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MATTESON, Robert Steere, 1931-  
ENGLISH VERSE EPISTLES, 1660-1758.

The University of Oklahoma, Ph.D., 1968  
Language and Literature, general

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA  
GRADUATE COLLEGE

ENGLISH VERSE EPISTLES, 1660-1758

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY  
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Norman, Oklahoma  
1968

ENGLISH VERSE EPISTLES, 1660-1758

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To Professor John Paul Pritchard for his help with the  
ancients, and to Associate Professor David P. French  
for his sensitive judgment and timely encouragement  
which have made possible the beginning, middle, and end  
of this study -- I express my warmest appreciation.



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## INTRODUCTION

In June 1729 Elijah Fenton wrote to William Broome, "I saw our friend Pope twice when I was at London.... He told me that for the future he intended to write nothing but epistles in Horace's manner, in which I question not but he will succeed very well."<sup>1</sup> And it is a matter of record now that after 1729 all of Pope's major works were cast in the epistolary mold. The significance of Pope's choice provides the impetus for this dissertation because I believe that the verse epistle has not received the critical attention it deserves. In attempting to cast light on a rather dim area of Augustan verse, therefore, I intend to illustrate and trace the development of three epistolary modes -- complimentary, Horatian, and Ovidian -- hoping to determine when verse letters were most in vogue. Also, I hope to show the importance of the verse epistle and to demonstrate that the central Augustan mode of poetry can perhaps best be defined in terms of the Horatian way.

The need for such a study is evident in view of the few critical works concerning verse epistles. Although there have been studies of the pastoral poem, the topographical poem, the didactic poem, the epic, the drama, and the ode, no one I know of has written a full-length study of verse epistles.

In fact, aside from some very helpful chapters in books devoted to single authors -- like Reuben Brower's Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion or A. W. Verrall's Lectures on Dryden -- and intricate readings of single poems cast in this mold, the epistle has gone almost unnoticed.<sup>2</sup> Lack of attention is due no doubt to the idea that the verse epistle should be viewed not as a "genre in its own right" -- i.e. like the ode or epic or tragedy -- "but as a manner of writing adaptable to such fixed forms as the elegy and the satire."<sup>3</sup> Or it may be due again to the Augustan silence about epistles in verse.

"Consideration of the epistle as a kind is indeed missing from such popular surveys of the genres as Boileau's Art Poétique, Rapin's Reflections, Thomas Blount's De Re Poetica, and Joseph Trapp's Lectures on Poetry."<sup>4</sup> But I suspect also that no survey has been undertaken because of the limitations of epistolary poetry and its inherent topical difficulties. There is, for instance, no doubt that immediately after the Restoration (and at least to 1680) the letter in verse was a distinctly minor mode and, as such, contained poetry of limited value. Having read more than 200 such poems, however, I believe it equally certain that during the Augustan age the verse epistle became a major mode of expression. The Augustans may have talked about and examined the epic and the pastoral, but many of them wrote verse epistles; and why they wrote them is the question I hope to answer. No one who has read the epistles of Robert Nugent, George Lyttelton,

Robert Lloyd, Christopher Pitt, or John Byrom would argue, I believe, from an aesthetic standpoint. But the popularity of the epistle and the fact that no other literary period seems to have produced verse letters in such number suggest the value of a study which seeks to explain, among other things, why the major poet of the period selected the epistolary way for his opus magnum.

Although the major focus of this dissertation will be on the special nature of the verse epistle in the Augustan age, some background material seems necessary to place such poems in proper perspective. Mindful of the pressures that any age brings to bear on its poets, therefore, I shall begin with a discussion on the Augustan temper, focusing on ideas that I believe affected the writing of epistolary verse. In subsequent chapters I shall trace the development of complimentary, Horatian, and Ovidian epistles written in England between 1660 and 1758. I shall devote separate chapters to Horace's Epistles and Alexander Pope. And in conclusion, I shall discuss a few contemporary trends in poetry which I believe firmly fix epistolary verse -- the Horatian way, in particular -- in a central Augustan poetic mode. Three final notes. The word "mode" used in this study refers to the combined effect of a poem's matter and manner and a writer's apparent intention. The dates, 1660 to 1758, I have selected because they represent the terminal points of a period when

the epistle flourished. And although I will include complimentary and Ovidian epistles in my discussion, I will be primarily concerned, as the Augustans were, with letters written in the Horatian way.

## ENGLISH VERSE EPISTLES, 1660 - 1758

### CHAPTER I

#### THE AUGUSTAN TEMPER

Blest with each Talent and each Art to please,  
And born to write, converse, and live with ease.

Alexander Pope, "An Epistle to  
Dr. Arbuthnot"

As A. R. Humphries has said, "The Augustan age is noted for its sense of man as a social being, divinely intended to collaborate in a great task."<sup>1</sup> And although a general social bias may seem at first to be less than unusual, what is uniquely Augustan is the degree of emphasis given to social concerns. Friendship, manners, conversation -- these were important in the Augustan world and were subjects of endless discussion. They really mattered to the men of the age, who felt strongly that communicating with others, sharing standards of conduct, cooperating in an effort to improve their society, partaking of widely accepted modes of speech, thought, and behaviour, and in general making life thoroughly civilized were among the most important earthly concerns.

Such a bias is evident, for example, in the fact that during the reign of Queen Anne, coffee-houses -- White's

Chocolate-house, Will's Coffee-house, the Grecian, and Saint James' Coffee-house, for instance -- reached the height of their popularity. In 1707 Guy Miège reckoned 1000 coffee-houses in London alone, and another visitor described them as "extreamly convenient."

You have all Manner of News there: You have a good Fire, which you may sit by as long as you please: You have a Dish of Coffee; you meet your Friends for the Transaction of Business, and all for a Penny, if you don't care to spend more.<sup>2</sup>

"Business" of a sort and a social bias are evident also in the popularity of clubs (what Dr. Johnson carefully called "an assembly of good fellows, meeting under certain conditions") that flourished during this same period. Many were undergirded by politics and patronage, like the greatest political society of its day, the Kit-Cat Club, numbering among its forty-eight members Whig leaders like Walpole, Godolphin, Marlborough, Somers, Sunderland, and Halifax, and the best-known Whig literary men of the age -- Addison, Steele, Garth, Vanbrugh, Congreve, and Walsh. Among the Tories we have the Brother's Club, assembling on Thursdays according to Henry St. John for the "improvement of friendship, and the encouragement of letters," and including men like Sir William Wyndham, Lord Orrery, Lord Bathurst, Dr. Arbuthnot, Matthew Prior, and Jonathan Swift.<sup>3</sup> And among the more informal clubs for men interested primarily in literature we have the group of Whig wits at Button's Coffee-house, the "little senate" that gathered around Addison; or the Tory Scriblerians -- Pope,

Gay, Swift, Parnell, and Arbuthnot. But others were formed purely for the sake of "clubbing" together. The Post-Man for October 26, 1703, for example, announces that "In respect to the antient Name of WESTON, several Gentlemen of the same Name, are, for better Society, desirous to meet at the House of Tho. Weston, being the Red Lyon and Ball in the Old Baily, on the 5th of Nov. next, at 2 of the Clock Afternoon." And in the Post-Man for January 16, 1705, and August 20, 1706, we find that "'A Club or Society of Men born in the City and County of Gloucester' met on Wednesdays 'at the Sign of the City of Bristol in Friday-street, Cheapside.'"<sup>4</sup>

In brief, my point is simply that a strong social bias is evident first of all in the popularity of such gatherings. If politics and patronage encouraged the formation of clubs like the Brothers and the Kit-Cats, factionalism and the production of party papers do not entirely explain their great appeal. Rather, I believe that men in the Augustan age found the good life in association with one another. Addison says, for example,

When Men are thus knit together [in Clubs], by a Love of Society, not a Spirit of Faction, and don't meet to censure or annoy those that are absent, but to enjoy one another: When they are thus combined for their own Improvement, or for the Good of others, or at least to relax themselves from the Business of the Day, by an innocent and chearful Conversation, there may be something very useful in these little Institutions and Establishments.<sup>5</sup>

And in the poetry of the period, there are frequent direct or indirect references to the joys of masculine companionship.



