CHAPTER III

Type and Form of Swift's Poetry

"Consult yourself, and if you find
A powerful Impulse urge your Mind,
Impartial judge within your Breast
What Subject you can manage best;
Whether your Genius most inclines
To Satire, Praise, or hum'rous Lines;
To Elegies in mournful Tone,
Or Prologue sent from Hand unknown" ¹

Type

Now that we have examined Swift's views on poetry it will be interesting to make a detailed study of the type and form of his poetry. And to do so is to start with those critics who grudge the title of a poet given to Swift because, according to them, he wrote no poetry but mere verses.

Sophie Shilleto Smith is one such critic who asserts

¹ On Potry : A Reapsody, p. 574, Ll. 77-84.
that Swift confined himself too much to the limitations of his age and thereby failed as a poet. The eighteenth century, writes Mr. Smith, "was of the earth, earthly in its ideals. It was moreover fruitful soil. It was, and wished to be, known by its fruits. In this sense, it was vulgarly practical. It was conscious solely of the tangible. Other elements were potential in it, but as yet were not visible. Herein we have the key to Swift's verse, and here we have the reason of its failure as poetry. Everything that he does must have its practical value, hence his verse is satirical."

There is again, Leslie Stephen, who in late Victorian times wrote that Swift's poetry might be called 'rhymed prose'.

Against these adverse criticisms we feel inclined to answer that it is hardly just to demand that it should be something other than it is, as so many have done, and say, 'This is not poetry'. These critics start from a carefully selective view of what poetry should be — one moreover which is not sanctioned by the practice of the poets — and then impose that standard upon poetry like Swift's. Stephen was writing during the triumph of romantic ideals in poetry, and if we expect in the poems of Swift the qualities we associate

with poetry from Wordsworth to Tennyson, we shall not find them. Swift was in certain important respects anti-romantic, but today we no longer regard this as a disqualification for a poet.

Nor can we subscribe to Jack G. Gilbert's idea that Swift was a romanticist and romantically believed in heroes, and therefore could believe in imitating them. Mr. Gilbert cited one prose piece and two poems (Ode to the King and Cadenus and Vanessa) as examples of Swift's love for virtue and valour.

We must remember, in this connection, that love for virtue or valour is but a minor romantic element, and the Romantic era, when it did really come, revealed itself in the garden of nature as in Thomson's The Seasons - because it was also the 'Age of Return to Nature'. The love of valour and virtue in Swift may be ascribed more to the panegyrical revival of the eighteenth century than to the Romantic bent of mind. To Swift Romanticism, sentimental patriotism, reliance on 'inner light', are all delusive because these depend upon a password, a simple magical formula unrelated to the conditions of life. Most of Swift's poems are strictures and attacks on a very real danger of the time - the tendency to

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substitute for hard realistic thinking and feeling a readymade theory, whether of literature or of conduct.

Swift's approach to verse was, for the most part of his career, very informal. He wrote poems for himself and for his friends. He composed broadsides on contemporary matters which engaged his combative interest, like the trouble over Wood's Halfpence and the notorious South Sea Bubbles. Again, he wrote lampoons, often of a very dangerous kind, on political matters. But he always gives us the impression — and sometimes striving hard to give that impression — that he writes negligently in order to amuse himself and his readers in a spare moment.

For example, the most formally designed of his poems, Cadenus and Vanessa, plays with the formal mannerisms of eighteenth-century verse in such a way as to suggest that nothing should be taken seriously. In fact, behind the brittle conventional mechanisms runs the sad and terrible theme that a true and intelligent relationship between the sexes is impossible or very near it. If this were careless cynicism, a negligent pose of the kind of the Restoration comic playwrights were fond of using as a mask, Cadenus and Vanessa would be a much less painful poem than it is. But we must realise that Swift is perpetually serious and has to take pains to hide his seriousness.
At the beginning it is better to start our assessment of Swift's earliest known compositions which are not prose but six or seven poems produced over four years (1690-1694). The first four are 'pindaric' odes like those of Abraham Cowley and the remaining two or three (if we include *Mother Ludwell's Cave* as suggested by Joseph Horrell in his Introduction to the *Collection of Swift's Poems*) are in the newer fashion of Waller's or Dryden's heroic couplets.

It may be noted here that the irregular pindaric ode was imported to England from France by Abraham Cowley in the seventeenth century. He, perhaps in 1650, found a text of Pindar and determined to imitate the Greek poetry, which was extremely regular, in English, without comprehending the system upon which Pindar's prosody was built up. Cowley published, however, in 1656, fifteen *Pindaric odes*, which became the model on which countless imitators found their *pindarics*. The English pindaric was a blunder founded upon a misconception. These loose and irregular odes were greatly in fashion during the close of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century.

Swift's very first writing is a congratulatory *Ode to the King (William) On his Irish Expedition*. Though 'prentice work, it already carries some surprising touches that foreshadow the mature Swift:
"What do the Scepter, Crown and Ball,
Rattles for Infant Royalty to play withal,
But serv't adorn the Baby-dress
Of one poor coronation-day,
To make the Pageant gay:
A three Hours Scene of empty Pride,
And then the Toys are thrown aside".4

A very odd and radical reflection appears in a celebration
of a king's triumph. In it we find other characteristic
self-reflecting strokes:

"we Poets oft our Bays allow,
Transplanted to the Hero's Brow" 5

The earliest efforts of men of genius often have
something prophetic of their future in them. It is applicable
in the case of Swift also. There is nothing more important than
to observe that there was something heroic about Swift's
personality, life and work.

In these years at Moor Park, Swift gave himself to
poetry, apart from his attendance on Sir William Temple, who encouraged his efforts in verse. The fashion of the time

5 Ibid., p.3, Ll. 9-10.
was pindaric odes in usual complicated form. Swift worked at them for a couple of hours in the mornings. Sometimes he wrote two stanzas in a day, at other times no more in a week, "and yet I do not believe myself to be a laborious dry writer, because if the fit comes not immediately I never heed it, but think of something else." He was very proud of the first heir of his invention to achieve print, The stanzas to the Athenian Society prove it:

"Sir William Temple speaking to me so much in their praise made me zealous for their cause, for really ...... poets cannot write well except they think the subject deserves it."

These early odes have been imperceptively depreciated. They not only tell us a great deal about his life at Moor Park, and express its values - rectitudinous, moralistic, rationalistic - but also have strokes that reveal the mature Swift, impassioned, angered by human folly. At this time everything he touched turned to verse:

"Whate'er I plant (like Corn on barren Earth)
By an equivocal Birth
Seeds and runs up to Poetry" 8

7 Ibid., p.363.
8 Ode to Sir William Temple, p. 24, Ll. 210-12.
A young man, he was an idealist, like Sir William; that doctrinaire whig, personally incorruptible, and always hoped the reform of English government. Hence, the long ede on the improbable subject of Archbishop Sancroft, an upright man who had sacrificed the see of Canterbury for his convictions. But even on these early moral attitudes Swift's contempt for the mob comes out:

"In vain then would the Muse the Multitude advise,  
Whose peevish knowledge thus peevishly lies  
In gath'ring follies from the wise" ⁹

The mass are described as 'the giddy British populace' there had been so many overtures, civil wars and revolutions. There is the universal idiocy of war:

"War! that mad Game, the World so loves to play,  
And for it does dearly pay;  
For though with Loss or Victory awhile  
Fortune the Gamesters does beguile,  
Yet at the last the Box sweeps all away" ¹⁰

There are particular targets too, where the poet scores Bull'-eyes: the pedantry of the Schools, especially the dead scholasticism which Bacon, Milton and - a nearer

¹⁰ Ode to Sir William Temple. p. 20, ll. 76-80.
spirit — Hobbes had all derided; the 'rudeness, ill-nature, incivility' of academics; the silliness and obtuseness of critics.

Following a strange incident in 1692, Swift put off writing Pindaric odes: he never wrote another. The young poet sought the approbation of his cousin Dryden, at the height of his fame, the acknowledged head of the commonwealth of literature. Understandably he showed the great man proudly the one work he had in print, the Athenian Ode — to receive no encouragement whatever, but an almighty rebuff: 'Cousin Swift, (Swift was related to Dryden by the mother's side) you will never be a poet'. Dryden was never forgiven for that. The next few poems were written in heroic couplets and then for some years no poetry was written at all. It shows how deeply Swift took this to heart; it was his nature always to take things too hard.

