become an ideal comrade was Prior, now in his forties but still unfixed."\textsuperscript{11} In terms of social station, abilities, wit, common interests, and in the possession of gifts which would be appreciated by the other, Swift and Prior were an ideal pair.

Swift's acquisition of new friends with the movement from Whig to Tory (and these actions are simultaneous, not sequential) marks an important change in his life. F.E. Ball even uses Swift's friendship with Addison, Prior and then Pope to mark the three mature phases of Swift's poetic career.\textsuperscript{12} In many ways Swift would have liked to avoid such a change, because it meant the loss of old habits and friends that he cared for, and the fact that these losses became necessary may account for some of the bitterness with which he attacked party politics. For instance, the friendship of Swift and Addison, which began soon after Swift arrived in England in 1707, was one which probably could have withstood political differences in a saner time. Swift tried to maintain his intimacy with Addison on his return to England in 1710, but several factors, most important of which were the attitudes of their mutually exclusive acquaintances on either side of the political spectrum, seemed to hinder any chances the friendship had. But it died a hard death. As late as September 1711 Swift writes: "This evening I met Addison and Pastoral Phillips in the Park, and supped with them at Addison's lodgings; we were very good company; and yet know no man half so agreeable to me as he is."\textsuperscript{13}
Swift's appreciation of Addison was not seconded by many of his Tory friends, however, and Prior in particular did not get along well with Addison. Addison and Prior must have realized that they were fated to be competitors in practically every endeavor. It was Addison who filled Prior's place with the Whigs while Prior was being read out of the party after his vote against Halifax. As Prior lost his position, Addison gained new ones. They both wrote poems celebrating Marlborough's victory at Blenheim in 1704, but it was Addison's "Campaign" (1705) which brought fame and a government post to its author. Prior's "Letter to Monsieur Boileau Despreaux" (1704) was not praised by the Whigs, nor was its author rewarded with anything more than a kind word from Marlborough and a harsh rebuff from Sarah. 14

The conflict between Addison and Prior is continuous. Addison attacked Prior personally in the first number of the Whig Examiner (14 Sept. 1710) as the opening shot of the war between the Tory Examiner and its rival:

I allow he has a happy talent at doggerel when he writes upon a known subject. When he tells us in plain intelligent language how Corsica's Ladle was lost in one hole, and Hans Carvel's finger in another, he is very jocular and diverting; but when he wraps a lampoon in a riddle, he must consider that his jest is lost to everyone but the few merry wags that are in the secret. This is making darker satires than ever Perseus made. 15

Addison also attacked Prior in reply to the eleventh Examiner, which is not even attributed to Prior. The crowning touch to all this animosity is that they were even rivals for the friendship of Swift. No
wonder there seems to be more than just party animus in Addison's remarks about Prior.

The most important and almost exclusive source of information about Swift's affairs during his third visit to England is the Journal to Stella. While Prior is never discussed in detail, the frequency with which his name appears and the kind of meetings which he and Swift have give a fairly complete picture of their relationship during this first period of their acquaintance.

The first known meeting of Prior and Swift took place at a dinner at Harley's on 15 October 1710. Swift writes, "I dined to-day with Mr. Harley: Mr. Prior dined with us." After dinner Lord Peterborough came in and they all began discussing the recently printed "Sid Hamet's Rod," with a great deal of merriment."Prior rallied lord Peterborough for the author of them; and lord Peterborough said, he knew them to be his; and Prior then turned it upon me, and I on him." After Swift was introduced to some other guests (he had first met Harley less than two weeks earlier), Swift notes, "Prior and I came away at nine, and sat at the Smyrna till eleven, receiving acquaintance."16 Although it is possible that Prior and Swift could have met at one of the three previous occasions when Swift came to see Harley, that is doubtful because Swift is careful to mention who is present, especially while he is still a newcomer. If this is indeed the first meeting of Prior and Swift, they certainly had little trouble in striking up a friendship. Both men must have recognized a kindred spirit and enjoyed each other's company immediately if they left the party together and then
spent two more hours in each other's company.

Prior and Swift were to dine many times together until Prior's diplomatic missions to France took him away, and most of the evenings followed the pattern of this first one: A group would have dinner at Harley's and would combine business with mirth, then, as often as not, Swift and Prior would leave and go to Prior's or to the Smyrna. Swift usually makes these outings sound as if he is being taken almost against his will. For instance, he writes, "I dined to-day with [the usual assortment of ministers, etc.] and then made a debauch after nine at Prior's house, and have eaten cold pye, and I hate the thoughts of it, and I am full, and I don't like it, and I'll go to bed, and it is late, and so good night." Or if there was not a dinner at Harley's: "To-day I dined with Lewis and Prior and I sat on, where we complimented one another for an hour or two upon our mutual wit and poetry." It is obvious that Swift enjoys this conviviality, despite his complaints about the late hours and irregular eating habits, and his enjoyment is not lessened by the sense that he is sought after on these occasions.

Another activity which Swift and Prior enjoyed together, besides eating and drinking fine wine, was walking in the Park. Swift was a firm believer in the value of regular exercise and walked as much to stay healthy as to save coach fare. The measures he took to preserve his health and his economy often seem to be incongruous in such a great man, but they merely demonstrate his essential humanity. As spring approached in 1711, Swift writes to Stella: "The days are now long enough to walk in the Park after dinner; and so I do whenever it
is fair. This walking is a strange remedy; Mr. Prior walks to make
himself fat, and I to bring myself down; he has generally a cough,
which he only calls a cold: we often [walk] round the Park together."
Sometimes these walks are cut short: "This evening was fair, and I
walkt a little in the Park, till Prior made me go with him to the Smyrna
Coffee-house, where I sat a while. . . ."18

According to the Journal, which appears to be a fairly complete
record of Swift's daily activities during this visit to England, Swift
and Prior were not only brought together in the numerous group
meetings which the new ministry found advantageous, but they also
sought each other's company for purely social reasons. There seems
to be an air of friendly competition between the two in both poetry and
in wit, and after an initial adjustment period, each praises the other's
work with no apparent trace of jealousy. The first episode of this
sort occasioned some uneasiness on Prior's part (at least Swift reports
that it does, and there would be little reason for him to puff himself
for MD, as he often calls Esther Johnson and Rebecca Dingley): "Prior
came in after dinner; and, upon an occasion, he [the secretary] said,
the best thing he ever read is not yours, but Dr. Swift's on Vanbrugh,
which I do not reckon so very good neither. But Prior was damped
until I stuff him with two or three compliments."19 One also finds
Prior and Rowe praising Swift's "A Description of a City Shower"(1710),
and Swift describes Prior's poem on the attempted assassination of
Harley as "handsome,"20 This element of competition may be a factor
in the poetic output of Prior and Swift during this time, but it seems
to have had no adverse effect on their relationship.

The time which Prior and Swift spent together should not be rigidly classified as strictly business or pleasure according to whether they were at Harley's or the Smyrna, for the dinners held by Harley were deliberately planned as social occasions as much as business ones. As the Tories recognized the importance of creating a certain image, a group identity, as well as fostering a spirit of friendliness among them, the idea of a club or society was brought forth. Bolingbroke seems to have originated the plan which resulted in The Society, or the Brothers' Club, as it was more widely known. The members were to be composed of those with either wit or influence among the Tories. Swift's account of the plan is one of the most complete:

It seems in my absence they had erected a Club, and made me one; and we made some laws to-day, which I am to digest, and add to, against next meeting. Our meetings are to be every Thursday: we are yet but twelve: lord keeper and lord treasurer were proposed; but I was against them, and so was Mr. secretary, though their sons are of it, and so they are excluded; but we design to admit the duke of Shrewsbury. The end of our Club is to advance conversation and friendship, and to reward deserving persons with our interest and recommendation. We take in none but men of wit or men of interest; and if we go on as we begin, no other Club in this town will be worth talking of.21

Prior was included among the original twelve (the number reached twenty-two finally). The Society died out after dissension within the ministry and the absence of several members (Prior among them) made its continuation more of a task than a pleasure, and the successor to this club, although not in a line of direct descent, would be the Scriblerus Club.
The formation of The Society is itself one of the first manifestations of differences between Bolingbroke and Oxford, for Bolingbroke planned for his group to compete with the Saturday dinner gathering that Oxford usually held. Since the gatherings were on different nights, the competition would not be overt, but Bolingbroke now had control over a group of his own with the prestige to match the less formal and formalized gatherings at Oxford's. Men like Swift and Prior were active in both groups, however, and there was never the open split between those who attended either or both gatherings that developed between Oxford and Bolingbroke.

One of Swift's occasional remarks about Prior in the Journal—I am using this term to denote comments which contain more than a notation that he and Prior had dinner together—takes notice of Prior's dependability in attendance at the various dinners and meetings: "We had much company to-day at dinner at lord treasurer's. Prior never fails: he is a much better courtier than I; and we expect every day that he will be a commissioner of customs, and that in a short time a great many more will be turned out." Although that comment could easily be given a note of envy, in Swift's case there is probably a hint of pride in his being less of a courtier than Prior. Swift does not make this reflection with respect to Prior, but his actions and comments on the subject at other times have this cast. Swift seems to have felt that this kind of punctuality was below his dignity, for he prided himself on his independence. Samuel Johnson once commented on this aspect of Swift's behavior: "No man, however, can pay a more
servile tribute to the Great, than by suffering his liberty in their
presence to aggrandize him in his own esteem. Swift's failure to
achieve the kind of recognition he would have liked for his services is
mostly due to his refusal to pay the kind of tribute that would easily
have led to "success." But perhaps that course of action would not
have brought Swift his bishopric in England; Prior, who was the
courtier's courtier, found little security and was subject to the same
kind of disappointment as Swift.

From the summer of 1711 on, Prior was increasingly taken up
with the ministry's planned negotiations for a peace treaty with France.
He made one secret trip during the summer of 1711, which was inad-
vertently discovered by John Macky, and only Swift's timely pamphlet,
"A New Journey to Paris," averted what could have been a major Tory
blunder. There was one more round trip to Paris in 1712—he was gone
from August until October—before Prior went in December 1712 for
what was to be a much longer stay than he had planned. When he
returned at the behest of the Whig Secret Committee in March 1715,
Swift had been in Ireland for seven months and was not to return to
England before Prior's death in 1721.

Although there was less time for Swift and Prior to see each other
during the second year of their friendship, they made good use of the
occasions they had. Swift twice mentions times when he and Prior
sat up together (apparently without other company) until eleven or
twelve, and there are other occasions when their dining together
appears to have a more intimate note than the larger gatherings of
earlier times. In other words, there is both a quantitative and a qualitative difference in the entries in the Journal for this period. Swift's references to Prior appear more natural and commonplace, as if their relationship is now an assured and easy one. Swift shows concern over Prior's health and finances, and worries along with Prior about his appointment as one of the plenipotentiaries to the Paris peace conference. After noting that he has heard that Prior's commission is passed, Swift writes: "Od so, I must go see his excellency, 'tis a noble advancement: but they could do no less, after sending him to France. Lord Strafford is as proud as hell, and how he will bear one of Prior's mean birth on an equal character with him, I know not."

It turned out that Swift's fears as to Lord Strafford were only too accurate, although Prior had worried more about opposition from the Queen. Oxford argued that Prior's diplomatic skill and commercial knowledge were indispensable and convinced the Queen to sign Prior's commission, even though she was reluctant to send "people of mean extraction" abroad on such a mission. Prior did go to Paris as a secretary and was given an appointment as a Commissioner of Customs as consolation, but he was deeply disappointed.

The one characteristic of Prior's that receives most of Swift's attention in the Journal is also one of the best indications of the nature of their relationship. Swift notes that "Prior puns very well," and even mentions several of Prior's puns. This is an observation from the Swift of the April Fool hoaxes, the lover of la bagatelle and connoisseur of puns. From Swift, this is a compliment of a very high order, and
the note of unblemished admiration in the remark is a real tribute
to the joys of their friendship. 26

With Prior's stay in France from December 1712 until March
1715, one turns from the Journal to Stella to the Correspondence
for information on the relationship of Prior and Swift. This change
marks the difference between the conversations, meetings, and meals
of one period and the lack of any contact except by correspondence of
the other. Yet there is a recompense, for the letters reveal more of
the substance of their relationship than do any number of entries in the
Journal. There is less dialogue between Prior and Swift during this
phase of their relationship than in the first, but this has the advantage
of being accessible where the conversations of the first were not,
except for certain remarks and puns which Swift saw fit to pass on to
Stella. One wishes that Prior and Swift had a Boswell to record their
conversations, but at least there are the letters.

There are only two letters extant for the period from the winter
of 1712 until March of 1715, shortly before Prior returned to England,
although there were obviously more. Both Prior and Swift were con-
cerned with matters of importance during this time, and Prior's first
letter (or, rather, the first letter we have) indicates that he is having
a little trouble adjusting to this new state of affairs. This letter,
dated 8 April 1713, begins with an apology for the incoherence and
haste "when the Writer was half a sleep hang Me if I know how to go
on, thô I am in a Country where Every body does not only write letters,
but prints them: Our great affair goes on very successfully." The
rest of the letter refers to news and to Prior's hope of being back
with the Society, and he closes with requests for Swift to give greetings
to several of their friends.²⁷

The strangeness of this letter--its curiously perfunctory tone
and the lack of warmth toward Swift--is easily dismissed as truly the
product of a sleepy and tired mind when one reads Prior's reply to a
letter from his "good friend Jonathan" four months later. Prior is
still complaining about the lack of matter with which to compose a
letter, but that in itself makes an entertaining and informative piece:

I have writ Letters now above 22 years. I have
taken towns, destroyed fleets, made treaties, and
settled Commerce in Letters, and what of all this?
why nothing, but that I have had some subject to
write upon: but to write a letter only because Mr
Roseingrave has a Mind to carry One in his pochett,
to tell you that you are sure of a friendship wch can
never do you three pence of good; and wish you well
in Engald very soon, when I dont know when I am
likely to be there my self: all this, I say is very
absurd for a letter, especially when I have this day
written a dozen much more to the purpose. if I had
seen your Manuscript, if I had received Dr. Parnel's
poem, if I had any news of Landau being taken, why
well and good; but as I know no more than that the Duke
of Shrewsburie designs for England within 3 weeks, that
I must stay here till some body comes, and then--
brings Me necessarily to say, good Mr Dean, that I am
like the fellow in the Rehearsal, who did not know
whether he was to be merry or serious, or in what way
or mood to act his part, one thing only I am assured of,
that I love you very well and am most sincerely and
faithfully /dear Sir/ Your Servant and Brother,
M. Prior.

Prior adds a long postscript in which he gives some news, quotes
some Horace as a reflection on current events, and concludes by
commenting "and now, I think I have furnished you out a very pretty
letter."²⁸
A noticeable characteristic of most of the good correspondence of this period is its candor and easiness, although this was often won only with great pains, despite the protestations to the contrary by most letter writers. The value that was attached to this quality can be judged by the Earl of Orrery's praise of "that unsuspicious openness, which is the principal delight of writing to our friends," or in Pope's claim that his letters are "scribbled with all the carelessness and inattention imaginable." Even if it weren't known that Pope did some careful revision of his correspondence, his letters and those of other famous correspondents seem at times a little too studiously arranged to be completely spontaneous. Samuel Johnson, while ridiculing the standard of elegant spontaneity, found Pope's letters too studied and artificial. Although both Swift and Prior were conscious of the possibility that their letters might be printed, their self-consciousness is not for the benefit of posterity, but for their correspondent. A letter was a form of conversation in which one was careful not to bore one's listeners, and even with one's closest friends (especially with one's friends, actually) good manners were necessary.

Prior and Swift seem to strike the medium between stiff formality and vulgar familiarity in a particularly happy manner; both have the gift of writing conversationally witty letters and poetry that utilize a precise tone and a light touch as expertly as a good conversationalist manages a discussion. Their wit seems to have left them open to the suspicion that their letters were contrived, however, and one finds Swift protesting against this: "Is it imagined that I must be always leaning upon one Hand while I am writing with the other, Always upon
the quivive and the Slip Slop instead of an honest plain Letter . . . ?" 32
Prior's letters in particular demonstrate an easiness of syntax and a
natural flow of wit that must have made his conversation as delightful
as his letters.

Two letters seem too few to constitute a phase, but the third
letter in the Swift-Prior correspondence signals a change in the rela-
tionship, enough of a change to warrant a division between the old
and the new. Significantly enough, this letter is from Swift, the first
one from him to Prior that appears in the Correspondence, and it was
written during a crucial period in their personal history, immediately
after the death of Queen Anne. It is hard to say whether the change
that takes place at this time in the correspondence is due to any change
of attitude on the part of Swift or Prior toward the other, or to the
change in their circumstances that the fall of the Tories produced.
It seems more likely that their common disaster--Prior was faced with
an immediate threat of Whig persecution and Swift was virtually exiled
to Ireland--brought them closer together, or perhaps they both now
had the time and an added need to pay more attention to an episto-
al relationship. At any rate, the remaining letters have a warmth and
a personal directness that the earlier ones lacked; there is less ele-
gance and artfulness and more plain speech. Some of this can be
attributed to the change in the size of their world, for no longer were
they important players on the political stage; the tone of their letters
reflect this change, for the later ones seem to be more the convers-
sations of two close friends talking privately than two men of the world
conversing in public.
The letter opens with a commendation of the bearer of the letter, then turns to Prior's troubles:

That you lost your Employment so soon, and were afterwards forced to stay in France so long, are Politicks out of my Depth. You have the Honor to be well ill with the best Men of the Kingdom, and to have been highly instrumental in a Work to which Your Enemyes perhaps principally on [sic] their Establishment; yet I confess I often wished you at home about a twelvemonth ago. I have no Concern at present about you but with Relation to your Fortune. You and some others have convinced the World that a Man of Business may be a Man of Witt, but I will swear he ought not to be a Philosopher too, at least he ought to suspend that Part of Philosophy which teaches the Contempt of Money, and resume it when he can get no more. I know you can retire as gracefully as any man from six footmen and a gilt Chariot to Jonathan [Prior's servant] and your Cloak, but I pronounce whatever Court suffers it is not a Christian one.

Now you come from making Peace abroad, I wish you would make it among our Friends at home. --But I will say no more, for I am so entirely ignorant of all Affairs that I should in three Lines be in danger of talking very absurdly: all I know proper for me to add is, that no Man loves or esteems you more than /Your/ most obedient /&c &c Brother/

J.S.

Will you tell our Friends that I am just alive, and that is all.

This letter presents Prior with Swift's concern for his state, his assurances of friendship, and his indignation over the treatment which Prior is being subjected to. The image of Prior's retirement from public life is characteristically invested with dignity; for Swift, this action usually represented the ultimate gesture a good man could make--Sir William Temple furnishing a modern example, Horace the classical one. The tone which Swift adopted at this point had to be chosen with care, for if he gave the impression that he was unusually
upset or concerned, Prior might think that Swift's concern was motivated by the fear that Prior was going to betray his friends to gain the good graces of the Whigs. That thought could also have prompted the sentence "I have no Concern at present about you but with Relation to your Fortune," although an additional interpretation of the sentence might be that Swift is assuring Prior that the only reasonable concern at the moment is Prior's financial state. In the light of the temper of the Whigs and Prior's position, which rendered him susceptible to much heavier penalties, Swift probably would not write such an empty assurance, however. The timing of the letter also supports the theory that Swift wished to reassure Prior of his trust before Prior acted. If Prior were indeed contemplating helping the Whigs, such a statement of trust might make him pause; if he were going to fight, the time for Swift to stand up for him was before the act, not after.

Swift's own isolation from what was happening in England, his desire to keep in touch, and perhaps just a little desperation figure in the close of the letter. The postscript and the last paragraph indicate that Swift was almost in as much need of friendly support as Prior. Perhaps Prior could be expected to sympathize with Swift more than anyone else of the Society; at least it does seem significant that Swift's comforting letter to Prior also contains a veiled request for comfort from his friends.

The remark about Prior making peace at home is a reference to the bitter quarrel between Oxford and Bolingbroke, which Swift had unsuccessfully tried to resolve. Swift's comment on this situation in
his Inquiry into the Behaviour of the Queen's Last Ministry makes some significant points about Prior's character and his function within the Tory group:

Neither perhaps would a Reconcilement have been an Affair of much Difficulty, if their Friends on both Sides had not too much observed the common prudential Forms of not caring to intermeddle, which together with the Addition of a Shrug, was the constant Answer I received from most of them whenever I pressed them upon the Subject. . . . Mr. Prior who was much loved and esteemed by them both, as he well deserved, upon the Account of every Virtue that can qualify a Man for private Conversation, might have been the properest Person for such a Work, if he could have thought it to consist with the Prudence of a Courtier; but however, he was absent in France at those Junc-
tures when it was chiefly necessary. 34

This description of Prior contains some high praise, but the praise seems to be tempered slightly by the qualification "if he could have thought it to consist with the Prudence of a Courtier," which by itself is not a damaging observation, but it is too close to the description of the other friends who chose not to meddle to avoid being associated with aspects of their actions. The overall effect of the passage is that Prior is a good man and a good courtier, and possibly an even better man when not so good a courtier. The moral implication of this qualifying phrase is not so definite or strong that it outweighs the positive traits, however, and much of the moral tone of the phrase (which is actually very slight) is conveyed by the context. Prudence in many situations is not a bad trait, but Swift is demonstrating how prudence can shade into selfishness or apathy, and a little of that is allowed to touch Prior conditionally.
The topic that occupies most of the correspondence after Prior's return from France is the publication and sale of Prior's Poems on Several Occasions (1718). The project is brought to Swift's attention by Erasmus Lewis on 12 January 1717:

Our friend Prior having not had the vicissitude of humane things before his Eyes is likely to end his dayes in as forlorn a State as any other Poet has done before him, if his friends doe not take more care of him, than he has done of himself, therefore to prevent the evil wch we see is coming on very fast, we have a project of printing his Solomon & other Poetical works by Subscription, one Guinea to be paid in hand, & the other at the delivery of the Books; he, Arbuthnot, Pope, & Gay, are now with me & remember you, it is our joynt request that you will endeavour to procure some Subscriptions . . . there are no papers printed here, nor are any Advertisements to be publish'd, for the whole matter is to be manag'd by friends in such a manner as shall be least shocking to the dignity of a Plenipotentiary. 35

Swift's attitude toward the project is demonstrated by his tireless efforts to secure subscribers, on the one hand, and by some of his comments to Prior on the other. Swift's disappointment in what he regarded as a small number of subscribers is expressed in a letter to Lord Harley on 17 May 1718, in which he writes, "I have sent Mr. Prior all the money which this hedge Country would afford, which for want of a better Solicitor is under 200 pounds." Swift then uses an ironic figure of speech (which appears in several later works, notably in Gulliver's Travels) to describe Prior's reward after such long and meritorious service to his country: "I believe that he is the first Person in any Christian Country that ever was suffered to starve after having been in so many great Employments. But among the Turks and
Chineses it is a very frequent Case, and those are the properest
Precedents for us at this time. Swift was being overly modest
about his efforts on Prior's behalf, for at least one critic has given
Swift much of the credit for the financial success of Poems on
Several Occasions.

Swift made a comment about the project in an untraced letter to
Prior which is difficult to interpret; our knowledge of the remark
comes from Prior's repetition of it in several letters. For instance,
on 30 July 1717, Prior writes to Swift: "You will easily imagine that
I have a hundred things to say to You which for as many reasons I
omit, and only touch upon that Business to which in the Pride of your
heart You give the Epithet of Sorry." Almost a year later, Prior
again refers to Swift's characterization of the project: "I have two
Colon and Comma Men. We correct and design to publish as fast as
the nature of this great, or sorry work, as You call it, will bear,
but we shall not be out before Christmas." It is highly doubtful that
the epithet refers to the work itself, so there must be something about
the project that inspired Swift's remark. The fact that someone of
Prior's former position would have to be helped by his friends to avoid
poverty could be what Swift is referring to, for this was evidently
bothering him. Another possibility for the point of the remark can be
found in Swift's attitude toward the relationship between a writer and
the publication of his works. The best illustration of this is his reaction
to the attempt to insert, in a bill designed to regulate the press, a
clause "that the Author's Name and Place of Abode should be set to every printed Book, Pamphlet or Paper." Swift refers to the clause, "which I believe no Man who hath the least Regard to Learning would give his Consent to," in the Following Manner:

It is most certain, that all Persons of true Genius or Knowledge have an invincible Modesty and Suspiciousness of themselves upon their first sending their Thoughts into the World: And that those who are Dull or Superficial, void of all Taste and Judgment, have Dispositions directly contrary. So that if this Clause had made Part of a Law, there would have been an End in all likelihood of any valuable Production for the future either in Wit or Learning. 39

Swift's own practice of publishing anonymously supports the contention that he felt that one should be reticent about one's own writings, although some of the energy of this attack on the bill undoubtedly comes from the restraint which the proposal would place on controversial writings. If his remark indicates a measure of displeasure with the publication of Prior's poems, this is probably a combination of his regret for the necessity of the venture and Prior's involvement in it. He might have felt that Prior's attitude was the same and that Prior would appreciate Swift's comment on a mutually distasteful task. Apparently Prior did not take the remark that way, not appreciating the jest. Of course, if Swift were being ironic, praising by belittling, then the remark is harmless and he and Prior are enjoying a joke. But the tone of Prior's references indicate that he did not take the comment in that sense, and his reaction appears to be at least as reliable as a modern student's, especially when Swift's letter cannot be seen. This is the only sign of any contention between the two in their correspondence, and its only
importance to their relationship is in its singularity.

The most interesting and important letters from the point of view of the personal relationship of Prior and Swift and the most revealing parts of the correspondence are those that are less substantive and more personal. One unfortunate hindrance to uninhibited personal communication between Prior and Swift—or between any of those connected with the late ministry—was the careful scrutiny which such letters got from officials when they were entrusted to the public post. The Whigs hoped to find something which might help them carry out their frustrated plans to punish Oxford and other high officials of the Tory Ministry.40

Prior's remark about omitting many things in his letter to Swift on 30 July 1717 is probably a reference to the restraint under which their correspondence now took place. In that same letter Prior writes, "I take if for granted that what ever I write as what ever is writ to me will be broke open, So you'l expect nothing from me but what you may have as particularly from the Post-boy." This situation probably means that only political matters would be dangerous subjects for the letters, but this in itself would be a great deprivation for both men, eliminating one of the major common areas of interest. The use of some means of private messenger for any protracted length of time was impractical, especially considering the distance between London and Dublin. Thus the joy of sharing a hoard of confidential information, of reminiscing with someone who is equally endowed with sopil and who participated in the same adventure, was lost for Prior and Swift.
But that did not lessen the warmth with which many of the letters expressed the feelings of one man for the other. In the same letter of 30 July 1717 which has been discussed above, Prior phrases his desire to see Swift with a touching combination of drollery and directness: "I have been made to believe that we may see your Reverend Person this Summer in England, if so, I shall be glad to meet You at any place, but when you come to London do not go to the Coco-tree (as you sent your Letter) but come imediately to Duke Street where you shal find a Bed, a Book & a Candle So pray think of Sojourning no where else." Prior also takes notice of Swift's industry in getting subscriptions in a manner which makes the comment more of a personal than a business one: "I think as you have ordered the matter you have made the greater part of Ireland list themsleves of that number, I do not know how you can Recom- pence them, but by coming over to help me to Correct the Book, which I promise them you will pardon my having used an other hand, since it is soe much better than my own. . . ."

Both Swift and Prior were fond of carrying on imaginary dialogues with their correspondents in their letters, although Swift usually indulges in that sort of banter more often in the Journal to Stella than anywhere else. One of Prior's letters demonstrates the kind of game which he and Swift could play:

The Earl of Oxford is stil here: He will go into Hereford shire some time in June, he says he will write to You himself. am I particular enough? is this prose? and do I distinguish Tenses? I have nothing more to tell You but that You are the happyest man in the World, and if
You are once got into la bagatelle, You may despise the World. Besides contriving Emblems such as Cupids, Torches and Hearts for great Letters, I am now un-binding two Volumes of printed Heads to have 'em bound toghter in better order than they were before; don't you envy me? for the rest matters continue Sicut olim. I will not tell You how much I want You, and I cannot tell You how well I love You. 41

The letter Prior is replying to has not been found, but one can guess from Prior's remarks that Swift has been playing proofreader, editing Prior's letters while Prior is busy seeing his poems through the press. Swift enjoyed playing the role of a tutor, and here he and Prior seem to be enjoying a joke at the expense of pedagogues and the petty problems of correcting proof. Prior is probably Swift's equal in his ability to use his wit and to fall into the spirit of a game, and apparently they were sufficiently in tune with each other's way of thinking that the letters could become a form of repartée, substituting for the evenings of jokes, puns, and good fellowship. Swift's and Prior's powers of dramatic visualization, which are brought into play here, are important features of their poetry, also. Swift's use of irony and "masks" owes a great deal to this power of entering into different roles or contexts easily, and most of Prior's best poetry is either narrative or is built around a dramatic scene.

Matters which were of interest to both Prior and Swift fill out much of the correspondence not devoted to subscription business and personal asides. News of the health of Oxford and his family is passed faithfully from Prior to Swift--Oxford was a notoriously poor correspondent--and the greetings of their common friends are forwarded. Since both men
were afflicted with various maladies for most of their lives, the state of their health is often a subject of interest. One reason the subject is sometimes mentioned is that if furnishes an excuse—albeit a perfectly valid one—for a delayed letter. Swift's attacks of vertigo and deafness were quite capable of incapacitating him, and while Prior's consumptive condition was a slow and steady drain on his health in contrast to the brief and severe attacks that Swift had, he was also subject to periods of acute discomfort that left him unable to attend to normal duties.

Prior maintains a humorous attitude toward his condition, as in the close of a letter to Swift on 25 September 1718: "I Cough but am otherwise well, and till I cease to Cough i.e. to Live, I am with entire Friendship and Affection... Your... Servant/M Prior." Prior ends another letter in the same manner: "Our friends are all well, so am I nisi cum pituita molesta est, which is at this present writing and will continue so all the winter; so with weak lungs and a very good heart I remain always... M Prior." The only time that Prior discusses his health in one of his letters to Swift in the same matter-of-fact way that Swift uses is in a letter dated 4 May 1720, which contains the following short paragraph in the middle of the letter: "I labour under the distemper you complains of, Deafness: especially upon the least Cold, I did not take care of my Ears till I knew if my head were my own or no, but am now syringing, and hope to profit by it."42

Although Swift's references to his "perpetual ill Health" are more frequent than Prior's and the tone he uses is more serious, on the whole Swift's attitude toward his disabilities seems to be more comfortable
and relaxed than Prior's. Prior's jesting is, on the surface, pleasant and urbane, but under this guise of wit lies the desperate realization that time runs more swiftly for him than it does for those who do not have the cough. Prior must keep his condition at least a little distance from him, while Swift, as much as he disliked and feared his attacks, seems to enjoy trotting his problem out regularly for a rational examination, exchanging remedies with friends, debating causes, and so forth. Of course the differences in their respective afflictions might explain these different responses, but the way in which each reacts to his problem is also a reflection of the differences in their characters. Swift deals with his adversary in a rational manner, hoping to reason Menière's syndrome into submission. Prior, knowing better than to trust to reason or hope for victory, can only gain a Pyrrhic victory by outjesting his foe. Swift enjoyed relatively long periods of good health between attacks that gave him hope that his latest program of diet and exercise had worked; Prior never had that respite and was forced to make do without much hope.

One of the most familiar refrains of the correspondence between Swift and his friends in England is "When will we see you?" One of the exchanges between Swift and Prior on this and other topics illustrates more fully the nature of the dialogue which they carried on:

Swift: I thought to have had the Happyness of seeing you before this time because my Health required a Journey. But whether I fancy my Head is some thing better, or that little paulytry Impediments stop me, or the sang froid of fifty, I cannot tell, but so it is, that I have past the Time and cannot be at Aix le Chappelle in May as I intended, and writ to my Friends in London that I would. But I am going to try a more lazy Remedy of
Irish Country Air, and as my Return is uncertain I thought fit to let you know that your Subscribers want their Books, and that your Bookseller is a Blockhead for not sending them. . . . I am just getting on Horse-back, and have only time to desire you will please to present my humble service to the Earl of Oxford. . . .

Prior: Since I love You with all the Tyes of Inclination and Friendship, and wish You all the happiness of Life, Health especially the Chiepest: you will pardon me being a little peevish, when I received yours of the 28th past, which told Me I must not expect to see You here, and that You were not perfectly well at Dublin. I hope there is a little Spleen mixt with your Distemper, in which case your Horse may be your Physician, and your Physician may have the happiness of being your Companion (an honor which Many here would envy him) as to the Sang froid of fifty who has it not that is worth conversing with except Harley and Bathurst? at least make no more than Sort of complaint to Me--isphaecon commemoratio est quasi exprobatio--for fifty (as Mr Locke observes) is equal to Fifty, and a Cough is worse than the Spleen my bookseller is a blockhead, so have they all been or worse from Chaucer's Scrivener down to John and Jacob [John Barber and Jacob Tonson, Swift's publishers].