Pope, for instance, wishes Dr. Arbuthnot well by saying,

May Heav'n, to **blèss** those days, preserve my Friend,  
Preserve him social, chearful, and serene....

In his epistle "To Mr. Pope," Parnell complains of being

Far from the joys that with my soul agree,  
From wit, from learning, --far, O far from thee!<sup>7</sup>

To Aaron Hill, Richard Savage speaks of friendship as one of the great virtues:

O say, my Hill, in what propitious sphere,  
Gain we the friend, pure, knowing, and sincere?  
'Tis where the **worthy** and the wise retire;  
There wealth may learn its use, may love inspire;  
There may young worth, the noblest end obtain,  
In want may friends, in friends may knowledge gain;  
In knowledge bliss; for wisdom virtue finds,  
And brightens mortal to immortal minds.  
Kind then my wrongs, if love, like yours, succeed;  
For you, like virtue, are a friend indeed.<sup>8</sup>

And in "The Choice" (1700), one of the most popular poems of its time, John Pomfret describes the good life including two friends, whose company would be, he says,

A great advance to my felicity:  
Well born, of humours suited to my own;  
Discreet, and men, as well as books, have known.  
Brave, generous, witty, and exactly free  
From loose behaviour or formality.  
Airy and prudent, merry, but not light;  
Quick in discerning, and in judging right.  
Secret they should be, faithful to their trust;  
In reasoning cool, strong, temperate and just;  
Obliging, open, without huffing, brave,  
Brisk in gay **talk**ing, and in sober, grave;  
Close in dispute, but not tenacious, tried  
By solid reason, and let that decide;  
Not prone to lust, revenge, or envious hate,  
Nor busy meddlers with intrigues of state;  
Strangers to slander, and **sworn** foes to spite:  
Not quarrelsome, but stout enough to fight;  
Loyal and pious, friends to Caesar, true  
As dying martyrs to their Maker too.  
In their society, I could not miss  
A permanent, sincere, substantial bliss.<sup>9</sup>

The lines from Pomfret's poem are especially important because they express the Augustan ideal. Masculine companionship, for instance, is clearly something that Pomfret wishes for; still we can see his discrimination. He would enjoy the company of friends; in fact such friends seem necessary for his complete happiness. But at the same time he would not be pleased by a mob of visitors. And he has some pretty clear ideas about the men he would welcome as his closest companions. The spirit, in brief, might be called one of select gregariousness, in temper not unlike Swift's enjoyment of the Saturday Club when it was small and exclusive with only Harcourt, Rivers, St. John, Harley, and himself discoursing about "matters of great importance," and his disappointment when other "rabble" began to attend. On January 9, 1713, he wrote to Stella,

I was of the Originall Clubb when onely poor  
 Lord Rivers, Ld Keepr, & Ld Bolinbr -- came, but  
 now Ormd, Anglesea, Ld Steward [Earl Poulett],  
 Dartmouth, & other Rabble intrude, and I scold  
 at it, but now they pretend as good a Title as I,  
 & indeed many Saterdays I am not there: the  
 Company being too many, I don't love it.<sup>10</sup>

Pomfret's lines are also useful because they suggest a number of the qualities that Augustans looked for in an ideal man. One that stands out, for instance, is Pomfret's choice of those who are learned, well-bred, and discreet, who "men, as well as books, have known," and who are "exactly free / From loose behaviour or formality." The ideal combines intelligence, the air of a man of the world, and the capacity to wear one's learning with ease -- all of which pervade the

Augustan temper. Walter Harte, for example, eulogized his father in practically the same terms. "Macarius," he says, knew "Courts and the world," but he did not "admire" them. "He travell'd thro' them wisely and retir'd."

His books, like friends were chosen, few and good:  
Constantly us'd and truly understood.<sup>11</sup>

And he was "Great without labour, without art refin'd."

Similarly, Steele describes the fine gentleman in the following terms:

Being firmly Established in all Matters of Importance, that certain Inattention which makes Mens Actions look easie, appears in him with greater Beauty: By a thorough Contempt of little Excellencies, he is perfectly Master of them. This Temper of Mind leaves him under no necessity of Studying his Air, and he has this peculiar distinction, that his Negligence is unaffected.<sup>12</sup>

And the same temper underlies Addison's admiration for Milton's learning, qualified only by his feeling that the poet was at times too ostentatious. Talking about Milton's thoughts, he says,

A third Fault in his Sentiments, is an unnecessary Ostentation of Learning, which likewise occurs very frequently. It is certain that both Homer and Virgil were Masters of all the Learning of their Times, but it shews itself in their Works after an indirect and concealed manner. Milton seems ambitious of letting us know, by his Excursions on Free-Will and Predestination, and his many Glances upon History, Astronomy, Geography and the like, as well as by the Terms and Phrases he sometimes makes use of, that he was acquainted with the whole Circle of Arts and Sciences.<sup>13</sup>

We should note, I think, that Addison does not object to Milton's learning as such, but to its ostentatious display,

to Milton's apparent manner. In a word, Addison is saying that Milton did not wear his scholarship with ease. And his objection is only one of several like it that can be found in Augustan literature. When we think, for example, of the manner opposite that of a gentleman of the world discoursing easily and intelligently and gracefully about a number of subjects, what comes immediately to mind but pedants and ill-natured critics picking over "hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms"? And when pedantry and ill-nature arise, objections are not hard to find. From Hudibras, who "could speak Greek / As naturally as pigs squeak" to Lord Rochester's "formal band and beard," who would have us "take a flight" and "Dive into mysteries"; from Pedantry and Ill-Manners and Noise and Impudence numbered among the children of Criticism in Swift's Battle of the Books to "slashing Bentley" and "pidling Tibalds"; from the modern pedant who in Swift's Tale of a Tub addresses His Royal Highness Prince Posterity ("Oh, that your highness would one day resolve to disarm this usurping maitre du palais of his furious engines, and to bring your empire hors de page." ) to the ponderous notes Variorum in Pope's Dunciad -- in all we find constant Augustan laughter directed at anyone not easily graceful or learned. And in all we find the constant Augustan assumption that if learning rightly worn could be the "Glory of a Nation," wrongly worn it would be supremely ridiculous. As Addison says in his essay on pedants -- a meer Courtier, a meer Soldier, a meer Scholar, or a

meer anything --

The Truth of it is, Learning, like Travelling, and all other Methods of Improvement, as it finishes good **Sense**, so it makes a silly Man ten thousand times more insufferable, by supplying variety of Matter to his Impertinence, and giving him an Opportunity of abounding in **Absurdities**.<sup>14</sup>

Here and in Steele's definition of the fine gentleman and in the other examples is one part of the Augustan temper -- good sense defined in terms of learning worn with ease, or of being acquainted with a whole circle of arts and sciences and yet wearing the air of a man of the world.

i

Now if the Augustan temper includes a social bias and a delight in what Addison called "agreeable Negligence," it also involves at least two other concerns which I hope to show are closely related to the epistolary way.<sup>15</sup> And the lines from Pomfret's "The Choice" are again useful because they express the ideal. I refer in particular to the perfection of character that Pomfret would look for in his closest companions, to his choice of friends who are ideally men of the middle way -- who are "merry, but not light," "temperate," "Close in dispute, but not tenacious," for instance -- and to the emphasis placed on conversation.

The first is a subject much too large to go into in detail here, but for the sake of illustration we can say that at the heart of the Augustan temper is a love of common sense and moderation, and a hatred of excess. In terms of human character (or any concern, for that matter) this idea might be

expressed with words like "modesty," "equanimity," or "balance"; and in the literature of the age this spirit can be found in either the endorsement of such qualities or the castigation of extremes.

On the positive side in Spectator No. 206, for example, Richard Steele makes moderation an aid to happiness.