The next two, and if we take Joseph Horrell's suggestions, three poems, viz. To Mr. Congreve Occasioned by Sir William Temple's 'Late Illness and Recovery and A Description of Mother Ludwell's Cave — are very revealing. The subject of To Mr. Congreve was an awkward one; for Swift's junior had achieved fame at one stroke with the brilliant success of his first play, while Swift himself — the most ambitious soul alive — remain yet unheard of. It
was hard to take, and the poem he wrote, hoping that it might make a prologue to Congreve's next play, shows it. It was never used. Swift's envy of his junior's triumph is clear enough in the lines:

"Thus prostitute my Congreve's name is grown
To ev'ry lewd pretender of the town.
'Troth I could pity you; but this is it,
You find, to be the fashionable wit". 11

Proud as Lucifer, as always, he did not intend to tax the Muse:

"Nor tax the goddess of a mean design
To praise your parts by publishing of mine;
That be my thought when some large bulky writ
Shews in the front the ambition of my wit;" 12

That day was not long in coming; for within the next few years he was writing his first masterpiece, A Tale of a Tub. The inspiration of all his work is foretold in a scarifying couplet of this early poem:

"My hate, whose lash just heaven has long decreed
Shall on a day make sin and folly bleed"; 13

In 1693 Temple fell ill. In the poem which his

11 To Mr. Congreve. p. 36, Ll. 159-62.
12 Ibid., p. 33, Ll. 33-36.
13 Ibid., p.35, Ll. 133-34.
amanuensis wrote to celebrate his recovery we get delightful glimpses of the interior at Moor Park. There is Lady Temple, the charming Dorothy Osborne, less sprightly now, in truth somewhat faded:

"Mild Dorothea, whom we both have long
Not dar'd to injure with our lowly song;
Sprung from a better world, and chosen then
The best companion for the best of men" 14

The household was run by Dorinda, Temple's sister. Lady Giffard was far from mild, and rather bossy. But she adored Sir William as everybody did, and had been grief-stricken at his illness, for all of them depended on him: everything was centred on the great man.

Here, too, Swift's own peculiar spirit bursts out, in his reproaches to the Muse, i.e. his genius:

"To thee I owe that fatal bent of mind,
Still to unhappy restless thoughts inclin'd;
To thee, what oft I vainly strive to hide,
That scorn of fools, by fools mistook for pride;" 15

14 Occasioned by Sir William Temple's Late Illness and Recovery. p. 39, Ll. 43-46.
15 Ibid., p. 41, Ll. 131-34.
It does not appear that Swift strove very hard to hide it.
Rather he could not help himself, he was so obsessed:

"Madness like this no fancy ever seiz'd,
Still to be cheated, never to be pleas'd" 16

With these pieces we may add the poem A Description
of Mother Ludwell's Cave, collected in Joseph Horrell's
edition of Collected Poems of Jonathan Swift and placed
just above the poem To Mr. Congreve. Moore Smith previously
pointed out the verbal resemblances of this poem -

"... and resemblances pointed out in the notes
to some poems of 1693 by Jonathan Swift make
it tempting to consider him the author" 17
discovered among papers formerly and included in his edition
among the unpublished poems of Sir William Temple at Moor
Park, to other early poems. But Harold Williams was not
convinced and excluded it from his edition of The Poems of
Jonathan Swift in 3 volumes. J.M. Murray has marshalled the
evidence favouring Swift's authorship. 18 The verbal resemblances

16 Ibid., p. 42, Ll. 147-48.
17 Introduction to The Early Essays and Romances of
Sir William Temple, ed. G.C. Moore Smith. Oxford:
18 J.M. Murray: Handbook for Surrey (5th edn. 1898) notes
that the cave is said to have been frequently the scene
will appear in a close reading. The Description anticipates 
the style, themes, and subject-matter of Swift's heroic
verse. As a specimen of 'local poetry' it is indebted to
Cooper's Hill, which saves Denham's bacon in the Battle of
Books. Mother Ludwell's cave, one of the natural wonders
of Surrey, was adjacent to Moor Park. The line (187) 'Here
by a mountain's side, a revered cave' in the poem To Mr.
Congreve identifies Swift's Muse with Mother Ludwell, who
in primitive times inspired the local druid and the same
identification is made in A Description of Mother Ludwell's
Cave (1.5) ('I that of Ludwell sing, to Ludwell run, / Her
self my muse, her spring my Helicon')

"Apparently also, in these early days", opines
Harold Williams, "Swift began another ode called The Poet,
from which he quotes in the Ode To Mr. Congreve. In a letter
of 3 May, 1692, he speaks of a translation of Virgil which
he was then attempting, and refers to a poem called The
Ramble. These three pieces have not been traced".

In any case Sir William Temple's Late Illness and
Recovery should be taken as the last of this group of
poems where finally, with a triumphant cry he breaks away,

London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1958, p.34, Ll.5-6.
21 The Poems of Jonathan Swift. London: Oxford University
turning his back upon visionary dreams and fancies, eager only to graze with untroubled sight upon a world of reality:

"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."  

He renounced the Muse and wrote no more verse for several years. His transformation was brought about, however, not by any renunciation of the themes and ideas which he had been striving to develop in the early verse, but by a rich elaboration of these and a sudden discovery of a new medium of expression. It is this fact which bestows importance on the verse and which justifies our taking a final conspectus of it before leaving it for things more exciting.

Not one of these verses is without a biographical interest, or without some revelation of the development of Swift's literary genius, and no collection professing to be representative of Swift's works can omit all the specimens of these. It is usual to make a complete contrast between this first group of Pindaric Odes and the later poems. Yet in these first poems there is the declared intention of the

22 Occasioned by Sir William Temple's Late Illness and Recovery. p. 42, ll. 75-54.
satirist to lash mankind for its folly. They illustrate above all the deep melancholy which never left even in the most busy scenes of his life. This had its root and groundwork in mood and character, and might have derived strength and confirmation in a congenital malady, caused by a structural malformation near the brain, from which he suffered. These early poems are simply high-minded. They express Swift's ideals and detestations, but they provide no room for the fancy and unlimited energy that mark Swift once he has found his feet. It is true that he talks of disappointment and despair in some of these poems, but we need not feel with Dr. Elrington Ball that he was despondent on account of his failure to succeed in the Cowleyan School. It may be true too that for the next five years from 1693-98 he wrote no more verses - or at least none survive - but that may equally well be owing to the fact that he had discovered a new path. It is not true that he could not write like Cowley or Dryden, but that he did not want to. For there was no sign of lack of confidence surely in the famous lines:  

"My hate, whose lash just heaven has long decreed
Shall on a day make sin and folly bleed;"

23 Swift's Verse - An Essay, 1929.
25 To Mr. Congreve, p. 35, Ll. 133-34.
nor in the lines quoted in the ode To Mr. Congreve supposed to be from a lost ode inscribed The Poet:

"Beat not the dirty paths where vulgar feet have trod,
But give the vigorous fancy room."

We are not sorry to see its end. It is a necessary stage, and it is as informative to Swift's biographer as it was to Swift. But the way is now clear not only for much better poetry but for the prose of A Tale of a Tiffy.

When this prose piece finally appeared in 1704, its author must have felt that he had successfully avoided the power of the malignant goddess, who troubles the crystal fountain of the sight, and fills the brain with antic shapes while reason sleeps. And if further proof was required of his emancipation, it could scarcely have been better provided than in the volume of Miscellaneae, published in 1711, in which he included thirteen poems, chosen out of a considerable amount of political and satirical verse, some already published as Broadsides. It seems almost as if he wished to flout the votaries of the heroic and romantic muse by ostentatiously placing at the very beginning of this little group the Verses Wrote in a Lady's Ivory-Table-Book (1698). Here instead of compliment or a lover's devotion, he makes a collection of

26 Ibid., p. 37, ll. 205-206.
some of the stupidest of the senseless trifles it contains, and exposes them as revelation of its owner's heart:

"Here you may read (Dear Charming Saint)
Beneath (A new Receipt for Paint)
Here in Beau-spelling (tru tel deth)
There in her own (far an el breth)
Here (lovely Nymph pronounce my doom)
There (A safe way to use Perfume)
Here, a Page fill'd with Billet Doux;
On t'other side (laid out for Shoes)
(Madam, I dye without your Grace)
(Item, for half a Yard of Lace).
Who that had Wit would place it here,
For every peeping Fop to jeer?" 27

His new manners in Verse appears very startlingly in this poem. The octosyllabic couplet, the familiar style, the intensity with which the subject is developed, the social satire—these characteristics of his greatest verse all appear here. Once the poet of Pindaric and Heroic Verses seizes upon the satirical method, he becomes a man of his own day, directing his full power against the world as it actually exists. He is not to be dismissed as an old-fashioned

romantic; he has only to examine carefully and castigate the nasty examples of the subsequent generation - and be accepted as both up-to-date and highly efficient. Moreover, with his great cunning, he can speak with the calculated disdain of an anonymous observer and, by his art, put a dignified distance between himself and his enemies. If his ridicule is feared by the living, he will be too much of a present menace to be relegated to a place among the dead, and the respect commands by virtue of the power at his disposal cannot fail to give him calmness and self-assurance when he mixes with the sophisticated world. With this poem is born that type of poetry which will give him fame and name in life.

Now we may amusingly pass over to the delightfully absurd chatter of The Humble Petition of Francis Harris, with its vigorous caricatures of the servants in the Earl of Berkley's household. It almost seems as if immediately Swift escaped from the restrained and dignified atmosphere of Sir William Temple's household, where he had tried to produce conventional poetry, and returned to Dublin in the train of the Earl of Berkeley where he found encouragement to indulge his own taste for ridicule and burlesque.

It will be found that most frequently Swift's poetry was prompted entirely from without - the political verse, and a great deal that belongs to his friendships and enmities.
There is no more struggle, as in his early attempts, at
heroic verse. He never courts the Muse, but turns instead
to the laughing and irrepressible demon of satire, always
ready at his elbow to use anything or anybody for its own
disreputable purpose. It may be a mere Patridge - shoe-
maker, quack, and astrologer, who is given an elegy exalt-
ing him to a place among the heavenly bodies, where he may
still follow his calling. Or it may be Lord Cutts - who,
while acting temporarily as a Lord Justice in Ireland in
1705, was the first of many who held that office to attract
Swift's violent dislike and whose character and appearance
are made to fit so admirably Pliny's description of a
Salamander. Or it may be a pleasant joke, delightfully ela-
borated on the subject of the tiny house that Vaubrugh the
architect and dramatist, had built out of the profits of a
play. Or even a street scene in the city in the early morn-
ing, or when it is raining - the two perfect sketches in
heroic couplets, which Swift contributed to the Tatler.