Swift's letter is more hurried than usual and is less witty than most of his letters to Prior, but Prior more than makes up for Swift's lapse in this instance by holding up his part of the dialogue admirably. The wit in Prior's reply is not made at the expense of warmth, nor is it excessively self-conscious; it preserves an ease without becoming dull and has personal warmth without sentimentality. In short, this letter is an admirable representative of the art of letter-writing at its best. But there is another letter of Prior's that is even better, and since a description would fall miserably short, with apologies for the extended quotations, here is some of it:

Having spent part of the Summer very agreeably in
Cambridgeshire with Dear Lord Harley, I am returned without Him to my own Palace in Duke street whence I endeavour to exclude all the tumult and Noise of the neighbouring Court of requests, and to live aut nihil agendo aut aliud agando till He comes to Town: but there is worse than this yet, I have treated Lady Harriot at Cambridge Good God! a fellow of a college treat! and spoke verses to Her in a gown and Cap: What! the Plenipotentiary so far concerned in the damned peace at Utrecht, the man that makes up half the Volume of terse Prose that makes up the report of the Committee, speaking Verses: Sic est, homo sum, and am not ashamed to send those very Verses to One who can make much better. and now lett Me ask You how you do and what you do, how your Irish Country Air agreed with you, and when you intend to take any English Country Air In the spring I will meet you where you will, and go with you where you will. . . . it is many Months since the Complaints of my Subscribers are redres'd and that they have ceased to call the Bookseller a blockhead, by transferring that title to the Author. 43

Most of the remaining correspondence is filled with news and some jesting about each other's poetry. In the last letter Prior wrote to Swift, he reprimands Swift for not writing enough, and the letter contains some interesting comments by Prior on the manner in which he and Swift should face the world. Prior's sentiments on this subject are similar to Swift's comment to Pope about a "Friendship among all Men of Genius" who, "if they could be united would drive the world before them,"44 but Prior's remarks characteristically emphasize la bagatelle rather than the satirist's scourge:

I know very well, that you can write a good letter, if you have a mind to it; but that is not the question. A letter from you sometimes is what I desire. Reserve your tropes and periods for those you love less; and let me hear how you do, in whatever humour you are; whether lending your money to the butchers, protecting the weavers, treating the women, or construing propria quae maribus to the country curate. You and I are so
established authors, that we may write what we will, without fear of censure: and if we have not loved long enough to prefer the bagatelle to any thing else, we deserved to have our brains knocked out ten years ago. 45

Less than five months after this letter was written, Prior died while at Lord Harley's seat in the country, Wimpole. Several features of the friendship of Prior and Swift indicate that they might have been closer if circumstances had been slightly different. As it was, their relationship was remarkably strong, considering the brief time they knew each other before Prior went to France and Swift left for Ireland. Although politics brought them together, it was not an important factor in preserving their friendship. Politics was a closed door for both men after 1715—at least common politics, for Swift finally turned to Irish affairs in 1720 and English politics was a forbidden topic for both Tories. The enforced retirement from that part of public life was fortunate in that it gave Prior time for leisure activities and Swift the opportunity to find and develop his place in Ireland. The diminution of politics in their lives also allowed both more time for literary pursuits, and this area was one of the major concerns of their correspondence. But a friendship is not built on common interests alone, and although Swift and Prior remained fairly close after their active participation in politics ceased and literature seemed their basic connection, this by itself cannot explain the durability and intimacy of their relationship.

One element which is difficult to analyze is the degree of personal compatibility which Prior and Swift enjoyed. Common interests form a part of any personal relationship, but all the common interests in the world cannot take the place of the je ne sais quoi of friendship, the
feeling between people that may or may not be susceptible to rational explanation. There is sufficient evidence in the tone of their letters and in the statements they made about each other to support the contention that Prior and Swift felt personally attracted toward each other. The easy-natured flow of their letters, the warmth and sincerity and friendly teasing of these epistolary conversations testify to a close personal bond. The fact that their relationship was maintained through correspondence is a tribute to their friendship, especially since much of their enjoyment of each other came from the spontaneous flow of wit and camaraderie which was lost or slowed down in the letters.

Prior's letters seem to show more affection than do Swift's, but Swift's feeling for Prior is shown on other occasions in such a way that one cannot doubt its strength. Swift was in the middle of a letter to Archbishop King when he received news of Prior's death; here is his response: "I am just now told from some News Papers, that one of the King's Enemy's, and my excellent Friend, Mr. Prior, is dead, I pray God deliver me from any such Trials. I am neither old nor Philosopher enough to be indifferent at so great a Loss, and, therefore, I abruptly conclude, but with the greatest respect... J. Swift."46 This is a spontaneous overflowing of grief at what was apparently a real shock to Swift; there is no reason why Swift would pretend to be deeply moved for Archbishop King's sake, and little likelihood that he would counterfeit sorrow for anyone's benefit. Swift's response to the news of Prior's death also belies some of the validity of his observations of how people
mourn those who have been close to them in "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," but then it is doubtful that most of mankind measures up to Swift in many ways.

Swift's response to the news of Prior's death can be examined in conjunction with two other comments by Swift on Prior, both of these made several years later. Patrick Delaney recorded some remarks supposedly made by Swift when they were discussing the art of good conversation. The account goes like this:

And I am told that he hath complained of the avarice, and monopoly of others, in that article, particularly of Mr. Prior. And that being asked, if he did not think Mr. Prior a very good companion, he answered, He would certainly be a very good companion if he were a fair one. But he leaves no elbow room for others. 47

One has few means of ascertaining the tone or veracity of this remark, but both Swift and Prior prided themselves on their wit and may have crowded each other occasionally in conversations. Swift's comment on his envy of others' gifts in "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" seems an appropriate gloss:

To all my Foes, dear Fortune, send
thy Gifts, but never to my Friends:
I tamely can endure the first,
But, this with Envy makes me burst. (ll. 67-70)

John Macky's brief character sketch of Prior (among others) adds to Delaney's account of Swift's view of Prior, for Swift wrote marginal comments by many of Macky's characters, agreeing or disagreeing or
sometimes supplementing Macky's comments. The significant potions of Macky's description of Prior are as follows:

Was taken from the bar of a tavern by my Lord Dorset and sent to the University of Cambridge. . . .

He was chosen a Member of that Parliament which impeached the Partition, to this Treaty he was Secretary, and yet joined in the Vote with Those who carried on the Impeachment against Those that had established him in the World.

On the Queen's Accession to the Throne, he was continued in his Office, is very well at court with the Ministry, and is an intire Creature of my Lord Jersey's, whom he supports by his advice. Is one of the best Poets in England, but very factious in conversation; a thin hollow-looked Man, turned of forty Years old. 48

Swift wrote "This is near the Truth" in the margin by this account of Prior, which was written about 1703 and published in 1733; Swift's annotations were written sometime after publication, but a more precise date cannot be determined. 49 The time of composition is an important consideration here, for Macky wrote about Prior shortly after the vote against Halifax and the Whigs, and this event would have at the time received undue attention. Swift did not know Prior at this time, and may not have cared about this event in Prior's past. Swift's agreement with Macky may be limited to the description of Prior's character rather than his history; if Delaney's account is true, Swift and Macky do agree on Prior's conversational traits. But there is little need to decide how Swift's comment qualifies Macky's; this description of Prior is fair, and the praise of Prior as poet is indeed gratifying. Swift never said anything publicly about the Halifax episode or about Prior's loyalty to his friends, and after several years had passed, the incident assumed
less importance. On the whole, this character sketch of Prior is balanced or even a bit in his favor, and Swift's agreement with its essentials is not surprising, for it confirms the inferences of his other remarks on Prior with regard to both praise and censure.

In summary, Swift and Prior seem to have had a genial relationship that withstood a long separation. It appears from the sketchy evidence that they genuinely admired and respected each other as friends and as fellow poets. While Swift's later comments may seem to qualify his admiration of Prior, his efforts in Prior's behalf at getting subscriptions and his expressions of grief at the news of Prior's death certainly suggest that his feelings for Prior were not ambivalent. The warmth of their correspondence and their common pleasure in many small particulars, as well as striking similarities in their wit and modes of expression, testify to the realization and the possibilities of this friendship. Whether the relationship could have withstood the rigors of prolonged close contact and possibly competition is a teasing question; the love which both Prior and Swift inspired in their close companions would seem to suggest that, given the opportunity, little would have been allowed to spoil such a friendship. As it was, their relationship was part of that community of the best men of the age, and each recognized the other as a kindred spirit in the realm of wit and poetry.
Notes to Chapter II


2. See the discussion of Prior's treatment at the hands of the Secret Committee in Chapter I, p. 28, n. 25.

3. Eves, pp. 103, 134, 141-146, 160, 200. If Prior had gone to Dublin, he probably would not have met Swift until Swift accompanied the Earl of Berkeley as chaplain in 1699. Swift was at Kilroad for only a year (spring 1695 to spring 1696)--during which time it is unlikely that Prior would have seen him--and returned to Moor Park for over three years. He came back to Ireland with Berkeley in August 1699.

4. Swift to Robert Hunter, 12 January 1709, Swift's Correspondence, I, 121-122.

5. Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on the Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland Preserved at Welbeck Abbey (London, 1891), IV, 155. This and other volumes issued by the Historical Manuscripts Commission will be referred to in the following manner: H. M. Portland.

6. Swift's work appeared for sale on 10 May 1704; Battle of the Books and part of A Tale are on the side of Atterbury in the Temple-Wotton-Bentley-Boyle (Atterbury's pupil whose name appeared on the pamphlet which Atterbury actually wrote) controversy over the Epistles of Phalaris. Swift was supporting Temple and Atterbury was in the same camp. Atterbury's remark about "good service" apparently refers to the controversy, although Swift's attacks on abuses of religion would warm the heart of any Anglican clergyman. The fear of discovery arises from the controversial aspect of the writings, which were doubly so because the author was a priest. Swift's caution in arranging for anonymous publication after he had left London for Ireland was wise, although most of the beau monde knew or guessed the authorship, as did Atterbury.

7. Swift's Correspondence, I, 173; Swift to Archbishop King, 9 September 1710.

8. See Chapter I, p. 19 and n. 27, p. 28.
9. **Journal, p. 282.** This letter is dated 29 May 1711, eight months after Swift had arrived in London, and by this time the change in his friends was probably becoming noticeable.

10. **See Ehrenpreis, II, 430, 434-439.** Swift was especially angered at having to listen quietly to some unknowing Whig attack one of his poems or a piece of his in the Examiner: "I dined to-day at lady Lucy's, where they ran down my Shower, and said *Sid Hamet* was the silliest poem they ever read, and told Prior so, whom they thought to be the author of it" (**Journal, p. 90, 10 November 1710**). And later: "To-day I went and dined at lady Lucy's, where you know I have not been this long time; they are plaguy Whigs, especially the sister Armstrong, the most insupportable of all women, pretending to wit, without any taste. She was running down the last Examiner, the prettiest I had read, with a character of the present ministry" (**Journal, p. 179, 3 January 1711**). When Swift's pride is touched, he shows the power of his rhetoric.

11. **Ehrenpreis, II, 446.**

12. **F. E. Ball organizes his book, Swift's Verse, An Essay, around this assumption, although he doesn't attempt to support it fully.** In the first chapter, one finds this comment: "It is at least certain that Swift was in his earlier years intensely ambitious to excel in the language of poetry, and that throughout his life he selected as his chief friends those who did so. Of the poets of his time there was scarcely one with whom he had not personal acquaintance, and in succession Addison, Prior and Pope occupied the chief place in his affections" (pp. 2-3).

13. **Journal, p. 360 (14 September 1711).**

14. **Eves, pp. 190-192.**

15. **Quoted in Eves, p. 226.**

16. **Journal, pp. 59-60.**

17. **Ibid., pp. 114-115 (7 Dec. 1710); p. 98 (18 Nov. 1710).**

18. **Ibid., pp. 197-198 (21 Feb. 1711); p. 196 (19 Feb. 1711).**
19.  Ibid., p. 92 (11 Nov. 1710). The brackets are Deane Swift's.

20.  Ibid., p. 74 (27 Oct. 1710) and p. 228 (30 March 1711). Prior's poem, "To the Right Honourable Mr. Harley, Wounded by Guiscard," pleased Swift a great deal, for he gave a copy to a friend to be printed in Ireland and tells Stella to look for them (Journal, pp. 231-232, 4 Apr 1711).


22.  Ibid., p. 298 (26 June 1711).


27.  Swift's Correspondence, I, 340-341.

28.  Ibid., I, 380-381. Prior quotes from the Odes, III, xxxix, 29-31, which is translated "With wise purpose does the god bury in the shades of night the future's outcome, and laughs [if mortals be anxious beyond due limits]" (Trans. E. E. Bennett, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Mass., 1952, p. 275.).


32. Swift's Correspondence, III, 170-171.

33. Ibid., II, 157-159. The letter was brought to Prior by Robert Howard, brother of Hugh Howard the painter, who was a close friend of Prior's. There was a strong reason for this method of delivery; which Swift mentions just before the quotation in the text starts: "Since I came here I never received a Line from any Friend of Consequence, and some of mine tho sent with Caution, I hear have been opened, so that I know nothing further with Relation to you than what those People tell me who read News papers."

34. Prose Works, VIII (1953), 158.

35. Swift's Correspondence, II, 245-246. Erasmus Lewis (1670-1754) was a close friend of both Swift and Prior and was employed by Lord Harley in several positions (D. N. B., XI, 1054-1055). H. Bunker Wright has revealed that Prior's finances were not as desperate as they appear from Lewis' statement (Lewis should have been in a position to know, but either he was wrong or Prior's fortune changed suddenly after Lewis wrote Swift). About half of Prior's extensive and valuable art collection seems to have been acquired between 1718 and 1721, and the contents of Prior's Duke Street house were valued at 2400 pounds, which includes a 2500-volume library worth 877 pounds, a fact which Wright says "is some evidence against the belief that the poet suffered poverty in his last years." Wright estimates that approximately 15,000 pounds "must have passed through the poet's hands in the five years preceding his death." This new light on Prior's finances does not alter the fact that his friends were concerned about him, however, and that their concern helped the realization of the 1718 Poems. See H. B. Wright and H. C. Montgomery, "The Art Bulletin, XXVII (1945), 195-204, and H. B. Wright, "Matthew Prior: A supplement to His Biography, "Summaries of Doctoral Dissertations, Northwestern Univ., V (1937), 34-38.

36. Swift's Correspondence, II, 290.


38. Swift's Correspondence, II, 280 and II, 290-291 (29 May 1718).

39. The History of the Four Last Years of Queen Anne's Reign, Prose Works, VII (1951), 105-106.
40. Shortly after Prior arrived in England, Bolingbroke fled to France (March 1715), evidently afraid that Prior was going to incriminate him. He did not return to England until after he was pardoned in May 1723. Prior spent the rest of his life under a cloud, however; the Royal Act of Grace (July 1717) extended a pardon to many charged with or suspected of political crimes but did not include Prior.

41. Swift's Correspondence, II, 291 (29 May 1718).

42. Ibid., II, 297-298, 328-329 (8 Dec. 1719), 346. Prior's remark about his head is reference to his fate at the hands of the Secret Committee, for which see Chapter I, n. 25.

43. Ibid., II, 318 (28 Apr. 1719), 323-324 (5 May 1719), 328-329 (8 Dec. 1719).

44. Ibid., II, 465 (20 Sept. 1723).

45. Ibid., II, 382 (25 Apr 1721).


49. Marginalia, Prose Works, V, 260. Macky's account was written about 1703 at the request of the Princess Sophia, Electress Dowager of Hanover (Introduction, "Prose Works, V, xxxv").
Chapter III

The Serious Muse:

Poems of Celebration, Damnation, and Meditation

The first difficulty in the study of the literary relationship of Prior and Swift is with the choice of a methodology. If one approaches the poetry through subject or content, distinctions of form and structure tend to be obscured; furthermore, with these two writers, there are several mutually exclusive subject areas. If a strict formal or genre approach is utilized, the problems of definition and applicability are severe. A strict genre classification in this case would also limit the study to contrast, because Prior and Swift often use the same forms for antithetical reasons. Generally speaking, Prior uses the traditional forms in a normal manner: the ode is for panegyric and more formal compliments to a lover, the epistle is a less public form that may be turned to either praise or reproach, the pastoral deals with love and occasionally with questions of poetry, and so forth. Swift, on the other hand, more often than not employs these forms for parody or burlesque: what is usually panegyric becomes satire, an elegy becomes a celebration of the well-deserved death of a scoundrel, the pastoral is moved to the city or is the frame for socially realistic actions, and raillery or even insult are the highest tokens of affection and regard. Prior also provides many of his poems with genre labels, and not only do his ideas of a certain genre differ from Swift's (where Swift indicates a classification), but they change with time.
The resolution of this problem is a tripartite division of the poetry into the following classifications: poetry of a serious nature, or what corresponds to the elevated or sublime for Prior and Swift; a second sportive order which is less utile and more dulce; and the imitations, which include both of the previous kinds but have qualities which set them apart as a special class. The imitations are particularly important in the literary relationship of Swift and Prior and for this reason also require a separate chapter.

The advantages of this organization are that it is simple, preserves most genre distinctions while avoiding over-classification, and allows a greater range of comparison on a flexible scale. For instance, in terms of scope, intensity, and rhetorical energy, Prior's more ambitious long poems have more in common with Swift's full-scale satires than do his few satiric poems. Panegyric and satire (on a formal basis), or as I have chosen to call them, celebration and damnation, have more in common than panegyric and the informal praise of Prior's lyrics and Swift's compliments to Stella and others. One problem of this organization is that some of the poems of meditation and damnation are stylistically closer to the poems of the second class. This is especially true of later poems by both poets, for they reach a point where the sublime and the casual, the serious and witty, are often side-by-side in the same poem. Some poems are so balanced that they can be discussed in either group, and occasionally the same poem will be dealt with from different points of view in both chapters.
Another way of explaining this division is in terms of audience and poetic voice. Poetry of the first kind is addressed to the public, deals with large questions of more general interest, and employs rhetoric and tone suited for an elevated and public occasion. The second class of poems is more intimate, quieter, and more conversational; the circle is smaller and the purpose is not so grand, although poetic merit may be even higher than in the first group. Another quality which I have used to separate these two classes is humor: the first class is serious, although not without wit. The second is less responsible to the higher orders of decorum and frequently indulges in la bagatelle. Swift and Prior, like most Augustans, were aware of the differences between the personal and the public, and their poetry reflects this awareness in a sensitive manner. The public man is serious, involved, and dignified. He may smile, but laughter and levity do not belong in the public forum. The private man is more domestic and sheds some of his responsibilities for the joys of friendship and conversation, love and sport.

The other reasons for this method of approaching the poetry of Prior and Swift in this study will become obvious, but one further point needs to be made. These three areas are not only convenient divisions within the poetry, but they correspond to what I feel are the basic modes of response that Prior and Swift make, with respect to their world, their poetry, and each other. The detailed investigation of these responses will make these men, their relationship, and their poetry more clearly understood and more significant in human and in literary terms.
This chapter is an examination into the kinds of poetry which are for the most part produced by either Prior or Swift but not by both. It also deals with the search for poetic forms suitable for elevated or sublime poetry and incidentally discusses the most ambitious and in some ways the least successful poems of Prior and Swift. Of course there are exceptions to the generalizations that Prior does not write satire and Swift does not write panegyric or lyric, and the generalizations and their exceptions will be closely studied. The validity of such critical assessments and the reasons for such patterns will also be of importance. Both poets are confronted at the beginning of their careers with the problem of adapting traditional forms to their individual talents and to a changing world; this problem and its solutions are most of all the subject of this chapter.

Both Prior and Swift began their poetic careers by writing panegyric in a way that was unsuited to their talents and to the age. Prior persisted in this much longer than Swift, probably because the older poet was more reluctant to abandon the traditions and style of an earlier age and because he had less aversion to panegyric than Swift. As has been seen, Prior also had fewer reservations about courting favor and possibly a greater need to do so. Prior's panegyrics are also more accomplished than Swift's, although it is hard to say whether that is due to his greater familiarity with the form or to an innate ability to praise gracefully. Swift once wrote that just as his attempts to sow "wholesome Herbs" turned up only weeds, whatever he planted
"By an equivocal Birth / Seeds and runs up to Poetry."¹ By the same token, whenever he tried to srite panegyric, it came out with a strongly satiric falvor.

Swift's rejection of both panegyric and the sublime impulse is documented in the early odes. These poems are failures but are interesting because they reveal with unusual clarity the development of Swift's satiric urge while he was engaged in panegyric. A pattern common to all the odes is the praise of King William, the Athenian Society, William Sancroft, and Temple primarily through contrast with Louis XIV, pedants and fools, and the proud. And the descriptions of the negative examples tend to be longer and more powerful than those of the central figure of the poem. This is in accordance with Swift's notion of the place and reward of the good and virtuous in this world, a notion confirmed by his experience in seeking a place and by the example of Sir William Temple, who retired from public life "after the deepest experience of court life and diplomacy . . . to the compensations of a disillusioned domesticity."² Swift's expression of this principle is found in the "Ode to the Athenian Society":

But Censure's to be understood
Th'Authentick mark of the Elect,
The publick Stamp Heav'n sets on all that's Great and Good,
Our shallow Search and Judgment to direct.³

The only real means of finding good men is by looking for the swarms of insects that will inevitably be plaguing such figures. Thus satire becomes a means of indirect praise, and is one of the most reliable in such times. Good men are constantly involved in holding actions
or are seen in gestures of withdrawal and rejection. Swift's defiant renunciation of the Muse in the last ode is in keeping with the actions of other good men in the poems:

Madness like this no fancy ever seiz'd,
Still to be cheated, never to be pleas'd;
Since one false beam of joy in sickly minds
Is all the poor content delusion finds.--
There thy enchantment broke, and from this hour
I here renounce thy visionary pow'r;
And since thy essence on my breath depends,
Thus with a puff the whole delusion ends. 4

Six years of poetic silence follow this, and when Swift turns to verse again, it is in the plain, vigorous style that one usually associates with Swift's poetry. If Swift is going to be a poet, it is on his own terms; if that means the rejection of the Muse and much of current poetic tradition, so be it. Independence has its price, and Swift is willing to pay it. One of the recent commentators on the odes remarks: "Swift's odes represent an effort to balance the claims of the literary and cultural tradition he had inherited and the realities of the post-Restoration world to which that tradition was less and less relevant." 5

Swift did come to terms with tradition, but fortunately it was not by means of the ode.

Swift's rejection of the Muse is not quite as drastic as it appears, however, for there are a surprising number of panegyrics after the odes, although they are panegyrics of a different order than the odes. In a similar way, Prior does not avoid satire as scrupulously as his statement in "Learning" indicates, although it is true that most of his satires are early works. 6 An interesting feature of Swift's panegyrics
and Prior's satires is that both use imitations and translations for most of these, indicating that imitation and translation could be used to help when one was trying to write in a form that was not congenial. These poems will be discussed separately, in the chapter on imitations and translations, but there are still some exceptions that can be dealt with now.

Except for translations or imitations, Swift has only three panegyrics. There are also a number of compliments of varying degrees of elaborateness to some of Swift's feminine friends (besides Stella). These have been omitted from panegyric because they lack the public note of panegyric and seem more personal and intimate than anything proper to this genre. The compliments, therefore, have been relegated to the class that includes Swift's Stella poems and Prior's lyrics. Prior, by the way, does write panegyrics for several women, and the difference between compliment and more formal praise will be seen clearly with those poems.

"To Lord Harley, since Earl of Oxford, on his Marriage"(1713) is Swift's poetic tribute to the marriage of the only son of the Lord Treasurer to Lady Henrietta Cavendish Holles, a union in whose negotiations Swift supposedly assisted. The poem consists of octosyllabic couplets in irregular stanzas (actually verse paragraphs) that mark the changes of metaphor and thought within the poem. The verse is graceful but plain, and strikes a comfortable medium between friendly intimacy and stiff formality, although Swift cannot but indulge
in a few characteristically striking rimes and colorful verbs:

Had Bacchus after Daphne reel'd,
The Nymph had soon been brought to yield;
Or, had Embroider's Mars pursu'd,
The Nymph would ne'er have been a prude. 7

Most of the praise of the poem moves on the comparison of
Lord Harley to Apollo and his bride to Diana and Aurora, but Swift's
use of mythological allusion does not seem as ornamental as Prior's.
There are several reasons for this. First, Swift opens the poem
quietly, setting the note of honest friendship as opposed to a more
formal and studied poet-patron relationship:

Among the numbers who employ
Their tongues and pens to give you joy,
Dear Harley, gen'rous Youth, admit
What friendship dictates more than wit.  (ll. 1-4)

Swift very cleverly establishes himself in contrast to the crowd("numbers")
who write mainly for profit--"who employ"--as a plain, honest figure
who cannot write except from the heart. Second, Swift at first makes
Harley's resemblance to Apollo a liability in love:

Forgive me, when I fondly thought
(By frequent observation taught)
A spirit so inform'd as yours
Could never prosper in amours.  (ll. 5-8)

All of Apollo's attempts to win Daphne were in vain, and this seems
to be a universal condition:

For such is all the sex's flight,
They fly from learning, wit, and light:
They fly, and none can overtake
But some gay coxcomb, or a rake.  (ll. 19-22)

And these lines bring up the third reason for Swift's unobtrusive handling
of the mythological machinery: the dieties are not automatically endowed
with virtue, and love is not viewed uncritically. As Apollo is contrasted with Bacchus and Mars, Harley is opposed to the coxcombs and rakes whom the Daphnes of the modern world prefer. The Lady Henrietta is presented in the same manner, for the "virgin of superior mind" is courted by "The dull, the noisy, and the lewd." But they appear this way only to the enlightened girl, and Swift's first description of her admirers prepares the reader for the second:

The chief among that glitt'ring crowd,
Of titles, birth, and fortune proud,
(As fools are insolent and vain)
Madly aspir'd to wear her chain. . . . (ll. 39-42)

She has been guided by Pallas to see beneath the tinsel, and the unsuccessful suitors are merely a crowd, an anonymour mass which doesn't deserve individuation. Her feminine counterparts are presented as mechanically stiff and unselective in their hunt for a husband:

Terrestrial nymphs, by formal arts,
Display their various nets for hearts:
Their looks are all by method set,
When to be prude, and when coquette;
Yet, wanting skill and pow'r to chuse,
Their only pride is to refuse. (ll. 53-58)

Lady Henrietta, "born to retrieve her sex's fame," and compared with Aurora and Diana, like them has "Descended from her sphere to find / A Mortal of superior kind" (ll. 79-80).

In the end, the presence of the mythological figures is necessary mainly to help in the differentiation of Harley and Lady Henrietta from ordinary men and women, and it is in the contrast between the crowds and the individual, appearance and reality, show and substance, and fashionable wit and virtuous wisdom that they are praised. There are
very few direct compliments in the poem, most being made through comparison, and it is significant that in the second part, which deals with Lady Henrietta, Swift is even more indirect and tends to focus more on the stories of Diana and Aurora than on the Lady. Once Swift has worked out the basic comparisons of the poem, there is little else he can do, unless he spends more time on the coxcombs, rakes, and terrestrial nymphs, for the highest praise and truest mark of merit is one's distinction from the rabble.

Aside from the imitations and translations and some of the compliments, this poem is about as conventional as Swift gets in praise, and even here the tendency to dwell on satiric subjects and the general distrust of straightforward praise is evident. The second of the three regular panegyrics illustrates another mode of praise altogether. "To the Earl of P--b--w" (1726) is a spirited, vigorous poem that moves so swiftly on its octosyllabic triplets that it thumps along almost like a ballad. The rapidity of the poem is meant to emphasize the speed of the Earl himself, and one of the main points of the poem is the energy displayed by Peterborough in every action:

Mordanto fills the Trump of Fame,
The Christian World his Deeds proclaim,
And Prints are crowded with his Name.

In Journeys he out-rides the Post,
Sits up till Midnight with his Host,
Talks Politicks, and gives the Toast.

Knows ev'ry Prince in Europe's Face,
Flies like a Squib from Place to Place,
And travels not, but runs a Race. 8

Messengers ("all a-reek") chase Peterborough all over Europe without
catching him, and he leaves his retinue scattered behind him. The poem is remarkable in its avoidance of comparison and in the vividness of the portrait of Peterborough. The triplet rimes rush the reader pell-mell through each stanza, and the momentum and occasional verbs at the beginning of the stanzas continue the movement until the final stanza, which contains the only comparison (except for the figurative ones to "a Squib," "an Apparition," and "a Star"):

    Heroick Actions early bred in,
    Ne'er to be match't in modern Reading,
    But by his Name-sake Charles of Sweden.  (ll. 34-36)

This poem ends even more abruptly than the one to Lord Harley, as if it were brought up with a bump against the comparison and stopped, having run out of points and rimes. This panegyric simply overwhelms the reader; there is no time for reflection, no need for the writer to appear, much less establish his qualifications as to honesty and objectivity. The poem, like the man it praises, belongs to a world of action, where the energy of an affirmation makes it right.

The last of these panegyrics is the strangest. "A Pastoral Dialogue between Richmond-Lodge and Marble-Hill" (1727) uses a form that Swift scorned, and the diction and tone of the poem are not what one expects to find in Swift. While Swift was fond of using houses as symbols or making buildings animate, practically anything related to the pastoral form is normally used ironically. In this poem, if its purpose is flattery of Mrs. Howard, the pastoral framework cannot be ironically intended. In addition, such phrases such as "right well I ween" (l. 9) and "God wot" (l. 17) occur, although this affectation
is limited to the opening lines of the poem. The most successful parts of the dialogue are those that recall scenes of the visits of Swift, Pope, and Gay to these neighboring houses, but the elegiac note flatters Pope's skill at gardening and poetry and Gay's and Swift's at managing the pantry and ice-house more than it does Mrs. Howard. Apparently the point of the poem is that the two houses will be abandoned now that the master of Richmond-Lodge, the Prince of Wales, has become King George II. Mrs. Howard, mistress of Marble-Hill and George II, was expected to spend little time at Marble-Hill and to have a strong influence on the King, but the expectations of the Tories were disappointed. It may be that much of the poems' appeal is limited to those who were familiar with the scenes the dialogue recalls and the parts that some of the characters played, and brief glimpses of the poets in this setting are interesting, but nothing more. "A Pastoral Dialogue between Richmond-Lodge and Marble-Hill" has neither the polish and tact of Swift's poem to Harley nor the vigor of the poem on Peterborough and seem more perfunctory than either. Design and execution probably reflect a hurried composition which did not undergo much revision after the need of the moment had disappeared.

Of the two non-derivative panegyrics that are fairly close to an elevated or formal standard, the one that is the most successful, on Lord Harley's marriage, depends on satiric contrast for much of its effect. Of course Swift's ability to find appropriate myths or narratives as metaphors for situations and characters is not necessarily an indication that he avoids stating something directly. The use of
fable, myth or narrative is also not restricted to panegyric, for most of Swift's writings in verse and prose utilize this device. However, in panegyric, one feels that there is more emphasis on the vehicle, the myth in this instance, than on the tenor, which is the person or quality praised. Swift's metaphoric use of story in the panegyrics thus appears more opaque than the device does in satire, where the satiric point or application deems to shine through the myth or narrative with clarity and brightness. These remarks on the differences in the uses of fable and myth in panegyric and satire do not necessarily mean that the quality of narrative is different in panegyric than it is in satire, but that the focus is different.

A pattern that was evident in the early odes appears in these three poems and in the imitation and translation panegyrics, also. Swift began with a more inflated form before he realized that he was simply unsuited for anything that required pretentiousness. Panegyric is not the form in which Swift can soar poetically, and in general it is the plainer and less formal ones that succeed best. The form which Swift uses for the poem on Richmond-Lodge and Marble-Hill is unfortunate, for it does not allow him to use a persona or point of view suitable to his temperament. The whole piece, if it were to be done at all, requires a delicacy and tact that someone like Prior, for instance, would be much better at. When Swift finds the right structure and can be less formal than what full-dress panegyric demands, his poems of praise are hard to fault, but one has to go to the imitations and the poems to Stella to find these conditions. Of the three poems that have been
discussed, the one to Peterborough is probably the most satisfactory, although the one to Lord Harley is also quite good. Swift is able to write a moderately good marriage poem only by using satire on the rest of mankind and their unions and by making the couple he is praising unique. Some of the implications of the poem are actually hostile to many ideas of marriage and love, but through a careful distinction between what may be expected of Lord Harley and Lady Heniretta and what is the case with less perfect mates, Swift gets away with his reflections on the subject.

Swift's first attempt at the Cowleyan (Pindaric) ode was in 1690 or 1691, and his last, much less effusive attempt in this style was in 1693. Prior began his poetic career with this form, too, in 1685, with an ode "On the Coronation of the Most August Monarch K. James II. and Queen Mary," but his last attempt does not come until 1706 or 1708, depending on how one defines the ode. I think that "An Ode, Humbly Inscrib'd to the Queen" (1706) is Prior's last Cowleyan ode, although there are two poems from 1708 that are entitled odes: "An Ode," which begins "The Merchant, to secure his Treasure," and "To Mr. Howard: An Ode," which also deals with love and the praise of a mistress. These last two are Horatian rather than Pindaric odes, for they are neither as complicated nor as exalted as Prior's other odes, nor do they conform to any standard concept of the Pindaric ode. Nevertheless, between these dates Prior writes a large number of panegyrics with a considerable variety of subjects and just as wide a range of merit. Not all the panegyrics are odes, and those that are
imitations are not discussed here. It is interesting that Prior writes very few panegyrics after he ceases to write odes, and, like Swift, he turns to other forms for the expression of elevated and sublime poetry.

Since Prior begins with a state panegyric--praise of the monarch--and since these poems are generally the least pleasing and least natural of his panegyrics, this class of poems will be dealt with first. Swift's first ode was to King William, but he was never moved to celebrate a monarch in laudatory fashion again. It becomes almost impossible to praise any English monarch after Queen Anne, anyway, as Pope's "Epistle to Augustus" clearly demonstrates. Besides the lack of a suitable subject for state panegyric, the rise of what Rachel Trickett has called "the Honest Muse" is an indication of the change in attitude which makes conventional panegyric unacceptable. But Prior begins writing before this change is evident, and the evolution of his style is probably as sensitive an indicator of the change in taste as is Pope's creation of a new panegyric.