He that is moderate in his Wishes from Reason and Choice, and not resigned from Sownerness, Distaste, or Disappointment, doubles all the Pleasures of his Life.... It is not to him of any Consequence what this Man is famed for, or for what the other is preferred.... He has no Emulation; he no Man's Rival, but every Man's Well-wisher; can look at a prosperous Man, with a Pleasure in reflecting that he hopes he is as happy as himself; and has his Mind and his Fortune (as far as Prudence will allow) open to the Unhappy and to the Stranger.<sup>16</sup>

Elsewhere he says in the person of "T. B." that because no man can attain perfect happiness, "The great Lesson is Aequanimity, a Regularity of Spirit, which is a little above Cheerfulness and below Mirth."<sup>17</sup> And among the poems we have Elijah Fenton's "Epistle to Thomas Lambard, Esq." expressing essentially the same idea from the point of view of an older man.

A nobler task our riper age affords  
Than scanning syllables, and weighing words.  
To make his hours in even measures flow,  
Nor think some fleet too fast, and some too slow;  
Still equal in himself, and free to taste  
The Now, without repining at the Past;  
Nor the vain prescience of the spleen to employ,  
To pall the flavour of a promis'd joy;  
To live tenacious of the golden mean,  
In all events of various fate serene;  
With virtue steel'd, and steady to survey  
Age, death, disease, or want, without dismay:  
These arts, my Lambard, useful in their end,  
Make man to others and himself a friend.<sup>18</sup>

On the negative side a good example is the "Epistle to Bathurst" in which Pope **attacks** the extremes of avarice and prodigality in the portraits of old Cotta, Cutler, young Cotta, and Buckingham. An "Epistle to the Right Honourable William Pulteney, Esq." also laughs at extremes, with John Gay describing French "Monkeys in action, perroquets in talk," men and women who do not know what moderation means. Describing a scene at the Paris opera, for instance, where "not a gold-clock'd stocking moves unseen," he says,

My jarring ear harsh grating murmurs wound,  
Hoarse and confused, like Babel's mingled sound.  
Hard chance had placed me near a noisy throat,  
That in rough quavers bellow'd ev'ry note.  
Pray, Sir, says I, suspend awhile your song,  
The Opera's drown'd; your lungs are wondrous strong;  
I wish to hear your Roland's ranting strain,  
While he with rooted forests strows the plain.  
Sudden he shrugs surprise, and answers quick,  
Monsieur apparemment n'aime pas la musique.  
Then turning round, he join'd th' ungrateful noise;  
And the loud chorus thunder'd with his voice.<sup>19</sup>

And we have the exemplary portraits of the eccentric intellectual, Flavia, with her "Pleasures too refin'd to please,"

With too much Spirit to be e'er at ease,  
With too much Quickness ever to be taught,  
With too much Thinking to have common Thought...<sup>20</sup>

or of Zimri,

A man so various, that he seem'd to be  
Not one, but all Mankinds Epitome.  
Stiff in Opinions, always in the wrong;  
Was every thing by starts, and nothing long:  
But, in the course of one revolving Moon,  
Was Chymist, Fidler, States-Man, and Buffoon:  
Then all for Women, Painting, Rhiming, Drinking;  
Besides ten thousand freaks that dy'd in thinking.  
Elest Madman, who could every hour employ,  
With something New to wish, or to enjoy!  
Rayling and praising were his usual Theams;

And both (to shew his Judgment) in Extrems:  
 So over Victu'ls, or over Civil,  
 That every man, with him, was God or Devil....<sup>21</sup>

or of the madmen busily at work in the Grand Academy of  
 Lagado.

In brief, we might say that one part of the Augustan  
 temper is the tendency to look for what is reasonable between  
 two extreme positions -- to define charity, for example, as  
 the mean between prodigality and avarice, and to discourse  
 about the best in human behavior or character in terms of  
 modesty or good sense. For example, in Thoughts on Various  
Subjects, either Swift or Pope wrote,

Modesty, if it were to be recommended for  
 nothing else, this were enough, that the  
 pretending to little leaves a Man at ease,  
 whereas Boasting requires a perpetual labour  
 to appear what he is not; If we have Sense,  
 Modesty best proves it to others; if we have  
 none, it best hides our want of it.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, many of the examples I have mentioned reemphasize  
 the social bias of the Augustans and introduce a final concern  
 that I believe stands out.

Perhaps the key note is struck by Elijah Fenton when in  
 writing about the golden mean -- about equanimity, steadiness,  
 and serenity -- he states that his intention is to "Make man  
 to others and himself a friend." In other words he assumes the  
 truth of what Fielding called "undoubtedly and obviously  
 certain" -- that "Man is...an animal formed for, and delighted  
 in, society."<sup>23</sup> And I suggest that in the Augustan age what  
 was desirable in terms of social intercourse was often dis-  
 cussed under the heading of conversation. In short, we might



say that if eighteenth-century gentlemen were concerned about standards of intelligence, behavior, and character like those that underlie Pomfret's description of his good companions -- generosity, discernment, modesty, judgment, and common sense -- and that if in this respect the Augustans were not altogether unusual, they defined themselves perhaps more distinctively in their emphasis on what constituted a good conversation. Samuel Johnson said it more clearly when he wrote in The Adventurer.

It is with justice...that in an accomplished character, Horace unites just sentiments with the power of expressing them; and he that has once accumulated learning, is next to consider, how he **shall** most widely diffuse and most agreeably impart it.<sup>24</sup>

That the subject was important to the Augustans is suggested by their universal admiration of those who could converse and by the high place they gave to conversation among the pleasures of life. Fielding, for example, in his "Essay on Conversation" (1743) used it as the basis for distinguishing man from and making him superior to "all other earthly creatures."<sup>25</sup> Samuel Johnson thought of it, in due proportion with reading and writing, as "the business of a man of letters."<sup>26</sup> Oswald Dykes in The Royal Marriage (1733) spoke of "civil conversation" as "the just delight of the wiser Part of the World."<sup>27</sup> And John Dennis called it one of the two reasonable pleasures a man can have in the world (the other being dramatic poetry.)<sup>28</sup> But perhaps more important is the fact that Augustans tended to use the term inclusively. "Conversation"

meant to them not mere talk, but, in Fielding's definition, a "reciprocal interchange of ideas by which truth is examined, things are, in a manner, turned round and sifted, and all our knowledge communicated to each other."<sup>29</sup> And it referred also to manners or accepted modes of social intercourse. Fielding's "Essay on Conversation," for instance, is largely concerned with good breeding. In brief, we might say that conversation was used by Augustans as a vehicle for defining what they considered most desirable not only in the interchange of instructive ideas but in the full development of one's good sense. It is for this reason, therefore, that during the Augustan age essayists writing about the subject are most often concerned with the reciprocal benefits of conversation and the manners of those who converse.

In Fielding's definition, for example, is the idea that in conversation "truth is examined" and "things are turned round and sifted." By this he means that conversation is one way that a man tests his beliefs and gains perspective, or, in Addison's words, "tries the Beauty and Strength of his Sentiments."<sup>30</sup> And the same idea is repeated by Samuel Johnson in Adventurer No. 85 when he speaks of conversation as the means of learning how to "wield" one's "weapons."<sup>31</sup> But most important in the statements by all three authors is the idea not only that conversation is beneficial from an intellectual standpoint, but that it is one of the supports of civilized life. Johnson discusses this support in terms of the refinement of learning, which without the benefits of

conversation would make a man unintelligible and unpleasant. Addison speaks of a conversation "between two Persons who are familiar and intimate Friends" as perhaps most valuable because it allows a man an opportunity to give "a Loose to every Passion and every Thought that is uppermost," to "discover his most retired Opinions of Persons and Things," and to "expose his whole soul to the Examination of his Friend." And Fielding describes conversation as "The art of pleasing or doing good to one another."<sup>32</sup> For all three men, in brief, conversation is an art with decided benefits for both those who talk and those who listen. It is a major way of improving knowledge, imparting knowledge, pleasing others, and pleasing oneself.