One of the most genial of Swift's poems is Baucis and
Philemon which burlesques a story told in the eighth
book of Ovid's Metamorphoses. According to Ovid, Baucis and
Philemon, an elderly Phrygian couple, show hospitality to
Jove and Hermes without recognizing their guests. In
gratitude, the gods transform their humble cottage into a
temple and ask what more they can do for them. Their wishes are fulfilled at once and Baucis and Philemon at the end of their days are metamorphosed into two trees.

Swift retains the names of Baucis and Philemon but turns the Pagan gods into Christian saints and locates the action in Kent. The saints transform the cottage into an English parish church; and, when they ask the couple what they can do for them:

"Philemon, having pause'd a while,
Return'd 'em Thanks in homely Stile;
Then said; my House is grown so Fine,
Methinks, I still would call it mine:
I'm Old, and fain would live at Ease,
Make me the Parson, if you please.

He spoke, and presently he feels,
His Grazier's Coat fall down his Heels;
He sees, yet hardly can believe,
About each Arm a Pudding-sleeve;
His Wastcoat to a Cassock grew,
And both assum'd a Sable Hue;
But being Old, continu'd just
As Thread-bare, and as full of Dust." 28

In this way Swift elaborates each of the transformations in his own fanciful way. When the cottage becomes a church, its chimney becomes the steeple, its kettle the bell, its jack (for turning the spit) the clock, a chair the pulpit, the bedstead the pews, and so on. Everything is so thoroughly naturalized and familiarized that Swift can even permit himself a little good-humoured satire at the expense of Philemon as representing the Anglican Church. From beginning to end, his style is simple, easy, and informal.

It is amusing and at the same time interesting to trace in a *Description of a City Shower* an ulterior motive behind the use of the triplet and the alexandrine in these concluding lines:

"Sweepings from Butchers Stalls, Dung, Cuts, and Blood, Drown'd Puppies, stinking Sprats, all drench'd in Mud, Dead Cats and Turnip-Tops come tumbling down the Flood." [29]

Written to ridicule the use of the triplet form and the Alexandrine verse, these lines merit a comparison with a triplet of Dryden whose practice was actually under Swift's attack:

"The dykes are fill'd, and with a roaring sound The rising Rivers float the nether ground;"

Swift is more matters of fact, mundane and particular in his more description while Dryden is formal and general in these lines. It may be noted here that a good number of Swift's pieces owe their existence entirely to such purely literary motives. However true it may be that much of his writing is the work of a man of action rather than a man of letters, yet Swift was always very closely associated with the literary world, and keenly interested in the work of his contemporaries. He was concerned moreover to influence their taste, and to do that he employed his usual method of satirizing what seemed to him to be the affectations and absurdities of poetical fashions. He liked to scorn above all the artificial conventions, the outworn ornaments and false sentimentality, which are perhaps at all times the signs of minor poetry. His attitude towards such poetry is seen in a parody - A Love Song in the Modern Taste. All the usual tricks are here exposed before our eyes - the ornamental epithet, the classical references, the personification, the alliteration, the sing-song lilt, the unreal language, the sentimental common places, and all the dreary staleness of these false, imitated, poetical devices:

“Mournful Cypress, verdant Willow,
Gilding my Aurelia's Bows,
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.”

A more violent attack on poetic cant is made in a little group of poems which were included in the Miscellanies by Pope in 1727. The first of these is Phillis, or the Progress of Love. It gives the past history of the landlord and hostess of the Old Blue Boar, at Staines, which Swift used to pass on his journeys to Windsor. It is a satire, as has already been noted in Chapter II, upon the popular notions of romantic love and such attendant follies as a girl's elopement with a servant to escape from a reasonable match properly arranged by her parents.

The next Progress poem, The Progress of Beauty, shows how Swift is prepared to deal himself with subjects, which have been 'sicklied O'er' with the sentimentality of romantic poets. Swift by just shifting the colours round creates a chaos in the world of Celia's beauties:

"So Celia went entire to bed,  
All her Complexions safe and sound,  
But when she rose, White, Black, and Red  
Though still in Sight, had chang'd their Ground.

The Black, which would not be confin'd  
A more inferior Station seeks  
Leaving the fiery red behind,  
And mingles in her muddy Cheeks." 32

The last stanza closes the episode with a gay little note, unusual in Swift:

"Ye Pow'rs who over Love preside,  
Since mortal Beauties drop so soon,  
If you would have us well supply'd  
Send us new Nymphs with each new Moon." 33

We may take up next Cadenus and Vanessa, which is as literary as anything that Swift ever produced. Apart from

33 Ibid., p.175, Ll.97-100.
the title, which alone removes it just outside the world of plain happenings, Swift has carefully framed it in a fantasy, in which gods and goddesses play their part, endowing Vanessa with graces and gifts rarely combined in women. And when this prodigy is finally introduced into the world, Swift indulges his usual banter at the expense of the "fashionable fops" and "glittering dames. From around the Purlieus of St. James":

"Both Sexes, arm'd with Guilt and Spite,
Against Vanessa's Pow'r unite;
To copy her, few Nymphs aspir'd;
Her Virtues fewer Swains admir'd." 34

But a few had better taste, whom she entertained with pleasing arts. Among these is Cadenus; and cupid - piqued at his lack of success with her - determines to take revenge, by making her fall in love with him:

"Cadenus is a Subject fit,
Grown old in Politicks and Wit;
Caress'd by Ministers of State,
Of half Mankind the Dread and Hate." 35

Swift treats the theme of the poem with as little emotion as possible; he is neither cynical nor sentimental, he detaches

himself gently from it, and places it a little way off. Then he tries to see it as something separate, a private affair of Cadenus and Vanessa, a delicate subject to be touched carefully with wit, fancy and humour.

Nothing that Swift ever wrote shows more perfectly his mastery of himself and his art than these lines, describing at length the dispute between Cadenus and Vanessa. He recognizes the force of her argument. He is fairly caught and it is a real 'bite'. But he may well be proud at her confession:

"Constr'ing the Passion she had shown,
Much to her Praise, more to his Own.
Nature in him had Merit plac'd,
In her, a most judicious Taste." 36

The poems to Stella are if possible both in subject and in style an even more complete triumph over any temptation to indulge in sentiment or romance that he detested as we have seen in the last chapter, while discussing his views on poetry. The Birthday Verses belong to the last years of Stella's life (1719-1727), and are perfectly described by a phrase which uses to describe the character and type of his poetry in some lines written in To Mr. Desby (1718):

"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."  

He might perhaps have gone further and said that he sometimes wrote verse because it was easier than to write prose. The doggerel trifles that he and Sheridan tossed off together seemed to be written in a much easier manner.

Just as in dealing with his enemies in political controversy he used verse for his roughest and best considered outburst, tossing off ballads and broadsides shaped to popular tunes, so in his friendships his most familiar manner of address was always in verse. What could be more familiar — and at the same time an excellent parody on the usual complementary Birthday Odes — than the first of the poems written for Stella's Birthday, titled On Stella's Birthday:

"Stella this Day is thirty four,
(We shan't dispute a Year or more)
However Stella, be not troubled,
Although thy Size and Years are doubled,
Since first I saw Thee at Sixteen
The brightest Virgin on the Green,

So little is thy Form declin'd
Made up so largely in thy Mind."³⁸

He likes to boast that in all his addresses to her there had been only sincerity as in To Stella, who collected and Transcribed his Poems:

"Thou Stella, wert no longer young,
When first for thee my Harp I strung:
Without one Word of Cupid's Darts,
Of killing Eyes, or bleeding Hearts:
With Friendship and Esteem possesst,
I ne'er admitted Love a Guest."³⁹

There are a good many common places, and too many repetitions on the birth-day theme, which Swift himself seems to be tired of, for in Stella's Birth-Day (1725) he complains that he can no longer dance in rhyme:

"Adieu bright Wit, and radiant Eyes;
You must be grave, and I be wise.
Our Fate in vain we would oppose,
But I'll be still your Friend in Prose:
Esteem and Friendship to express,
Will not require Poetick Dress;
And if the Muse deny her Aid
To have them sung, they may be said"⁴⁰

³⁹ Op.cit., p. 184, Ll. 9-14
yet two years later, on Stella's last birthday, he offers her a splendid final poem, where without any change of tone these plain prosaic octosyllables take on real force and dignity:

"Shall these like empty Shadows pass,
Or Forms reflected from a Glass?
Or mere Chimaera's in the Mind,
That fly and leave no Marks behind?"*41

After his death there was found among his papers, in his own handwriting, a poem on The Day of Judgement. It describes the Last Day, with the world standing trembling before Jove's throne, and then gives very shortly the epilogue to the whole comedy of life:

"Offending Race of Human Kind,
By Nature, Reason, Learning, blind;
You who thro' Frailty step'd aside,
And you who never fell - thro' Pride;
You who in different Sects have shamm'd,
And come to see each other damn'd;
(So some Folks told you, but they knew
No more of Jove's Designs than you)
The World's mad Business now is O'er,
And I resent these Pranks no more.