Prior's first English poem, which celebrates the coronation of James II and Queen Mary opens with the poet in rhapsodic ecstasy:

No, 'tis in vain. What Limits can controul
The Rovings of my active Soul?
That Soul that scorns to be to Place confin'd,
But leaves its dull Companion Earth behind. . . .

Fancy and thought spur the soul to higher flight and provide vision superior to normal sight,

Giving Poets to partake
(Like those Deities they make)
Of Infinite Ubiquity. 11

There follows a proliferation of classical and Biblical examples of
processions of rulers and the joys of the subjects, all of which pale beside the present one. The piece ends with a wish for a long reign. The verse is not bad, although it is not exceptionally good. The display of learning and classical examples gives away the fact that this is a college poem, but on the whole it at least hangs together better than Swift's first few odes.

Prior's next royal panegyric is "A Pindariique on His Majesties Birth-Day Sung before Their Majesties at Whitehall, The Fourth of November 1690." Of course, William and Mary have now replaced James and Mary. The poem is a prophecy by Apollo in which the fortunes of Britain are good in war and peace. Thought and verse are unified, and the use of repetition and recurring rhetorical patterns hold the poem together effectively. By making Apollo the spokesman, the problem of a suitable identity for the poet is solved, and the credibility of a prophecy is increased. This poem represents a considerable advance over Prior's previous effort in this vein.

"Hymn to the Sun. Set by Dr. Purcell, and Sung before their Majesties on New-Years-Day, 1694" is an accomplished and smooth performance that utilizes a comparison between King William and the sun to compliment the King, while the sun's abilities to shed blessings and inspire poets (as Apollo) are prayed for. The opening stanza illustrates Prior's improvement in diction and in meter:

Light of the World, and Ruler of the Year,  
With happy Speed begin Thy great Career;  
And, as Thou dost thy radiant Journies run,  
Through every distant Climate own,
That in fair Albion Thou hast seen
The greatest Prince, the brightest Queen,
That ever sav'd a Land, or blest a Throne,
Since first Thy Beams were spread, or Genial Power
was known. 12

The poem then modulates smoothly and unobtrusively into the com-
parison, then on to the wish for continued blessings on the monarch
and the land. The last stanza touches on the poets and ends the whole
with an appropriate flourish:

For Thy own Glory sing our Sov'raign's Praise,
    God of Verses and of Days:
Let all Thy tuneful Sons adorn
    Their lasting Work with William's Name;
Let chosen Muses yet unborn
Take great Maria for their future Theam:
    Eternal Structures let Them raise,
On William's and Maria's Praise:
    Nor want new Subject for the Song;
    Nor fear they can exhaust the Store;
'Till Nature's Musick lyes unstrung;
'Till Thou, great God, shalt lose Thy double Pow'r;
And touch Thy Lyre, and shoot Thy Beams no more. (ll. 66-78)

Prior changes from Pindaric to Horatian with "An Ode. Presented
to the King, on his Majesty's Arrival in Holland, After the Queen's
Death. 1695," which contains forty-one quatrains of octosyllabic verse
riming abab. The result is quieter, but the total effect is not satis-
fying. Prior is trying to write two poems--an elegy for the Queen
and a heroic poem for King William to inspire him to overcome his
grief--and as a result the poem has no central focus. Prior's choice
of stanza also detracts from the poem, for he doesn't seem able to
get enough momentum and force in the short quatrains to sustain
either grief or high praise. The final stanzas of the poem do rise
to a kind of climax and bring about a resolution of the separate themes with a nice touch:

    But oh! 'twas little, that her Life
    O'er Earth and Water bears thy Fame:
    In death, 'twas worthy William's Wife,
    Amidst the Stars to fix his name.

    Beyond where Matter moves, or Place
    Receives it's Forms, Thy Virtues rowl:
    From Mary's Glory, Angels trace
    The Beauty of her Part'ner's Soul.

    Wise Fate, which does it's Heav'n decree
    To Heroes, when They yield their Breath,
    Hastens Thy Triumph. Half of Thee
    Is Deify'd before thy Death.

    Alone to thy Renown 'tis giv'n,
    Unbounded thro' all Worlds to go:
    While She great Saint rejoices Heav'n:
    And Thou sustain'st the Orb below.  

"Presented to the King, at his Arrival in Holland, after the Discovery of the Conspiracy 1696" is probably Prior's best royal panegyric. He uses guardian angels instead of pagan deities for the heroic machinery and natural forces more than supernatural for symbols. The verse form is heroic couplets in verse paragraphs of varying length, and Prior shows his competence in his handling of this form with a sensitive placement of caesura and fine use of antithesis:

    Still, blessed Angel, be thy Care the same;
    Be William's Life untouched, as is his Fame:
    Let Him own Thine, as Britain owns His Hand:
    Save Thou the King, as He has sav'd the Land.  

The opening lines of the poem manage to be serious and impassioned without becoming bombastic. The poet seems confident and secure, and the self-consciousness of the earlier panegyrics is gone:

    Ye careful Angels, whom eternal Fate
    Ordains, on Earth and human Acts to wait;
Who turn with secret Pow'r this restless Ball,
And bid predestin's Empires rise and fall;
Your sacred Aid religious Monarchs own;
When first They merit, then ascend the Throne:
But Tyrants dread Ye, lest your just Decree
Transfer the Pow'r, and set the People free.... (ll. 1-8)

Expression and emotion are united in this piece in a way that the
earlier panegyrics lacked, and the decorum is maintained without any
sense of restriction. There is one place that is a little awkward.
After an extended metaphor involving the rebellion of the sea against
Britain (like the recent rebellion of the conspirators), these lines
appear: "Safe on his Darling Britain's joyful Sea, / Behold, the
Monarch plows his liquid Way" (ll. 55-56). Prior doesn't allow enough
time after the storm before placing William in such a serene surface.

There are probably more good images and fine lines in "Carmen
Seculare, For the Year 1700. To the King" than in any other of Prior's
panegyrics, but that could be expected in a poem of well over five
hundred lines. The poem has great scope, covering past, present,
home and foreign lands, war and peace, but that is also its greatest
fault, because it is too diffuse and lacks coherence. This is Prior's
last poem for William, and the last royal panegyrics are for Queen
Anne.

Prior's first panegyric for Queen Anne rivals his poem to William
in 1695 in its execution and design, and the opening lines of "Prologue,
Spoken at Court before the Queen, on Her Majesty's Birth-Day, 1704"
are as celebrative as anything Prior writes in this vein:

    Shine forth, Ye Planets, with distinguish'd Light,
    As when Ye hallow'd first this Happy Night:
Again transmit your Friendly Beams to Earth,
As when Britannia joy'd for Anna's Birth:
And Thou, propitious Star, whose sacred Pow'r
Presided o'er the Monarch's Natal Hour,
Thy Radiant Voyages for ever run,
Yielding to none but Cynthia, and the Sun... 15

Writing panegyrics for a queen presents one peculiar problem: the
usual remarks about the prowess of the ruler must be omitted, or
applied to someone else. Prior neatly solves this problem while
emphasizing the powers which a queen can exercise by letting "the
young Austrian" (Prince Eugene of Savoy) be her delegate in war,

While the Bright Queen does on Her Subjects show'r
The gentle Blessings of Her softer Pow'r;
Gives sacred Morals to a vicious Age,
To Temples Zeal, and Manners to the Stage;
Bids the chaste Muse without a Blush appear,
And Wit be that which Heav'n and She may hear. (ll. 28-33)

The poem ends with a comparison which combines several compliments
that emphasize the importance of poetry in a flourishing land, implying
that Queen Anne's role is that of an English Minerva:

Minerva thus to Perseus lent Her Shield;
Secure of Conquest, sent Him to the Field:
The Hero acted what the Queen ordain'd:
So was His Fame compleat, and Andromede unchain'd.

Mean time amidst Her Native Temples sate
The Goddess, studious of Her Grecian's Fate;
Taught 'em in Laws and Letters to excell,
In Acting justly, and in Writing well,
Thus whilst She did Her various Pow'r dispose,
The World was freed from Tyrants, Wars, and Woes:
Virtue was taught in Verse, and Athens Glory rose. (ll. 34-44)

The various parts of the poem are so harmoniously joined that tran-
sitions between stanzas are almost unnoticed, and the compliments to
Queen Anne are managed so gracefully that they charm without being
obsequious and are decorous without seeming studied.
The last of Prior's royal panegyrics, "An Ode, Humbly Inscrib'd to the Queen. On the Glorious Success of Her Majesty's Arms, 1706. Written in Imitation of Spenser's Stile," is a Spenserian imitation in terms of the stanza form (ten lines instead of nine, the final one an Alexandrine, rime scheme ababcdcdee), some scattered archaisms, and possibly in the frequency of the epic similes. I find the only effective section in the three hundred-fifty-line poem is the lament by the French monarch, who, despite himself, must praise Marlborough and the British: "Hence the long Roll which Gallia should conceal: / For, oh! Who vanquish'd, loves the Victor's Fame to tell?"16 Nevertheless, tell he does, for three more of those long stanzas.

We have seen how Swift managed to write a poem celebrating marriage, and although Prior did not write a marriage ode for Lord Harley, he also tried his hand at praising an occasion he personally avoided as resolutely as did Swift. Prior's attitude toward women and love, which is not similar to Swift's in many ways (despite their both being bachelors), will be examined in detail in connection with the lyric poetry, but some of the differences between his and Swift's view on the relationship of the sexes will be seen in these marriage poems, also. Prior's first poem for a marriage is his second English one, and it exhibits many of the faults of his early royal panegyrics: too many comparisons and too much learned lumber, a lack of unity, and no real energy. "To the E of D. upon His Marriage" (1685) takes the form of a pastoral dialogue between Damon and Lycidas, but the reason why these two shepherds should sing of the love of Daphnis
and Dorinda is never made clear. Thus any dramatic interest the poem might have had is lost.

In 1688 Prior wrote a poem which is marginally panegyrical, in praise of the marriage of his close friend Charles Montagu. The piece is so much more intimate and direct than almost any other celebrative poem that Prior writes that it could easily be classified as a private rather than a public poem, and the fact that the poem was not published until 1907--the original was sent to Montagu--supports this classification. However, since the poem is not really an epistle and since it captures the joy of a public event and praises the participants in a proper fashion--although the tone is probably more intimate than conventional panegyric--the poem will be discussed here. One of the most striking features of the piece is its unconventional beginning, which requires a witty turn before the poem actually becomes a marriage poem:

Chamont was absent, and Remembrance brought
Him and past Blessings thick upon my Thought:
Those but my Tortures now; whilst my vex't Heart
Beat quick, and throb'd, and sought its Nobler part,
Nor would have Rest; uneasy still Alond
I scorn'd the Wretch my Self, my Worth was gon. 17

All attempts to gain ease but remind him of his friend and their former activities, and then comes what at first might be taken for news of his friend's death:

But when 'twas said, Thou ne'r must hope to See
That Friend return to Things below and Thee.
Happy He triumphs, happy has possess
A Seat of Glory, and a Heav'n of Rest:
'Twas base to sigh; and grew a Crime to moan;
So much I prize Your Joy beyond my Own. 17 (ll. 15-20)
And the comparison that follows, of the friendship of Theseus and Alcides and the observation that Theseus ceased to grieve when his friend was changed to a god, reinforce the supposition that the poem might turn to elegy. But a break between this comparison and the following lines emphasize the change in the direction of thought and finally make clear the point of this opening conceit:

Accept my first Oblation, thy own Heart,
(For Friendship shall be forc't to let it part.)
'Tis Love demands it, and I must resign,
Honoria gave Her own, and merits Thine. (ll. 27-30)

Prior then weaves a delicate pattern of praise for Montagu and his bride in a graceful and intimate tour de force:

May all Thy Hours in glad Procession pass
Kind as Her look, and soft as her Embrace.
And every Hour new pleasures may'st Thou find
All Fair and Lovely as Thy Mistress' Mind
And sure that's very lovely, very fair:
Nothing but Heav'n, and You, my Friend, are there.
May all Her future Minutes happy prove
As are Thy Numbers when Thou writ'st of Love.
How strangely happy those well Beauty knew
She fled Apollo, but She ran to You.
May smiling Peace and gentle Concord spread
Their blooming sweets around Thy spotless Bed
And may Mankind with pleasing Wonder see
Successive Hopes of thy great Progeny
Till dear Chamont's and Virgil's labours dye. (ll. 39-53)

Swift's praises of Lord Harley and Lady Henrietta seem awkward beside this poem, where an air of spontaneity and a lightness of touch permit the expression of sentiments which could well sink into bathos under a heavier hand. Prior finds much more to compliment about "Honoria" than her mind, which is Swift's main
point of praise for Lady Henrietta and "Fair" and "Lovely" are not the terms which Swift would apply to a woman's mind. In short, Prior is not limited by the pragmatic point of view and suspicion of emotion that prevent Swift from appreciating all the aspects of marriage. Swift has a hardness of mind which resists a total involvement in this situation, where Prior's sensibilities toward relations between the sexes are much better developed.

The third of Prior's marriage poems is for an occasion whose details are not known. "A Hymn to Venus, upon a Marriage" (1690) is a Pindaric ode featuring Venus and Cupids, and a plea for inspiration for the poet and blessings for the couple. It is a competent piece of versification but obviously did not occupy Prior's full attention. When Prior is forced to write upon a subject which he must treat impersonally and in a grand manner--panegyrical in which he has little personal interest, for instance--he often falls flat. One might be tempted to credit the success of the poem on Montagu's marriage and the ode to King William in 1696 to the degree of Prior's involvement with the event or concern for the recipient. This supposition is further supported by the difference between the more impersonal panegyrics which have been discussed and the ones which follow, most of which are to Prior's acquaintances of higher social standing, or to figures with whom a more intimate form of address would be improper.
A companion piece to Prior's pastoral tribute to the Earl of Dorset on his marriage is "To the Countess of D... t walking in a Garden" (1685), and the latter poem is preferable, mainly because the persona of the poem is given a role and personality which make the poem into a little dramatic piece. The first stanza sets this tone and is the best one of the poem:

Yes I did stubernaly believe  
The place no added Beauty cou'd receive  
'Till bright Dorinda's passing by  
Convinced my Infidelity. 18

The rest of the poem dwells on the change which Dorinda brings and tends to let this opening note dissipate, but this is a hint of where Prior's real power lies. Later he would begin to recognize this fact and take advantage of it, but that is part of a later story.

Prior addresses three early poems to relates, and one to a noted minister who wrote a devotional work, and these poems combine his desire to write panegyric with the strain of religious and philosophical interest that culminates in Solomon, Alma, and "Predestination." The first, "To the Lord Bishop of Rochester" (1685), is an epistle that probably accompanied another of Prior's poems and combines an apologia with rather effusive praise for Bishop Sprat. As in Prior's other early poems, an excess of classical examples and comparisons mars the work. Francis Turner, Bishop of Ely, was favored with one Latin and two English poems from Prior. 19 "To the right Reverend Father in God Francis Lord Bishop of Ely. &c" (1685) is a pastoral lamenting the departure
of the great shepherd "from Cambridge soon after I had the Honour
to be made known to Him," the sub-title notes. (Prior was twenty-one
years old at the time). The flexibility of this particular poem is
demonstrated by Prior’s subsequent use of it (with a few minor
additions and revisions) as a lament for leaving his cousin, Katharine
Prior, probably after one of his visits to her home.20 Prior’s second
poem to Bishop Turner is straightforward praise in heroic couplets,
without any embellishing mythological figures, in which Prior finds
a solution to the problem of inspiration and guidance:

If Poets, e’re they cloath’d their infant Thought,
And the rude Work to just perfection brought,
Did still some God or Godlike Man invoke,
Whose mighty Name their sacred Silence broke. . . .

The name to invoke is Francis Turner’s, of course, and led by his
example, which combines the "Saints Palm" and the "Muses lawrell,"
the Must will

    proudly press the runefull string,
    And mighty Things in mighty Numbers sing;
Nor doubt to strike Prudentius’ daring Lyre,
    And humbly bring the Verse which You inspire. 21

This poem is rather pleasing in its directness and the apparent
sincerity of the praise for Bishop Turner, and the verse is
surprisingly supple for a poem of this date in this form.

"To Dr. Sherlock, on his Practical Discourse Concerning Death"
(1690) is the most accomplished and broadest in scope of the
panegyrics on religious men. The poem is not as directly concerned
with praise of Dr. Sherlock as it is with the effect of his book and
example on a decadent age. The poem achieves a depth that many of
the other poems of praise lack because the vision it contains is larger
and because of the contrast between Dr. Sherlock and ordinary men,
which at times expands into the theme of man's impermanence in the
face of eternity:

Thee Youth shall study; and no more engage
Their flatter ring Wishes for uncertain Age;
No more with fruitless Care, and cheated Strife
Chace fleeting Pleasure thro' this Maze of Life;
Finding the wretched All They here can have,
But present Food, and but a future Grave:
Each, great as Philip's Victor Son, shall view
This abject World, and weeping, ask a New.

Decrepit Age shall read Thee, and confess,
Thy Labours can assuage, where Medicines cease:
Shall bless thy Words, their wounded Souls Relief,
The Drops that sweeten their last Dregs of Life:
Shall look to Heav'n, and laugh at all beneath;
Own Riches gather'd, Trouble; Fame, a Breath;
And Life an Ill, whose only Cure is Death.

After some more comments on the virtues of Practical Discourse,
Prior gives a brief description of the state of the country, which can
only be saved if Dr. Sherlock resumes his preaching—as a Nonjuror
he stepped down from the pulpit on the day Nonjurors were suspended
(1 Aug. 1689)—and ends with a vision of the kind of Judgment Day that
Sherlock's continued activity would bring:

Then in full Age, and hoary Holiness
Retire, great Teacher, to thy promis'd Bliss:
Untouch'd thy Tomb, uninjur'd be thy Dust,
As thy own Fame among the future Just:
'Till in last Sounds the dreadful Trumpet speakes:
'Till Judgment calls; and quick'ned Nature wakes:
'Till thro' the utmost Earth, and deepest Sea
Our scatter'd Atoms find their destin'd Way,
In haste to cloath their Kindred Sould again;
Prior can sing beautifully, but he cannot shout, and his attempts to exclaim almost invariably fall short and collapse. He comes closest to sustaining an exalted tone when dealing with questions of religion, and his best poems on this topic are more meditative than celebrative. Too often the exclamatory poem will turn into a catalogue of learned examples, comparisons with mythological figures, and so forth, all on an elevated plane and with no real feeling. The lines founder and the Muse sinks, for all of Prior's education does not make him a poet. One can even see him rebelling against the fashion of elaborate similes and comparisons in the third and last stanza of "A Hymn to the Spring," where he calls attention to the fact that he is not employing such devices:

Senseless as the Year we lye,
'Till kind spring'e enlivening fires
Wakens our activity,
Improves our Joys, and heightens our desires.
For thee ev'n Venus we'll despise
Thou brighter Queen of Harmony and Love!
And Thee too born above the skies
Without a fictious Metaphor we'll prove:
For what is Heav'n but bright recesses, where
A constant Spring inriches all the Year?²³

In the identification of the seasons with man's state and in the final image of heaven, Prior comes curiously close to a lyricism that one expects in the early seventeenth century but not late in the Restoration. The first stanza displays a sense of rhythm and harmony, in the arrangement of vowel sounds and intensification of energy, that is practically flawless. The climax of the stanza is in line four, with the expanded line, the full, resonant vowels (in contrast to the lighter
and higher vowels leading up to this line), and the heavy stresses on
the four central words with their emphatic initial consonants. These
features are not the only operating parts of the stanza, but they do
reveal that a poet with a fine ear and a sure instinct for lyric verse
is at work.

Prior's two poems of praise for Lady Margaret Beaufort,
foundress of St. John's, Cambridge, use a different approach to
panegyric. "There be Those that leave Their Names behind them"
(1688) was probably meant to be sung, and it employs an antiphonal
question-and-answer structure in which a chorus answers the questions
"If gilded flaggs and heaps of polish'd Stone / Can make the Deads
memorial known/ . . . How long will Margaretta's Name be prais'd, /
Who spent her Wealth another way . . . ?", "If charitable Acts alone/
Best make their Pious Authors known / . . . How long shal Margarettas
Name / Grace the bright Rolls of Piety and Fame?", and "If Charitable
Acts alone / Can for a Multitude of Sins attone / . . . What then shal be
to Margarett's giv'n?". The answers carry the strongest praise, but
the contrast between ordinary monuments, fame, and salvation and
that which Lady Margaret deserves adds to the piece. The other poem
is an attempt to use a dream vision as a means of praising the dead
woman and is indebted to Cowley's "The Complaint" for the setting and
structure. "Many Daughters have done well, but Thou Excelllest them
all" (1688) seems to be another attempt to reach a majestic or grand
tone, and Prior simply cannot write naturally in this vein."
Prior's first position upon leaving Cambridge was with John Cecil, Earl of Exeter, as a tutor for Exeter's two sons at Burleigh. While at Burleigh, Prior wrote two graceful poems to Exeter's wife, Anne Cavendish, and one to Anne's mother, the Countess Dowager of Devonshire. "To My Lady Exeter, on New Years day. Her Birth-Day" (1689) is a simple, rather lyrical piece of three ten-line stanzas of octosyllabic verse with the refrain "To Shower their Blessings all on her." It is a good birthday poem; the verse is so accomplished that it is a little too finished, too easy, but for the occasion it is quite suitable. Prior turns to heroic couplets and becomes more witty and ranges wider for metaphors in his second poem to the countess, "To the Countess of Exeter, Playing on the Lute" (1689), but the best (and wittiest) of the three poems is the one to the mother-in-law, "To the Right Honourable the Countess Dowager of Devonshire, On a Piece of Wissin's; Whereon were all her Grandsons Painted" (1689). Prior's use of wit in panegyric is aptly demonstrated by the first stanza:

Wissin and Nature held a long Contest,  
If She Created, or He Painted best:  
With pleasing Thought the wond'rous Combat grew  
She still form'd Fairer, He still Lik'er drew.  
In these Seven Brethren, they contended last,  
With Art increas'd their utmost Skill they try'd,  
And both well pleas'd they had themselves surpass'd,  
The Goddess Triumph'd, and the Painter Dy'd.  
That both their Skill to this vast Height did raise,  
Be ours the Wonder, and be yours the Praise;  
For here as in some Glass is well discry'd,  
Only yourself thus often multiply'd.  

The long middle stanza of the poem reiterates this point in several ways. Since the heavenly store of images of beauty was exhausted after the
creation of the countess dowager and Anne, "It but kept up to these, nor could do more / Than Copy well, what it well fram'd before" (ll. 16-17). Her grandsons possess her beauty and charm with the addition of their fathers' strength, but for this poem, what the paternal side contributes is an addition:

Thus still your Beauty in your Sons we view,  
Wissin seven Times one great Perfection drew,  
Whoever sate, the Picture still is You.  
(ll. 34-36)

As precious gems reflect the rays of the "Parent Sun" and the worship by men of the sons of Rhea is actually greater praise of her, Prior reasons, the glory of the countess dowager's offspring is owed to her. And this fact makes her immortal, but the way Prior phrases this thought has more charm:

In short-liv'd Charms let others place their Joys  
Which Sickness blasts, and certain Age destroys:  
Your stronger Beauty, Time can ne'er deface,  
"Tis still renew'd, and stamp'd in all your Race.  
(ll. 47-50)

The last stanza provides a distancing effect by addressing Wissin instead of the countess dowager, and by referring to art rather than life. This also brings the poem full circle, for it began with the painting, turned to the countess dowager, and now turns back to the painting and to the dead artist, yet still in a way that adds just one touch more to the artifact which Prior is creating:

Ah! Wissin, had thy Art been so refin'd,  
As with their Beauty to have drawn their Mind,  
Thro' circling Years thy Labours would survive,  
And living Rules to fairest Virtue give  
To Men unborn, and Ages yet to live;
"Twould still be wonderful, and still be new,
Against what Time, or Spight, or Fate could do,
"Till thine confus'd with Nature's Pieces lie,
And Cavendish's Name, and Cecill's Honour Die. (ll. 51-59)

Swift called Prior's poem on the attempted assassination of Harley
"a handsome paper of verses," but "To Mr. Harley. Wounded by
Guiscard. 1711" suffers from the attempt to produce a formal panegyric
that would suit the occasion. The feeling that animates the poem may
be genuine, but the terms used to describe Harley are too laudatory.
A plainly factual account would have been just as effective and much
more credible. The following stanza may be a fairly true rendition
of the stabbing and Harley's reaction, but Prior, in trying to elevate
Harley, places him beyond sympathy and eliminates much of the
human element from the event:

    The guilty Stroke and Torture of the Steel
      Infix'd, our dauntless Briton scarce perceives:
    The Wounds His Countrey from His Death must feel,
      The Patriot views; for those alone He grieves. 29

The country was swept with a wave of feeling for Harley at this
incident, and Prior, when Harley's recovery seemed fairly sure,
undoubtedly wished to preserve the moment and the feelings of unity
which it brought to a usually divided country. 30 But heroic verse is
simply out of Prior's reach, and whenever he tries something of this
sort, it not only falls flat, but it also appears stiff and awkward.

Prior is moved by the desire and need to praise and the impulse to
lift his voice, poetically, to write panegyric. He has the tact and
grace to make a compliment with charm and sincerity, especially if
he is not forced to the upper limits of formality. But this is not
the genre in which Prior writes good serious poetry, i.e., poetry
that deals with serious topics in a sublime manner. When he tries to
imitate Cowley, like Swift, he founders. Unlike Swift, Prior attempts
to master the grand manner for a long time, and one finds an
occasional poem of this type as late as 1719 and 1721. But in general
Prior's celebrative poems are few after 1711, and the expression of
heroic sentiments is left to other poets.

Swift seems to turn from panegyric mainly because the traditional
forms in which praise is given are unsuitable for him, but there is
another reason why his production in this area is small. His vision
of the world makes it difficult to accept praise at face value, even
when one can find something or someone that deserves commendation.
Panegyric involves the kind of mind that stresses positive values, that
can overlook small faults and blemishes in favor of an optimistic
interpretation of the whole. Even in his poems to Stella, Swift refuses
to be anything but honest, admitting that they are old or that she is
losing her beauty, for instance, rather than sully the truth and sincerity
of his praise of her by passing over these matters. He affirms his
honesty and accuracy by such means, and it is a tribute to this approach
that one of the strongest features of the Stella poems is their credibility.
Swift does not need to persuade or plead his case after his integrity is
established, and the most simple affirmation acquires remarkable
force and eloquence.
Another reason for Swift's avoidance of panegyric and Prior's relatively large number of panegyrics is the difference in their attitude toward problems. Swift is basically a pragmatic person who thinks in terms of action and result: his praise of Peterborough and Temple reflects his admiration for men of action. One who is active rather than contemplative will emphasize matters that need to be changed, problems that should be solved—in other words, the unpleasant side of a situation. The satirist is an activist who wants to see the state of affairs changed, and his main purpose is to move others to change things, to give them the vision with which he is obsessed. The singer of praises, however, looks at or possibly just sees what can be praised; he accepts life and people in a way that the satirist cannot. Vision and attitude are intertwined here, for it is hard to say if the activist becomes a satirist, or the satiric vision brings the seer to espouse action. These qualities may be conjunctive. At any rate, on one side is a dissatisfied man whose dissatisfaction moves him to make the world change. He is in no mood to praise, for his concern is for the things that require correction, which, God knows, are numerous enough. On the other side is the man who likes to affirm, or perhaps needs to make an affirmation as a means of quieting his doubts; for such a person a panegyric is a tune which one whistles in the dark. Or he may even need to sing, and a psalm makes a better song than a dirge. Swift and Prior are two such figures, and the reasons that lead Prior to praise cause Swift to avoid panegyric.
The poems which are directed at the more important villains are next on the scale and are too numerous to list individually. Finally comes the small number of what I call Swift's grand satires, poems which combine the intensity of the individual satires with a more sweeping condemnation of mankind in general. These poems elevate individual examples to the level of symbols, and the works finally become heroic attacks on evil itself on a universal rather than a particular basis.

Swift's attacks on individuals make one remember the line from "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," in which the impartial observer notes that Swift "lash'd the Vice but spar'd the Name" (l. 460). In view of the number of poems that are directed at Walpole, Marlborough, the Duchess of Somerset, William Wood, and so on, this claim appears blatantly false. However, in context, the meaning of the line becomes clearer:

"Perhaps I may allow, the Dean
"Had too much Satyr in his Vein;
"And seem'd determin'd not to starve it,
"Because no Age could more deserve it.
"Yet, Malice never was his Aim;
"He lash'd the Vice but spar'd the Name.
"No Individual could resent,
"Where Thousands equally were meant.
"His Satyr points at no Defect,
"But what all Mortals may correct;
"For he abhor'd that senseless Tribe,
"Who call it Humour when they jibe:
"He spar'd a Hump or crooked Nose,
"Whose Owners set not up for Beaux.
"True genuine Dulness mov'd his Pity,
"Unless it offer'd to be witty.
"Those, who their Ignorance confess'd,
"He ne'er offended with a Jest;
"But laugh'd to hear an Idiot quote,
"A Verse from Horace, learn'd by Rote."
From this point of view, Walpole merely becomes a convenient sign of the thousands who share his faults—a nice touch by Swift, which enlarges the scope of reference greatly. Nevertheless, this conventional apology for satire is not as convincing when applied to Swift as it is with others, because of the power of his satire, and at times the job of demolition is too thorough for one to ignore the individual who receives the brunt of the attack.

Of the traditional forms which Swift turns to his own in the production of satire, one of the most frequently used means is the elegy. A built-in advantage of the elegy is that one expects praise of the dead, and the shock of what Swift replaces praise with is greater for its surprise. Another possibility of the genre exploited by Swift is the fact that one can be more honest about the dead when they are no longer around either to be offended or to make reprisals. "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift: and "A Satyrical Elegy on the Death of a Famous General" both take advantage of this element of human behavior, one to satirize the living friends, the other to give a "true" picture of the dead man. An elegy also carries the connotation of a final summation of a person's life and can, if the elegist is an acceptable source, be considered authoritative. Thus the elegy furnishes the satirist with an opportunity to have the last word. All possibility of reformation is over for the subject, and he and his life are at this moment open for judgment. Amid these possibilities, it is no wonder that Swift uses the mock-elegy as often as he does.
Swift's six mock-elegies fall neatly into two categories: the first three, which are remarks on the character of the dead person, completed with an epitaph; and the last three, which present a dramatic account of the effect of the death of a certain person on those close to him or, in the case of Marlborough, on those who hear the news of his death. The poems of the second category are less static than those of the first and in general show more refinement of technique and a better verbal polish.

"An Elegy on Mr. Patrige, the Almanack-maker, who Died on the 29th of this Instant March, 1708" is one of the crowning touches of the hilarious hoax on John Partridge, shoemaker turned astrologer. Swift merely carries the tone of the earlier pamphlets into the poem, and here the persona is a down-to-earth, mildly interested observer who really felt that Bickerstaff was joking but who now gives Partridge's elegy, with various reflections on the career of the deceased. The tone is nicely set in the opening lines:

Well, 'tis as Bickerstaff has guest,
Tho' we all took it for a Jest:
Patrige is Dead, nay more, he dy'd
E'er he could prove the good Squire ly'd.
Strange, an Astologer should Die,
Without one Wonder in the Sky;
Not one of all his Crony Stars,
To pay their Duty at his Hearse!

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:
He at fit Periods walks through Aries,
Howe'er our Earthly Motion varies,
And 'twice a Year he'll cut th' Aquator,
As if there had been no such Matter. 33
The matter-of-fact tone, the wonder that the elements did not make more of the astrologer's death, and the effect of the disappearance of another figure all culminate in the last line of this stanza—"As if there had been no such Matter." In this poem supposition acquires the weight of fact, and the quiet irony in these lines is emphasized by the naïveté with which the persona makes such chance comments. But the best part of all three poems of this first category is the epitaph:

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. (ll. 103-116)

Instead of weeping friends, it is the clients who are given the customary role of grievance, and in a parody of the miracles wrought by the saints' remains, Swift is able to equate Partridge's power of forecasting with the power of the earth of his grave, which is itself (as the emblem of his death) the most blatant symbol of his failure as an astrologer.

"An Elegy On the much lamented Death of Mr. Demar, the Famous rich Man, who died the 6th of this Inst. July, 1720" is cast in heroic couplets and metrically is not as good as Partridge's elegy. However, the epitaph is octosyllabic and is the wittiest part of the poem:
Beneath this verdant Hillock lies
Demar the Wealthy, and the Wise.
His Heirs for Winding-Sheet bestow'd
His Money-Bags together Sow'd.
And that he might securely Rest,
Have put his Carcass in a Chest.
The very Chest, in which they say
His other Self, his Money lay.
And if his Heirs continue kind,
To that dear Self he left behind;
I dare believe that Four in Five
Will think his better Half alive.\(^{34}\)

In this poem, as in "A quibbling Elegy on the Worshipful Judge
Boat" (1721), Swift seizes on one outstanding trait and uses the
ambiguities of language and his ability to find analogies to furnish
satirical matter. The death of Judge Boate becomes the sinking of a
ship, and through this metaphor Swift can make references to lack of
ballast, to the judge's ability to tack in any wind, and so forth. When
the boat is sent to "the Stygian Ferry," other qualities are revealed:

Charon in him will ferry Souls to Hell;
A Trade, our Boat had practic'd here so well.
And, Cerberus hath ready in his Paws,
Both Pitch and Brimstone to fill up his Flaws.\(^{35}\)

This first class of mock-elegies is ingenious and effective and
witty but with the exception of the elegy on Partridge, there is no
attempt to furnish the poem with a persona whose presence contributes
to the total effect of the satire. The lack of a well-defined persona
leaves the question of the motives and character of the satirist open to
doubt, whereas the slightest indication of the point of view of the
speaker immediately adds another dimension to a satire. Thus, with
the poem on Partridge, the few hints at the beginning of the poem as
to the persona's point of view add greatly to the irony and credibility of the poem. This is handled in a more subtle fashion in "A Satirical Elegy On the Death of a late Famous General" (1722), where the effect of a conversation between at least two, or possibly among several, people is recreated:

His Grace! impossible! what dead!
Of old age too, and in his bed!
And could that Mighty Warrior fall?
And so inglorious, after all;36

These are the initial responses of those who have evidently just heard of the death, before they have had a chance to alter their natural reaction to the news. The colloquial spontaneity of this passage is superb, and the slight modulation in attitude toward the Duke that can be seen from the first to the fourth line is carried on with a slight acceleration of the change in attitude—or perhaps the first exclamations' meanings just become more explicit:

Well, since he's gone, no matter how,
The last loud trump must wake him now:
And, trust me, as the noise grows stronger,
He'd wish to sleep a little longer. (ll. 5-8)

This seems to be a self-contained unit, whether from a speaker who differs from the first one(s), or merely the same persona with a new point of view, is hard to say. As a matter of fact, the first stanza could be the response of one person, but the shifts of tone, emphasis, and idea seem to support the notion of a number of speakers rather than one, even though there is no formal indication of this.