With regard to manners in conversation, the most often repeated ideas are those suggested by Fielding's statement that in action, words, and conduct, a person should contribute "as much as possible to the ease and happiness of those with whom" he converses.<sup>33</sup> With this ideal in mind, for example, Jonathan Swift remembers Stella:

She never had the least absence of mind in conversation, nor given to interruption, or appeared eager to put in her word by waiting impatiently until another had done. She spoke in a most agreeable voice, in the plainest words, never hesitating, except out of modesty before new faces, where she was somewhat reserved; nor, among her nearest friends, ever spoke much at a time. She was but little versed in the common topics of female chat; scandal, censure, and detraction, never came out of her mouth....

She never interrupted any person who spoke; she laught at no mistakes they made, but helped

them out with modesty; and if a good thing were spoken, but neglected, she would not let it fall, but set it in the best light to those who were present. She listened to all that was said, and had never the least distraction, or absence of thought.<sup>34</sup>

The same ideal also underlies the several faults which Swift saw as evidence of the abuse and neglect of conversation -- talking too much, talking to one person only, talking of oneself (one's diseases, for example) -- and which Fielding mentions in his "Essay on Conversation" -- a disrespect or insolence or contempt for company that breeds

the supercilious eye, the reserved look, the distant bowe [sic], the scornful leer, the affected astonishment, the loud whisper, ending in a laugh directed full in the teeth of another.<sup>35</sup>

And finally the ideal, "the art of making every reasonable person in the company easy" and of being "easy ourselves," underlies contemporary definitions of raillery, the finest part of conversation. For Swift raillery in a polite age ("the peaceable Part of King Charles the First's Reign") "was to say something that at first appeared a Reproach, or Reflection; but, by some Turn of Wit unexpected and surprising, ended always in a Compliment, and to the Advantage of the Person it was addressed to."<sup>36</sup> Similarly for Fielding true raillery consisted either "in playing on peccadilloes... as too much freedom with the bottle... [in] pleasantly representing real good qualities in a false light of shame, and bantering them as ill ones... [in] ridiculing men for vices and faults which they are known to be free from."<sup>37</sup> And for Steele the most agreeable kind of raillery was a mode

of "Satyr...directed against Vice, with an Air of Contempt of the Fault, but no ill Will to the Criminal."<sup>38</sup>

Refined raillery, good nature, good breeding, cheerfulness, openness, good sense, ease -- these are among the terms used by Augustans to define what was best in conversation. Also important is the fact that when they wrote about conversation, they did so not always because they were concerned with the subject "as an accomplishment for ladies and gentlemen who wish to enter polite society, but as a human privilege common to all civilized societies."<sup>39</sup> In "Hints Toward an Essay on Conversation," for example, Swift speaks of conversation as a "useful and innocent...Pleasure...fitted for every Period and Condition of Life, and...in all Men's Power."<sup>40</sup> In Spectator No. 143 Steele talks of conversation as an "Indulgence to the Sociable Part of our Make."<sup>41</sup> And most important, the range of Augustan remarks about the agreeable art of conversation -- from talk of the interchange of information to a full discussion of good breeding -- suggests the significance attached to it. When we consider, for example, the art of conversation as discussed by the Augustans -- with their talk of refining knowledge, gaining perspective, testing new ideas, pleasing others, pleasing oneself, avoiding pedantry and technical jargon, and, in short, maintaining an easy and agreeable relationship between all civilized humans -- we have nothing less than the discussion of an ideal Augustan society in miniature and of principles applicable to all forms of

communication through language. In terms of conversation the Augustan ideal is perhaps best expressed by Richard Steele.

The Persons to whose Behaviour and Discourse I have most regard, are such as are between these two sorts of Men ["little Potentates" and dawdlers]: Such as have not Spirits too Active to be happy and well pleased in a private Condition, nor Complexions too warm to make them neglect the Duties and Relations of Life. Of these sort of Men consists the worthier Part of Mankind; of these are all good Fathers, generous Brothers, sincere Friends, and faithful Subjects. Their Entertainments are derived rather from Reason than Imagination: Which is the Cause that there is no Impatience or Instability in their Speech or Action. You see in their Countenances they are at home, and in quiet Possession of the present Instant, as it passes, without desiring to Quicken it by gratifying any Passion, or prosecuting any new Design. These are the Men formed for Society....<sup>42</sup>

The corresponding ideal of the Augustan poet is to be

Blest with each Talent and each Art to please,  
And born to write, converse, and live with ease.<sup>43</sup>

## ii

Now the four interrelated and often overlapping tendencies I have mentioned -- a social bias, an admiration of learning worn with ease, a love of modesty and good sense, and a high regard for conversation as one of the chief arts of human life -- form a significant part of the ideal Augustan temper. At least they stand out as powerful influences on all forms of Augustan literature and as pressures which, I believe, encouraged writing in the epistolary way. The ideal Augustan gentleman discoursing easily with his close friends, a learned man ranging freely and gracefully over whatever concerns him,

a social man "not murmuring to himself alone" but speaking "to" someone in a manner that is appropriately grave or gay and often easy and intimate, a discreet man not "striving for originality" or a "show of unconventional learning," a friendly and cheerful man full of good sense and knowledge of men as well as books -- all are part of the ideal suggested by the examples I have introduced. And the ideal affects much that was written during the Augustan age.

Among the contemporary critical essays, for example, we have A Discourse Upon Comedy, In Reference To The English Stage (1702) in which George Farquhar addresses a "Letter to a Friend" beginning with the following paragraph:

With Submission, Sir, my Performance in the Practical Part of Poetry is no sufficient Warrant for your pressing me in the Speculative; I have no Foundation for a Legislator, and the two or three little Plays I have written, are cast carelessly into the World, without any Bulk of Preface, because I was not so learn'd in the Laws, as to move in Defence of a bad Case. Why then shou'd a Compliment go farther with me, than my own Interest? Don't mistake me, Sir, here is nothing that cou'd make for my Advantage in either Preface or Dedication; no Speculative Curiosities, nor Critical Remarks; only some present Sentiments which Hazard, not Study, brings into my Head, without any preliminary Method or Cogitation.<sup>44</sup>

Here the easy urbanity might seem to be, if anything, too gay and negligent; but at least we have the accent of conversation, of one man chatting with another in a free and disengaged manner. Similarly, William Congreve writes to Mr. Dennis Concerning Humour in Comedy (1695) including "such little Remarks as may be contained within the Compass of a

Letter, and such unpremeditated Thoughts as may be communicated between Friend and Friend without **incurring** the Censure of the World or setting up for a Dictator."45

But perhaps a fairer example (both Congreve and Farquhar write letters) can be seen in the comparison of opening passages from two prefaces -- Alexander Pope's "Preface to the Translation of the Iliad" (1715) and George Chapman's "Preface to the Reader," the first of the "Prefaces to His Translation of Homer" (1610-16?). From Pope's "Preface:"

Homer is universally allow'd to have had the greatest Invention of any Writer whatever. The Praise of Judgment Virgil has justly contested with him, and others may have their Pretensions as to particular Excellencies; but his Invention remains yet unrival'd. Nor is it a Wonder if he has ever been acknowledg'd the greatest of Poets, who most excell'd in That which is the very Foundation of Poetry. It is the Invention that in different degrees distinguishes all great Genius's: The utmost Stretch of human Study, Learning, and Industry, which masters every thing besides, can never attain to this. It furnishes Art with all her Materials, and without it Judgment itself can at best but steal wisely: For Art is only like a prudent Steward that lives on managing the Riches of Nature.46

From Chapman's "Preface":

Of all bookes extant in all kinds, Homer is the first and best: No one before his, Iosephus affirmes, nor before him, saith Velleius Paterculus, was there any whom he imitated, nor after him any that could imitate him. And that Poesie may be no cause of detraction from al the eminence we giue him, Spondanus (preferring it to all Arts and sciences) vnanswerably argues and proues. For to the glory of God, and the singing of his glories, no man dares deny, man was chiefly made. And what art performes this chiefe end of man with so much excitation and expression as