*41 Stella's Birth-Day, p.320, Ll. 51-54.
I to such Blockheads set my Wit!
I damn such Fools! - Go, go, you're bit.\textsuperscript{42}

Here is the complete triumph of the comic Spirit, unabashed and unafraid, delighting to overthrow all mankind's claims to dignity and importance, and "ending with a puff" the whole heroic and romantic delusion.

Ricardo Quintana has mightily pointed out that "so far as the production of verse is concerned, the year 1731 proved to be one of the greatest in Swift's life."\textsuperscript{43} In that year the Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift, The Place of the Damn'd, and The Day of Judgement saw the light, while The Beasts Confession to the Priest followed in 1732. These four pieces, along with, On Poetry - A Rapsody and The Legion Club display the great artist in his final phase. The Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift shows Swift at the zenith of his poetic craftsmanship. Most oft quoted are the splendid lines describing how the news of his death is received by his women friends as they sit at cards, -

"Receive the News in doleful Dumps,
The Dean is dead, (and what is Trumps?)" \textsuperscript{44}

- but undoubtedly the most remarkable passages are those

containing the author's estimate of himself. The following are the lines of the piece:

"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." 45

Swift had the gift of choosing the most striking circumstances and, with the help of his imagination, accumulated them in an admirable fashion. In this regard he may be placed above all after poets, of all ages and countries. The most remarkable pieces of this sort are, *The Furniture of a Woman's Mind*; *To Betty the Grizette*; *The Journal of a Modern Lady*; *On Reading Dr. Young's Satires*; *A Description of a City Shower*; *To Quilca*; *A Description of the Morning*; and *The Place of the Damn'd*. This power of the mind gave him also that desperate hand, as Pope terms it, in taking off all sorts of characters. We may omit for the present those of a political nature - *The Progress of Poetry*; *Traelus The Second Part*; *Phillis*, or, *The Progress of Love*, *Corinna*.

and A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed; where one will find that his imagination could even dream in the character of an old battered strumpet. And from the same inexhaustible fund of wit, he acquired the historic arts both of designing and colouring, either in groups, or in single portraits.

But Swift's own conception of man's state forbids his affirming the value of "higher" principles or suggesting, either in his substance or in his method, that beauty is more than skin deep. Thus, for Swift, pretensions to lyricism are impossible; Fancy is only the enemy of Reason; Inspiration, in even its broadest sense, is bogus and subversive.

"Swift has", as Joseph Hornell points out, "his own uses for the baroque decoration of regal pictures seen over many an Alehouse fire, but his favourite and characteristic rhetorical device is barrenness. His 'types', or analogies, emphasize the point at issue by paralleling it, like the witty series on poetical vacuity in On Poetry: A Rapsody ending with:

"So Geographers in Afric-Map
With savage-Pictures fill their Gaps;
And o'er unhabitable Downs
Place Elephants for want of Towns"46

Swift's satiric wit, seen at its best in these 'types', is an inversion of what we call metaphysical. It has the same remoteness of allusion, but shrinks rather than expands the subject. Our poet, though he restricted himself mostly to dight verse, is fundamentally one of the world's most serious poets. Even his jokes have metaphysical implications.

At the same time we must appreciate the point that the 'several occasions' of his poems are nearly always fresh and revealing because he has no 'high falutin' notions of 'poetry' or literary reputation to restrain him. He gets in and out of his verse as easily as he changes his gown. His poems open like windows on persons and places, on his darkest and most joyous moods. They celebrate no exalted moods only because he acknowledged none. They are attractive because we feel in them Swift's compulsion, like Horace's to write whatever the colour of life may be. His verse is a social activity like conversation, to which it owes much. Swift was less preoccupied with poetry than Dryden and Pope, but closer than they to the civic ideal of his time. He has used it as an admirable vehicle for the expression of his passion and irony. It is excellent of its type—simple, sincere, direct, pointed, without any poetic ornament or show of learning.
In shifting our attention from the 'type' of Swift's poetry to its form we should not fail to take into account Rachel Trickett's very useful book *The Honest Muse* (A Study in Augustan Verse). He has drawn our attention to the paradox in Augustan poetry - "on the one hand it is conservative, imitative, and formal; on the other it is deeply concerned with the present, with contemporary attitudes, standards of language, and codes of behaviour". He has also mentioned "three of the major kinds of poetry which the Augustans inherited - panegyric, satire, and elegy", and how they "were all radically affected by the changing ideas and circumstances of the age."

In Augustan poetry these three genres, while retaining their old importance, were modified by the new circumstances and the new mood of the times. In particular, the panegyrical form was transformed in a way which very vividly illustrates the changes that were beginning to affect every other form of poetry.

A panegyric proper is a public celebration of virtue, nobility, and splendour - qualities which can be represented

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by a monarch, a hero, or a statesman whose private character might not bear a more intimate scrutiny. For, like the epic, panegyric represents an ideal to recall men to a proper sense of elevated dignity.

The Restoration gave a party impetus to panegyric. An Elizabethan past singing the praises of Gloriana felt no need to convince his readers, but the poet who welcomed back Charles II was called on to reassert and justify the claims of the monarchy. He should hardly avoid expressing the mood of a party returned to power, and inevitably there was a strong element of persuasive rhetoric in his compliments. He drew on classical allusions to impress a sense of continuity and authority on his readers, and he turned as well to scriptural analogies to support the traditional link between kingship and episcopacy. Charles was hailed as Augustus and as David returned from Hebron.

The new panegyric was a downright provocation to satire in a way unthinkable with the old high compliment, and, in any case, the vein of satire ran near the surface in such factional times. Nourished by the rancours of the commonwealth, satire was the most spontaneous and popular literary expression of common feeling, perhaps for the first time in the history of English letters. The Restoration poet might feel convinced of the value of the heroic strain,
but he was unusually conscious of the effort it involved. Satire, on the other hand, came to him as naturally as leaves to the tree.

Mr. Trickett also rightly asserts that "at the beginning of the Augustan period satire was the most vital of all poetic forms, and it retained its force and vigour longer than any other". But if panegyric was affected by the political situation and mood of the times, satire could hardly avoid its influence. Inevitably it was strongly coloured by party feeling, popular opinion, and the urge for justification.

Elegy itself, the lament over the dead, is a constant poetic theme, and funeral verse, like panegyric, was poetic tribute much in vogue throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. But of the many themes explored by elegiac poetry the Augustans preferred "to tell of disappointment and misery, to thicken the darkness of futurity, and perplex the labyrinth of uncertainty, has been always a delicious employment of the poets". In so doing the poets of the age were following, more or less, the epic trend, because the epic does not deal in consolation. Death is the hero's inevitable end, the fate that his

51 Ibid., p.20.
actions may defy for a while, but which will eventually overwhelm him. This mood is inevitably an occasion for moralizing. Dryden is always willing to interrupt the course of his narratives for some general comment, and Pope sees the whole life of man in the perspective of history and overshadowed by "the black Fear of Death, that saddens all".

The elegiac tone pervaded Augustan satire and coloured even panegyric, for compliments themselves could only be paid sincerely by a poet who recognized the brevity and tragedy of human life. It was deeply connected with the Augustan love of fact, with reverence for past experience recorded in history or recollected over the span of a lifetime, and with the stoic ideal of facing reality.

These three major and broad forms of verse, in their new guise, and with the moods and attitudes now associated with them, were predominant in Augustan poetry. During the Restoration satire was supreme, and eulogy, when it was not simply hired flattery, was most commonly to be found in funeral verses, written either in the new high style or as a pastoral elegy. But poets were already feeling their way towards a treatment of compliment and elegiac reflection which would not be at
odds with the new realistic approach to satire. Dryden especially in this way prepared the ground for Pope's extraordinary achievement; for in Pope we find a new kind of compliment, a pervasive elegiac reflective mood, and such a flexible form of satire that it can move over the whole range of feeling in one poem, from grave to gay, from lively to severe, and seems to contain in itself the other two modes of praise and grief.

Many of Swift's poems fall into some of the well defined conventions we have already mentioned. A Description of the Morning and A Description of a City Shouler, both contributed to the Tatler, in their careful enumeration of factual detail mingled with the controlled tone of parody, illustrate that consciousness of traditional form, and the desire to be realistic under the ironic guise of using it. It is best exemplified in the delicate parody of Gay, which, as we shall see, could only be perfectly achieved after a long established practice of classical imitation and the vogue for carefully defined genres. Each is a town dialogue, using the careful and affectionately familiar tone of country poetry for the contrary purpose of making real and recognizable that town life and atmosphere which has so often been repudiated as corrupt and uncongenial. But the tone of precise honesty enables Swift to be at once humorous, ironic, and exact about
detail with a concentrated factual realism which conveys by implication a positive pleasure in observing those phenomena which were usually generalised for attack under the common heading of the tumult and noise of the town.

Swift's earliest known compositions are six or seven poems, produced during the period from 1690 to 1694. The first four are 'pindaric' Odes like those of Abraham Cowley; and the remaining two or three are in the newer fashion of Waller's or Dryden's heroic couplets. Only these early 'pindarics' and 'heroic' odes can be put straightforward into the panegyric genre.