The rest of the conversation makes clear the reason why Marlborough
will wish for a longer sleep:

And could he be indeed so old
As by the news-papers we're told?
Threescore, I think, is pretty high;
"Twas time in conscience he should die.
This world he cumber'd long enough;
He burnt his candle to the snuff;
And that's the reason, some folks think,
He left behind so great a s---k.
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 hearse.
But what of that, his friends may say,
He had those honours in his day.
True to his profit and his pride,
He made them weep before he dy'd. (ll. 9-24)

Terms like "in conscience," "cumber'd" and "burnt his candle to the snuff" are loaded; they are part of colloquial speech but in this context can and do take on new connotations. This first section of the poem has a great deal of suggestiveness because no specific charges against Marlborough are made. All of the weight of the satire rests on tone, interpretation, and the direction in which the comments on the late general lead; his actual deeds are to be found "out there," and the reader's imagination is free to fill in details. Placing the explanation for the lack of mourners at Marlborough's funeral in the mouths of his "friends" is especially damning--it can't be malicious and thus at best represents the truth and at worst is too favorable to Marlborough.

The last eight lines of the poem, which are a separate stanza, are an address, almost a command, which makes all the great men
and the reader witness the burial and understand the significance
of this death:

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. (ll. 25-32)

This elegy compresses the normal amount of time between death,
funeral, and burial as if this were a matter to be disposed of quickly,
unceremoniously. The verbs of the last stanza emphasize lack of
respect for the remains, and they even hurry the rate of decomposition
so that we are forced to see the end. The living man and the dirt at
the end are so closely juxtaposed that the identity between them
effectively reflects the worth of all of his honors and his pride. Scorn
is much worse than spite, and the total disdain of the poem toward
Marlborough, which is the natural response of the persona(e) of the
beginning and the symbolic actions of whoever disposes of the body,
is more damaging than the fiercest invective. This poem, in terms of
total design, execution, and verbal finish, is one of Swift's best. Just
as the language it uses is plain and natural, the action of the poem
strips the artifice from normal elegies and funeral pomp in a
stunning display of what the continuity of life really means.

The other two poems of this class of mock-elegies are not up to
the finish of the one on Marlborough, although "Verses on the Death of
Dr. Swift" (1731) contains much of his finest poetry. "An Elegy on
Dicky and Dolly" (1728) is more of a jeu d'esprit, and the octosyllabic triplets emphasize the humorous aspect of the poem with their frequent rhymes. The humor is not without a bitter point, however, which the following stanza reveals:

Dick lost in Doll, a Wife Tender and Dear,
But Dick lost by Doll, twelve hundred a Year,
A Loss that Dick thought, no mortal could bear. 37

Swift is referring to a couple who died within four days of each other, a situation with much sentimental appeal until the real motive of the husband's grief appears.

This realistic, or perhaps cynical, point of view also informs the first section of "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" (1731). The poem is an explication of a maxim of Rochefoucauld (proved by observation), a narrative of the reactions of Swift's friends during his last illness and death and for a short period afterwards, and, finally, a lengthy apology for Swift's life and activities. I regard the apologia as non-irritoic, even though it is probably an error in strategy for Swift to have written what amounts to a panegyric upon himself without also furnishing an interlocutor against whom his defense could be argued, as does Pope in "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot." 38 Although much of what is said in the poem does not reflect kindly on human nature, this poem is unusual in that the bitterness one often finds in Swift's late poems is not present here. One reason for this is undoubtedly the inclusiveness of the satire, especially in the proem (the opening section which notes and verifies Rochefoucauld's observation
on friendship), where Swift applies most of the corollaries of Rochefoucauld's saying to himself. Since the fault which the sharp eyes of the French sage and the British satirist have observed is a universal one, no one, including the satirist, can assume a position of superiority from which he can denounce the rest of mankind. Since the maxim has been mentioned, it might be instructive to quote Swift's paraphrase:

   This Maxim more than all the rest
   Is thought too base for human Breast;
   "In all Distresses of our Friends
   "We first consult our private Ends,
   "While Nature kindly bent to eart us,
   "Points out some Circumstance to please us." 39

There is a noticeable difference in the way in which Swift's friends are shown behaving at his death and the way his enemies react, but no one actually disproves the moral of the poem. What is being done here is similar to the final perspective of "A Satirical Elegy on the Death of a late Famous General," where all the gains of life and life itself are seen as nothing from the point of view of the grave. Death and time have a way of altering many of our cherished notions about such things as friendship and fame, and in the face of these inescapable presences, man can appear very small.

"The Author upon Himself" (1714), although not a mock-elegy, is similar to "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" in that it includes both an apology or explanation of Swift's actions and an attack on his enemies and on vice. This piece was written during Swift's stay at Letcombe in the summer of 1714, after he had given up all hope of
uniting Oxford and Bolingbroke, and it contains his reflections on his part in the ministry and on those who fought against it and (especially) him. The poem has some of Swift's harshest lines, especially if the blanks of lines one, fifty-three, and fifty-four in the printed editions actually were supposed to have the readings supplied by Orrery. Much of the animus is directed against the Duchess of Somerset, although others get a share. The following lines contain some of his most bitter remarks (underlined words are those supplied by Orrery):

By an old, redhair'd, mard'ring Hug pursued,
A Crazy Prelate, and a Royal Prude,
By dull Divines, who look with envious Eyes,
On ev'ry Genius that attempts to rise;
And pausing o'er a Pipe, with doubtful Nod,
Give Hints, that Poets ne'er believe in God.
So, Clowns on Scholars as on Wizards look,
And take a Folio for a conj'ring Book.

Now, Madam Coningsmark her Vengeance vows
On Swift's Reproaches for her murdered spouse.
From her red Locks her Mouth with Venom fills:
And thence into the Royal Ear instills.
The Qu--- incens'd, his Services forgot,
Leaves him a Victim to the vengeful Scot;
Now, through the Realm a Proclamation spread,
To fix a Price on his devoted Head.
While innocent, he scorns ignoblc Flight;
His watchful Friends preserve him by a Sleight. 40

The longer periods of the heroic couplets and perhaps Swift's vantage point at Letcombe, away from the center of activity, give the verse a slower pace and a more thoughtful tone. This is nowhere more evident in the last stanza, which one critic has said "would be hard to ascribe . . . to Swift, at least with any conviction. The tone seems more delicate, more charitable, more Johnsonian than our standard impression
of him. "41 Here is the unusual passage:

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? (ll. 71-74)

The sections of the poem that are mainly apologetic, as well as the portrait of Swift that emerges from incidental touches, indicate that Swift probably felt the need of presenting his side of the case at least as early as the time of this poem, if not a year earlier with "Part of the Seventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated" (1713). The brief sections of self-praise in "The Author upon Himself," therefore, are merely earlier versions of the extended panegyric of "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift." The similarities in tone are obvious, as this passage reveals:

S---- had the Sin of Wit no venial Crime;
Nay, 'twas affirm'd, he sometimes dealt in Rhime:
Humour, and Mirth, had Place in all he writ:
He reconcil'd Divinity and Wit.
He mov'd, and bow'd, and talk't with too much Grace;
Nor shew'd the Parson in his Gait or Face;
Desipir'd luxurious Wines, and costly Meat;
Yet, still was at the Tables of the Great,
Frequented Lords; saw those that saw the Queen;
At Child's or Truby's never once had been;
Where Town and Country Vicars flock in Tribes,
Secur'd by Numbers from the Lay-men's Gibes;
And deal in Vices of the graver Sort,
Tobacco, Censure, Coffee, Pride, and Port. (ll. 9-22)

There is no question of self-directed irony here, and, allowing for the mellower attitude of the earlier poem, how is the praise different from this passage from "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift"?

"Had he but spar'd his Tongue and Pen,
"He might have rose like other Men:
"But, Power was never in his Thought;
"And, Wealth he valu'd not a Groat;
"Ingratitude he often found,
"And pity'd those who meant the Wound:
"But, kept the Tenor of his Mind,
"To merit well of human Kind:
"Nor made a Sacrifice of those
"Who still were true, to please his Foes.
"He labour'd many a fruitless Hour
"To reconcile his Friends in Power;
"Saw Mischief by a Faction brewing,
"While they pursu'd each others Ruin.
"But, finding vain was all his Care;
"He left the Court in meer Despair."

Swift's dislike of artifice and deceit probably prevents him from being more "modest" (that would actually be a false modesty) and less direct, and it appears that the distinction between panegyric and apologia needs to be kept in mind when discussing these poems.

A device that is a major characteristic of Swift's poetry furnishes the complete structure for several poems, including "The Description of a Salamander" (1705), "The Virtues of Sid Hamet's the Magician's Rod" (1710), "The Progress of Beauty" (1719) and "The Progress of Poetry" (1720). The device is lucidly discussed by Ehrenpreis:

Throughout his career as a poet, Swift liked to design his works, as in the Salamander, around systematic analogies between a situation immediately presented and a remote parallel drawn from mythology or nature. The bridge between the real and figurative aspects of the analogy is usually a play on words; so Swift's peculiar structure tends to be a set of parallels, each illustrating a pun and all based on a far-fetched simile; if the simile happens to be a commonplace, Swift will often, as in the Salamander, reverse its ordinary implications.

In the "Salamander," Swift takes the nickname that had been given to Lord Cutts because of his courage under fire at the siege of Namur
and proceeds to make it literal: "For, what is understood by
Fame/ Beside the getting of a Name?" The analogy which Swift
takes advantage of here, that of the similarity of animal and human
characteristics, is probably his central trope, and one of his most
powerful. The endless variations of this theme can be seen in small
in the following lines:

As we say, Monsieur, to an Ape
Without offence to Human Shape:
So men have got from Bird and Brute
Names that would best their Natures suit:
The Lyon, Eagle, Fox and Bear
Were Hero's Titles heretofore,
Bestow'd as Hi'roglyphicks fit
T'express their Valor, Strength or Wit. (ll. 5-12)

The use of firearms has brought about a new situation in which
the kind of animal who can withstand fire is the most suitable
name-giver; Swift then tests the validity of the name given to Cutts
by appealing to a classical authority:

--But since we live among
Detractors with an evil Tongue,
Who may object against the Term,
Pliny shall prove what we affirm:
Pliny shall prove, and we'll apply,
And I'll be judg'd by standers-by. (ll. 23-28)

The catch here is in the application, for Swift takes Pliny's literal
description of the salamander and by using the ambiguities of language
and making figurative what is literal, produces what Harold Williams
calls "scurrilous invective."45

"Sid Hamet" refers to the rods of Moses and Hermes, a divining
rod, a witch's broom, and Achilles' scepter as points of contrast or
comparison with Godolphin's staff of office. The poem lacks the
neatness of "Salamander" because of the need to use so many diverse parallels in order to get enough said about Godolphin. The success of this device often depends on the suitability of the analogue, much as the success of an imitation can depend on how closely the features of the imitated poem can be paralleled in a modern version. In "The Progress of Poetry," Swift puns on "flight" as a term for poetic inspiration and equates the hack poet and the barnyard goose; when well-fed, neither can fly, but when "inspired" with lack of provender, the poet, like the goose,

... loaths
Incombrunces 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. 46

"The Progress of Beauty" is in several ways the best of this group of poems. Swift's tactic of carrying an assumption or a metaphor to its logical extreme is masterfully handled here, where the choice of characteristics used to define the similarities between the moon and Celia transforms that old comparison into something uniquely Swiftian. First of all, the moon does not appear in her usual poetic garb:

When first Diana leaves her Bed
Vapors and Steams her Looks disgrace,
A frouzy dirty colour'd red
Sits on her cloudy wrinkleed Face.

But by degrees when mounted high
Her artificial Face appears
Down from her Window in the Sky,
Her Spots are gone, her Visage clears. 47

We recognize the reality of this moon, although it is not the reality
we are accustomed to find in poems; we are not sure what kind of
world this is until the process of definition is completed. The remain-
der of the essential terms of the poem--the means through which
Swift controls and limits the vision of the poem--furnishes the moon
with a companion and defines the relationship of the pair:

'Twixt earthly Femals and the Moon
All Parallels exactly run;
If Celia should appear too soon
Alas, the Nymph would be undone.

To see her from her Pillow rise
All reeking in a cloudy Steam,
Crackt Lips, foul Teeth, and gummy Eyes,
Poor Strephon, how would he blaspheme! (ll. 9-16)

Swift will begin a poem, essay, or one of the longer satires in this
manner, by establishing a set of relationships which are accepted
within the framework and logic of the work. Then he proceeds to
demonstrate exactly what the acceptance of the relationship, metaphor,
or persona (as in A Modest Proposal) entails. After being blinded by
centuries of poetic cant about the nature of women, the reader has
his illusions stripped from him through the transformation of a meta-
phor that had begun to substitute itself for any actual view of real
women. Poetic comparisons are the means of dressing illusions;
destroy the comparison and the illusion goes, too. This experience
of stripping off appearance, of peeling through the outside to the inner
reality, is painful, as the flayed woman of A Tale of a Tub, the dis-
illusioned lovers of the dressing room poems, and Lemuel Gulliver
discovered.

This poem allows no warning, however, and the reader is trapped
within his acceptance of an old cliché deliberately turned upside-down.
A figurative comparison is made all too literal and concrete in every
detail, as in the explanation of the waning of the moon and its signifi-
cance in terms of Celia:

    Matter, as Wise Logicians say,
     Cannot without a Form subsist,
      And Form, say I, as well as They,
       Must fayl if Matter brings no Grist.

    And this is fair Diana's Case
     For, all Astrologers maintain
      Each Night a Bit drops off her Face
       When Mortals say she's in her Wain.

    While Partridge wisely shews the Cause
     Efficient of the Moon's Decay,
      That Cancer with his pois'rous Claws
       Attacks her in the milky Way:

    But Gadbury in Art profound
     From her pale Cheeks pretends to show
      That Swan Endymion is not sound,
       Or else, that Mercury's her Foe.  (ll. 81-96)

The reduction of a person to matter is just one step of the process
which turns organic matter into mechanical, and the poem relentlessly
pursues the transformations to the point where even mechanical women
with replaceable parts are phased out in favor of a more efficient
unit replacement plan:

    When Mercury her Tresses mows
     To think of Oyl and Soot, is vain,
      No Painting can restore a Nose,
       Nor will her Teeth return again.

    Two Balls of Glass may serve for Eyes,
     White Lead can plaister up a Cleft,
      But these alas, are poor Supplyes
       If neither Cheeks, nor Lips be left.

    Ye Pow'rs who over Love preside,
     Since mortal Beayyes drop so soon,
      If you would have us well supply'd,
       Send us new Nymphs with each new Moon.  (ll. 109-120)
This kind of transformation is characteristic of most of Swift's poems. Denis Donoghue describes the process in the following manner: "If something appears intractable, translate it downward; if it is organic, treat it as if it were mechanical. If it is human, be on the watch for animal imagery which will intimidate it, thereby releasing you."^48 Swift is not content to merely use animal imagery, however, and frequently reverses the common human-animal comparison to one where the beast is preferable to the man.\(^49\) The last book of Gulliver's Travels immediately comes to mind, and among the poems "The Beasts Confession to the Priest, on Observing how most Men mistake their own Talents" (1732) is the best example of an extended treatment of this theme. This poem is also an example of the use of analogy raised to a higher power—maintained throughout a narrative rather than just for the space of a simile or a metaphor. In his use of the fable, as in most of his adaptations of conventional forms, Swift often reverses normal applications and expectations. Instead of explaining the parallels between animal behavior and human, or even defending or criticizing zoological decorum in the description of animal behavior (as Prior and Montagu did in their attack on Dryden's Hind and Panther), Swift virtually destroys the basis on which the fable was built:

I own, the Moral not exact;  
Besides, the Tale is false in Fact;  
And, so absurd, that I could raise up  
From Fields Elyzian, fabling Esop;  
I would accuse him to his Face  
For libelling the Four-foot Race.

...  
Our Author's Meaning, I presume, is  
A Creature bipes et implumis;
Wherein the Moralist design'd
A Compliment on Human-Kind:
For, here he owns, that now and then
Beasts may degener'rate into Men. 50

A footnote by Swift even cites the last book of Gulliver's Travels as commentary on the last line.

The last decade of Swift's active production of poetry gives us his most finished and powerful, and, with the exception of "Cadenus and Vanessa" (1713), his longest poems. "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" and "The Beasts Confession" are in this group, as are the dressing room poems, but the grand satires are "Directions for a Birth-day Song" (1729), "On Poetry: A Rhapsody" (1733), and "The Legion Club" (1736), although "Epistle to a Lady" (1733) might also be considered a junior member. These poems are remarkable in Swift's canon because of their sweep and because they sustain a high level of poetic energy without relying upon an elaborate framework or structure. "The Legion Club" is an exercise in pure invective, but it was written when Swift's powers began to fail. Besides the ingenuity of the rimes and the surprising ability of the piece to create a great deal of energy out of nothing more than hate (or at least a strong form of dislike) and sustain that energy for an entertaining two hundred and forty-two lines, the noteworthy feature of the poem is the fact that it is an unusual demonstration of good poetry in a difficult and rarely well-done form. "The Legion Club" is the logical extension of the kind of satire Swift was writing at the end of his career, but the control, balance, and range of "On Poetry: A Rhapsody" are missing.
"Directions for a Birth-day Song" and "On Poetry: A Rapsody" take the form of advice poems, the first dealing with panegyric, the second with poetic craft as a whole. In this guise, Swift is able to touch upon the practices of bad poets as well as the characters of those whom the poets praise; in other words, he is able to deal with art and politics at the same time, subjects on which he has strong views and stronger words. The poems do not reflect Swift's views on these subjects directly, however, for the persona is a praiser of folly. The advice offered to Matthew Pilkington in "Directions" and to any aspiring poet in "A Rapsody" is ironic, and the irony is handled in such a way that even Queen Caroline had to be instructed in "the use and power of irony," as King describes it in his Anecdotes, before she was fully aware of the real meaning of many of the lines in "A Rapsody." It is difficult to account for these poems, although many of the devices and techniques of earlier works can be seen in operation. Usually Swift limits himself to a particular subject, most often something of interest at the moment, but these poems are marked by a wideness of vision and an overview of society that is closer to Pope's late satires and moral essays. Harold Williams cites one reason for the enlarged scope of this group of poems, and that is Swift's loss of many of his old friends in England--Congreve died in January 1729, Gay in December 1732, and Arbuthnot in February 1735--and the cooling of some of the Irish friendships. Williams comments, "As he withdrew himself from social life his poems began to owe less to the passing occasion, and to become more general in character."
Swift also had more time to devote to poetry with fewer outside interests to distract him, and his powers and confidence in his poetry seem to be at their peak at this time. Another consideration is that his last major work in prose was "A Modest Proposal," published in 1729, and doubtless some of the energy that had previously gone into the prose was now channeled into verse.

Whatever the reasons, the polish and abundance of wit, the virtuosity of descriptions and rimes, and the aptness of the metaphors of these poems are not surpassed elsewhere in his poetry. In these poems, Swift achieves sublimity and on his own terms. One example of the many startling rimes in "Directions for a Birth-day Song" is the following couplet: "Your Hero now another Mars is, / Makes mighty Armys turn their Arses" (ll. 29-30). While generalizing about the methods of writing panegyric, Swift discovers a principle with remarkable applications:

'Tis not deny'd that when we write,
Our Ink is black, our Paper white;
And when we scrawl our Paper o'r'e,
We blacken what was white before.
I think this Practice only fit
For dealers in Satyrick Wit:
But you some white-lead ink must get,
And write on paper black as Jet:
Your Int'rest lyes to learn the knack
Of whitening what before was black. 54

One of the more effective traits of this poem is its apparent indifference to the moral issues of whitewashing villains. Scorn is more damning than anger, and indifference is the ultimate insult. The persona lists the ways in which all faults are concealed but does not
respond to the catalogue of vices, and what is left unsaid is as important as what is mentioned. Rather than attack directly, Swift chooses to let the tone of the poem carry the weight of the irony. Small matters of diction often alter the entire import of a passage, as the last word of this couplet shows:

Now Birth-day Bard, with joy proceed
To praise your Empress, and her Breed. (ll. 151-152)

The task of praising the royal family is made easy by the characters of Queen Caroline and her children, and how happy for the poet that her name is so melodious:

Hail Queen of Britain, Queen of Rhymes,
Be sung ten hundred thousand times.
Too happy were the Poets Crew,
If their own happiness they knew. (ll. 221-224)

This bland celebration of the Queen ends with a slightly savage reminder of reality, but it is primarily in the perfect mimicking of the clichés of normal panegyric that the poem achieves its purpose. The irony of the following passage is not as carefully maintained as it is for most of the poem, but even though the remark is not in isolation a particularly harsh one, the change in tone from "Behold three beauteous Vowels stand / With Bridegroom liquids hand in hand"(ll. 229-230) to the remarks on the mortality and destiny of the Queen gives the passage its power:

May Caroline continue long,
For ever fair and young—in Song.
What tho the royal Carcase must
Squeez'd in a Coffin turn to dust;
Those Elements her name compose,
Like Atoms are exempt from blows. (ll. 233-238)
By insinuating that Caroline's name is her most noteworthy attribute and by ending the comparison between Venus and Caroline with a comment on their chronological relationship, Swift's praise of the Queen is damning indeed:

Nor shall we think you talk at random,
For Venus might be her great Grandam.
Six thousand years hath liv'd the Goddess,
Your Heroine hardly fifty odd is. (ll. 159-162)

"Directions for a Birth-day Song" and "On Poetry: A Rapsody" parody conventional panegyric so well that only the fine but pervasive irony of both poems separates them from real panegyric. Swift sings and rhapsodizes in an outrageous manner, brilliantly employing all the devices of praise for his most effective and far-reaching satires in verse. There is a curious symmetry in his return to panegyric at the end of his poetic career, and although his intentions are different from those he had when he began writing poetry with the early odes, it is fitting that Swift demonstrate his mastery over this form before bidding farewell to the Muse. He disclaims the ability to write in an elevated fashion in "Epistle to a Lady," but in a way that warns the reader of the possibilities of heroic verse in Swift's hands:

    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.
All my Fire would fall in Scraps,
Give your Head some gentle Raps;
Only make it smart a while:
Then cou'd I forbear to smile,
When I found the tingling Pain,
Entering warm your frigid Brain
Make you able upon Sight,  
To decide of Wrong and Right?  
Talk with Sense, whate'er you please on,  
Learn to relish Truth and Reason.

Thus we both should gain our Prize:  
I to laugh, and you grow wise.  

The opening and close of this poem deal with Lady Acheson's request that Swift write a serious panegyrical on her, to balance his witty teasing in other odes, but the center of the poem is an attack on the political system and its representatives. The exalted strain which in his early odes turned curiously to satire finds its fullest expression here, but not in railing:

Still to lash, and lashing Smile,  
Ill befits a lofty Stile.  
From the Planet of my Birth,  
I encounter Vice with Mirth.  
Wicked Ministers of State  
I can easier scorn than hate:  
And I find it answers right:  
Scorn torments them more than Spight.  

Swift's vision gives him the power to scorn, as he demonstrates in the following lines:

All the Vices of a Court,  
Do but serve to make me Sport.  
Shou'd a Monkey wear a Crown,  
Must I tremble at his Frown?  
Could I not, thro' all his Ermin,  
Spy the strutting chatt'ring Vermin?  
Safely write a smart Lampoon,  
To expose the brisk Baboon?  

The effectiveness of this form of attack derives mainly from Swift's devaluing attitude toward his subjects. He had learned that a sneer carries more weight and cuts deeper than a curse. To be sure, there is underneath this surface nonchalance just as much feeling as
in the poems that use invective, but now Swift's reaction is more controlled. He achieves mastery over his response to what he sees and probably accomplishes more through this plan, as he states in another passage from "Epistle to a Lady":

Like the ever-laughing Sage,
In a Jest I spend my Rage:
(Tho' it must be understood,
I would hang them if I cou'd!)
If I can but fill my Nitch,
I attempt no higher Pitch. (ll. 167-172)

La bagatelle is not merely diversion, as it seemed to be in the days when Prior and Swift talked about it. By this time Swift has transformed it into a way of life and a weapon whose use preserves his equanimity and disturbs that of his enemies. Judging from the response of the government to this poem and to "On Poetry: A Rhapsody," when the printer and bookseller who had the copyright and any others who were found to be connected with the publication of these works were arrested and detained for some time before it was determined that "there was nothing in the poems constituting a libel or subject of legal punishment," Swift's method of attack was both effective and safe from normal means of reprisal.

Prior incurred the wrath of Whigs from the time of his vote against Halifax in 1701, and some Tories were nervous about his conduct during the investigation by the Secret Committee after the death of the Queen, but his satires were never the cause of uneasiness among either his friends or his foes. The conspicuous infrequency of this major mode of Augustan writing in Prior's works
has been discussed earlier, but now it is time to look at the few satires (besides the imitations) that he wrote. Prior's satiric productions fall into two main categories: his early, somewhat lengthy satires on literary matters, and the group of character sketches written after his retirement from public life. These sketches are usually short, many in the form of epitaphs, and they are balanced between the specific--i.e., a particular person--and the general, dealing with a type. Compared with Swift's satires, it is almost ludicrous to call these poems of Prior's satiric, for even in the harshest of them Prior does not approach the severity of Swift, and in the best poems of this class, Prior characteristically strikes a balance that tends to emphasize character at the expense of satiric impact. The net result is a witty poem that reveals the weakness of human nature very clearly but hardly ever without understanding and occasionally sympathy.

In general, the literary satires tend to be harsher than the personal ones. As an illustration of how this type dominates Prior's attempts at satire, here is a list of what I consider his early satires, including the imitations: "A Satyr on the modern Translators" (1685), "Satyr on the Poets. In Imitation of the Seventh Satyr of Juvenal" (1687), "The Hind and the Panther Transvers'd to the Study of The Country Mouse and the City-Mouse" (1687--a parody of Dryden's poem using The Rehearsal as the source of the structure and containing a loose imitation of part of Horace's Sat. VI. 2, as the
title shows), and "A Session of the Poets (imperfect.)" (1688—not an imitation but following Rochester's Session closely in meter and subject). Of these poems the one which seems to owe less to other models, "A Satyr on the modern Translators," is the least polished and unified of the group. It is also the earliest, and it would be difficult to establish whether its faults are mainly due to the immaturity of the poet or to his attempt to write in an unfamiliar genre without using a model. However, the fact that the succeeding poems of this type are either close imitations or are indebted to another poem for structure indicates that Prior realized that his genius was not wholly suited to planning and writing satire. Prior also learned the danger of satire which names individuals, for he was forced to disown the authorship of "A Satyr on the modern Translators" and "Satyr on the Poets," primarily due to the bitter attacks in these poems on John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, when Curll included these poems in his unauthorized edition of Prior's collected works. Prior subsequently wrote few poems which could give offense to any particular person, and most of these were not published while he was living. 58

"The Hind and the Panther Transvers'd" is the most ingenious of the early satires and in many ways the most interesting, but a detailed discussion of it will appear in the chapter on imitations. Metrically, "A Session of the Poets" is the best of this early group, illustrating Prior's facility with anaplectic tetrameter as well as
perhaps his comparative lack of ease with a decasyllabic line in his early poems. "A Session" also has a greater sense of unity, despite its unfinished state, than the other early satires, possibly because of the dramatic setting of the genre, which gives an overall structure, a sense of action, and an opportunity for presenting dialogue. These qualities enable the poet to cover a number of characters without merely cataloguing contemporaries, and Prior's gift for rendering conversations with ease and wit in poetry make this kind of poem ideally suited to his talents. From a larger perspective, none of these poems are particularly noteworthy. They are competent, although in places only barely so: the forced similes, poor transitions, and general awkwardness that mark the early work of Prior can be seen here.

The second main division of Prior's satires includes both the general and the individually pointed types, but the poems that might offend specific people do not appear to have been published during Prior's lifetime. A poem that was published in the 1709 Poems on Several Occasions, "The Chameleon" (1708), illustrates the improvement in Prior's poetry generally in the space of twenty years as well as the change in satiric technique. The poem begins as many of Swift's poems do, with the description of an animal (or even an inanimate object) which will provide the basis for a description of a human, but where Swift often pursues the metaphor with relentless logic into ingenious details, Prior soon abandons the opening figure
to concentrate on the human character he is presenting. The first
verse paragraph is the only one that mentions the creature whose
name graces the title:

As the Chameleon, who is known
To have no Colors of his own;
But borrows from his Neighbour's Hue
His White or Black, his Green or Blew;
   ... 
So the young 'Squire, when first He comes
From Country Schole, to Will's or Tom's;
And equally, in Truth, is fit
To be a Statesman, or a Wit. ... 59

This unformed lad is eventually noticed by "some Acquaintance,
good or bad" (l. 15), who admits him to his circle, and then the
naif "acts and talks, as They befriend Him, /Smear'd with the
Colors, which They lend Him" (ll. 19-20). The remainder of the
poem is devoted to the illustration of three of the possible groups
under whose influence the country squire might have fallen. The
poet's attitude toward this method of choosing a career is shown by
the transitional couplet which introduces the sketches of the three
groups: "Thus merely, as his Fortune chances, /His Merit or
his Vice advances" (ll. 21-22). From the point of view of common
sense, there is little to commend in any of the three; the last sketch
carries more sting, possibly because of its position and because the
type it discusses was most familiar to Prior. The merit of the poem
lies more in its accuracy in catching the characteristics of the various
types than its ethical structure, however.
If happily He the Sect pursues,
That read and comment upon News;
He takes up Their mysterious Face:
He drinks his Coffee without Lace.
This Week his mimic-Tongue runs o'ier
What They have said the Week before.
His Wisdom sets all Europe right;
And teaches Marlbro when to Fight.

Or if it be his Fate to meet
With Folks who have more Wealth than Wit;
He loves cheap Port, and double Bub;
And settles in the Hum-Drum Club.
He learns how Stocks will Fall or Rise;
Holds Poverty the greatest Vice.
Thinks Wit the Bane of Conversation;
And says, that Learning spoils a Nation.

But if, at first, He minds his Hits,
And drinks Champaine among the Wits;
Five deep, He Toasts the tow'ring Lasses;
Repeats you Verses wrote on Glasses;
Is in the Chair; prescribes the Law;
And Lies with Those he never say. (ll. 23-44)

The impulse of condemnation that drives Swift's satires is
definitely lacking in Prior's; one is often tempted to label poems
such as "The Chameleon" as realistic and sharp-witted rather than
satiric, and that temptation is an indication of the gap that lies
between Swift and Prior in this area. Prior's other general satire,
"True Statesmen" (written between 1710 and 1714), is less moderate
in tone and less general than "The Chameleon." The opening uses
diction that is rather close to some of Swift's:

  True Statesmen only Love or hate
  What Lessens 'em or makes 'em Great.
  With wondrous kindness each ascends
  Supported by his Should'ring Friends
  And fleering Criticks sometimes Note
  His dirt imprinted on his Coat.
The middle paragraph of this poem deals with the disagreement between Oxford and Bolingbroke, although not in detail, but the last paragraph changes the tone and direction by addressing advice to an implied listener who must be in politics, if not one of the leaders:

Be not the Bully of the Nation
Nor foam at mouth for Moderation.
Take not thy Sentiments on trust
Nor be by others Notions just.
To Church and Queen and Laws be hearty
But hate a Trick and scorn a Party
And if Thou ever hast a Voice
Tho it be only in the Choice
Of Vestry Men or Grey Coat Boys
Vote Right tho certain to be blam'd
And rather Starve than be asham'd.
This method I shou'd fancy best
You may think otherwise, I rest. (11. 27-39)

The presence of the one to whom the advice is given is made more immediate by the last line, and the shift from descriptive to imperative turns the last paragraph into an extended moral that shifts the focus of the poem from the problem (which is a satiric focus) to the solution. Another way of understanding the change within this poem would be through the persona; Prior seems to have difficulty sustaining a persona with the qualities or point of view necessary to satire. "True Statesmen" opens with the cutting tone, the striking and perhaps simplistic descriptive phrases that are characteristic of good satire, but there is a gradual modulation through the middle verse paragraph into the straightforward advice of the third, where only a few phrases like "foam at the mouth for Moderation" and "Nor be by others Notions just" retain the satiric tone of the opening.
Prior has written a few epitaphs whose irony is biting enough to include them as satiric works, but these seem to be of a more personal and ephemeral nature than the rest of the poems considered in this chapter—they do not strike the public tone required of poems included here. These epitaphs do support the contention that Prior was sensitive to the possible repercussions of personal satire, however, because these pieces against Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, were not printed during Prior's lifetime.61

The last and in some respects the most interesting of Prior's satires is a fragment, "Thy King O may I call him by that Name," whose date and context is uncertain. The poem presents a grim picture of the effect of a king's abandonment of a country, in terms that have more satiric energy and descriptive impact than almost anything else written by Prior. The last verse paragraph of the fragment accurately indicates the tone:

Thou shalt have Preists immers't in lust and gluttony
And bishops three times married, thy cathedrals
The Seats where Prayer and hospitality
Should dwel, shall be the taverns
Where Drunken bowles incessantly goe round
In leud debauch and midnight dice are hurld,
The beds wherein the wearied Pilgrim us'd
To ease his crippled Limbs, he now shall find
Possess't with Women, nurses, she attendants,
And a Dishonest brood of ugly children.62

Prior's editors suggest two contexts for this incomplete piece: it may refer to the political situation in England when William III was being threatened with a loss of power and the standing army dispersed, therefore placing the poem's composition 1697–1701, "when Prior was stating the same theme in other poems," or, "since all Prior's
other pieces in blank verse are either translations or plays, "it could be a translation or belong to a fictitious situation." This poem lacks the polish of Prior's later works, when he was writing most of his blank verse, but its unfinished state may account for that. The absence of blank verse compositions during the period when this would have to have been written if it referred to a real situation and the tone of this poem seem to indicate that it is probably a translation or a fragment of a speech for a play. This in turn would be further proof that Prior's poetic personae are basically incapable of a sustained satiric attack. A translation or a dramatis persona might offer an acceptable form for such an effort, but not one of Prior's "normal" personae, who perceive sharply and speak wittily but hardly ever lose sight of the essential humanity of all men, no matter how flawed, and are most conscious of their own failings and smallness and the folly of judging others.