Poesie, -- Moses, David, Salomon, Iob, Esay, Jeremy, &c., chiefly vsing that to the end aboue said? And since the excellence of it cannot be obtained by the labor and art of man, as all easily confesse it, it must needs be acknowledged a diuine infusion. To proue which in a word, this distich, in my estimation, serues something nearely:

Great Poesie, blind Homer, makes all see  
Thee capable of all Arts, none of thee;

For out of him, according to our most graue and iudicial Plutarch, are all Arts deduced, confirmed, or illustrated.<sup>47</sup>

The temper of Pope's prose, even if we allow for a difference in substance, is most Augustan. Note, for example, the opening phrase -- "Homer is universally allow'd...." And contrast this with Chapman's blunt assertion, "Homer is the first and best." The accents are not the same. Pope speaks as though he knows that all men of good sense will agree with him; and, in a way, he assumes the truth of what he says. Chapman, however, seems almost as though he is facing the enemy, and he sets out immediately to prove his point by citing venerable authorities. Our first impression of Chapman, in other words, is of a man who has done a considerable amount of research and who is determined to arque and prove his point at least to his own satisfaction. He is as "graue and iudicial" as Plutarch. On the other hand, Pope is much more easy going. For example, although he is appropriately dignified, he sometimes uses expressions that are less than formal -- "any Writer whatever," "Pretensions as to" (my italics), "Nor is it a Wonder if," "Utmost Stretch" -- he interjects a note of humor with his reference to stealing

wisely, and he uses a homely comparison to explain the relationship between his abstract terms. In brief, although I would not call Pope's prose altogether conversational, it has some of the qualities associated with the Augustan ideal. Pope does not belabor his readers with authorities, he is not pedantic, he is sure of his audience, and he comes much closer than Chapman to the manner of a man discoursing gracefully about what concerns him. In Pope I see a man delivering a friendly address to men that he knows well. In Chapman I see a man at his desk surrounded by authorities.

In the writing of some moralists and philosophers of the Augustan period, the same peculiar ease and urbanity also appear.<sup>48</sup> But for our purposes the pressure of the Augustan ideal on poetry is most important. And here I must simply state that of the kinds of original poetry written in the Augustan age -- such as songs, pastorals, mock-epics, georgics, panegyrics, tales, odes, epistles, essays, satires, hymns, and elegies -- epistles (and particularly Horatian epistles) seem best suited to the combination of ideals I have mentioned. I do not mean that a conversational rhythm is found nowhere but in epistles or that epistolary verse is the only mode in which a writer might wear his learning with ease or appear graceful and appropriately grave or gay. In fact by looking very rapidly over a few selections, one can find these qualities appearing singly or together in many Augustan poems that are not epistles. Note, for example, the opening lines

of Swift's "An Elegy on Mr. Patridge..." (1708):

WELL, 'tis as Bickerstaff has guest,  
Tho' we all took it for a Jest....

or the following lines from "The Story of Baucis & Philemon":

It happen'd on a Winter's night,  
As Authors of the Legend write  
Two Brother-Hermits, Saints by Trade  
Taking their Tour in Masquerade  
Came to a Village hard by Rixham  
Ragged, and not a Groat betwixt 'em.

Note also the following lines from Prior's Alma:

Matthew met Richard; when or where  
From Story is not mighty clear:  
Of many knotty Points They spoke;  
And Pro and Con by turns They took.

or from Parnell's "An Elegy, to an Old Beauty":

In vain, poor nymph, to please our youthful sight  
You sleep in cream and frontlets all the night,  
Your face with patches soil, with paint repair,  
Dress with gay gowns, and ~~shab~~ with foreign hair.  
If truth, in spite of manners, must be told,  
Why really fifty-five is something old.

In all these selections, from Swift's "WELL" to Parnell's "really," there is an element of ease and negligence as well as ample evidence of a conversational idiom.

But the fact remains that if Augustan poets were strongly influenced by the ideals I have mentioned (and I believe they were), the epistolary mode would have been one of their first choices. At least its centrality is strongly implied in the only extended contemporary definition of epistolary verse that I have seen, one which not only combines the earmarks of familiar Horatian epistolary verse but may serve as a brief summary of what I take to be the dominant social pressures affecting Augustan poets.

In Spectator No. 618 Ambrose Philips devotes only a few words to heroic epistles, saying that in letters of this sort (with Ovid as a model) a writer's thoughts should be delicate and tender, his versification soft, and his "Numbers flowing and querulous." Then he says the following about epistles in the manner of Horace:

The Qualifications requisite for writing Epistles, after the Model given us by Horace, are of a quite different Nature. He that would excel in this kind must have a good Fund of strong Masculine Sense: To this there must be joined a thorough Knowledge of Mankind, together with an Insight into the Business, and the prevailing Humours of the Age. Our Author must have his Mind well seasoned with the finest Precepts of Morality, and be filled with nice Reflections upon the bright and the dark sides of human Life: He must be a Master of refined Raillery, and understand the Delicacies, as well as the Absurdities of Conversation. He must have a lively Turn of Wit, and an easie and concise manner of Expression; Everything he says, must be in a free and disengaged manner. He must be guilty of nothing that betrays the Air of a Recluse, but appear a Man of the World throughout. His Illustrations, his Comparisons, and the greatest part of his Images must be drawn from common Life. Strokes of Satyr and Criticism, as well as Panegyrick, judiciously thrown in (and as it were by the by) give a wonderful Life and Ornament to Compositions of this kind. But let our Poet, while he writes Epistles, though never so familiar, still remember that he writes in Verse, and must for that reason have a more than ordinary care not to fall into Prose, and a vulgar Diction, excepting where the Nature and Humour of the Thing does necessarily require it.<sup>49</sup>

Note the qualifications in learning, in manners, in conversation. Might not Philips have said that to succeed in the Horatian way, one must be thoroughly Augustan? I believe so, because everything I have said about the Augustan

temper appears in this expanded description of epistolary verse -- the ideas of learning worn with ease, of a free and disengaged manner, of a knowledge of men as well as books, and of artful and good-natured conversation in which refined raillery is the best part. In short, Philips' list of "Qualifications requisite for writing Epistles after the Model given us by Horace" seems to me a fair summary of the ideal Augustan man. And when the epistolary mode and the ideal are thus brought together, I can suggest only that the familiar epistolary way was very close to the Augustan way.

### iii

One final question is how the verse epistle should be regarded. Should it be considered as a specific Kind, accepted as such by the Augustans? Or should it be treated as a mode of expression, not necessarily a genre, well-adapted to the temper of the Augustan period? To answer this question, of first importance is the manner in which the Augustans themselves spoke of the verse epistle; and from what little they did say, it appears that they were uncertain about its nature. The dilemma is suggested in Spectator No. 618 when Ambrose Philips refers to the epistles as a "Species of Poetry by it self" and likens this "Species" to "such Writings in this Kind, as have been in Use amongst the Ancients." Philips makes this distinction because he wishes to distinguish the sort of poetry he is talking about from all other modes like it; and he appears to be thinking in

terms of a genre or kind of poetry with distinct characteristics. He uses "sort" and "kind" interchangeable, however; and he refers at the beginning of the essay to "the Epistolary way of writing in Verse," which suggests a manner of writing instead of the requirements of a specific genre.

The same uncertainty appears elsewhere. For example, in Rambler No. 152 (August 31, 1751) Samuel Johnson, referring to prose letters in remarks which I think are applicable to the verse epistle, says "scarcely any species of composition deserves more to be cultivated than the epistolary style."<sup>50</sup> And in A Dissertation Concerning the Perfection of the English Language, The State of Poetry, etc. (1724), Leonard Welsted says,

The Art of Poetry, of Horace, is, no question, a masterly Piece, if one considers the Stile, Method, and Poetry of it, and yet I cannot but think, there are scatter'd thro' the Odes, the Satyrs, and Epistles of that Author, more elegant Hints concerning Poetry, and that go further into the Truth of it, than are to be met with in this profest Dissertation on that Subject.<sup>51</sup>

Such thoughts show Welsted shying away from any classification according to genre, although, paradoxically, Welsted seems to recognize Horace's epistles as a separate kind.