James D. Garrison traces the beginning of the history of English verse panegyric with the Stuart succession. The traditional themes of restoration and limitation are first translated from the Latin by Samuel Daniel and Ben Jonson, whose panegyrics to James I provided model topics for a host of lesser poets anxious to celebrate, but also to restrict, the early Stuart monarchy. Thus established as a useful form of poetry during the reigns of the first two Stuarts, panegyric is given a new significance and a new popularity by the poets of the mid-century, most notably by Abraham Cowley and Edmund Waller. Cowley transforms the

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oratorical conventions of panegyric by assimilating them to his conception of the Pindaric ode. Waller, on the other hand, transforms panegyric into a "branch of epic", making the king an epic hero. Between his welcome to Charles I in 1641 and his welcome to Charles II in 1660, Cowley wrote Pindaric odes on a vast range of subjects and occasions. He exercised a significant influence over Dryden and other poets of the later Stuart period, including (after 1688) Jonathan Swift with these Pindaric odes.

Swift's first 'Pindaric' Ode to the King, on his Irish Expedition is patently modelled on Cowley's Ode upon his Majesties Restoration and Return. It has been recognized in particular that Swift's famous celebration of Louis XIV's fistula in ano is a reductive version of Cowley's treatment of Cromwell. Louis XIV in Swift assumes the characteristic attributes of the villain in panegyric. He is a "Restless Tyrant" who considers himself above the 'Laws', the prophet of a "cause" that brings to earth the evils of plague and war. In contrast Swift celebrates William as the poem's hero, who combines 'Valour' and 'virtue'.

"This made the Ancient Romans to afford To Valour and to Virtue the same Word; To shew the Paths of both must be together 'trod, Before the Hero can commence a God."

Just as in the last ode, Swift had lavished celestial and divine qualities upon William, so in the Ode to the Athenian Society, though with even less propriety, he bestows the same attributes upon those invisible members of the Athenian Society who have replaced the king as a protagonist and hero. He also makes a more meaningful departure, in opposition to Cowley’s praise of the national philosophers’ minute and experimental precision; for Swift welcomes the Athenians as being Christian humanists like himself, and resisting the Hobbesian ‘new modish system of reducing all to sense’. Thus Swift’s ode, without parodying Cowley’s Ode to the Royal Society, does in some ways reply to it. Though Cowley died the year Swift was born, his philosophical outlook was less conservative; he hoped for an end of some mysteries which it was Swift’s instinct to preserve. One cannot, after all, discover anything for science unless one believes it is ‘there’, ready to be found, whereas for Swift the sublimest truths reach us neither through discovery nor demonstration but rather through intuition.

In Ode to Sir William Temple, Swift has a hero whom he sincerely admires and of whom he possesses direct knowledge. These facts no doubt account for his dropping the veil of obscurity. But the imagery and the central ideas of the poem are largely derived from two of Temple’s essays, Upon Ancient and Modern Learning and Upon the Gardens of Epicurus.
The Ode to Sancrect discloses a broadening of the positive concept. There are two realms, one of the Eternal Truth, one of mundane affairs. Such is the distance separating them that in this inferior world of ours the image of Truth shows but dimly. But within our world a second dualism is exhibited. On the one hand is the small company of rational men, like Sancroft, who alone cause Truth to appear this side of the Eternal realm. In contrast are the vast numbers of mistaken idiots, forever deprived of light, led blindly by opinion. This essentially is the central concept of the Ode, though part of it is expressed vaguely and part by implication alone.

To Mr. Congreve, Swift describes to his cousin Thomas Swift, as consisting of "almost two hundred and fifty lines not Pindaric". There is, perhaps, a certain grim emphasis on the 'not Pindaric' - as much as to say that he has finally come to his senses and does not intend to be misled longer by Cowley's Muse. At any rate, he has now discarded the Pindaric Ode in favour of the heroic couplet. But it is one thing to adopt a new artistic form, another to change one's manner and tone. Unfortunately the bad habits contracted during a year's desperate struggles with the Pindaric Ode are still discernible in his writings.

Ungainly from start to finish, he is perversely obscure through entire stanzas; he hammers his ideas home with a rhythm out of all relations to the movement of the verse; he refuses to relieve the intensity with the barest touch.

In the next poem *Occasioned by Sir William Temple's Late Illness and Recovery* also in the heroic couplet, he liberates his Muse and dismisses her. The Muse and poet meet by the stream running through the Estate at Moor Park. The Muse bids him put off his melancholy air now that the cause of his sadness, Temple's illness, has happily been removed. The poet, however, is unable to share the joy felt by the others at Moor Park - the Muse herself is the occasion of his woes. It is all the Muse's fault:

"To thee I owe that fatal bent of mind,
Still to unhappy restless thoughts inclin'd;
To thee, what oft I vainly strive to hide,
That scorn of fools, by fools mistook for pride;
From thee whatever virtue takes it rise,
Grows a misfortune, or becomes a vice;" 56

He has followed her recipe for poetical greatness for a long time. His few ill-presented graces seem to breed contempt only where he has hoped for esteem; he is always cheated,

never pleased.

"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." 57

But with capacity of genius for retreating in order after a major disaster and planning an attack in an entirely new direction, Swift dismisses from his mind his fond hopes of achieving distinction through poetry and looks elsewhere.

The best two main forms, viz. satire and elegy are not clearly distinguishable in Swift's poetry just as among the Augustans elegiac action is seldom undertaken at any great distance from satiric or mock-heroic manoeuvres, for to regret the past is by implication to condemn the present. Few indeed are the literary forms that cannot accommodate at least a touch of satire. Satire is not only a chameleon adapting itself to its environment, it is capable of apparent metamorphoses, manquering by parody in the very form it is criticising. And in the hands of the master artist Swift, satire reduces all other forms into insignificance. For example, his Elegy on Mr. Partridge, the Almanack-Maker, who died on the 29th of this Instant March, 1708 has an element of cruelty as well as of the comic. The Epitaph reads:

57 Ibid., p.42, ll. 151-54.
"Here Five Foot deep lies 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."

The poor man had only been gaining a livelihood out of people's foolery - but this was precisely what our poet could not stand. And hence the publication of the Elegy.

Apart from these broad forms suggested by Mr. Trickett, we notice a number of subsidiary forms utilised by the Augustan poets including Swift. The 'kinds' or 'forms' were useful as familiar habitations inside which they could go about their work, for we often find them writing in one or another of fables, ballads, imitation, epistles, epigrams, etc. This constant tendency to think in 'kinds' was also due in part to the formalism of an age which never felt more comfortable than when it was formally dressed. But here again, as in the main forms, Swift's poetry cannot be placed in water-tight categorical compartments, for one form often slides into another and makes distinction difficult. It is mainly, as we have already noted, due to

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the predominance of satire in his poetry. It is also not less due to the irregular and careless approach of Swift towards poetry. Swift is not the systematic poet who writes fables in one period of his life and epistles in another, and his disregard for form as an end in itself is apparent from the way in which he subverts form to his own purpose, often satirical. Even so, there are certain forms — fables, ballads, imitation of Horace, epistles, epigrams, etc. — in Swift's poetry which can be studied with advantage and pleasure.

Many collections of fables and related kinds of moral tales had been published in England by the end of the seventeenth century, often with a prefatory recommendation of their value in providing palpable instruction. The popularity of the fable spread throughout the eighteenth century and, following the examples of La Fontaine, Gay and others, exploited the mode as a literary form. Indeed, the eighteenth century seems to be the only period in which the fable has been considered a legitimate literary form.

Certain historical trends help to explain the suitability of the fable for prevailing eighteenth century tastes and aims. The most prominent of these was growing social concern, particularly as it aroused interest in
education. For example, John Locke, in teaching children to read vigorously recommends fables, the implicit morality of which concomitantly achieves his aim of imparting virtue. Rousseau, though like Locke condemns, the constant memorization demanded of children, approves fables for the youths sufficiently mature to comprehend them and to profit from the moral lesson. The fable does degenerate into a fairy tale, if it lacks the moral lesson, which constitutes its very soul.

In Swift's time the most popular collection of the ancient simple type was L'Estrange's _Fables and Aesop and Other Eminent Mythologists: with Morals and Reflections_, 1692, to which a second part was added in 1699.

The main two sources of fables for Swift are _Aesop and the Metamorphoses of Ovid_. He had, moreover, an originality of his own in devising fables, as he did for the earliest of them, the dispute of the spider in _The Battle of the Books_.

For the first of his verse fables Swift turns to Ovid. In praising Ovid, along with Chaucer, for the graphic reality of his _Descriptions of Persons, and their Very Habits_,


60 In his pedagogical novel _Emile or, Education_, tr. from the French by Barbara Foxley. London: Everyman's Library, 1911.
Dryden had selected the Fable of Baucis and Philemon as an instance for translation. In 1706 Swift wrote his own imitation of the legend. It is a playful piece in the manner of other poems he was writing at the time, such as the pieces on Vanbrugh's modish little house. Behind the general commendation of the humble, contended life of the pious old couple, there seems in the choice for the central figures of a parson and his wife in Rixham or 'a small village down in Kent' some private jest that defies elucidation. Perhaps more than the charming rural fantasy, it is the style of the poem that keeps it fresh. For two main features Swift elaborates on Ovid.