A fundamental aspect of the Prior persona, or one persona who is one of the more important of Prior's personae, is seen most clearly in an important but neglected area of Prior's poetry—his philosophical, or as I prefer to call them, meditative poems. It may on the surface appear incongruous for the author of such pieces as "Hans Carvel," "Letter to J . . . .," and "The Ladle" to write serious devotional and philosophical poems, also, but Prior's love for la bagatelle and his concern about fundamental questions on the nature of man and his relationship to his world are closely related.
Prior's meditative poetry is principally concerned with man's search for happiness, for self-knowledge, and for answers to the basic questions of why (anything). Most of the devotional poems find a source of joy and comfort in belief in God, but this belief is achieved through a rejection of other means of determining man's end, after worldly paths to ultimate happiness and cosmic understanding have been tried. Prior's two poems on the text of I Corinthians 13, "Charity never faileth" (1690) and "Charity" (1703), are early attempts at presenting this movement. "Charity never faileth" opens with the mocking advice of how to find lasting fame:

Say would'st Thou gain eternal Praise,
Go foolish Man thy great designs pursue,
   Go, try ten thousand ways;
Thy Toil like Sisyphus each hour renew
   Yet know that after all Thy Pain,
Like Him thou dost but roll a heavy Stone in vain.

The reward of military service is "only shouts and noise / (The Rabbles unintelligible voice) / And scarce a Lawrel-leaf for every wound" (ll. 14-16); a monument erected to one's public service soon crumbles into dust; "Since Men the mighty Stagyrite disdain" (l. 29), philosophy is just as ephemeral; and if Homer is now censured, "Then how short-liv'd will be thy Praise:/ Like what thou labour'st for, a sprig of Bayes, / 'Twill with its Transitory Master Dye" (ll. 37-39). Charity, on the other hand,

Will make its Author always known.
The Charitable Man shall live
Without what needless Art can give
And every Tongue his Acts rehearse
Tho no Man built his Tomb, or sung his Praise in Verse.

(ll. 45-49)
But fame is not the final goal of man, and the last stanza adds the most important benefit of practicing charity. As "Old Time" and "Envy" pursue the man of charity, he escapes the curse of mortality and an even greater calamity:

Nay even in that dreadful Day
When all Men else to Rocks and Caverns run
And desperately strive an angry God to shun
When time it self shal be no more,
Who fed the Orphan, and reliev'd the Poor
Shal with undaunted Courage stay
And Ten times more receive, then e'er he gave away. (ll. 54-60)

The hollow pursuit of earthly values is made even more worthless in "Charity," where not only selected professions but the greatest of man's endeavors is seen as nothing without charity:

Did sweeter Sounds adorn my flowing Tongue,
Than ever Man pronounc'd, or Angel sung:
Had I all Knowledge, Human and Divine,
That Thought can reach, or Science can define;
And had I Pow'r to give that Knowledge Birth,
In all the Speeches of the babling Earth:
Did Shadrach's Zeal my glowing Breast inspire,
To weary Tortures, and rejoice in Fire:
Or had I Faith like That which Israel saw,
When Moses gave them Miracles, and Law:
Yet, gracious Charity, indulgent Guest,
Were not Thy Pow'r exerted in my Breast;
Those Speeches would send up unheeded Pray'r
That Scorn of Life would be but wild Despair:
A Tymbal's Sound were better than my Voice:
My Faith were Form: my Eloquence were Noise. 65

Thus, in many of Prior's meditative poems man's pride, his blindness to his own folly, leads him astray and prevents him from seeing life truly. What is necessary to correct this natural myopia is a humiliation, something that removes man's comforting delusions
about the ultimate worth of most of his activities and himself. In this area, Prior and Swift are similar in their views of the problem and solutions to it. But because Prior is not satisfied with mere acceptance, because he pushes for answers to questions about man's existence, he cannot take refuge in doctrine or take comfort in belief, as much as he would like to. Swift does not ask the final questions—these are beyond man's reach—although he sees the paradoxes of man's state at least as clearly as Prior. Swift can face the truth of man because he believes in a final redemption, but there is a desperation in Prior's praise of belief, and even some of his early assertions of faith have their dark corners.

There seems to be a basic proportion in Prior's devotional poetry: the grandeur of God and the strength of man's belief in Him depends on the weakness of man and the darkness of his existence. "Considerations on part of the Eighty Eighth Psalme" (1693) sounds a theme typical of many of the psalms—man's dependence on God, especially in the depths of despair—but what seems to be most important in this poem is the unhappy state of the psalmist. One senses from the poems on charity, for instance, that if it weren't for his awareness of his helplessness, the poet would not be making the affirmation of God's power and, almost hopefully, Her mercy. Each of the three stanzas of the poem begins with a lament for his present state and ends with a plea for help: "Save the Poor Wand'erer from Eternal Night, / Thou that art the God of Light"; "O let Her rest beneath
Thy Wing secure, / Thou that art the God of Pow'r"; and "Receive
the Son Thou did'st so long reprove, / Thou that art the God of Love"
are the petitions and praise that end the stanzas. But the affirmative
nature of these lines is modified by the nature of the opening lines
of each stanza: "Heavy, O Lord, on me Thy Judgments lye, /
Accurs't I am, while God rejects my Cry"; "Downward I hasten
to my destin'd place;/ There None obtain Thy Aid, or Sing Thy
Praise"; and "Behold the Prodigal: To Thee I come, / To hail my
Father, and to seek my Home." There is a movement from the
depths of despair at the beginning of the poem to a mood of hopefulness
in the last stanza with the image of the prodigal son, but the weight
of each stanza and of the poem as a whole is in the misery of the
speaker. The single line of affirmation at the end of each stanza does
not, and perhaps is not meant to, balance the catalogue of woe that
precedes it; this poem is a statement of faith, but that faith is
wrung from suffering and lacks assurance.

"God is Love" (1690) seems to be a completely positive statement
of belief; God's love is manifested in all His acts, from the ordering
of Chaos by "Loves creating word" (1. 10) to the fortunate fall of man
from Paradise to the incarnation of Christ. But the poem ends on
something less than a joyful note in the last stanza's contemplation
of the crucifixion:

Then cast (if Tears restrain not) cast thy Eye
Up to the dismal top of frighted Calvary
See whom thy Pray'rs so oft invok'd
To whom thy fatlings fell, thy Altars smoak'd
See to the fatal Cross He's ty'd,
The thorns his temples wound, the spear his side:
And to compleat his glorious Miserys, 
Imperious Love, what wou'dst thou more? He Dyes. 
What wou'dst Thou more? Thy Deity we own: 
By thy mysterious Power alone 
The World was fram'd, Man sav'd, God crucified. 67

But there is a basic paradox in love being the principle behind the 
fall of man from grace and behind the suffering of the crucifixion.

In several of the meditative poems, this figure is used as an answer 
to man's questions and searching, but the invocation of this scene 
is somewhat uneasy. The crucifixion is not an event that is grasped 
rationally—indeed, in the Exodus ode, Prior cites this as the 
concluding point in his argument against the validity of reason and 
the power of knowledge 68 but one does not find a full acceptance 
even when it is evident that Prior intends to produce a strong 
conviction of a secure faith in the reader. To use an analogy, the 
kind of irrational yet unquestionable acceptance that is present in 
the last speech of Job cannot be found in Prior's use of the mystery 
of the crucifixion. Prior seems to use this event on demand, as 
required by the poem and its argument, but his plea for its 
reality rings hollow.

Prior's early devotional piece, "On Exodus iii. 14. I am that I
am. An Ode" (1688), prefigures on a smaller scale much of the 
thought that finds its most complete expression in Solomon (1708). 
Where Solomon demonstrates the pettiness of all of man's endeavors 
in Solomon's quest to find happiness in the pursuit of knowledge, 
pleasure, and finally in the exercise of power, "On Exodus"
concentrates on the vanity of man's reliance on reason:

Man! Foolish Man!
Scarce know'st thou how thy self began;
Scarce hast thou Thought enough to prove Thou art;
Yet steel'd with study'd Boldness, thou dar'st try
To send thy doubting Reason's dazled Eye
Through the mysterious Gulph of vast Immensity.
Much thou canst there discern, much thence impart.
Vain Wretch! suppress thy knowing Pride;
Mortifie thy learned Lust:
Vain are thy Thoughts, while thou thy self art Dust.

(II, 1-10)

The tone and diction of this poem remind one of Pope's Essay on Man, which is not surprising when the similarities of subject and point of view of the two poems are considered. Indeed, "On Exodus" is probably the best early statement of "a religious attitude that is a central theme throughout his verse and is developed at length in Solomon," which was used extensively by Pope in the Essay on Man.69

The subject of Solomon is discussed in the rather long preface to the poem that appeared with its publication in 1718:

To bring this to our present Subject: The Pleasures of Life do not compensate the Miseries: Age steals upon Us unawares; and Death, as the only Cure of our Ills, ought to be expected, but not feared. . . . If in the fair Situation where this Prince Solomon was placed, He was acquainted with Sorrow; If endowed with the greatest Perfections of Nature, and possess'd of all the Advantages of external Condition, He could not find Happiness; the rest of Mankind may safely take the Monarch's Word for the Truth of what He asserts.70

This gloomy view of life is validated by Solomon's experience, and in Book III of the poem, he ends his search for happiness with a prayer that concludes with this humble petition:

Permit me Strength, my Weight of Woe to bear;
And raise my Mind superior to my Care.
Let Me, howe'er unable to explain
The secret Lab'rynths of Thy Ways to Man,
With humble Zeal confess Thy awful Pow'r;
Still weeping Hope, and wond'ring still Adore.
So in my Conquest be Thy Might declar'd:
And, for Thy Justice, be Thy Name rever'd. 71

Whatever the poetic merit of Solomon, it is an important statement of Prior's thought on the place of religion and faith in man's life and on the quality of life in general. Monroe K. Spears comments that the "theme of the opposition of faith and reason, and the superiority of faith to reason, is a constant one in Prior's verse, finding ... its fullest expression in Solomon." 72 This is where Prior's devotional verse is headed, and the pattern of faith discovered in the midst of earthly sorrow is a basic part of Prior's view of life. Samuel Johnson's praise of this poem, surprising in light of Johnson's unfavorable attitude toward Prior, is not so strange when one recognizes the similarities in the points of view of Solomon and several of Johnson's own works. 73 Here are some of Johnson's remarks:

Solomon is the work to which he entrusted the protection of his name, and which he expected succeeding ages to regard with veneration. His affection was natural; it had undoubtedly been written with great labour, and who is willing to think that he has been labouring in vain? He had infused into it much knowledge and much thought; had often polished it to elegance, often dignified it with splendour, and sometimes heightened it to sublimity: he perceived in it many excellences, and did not discover that it wanted that without which all others are of small avail, the power of engaging attention and alluring curiosity. ... Yet the work is far from deserving to be neglected. He that shall peruse it will be able to mark many passages, to which he may recur for instruction or delight: many from which the poet may learn to write, and the philosopher to reason. 74
Johnson's natural predilection for poetry that instructs and inspires makes Solomon his favorite work of Prior's. Even though Johnson's taste has not proved to be that of succeeding readers, he is correct in identifying Solomon as an unusual poem for Prior. Prior is probably at his most sublime in this poem; despite the weighty argument and the equally weighty use of traditional learning, this is Prior's most intense, most serious and most involved poem. He is trying to deal with a problem that concerns him greatly, and the concern and passion of the poet are visible throughout the poem. Unfortunately, Prior is not at his best when he tries to be as direct as this. The involved, heroic persona tends to fall from his own weight rather than soar, and perhaps this stance is just wrong for Prior. As Johnson notices, there are many brilliant lines in this piece, and, except for the poetry of Dryden and Pope, Solomon might well claim the best collection of heroic couplets in the period. But the poem as a whole lacks that "je ne sais quoi" which makes the difference between a good poem and a great one.

Prior's other long poem, "Alma," is philosophically more involved than Solomon, but its approach is much lighter. Consequently, "Alma" is not only easier to read, but it is also more effective philosophically and better poetically. "Alma" is a burlesque treatise on the nature of the soul (or mind, as it is called in the poem) which ridicules those theories which are dualistic, dividing the soul and body, or deterministic. One of Prior's targets is the atomists'
position, for which Lucretius is a good spokesman, but Prior also identifies this point of view with that of the modern scientists—"he conceived them to be alike materialistic and deterministic." 75

While the poem makes fun of all philosophical debate, Prior tends to take an Aristotelian stand on the question, which, for Prior, means that the body and soul are intimately united. The impotence of reason in this scheme of things leaves man little hope for happiness based on order or reason. Is man a reasonable being? The way in which this question is answered in "Alma" is quite similar to Swift's discussions of the reasonableness of man in A Tale and Gulliver's Travels. Look what engrosses this superior faculty:

How little gives Thee Joy, or Pain:
A Print, A Bronze, a Flow'r, a Root,
A Shell, a Butter-fly can do't.
Ev'n a Romance, a Tune, a Rhime
Help Thee to pass the tedious Time,
Which else would on thy Hand remain:
Tho' flown, it ne'er looks back again,
And Cards are dealt, and Chess-boards brought,
To ease the Pain of Coward-Thought.
Happy Result of Human Wit!
That Alma may Her self forget. 76

Instead of Solomon's high-minded quest for an answer to man's desire for happiness, Matthew asks that "Fortune calm her present Rage, /
And give us Play-things for our Age" (ll. 534-535, Canto III). A pleasant picture is drawn of that eighteenth-century dream, retirement at one's country estate, surrounded by the library, objets d'art, and friends of a lifetime—"Yet then, ev'n then one cross Reflection/ Would
spoil Thy Grove, and My Collection" (III, 552-553). Richard, or Dick as the meter or mood decides, ends the poem on the proper note:

Tir'd with these Thoughts--Less tir'd than I,
Quoth Dick, with Your Philosophy--
That People live and dye, I knew
An hour ago, as well as You.

... 

What need of Books these Truths to tell,
Which Folks perceive, who cannot spell?
And must We Spectacles apply,
To view, what hurts our naked Eye?

... 

If to be sad is to be wise;
I do most heartily despise
Whatever Socrates has said
Or Tully writ, or Wanley read.

Dear Drift, to set our Matters right,
Remove these Papers from my Sight;
Burn Mat's Des-cart', and Aristotle:
Here, Jonathan, Your Master's Bottle.

(III, 578-81, 90-93, 606-613)

Actually, "Alma" does not rightfully belong in this chapter, since her style is not of the serious sublime, but the tone of the poem belies its underlying seriousness. As an answer to the gloom of Solomon, in which "sorrow for the past, as well as fear for the future, taints the present,"77 as M. K. Spears so finely phrases it, and as a demonstration of Prior's ability to render heavy material in a light and pleasant poetic fashion, "Alma" is a necessary coda to the discussion of Solomon.

Prior's last fragmentary poem, "Predestination" (1721), takes up the question of the nature of the soul and free will and the problem of the existence of evil but reaches no definite conclusion. Here, as
in most of the meditative poems, the answer seems to be in an
absolute faith and trust in God:

O Soveraign! great Three One! O God and Man!
Who set those Measures which I dare not Scan;
If I have leave to chuse, I beg that choice
Guided at least by thy Assistant Voice.
If I must pursue a Destin'd way
Direct my Footsteps for thou can'st not stray.
From dangerous doubts my wandring Soul retrieve
I cannot Argue, grant me to believe!
Lifeless I lay, Thou wak' st me into Sense;
Fraelity is mine, and Thine Omnipotence. 78

Prior never seemed able to lose those "dangerous doubts," however,
and his position is not resolved into complete faith or secularism.
One of the truly impressive indications of Prior's intellectual and
spiritual honesty is his refusal to blind himself to the difficulties of
human choice, while his desire to secure a choice is so evidently
strong. One of the non-devotional meditative poems which expresses
his ambivalence best is "To the Honourable Charles Montague, Esq"
(1692); this poem sees life just as darkly as Solomon but lacks the
religious dimension of the latter work, which "stands historically
between two great theodicies, Paradise Lost and the Essay on Man." 79
"To the Honourable Charles Montague" presents the same sceptical
attitude as "Alma," but its despair is not masked by conviviality, nor
its disappointment in the pleasantries and comforts of rustic dreams.
The opening lines present the same kind of life that "Alma" and other
poems on the worthlessness of reason reveal:

I,
Howe' er, 'tis well, that while Mankind
Thro' Fate's perverse Maeander errs,
He can Imagin'd Pleasures find,
To combat against Real Cares.
II.
Fancies and Notions He pursues,
Which ne'er had Being but in Thought:
Each, like the Graecian Artist, woo's
The Image He himself has wrought.

III.
Against Experience He believes;
He argues against Demonstration;
Pleas'd, when his Reason He deceives;
And sets his Judgment by his Passion. 80

Even old age brings no wisdom or relief from folly, as the "hoary Fool" looks to the future to bring happiness. The "Real Cares" and continu'd Sorrow of this life are ignored as, against all reason, man chases after an empty prospect which the future holds. And what does the future hold?

V.
To Morrow comes: 'tis Noon, 'tis Night;
This Day like all the former flies:
Yet on He runs, to seek Delight
To Morrow, 'till to Night He dies. (ll. 17-20)

In the face of this kind of finality, escape and delay are but games that man plays to avoid seeing life truthfully. In Solomon the necessity of facing up to the truth about life, whatever it be, is affirmed. What happens when God is absent from this process, when that dimension is left out, is the subject of "To the Honourable Charles Montague." Reality and illusion, knowledge and delusion and the confusion of these are all that remains:

VI.
Our Hopes, like tow'ring Falcons, aim
At Objects in an airy height:
The little Pleasure of the Game
Is from afar to view the Flight.
VII.
Our anxious Pains We, all the Day,
   In search of what We like, employ:
Scorning at Night the worthless Prey,
   We find the Labour gave the Joy.

VIII.
At Distance thro' an artful Glass
   To the Mind's Eye Things well appear:
They lose their Forms, and make a Mass
   Confus'd and black, if brought too near.

IX.
If We see right, We see our Woes:
   Then what avails it to have Eyes?
From Ignorance our Comfort flows:
   The only Wretched are the Wise.

X.
We weary'd should lye down in Death:
   This Cheat of Life would take no more;
If You thought Fame but empty Breath;
   I, Phillis but a perjur'd Whore. (ll. 21-40)

Life is merely a poor diversion, a series of activities with no real purpose. The reference to the optical instrument in stanza eight ingeniously ties together modern science ("artful Glass" is a synecdoche), reason’s dependence on the observations of science ("Mind's Eye"), and the loss of perspective which occurs with the use of such tools. Stanza nine questions the wisdom of any knowledge at all and reminds us of Swift's definition of happiness

   as it has Respect, either to the Understanding or the Senses, we shall find all its Properties and Adjuncts will herd under this short Definition: That, it is a perpetual Possession of being well Deceived.81

And the tenth stanza makes clear the logical response to life as it really is and concludes the poem with a concrete image of the
cynicism which the destruction of innocence and its illusions
inevitably brings. To use another comparison to a Swift work,
this poem is a simple and smaller version of the story of Gulliver,
and with the same difference in scale and complexity, the impact
of the two is much the same.

In "To the Honourable Charles Montague" the deception practiced
by "this Cheat of Life" is uncovered, and man's dreams, hopes and
illusions are shattered. However, this is not Prior's last word—if
any poetic statement could be regarded as final, "Predestination"
would come closest. But that poem is fragmentary and, given the
nature of its task, probably would have been inconclusive even if
completed. Prior's dilemma has been described in the following
way: "As convinced as Pascal of the depth and inevitability of man's
misery, he was not quite sure of the faith that could remedy it. As
convinced as Montaigne that reason cannot guide men, he could not
wholeheartedly accept Montaigne's complacent, mildly Epicurean way
to happiness. To the problem of ethics Prior found no solution."82

Prior's meditative poems are mostly devotional in outlook and
thus stress faith as a means of resolving the problems of how to cope
with life. That this answer is not totally satisfactory is evident from
poems such as "To the Honourable Charles Montague" and "Alma."
The answer on which Prior seemed to rely in his life and that which
is reflected in most of his poetry is not faith but divertissement,
la bagatelle, and that is the subject of the next chapter.
The closest Swift comes to writing meditative poetry, in the sense that term has been applied to Prior's work, is in his early odes, which have more of a panegyrical flavor than a meditative one, anyway. The point of view necessary for the meditative poem is a serious, contemplative, rather elevated one, and Swift left all that behind when he left the ode. Swift's serious aspirations in poetry found their place in his grand satires; apparently his sensitivity to the pretentiousness of elevated poetry was overcome by the strong sense of anger that animates those late, powerful pieces. With Prior the desire to praise that may have been partly responsible for his sustained production of panegyrics is still evident in his meditative poems, but now the object of praise is not as likely to fall into the kind of error or disrepute that a human subject might. Prior's investigations of man's place in the cosmos and his relationship with God furnish him with an area in which impassioned poetry is natural and credible. Prior's concern for the philosophical (or the ethical or religious, if those terms are better) demonstrates his involvement with the larger questions of man's state, while Swift's achievements in satire reflect his involvement in the more immediate and practical questions of how to live a better life in eighteenth-century England. Here their poetry diverges the most. The next chapter deals with the kinds of poetry both Prior and Swift are masters of and in which they are most similar.
Notes to Chapter III


3. Swift's Poems, p. 18, ll. 91-94.

4. "Occasioned by Sir W-- T--'s Late Illness and Recovery" (1693), Swift's Poems, p. 55, ll. 147-154.

5. Kathryn M. Harris, "Occasions So Few! Satire as a Strategy of Praise in Swift's Early Odes," MLQ, XXXI (1970), 32. She goes on to note that this "satiric vision and Swift's fundamental distrust of praise are the primary links between those early odes and his mature work in both prose and verse" (p. 33).

6. For Prior's comment in "Learning," see Chapter I, p. 18, or Wright and Spears, pp. 583-584. Excluding epigrams, Prior writes three or four works that could be called satires up to "A Session of the Poets" (1688). After this, very few of his poems could be classified as satires, although some have light satiric touches and his wit is never dull.

7. Swift's Poems, p. 177, ll. 13-16.

8. Ibid., pp. 397-398, ll. 1-9.

9. Several of Swift's birthday poems to Stella compare her to a house--"Stella's Birth-day" (1721) is built entirely on this metaphor--and "Baucis and Philemon" features the metamorphosis of a cottage to a church. Other house poems are "The History of Vanbrugh's House" (1706), and "On the Little House by the Church Yard of Castleknock" (1709).


13. Ibid., p. 138, ll. 149-164. I have omitted stanza numbers at head of each stanza to conserve space; these are stanzas XXXVIII-XLI.

14. Ibid., p. 155, ll. 31-34.


17. Ibid., p. 61, ll. 1-6.


19. Prior's Latin poems will not be discussed in this study, due to Swift's lack of such poems (he wrote one), the limited and specialized appeal of the Latin poetry, and my lack of competence on Latin verse.

20. The Arthur Prior household was Matthew's home after the death of his father. See Chapter I, p. 8.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-96, ll. 13-27, 55-69. "William Sherlock (1641?-1707), Master of the Temple, throughout the reign of James II had opposed Popery but upheld the doctrine of passive obedience. At the Revolution he refused to take the oaths, and stopped preaching on the day (1 Aug. 1689) fixed for suspension of Nonjurors. While excluded from his pulpit he wrote the *Practical Discourse*. He resumed preaching, however, on 2 Feb. 1690, and finally took the oaths in Aug. 1690, defending his action in a pamphlet... He was made Dean of St. Paul's on 15 June 1691." *A Practical Discourse Concerning Death* was an immediate success and went through twelve editions by 1703 (Wright and Spears, p. 857).


26. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79. The refrain of the first stanza reads "To show'r it's blessings all on Her," but the difference in pronoun number is merely for grammatical agreement and is an insignificant poetic variation.


29. Wright and Spears, p. 398, ll. 9-12.

30. "Harley's narrow escape turned public and royal sympathy so strongly in his direction that no intrigue and insinuation could for a while divert it... Even the Whigs... sent him private messages of support, exhorting him to take firm charge of the government of the country, which tottered while he lay sick (G. M. Trevelyan, *England under Queen Anne: The Peace*, 1946, p. 121, quoted in Wright and Spears, pp. 926-927).
31. "Verses Spoke to the Lady Henrietta-Cavendish Holles Harley, in the Library of St. John's College, Cambridge, November the 9th. An. 1719," and "Colin's Mistakes" (1721) are late panegyrics. Prior's attitude toward these in indicated by his remarks on the occasion in a letter to Swift in which he makes light of his participation in such activities. See above, p. 61, or Swift's Correspondence, II, 328 (8 Dec. 1719).


33. Ibid., p. 93, ll. 1-8, 11-18.

34. Ibid., p. 235, ll. 41-52.


36. Ibid., p. 296, ll. 1-4.

37. Ibid., p. 430, ll. 4-6.


39. Swift's Poems, pp. 553-554, ll. 5-10.

40. Ibid., pp. 193, 195-198, ll. 1-8, 53-62. See above, p. 10 and note 9 to the first chapter for a brief discussion of Swift's relationship with the Duchess of Somerset.

42. Swift's Poems, p. 567, ll. 355-370.

43. Ehrenpreis, II, 246.


45. Ibid., p. 82.

46. Ibid., p. 231, ll. 41-46.

47. Ibid., p. 226, ll. 1-8.

48. Donoghue, pp. 214-215. I have taken the liberty to correct an obvious misprint in the text, which has "is" instead of "it" immediately after "treats."


51. Pilkington was a poor Irish parson whom Swift befriended and who was working on an ode for the birthday of George II (30 Oct.) at the time Swift wrote this poem. Pilkington was in London in 1733 and helped negotiate the publication of six of Swift's late and more outspoken poems. Swift's Poems, xxiii, 459.

52. Dr. William King, Political and Literary Anecdotes (1818), quoted from Swift's Poems, p. 640.


55. See above, pp. 57 and 62, or Swift's Correspondence, II, 291, 382.

56. Ibid., p. 629.

57. See above, p. 18, for Prior's remarks in "Learning" on the subject, and pp. 104-105 for a discussion of the satirist's point of view.

58. Among the satires which remained unpublished until after Prior's death are "A Session of the Poets," and the series of poems relating to the Freind-Atterbury dispute in which Prior attacked Atterbury harshly: "Epitaph ('Meek Franco')," "The Epitaph upon Gilbert Glanville," "Epigram ('My Lord there's a Christ'ning')," and "On Bishop Atterbury's Burying the Duke of Buckingham," "True Statesmen," and a fragment, "Thy King O may I call him by that name." "The Hind and the Panther Transvers'd" was unsigned and was not included in an authorized collected edition, but its authorship was widely known. However, Dryden probably was not in a position to cause trouble for the authors, and there was little need to avoid the recognition the poem brought to Montague and Prior.

59. Wright and Spears, p. 269, ll. 1-4, 9-12.

60. Ibid., p. 411, ll. 1-6.

61. These poems are listed in note 58, above, and are found on pp. 549-550 in Wright and Spears.


63. Ibid., pp. 1042-1043.

64. Ibid., p. 99, ll. 1-6.


68. Here is the next-to-last stanza in "Exodus":

Let cunning Earth her fruitful Wonders hide;
And only lift thy staggering Reason up
To trembling Calvary's astonish'd Top;
Then mock thy Knowledge, and confound thy Pride,
Explaining how Perfection suffer'd Pain,
Almighty languish'd, and Eternal dy'd:
How by her Patient Victor Death was slain;
And Earth prophan'd, yet bless'd with Deicide.
Then down with all thy boasted Volumes, down;
Only reserve the Sacred One:
Low, reverently low,
Make thy stubborn Knowledge bow;
Weep out thy Reason's, and thy Body's Eyes;
Deject thy self, that Thou may'st rise;
To look to Heav'n, be blind to all below.

(Wright and Spears, p. 69, ll. 85-99)

The incredible nature of this event in Prior's use of it seems to suggest the difficulty of understanding it as much as it does the limitations of reason. Passages such as this, instead of sweeping away belief in reason, demonstrate a conflict between reason and faith in which reason maintains her validity against superior arguments through irrational stubbornness.

69. Quotation is from Wright and Spears, p. 844; remark on Pope's use of Solomon is made in the notes to the poem, p. 913.

70. From "The Preface" to Solomon on the Vanity of the World, Wright and Spears, p. 308, ll. 70-72, 75-79.

71. From Solomon, Wright and Spears, p. 380, ll. 694-701.

73. Ian Jack, "The 'Choice of Life' in Johnson and Matthew Prior," JEGP, XLIX (1950), 523-530, notes the similarities between Solomon and Rasselas and "The Vanity of Human Wishes" and suggests that Johnson was influenced by Prior's more serious style as well as by this particular poem. J. W. Johnson, "Rasselas and His Ancestors," N&Q, CCIV (1959), 185-188, disagrees with Jack's conclusions and cites the book of Ecclesiastes as the most likely source for Rasselas as well as for Solomon. I think Jack's argument is more convincing.


76. Wright and Spears, p. 513, ll. 481-491.


Chapter IV

The Sportive Muse:  Poems of People, Places, and Moods

You and I are so established authors, that we may write what we will, without fear of censure: and if we have not lived long enough to prefer the bagatelle to any thing else, we deserved to have our brains knocked out ten years ago."

[Letter from Prior to Swift]

The previous chapter discussed poems which have definite places in the normal poetic traditions of the time. They participate in many of the forms, attitudes, and assumptions that governed poetry previously and would continue to do so, at least for the mainstream of poetic development in the eighteenth century. It is true that Swift's satires demonstrate his rebellion against the accepted ways of doing things (in poetry), but satire is still an accepted method of rebelling—an establishment outlet for blowing off steam. And with Swift, practically any poem after his early odes is going to be unconventional, although that generalization has its exceptions, too. However, the poems of this chapter are different in several essential ways from contemporary poetry, and these differences become the characteristic signs of the poetry of Swift and Prior. To put it another way, the poems of this chapter are those that mark and differentiate the styles, attitudes, and subject matter of Prior's and Swift's poetry from that of their contemporaries.

When one is asked to name some characteristic Swift poems, for example, poems such as "Description of a City Shower," "The Humble
Petition of Frances Harris," "Baucis and Philemon," "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed," "A Satirical Elegy on the Death of a Late Famous General," and "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" are likely to come to mind. The birthday poems to Stella are certainly among his best, but they are not characteristic of the Swift who is most visible to modern readers as the author of a number of scatological, misogynistic (or more accurately, misogamistic), and misanthropic works. Even after acknowledging the inadequacy and inevitable inaccuracy of such labels, the student of Swift finds the Stella poems something of a surprise. I have tried to argue that the most intense (and, I feel, the most mature) of Swift's satires actually belong to a different order than the rest of his poetry, but it must be admitted that even the "grand" satires contain elements similar to those in some of the non-satire poems mentioned above.

The opening of "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," for instance, offers little hint of the intensity and rage that appear later, and "A Satirical Elegy" begins with an innocuous conversation.

The element which is common to all these poems and which is shared with some differences by Swift and Prior is a relaxed, colloquial, often deliberately inelegant ("anti-Petrarchan" is a term used in this context) style. This style or tone is unconventional enough to have prompted one critic to apply Wallace Stevens' term "anti-poetry" to Swift's poems.² The point of view of this style is realistic, sometimes brutally iconoclastic in its pursuit of the realities hidden under artifice. Its ideal is verisimilitude as the poet sees it, and
its purpose is the creation of a new awareness of the falsity and follies and absurdity of man's ways. This awareness is stimulated by the constant use of a sharp wit and surprising changes in traditional diction, subjects, and point of view.

Swift's and Prior's poetry in the plain style is difficult to classify: neither subject nor form categories provide reasonable order in this great variety. The chapter title reflects the greater concern of this poetry with the immediate subject and context and with concrete relationships, in contrast to the more abstract matter and larger scope of the poems of celebration, damnation, and meditation, but a more specific kind of classification is too unwieldy and too artificial. However, the poems of this chapter can be arranged according to certain themes, and the comparison of each poet's treatment of these themes will provide a basic methodology for the chapter.