And contrasted with this mixture of remarks are other contemporary critical stands which reveal less uncertainty about how one should regard the verse epistle, but they are in the minority. One fairly definite position appears in Guardian No. 12 (March 25, 1714). Here Steele says that

regularity is required in "the great kinds of Poetry," including the Epic and the Drama; but, he says, regularity

ought by no means to be required in Odes, Epistles, Panegyrics, and the like, which naturally admit of greater Liberties. The Enthusiasm in Odes, and the Freedom of Epistles, is rarely disputed.<sup>52</sup>

Such a statement, of course, shows Steele thinking of the epistle as a genre; but despite this oasis of certainty, the general approach to the epistle, if based on what most Augustans said about it, would be multifarious and non-committal. And to further cloud the issue, Jay Levine has noted that earlier Renaissance theoreticians generally regarded the "epistle either as an elegaic mode, or as a manner of writing satire," and that critics have not yet stopped arguing about whether even Horace's Epistles should be regarded as a definite type or as a subdivision of the sermo or Horatian satire.<sup>53</sup> The result of observations such as these, therefore, leaves much to be desired in the search for an appropriate but workable way in which to regard the epistle.

But I think there is still a possible path to follow. The critical probabilities during the first half of the eighteenth century are that a poet "set out to write not only a poem rather than poetry, but a poem which belonged to one of the recognized Kinds"; that the "poet knew beforehand the sort of achievement possible in each Kind and the type of treatment required, and he was well aware what had been done in it by previous writers"; that to "Dryden, as to Pope after him, the pleasure of writing came not from a sense of complete

freedom, but rather from a consciousness of common form which could be varied and modified to suit his purposes"; that the "characteristic compromise was to seek variety within the established form: not to abandon the known Kinds, but to introduce a slight change of subject or treatment."<sup>54</sup> And the combination of these generally accepted ideas about the main stream of poetic activity in the eighteenth century with the comments showing uncertainty about the verse epistle suggests the following approach. The epistle should be treated as a separate genre, one distinguished from purely spontaneous, chatty, and private compositions. Including a specific addressee and evidence of a conscious attempt on the part of the poet to model his epistle after those of either Horace or Ovid, such poems should be considered epistles if they are occasioned by love, friendship, and mournful occasions, or if they are clearly familiar letters, not entirely private, on subjects including social and literary criticism, and moral philosophy. But to allow **for** the contemporary uncertainty, these stipulations should be made with the realization that what really mattered to the Augustans who wrote and read epistles was the style, method, texture, and tone which the epistolary mode encouraged and, in fact, required.

For the purposes of this dissertation, then, I am going to regard the verse epistle as a recognized Kind of poetry, addressed to a stated audience; a Kind of poetry which, depending on its Ovidian or Horatian heritage, is intended to



please and instruct its audience either by appealing to the emotions of love and pity or by appealing to the intellect in a persuasive discussion of serious matters of individual, social, or political conduct; and a Kind of poetry which can easily subsume (it often does) the manners of writing to be found in the "fixed forms" of the elegy and satire.

## CHAPTER II

### COMPLIMENTARY EPISTLES: 1660 - 1758

To praise, yet still with due respect to praise,  
A bard triumphant in immortal bays,  
The learn'd to show, the sensible commend,  
Yet still preserve the province of the friend,  
What life, what vigour, must the lines require!  
What music tune them! what affection fire!

Thomas Parnell, "To Mr. Pope"

Among the three kinds of epistles written during the Augustan age, complimentary verse letters will be our first concern. Unlike Ovidian letters they involve no dramatic fiction, unless we allow the more fanciful claims to be such -- Pope sitting beside Virgil in "Fame's fair temple," for instance. And although they sometimes overlap Horatian epistles, they can be distinguished by their primary purpose of praise and by the fact that they are perhaps the least **epistolary** of the three kinds to be explored. In other words, although the poet occasionally uses epistolary techniques -- by taking note of the addressee's special interests or occupation and by paralleling the addressee's situation with his own -- he tends to disregard letter-like qualities more apparent in Horatian epistles and seldom employs the familiar idiom associated with this central mode. A poem written to

praise is usually an accolade, not a conversation.

The record of complimentary epistles written between 1660 and 1758, however, is one of gradual movement from the panegyrical to the familiar mode or from the complimentary to the Horatian way. It is a record of change from a heightened and formal to a somewhat more familiar and informal manner of address, or from an essentially public manner of speaking to a more personal chat. Complimentary epistles, we might say, begin with commendation and nothing more, and pass to commendation in which the poet, as Thomas Parnell says, still preserves "the province of the friend." And within the province of epistolary compliment the record is one of gradual, albeit not perfectly consistent, change from narrow puffing to broad gracious compliment to miscellaneity.

i

After 1650 and up to the bloodless revolution of 1688, two general sorts of complimentary epistles seem to stand out. The first category contains literary puffs and tributes, minor poems not notably epistolary and seldom reaching beyond the immediate purpose of praise. They do not, for example, comment on the contemporary state of poetry. And they seldom express ideas that could be called philosophical, political, or aesthetic. The second category, on the other hand, includes poems which embody general critical remarks or substantial thoughts on such subjects. And in them is a decided tendency

to move beyond the limits of praise. If we look, for example, at representative poems drawn from the works of John Dryden and Charles Cotton -- two major poets of the Restoration -- this is the emerging pattern.

In the first category are such pieces as Dryden's "To his friend the Authour, or his divine Epigrams," published with John Hoddesdon's Sion and Parnassus in 1650; and "To Mr. Lee, on his Alexander," also by Dryden and published with The Rival Queens in 1677. Both are "puffs" of the sort that abounded during the seventeenth century. In the first, for example, Dryden purposely plays down his own poem and claims that whatever he has written of worth he owes to Hoddesdon:

Thou hast inspir'd me with thy soul, and I  
~~Who~~ ne're before could ken of Poetry  
 Am grown so good proficient, I can lend  
 A line in commendation of my friend;  
 Yet 'tis but of the second hand, if ought  
 There be in this, 'tis from thy fancy brought.<sup>1</sup>

His own poem is "adult 'rate copper"; Hoddesdon's poems are "pure gold." And in the second, Dryden repays Lee's compliment on The State of Innocence by defending Lee's too vigorous style against attacks made by "some vile Poets of the Crowd." The range in both poems is narrow, the intent is clearly that of praise, and the manner of address somewhat distant and extravagant. Dryden is not insincere, but he is no more involved with his addressees here than were hundreds of other poets who "traded compliments as freely as boys trade marbles."<sup>2</sup> In the first poem, for example, he might have said something about Hoddesdon's style, he might have included information about

previous epigrammatists (Jonson, perhaps), or he might have commented on the contemporary interest in epigrams. But he does none of these. And the result is essentially a minor complimentary statement.<sup>3</sup>

In the same general category are other tributes, including works like Dryden's "To The Lady Castlemain, Upon Her encouraging his first Play," probably written shortly after 1663, and Charles Cotton's "To my old and most Worthy Friend Mr. Izaak Walton, on his Life of Dr. Donne, etc.," written in 1672. Like others of the sort, both poems are expressions of gratitude.<sup>4</sup> Written to Lady Castlemain for her promotion of The Wild Gallant at court, Dryden's poem is a little clumsy, but it "shows him fairly emancipated from the...miscellaneousness of the poems that preceded it."<sup>5</sup>

As Sea-men shipwrackt on some happy shore,  
Discover Wealth in Lands unknown before;  
And what their Art had labour'd long in vain,  
By their misfortunes happily obtain:  
So my much-envy'd Muse by Storms long tost,  
Is thrown upon your Hospitable Coast;  
And finds more favour by her ill success,  
Than she could hope for by her happiness.<sup>6</sup>

And in the second poem Cotton expresses his warm gratitude to Walton for saving from oblivion the memory of virtuous men. Cotton is particularly caught up in his compliment not only because Walton was a close personal friend but because the virtuous men -- Wotton and Donne among them -- had been old friends of Cotton's father. Cotton sees Walton's work, therefore, as a mark of both true virtue and friendship and, more specifically, as an honor to the Cotton name.