The first is the rollicking description of the inhospitable villagers and their demotic speech when repulsing the two strolling saints, gods in Ovid, but in Swift's version:

"Two Brother-Hermit[s], Saints by Trade,
Taking their Tour in Masquerade" 61

Disguised as beggars, the vagrant saints appeal to the charity of the villagers—

"They call'd at ev'ry Door; Good People,
My Comrade's Blind, and I'm a creeple

61 The Story of Baucis and Philemon, p.62, ll. 7-8.
Here we ly starving in the Street
'Twould grieve a Body's Heart to see't;
No Christian would turn out a Beast
In such a dreadful Night at least;" 62

In speech that is even more dramatic, the suspicion and violent hostility of the villagers are conveyed by an adjustment of tone to idiom that is amazingly real:

"One swore he'd send 'em to the Stocks,
A third could not forbear his Mocks,
But bawl'd as loud as he could roar,
You're on the wrong side of the Door.
One surly Clown lookt out, and said,
I'll fling the P - pot on your head;
You sha'n't come here nor get a Sous
You look like Rogues would rob a House." 63

The second main feature of the poem is the concreteness of Swift's fancy and his charming inventiveness in depicting the metamorphosis of the furnishings of the cottage into those of the church. Before our eyes the lowly Chimney is smoothly transformed into a spire and the kettle into a bell. By more elaborate graduations the roasting jack

63 Ibid., p. 62, ll. 33-40.
becomes the movement of the church clock, while, more grotesquely:

"The groaning Chair began to crawl
Like a huge Insect up the Wall,
There stuck, and to a Pulpitt grew,
But kept it's Matter and it's Hue,
And mindful of it's antient State,
Still Groans while tatling Gossips prate."

Swift had a very special and rare ability to observe physical objects as in themselves they are and to depict them in all their physicality—it is not, infrequently a cause for offence in his work.

Garth singled out as most characteristic of Ovid the propriety of our author's similes and epithets, the perspicuity of his allegories, the instructive excellence of the morals, the peculiar happy turns of his fancy. These were the qualities that appealed to Swift and which, with the addition of sprightly dialogue, he most happily exploited from now on in his own fables.

The 'confinement to the present object', which Garth also notes in Ovid, gives point to Swift's next Ovidian

64 Ibid., p.64, Ll. 105-110.
66 Ibid.
The Fable of Midas. On 30 December 1711 the Duke of Marlborough had been stripped of his military appointment. As part of the campaign of vilification against him and the Whigs these appeared early in January of the next year. A Fable of the Widow and her Cat, in which Prior and Swift appear to possess ill-defined shares. F.E. Ball says "the hand of Prior is seen in the verse, the mind of Swift in the matter".

As in the preceding poem Swift in The Fable of Midas pilloried Marlborough's supposed peculations and his undoubted avarice. Midas provided the perfect analogy. With this choice Swift is at the same time parodying the use of classical gods and heroes in contemporary panegyrics.

This aspect of parody is only incidental in this poem. Equally dividing the poem between a tendentious rendering of the classical legend and his invitation—'To think upon a certain Leader', Swift concentrates his derision in The Fable of Bitches and The Dog and Thief. The originals of both are again given in L'Estrange. Both have political and religious applications, the first to the treachery of the Dissenters at a time when one of the many attempts were being made to repeal the Test Act; the second, drawing on a fable that had already been expounded along similar lines by L'Estrange with reference to the politics of the former age, is a satire.

on self-seeking politicians and their bribery at elections. It is aimed at the Whig stock-jobbers and the moneyed men who were seeking to oust the landed interest:

"Who'd vote a Rogue into the Parliament-house
That would turn a Man out of his own?" 68

We may pass over many other instances of Swift's employment of the fable, but must give attention to the two poems that constitute, along with The Fable of Midas, his finest handling of the form in a way that was specially his own. Written at the height of the frantic speculation in the South Sea project at the end of 1720, when the market for the grossly inflated shares was about to crash, The Bubble is a poem built almost entirely out of a series of similitudes. If the manner is jaunty and popular, the range of Swift's similitudes is so widely diversified as to catch at the interests of almost all elements in the community. Folklore, new scientific discoveries, Biblical incidents and fables of the popular as well as the Ovidian kind—each is wittily and dexterously turned to the indictment of the knavery and deceit and malpractice of the South Sea directors and stock-jobbers. Now are the investors, more greedy than wise, immune from Swift's scorn. At a point the common crowd of investors are seen as the yokels of a folk-tale. According

68 The Dog and Thief, p. 310, ll. 19-20.
to the tale, they thought an ass had swallowed the moon when its reflection that fell in the stream, where the animal was drinking, disappeared as the moon passed behind a cloud. But as Swift acidly comments with the profiteering directors in view, "The Moon lay safe behind the cloud." Similarly the illusion of wealth that has enticed the investors to their ruin is portrayed by the fable of the Fool who, mistaking the reflection of the moon and stars for coins, jumped into a brook and came out: "All cover'd o'er with Slime and Mud." The Midas legend appears as the archetype for the directors with the golden touch:

"Oh! would those Patriots be so kind
Here in the Deep to wash their Hands,
Then like Pactolus we should find
The Sea indeed had golden Sands."

Marlborough comes to mind and Swift is in fact adapting the image he had used on the former occasion. It is all superbly and exhilaratingly apt. In the context of Swift's poem the common place is recharged with meaning; it has the show of an actual occurrence.

Jocular but biting, colloquial in syntax and

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71 Ibid., p.201, ll-109-112.
rhythm, simple in manner, but scarifying in its exposure of folly and knavery, the impact of the poem is undeniable. Though unmistakable in meaning and intent, it is yet a truly sophisticated piece of poetic writing where the unelaborate similitude provides the excitement and the nexus of meaning for which other poets rely on imagery and elaborately intellectual conceits. For this kind of precision, exact, full of surprises, uncontradictable, yet perfectly easy and natural, there is, it seems to us, hardly another poet to compare with Swift.

The final poem for our consideration, unlike most of Swift's fables, is neither personal nor political in reference, but, as befits his post-Gulliver period, is an indictment of all mankind and in particular the representative professions of Church and Law and Politics. The full name of the piece is The Beasts Confession to the Priest, Observing how most Men mistake their own Talents. It deals with Swift's favourite subject - the pride and self-deception of man - and as it recalls to our minds the fourth book of Gulliver's Travels. The poem is scarcely inferior to it in the pungency and ironic naïveté of the style. The poem, like several others that have already been mentioned, has its slender original in one of Aesop's fables, as Swift acknowledges in lines:
"I own, the Moral not exact;
Besides, the Tale is false in Fact;
And, so absurd, that could I raise up
From Fields Elyzian, failing Esop;
I would accuse him to his Face
For libelling the Four-foot Race."72

The fable is numbered 217 and named A Plague among the Beasts in the second part of L'Estrange's collection.

In a time of plague, as Aesop relates, the lion, consulting history, finds that plagues were a punishment for wrongdoers. All the animals are summoned to confession with the intention of sacrificing the most guilty. Swift converts the fable to imply that men are more hypocritical, more given to self-deception and exculpation than the beasts. To this end he substitutes for the supposedly nobler animals the very worst hearts, the Wolf, the Ass, the Swine, the Ape, the Goat, each denying his true nature or commending what is worst in it or supposing himself to have the very opposite of his true talents. So he proceeds to extend the confessions to the classes and professions of human beings, the Lawyer, the Place-seeker, the Chaplain, the Doctor, the Statesman with (the longest and most ironical confession) and the

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Sharper. Though he uses Oratio Obliqua throughout in place of direct dialogue, it marvellously retains the raciness of colloquial speech. For Swift, the moral when it comes will not do; 'fabling Esop' has libelled the 'Four-foot Race' because -

"Creatures of ev'ry Kind but ours
Well comprehend their nat'ral Powers;
While We, whom Reason ought to sway,
Mistake our Talents ev'ry Day:"

Swift seems to set Aesop right and concludes the poem with an ironic reversal of Aesop's fable:

"For, here he owns, that now and then
Beasts may degenerate into Men"

The figure of Aesop appears in the first fable that Swift wrote, and in the last. But here Swift pushes Aesop aside to speak again in his own voice, to form his final truth from fable - Aesop's 'Tale is false in fact' because it is designed to compliment mankind. The one final truth characteristically for Swift is that man, proud man, by the corruption of his talents has set himself below the beasts.

73 Ibid., p. 543, ll. 204-207
74 Ibid., p. 544, ll. 219-20.
The cult of translation and imitation had originated in France. But it is also found at the same time that in generous emulation of this art the English bat the French in their own game.

The English Imitation is largely a post-Restoration form. There are few examples of it before 1660, and there is apparently no dictionary definition of it until 1755. The Imitation reaches its qualitative peak in Pope's Imitation of Horace (1733-38), and has its last major display in Johnson's Vanity of Human Wishes (1749). Through much of the later eighteenth century the form loses its strength, and some of its attraction. But between 1660 and 1750 (well covering the Age of Swift) this important form attracted such poets as Cowley, Rochester, Dryden, Oldham, Congreve, Swift, Prior, Rowe, Pope and Johnson.

Howard D. Weinbrot has shown us three early modes of Imitation: (1) Cowley's, in which the original is overtly cited, freely translated and truncated, thereby altering the meaning of the poem; (2) Cowley's second mode of paraphrase and consistent modernization of an announced model; (3) extremely free Imitation of an unannounced source which, nevertheless, the poet expected the reader to know.