In accordance with the principle of moving from areas of greatest difference to those of greatest similarity, the first thematic group to be discussed will be one in which Swift's and Prior's poetry in the plain style differs the most--love poems. Prior is the older of these two bachelors and is generally more conservative and traditional than Swift, and perhaps Prior's exposure to the Court Wits at the Rhenish Tavern formed his taste on that of an earlier era. Whatever the cause, Prior preserves something of the Cavalier, a faint smack of the Restoration rake, in his poems on love. Several of these pieces
have been identified with fair certainty with particular people and
incidents in Prior's life, and his poetry and biography indicate that
he spent some energy and thought on his relationships with the fair
sex. But it is also true that many of Prior's lyrics are fictional
and are part of a pose, elements of a game which did not have to be
taken seriously to be enjoyed. Finally, one cannot be sure if the
lightness of most of Prior's love poems is the effect of a real
nonchalance or is a disguise which hides the pain that is present
even in this diversionary activity.

Nevertheless, the lightness is almost always there. One poem
that illustrates this tone and strikes the Cavalier note is "In Imitation
of Anacreon" (1703), which is an imitation of general themes and
attitudes in Anacreontic verse rather than of a particular poem.

Let 'em Censure: what care I?
The Herd of Criticks I defie,
Let the Wretches know, I write
Regardless of their Grace, or Spight.
No, no: the Fair, the Gay, the Young
Govern the Numbers of my Song.
All that They approve is sweet:
And All is Sense, that They repeat.

Bid the warbling Nine retire:
Venue, String thy Servant's Lyre:
Love shall be my endless Theme:
Pleasure shall triumph over Fame:
And when these Maxims I decline,
Apollo, may Thy Fate by Mine:
May I grasp at empty Praise;
And lose the Nymph, to gain the Bays.

It is interesting that Prior establishes the effect or attitude of
artless sincerity by using an older tradition which eschewed the
entire concept of pursuing fame or laboring over poetry. However, the grace and polish of this poem give the concluding couplet an ambiguous ring; of course, Prior is not addressing a nymph directly in this poem, but the energy of his passion as contrasted with the poetic quality of the verse make his winning the bays more likely than his gaining the nymph. Then one can say that by denying art (in an artful manner) to gain the girl, he stands a good chance of getting both fame and love and at least should win one.

Before winning a nymph, the lover must pass through the pains of courtship, and this ritual period is normally full of the lover's laments of his mistress's coldness as contrasted with his flame, his pain and her lack of sympathy, and her power and his weakness. The pastoral is one obvious setting for this theme, and although Prior does not write many pastorals (he does use pastoral names in most of his love poetry), there is "The Despairing Shepherd" (1703) as an example of this type.6 Prior's deft handling of practically any narrative is illustrated by the economy of the opening of this poem:

Alexis shun'd his Fellow Swains,
Their rural Sports, and jocund Strains:
(Heav'n guard us all from Cupid's Bow!)
He lost his Crock, He left his Flocks;
And wand'ren'g thro' the lonely Rocks,
He nourish'd endless Woe.

All his friends try to discover the cause of his grief, but Alexis pays no attention until Clorinda enquires:

She ask'd, but with an Air and MEIN,
That made it easily foreseen,
She fear'd too much to know. (ll. 16-18)
Clorinda's suspicions are confirmed by Alexis in the next two stanzas as he confesses his love for her:

Which nothing from my Breast shou'd tear;
Which never shou'd offend Your Ear,
But that You bid Me tell. (ll. 22-24)

The brief moments of dramatic irony are not prolonged, but if they were, the piece would be too melodramatic. As it is, the parenthetical reference to love in the guise of Cupid in the third line and Clorinda's suspicions in the third stanza help move the narrative ahead by foreshadowing and tie the poem together. Alexis' answer is anticipated by the reference to Cupid, and Clorinda's response to his declaration is implicit in her fearful enquiry. But Prior carries the expected a step farther in the last stanza, which presents the unexpected denouement of the incident:

Too much, Alexis, I have heard:
'Tis what I thought; 'tis what I fear'd:
And yet I pardon You, She cry'd:
But You shall promise ne'er again
To breath your Vows, or speak your Pain:
He bow'd, obey'd, and dy'd. (ll. 31-36)

The shepherd who dies from unrequited love is a commonplace of the pastoral, but Prior's method of presentation and especially the abruptness of the ending lift this poem above the commonplace. Death as reality makes its appearance, and in this act what had been part of a convention and a game becomes part of the real world and has serious implications. The poem is witty, sophisticated, and conventional up to a point, but under that surface polish lurks the disturbing presence of a reality whose pain is sharpened rather than dulled by its inclusion in this form.
The mention of Cupid's bow in this poem and the reference to Venus in "In Imitation of Anacreon" give the impression that Prior uses such adornment regularly in his love poems. There is a group of poems that features Cupid, and some of Prior's longer love poems involve mythological characters, but he is not dependent on such machinery. Most of the Cupid and Venus poems derive from a French source and are rather nice compliments in the form of mistaken identity situations: Cupid mistakes Venue bathing for Floe and shoots her, Venue sees a painting of Cloe and is angered at the artist's audacity, to paint her while she was bathing, and wonders how she was caught unawares, and so on. These playful poems are the vehicles for elaborate compliments, however, and the grace and lightness of the compliment probably owes a great deal to the presence of the "machinery." 7

Prior's love poems also include versions of the carpe diem theme, but Prior's handling of this concept reveals some interesting changes. The usual position of the carpe diem idea in love poetry is as the justification for the lover's impatience to enjoy love now. "An Ode" (1692) takes this tack by concentrating on what will happen in time to her beauty, as contrasted with her present state:

While blooming Youth, and gay Delight
Sit on thy roseey Cheeks contest,
Thou hast, my Dear, undoubted Right
To triumph o'er this destin'd Breast.
My Reason bends to What thy Eyes ordain; 8
For I was born to Love, and Thou to Reign.
The lover's acknowledgment of her power continues through the next stanza, but he has an ally who is immune to her charms ("As well as Cupid, Time is blind") and who will inevitably take away the source of her present control over her lover: "Soon must those Glories of thy Face/ The Fate of vulgar Beauty find" (ll. 15-16). As age advances and the wrinkles spread (especially in the frowns which once discouraged lovers and now frighten love), "Kindness it self too weak a Charm will prove, / To raise the feeble Fires of aged Love" (ll. 23-24). Then the poet paints the future of his disdainful mistress in a characteristic setting:

Forc'd Compliments, and formal Bows
   Will show Thee just above Neglect:
The Heat, with which thy Lover glows,
   Will settle into cold Respect:
A talking dull Platonic I shall turn;
Learn to be civil, when I cease to burn. (ll. 25-30)

The expected turn of the poem would now produce the admonition to waste time and youth no longer; that plea does appear shortly, but something else precedes it:

Then shun the Ill, and know, my Dear,
   Kindness and Constancy will prove
The only Pillars fit to bear
   So vast a Weight, as that of Love.
If thou canst wish to make My Flames endure,
Thine must be very fierce, and very pure. (ll. 31-36)

The time scale of the poem and this reference to constancy indicate that the persona is interested in more than mere seduction. He does urge Celia to

Obey kind Cupid's present Voice;
   Fill ev'ry Sense with soft Delights,
And give thy Soul a Loose to Joys. . . . (ll. 38-40)
But he also wants her to be his alone and to be faithful—"Be Mine, and only Mine" (l. 43), and the theme of permanence, constancy, and an enduring relationship is the subject of the last stanza:

    So shall I court thy dearest Truth,
    When Beauty ceases to engage;
    So thinking on thy charming Youth,
    I'll love it o'er again in Age:
    So Time it self our Raptures shall improve,
    While still We wake to Joy, and live to Love. (ll. 49-54)

This projection of the lovers' relationship into old age is an unusual feature in a poem presumably celebrating the joys of youth and love and may indicate a strong underlying desire for stability in Prior. Perhaps the civility of poems such as this one led Samuel Johnson to remark that Prior's "Amorous Effusions . . . are not dictated by nature or by passion, and have neither gallantry nor tenderness." There is a restrained quality to most of his love poems, an even tone that seems to result from a control or guidance of passion rather than a revelation of it. However, the exterior grace of Prior's lyrics can be misleading, and Johnson may have been responding more to Prior's use of pastoral devices than to the poetry itself.

Two of Prior's _carpe diem_ poems present the woman as the one who is sensitive to time's passing and the transitory nature of human joy. "The Garland" (1718) is a brief narrative set in an unobtrusively pastoral scene dealing with Cloe's realization of the decay of beauty and the nature of mortality through the wilting of a flower garland. The
lyricism of the first stanza is representative of the tone of the poem and of Prior's mastery of delicate harmonies:

The Pride of ev'ry Grove I chose,
The Violet sweet, and Lilly Fair,
The dappl'd Pink, and blushing Rose,
To deck my charming Cloe's Hair. 10

By evening the fragrant blossoms have lost their freshness and beauty, and this produces a change in Cloe: "She chang'd her Look, and on the Ground/ Her Garland and her Eye She cast" (ll. 15-16). The persona asks for an explanation, although he already knows ("Dissembling, what I knew too well" [ll. 21] ) the answer, and her response is as follows:

Ah Me! the blooming Pride of May,
And That of Beauty are but One:
At Morn Both flourish bright and gay,
Both fade at Evening, pale, and gone.

At Dawn poor Stella danc'd and sung;
The am'rous Youth around Her bow'd:
At Night her fatal Knell was rung;
I saw, and kiss'd Her in her Shroud.

Such as She is, who dy'd to Day;
Such I, alas! may be to Morrow:
Go, Damon, bid Thy Must display
The Justice of thy Cloe's Sorrow. (ll. 29-40)

"Celia to Damon" (1703) is an extended dramatic monologue on the doubts and fears that arise to plague man even in the midst of his enjoyment of life's greatest pleasures, much like Matt and Dick's visionary joy at the contemplation of an ideal retirement in Alma: "Yet then, ev'n then one cross Reflection/ Would spoil Thy Grove, and My Collection" (III, 552-553). Celia gives a brief history of their love's
growth and then brings up the problem:

Yet thus belov'd, thus loving to Excess,
Yet thus receiving and returning Bliss,
In this great Moment, in this golden Now,
When ev'ry Trace of What, or When, or How
Shou'd from my Soul by raging Love be torn,
And far on swelling Seas of Rapture born;
A melancholy Tear afflicts my Eye;
And my Heart labours with a sudden Sigh:
Invading Fears repel my Coward Joy;
And Ills forseen the present Bliss destroy. 11

In one sense, Celia represents the ideal Prior persona, or the one
who comes closest to the complexity and sensibility seen in the
poet's stance toward the world. Passionately involved yet sensitive
to the paradoxes of that involvement, detached in the ability to
respond to and assess the implications of the patterns of human
life, this figure contains the tensions of a man whose sensibilities
and intellect are finely developed and balanced, and whose integrity
prevents him from choosing one over the other.

Celia continues with an eloquent presentation of her awareness
of the effect of time on human beauty:

    Poor as it is, This Beauty was the Cause,
    That with first Sighs Your panting Bosom rose:
    But with no Owner Beauty long will stay,
    Upon the Wings of Time born swift away:
    Pass but some fleeting Years, and These poor Eyes,
    (Where now without a Boast some Lustre lyes)
    No longer shall their little Honours keep;
    Shall only be of use to read, or weep:
    And on this Forehead, where your Verse has said,
    The Loves delighted, and the Graces play'd;
    Insulting Age will trace his cruel Way,
    And leave sad Marks of his destructive Sway. (ll. 37-48)
The great improvement of this scene over the similar one in "An Ode derives from the poignancy gained by having the woman herself describe the decay of her beauty and then give her response to this change. Here character and action are both presented. The greater impact of Celia's "speech" comes from the more fully developed dramatic quality of this poem and the immediacy of the first-person point of view. The final two stanzas bring all the emotion of this poem to a fine focus as man's unique position in the scheme of things (and love's position in that) and his response to his awareness of his state is given:

Just Gods! All other Things their Like produce:
The Vine arises from her Mother's Juice:
When feeble Plants, or tender Flow'rs decay;
They to their Seed their Images convey:
Where the old Myrtle her good Influence sheds;
Sprigs of like Leaf erect their Filial Heads:
And when the Parent Rose decays, and dies;
With a resembling Face the Daughter-Buds arise.
That Product only which our Passions bear,
Eludes the Planter's miserable Care:
While blooming Love assures us Golden Fruit;
Some inborn Poison taints the secret Root:
Soon fall the Flow'rs of Joy; soon Seeds of Hatred shoot.

Say, Shepherd, say, Are these Reflections true?
Or was it but the Woman's Fear, that drew
This cruel Scene, unjust to Love and You?
Will You be only, and for ever Mine?
Shall neither Time, nor Age our Souls disjoin?
From this dear Bosom shall I ne'er be torn?
Or You grow Cold, Respectful, and Forsworn?
And can You not for Her You love do more,
Than any Youth for any Nymph before? (ll. 97-118)

It can be seen from the few selected love poems that have been examined so far that Prior is capable of treating serious questions in
areas outside the philosophical or meditative poetry. Celia's analysis of the fruition of love and her questions to Damon present a highly realistic, if not cynical, view of life that coexists with the unlikely yet firmly held hope that fate and chance will grant this one person a special dispensation. While not all of Prior's love poems have this depth, dealing instead with more immediate concerns and issues, his interest in the relationships between men and women seems to be in those areas which raise the larger questions of man's nature, function and ability to find happiness.

There is another factor which contributes to the number of love poems with serious implications or outright philosophical anxiety. Prior chooses situations which seem to involve a large amount of conflict and tension. This is probably due mainly to the dramatic effect that such elements contribute, but his inclination to see more of the conflict and pain than unbridled happiness in life also may produce this emphasis. However, one should not ignore those love poems that are not gloomy or enmeshed in larger issues, for Prior can celebrate the joys of love as well as any poet. One poem that incorporates the movement from melancholy to happiness, or from involvement to diversion in a less idealistic frame of reference, is "A Song" (1703):

If Wine and Musick have the Pow'r,  
To ease the Sickness of the Soul;  
Let Phoebus ev'ry String explore;  
And Bacchus fill the sprightly Bowl.  
Let Them their friendly Aid employ,  
To make by Cloe's Absence light;
And seek for Pleasure, to destroy
The Sorrows of this live-long Night.

But She to Morrow will return:
Venus, be Thou to Morrow great;
Thy Myrtles strow, Thy Odours burn;
And meet Thy Fav'rite Nymph is State.
Kind Goddess, to no other Pow'rs
Let Us to Morrow's Blessings own:
Thy darling Loves shall guide the Hours;
And all the Day be Thine alone. 12

The logic of the poem indicates that the malaise in the first stanza is due to Cloe's absence, but the phrase "Sickness of the Soul" and the normal relationship of love to "Wine and Musick" suggest that the persona's state is a general one and that Cloe is to serve the same function as Phoebus and Bacchus. The second stanza does show a complete commitment to the joys of the event, though, with no hint of intruding sorrows.

Prior's most thoroughly joyous love poem reflects the same kind of excellence as the panegyrics that involved him personally, 13 and for much the same reason. "Written in the Year 1696" is set in The Hague, where Prior had his first diplomatic post, and his companion is probably Flanders Jane or Jinny, as she was sometimes called, his housekeeper and mistress for at least nine years and probably longer. 14 The appropriateness of the few similes and the quiet realism of the piece easily qualify this poem as one of Prior's best in this mode:

While with Labour Assiduous due pleasure I mix
And in one day attone for the Dusyness of Six
In a little Dutch Chaise on a Saturday Night
On my left hand my Horace and on my right
No Memoire to compose and no Post-boy to move
That on Sunday may hinder the softness of Love:
For her, neither Visits nor Parties of Tea
Nor the long winded Cant of a dull Refugee
This Night and the next shal be Hers shal be Mine
To good of ill Fortune the Third we resign:
Thus Scorning the World and superior to Fate
I drive on my Car in processional State.
So with Phia thro Athens Pistraturus rode
Men thought her Minerva and Him a new God
But why shou'd I stories of Athens rehearse
Where People knew Love and were partial to Verse
Since none can with Justice my pleasures oppose
In Holland half drown'd in Interest and Prose:
By Greece and past Ages what need I be try'd
When the Hague and the Present are both on my side
And is it enough for the Joys of the day
To think what Anacreon or Sapho shou'd say
When good Vandergoos and his provident Vrough
As they gaze on my Triumph do freely allow
That search all the province you'll find no Man there is
So blest as the Englishen Heer Secretaris. 15

The use of anapestic tetrameter may remind one of Swift (although both Prior and Swift are unusually fond of and skillful with this verse form),16 but a line such as "This Night and the next shal be Hers shal be Mine," a phrase like "the softness of Love," and the entire tone of this poem are foreign to Swift. The classical simile, nicely introduced by the partly ironic "processional State," is mock heroic but actually tends to elevate the English couple and their activity, to assert the community of all lovers (especially well-read ones), as well as compliment her beauty and his stature rather than emphasize the differences between the Greek and the Dutch processions. The release from daily routine, business, perhaps even mortal cares (ll. 5-10) is one of the sources of the ebullience of the poem, just as the contrast between the carefree
lovers and the stolid Dutch citizenry adds zest to enjoyment of love and the evening. Labor and learning are useful, but life is meant to be enjoyed, and the art of giving oneself up to delight and impractical pleasure is surely an enviable one. Indeed, this cessation of cares and disdain of mortal woes is more god-like than human—such is the power of love.

Most of Prior's better love poems, and this can be extended to practically all of his poetry, are dramatic; that is, they present a scene or dialogue which illustrates one of the various stages of a relationship in a way that allows an intimate glimpse of the character of the participants as well as that of the incident. Action and dialogue as well as narrative are at the disposal of the poet, and the economy of this approach along with its ability to deal in a concrete manner with the problems and ethical choices that man faces make it a favorite one of Prior's. "Celia to Damon" is a good example of this kind of poem, although the type most frequently seen in a first-person lyric--dramatic monologue might be an appropriate label--similar to "An Ode" ("While blooming Youth and gay Delight").

One poem which is a fine example of the dramatic lyric combines the personal tone, a lyric touch, a slight use of the love machinery (i.e., Venus and Cupids) to produce what is probably the most characteristic and playfully delightful of Prior's love poems. Since it is certainly inadvisable to select one poem as characteristic of a great variety of different poems, a more careful description would
be that "An Ode" ("The Merchant, to secure his Treasure"--1708) contains most of the elements that are found in Prior's love lyrics.

As the poem is fairly short, here it is complete:

The Merchant, to secure his Treasure,
Conveys it in a borrow'd Name:
Euphelia serves to grace my Measure;
But Cloe is my real Flame.

My softest Verse, my darling Lyre
Upon Euphelia's Toylet lay;
When Cloe noted her Desire,
That I should sing, that I should play.

My Lyre I tune, my Voice I raise;
But with my Numbers mix my Sighs:
And whilst I sing Euphelia's Praise,
I fix my Soul on Cloe's Eyes.

Fair Cloe blush'd: Euphelia frown'd:
I sung and gaz'd: I play'd and trembl'd:
And Venus to the Loves around
Remark'd, how ill We all dissembl'd. 17

This technical polish of this poem is faultless; its utter charm and simplicity make it disarmingly graceful, so much so that one is tempted to dismiss it with the term "society verse." 18 The best features of the poem could be its lack of resonance, its self-contained neatness and simplicity. Its construction is well-balanced, with an opening metaphor opposed by a closing commentary; even the development of the action is symmetrical. There is something teasing about this poem, however; something that prompts a closer examination. The verse is economical without being curt, the sound musical but not weak or effeminate. But is it nothing more than a nice presentation of a typical scene? Although the poem does not
depend on metaphor, the connotations of the opening commercial
one can be said to cast a slight shadow over the action of the poem.
Deception of an accepted sort is analogous to another accepted form
of deceit (here, in love), and perhaps the economic terms of the one
hint at the mode of perception of the persona. In other words, under
the really pleasant and harmless guise of the poem, is there a deeper
cynicism about human relationships? If Venus's "all" refers to
Euphelia, is her displeasure feigned? This possibility calls into
question the whole value system that the surface of the game that is
being played preserves; one senses that the remark at the end is
from another world, so to speak, and one's assumptions about the
nature of that world may color the tone of the comment. If Venus
and the Loves produce a simple-minded and automatic response
which casts a soft romantic glow over the poem, then we are in one
world—a quaint and somewhat musty one. However, the "dissembling"
may not go that far, or Euphelia's dissembling may be her feigning
ignorance. But there is enough ambiguity to give the poem an extra
dimension, to add a sense of disaster to the carefully maintained
decorum of the scene and possibly even to show the antithesis of the
very world that the poem creates.

I have been attempting to demonstrate that Prior's use of
traditional materials and conventions (perhaps even outworn
conventions) is not quite as uncritical as it might appear. On the
whole, however, it would be fair to say that Prior's attitude toward
love and its ethic, as seen in his poetry, is favorable. He is aware
of the complex and often contradictory nature of this business and
of the complicated response it produces in man, but he remains a participant, anyway. Swift's response to this activity is complex but not ambiguous—he distrusts it completely. There are a few rather nice compliments from Swift to various feminine acquaintances, and on rare occasions Swift can manage to be gallant in his own way. But anything resembling Prior's lyrics, with nymphs and swains and little Cupids, would be anathema to Swift. Now Swift does use these same materials, but in an entirely different way. His disdain for the conventional love lyric prevents him from doing much with it, however, except for one strange poem that appeared in 1733. It is so uncharacteristic that Harold Williams is moved to write:

"Were it not for the publication of the poem in a volume which Swift at least partly overlooked some doubt might be entertained as to whether it was really from his hand. It is, of course, to be read as a satire upon the conventional and commonplace love song." 19 The irony of "A Love Song in the Modern Taste" is so fine that beyond the excessively sweet diction and the lack of any action in the formal sense (i.e., there is no structure)—which are characteristics of poor examples of this poetic type—there is no hint that it is an attack on its models. Its mimicry is so perfect that Williams' remark is understandable, but the poem itself is the best commentary:

Flutt'ring spread thy purple Pinions,
    Gentle Cupid o'er my Heart;
I a Slave in thy Dominions;
    Nature must give Way to Art.
Mild Arcadians, ever blooming,  
Nightly nodding o'er your Flocks,  
See my weary Days consuming,  
All beneath yon flow'ry Rocks.

Thus the Cyprian Goddess weeping,  
Mourn'd Adonis, darling Youth:  
Him the Boar in Silence creeping,  
Gor'd with unrelenting Tooth.

Cynthia, tune harmonious Numbers;  
Fait Discretion string the Lyre;  
Sooth my ever-waking Slumbers:  
Bright Apollo lend thy Choir.

Gloomy Pluto, King of Terrors,  
Arm'd in adamantine Chains,  
Lead me to the Chrystal Mirrors,  
Wat'ring soft Elysian Plains.

Mournful Cypress, verdant Willow,  
Gilding my Aurelia's Brows,  
Morpheus hov'ring o'er my Pillow,  
Hear me pay my dying Vows.

Melancholly smooth Meander,  
Swiftly purling in a Round,  
On thy Margin Lovers wander,  
With thy flow'ry Chaplets crown'd.

Thus when Philomela Drooping,  
Softly seeks her silent Mate;  
See the Bird of Juno stooping,  
Melody resigns to Fate.

Swift's other poems on love and the courtly love syndrome make clear why this poem must be a satire, but it is interesting that all Swift seemed to think was necessary for a satiric comment on this form (at least with this poem) is a good specimen of it.

Although the pastoral is not restricted to the subject of love, that was its primary use at this time. Swift's most pungent comment on the pastoral is "A Pastoral Dialogue" (1729), in which the principal
characters, Sheelah and Dermot, reveal their mutual passion while weeding the courtyard of a local member of the gentry. The invocation to the Muse is decorous enough: "Sing heavenly Muse in sweetly flowing Strain, / The soft Endearments of the Nymph and Swain," but what follows this is a predictably coarse and realistic dialogue that nevertheless employs all the conventions of the form. The declaration of love (with references to the firmly rooted weeds and their rapid rate of growth as compared with the permanence and growth of their love), exchange of gifts—Dermot offers a "rushy Matt" with the explanation, "The hardest Bum will bruise with sitting squat" (l. 20); Sheelah gives him a petticoat because his "Breeches torn behind, stand gaping wide" (l. 21) and adds, "Nor need I blush, although you feel it wet;/ Dermot, I vow, 'tis nothing else but Sweat" (ll. 23-24), jealousy (Sheelah cracked lice from Tady's head, Dermot kissed Oonah), and final pledges all testify to the authenticity of this poem as a pastoral. The force of the burlesque is not directed at Dermot and Sheelah, at their poverty and manners, however, but at the artificiality of the conventions they are copying. The distance between the form and the content emphasizes how unreal pastoral poetry is, although the rough vigor and honesty of the Irish swain and nymph make this rustic pastoral crudely attractive.

Prior is just as capable as Swift of writing realistic dialogue that presents love in a down-to-earth manner, although Prior's speakers are usually higher on the social scale than Dermot and
Sheelah. One of Prior's favorite ploys is the dialogue in which one
speaker uses the diction and conventions that the genre and the
situation normally demand, while the other is a thoroughly realistic
and practical person. In "Daphne and Apollo" (1715), Prior's
manipulation of the myth and the conventions of the form through
the contrast between an elegant Apollo and a real and healthy
Daphne is neither burlesque nor mock-heroic, but something in
between. The figure of Daphne provides an effective foil to the
totally inept and foolish Apollo, but in her triumph over the god,
she may lose more than she gains. The ironic note beneath the
title says, "Faithfully translated from Ovid's Metamorp.," but
the opening speeches quickly reveal the literalness of Prior's
translation:

A. Abate fair Fugitive, abate thy Speed
   Dismiss thy fears, and turn thy beauteous head,
   With kind regard a Panting Lover view
   Less Swiftly fly, less swiftly I'll pursue,
   Pathless alas and rugged is the ground
   Some Stone may hurt thee or some thorn may wound.

D. This care is for himself, as sure as Death
   One mile has put the Fellow out of Breath
   He'll never do, I'll lead him t'other round
   Washy he is, perhaps not over Sound.21

Apollo and his speeches are close to the original, but the demure
Daphne of the myth is replaced by this garrulous and thoroughly
practical country horse-trader in the form of a woman. Apollo's
problem is that he assumes that a certain decorum is operable
here and that this is a game of sorts; Daphne knows that this is
a very real game that has to do with substantial matters: gifts,
proper wooing, the right kind of marriage settlement, her rights as a wife, and so forth. The mention of such concerns effectively silences Apollo's arguments, and the real world grows larger as Daphne waxes eloquent on her terms of surrender while Apollo and his world grow smaller and finally disappear (a rat-eaten manuscript conceals his reply to her). But one's response to the obliteration of the pastoral world is not all on the side of the moderns; one's passion for truth and reality may be qualified by the gradual realization of what is going to take its place, so the humor and fun of the poem is not unmixed with a sense of loss. We may have gained reality, but we have also lost a fine myth. Swift, in contrast, can see the destruction of the pastoral way of seeing things with no regrets, no sense of loss.

There is a cynical side to Prior's love poems that goes further than merely mocking the conventions of a pastoral such as "Daphne and Apollo." The primary effect of "Daphne and Apollo" is won through the contrast between the speech of the two principals, and in such stylistic changes Prior shows that his ability to produce casual, even vulgar, speech is equal to Swift's. But Prior is also capable of writing a poem whose style is perfectly conventional but whose action is bitterly satiric. In other words, there can be at least two kinds of contrasts--one is made by a change in the style or diction, the other by a change in the expected action. Swift normally uses both of these changes simultaneously. In "To a Young Gentleman
in Love. A Tale" (1702), Prior presents two lovers, Celia
and Celadon, who swear that their only bliss lies in the other;
Celadon pledges to give up "publicit Noise and factious Strife,"
and leave the Court for her, Celia declares that one hour away
from him would not be worth all the wealth and power in the world.

Then follows a revelation:

O happy these of Human Race!
But soon, alas! our Pleasures pass.
He thank'd her on his bended Knee;
Then drank a Quart of Milk and Tea;
And leaving her ador'd Embrace,
Hasten'd to Court, to beg a Place.
While She, his Absence to bemoan,
The very Moment He was gone,
Call'd Thyrsis from beneath the Bed;
Where all this time He had been hid.

MORAL.
While Men have these Ambitious Fancies;
And wanton Wenches read Romances;
Our Sex will--What? Out with it. Lye;
And Their's in equal Strains reply.
The Moral of the Tale I sing
(A Posy for a Wedding Ring)
In this short Verse will be confin'd:
Love is a Jest; and Vows are Wind. 22

Although the protestations seem slightly excessive, that is a trait
of such poems, and there is no hint of the surprise lurking at the
end of the poem until the above passage is reached. This kind of
moment in such an outwardly decorous piece adds to the shock. It
is interesting to note that Prior brings the tale to a graceful close,
which is something Swift has trouble doing. Prior also manages
the transitional shift in tone from a straight narrative to a narrative
with commentary in the exclamation which begins the section quoted
above; this also prepares for the added moral at the end of the poem.
Prior's most realistic love poems in both substance and style are those on marriage, and most of these are tales. "The Ladle" (1703), which is based on Ovid's story of Baucis and Philemon (and which will be discussed in relation to Swift's imitation of that story in the next chapter), has some excellent lines on married love. One passage describes how the couple

Had strugl'd with the Marriage Noose;
As almost ev'ry Couple does:
Sometimes, My Plague! sometimes, My Darling!
Kissing to Day, to Morrow snarling;
Jointly submitting to endure
That Evil, which admits no Cure.23

"Hans Carvel" (1700), a free imitation of a story of La Fontaine's, deals with that favorite marriage situation for satirists and cynics, a January-May couple. Prior's treatment of this theme is witty, bawdy, and quite entertaining. Prior does not romanticize marriage, but even his jokes at the expense of married love are not totally bitter. He accepts the realities of love and marriage with more grace than Swift, and an easy contrast of their views and methods in this area can be seen with Swift's poem dealing with the January-May theme, "The Progress of Marriage" (1722).

"The Progress of Marriage" opens abruptly and plunges immediately into the narrative:

Actatis suae fifty two
A rich Divine began to woo
A handsome young imperious Girl
Nearly related to an Earl.24
A marriage is quickly agreed to, and all the proper deities are
invited—Venus, Juno, the Graces and all the Muses—but few are in
attendance.

Whate'er these dire fore-bodings meant,
In Mirth the wedding-day was spent.
The Wedding-day, you take me right,
I promise nothing for the Night:
The Bridegroom dress'd, to make a Figure,
Assumes an artificiall Vigor;
A flourish'd Night-cap on, to grace
His ruddy, wrinkled, smirking Face,
Like the faint red upon a Pippin
Half wither'd by a Winters keeping. . (ll. 17-26)

Of course the situation is impossible, and the little ironic touches
that enliven the description of the marriage ceremony and the
differences between the husband and wife become harsher, although
the dominant mode of the poem remains irony until the very end.

There is little action to the marriage itself; Dean Pratt, whose
marriage this poem relates, died after one brief year of bliss, and
so does the poetic counterpart. But the description of this one year
is rather long. Swift does not give a summary of all the activities
but proceeds by a series of scenes which reveal the decline of the
Dean's health and his marriage. Usually the old husband is the
butt in such a poem, but here he is the pitiable figure, while his wife
makes a mockery of him and marriage. Her vanity and insensibility
are emphasized throughout the poem, and Swift's indignation bursts
through the irony at the conclusion:

The Widow goes through all her Forms;
New Lovers now will come in Swarms.
Oh, may I see her soon dispensing
Her Favors to some broken Ensign
Him let her Marry for his Face,
And only Coat of tarnish't Lace;
To turn her Naked out of Doors,
And spend her Joynture on his Whores:
But for a parting Present leave her
A rooted Pox to last for ever. (ll. 157-166)

The animus of this ending is so strong that it appears to involve
the poet personally, and the vocation and position of Dean Pratt might
lead Swift to identify with the husband to some extent. However,
most of Swift's poems on marriage and sexual love have this same
intensity, so the peculiar energy of these poems must be related to the
general theme rather than to a particular situation or character. Swift
also seems to use narratives as vehicles for statements on certain
issues; the emphasis is on the message or the moral, not on the
action or the narrative as narrative. Swift's narratives often appear
unfinished, with rough transitions and poor endings, and his
concentration on matters other than the quality of the narrative may
account for some of this.