Taken together, the two poems represent the different manners of address found in this first category of epistolary verse. In the lines to Lady Castlemain, as in ten of the thirteen minor complimentary epistles I have seen, the author speaks from a distance in adulatory tones. The paradox of happiness as the result of failure and the "witty" storm and shipwreck promote this distance. In Cotton's poem, on the other hand, there is little but heartfelt emotion. Walton has rescued the elder Cotton's friends from "frailties and mortality"; and if one should happen to memorialize Walton, Cotton says, in effect, "my monument will be to have been your friend."<sup>7</sup> The reason for this difference is clear. Dryden was writing to his social superior, and his ultimate purpose was to praise for gain. Cotton wrote to his social equal, in this case a fellow fisherman, and had none of Dryden's professional ambitions or needs. The general point here, and one that will continue to bear directly on the nature of verse epistles, is that the manner of address is governed by two important facts -- the relationship between the author and the addressee, and the professional status of the poet or the place he seeks within his society.

In the second category -- complimentary poems containing general critical remarks or substantial comments on matters political, philosophical, or aesthetic -- are works like Dryden's "To my Honored Friend, Sir Robert Howard, On his Excellent Poems" (1660) and Cotton's "To my Friend Mr. Lely,

on his Picture of the Excellently Virtuous Lady, the Lady Isabella Thynn." Dryden's poem was occasioned by Howard's Poems and was probably not a "disinterested" effort inasmuch as the poet married Lady Elizabeth Howard, Sir Robert's sister, in 1663. It achieves "in a slight measure the felicity, the fluency, and the plenitude of praise which marked his maturest compliments" and combines, with this praise, remarks which are both critical and political.<sup>8</sup> In the area of literary criticism, for example, Dryden praises Howard's improved translation of Statius' Achilles. Statius' "work was lamely rough," "Each figure stiffe," and the whole too thick with paint of "colours." This quality Howard **has** corrected; where before there was only "paint," now "we Beauties see" because Howard's "Glasse" lends perspective to Statius' poem.

Thus vulgar dishes are by Cooks disguis'd,  
More for their dressing than their substance priz'd.<sup>9</sup>

The passage refers to the desirability of art hiding art, it points to Dryden's insistence on substance in poetry (and therefore his condescending attitude toward Statius), but its most immediate critical point is the denunciation of conceits. And politically the poem draws clear analogies between Howard's supposed restoration of poetry and the restoration of Charles II.

Like some brave Captain, your successfull Pen  
Restores the Exil'd to her Crown again;  
And gives us hope, that having seen the days  
When nothing flourish'd but Fanatique Sways,  
All will at length in this opinion rest,  
"A sober Prince's Government is best."<sup>10</sup>

Cotton's poem is a lesser example in the same category. Although lacking the critical and political frame of reference, however, it bears on the aesthetic problem of the relationship between art and nature, coming to the conclusion that Lely's painting is as excellent as it can be.

So well 'tis done; but thou canst go  
No farther than what Art can do:  
And when all's done: this, thou hast made,  
Is but a nobler kind of Shade;  
And thou, though thou hast played thy part,  
A Painter, no Creator art.<sup>11</sup>

And this together with Dryden's poem shows an early tendency by the poet, using an essentially complimentary mode, to reach beyond the immediate purpose of praise.<sup>12</sup> A second general point here is that the popularity of the epistolary poem, as we shall see, was no doubt related to its tendency to allow for "all manner of discourse." In plain terms the epistle was a most useful and practical form in which the poet could talk about almost anything. The form placed no restrictions on the poet other than those he placed on himself.

The expansive tendency in epistles that are essentially complimentary is perhaps better illustrated in a third example, namely Dryden's "To my Ingenious Friend, Mr. Henry Higden, Esq; On his Translation of the Tenth Satyr Of Juvenal" (1687), in which the poet praises Higden's satirical temper and talks of his own pulling away from the tougher tones of Juvenal. In brief, Dryden writes primarily to praise; but he also includes a literary discussion of ancient and modern satire, speaking of satire as a court of last redress,



of the uses of satire in curing foppish assinity beyond the reach of law, and of the effect of the "right" kind of satire in encouraging laughter, quiet, and content of mind.

This Way took Horace to reform an Age  
Not Bad enough to need an Author's Rage.<sup>13</sup>

Attributing Juvenal's harsher temper to the times in which he lived, Dryden praises Higden's ability to combine the virtues of both Horace and Juvenal.

You make him Smile in spite of all his Zeal:  
An Art peculiar to your Self alone,  
To joyn the Vertues of Two Stiles in One.<sup>14</sup>

And as such the poem not only serves to exemplify the second category of complimentary epistles written between 1660 and 1688, but also uses further techniques pertinent to epistolary verse as a whole.

Concerning technique, the way in which Dryden takes note of his addressee is important. Henry Higden was a lawyer and a member of the Middle Temple; therefore, Dryden uses legal terminology -- "Common-Law" and "Court of Chancery" -- and ends his poem with an epistolary professional quip. Saying that if all lawyers, who are "too studious of Debate," were to follow Higden's example and temper their zeal as Higden had Juvenal, Dryden concludes that lawyers and clients would vanish because there would no longer be fierce arguments. By such interweaving of his poetic subject with the profession of his addressee and adding to the poem the hint of a dramatic gesture (perhaps, in this case, a *wink*), Dryden uses a typical epistolary technique. Also worthy of note is the way in which

the poem appears to be many things in one. While it concentrates on the immediate subject -- the beauties of Higden's translation -- it also includes a thumbnail sketch of ancient satire, Dryden's present feelings about the "right" kind of satire, references to the pleasures of quiet and content, and some slight "diggerly" directed at lawyers in general. A tendency to comment lightly on a number of subjects is an earmark of epistolary verse.<sup>15</sup>

Now the complimentary epistles discussed do not exhaust all the possibilities for this kind of verse, but I believe they represent a fair cross-section of what was being done between 1650 and 1688 in this mode. At least they are a sample of the twenty-seven poems I have seen. And although some inconsistencies exist, as a whole they seem to fall into a discernable pattern in terms of their scope, content, and manner of address.

First, the scope or range of epistolary compliments written between 1650 and 1688 seems to expand. By this I mean that with some exceptions -- Dryden's "To my Honour'd Friend, Dr. Charleton..." (1663) and Henry Watson's "To Madame Behn, on her Poems" (1683), for example -- the earlier epistles tend to confine themselves to their primary purpose of praise; whereas the later epistles, those of the 1680's, become vehicles for essays and are, therefore, much more far-reaching. To be specific, of the thirteen poems I have

read in the first category -- puffs or minor tributes -- ten were written before 1680; and of the fourteen poems I have read in the second category -- those that seem to go beyond the purpose of praise -- twelve were written after 1681. Even allowing for the limitations of my reading, in other words, **there** seems to be a unmistakable trend toward the use of poetry addressed "to" someone for the expression of substantial political or aesthetic ideas.

To illustrate this trend, in the early part of the period we have Etherege's "To Her Excellence the Marchioness of Newcastle After the Reading of Her Incomparable Poems" (1664), apparently written in response to her Poems and Fancies. Here the poet does little more than praise his addressee, saying that her fame knows no bounds, that she has a charming soul and victorious eyes, and implying that she is a goddess.

While we, your praise endeavoring to rehearse,  
Pay that great duty in our humble verse,  
Such as may justly move your anger; you  
Like heaven forgive them, and accept them too.<sup>16</sup>

The range, in brief, is narrow, and the poem makes no attempt to reach beyond its primary intention. As he might have done, Etherege says nothing specific about the Marchioness's poems, about their style, or about **other lady poets**.