Cowley's first mode is important in its implication as well as its liberal influence. It reinforced the notion of pointing to a specific model and of altering its meaning in some way. This mode - or a variation upon it - was seen at work in Swift's Imitations. Often he might either imitate part of a poem and alter its meaning or tone, or, upon occasion, imitate part of it and largely preserve its meaning.

He does the former in Part of the Seventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated. Here he adopts and prints the relevant parallels from half of Horace's poem. In the omitted part Horace tells Maecenas that he will not be coming to town to see him this winter, since at this point in his life he needs rest and warmth rather than excitement and pleasure. Horace is always respectful towards his patron, always grateful for the wealth he has given him, but, at the same time, gently reminds Maecenas both that he cannot give the essential gifts of youth and vigour and that his own "ease and ... freedom" (L. 35-36) are not for sale: "Try me, whether I can restore your gifts, and cheerfully too" (L. 39). He then cites Telemachus' sensible rejection of a gift of horses inappropriate for Itaca and concludes that "small things befit small folk" (L. 44); and so he prefers "peaceful Tarentum" to "queenly Rome" (L. 44-45).
Horace then relates the story of Philippus who seduces the modest and virtuous Vulteius Mena from a carefree life to a life of profession—farming and frequent worries. Vulteius finally implores Philippus to "put me back in my former life" (1.95) and Horace, in his "own" voice (1.95) voice, concludes: "Tis right that each should measure himself by his own rule and standard" (1.98).

In his Imitation, an adaptation of the tale, Swift develops the device of the thinly disguised mask, for he has his patron Harley say:

" .......... Dr. Swift:)
A Clergyman of special Note, ...
For shunning those of his own Coat;"

But Swift the author is overtly, where Horace was covertly, biographical; "Swift" the character in the poem receives both more praise and more mockery than Vulteius. Swift's tale is self-contained, related directly to Harley and himself, and only peripherally to the human condition, for Swift not only omits the first section, but the final generalizing paragraph as well. Nor is there any of the vigour of independence that motivates Horace's epistle, since Swift merely says "Pray leave me where you found me first", whereas

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in his opening section Horace in his "own" voice openly offers to return his patron's gift, and in the final lines repeats this sentiment, if not its original language.

This kind of "partial Imitation" seemed congenial to Swift. We recall that Cowley imitated only one country mouse section of Horace, *Satires*, ii, 6, and that Swift imitated the first part. Swift performed a similar task, writing his *Horace, Lib. 2, Sat 6* (The) Part of it imitated in 1714, while, in 1728, Pope added the fable of the mice. Both Swift and Pope are largely faithful to Horace's tone and content, so that this poem, unlike the preceding Imitation, is roughly within the class of translation. Swift returns to partial Imitation and alteration of meaning in *To the Earl of Oxford, Late Lord Treasurer. Sent to him when he was in the Tower, before his Tryal out of Horace* — Written in the year 1716. He imitates something over half odes, iii, 2 and in so doing, omits Horace's opening account of the virtues of a brave military life. Swift's poem is addressed to the virtues of a brave political life and is meant, in part, to show that the political leader in contemporary England must be as courageous and virtuous as the military leader of ancient Rome. The form appears again in *Part of the 9th Ode of the 4th Book of Horace* (1721) in which Horace makes it clear that Lollius will be celebrated with
other great men because he will have a "sacred poet" to sign his name. Swift, on the other hand, excludes the self-conscious and implicitly self-congratulatory poet, and crowns only Archbishop King himself. There are numerous other examples of this popular form of Cowleyian partial imitation—it was imparted through much of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and even early nineteenth centuries.

Swift neither boggled at changing their Roman masters where necessary, nor accused himself of "copying" when paralleling them. He accepted Cowley's and Oldham's modernization but, instead of their line-by-line correspondence to the original in both form and content be followed Rochester's slightly freer practice in the 'Allusion' and supplied a section-by-section correspondence but unlike Rochester he pointed to the sections imitated and used even more originality in treating their poet's themes.

For example, in Swift's earlier work Toland's Invitation to Dismal, to Dine with Calves—Head Club. Imitated from Horace, Epist 5, Lib. I the reader's pleasure is lessened unless he reads the Latin footnotes, sees Horace adopted, and thereby sees the contrast between true and false fellowship, unity and disunity, friendship and treachery, and a straight-forward and ironic method in both the ancient and modern poems. The extraordinary self-consciousness of the
Imitation – as well as part of its roots in translation – can also be found in another work of Swift, *On Noisy Tom: Horace, Part of Book I, Sat. 6* paraphrased, a lampoon against Sir Thomas Prendergast, written in 1736. It stems from Horace, *Satires, i, 6*, 34-39. It begins by printing and identifying the Latin lines imitated, and then, adds a paragraph "Translated literally" with explanatory footnotes. Immediately thereafter Swift includes the same lines 'Paraphrased', as he calls it, and generally annotates them so that his readers will both understand his English references and more easily compare them to the Latin.

Swift, like other eighteenth-century poets, might and often did choose any combination of treatment of the parent poem: close translation, paraphrase or extreme freedom; abbreviation or expansion; modernization or adaptation.

If panegyric, Imitation of Horace, *fables of Swift* were influenced by the invective power of satire, ballad also suffered from no less a fate. Before we go into the details of Swift's ballad, it is better to have a brief history of it in the Augustan age and how it differs from general poetry.

"Poetry", says Albert B. Friedman very aptly; "is recorded with symbols in ink and paper; the ballad in its
native habitat at least, is carried in memory". He goes on to say that "in a literal sense, the ballad is 'illiterate', its style and character explicable only by reference to oral transmission, which, in turn, implies a community virtually illiterate and of reasonably uniform beliefs and tastes". It may be that poetry suggests recitation or declaration or singing, but it is only vestigially. The ballads, on the other hand, are, in fact, inseparable from song and recitation.

By its very nature ballad leaves incomplete records of its existence. We may study its course partly by its reflections, by its impingement upon the higher level of poetry. An interpretation of the appeal of popular poetry reveals that balladry has affected literary criticism and theory at crucial moments and has virtually influenced the style of major poets - and through them the whole development of English poetry.

The broadside is the ancestor of the handbill and its predominance over the traditional ballad is signalized by the fact that the term 'ballad' was first and until the

79 Ibid., p.2.
end of the eighteenth century, almost exclusively used for the broadside ballads hawked about the streets of London and provincial centres and at country fairs.

The ballads of Prior, Gay, Swift, and Pope were all modelled on broadsides. The ballad singer was then a common street character; his songs were associated with the unrefined taste of the lower classes and the unmannerly exchanges of the hustings. The form, therefore, could hardly be employed for serious or intimate poetry. It was excellently adapted, however, to convivial or humorous matter, since the very vulgarity of the model might be counted on to impart the desired tone of casualness or frivolity. The device still s sede in the later eighteenth century.

The non-political ballad poems of Prior, Swift, Gay, and Pope are mainly jocular, and the choice of the ballad style is obviously part of the joke. Pope's Court Ballad and Sandys' Ghost are exquisitely turned Vers de société, the plebian framework greatly enhancing the poems' boyant, facetious tone. Swift gets this effect from the ballad whether tossing off a bagatelle for Mrs. Dingley and Brent (Dingley, and Brent - A Song to the Tune of Ye commons and Peers) or answering Dr. Sheridan's claims for the medicinal properties of Ballyspellin waters (An Answer to the Ballyspellin Ballad). Most of the fun in the Ballyspellin ballad comes from the
struggle for rhymes to match a different rhyme sound, a struggle which burlesques the outrageously forced rhymes of many broadsides:

"Dare you dispute,
You saucy Brute,
And think there's no rebelling
Your scurvey Lays,
And senseless praise.
You give to Ballyspellin." 80

Again:

"No Subject fit
To try your Wit
When you went Colonelling
But dull Intrigues
'Twixt Jades and Teagues
That met at Ballyspellin?" 81

Glimpses of Swift's hectic ballad-scribbling on behalf of the Oxford-Bolingbroke ministry were scattered through the Journal to Stella. His notable contributions to the ballad form beside those mentioned already are In Pity to the Empty'ng Town, Peace and Dunkirk, On a Seditious Pamphlet, The Description of an Irish-Feast, The Run upon the Bankers.

80 An Answer to the Ballyspellin Ballad, p.358, Ll.1-6.
81 Ibid., p.359, Ll. 25-30.
Upon the South-Sea Project. The Bank Thrown Down, Clever Tom Clinch Going to be Hanged, The Dog and Thief, Advice to the Grub-Street Verse-writers, Dr. Swift to Mr. Pope, The True English Dean to be Hanged for a Rape, A Love Song in the Modern Taste, The Yahoo's Overthrow.

The metrical virtuosity found in these pieces bears out Ball's statement, as to the diversity of influences on Swift's verse—

"In its construction Swift laid under contribution all classes of metrical composition from the Elizabethan age to his own, ephemeral songs and ballads no less than the standard writings of poets and dramatists." 82

The sonority of words and his use of ballad-form show us Swift's taste for song and rhythm. The same taste mingled with the proneness towards satire explains the publication of 'A Cantata' in the poetical works of Swift, the words of which were written in order to ridicule the attempt to imitate sounds in music. Harold Williams observes:

"Nicholas, when printing the words only in his Select Collection of Poems (1780-82), IV, 305-6, added a footnote in which he quotes Dr. Beattie as censuring 'illicit imitations' and observing that 'this abuse of a noble art did not escape the satire of Swift; who, though deaf to the

charms of music, was not blind to the absurdity of musicians.  