Prior's "Hans Carvel" deals with the same situation, but Prior
does not appear to have any axe to grind. One indication of this
detachment is the lack of authorial intrusion; two witty asides in
parentheses are the only interruptions of the narrative. The openings
of the poems are somewhat similar, but Prior's is lighter, less
serious and somber than Swift's:

Hans Carvel, Impotent and Old,
Married a Lass of London Mould:
Handsome? enough; extremly Gay:
Lov'd Musick, Company, and Play:
High Flights She had, and Wit at Will:
And so her Tongue lay seldom still:
For in all Visits who but She,
To Argue, or to Repartee?²⁵

Prior's verse is less regular, not as weighty—in short, it conveys a totally different tone. There is also a greater use of dialogue by Prior, and a more rapidly shifting tone. The entire effect of Prior's narrative is livelier and more sprightly, and although some of this difference in these two poems may be due to the difference in attitude toward subjects, this is a characteristic difference in those poems that are similar in other ways. A passage that illustrates the flexibility of Prior's verse and use of dialogue follows:

Hans Carvel, lay aside your Grief,
The Devil says: I bring Relief.
Relief, says Hans: pray let me crave
Your Name, Sir.--Satan.--Sir, your Slave:
I did not look upon your Feet:
You'll pardon Mr:--Ay, now I see't:
And pray, Sir, when came You from Hell?
Our Friends there, did You leave Them well? (ll. 79-86)

Swift never quite reaches a tone as suave and urbane as this;
Prior's cosmopolitan character and Swift's lack of that quality are as evident in their poetry as in their lives. The intensity and bitterness evident in many of Swift's poems is probably due to his involvement in the values and conflicts of the poems. Irony is a mode of detachment, a way of masking one's real response, and Swift has a way of heightening the effects of irony so as to make the distance between the stated and the actual enormous. Or, as in the ending of "The Progress of Marriage," irony is abandoned and
invective is used. Prior can employ irony as fine as Swift's, but his normal detachment enables him to deal with most issues in a sensitive but undisturbed and undisturbing fashion. Swift's deep commitment to certain institutions and ideals is so strong that he is often moved to attack whatever or whoever threatens what he cherishes. Prior seems to be most fully committed to moderation and tolerance, and at times his commitment to these qualities has the appearance of no commitment at all. Swift seems to be pressing for a moral and constantly judges; Prior is searching for knowledge and is trying to understand. Prior's response to human folly is a laugh, sometimes harsh, sometimes gentle, but always a laugh; Swift's reaction to folly is savage indignation.26

Swift's harshly realistic view of love is not restricted to the follies of an old man and a young girl, however. The entire concept that surrounds the emotional romanticization of relationships is false and dehumanizing in Swift's eyes, and for this reason must be corrected. "The Progress of Love" (1719) is a characterization of and brief narrative about a shy girl who elopes with the butler just as her arranged marriage is about to take place. The presentation of her character is developed at length:

Desponding Phillis was endu'd  
With ev'ry Talent of a Prude,  
She trembled when a Man drew near;  
Salute her, and she turn'd her Ear;  
If o'er against her you were plac't  
She durst not look above your Wast;  
She'd rather take you to her Bed  
Than let you see her dress her Head;
In Church, you heard her thr' the Crowd
Repeat the Absolution loud;
In Church, secure behind her Fan
She durst behold that Monster, Man:
There practic'd how to place her Head,
And bit her Lips to make them red:
Or on the Matt devoutly kneeling
Would lift her Eyes up to the Ceiling,
And heave her Bosom unaware
For neighb'ring Beaux to see it bare. 27

In short, Phillis is a feminine Tartuffe. But the point of the poem is made in the narrative which follows the discovery of the flight of the lovers, who are forced to sustain themselves by measures least conducive to a happy and stable home. John the butler is a landlord of an inn, she is the hostess, and "They keep at Stains the old blue Boar, / Are Cat and Dog, and Rogue and Whore" (ll. 99-100). The history of their marriage is summarized in a few brief lines, as if this end is an inevitable result of their conduct. No sympathy is given them, as if anyone foolish enough to believe that "Love never thinks of Rich and Poor" (l. 61) deserves their fate.

Swift's most powerful attacks on romantic love and his most effective use of realistic detail are found in the dressing room and scatological poems. Swift is not the only poet to take advantage of the metaphoric power of filth, but his ability to force man to see his unavoidable relationship with his body is probably unique. Although Swift's general attitude toward love and his tendency to push any metaphor to its logical extreme make his use of scatology a somewhat natural development, it is a surprise to note that Prior contributes a few short pieces to this field. Prior's scatological poems are early
and have no real poetic merit; "To Dr: F . . . . in a Letter to Beverley dissuading him from drinking Waters" (1689) and "Letter to J . . . ." (1690) are *jeux d'esprit* and do not develop the use of image at all. Prior's small group of poems on artificial beauty aids concentrates on eyebrows and eyes and is not as extensive or as devastating as Swift's series on the same topic. Prior, unlike Swift, does not draw moral conclusions in these poems and is content to let the action carry its own message; a good example of the tone in this group of Prior's poems is seen in "A Critical Moment" (1718): "How capricious were Nature and Art to Poor Nell?/ She was painting her Cheeks at the time her Nose fell." 28 Another short poem that shows Prior's method of handling this theme is "Forma Bonum Fragile" (1718):

What a frail Thing is Beauty, says Baron Le Cras,
Perceiving his Mistress had one Eye of Glass:
And scarcely had He spoke it;
When She more confus'd, as more angry She grew,
By a negligent Rage prov'd the Maxim too true:
She dropt the Eye, and broke it. 29

"The Lady's Dressing Room" (1730), "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed," "Stephon and Chloe," and "Cassinus and Peter. A Tragical Elegy" (all 1731) are Swift's harshest poems on love and marriage. However, they are familiar enough and the differences between Prior's and Swift's efforts in this area are great enough to make a detailed comparison and quotation of Swift's poems beside the point, and there are other kinds of poems that need to be examined for an accurate picture of the relationship of the poetry in the plain style of Swift and Prior.
Swift and Prior use poetry as a means of expressing themselves within their circle of friends, and those poems can range from the extemporaneous invitations from members of the Brother's Club to Harley to accounts of visits and activities when away from some friends to the magnificent tributes both men pay to their closest friends. Prior's most colloquial poem of this type is "Journey to Copt-Hall" (1588), which, although an early and somewhat crude effort, is a good example of Prior's mastery of the conversational tone. Here is the second stanza:

With Faith I'll pay, and six pence earnest
I got my Quondam Coach-horse harnest:
I mount, and great as Hudibrass,
With unarm'd kick urge on my horse;
While he by instinct still approaches
His old acquaintance of the Coaches[.] 30

Although this is merely a college poem, there is an easy relaxed quality to it that Swift never seems to find. Swift almost always is in his gown, even when he relaxes. In the Market Hill poems, for instance, which are to and about Sir Arthur and Lady Acheson and their friendship with Swift, there is still a slightly formal air, a little stiffness, in the most informal and prosaic piece:

I will not build on yonder mount:
And, should you call me to account,
Consulting with myself, I find,
It was no levity of mind. 31

These opening lines from "The Dean's Reasons For not Building at Drapier's Hill" (1730) deal with a personal scheme Swift had for building on some property he had acquired near the Achesons, but
the poem is neither quiet nor intimate. Even most of the poems addressed to Gay of Delany are opportunities for making a statement about something rather than an intimate epistle:

How could you, Gay, disgrace the Muses Train,  
To serve a tastless C--t twelve Years in vain?  
Fain would I think, our Female Friend sincere,  
Till B--, the Poet's Foe, possess't her Ear.  
Did Female Virtue e'er so high ascent,  
To lose an Inch of Favour for a Friend?

It may be that Swift is completely intimate and relaxed only with Stella, for it is in the birthday poems to her that we find him the most personal and close. Prior seems to have a gift for striking a conversational tone on a level that is not too close, yet has the quality of friendliness. There is something about the diction, the method of address, in these poems that creates a small circle, often just a conversation between the persona and the reader. Swift can come close to this conversational intimacy outside the Stella poems only when he adopts a persona that is safely distant from himself or with an imagined dialogue--"A Pastoral Dialogue" is one example of this type. Of course, some of the trifles that passed among the Swift-Sheridan-Delany circle are relaxed and intimate enough, but these are not of much poetic interest or quality, and in these it is interesting to note that, as in the poems to Stella, Swift often shows his affection for others in raillery. There are a few exceptions to the generalization that has just been made, though, and these are interesting in themselves. Some of Swift's imitations capture the
intimacy of the original, especially in imitations of some of Horace's epistles, and Swift has two poems that may show Prior's influence in the writing of the intimate epistle.

"To Mr. Delany" (1718) demonstrates the ease and polish that F. E. Ball cites as marks of Prior's influence on Swift, but more than that, the poem is from the period when Prior's influence would have been strongest, and it has a quiet intimacy that Swift does not seem to reach very often:

To You, whose Virtues I must own
With shame, I have too lately known;
To you, by Art and Nature taught
To be the Man I long have sought,
Had not ill Fate, perverse and blind,
Plac'd you in Life too far behind;
Or what I should repine at more,
Plac'd me in Life too far before;
To you the Muse this Verse bestows,
Which might as well have been in Prose;
No Thought, no Fancy, no Sublime,
But simple Topicks told in Rime.

Even though Swift is concerned with a jest by Sheridan that hurt Swift's feelings, and he is conveying his feelings on the subject to Delany, this poem shows him in an unusually mellow mood, as the opening with its praise of Delany demonstrates. Of course, there is no specific evidence that might reveal that poems of this sort in Swift's canon reflect the subtle influence of Prior, but their infrequency except in proximity to Prior's acquaintance and friendship with Swift and Prior's own mastery in this style make it likely that at least some of Prior's gifts were noticed and eventually used by Swift.
The other poem that qualifies the statement that Swift does not write intimate poems is connected with all the factors (except imitation) that produce his most intimate poetry. Not only is "To Charles Ford Esq." (1723) related to Stella; it is one of the few poems in which Swift makes a reference to Prior. The date of the poem may seem to put it beyond the shadow of influence cast by Prior, but the publication of his Poems on Several Occasions in 1719 and his death late in 1721 may have left lingering traces. The fact that he is mentioned in this poem certainly indicates that he was not immediately forgotten by Swift after his death. The colloquial nature of the poem is most evident in the opening lines:

Come, be content, since out it must,
For, Stella has betray'd her Trust,
And, Whisp'ring, charg'd me not to say
That Mr. Ford was born to day:
Or if at last, I needs must blab it,
According to my usuall habit,
She bid me with a serious Face
Be sure conceal the Time and Place,
And not my Compliment to spoyl
By calling This your native Soyl;
Or vex the Ladies, when they knew
That you are turning fourty two.

... 

Your Foes, triumphant o'er the Laws,
Who hate Your Person, and Your Cause,
If once they get you on the Spot
You must be guilty of the Plot,
For, true or false, they'll ne'r enquire,
But use You ten times worse than Pri'r. 34

These exceptions are unusual and by their contrast with the tone of Swift's other poems actually demonstrate the soundness of the observation that Swift writes few poems that have the conversational ease of Prior's.
Prior makes an observation in "An Epistle to Fleetwood Shephard, Esq" (1689) that also helps explain how two poets who write a great many poems in the plain style can still be quite different in a number of rather subtle ways. This poem, by the way, is a little more formal than "Journey to Copt-Hall" in places, but Prior has fun in playing the poet, using many similes and working quite hard, then making fun of such activities in colloquial verse that is even more difficult to write. Prior makes a statement in the midst of this fun that is partly jest, but it also illuminates a difference in the attitudes of Prior and Swift toward their poetry:

Here some would scratch their Heads, and try
What They shou'd write, and How, and Why;
But I conceive, such Folks are quite in
Mistakes, in Theory of Writing.
If once for Principle 'tis laid,
That Thought is Trouble to the Head;
I argue thus: The World agrees,
That He writes well, who writes with Ease
Then He, by Sequel Logical,
Writes best, who never thinks at all. 35

This is an ironic theory, of course, but there is a sense in which Prior can be said to be much less concerned with "content" than Swift. Even Swift's jokes have a practical quality to them: the Bickerstaff papers are a rare delight, but part of their fun is the removal of a public nuisance. This also may be another reason for Swift's reluctance to participate in love--lovers and much of their activities are foolish from any other perspective.

So far it has seemed as if the similarities in the poetry in the plain style of Swift and Prior are broadly stylistic, while the differences
(which have been exphasized) are in their attitudes toward the subject matter. Basically this is true. Also, Swift and Prior differ most in their attitudes toward and response to love, and an examination of this area accentuates the differences. In some of the best poems of this kind, however, both poets reveal striking similarities in attitude, purpose, and style.

Poetry in the plain style can be used in a number of ways, but ordinarily it is utilized when the need to bring the poetic and the real world close together is felt and when more formal verse is too artificial. In other words, poetry in the plain style is primarily a realistic form. Now realism can be used to serve comic ends, especially when a realistic and a non-realistic mode of perception are placed in close conjunction, but realism can also be used to establish the authority and validity of a persona in a time when older approaches and conventions have lost the confidence of the reader.

To cite one example, Shakespeare makes anti-Petrarchan declarations in sonnet 130 to establish the accuracy and truthfulness of the persona, and then uses the credibility of the persona as a base from which to launch a hyperbole of his own. Probably one of the most effective examples of this approach to love poetry is found in Swift's birthday poems to Stella, though, and Prior also uses the technique in his most effective love poems.

One of the greatest charms of the Stella poems is Swift's constant determination to avoid the common ways of praising a woman and thus
diminish or cheapen his praise of her. The folly of seeing only
the exterior (and that sometimes seen falsely), which is a major theme
of the scatological poems, is also a dominant strain in these poems.
The tendency of Petrarchan conceits to concentrate on parts instead
of the whole, on the surface instead of the woman's personality and
character, is merely one aspect of what Swift sees as a conspiracy
by poets to deprive woman of her real beauty and ultimately dehumanize
her. Swift uses guilt by association as a method of disparaging the
conventional ways of praising a woman:

So Maevius, when he drain'd his Skull
To celebrate some Suburb Trull;
His Similes in Order set,
And ev'ry Crambo he could get;
Had gone through all the Common-Places
Worn out by Wits who rhyme on Faces;
Before he could his Poem close,
The lovely Nymph had lost her Nose. 36

The deliberate avoidance of the commonplace and impatience with
man's preoccupation with woman's physical features are the staples
of Swift's birthday poems to Stella, and in his dedication to veracity
he seems to court disaster by wounding her vanity. "Stella's
Birth-day" (1721) is built around the metaphor that Stella is an
inn which, when new, attracts customers who return if the service
and accommodations answer to the fair outside, "And though the
Painting grows decayd / The House will never lose it's Trade."37
Even the competition from a new and freshly painted establishment
just down the street affects the friends of "the true old Angel-Inn"
(1. 14) very little. The explanation of the opening metaphor is one
of the strangest compliments a poet ever made:

Now, this is Stella's Case in Fact;
An Angel's Face, a little crackt;
(Could Poets or could Painters fix
How Angels look at thirty six). . . . (ll. 15-18)

But Stella "freely entertains / With Breeding, Humor, Wit and Sense" (ll. 24-25) all her guests, and "crowding Swains" (l. 23) flock around her, while Doll and Cloe, with the advantages of youth and newly painted faces--and here the implications of painting which when applied to inns were innocent enough become quite telling when transferred to women--must stoop to gossiping and bitter innuendoes about Stella's popularity. Then the point for which all this framework has been erected is reached:

But let me warn thee to believe
A Truth for which thy Soul should grieve,
That, should you live to see the Day
When Stella's Locks must all be grey
When Age must pring a furrow'd Trace
On ev'ry Feature of her Face;
Though you and all you senseless Tribe
Could Art or Time or Nature bribe
To make you look like Beauty's Queen
And hold for ever at fifteen.
No Bloom of Youth can ever blind
The Cracks and Wrinckles of your Mind,
All Men of Sense will pass your Dore
And crowd to Stella's at fourscore. (ll. 45-58)

Of course the compliment stands out against the earlier bluntness about her age and beauty, but much of the power of this poem comes from the same source as that of the satires--the attack on the Cloes and Dolls of this world. Swift's way of praising seems to operate best in a negative fashion, by concentrating on what the good person is not.
But as Stella grows older, Swift seems to get milder. The satiric elements disappear, and although the emphasis on frankness and honesty are still there, a new note enters. Swift's offering for 1725 is unusual in that he includes himself in the aging process, makes the poem a vision of two people instead of one, and lets more of his real love for her show. The opening lines reveal the new balance and softened, almost elegiac quality of the late Stella poems:

As when a beauteous Nymph decays
We say, she's past her Dancing Days;
So, Poets lose their Feet by Time,
And can no longer dance in Rhyme.
Your Annual Bard had rather chose
To celebrate your Birth in Prose;
Yet, merry Folks who want by chance
A Pair to make a Country Dance,
Call the Old Housekeeper, and get her
To fill a Place, for want of better;
While S----n is off the hooks,
And Friend D----y at his Books,
That Stella may avoid Disgrace
Once more the D--n supplies their Place. 37

The second stanza of this nicely proportioned poem, (a good structure is an unusual feature for Swift's poetry), 38 points out that both Phoebus and Venus are young, with a logical corollary that affects them:

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? (ll. 23-26)

But Nature, who is normally the enemy of the old, has made the changes in these two according to some divine plan, and Swift and Stella seem to move into a world of their own as the witty and tender point of the poem is made:

But, Stella say, what evil Tongue
Reports you are no longer young?
That Time sits with his Scythe to mow
Where erst sate Cupid with his Bow;
That half your Locks are turn'd to Grey;
I'll ne'er believe a Word they say.
'Tis true, but let it now be known,
My Eyes are somewhat dimnish grown;
For Nature, always in the Right,
To your Decays adapts my Sight,
And Wrinkles undistinguish'd pass,
For I'm asham'd to use a Glass;
And till I see them with these Eyes,
Whoever says you have them, lyes.

No length of Time can make you quit
Honour and Virtue, Sense and Wit,
Thus you may still be young to me,
While I can better hear than see;
Oh, ne'er may Fortune shew her Spight,
To make me deaf, and mend my Sight. (ll. 35-54)

Of course, this is a particularly courtly way of making a disadvantage into an asset, but it also reinforces Swift's basic idea that it is the inner qualities that matter the most. One sees best with the ears, for the voice conveys more of the inner person that does one's outward appearance.

The last of the birthday poems to Stella was written less than a year before her death and contains the most frank and tender expression of love anywhere in Swift's poetry. The tone of the poem is quiet, somewhat somber, and there seems to be an awareness of her approaching death that makes the restraint and dignity of the poem even more touching.

This Day, whate'er the Fates decree,
Shall still be kept with Joy by me:
This Day then let us not be told,
That you are sick, and I grown old,
Nor think on our approaching Ills,
And talk of Spectacles and Pills;
To morrow will be Time enough
To hear such mortifying Stuff.
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. 39

One of the nicest features of these poems is the scene that they convey.

Here are two people who face growing old and dying—and death and
old age are presented in spare but concrete and vivid terms—but
whose greatest worries seem to be about how each can help the
other. Swift is too sensible to defy death, and he is not of the temper
to advise against going into that dark night gently (one also assumes
that for him the night was not as dark as it was for Dylan Thomas),
but he does try to furnish some comfort against that moment. The
expression of love in the closing lines is more effective for its lack
of poetic padding, and in the context of the poem the simple affirmation
has more power than the strongest oath.

The major part of the poem surveys Stella's past actions as a
source of comfort and assurance to her, and then the conclusion turns
from what she has done for others during her life to what Swift desires
to do for her:

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, sure, me, you ought to spare,
Who gladly would your Sufferings 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.  (ll. 79-88)
Simplicity, honesty, and economy are the virtues of Swift's verse, and in the right situation, these qualities are quite effective. Honesty is not usually a term that is applied to verse, but Swift's awareness of the sense of a persona, or to a certain voice or presence, helps him to maintain a poetic decorum that has absolute validity—the verse is "honest." And the most honest of his verse is the most bare of metaphor, simile, and allusions. Perhaps we find this poem of Swift's as moving as it is because of the contrast it provides to the practical, rather tough, and never tender Swift of his other poems and prose. But if one of the major problems of love poetry is the establishment of the credibility of the persona, Swift certainly found one solution.

With minor differences of degree that mark the individual temperaments of Swift and Prior, Prior's best love poems are also plainest and most straightforward. His most moving poem to a grown woman is "Jinny the Just" (1708), and the reason why "grown woman" was necessary is that his "Letter to the Honorable Lady Mrs: Margaret Candish Harley" (1720), which is a simple and beautiful epistle that is both direct and evocative, is to the five-year-old daughter of Edward Lord Harley. "Jinny the Just" is a magnificent elegy to the memory of Prior's first mistress and housekeeper, although the elegiac tone is quite subdued and becomes strong only for a brief section at the end. The poem was composed while Jinny was still alive, and the anapestic tetrameter triplets present more of a lively characterization of Jinny than a mourning for her death.
Releas'd from the Noise of the Butcher and Baker,
Who, my old friends be thanked, did seldom forsake Her
And from the soft Duns of my Landlord the Quaker

From chiding the footmen and watching the lasses,
From Nel that burn't milk too, and Tom that brake glasses
(Sad mischeifs thro which a good housekeeper passes!)

From some real Care but more fancied vexation
From a life party: colour'd half reason half passion
Here lyes afte: all the best Wench in the Nation. 41

Thus the poem presents a realistic, colloquial, yet intimate picture
of the typical routines and responses of that unusual creature, an
ordinary human. The emphasis in on life, with all its hurry, bustle,
and daily problems. Death is disposed of in one line, for instance:

While she read and accounted and pay'd and abated
Eat and drank, play'd and work't, alught and cry'd, lov'd and hated
As answer'd the End of her being created

In the midst of her Age came a cruell desease
Which neither her broths nor recepts could appease
So down dropt her Clay, may her Soul be at Peace.  (ll. 85-90)

The emotion that the poem expresses and arouses is ascribed to the
imagined onlooker so as to avoid entangling the persona in sentimentality,
which would destroy the decorum and finely balanced tone of the poem:

Retire from this Sepulchre all the prophane
Ye that love for debauch or that marry for gain
Retire least Ye trouble the Manes of J----.

But Thou that know'st love above Interest or lust
Strew the Myrtle and rose on this once belov'd dust
And shed one pious tear upon Jinny the Just.  (ll. 91-96)

The close of the poem extends the meaning beyond the explicit personal
concern of the persona for Jinny and makes the poem a universal
expression of grief for the loss of a loved one:
Tread Soft on her grave, and do right to her honour
Lett neither rude hand nor Ill tongue light upon her
Do all the Small favours that nor can be don her

And when that Thou lik't Shall return to her Clay
For so Im persuaded She must do one day
What ever fantastic J--- Asgil may Say

When as I have don now thou shalt sett up a Stone
For Something however distinguisht or known
May Some pious friend the misfortune bemoan
And make thy Concern by reflexion his own. (ll. 97-106)

When the poem turns from description of Jinny's activities to the
contemplation of her death, the verse is marked by a stronger caesura
and longer and more complex syntactical units, in contrast to the
largely unbroken lines and serial or compound structure of the earlier
section. This slows the verse down, and aids that union of sound and
sense that is the mark of all great poetry. This poem is a celebration
of virtues and values that are as far removed from high society and
the conventions of courtly love as this poem is different from the
elegant Petrarchan poems that Prior also writes. This poem is not
as direct as Swift's Stella poems or as explicit in its expression of the
persona's feelings, but nonetheless the intimate touches that make the
description of Jinny come alive and the understated grief over her
death testify to the quality and intensity of the love that is involved.
The effectiveness of the Stella poems and "Jinny the Just" also
demonstrates the potential of poetry in the plain style.

Although the principal similarities between the poetry in the plain
style of Swift and Prior are stylistic rather than thematic, there are
some poems and other writings that show thematic similarities as well.
Their attitudes toward speculative philosophy and toward systems in general are practically the same, and one instance of this is the relationship between the first canto of *Alma* and a few sections of the *Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Works, and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus*. *Alma*, which is probably Prior's best sustained piece of work in the plain style, is not only similar to Swift's colloquial and irreverent style but also is similar in detail to the first part of Chapter XII of the *Memoirs*, which is an inquiry into the seat of the soul. Charles Kerby-Miller notes Prior's handling of this theme in *Alma* and Swift's reflections on the matter in a pamphlet, "The Right of Precedence between Physicians and Civilians Enquir'd into," and comments, "It seems probable that both Prior and Swift were influenced by the Scriblerian considerations of the problem." Part of Chapter XII was apparently composed in 1714, and Arbuthnot was possibly the author of the section on the seat of the soul. Swift and Prior were intimate with him and thus could have been influenced by this passage in the *Memoirs*. But Kerby-Miller thinks that the first part of Chapter XII was written later, although a definite date is impossible to fix. Wright and Spears offer an interesting solution: "It is much more likely, however, that the influence was the other way, and that the specific parallels to *Alma* in this passage [the first part of Ch. XII of the *Memoirs*]... are the result of Pope's extensive revision of the *Memoirs* shortly before their publication 1741." Swift's pamphlet may owe more to Prior's discussion than to Scriblerian
ideas if the composition of the relevant passage in the Memoirs is later than 1714, because Swift does not return to England until 1726, and there is little indication that he was working on Scriblerian projects during that period. He was involved in the publication of Prior's Poems (1718), in which Alma was first printed, though, and was undoubtedly familiar with that poem shortly before he wrote his pamphlet on the subject.

Both Prior and Swift write ballads, usually of a political nature, and Swift's are expectedly broader. The only one of these productions that is worth citing by itself is Prior's "Down-Hall" (1721), which is a wonderfully Hudibrastic description of Prior's journey with a realtor, John Morley, to see the "estate" Prior purchased in 1720, yielding to the same impulse that prompted Swift to buy land near the Acheson's, although Prior went much farther than Swift in carrying out the dream of his own place in the country.

Many of Prior's light lyrics were put to music, but with Swift's disdain for such virtuoso interests, it is surprising to note that he wrote the lyrics to a cantata (date unknown). But "A Cantata" is a delightful burlesque on the attempt to imitate sounds in music. Swift's position at St. Patrick's forced him to pay some attention to music, especially sacred music, so that is at least one area of the fine arts that Swift was forced to deal with. The difference in attitude toward music and song is obvious, however, and the difference in their verse that this feature emphasizes is an important one. Although both
Prior and Swift realize their strengths in verse in the plain style, Swift's is plainer and heavier; the differences in emphasis and in subject matter are also reflected, although to a much smaller degree, in the style of each poet. Throughout the range of Swift's poetry, his interest in making a comment or point on some issue or other often takes precedence over what might be termed aesthetic considerations. Swift's tendency to work by negatives gives satire, burlesque, and comic modes that depend on contrast and reversal of normal assumptions a prominent place in his work. As for style, one sometimes thinks that Swift flaunts his independence from the conventions of poetry, just as he flaunts his independence from some of the social realities of the day. Prior, on the other hand, is less obvious and extreme in his deviations from the use of conventional forms, diction, and attitudes. Prior's playfulness often allows him to write with a seeming nonchalance that is a large part of his grace, and this underlying current of good humor preserves in most of his poems a balance that has the appearance of a reluctance to take a stand but which actually comes from the integrity of his vision of the complexities of life.

One group of poems stands on the border between imitation and mock, between plain style and something more elevated but not formal, and between that degree of plainness and rough energy that characterizes Swift's verse and that ease, sophistication, and balance that marks the poetry of Prior. This is the group of "city" poems that includes "A Description of the Morning" (1709), "A Description of a City Shower"
(1710), "To Mrs. Biddy Floyd" (1708), "Apollo Outwitted" (1709), and probably "Cadenus and Vanessa" (1713). This combination of compliments, brief and long narratives, and the mildest form of burlesque Swift ever wrote may be indications that Swift was coming under the influence of a poet whose strengths were in these forms. The productivity of Swift in this period, which might be called his London period, is remarkable for its quality and for the differences that many of these works show when compared with the rest of his poetry. Specific indebtedness to Prior is probably out of the question, for Swift transforms any materials and ideas he gains from others too completely to allow much tracing of influences in the works themselves; his independence and pride in that independence also make such a task one unlikely to discover much in the way of borrowings. But the overall pattern that the above poems indicate in terms of tone, method, and style, point to this period as one which probably demonstrates in the clearest fashion the relationship between Swift and another poet who I think can be identified as Prior.
Notes to Chapter IV

1. *Swift's Correspondence*, II, 382 (25 April 1721).

2. E. San Juan, Jr., in "The Anti-Poetry of Jonathan Swift," *P Q*, XLIV (1965), 387-396, argues for the usefulness of this term as an adequate label for Swift's particular poetic vision and method. The term has not yet gained much currency.


4. See above, pp. 23-24 and note 35 to Chapter I.

5. Wright and Spears note that the "second stanza was probably suggested by the ode numbered 60A in the Loeb Library edition of the Anacreonta" (p. 902), but go on to say that the imitation is not of any particular poem. The poem is on p. 258 of Wright and Spears.


7. Prior's use of Cupid is usually quite conventional, but in the series of poems mentioned, Cupid becomes a vividly realized figure in the action of the poem, more on the order of a Puck figure. The same is true of his use of mythological characters: sometimes they are merely convenient references, but in the better poems Prior uses their characters and associated traits subtly and to great effect.


11. Ibid., p. 110, ll. 27-36.

12. Ibid., p. 196, ll. 1-16.
13. See above, p. 98.

14. Wright and Spears, p. 910. This Flanders Jane is also most likely the subject of "Jinny the Just," one of Prior's simplest and most tender and sincere love poems.


16. Swift's anapestic tetrameter poems include "An Excellent New Song" (1711), "The Windsor Prophecy" (1711), "Apollo to Dean Swift" (1721), "The Place of the Damned" (1731), "The Grand Question debated" (1729); others by Prior include "A Session of the Poets" (1688), "Jinny the Just" (1703), "For His Own Epitaph" (1714), "A Lover's Anger" (1718), "Another" ("Ten Months after Florimel happen'd to wed"---1718), and "The Thief and the Cordelier, a Ballad," (1718).

17. Wright and Spears, p. 259, ll. 1-16.

18. E. A. Richards, in Hudibras in the Burlesque Tradition, No. 127 of Columbia University Studies in English and Comparative Literature (New York, 1937), characterizes Prior as a writer of "society or light verse—a type that admits of no melancholy and no didacticism, while it plays neatly and airily with notions" (pp. 148-149).


20. Ibid., p. 880, ll. 7-8.

21. Wright and Spears, pp. 413-414, ll. 1-10. "The Turtle and the Sparrow" (1720) is a similar dialogue modeled after the medieval debate of fowls; in this poem the turtle dove mourns in rhapsodic fashion after her dead mate while the less idealistic sparrow catalogs his trials under his six previous wives in a manner reminiscent of the Wife of Bath.

22. Ibid., p. 195, ll. 57-72.

23. Ibid., p. 204, ll. 81-86.


34. *Ibid.*, pp. 311-312, ll. 1-12, 29-34.

35. Wright and Spears, p. 86, ll. 31-40.


38. The three main stanzas have fourteen, twenty, and fourteen lines, respectively, and there is a six-line concluding stanza.


40. Four cancelled stanzas that were found among Prior's papers were the original opening of the poem and clearly indicate that Jinny was alive and still Prior's housekeeper when he wrote the poem. "Jinny the Just" was not published until 1907, although Pope and Swift saw the poem in manuscript and liked it so well that they wanted to print it in their Miscellanies but could not get Lord Oxford's permission to do so (Wright and Spears, pp. 911-912).


43. Wright and Spears, p. 967.

44. Majl Ewing, in "Musical Settings of Prior's Lyrics in the Eighteenth Century," E L H, X (1943), 159-171, lists fifty-three separate settings of Prior's lyrics, and he further states that there was not a decade between 1690 and 1800, except that of 1710-1719, that "fails to give us a setting or a reprint" (170).

45. See above, pp. 14-15 and 24-25.
Chapter V

The Augustan Muse: Poems of Imitation

One of the best and most characteristic achievements of the Augustan Age and one which is at least partially responsible for the label usually given to the period is in that curious genre, the "imitation." This term can signify practically anything from a literal translation to a loose application of the action of some work, usually from the classics. H.F. Brooks has suggested that the early imitations were attempts to modernize while keeping fairly close to the original, and later imitations—those of Swift, Pope, and Johnson—were intended more for readers who knew the classics and could appreciate the way in which a poet was changing allusions to Rome to those about London.¹ This latter form derived much of its power from the application of classical references and situations to modern times, and a knowledge of the original was essential—Pope's "First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace Imitated," the epistle to Augustus, is a prime example of this type of imitation.

Far from being an attempt to disguise lack of originality or creativity (critical terms from a later era), the imitation was a challenge for a good poet, a test of his abilities to express in his own time's idiom some of the universal truths which had been touched upon by a classical author. Imitation was recognized as a difficult genre in which to write well; at one time or another, all of the major
writers of the period had to test their skill in this form, and some of their productions in this genre are among the best poems of the century.

It might seem at first that a comparison of the imitations of Prior and Swift, or an analysis of their imitations and sources, would not be very rewarding. After all, Prior "has been called the most Horatian of English poets," claiming "Horace as his friend and master, and was accorded by his contemporaries the distinction of being the eighteenth-century Horace."\textsuperscript{2} Swift, on the other hand, has always been acknowledged as a unique writer, similar to no one else. Dr. Johnson took notice of Swift's claim of originality in his "Life of Swift":

\begin{quote}
It was said, in a Preface to one of the Irish editions, that Swift had never been known to take a single thought from any writer, ancient or modern. This is not literally true; but perhaps no writer can easily be found that has borrowed so little, or that in all his excellences and all his defects has so well maintained his claim to be considered as original.\textsuperscript{3}
\end{quote}

Swift's own comment on this is found in his "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift": "'To steal a Hint was never known, / 'But what he writ was all his own.'"\textsuperscript{4} In view of Johnson's remarks and Swift's own regard for his literary independence, one might be surprised to note that Swift wrote no less than nine "imitations" of Horatian odes, satires, or epistles. This number includes what Swift refers to as "paraphrase," which is a rather loose, expanded imitation--in contrast to Dryden's use of the term to mean a literal rendering--and one "allusion," which is Swift's way of saying that he is indebted to
Horace for the general framework of the poem and probably desires the reader to remember the situation of Horace's original and nothing more. Swift's remarks and his production of imitations also demonstrate that the eighteenth century did not look upon imitations as borrowed works. What is original in Swift's, or any other poet's work is the manner in which the subject is handled, not the action or plot. Pope's phrase on true wit—"Nature to Advantage drest, / What oft was Thought, but ne'er so well Exprest"—aptly expresses the neoclassical attitude toward originality of action. In this sense, only the expression can be original, for truth is single and eternal, the same for Swift and Horace.

In view of Prior's title as the Horace of the eighteenth century, it is interesting to note that he has fewer Horatian imitations than Swift—seven in all, although there are many other instances of indebtedness for small matters throughout Prior's works. Of course, Prior comes closer in tone and general outlook to Horace than does Swift, and this overall impression is probably what was meant by the description of Prior as the eighteenth-century Horace. Prior's Horatian imitations are as follows: "The Hind and the Panther Transvers'd" (1687)—contains a loose approximation of Satire II.6; "An Ode in Imitation of Horace" (1692) is a greatly expanded version of Ode III.2; "The Lady's Looking-Glass" (1703)—partially indebted to Ode I.5; "An Ode" (1704)—a fairly close imitation of Ode I.28; "An Ode, Humbly Inscrib'd to the Queen" (1706)—a very loose approximation of Ode IV.4; "Horace Lib. I. Epist. IX" (1710)—a strict rendering
of the title epistle; and "Cantata" (1716), which follows some details of Ode IV.1 closely. Some of these poems are only remotely related to their supposed model in terms of scope or number of lines but are instead an attempt to deal with what Prior seems to feel is the principal concern of Horace's work, revised extensively in English terms. Instead of trying to supply generalizations at this point, I will list Swift's Horatian imitations and then will deal with individual poems by each author.

Swift's Horatian imitations are as follows: "Toland's Invitation to Dismal" (1712), from Epistle I.5; "Part of the Seventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated" (1713); "The First Ode of the Second Book of Horace Paraphras'd" (1714); "Horace, Lib.2. Sat.6" (1714); "To The Earl of Oxford . . . Out of Horace" (1716), from Ode III.2; "Part of the 9th Ode of the 4th Book of Horace, addres'd to Doctor William King" (1720?); "A Dialogue between an eminent Lawyer and Dr. Swift . . ., being an allusion to the first Satire of the second book of Horace" (1730); "Horace. Book I. Ode XIV. Paraphrased and inscribed to Ir----d" (1724); and "On Noisy Tom" (1736)--a literal translation and then a paraphrase of six lines from Satire I.6.

A glance at these two lists is enough to see that any attempt at a comparison of the methods of Prior and Swift in imitations will run into problems. Both Prior and Swift imitate Satire II.6 and Ode III.2, but these are the only pieces of Horace's which they share. A further
complication arises in that Prior's treatment of Satire II.6 is in his collaboration with Charles Montagu on "The Hind and the Panther Transvers'd," and the part of the satire used in that poem is the story of the country mouse and the city mouse. Swift's imitation of this satire ends at this point in Horace, although in 1738 the poem was published with substantial additions by Pope, including the mouse fable. Prior's handling of Ode III.2 is a two-hundred-and forty-three line panegyric on William. Swift begins his imitation at line thirteen of Horace's ode and practically matches Horace line for line, finishing with twenty-two lines while the original ode totaled thirty-two lines. Prior is rarely at his best in his attempts at formal praise, and his expansion of Horace's dignified and almost Stoic patriotism is, at best, tiresome.

However, since this is the only common imitation for Prior and Swift, a brief examination of their efforts, different as they are, might help illuminate some of their general tendencies. Prior, in this instance and generally, expands Horace, usually by the addition of detail to a particularly pleasing scene, or merely by accretion of details. This latter tendency is less effective and commonly tends to weaken the sharpness of the original image. An example of this is Prior's lengthening of Horace's brief reference to the hardships of military life—"Let the youth, hardened by active service, learn to bear with patience trying hardships . . . and pass his life beneath the open sky amid stirring deeds!"—to ten lines of references to
"Summers Drought, and Martial Sweat," "Winter Camps," night watches, storming the breach, and mounting the trench.\(^8\) Prior's tendency to expand by elaborating on a particular scene can also be seen in his rather pleasing picture of the grieving matron of the unfortunate opponent of William, "Louis Friend or Wife" (l. 75), as she worries about her husband's fate in battle:

Why dos my ruin'd Lord retard his Flight?  
Why dos dispair provoke his Age to fight?  
As well the Wolf may venture to engage  
The Angry Lions kindled rage.  
(l. 76-79)

This speech continues for twelve more lines, but the presentation of the wife of the French king and her narration of the battle adds a nice dramatic touch to this scene. Horace's description of the anxious wife and the ripe maiden ("adulta virgo") contains all the essentials of Prior's scene but lacks the particularity. Where Horace merely shows the concern of the women at the sight of the fierce Roman soldier, Prior presents a capsule commentary of their worry, the battle, and the defeat of the enemy of his country.

The very next section of Horace's ode is the beginning of Swift's imitation. Swift renders the "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" (l. 13) of Horace as "How blest is he, who for his Country dies."\(^9\) Swift's rendition of this line is particularly striking in that he has preserved the epigrammatic quality of Horace's statement while subtly changing the general or impersonal tone of Horace to a more specific praise of the man. Instead of praising the act, Swift alters the line to praise the actor, thereby making this ode to Lord Harley more personal and direct.
Swift follows the structure of Horace quite closely, and, except for the first stanza, which manages Horace's four lines in six of English, even duplicates each line of the Latin. The only major change which Swift makes is his alteration of the reference to one who has revealed the sacred rites of mystic Ceres ("qui Cereris sacrum volgarit arcanae"—ll. 26-27) to "He who betrays his Friend" (l. 17), which suits the time and particular situation much better. One Swiftian touch that cannot go unnoticed is his version of the "arbitrio popularis aurae" (l. 20): "Just as the Rabble please to smile or frown" (l. 10).

Swift's greater economy and concision are readily apparent in the imitations, as is his gift for striking phrases. Prior's expansiveness and predilection for narrative and presentation of character are the traits that seem to stand out in this early imitation. Swift in general seems to stay closer to the original than Prior, and in structure and phrasing is not as free as Prior. A brief examination of more imitations by each author now will help establish the validity of these observations and provide a more coherent view of the total picture of Swift's and Prior's imitations.

Swift's first known imitation of Horace is "The 1-nd's Invitation to Dismal, to Dine with the Calves-Head Club" (1712). Dismal is Lord Nottingham, and in this lampoon on Nottingham, Swift has John Toland, a deistic writer and later pamphleteer for the Whigs, issue an invitation to Nottingham, a turncoat Tory, to join the Calves' Head Club for its annual dinner. H. Williams notes that the "Calves' Head Club was an association instituted in disrespect to the memory
of Charles I. A calf's head formed a prominent part of the meal at annual dinners held on the 30th of January, the date of the King's execution.\textsuperscript{11} The broadside edition of the poem was dated the 29th of January.

What Swift has done is transform the gracious dinner invitation of Horace to Torquatus (Epistle I, 5, pp. 279-283)\textsuperscript{12} into a satirical piece that parodies in grotesque fashion the picture of an elegant company enjoying a splendid meal amid pleasant surroundings. Horace's dinner is a celebration on the eve of the birthday of Augustus, in great contrast to the event which the Calves' Head Club is celebrating. As this is the best illustration of Swift's ironic mode of imitation, both epistles will be produced. I have made certain deletions in Horace which represent topical allusions or phrases which Swift ignores.

If you can recline at my table on couches made by Archias, and are not afraid of "a dinner of herbs" only, from a modest dish, I shall expect you, Torquatus, at my house at sunset. . . . Dismiss airy hopes and the struggle for wealth, and Moschus's cause. To-morrow, the festal day of Caesar's birth, gives excuse for sleeping late; without penalty shall we be free to prolong the summer night in genial converse.

Why is fortune mine, if I may not use it? . . . What a miracle cannot the wine-cup work! It unlocks secrets, bids hopes be fulfilled, thrusts the coward into the field, takes the load from anxious hearts, teaches new arts. The flowing bowl--whom has it not made eloquent? Whom has it not made free even amid pinching poverty?

Here is what I charge myself to provide--and able and willing I am: that no untidy coverlet, no soiled napkin wrinkle up your nose; that tankard and plate become for you a mirror; that there be none to carry abroad what is said among faithful friends; that like may meet and mate with like.

Butra and Septicius I shall have to meet you, and Sabinus, unless a better supper and a goodlier girl detain him. There is room, too, for several "shades"
uninvited guests accompanying an important one; but the reek of goats makes too crowded feasts unpleasant. Write back, pray, how many you would like us to be; then drop your business, and by the back-door give the slip to the client waiting in your hall. Torquatus was presumably a busy lawyer. [12]

The blanks in Swift's poem for the proper names are filled in in this transcription:

If, dearest Dismal, you for once can Dine
Upon a single Dish, and Tavern Wine,
Toland to you this invitation sends,
To eat the CALVES-HEAD with your trusty Friends.
Suspend a while your vain ambitious Hopes,
Leave hunting after Bribes, forget your Tropes:
To morrow We our Mystick Feast prepare,
Where Thou, our latest Proselyte, shalt share:
When We, by proper Signs and Symbols tell,
How, by Brave Hands, the Royal TRAYTOR fell;
The Meat shall represent the TYRANT's Head,
The Wine, his Blood, our Predecessors shed:
Whilst an alluding Hymn some Artist sings,
We toast Confusion to the Race of Kings:
At Monarchy we nobly shew our Spight,
And talk what Fools call Treason all the Night.

Who, by Disgraces or ill Fortune sunk,
Feels not his Soul enliven'd when he's Drunk?
Wine can clear up Godolphin's cloudy Face,
And fill Jack Smith with Hopes to keep his Place;
By Force of Wine ev'n Scarborough is Brave,
Hal--grows more Pert, and Somers not so grave:
Wine can give Portland Wit, and Cleveland Sense,
Montague Learning, Bolton Eloquence:
Cholmondeley, when Drunk, can never lose his Wand,
And Lincoln then imagines he has Land.

My Province is, to see that all be right,
Glasses and Linnen clean, and Pewter bright;
From our Mysterious Club to keep out Spies,
And Tories (dress'd like W iters) in Disguise.
You shall be coupled as you best approve,
Seated at Table next the Men you love.
Sunderland, Oxford, B----l, and Richmond's Grace
Will come; and Hampden shall have Walpole's Place.
Wharton, unless prevented by a Whore,
Will hardly fail, and there is room for more:
But I love Elbow-room when'te I drink,
And honest Harry is too apt to stink.
Let no pretence of Business make you stay,
Yet take one Word of Counsel by the way:
If Guernsey calls, send word you're gone abroad;
He'll tease you with King Charles and Bishop Laud,
Or make you Fast, and carry you to Prayers:
But if he will break in, and walk up Stairs,
Steal by the Back-door out, and leave him there;
Then order Squash to call a Hackney Chair.

Swift's travesty of what Horace had in mind is completed by the
use of imagery from the Eucharist in the description of the feast
(ll. 7-13). Horace's references to the cares of state and business
are transformed into the search for bribes and tropes. The inspiration
wine furnishes to conversation and good-fellowship in Horace changes
to drunkenness in Swift. Swift also uses such terms as "coupled" and
"drunk" and "whore" in a reduction of the entire affair to something
disgusting and bestial. Not only is the Calves' Head Club implicitly
accused of treachery, but all its members and especially the guest,
Nottingham, are connected to all sorts of corruption. Swift even
manages to damn Toland's religious views through the parody of the
liturgy.

The real force of Swift's irony and an appreciation of his wit
appear only when his imitation and Horace's original epistle are
compared. In the original broadside, Swift's text was printed with
the appropriate sections of Horace's Latin, so the reader could look
at both. Swift, when writing to Stella about the piece, asks her how
she likes it and then says, "But it is an Imitation of Horace, and
perhaps you don't understand Horace."13 This is the kind of imitation
that H. F. Brooks has in mind when he says that Swift, Pope and
Johnson wrote imitations for readers who would have the original in mind as they were reading. The kind of contrast between the situation and tone in Horace and that of the imitation add another dimension to such poems, but without knowledge of the work being imitated, these poems sometimes seem flat.

But Swift is perfectly capable of imitating Horace in a straightforward manner, and the non-satiric imitations can often be read without any necessity for turning to the original. In fact, most of Swift's imitations are in this vein, and these also include some of his most successful ones.

The subject of Horace's Epistle I. 7 is his relationship with his patron, Maecenas. After explaining his prolonged absence from the city and his patron, Horace emphasizes his independence and his attitude through several stories, one of which Swift imitates in his poem to Lord Harley. "Part of the Seventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated" is not as closely related to the original as is "Toland's Invitation to Dismal," and the former poem is both a fine imitation and an interesting work in its own right. Swift is describing the same situation, and the parallels which he finds in the relationship of Horace and Maecenas, himself and Lord Harley, and the famous lawyer Philippus and his client (the subjects of the story Horace tells) are instructive without being intrusive. Swift seems to be making a point about his status by making fun of those around Harley, including himself, and at the same time reminding Harley, especially through the reference to Horace's poem, that a patron's gift is not an
unmixed blessing. The imitation gains force when it is remembered that Swift wrote this just after he had returned to England from his installation as Dean of St. Patrick's, a reward which at first meant more expenditures than income for Swift. Ehrenpreis praises the manner in which Swift manages to compliment Lord Harley by making himself the dupe of Harley's practical joke—the preferment; he also cites this poem as an illustration of Swift's ability to handle conversational rhythms and plain speech in poetry but at the sacrifice of the polish and some of the harmony of Horace's lines.

While it is true that Swift lacks some of the grace and polish of Horace, I feel that Ehrenpreis's further remarks on Swift and imitation are not fair or accurate. He states: "He never attempts the allusive subtleties that Dryden and Pope could produce when imitating Latin classics. The broad application of an ancient tale to a modern instance seemed enough for him." This observation is partially true about the poem under consideration, for Swift is not following his model as closely as he could have, or does in other instances. But the allusions in "Toland's Invitation to Dismal," or "Horace, Lib. 2. Sat. 6. Part of it imitated" appear to be as fine as practically anything of Dryden's or Pope's.

Swift's imitation of Horace's Satire II. 6 is unlike his imitation of Epistle I. 5 in that he follows the tone of his model closely, adopting not only the structure and incidents of Horace's poem but capturing a great deal of Horace's tone and attitude. The opening of this very
personal satire is justly famous:

Hoc erat in votis: modus agri non ita magnus,  
hortus ubi et tecto vicinus iugis aquae fons  
et paulum silvae super his foret... (ll. 1-3)

Swift's version of this delays the note of thankfulness until the second
stanza but preserves the attitude of describing a long-desired goal;
Swift's opening is wistful and concrete--his list of items seems to
be a carefully thought-out summation of what could bring him
happiness--while Horace's begins with the pride and joy of possession.

The first stanza of Swift's imitation runs thus:

I Often wish'd, that I had clear  
For Life, six hundred Pounds a Year,  
A handsome House to lodge a Friend,  
A River at my Garden's End,  
A Terras Walk, and half a Rood  
Of Land set out to plant a Wood. 17

To say that Swift matches perfectly Horace's mood is not quite
correct, for the slight humorous undertone of the first stanza becomes
a frankly witty aside in the second, while Horace maintains a fairly
serious tone. Horace's statement that he is perfectly satisfied with
what he has and nothing more could be added to it, except possibly
the duration of these blessings for all his life, becomes:

Well, now I have all this and more,  
I ask not to increase my Store,  
But here a Grievance seems to lie,  
All this is mine but till I die;  
I can't but think 'twould sound more clever,  
To me and to my Heirs for ever. (ll. 7-12)

The dominant tone in Swift's imitation is a slightly detached, rather
humorous attitude toward the scramble of the court, mixed with a
strain of elegiac longing for the joys of the country life. This elegiac tone is not as apparent in Swift as it is in Horace, probably because Swift's longing for the pleasures of retirement (or exile, as he sometimes called it) in Ireland is not as strong as Horace's love for his Sabine farm. One indication of the difference in these poets' attitude is the amount of detail involved in Horace's picture of rural life, which is specifically concrete and vivid, as contrasted with Swift's description, which is more general and less vivid. One senses that Horace is referring to a familiar, very personal scene of his life away from the city, but that Swift is merely echoing Horace. The basis for this impression lies not in the fact that Swift was indifferent to the charms of rural life, for he could become enthusiastic when thinking on such scenes:

Oh, that we were at Laracor this fine day! the willows begin to peep, and the quicks to bud. My dream's out: I was a-dreamed last night that I eat ripe cherries. --And now they begin to catch the pikes, and will shortly the trouts (pox on these ministers), and I would fain know whether the floods were so high as to get over the holly bank or the river walk; if so, then all my pikes are gone; but I hope not.

The main reason for the difference between Swift's and Horace's attitude toward the country, at least as seen in this poem and its imitation, seems to be that Horace is concentrating more on the positive aspects of what the Sabine farm meant to him than on the dreary facts of life in Rome, while Swift's emphasis is on the futility and ultimate senselessness of courtiers and the court. Swift tends to use the picture of his country "estate" to emphasize what is wrong with
most of the activity at court; Horace sings the praises of his placid farm partly out of the sheer joy of singing and of having something worthy of a song. And this brings us to the final difference between Horace's poem and Swift's imitation: Horace can and does sing in his piece, while Swift rarely ever does, anywhere. More of Swift's poem is taken up with his superb rendition of conversation and the idle chatter of petitioners than is Horace's, and the language of Horace's "satire" is a good deal richer in imagery and metaphor.

Despite all of these dissimilarities, in many details the poems match, with surprising correlations between Roman and English politicians and the attitudes of a Roman and Anglo-Irish poet toward politics. This poem also illustrates Swift's use of imitation in a way that alters some of his normal poetic attributes. Although in comparison with Horace's poem Swift's is more satiric and less lyric, when compared with Swift's poems outside imitations, this poem has a mellowed tone, a finer balance, and more of the reflective and objective attitude that is characteristic of Prior than most of Swift's work.

Swift's imitation of the 2nd Ode of Book 3 has already been discussed, but it might be well to remark at this point that his "To The Earl of Oxford, Late Lord Treasurer" is a close imitation of the language, structure, and tone of Horace's original. "Part of the 9th Ode of the 4th Book of Horace, address'd to Doctor William King, late Archbishop of Dublin" (1702?) is another imitation on the same theme--virtue and honor and the rewards of upholding them.
Swift wisely uses only the last half of Horace's ode, for the first twenty-eight lines of Horace are filled with references to contemporary figures and literature. At the point where Horace begins to apply his earlier illustrations in praise of Lollius, Swift picks up the theme of the poet's preservation of virtue and the reputations of good men.

This imitation and the other three Horatian imitations of Swift that have not been discussed illustrate his use of the title to reflect the exact nature of his imitation. "A Dialogue between an eminent Lawyer and Dr. Swift Dean of St. Patrick's, being an allusion to the first Satire of the second book of Horace" (1730) is exactly what the title states, an allusion to Horace's poem. Swift uses the situation in Horace's satire as the setting for his brief vindication of satire as a necessary and profitable mode of writing. "Horace. Book I. Ode XIV. Paraphrased and inscribed to Ir----d" (1724) is a paraphrase, which seems to mean the kind of imitation half-way between a true imitation and the very loose application of a classical model that he terms allusion. "On Noisy Tom" (1736) features six lines from Horace's 6th Satire, Book 1 in Latin, then translated literally, and, finally, as the poem proper, these lines in a lengthy paraphrase.19

The beauties of a fine imitation seem to consist in how the imitator turns the model poem's phrasing, structure, and even allusions into a poem that is not a translation, yet retains a close resemblance to the original. However, the type of poem which Swift most successfully imitates is not one that contains a great number of
allusions to specific past events. Swift does not, for instance, usually attempt something like Pope's epistle, "To Augustus." The one instance where he comes close to this is the satiric imitation of Horace's dinner invitation (Epist. 5, Bk. 1), "Toland's Invitation to Dismal." Swift excels in reproducing the bits of dialogue which Horace sometimes includes in his pieces but does not try to echo the lyric passages in Horace's poems, nor does Swift use metaphor as profusely (and sometimes surprisingly) as Horace. The dialogue, the humor, and the conciseness of Horace are all found in Swift's imitations, but the variety and the lyric are not.

The parody of Dryden's "The Hind and the Panther" by Prior and Charles Montagu, "The Hind and the Panther Transvers'd" (1687), appears to be the first Horatian imitation of Prior's. Unfortunately, how much of the work is Prior's and how much is Montagu's cannot be determined. All evidence points to a genuine collaboration by both men, although Toreis later sought to minimize Montagu's part in the poem. Eves proposes the interesting idea that "probably Montague wrote the preface, Prior the verses, and both together, the prose passages," but, as Wright and Spears comment, "Speculation on the respective shares of Prior and Montagu seems unprofitable."21 The nature of this imitation is quite complex, for the framework and many passages are taken from The Rehearsal (1671), a number of passages from Dryden's The Hind and the Panther are burlesqued and the design of Horace's fable of the country and the city mouse is
also used. Thus the allusiveness and wit of the piece represent a brilliant eclecticism. An important feature of the poem is that it is Prior's most pointed and best satire (burlesque might be more accurate) and demonstrates the tendency to use the imitation as a framework for unaccustomed bypes of poems—for Prior, satire. It also confirms that Prior tends to use what he needs from his sources and is content to alter material, even in imitations, as much as he wishes.

Prior's second Horatian imitation, "An Ode in Imitation of the Second Ode of the Third Book of Horace" (1692), has been mentioned previously. This poem is such a greatly expanded version of Horace's ode that there is little resemblance. One of Prior's loveliest lyrics owes its principal metaphor to Horace's 5th Ode of Book 1. "The Lady's Looking-Glass" (1703) ("Celia and I the other Day/ Walk'd o'er the Sand-Hills to the Sea:" ) uses the image of the sea at rest, then stormy, as a figure for the changeable nature of a woman, but the poem can hardly be called an imitation.

"An Ode. Inscribed to the Memory of the Honble Col. George Villiers" (1704) is an imitation of the 28th Ode of Book 1 of Horace. Horace's poem deals with the universality of death and the insignificance of all of life's activities in the face of death. Although the tone of the ode is rather stern, some consolation is given in the thought that all men, even the greatest, must go this common way. Prior takes Horace's ode and turns it to a sombre elegy on the death of George
Villiers, husband of his cousin, Katharine Prior. Almost half of Prior's poem is a reflection on man's failure to postpone or avoid death, regardless of mortal power, wealth, or wisdom, which is the central theme of Horace's ode. Actually, Horace's piece is in two distinct sections, the first section about death, the second being a plea for proper burial supposedly given by the soul of a dead seaman. Prior's ode ends with a brief plea for the proper rites from whoever finds the body of George Villiers, who was drowned in a river in Italy.

The three short stanzas which describe the death of Villiers are too full of passionate exclamations and stylized grief to be truly moving. Prior was very close to Katharine and "probably knew Villiers well," but the most striking poetry in the ode is that relating to man's state in general, not that which tries to grieve over Villiers. The serious and dignified expression of Horace's ode is preserved in Prior's imitation and Prior's handling of the heroic couplet, sufficiently graceful, contributes a great deal to the solemnity of the poem.

Prior's panegyric on Marlborough in 1706, "An Ode, Humbly Inscrib'd to the Queen On the Glorious Success of Her Majesty's Arms, 1706. Written in Imitation of Spenser's Stile," is also an imitation of Horace's 4th Ode of Book 4. Prior describes his use of Horace's ode in the lengthy Preface:

When I first thought of Writing upon this Occasion, I found the Ideas so great and numerous, that I judg'd them more proper for the Warmth of an Ode, than for any other sort of Poetry: I therefore set Horace before
Me for a Pattern, and particularly his famous Ode, the Fourth of the Fourth Book, Qualem ministrum fulminis Alitem, &c.
which He wrote in Praise of DRUSUS after his Expedition into GERMANY, and of AUGUSTUS upon his happy Choice of That General. And in the following Poem, tho' I have endeavor'd to Imitate all the great Strokes of that Ode, I have taken the Liberty to go off from it, and to add variously, as the Subject and my own Imagination carry'd Me. 23

This is exactly what Prior has done, in three hundred and fifty lines of modified Spenserian stanza—ten lines instead of nine and a rime scheme of ababcdecdee.

Prior's closest imitation of Horace is his verse epistle recommending his friend Richard Shelton to Robert Harley, "Horace Lib. I. Epist. IX. Septimius, Claudi, nimirum intelligit unus, Quanti me facias: &c. Imitated. To the Right Honorable Mr. Harley." The delicacy of Horace's epistle to Tiberius, where he might seem selfish if he did not grant his friend's request for a recommendation and guilty of effrontery if he did, is matched by Prior's tact. The tone of Prior's poem is quietly humorous, respectful but not obsequious, and the epistle appears to have come from the kind of plain, honest vir bonus who represents the typical solid citizen. Prior's good man also happens to be a wit, and a little of this seeps into the poem, but the slight note of jocularity captures the same easy but not familiar opening of Horace's epistle. While the success of Horace's letter is not known, Prior was to try for four years to get a position for Shelton before he was successful. Prior's energy in trying to secure favors for deserving friends is quite
similar to Swift's enjoyment and interest in being a patron, and Prior's demonstrable concern for his friends when his own house was in grave danger is a strong argument against the charge that he was an unprincipled opportunist.

Prior's final Horatian poem is his "Cantata. Set by Monsieur Galliard," (1716), which is based on the first Ode of Book Four. In this charming lyric, Prior moves freely around Horace's address to Venus, choosing the details that seem to fit his song without any strain and making little effort to produce an exact or close replica of Horace's ode. The lightness of touch in Prior's poem is exquisite, and the line from Horace which appears so often in the letters of Prior, Swift, and Pope--"non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cinarae"--here lacks the personal intensity and resonance which the line seems to have in the original and in its use elsewhere. Such a tone would not be fitting in Prior's "Cantata," however, and he appropriately paraphrases this line with a more general and less direct sentiment: "Youth on silent Wings is flown:/ Graver Years come rolling on."24

Prior's resemblance to Horace seems to be due more to the variety and correctness of his poetry than to his ability or desire to produce imitations of Horace's works. His familiarity with and love of Horace are revealed in his frequent references to phrases of Horace and his use of quotations from Horace as mottoes at the head of many of his poems.24b Horace's influence is difficult to assess, for
sometimes Prior is most Horatian when there appears to be little
direct resemblance; that is, Prior's poetry reminds one most of
Horace in tone and overall attitude rather than in verbal or structural
borrowings.

A comparison of the Horatian imitations or of the Horace-inspired
works of Prior and Swift reveals that Swift has more imitations than
Prior and that more of Swift's imitations are closer to the original
than are Prior's. Swift comes close to producing translations, especially
when the Horatian work he is imitating is moral and serious rather
than gay and lyrical, or when there is an ironic undertone in Horace.
The ode "To The Earl of Oxford, Late Lord Treasurer" (1716) is a
good example of Swift's ability to copy Horace in good, concise
English. But this does not make Swift the better Horatian, for Swift
could not follow many of Horace's moods--those of love and gentle
humor, for instance. One senses that the surface similarities of
Swift's imitations of Horace and the original tend to disguise the
difference of temperament. Prior, on the other hand, rarely turns
out a close copy of Horace, but a great deal of Horatian wit and the
light touch and the lyric note of the Roman are found in Prior's poetry.

The relationship between Prior's and Swift's use of sources is
not all one of differences, however. Out of Swift's approximately
twenty "derivative" poems (those with some indebtedness to an
individual work), only four can be considered as written before Swift's
association with Prior, and only three of these are truly indebted.
Of these three, "Lady B----B---- finding in the Authors Room some Verses" (1702), "The Description of a Salamander" (1705), and "The Story of Baucis and Philemon" (1706 & 1708/9), only the first two can be excluded from some connection with Prior. Swift's ballad with the long title describing its composition, "Lady B---- B----," is modeled on a song of Nightingale in Jonson's Bartholomew Fair, and Prior, as far as I can tell, never borrowed from Ben Jonson. "The Description of a Salamander" is from a passage in Pliny's Natural History, and while Prior did write a close imitation of Pliny's story of Protogenes and Apelles, also taken from the Natural History, the two poems are separated by thirteen years. Swift's "Baucis and Philemon" is a retelling of the story by Ovid, and curiously enough, Prior's "The Ladle" (1703) is based on the same story in Ovid. Swift indicated that he wrote "Baucis and Philemon" in 1706, but the printed version which appeared in 1709 was a revision advised by Addison. There is no record of Swift's inspiration for this piece, although Prior's modified version of the tale did appear in a 1704 miscellany and could have interested Swift in the story. Swift had completed his original version before he met Addison, so Addison's connection with the poem seems to be limited to the revision. The revision, by the way, merely smooths out some of Swift's almost irrepressible tendency to avort in verse and changes the order slightly; Ehrenpreis finds the change in order a little better but sees Addison's efforts at improving Swift's language as "misguided."
"A Description of a City Shower" and six of Swift's Horatian imitations were written during the period from 1710 to 1720. If one omits the last poem the ode to Dr. William King, the time span becomes even shorter, from 1710 until 1716. What produced this concentrated burst of Horatian imitations on the part of Swift? After 1720, he wrote three poems connected to Horace, and all three were allusions or paraphrases of the original, not imitations in the sense that his earlier Horatian works had been. The correspondence between the periods of Swift's friendship with Prior and his period of writing imitations of Horace, combined with Prior's reputation as a lover of Horace, tempt one to find a correlation between the two. One of the difficulties has been cited above: since Prior and Swift do not imitate many of the same sources, establishing a direct relationship is difficult. In their respective treatments of Ovid's tale of Baucis and Philemon, Swift relishes the opportunity to show a realistic picture of country people and objects, while Prior's setting is still somewhat pastoral. Prior plainly enjoys the opportunity to reflect in his witty, octosyllabic way, on the foibles of men, the necessity of visiting gods for the poets, and the state of marriage:

The honest Farmer and his Wife,
To Years declin'd from Prime of Life,
Had struggl'd with the Marriage Noose;
As almost ev'ry Couple does:
Sometimes, My Plague! sometimes, My Darling!
Kissing to Day, to Morrow snarling;
Jointly submitting to endure
That Evil, which admits no Cure.
Swift does not and would not write on marriage and he cannot manage this kind of delicate balance, which is one of Prior's hallmarks.

The differences in these two poems provide another instance of some of the basis differences and similarities in Prior's and Swift's sportive poetry. Swift's version emphasizes the moral of Ovid's tale and the homely realism of the country couple, and then has fun with the figure of the country parson when Bucis and Philemon are transformed. Prior's tale concentrates on the domestic relations and characters of the old couple and attempts to present an account of some universal human traits. Swift's poem, while humorous, is basically serious; Prior's is basically humorous with a slightly bawdy undertone, but the implications of Prior's are not merely entertaining or flippant.

Despite the differences between Prior's and Swift's manner of writing imitations, the general changes that Swift's imitations show in relation to his other poetry, the curious fact of the dating of most of Swift's Horatian imitations around the time when he and Prior were most intimate, and the direction in which the imitations and some of Swift's other poems seem to be going, all indicate that Swift was influenced by Prior, not only in the production of imitations, but in the tone and sometimes in the subject matter of his poetry, during this period.
Notes to Chapter V


5. Swift's use of these terms and the distinctions he makes among the different types will be discussed under individual poems.


15. Ehrenpreis, Swift, II, 675-676.


17. Williams, Swift's Poems, p. 198.


21. Wright and Spears, p. 834.

22. Wright and Spears, p. 892.


24b. Caroline Goad, Horace, pp. 104-116 and 360-379. Miss Goad lists 9 poems with mottoes from Horace and finds many more that refer directly or indirectly to Horace.

24. Wright and Spears, p. 431.


27. Wright and Spears, p. 204.

Conclusion

In spite of basic differences of personality and outlook, Matthew Prior and Jonathan Swift were close friends under adverse conditions from the time of their meeting until Prior's death. Similar in their tastes in politics, poetry (to a certain extent), and diversions, each had the ability and made the effort to win the friendship and establish the rapport which marks their correspondence, which became their only connection for most of their relationship. The intimacy and easy familiarity of their letters testify to the strength and vitality of the bond between the two men. Except for the accidents of politics and fortune, which separated them physically, Prior and Swift might have had an even closer relationship that might have led to greater mutual influence.

The differences in their temperaments are the differences that appear in their poetry, and these are found primarily in the choice of and attitude toward subject matter. Satire is Swift's dominant form, while Prior avoids satire; Swift is often didactic and concerned with making a point while Prior is more interested in aesthetics and the enjoyment of beautiful artifacts, whether they be paintings, poems, or women; and finally, Swift's poetry is powerful, sometimes brutally so, while Prior's is often lyrical, delicate, and graceful.

Their similarities are essentially technical and stylistic: octosyllabic verse is a favorite form, anapestic tetrameter is handled
with unusual facility, ingenious rimes mark their poetry from an early stage, and wit is present in a wide variety of tones in most of their poems.

Prior's chronological precedence over Swift makes his influence on Swift more likely than vice-versa. While Prior's later poems are more colloquial and involve more burlesque and reversal of forms than earlier poetry, it is nearly impossible to trace Swift's influence in this development. The marked change in some of Swift's poems during his acquaintance with Prior and Prior's poetry is the most evident indication of influence between the two. This change is reflected in the descriptive nature of several poems around 1710, the mellower tone of these poems, and finally in the number and kind of imitations written by Swift almost exclusively during the period of their relationship.

But influence is not a major consideration in the relationship of Prior and Swift. They seemed to recognize each other's particular talents and respect their differences. Prior's genius lay in dramatic presentation and character portrait, and his prose characters and unfinished dramas indicate that he was developing this talent at the time of his death. Swift's genius in satire and straightforward diction results in the great satires of the 1730's. But together, their poetry is an outstanding example of the versatility, beauty, and power of poetry in the plain style during the early eighteenth century, and much of the credit for this achievement lies in the relationship of Matthew Prior and Jonathan Swift.