We should note that it was a time of long-winded cantatas and Italianate songs whose verbose words grandiloquently and repetitiously sought to imitate musical notes rather than make good sense. Hence Swift recommended it to Dr. John Echlin, who was his consultant on matters affecting the cathedral choir, to compose a Cantata in ridicule of his puerile mimicry. Here we get motions imitated, which are the most inharmonious, and sounds the most unmusical. In short, Swift's Cantata may convince any person, that music, if only imitative, would be ridiculous. It burlesques what Swift felt was wrong with music in the Augustan Age.

Swift seems to delight to go through the whole realm of poetry, sometimes obeying and often violating the rules of form or kind. We are simply struck by its variety. We have already seen his use of Imitation, fables, ballad forms and now we may close the chapter with some other forms that he touched upon.

Among the forms that have proved themselves particularly adapted to serve as the vehicle for satire, the epistle or imaginary dialogue in verse occupies a very

significant position.

The traditional form of Roman satire is the epistle or imaginary dialogue in verse. It has a dramatic origin which was preserved by Horace in about half of his satires by the adaptation of the form of the dialogue. Even when dialogue proper is not used, it is as though the poet were speaking to an imaginary companion.

In 1733 Swift wrote an admirable reply to the criticism of his practice of poetry. It is a long piece, entitled An Epistle to a Lady, who desired the Author to make Verses on Her, in the Heroick Stile. The Lady here is supposed to be Lady Acheson, who asks Swift to:

"............... suspend a While,
That same paultry Burlesque Stile:
Drop, for once, your constant Rule,
Turning all to Ridicule:"

She will provide him with material, and he is to try instead to sing her praise in strain sublime. But the attempt is in vain. He allows her due praise, but instinctively turns to give her advice and then offers this apology:

"To conclude this long Essay;
Pardon, if I disobey:

Nor, against my natural vein,
Treat you in Heroick Strain.
I, as all the Panish knows,
Hardly can be grave in Prose:
Still to lash, and lashing Smile,
Ill befits a lofty Stile.
From the Planet of my Birth,
I encounter Vice with Mirth." 85

Then he turns to have a fling at Kings and courts, and corrupt ministers. But here too he constantly insists that his only method of treating all such things is ridicule:

"Safe within my little Wherry,
All their Madness makes me merry;
Like the Watermen of Thames,
I row by, and call them Names.
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:)") 86

And towards the end he confides that:

"For your Sake, as well as mine,
I the lofty Stile decline
I Shou'd make a Figure scurvy,
And your Head turn Topsy-turvy" 87

85 Ibid., p.565, Ll. 135-144.
86 Ibid., p.566, Ll. 167-174
87 Ibid., p.567 Ll. 223-26.
As Swift remarks in a letter and in his poem To Mr. Delany, he writes in rhyme because it gives him an opportunity to express his esteem for the person. This is the motive of most of these pieces, although from 1730 onwards he seized the opportunity to satirize persons other than the one he was writing to. He graduated from the fulsome panegyric of his early poems, characteristic of their time, to the delicately turned compliment, or 'obliging ridicule', in which 'rallying' plays the chief part. His Epistles are the ideal medium for this persiflage, which is found in much of his society verse, notable the Stella and Market Hill poems. To Mr. Delany is such an epistle where he shows that "to rally is better than to rail", but this theory does not go hand in hand with practice in most of his later Epistles as in To a Lady the later part of which comprise an attack on Walpole. Similarly, To Mr. Gay - On his being Steward to the Duke of Queensberry illustrates how his desire at this time to get at Walpole and the English government was diverting his thoughts/whatever subject be chose.

On the other hand, the Epistle - The Journal, which begins in the right fashion:


89 The title given in Joseph Horrell's edition of Collected Poems of Swift is The Part of a Summer at the House of George Rochfort, Esq.
"Thalia, tell in sober Lays,
How George, Nim, Dan, Dean pass their Days;" 90

is a charming retrospective picture of the merriment at Gaulstown House. During the summer of 1721 Swift paid a four-month visit to Rochforts at Gaulstown, where Delany, Sheridan, and Dan Jackson joined the party.

Swift wrote a rejoinder, *An Epistle upon an Epistle from a certain Doctor to a certain Great Lord: Being a Christmas Box for D. Delany*, to Delany who unabashedly published a verse epistle to Carteret asking for additions to the extensive preferment he already enjoyed through Swift's interest with Carteret. Swift concludes the epistle with an advice:

"Take this Advice then from your Friend,
To Your Ambition put an End.
Be frugal, Patt: pay what you owe,
Before you Build and You Bestow;
Be Modest: nor Address your Betters
With Begging, Vain, Familiar Letters." 91

Likewise Swift wrote some Epigrams which are supposed to be the last verses he wrote. It is presumed that he wrote them in the course of a walk after he had been declared

'not of sound mind' and placed in the custody of guardians.

But Ball shows that his last verses were probably Ay and No, and that his prose character of Sheridan was written later, towards the closing months of 1738. In any case these poems are brief, to the point and witty at the same time. They are in keeping with the brevity and terseness of style which Swift unhesitatingly admired in Pope:

"In Pope, I cannot read a Line,
But with a Sigh, I wish it mine:
When he can in one Couplet fix
More Sense than I can do in Six." 93

Verses said to be written on the Union shows Swift's dislike for the Act of Union in a brief but forceful manner, which recognized the Presbyterian Establishment in Scotland, described in the Tale of a Tub, Sect. viii, as the fountain head from which Aëolists carried 'inspiration' to sectaries in all lands.

There are certain shorter poems in Swift which are concise, pointed like arrows, witty and epigrammatic. With keen power of observations on subjects like the English language, Irish sense, or violent wives, these epigrams hit their mark precisely. In the deflatory epigram Shal I repine? Swift is commenting mock-heroically but with characteristic


93 Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift, D.S.P.D., p.497, Lil.47-50.
terseness on grandiose notions of the power of time as expressed by Horace, and in such poems as Shakespeare's Sonnet 65 starting with:

"Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, 
nor boundless sea...."

But one of the very brief, and perhaps the last of his poems is his Epigram containing the following four lines:

"Behold! a proof of Irish sense! 
Here Irish wit is seen! 
When nothing's left, that's worth defence, 
We build a magazine." 94

The poem was printed with Swift's Works by Nicholas in 1775 with an explanatory note. To the substance of Nicholas's note the Annual Register (1759) adds that Swift, after writing the epigram,

"put up his pocket book, laughing heartily at the conceit, and clinching it with, After the Steed's is stolen, shut the stable door; after which he never said a sensible word: so that these lines may be said to have been the last speech, and dying words of his wit" 95

It shows the mastermind, even in its dying phase,

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is still preserving the high tradition of wit, brevity, punning and simplicity for which he was known throughout his career.

We will close the account of forms in Swift's poetry with a brief study of the Riddles, just keeping in conformity with the enigmatic nature and style of our poet who, although wrote in different forms of his age, often defied the norms that bound them.

It is known that the circulation of ingenious riddles in verse was one of Swift's social amusements. This form of verse is of primitive origin: examples still survive in just as Anglo-Saxon, and the rhyme of 'Humpty-Dumpty', known to children, is a riddle of ancient origin.

It may be argued that Swift was happy in this form because he delighted in carrying things to the end of the line, exploiting purely internal resources far beyond the requirement of the occasion. This would account for most of his riddles with the virtuosity of the rhymes. In this connection we cannot overcome the temptation of quoting John, Earl of Orrery in his inimitable style:

"Yet I must add, that since he has descended so low as to write, and, still so much lower, as to print riddles, he is excellent even in that kind of versification. The lines are smoother,
the expressions are neater, and the thought is
closer pursued than in any other riddle-writer
whatever. But, Swift composing riddles, is Titan
painting draught-boards, which must have been.
in-excusable, while there remained a sign-post
painter in the world". 96

We have a number of Riddles by Swift and his friends
in all the viable editions of Swift's poetry. They have all
the qualities of an epigram - the terseness, appropriateness,
wit and punning. The 'answers' to the riddles have
also been supplied. And it will appear even in our casual
study that the shorter the piece is the better is the
craftsmanship of the artist. Here is the shortest one which
will serve as our illustration:

"Ever eating, never cloying,
All devouring, all destroying,
Never finding full Repast,
Till I eat the World at last." 97

The answer is 'Time' again which is also the subject of
Shakespeare's sonnet No. 65 quoted earlier.

In drawing conclusion to this chapter we came to
the same assessment we have made in previous two chapters/
that Swift, although writing in the Augustan period, often

96 Remarks on the Life and Writings of Jonathan Swift
Dublin: Printed by George Faulkner, MDCC II p. 129.
97 Riddles: Another, p. 630.
defied its rigid conventions and boundaries. Mr. Trickett rightly observes that Swift's poetry (excluding of course his early 'pindarics') is deliberately unprofessional, and his impromptu rhymes, his idioms are informal and casual to an extent which seems to cast doubt on the whole serious art of verse-writing. It is this which prevents us from considering him as representative of the main tradition of Augustan poetry both in its type and form. This also accounts for the neglect of his poetry.