As examples of the later type we have Wycherley's "Epistles to the King and Duke" (1683).<sup>17</sup> And the epistle to the Duke of York is first of all an elaborate panegyric: the Duke is an "Image of the patient Deitie," he is the "Worlds hidden Axletree." But beyond this the poem is a strong defense of

the Duke's right to the throne. Wycherley lashes out at all who would alienate the Catholic heir and compares their efforts to those of Satan in his attempt to overthrow the throne of God and Christ. He speaks of rebellion, of the unhinging of whole provinces, and of the eventual defeat of the "Moon-Barkers" who disturb the quiet night. As such, therefore, the poem goes far beyond mere praise and is more an heroic statement of devotion to the royalist cause. Wycherley is full of "Godly malice" and draws his pen to paint virtue in distress with full confidence that "Heav'n will at last the muddy Tempest clear." Similarly, the "Epistle to the King," although an elaborate compliment and a plea by Wycherley for his return to favor at court, becomes a lecture on kingship and a warning to Charles that his love affair with his nation has only made her more coy.

Her whom you watch'd all night, Courted by day,  
Proves now your false, and weakning Dalila.<sup>18</sup>

Wycherley cites Charles' too much mercy, bounty, and patience as his "Crimes" and calls on the King to be more strict with those who are clipping his power and exposing him to the "Philistians" [sic], to punish those who oppose him and assassinate the character of his most loyal followers (i.e. Wycherley). The author calls for justice as well as mercy from the King and warns his monarch of the "Rapin, Rage, and Rebellion" that will surely follow if "gadding Princes" and traitors are not harshly curtailed.

By giving each King grows an Emperour;  
 Yet the sole fault of giving, is excess;  
 Its overflowing, makes its shallowness,...  
 O'reflowing honour dreins Spring Majesty,  
 And when a Prince puts Royal stamp on Brass,  
 Raising the Mettles price, will his debase.<sup>19</sup>

In brief, Wycherley parallels his feeling that he has been mistaken and demeaned by treacherous tongues at court with a warning of the disastrous consequences should the King allow himself to be misled by the "Court-Underminers," "state lyars," and flatterers.

Kings, but condemn the Just, when they the guilty save,<sup>20</sup>  
 Suffering Tyrant Slaves, they their own Crowns enslave.

The difference in scope between the early and late epistles should be apparent. At first there is a tendency toward mere praise; later we have, in the ~~examples~~ I have cited, extended political thought interwoven with praise illustrating what I have called the expansive tendency in epistolary compliment between 1650 and 1688. And later developments will, I believe, justify the further point that during the last two decades of the seventeenth century this tendency to combine an extensive essay with compliment, marking the full development of the complimentary epistle, reached its highest point and then, in the new century, diminished rapidly.

With regard to content, allowing of course for the several variations that accompany the different occasions and purposes of the poems, most of the complimentary epistles I have seen

written between 1650 and 1688 are concerned with poetry itself -- its uses, its quality, and the poet's place in society. Some of the ideas are traditional; others are more nearly unique and demonstrate a growing regard for poetic qualities that can be associated with epistolary verse as a whole.

The first idea, and one that is certainly not out of place in compliment, is the notion that worthy men should be praised and immortalized in verse. Cotton says as much, for example, in his epistle to Izaak Walton:

When, to a Nation's loss, the virtuous die,  
There's justly due, from every hand and eye,  
That can or write, or weep, an elegy.<sup>21</sup>

And Dryden suggests the same when he praises Sir Robert Howard's peculiar talent "to write worthy things of worthy men."<sup>22</sup> A related idea also appears -- the ability of such poetry to bestow fame and immortality. This is the substance of the exchange of epistles between the Cotton family and Sir William Davenant, for instance, written when he was a prisoner in the tower. Davenant dedicated part of Gondibert to the elder Cotton ("To Fame, who rules the world, I lead thee now"); and when Charles Cotton wrote a personal tribute in return for this kindness, he said,

Let men of greater wealth than merit cast  
Medals of gold for their succeeding part;  
That paper monument shall longer last,  
Than all the rubbish of decaying Art.<sup>23</sup>

These ideas represent nothing new; but when placed beside a growing distrust of flattery, they become part of a pattern leading toward a mode of address that is more epistolary.

By the 1670's poets and readers had apparently begun to suspect elaborate compliment. For example in his epistle to Izaak Walton (1672), Charles Cotton speaks of poems written to praise as "monuments of...short date" and, by way of praising Walton's prose Lives, adds the following:

And though to verse great reverence is due,  
Yet what most poets write, proves so untrue,  
It renders truth in verse suspected too.<sup>24</sup>

The problem that many writers faced is suggested by these lines. As poets during this period they literally had to praise to stay alive. They depended upon their court patrons. At the same time, however, these same poets were well aware of the indifference of some of their superiors. Witness the case of Wycherley, for example, who "lay for seven years in prison without any of his dear Court friends appearing to observe his absence"; or of Lee, who was urged by Buckingham to come to London and was then forgotten; or of Otway, whose "aristocratic boon-companions let him die in poverty"; or of Dryden, who was "mercilessly thrashed without one of his patrons turning a hair."<sup>25</sup> In brief, many poets were caught between their feeling that the praise of virtuous men was an appropriate poetical activity, the practical need to engage in such activity, and their realization that honest compliment might easily become false and fulsome flattery.

Wycherley, in his "Epistle to the King," wrestles with this problem. Again and again he refers to the King's hatred of flattery, to flattery as treason, and to his own desire not

to flatter (while in the very act). He calls himself impudent in addressing a poem to the King, refers to his work as a "petition in verse," and, as I have already mentioned, engages in a lengthy essay on kingship, attacking all those who opposed the succession of the Duke of York. I suggest that Wycherley's poem is a good example of one method that many poets used to bridge the gap between the need to praise and the distrust of praise. And I will call it the method of expansion. Wycherley's poem is clearly a plea for help, and it is full of compliment. Yet it pretends to be everything but what it really is. It is not like Swift's insulting praise.<sup>26</sup> Rather, I think, Wycherley loads his poem with advice in order to diminish the stigma of mere flattery; with one hand he waves his indignant sword at all who would libel the "high Name of earthly God" while with the other he asks not for aid but for "forgetfulness." And he writes not a panegyric or a poem "to" the king but an "Epistle," a kind of poetry in which his major intention (and his essential subservience) can be hidden in a mass of free-ranging concerns. The point here is related to the expansive tendency of epistolary compliment written between 1660 and 1688. Pure compliment was acceptable early in the period; but with a growing distrust of mere flattery, poets began to hide it in longer and more far-reaching epistolary poems.

In other terms this wish to hide an undesirable quality in poetry or in the poet's position, such as the appearance of being a mere flatterer and therefore the purveyor of



something "untrue," is continued in a second set of ideas concerned with the desirability of art hiding art. For example we have Dryden's epistles "To the Earl of Roscommon, on his Excellent Essay on Translated Verse" (1684) and "To my Honored Friend, Sir Robert Howard, On his Excellent Poems" (1660). In the first, Dryden praises Roscommon in the following terms:

The Muses Empire is restor'd agen,  
 In Charles his Reign, and by Roscomon's [sic] Pen.  
 Yet modestly he does his Work survey,  
 And calls a finish'd Poem an ESSAY;  
 For all the needful Rules are scatter'd here;  
 Truth smoothly told, and pleasantly severe;  
 (So well is Art disguis'd, for Nature to appeare.)<sup>27</sup>

And in the second, we have this passage:

'Tis strange each line so great a weight should bear,  
 And yet no signe of toil, no sweat appear.  
 Either your Art hides Art, as Stoicks feign  
 Then least to feel, when most they suffer pain;  
 And we, dull souls, admire, but cannot see  
 What hidden springs within the Engine be:  
 Or 'tis some happinesse that still pursues  
 Each act and motion of your gracefull muse.  
 Or is it Fortune's work, that in your head  
 The curious Net that is for fancies spread,  
 Let's though its Meshes every meaner thought,  
 While rich Idea's there are onely caught?  
 Sure that's not all; this is a piece too fair  
 To be the child of Chance, and not of Care.  
 No Atoms casually together hurl'd  
 Could e're produce so beautifull a world.  
 Nor dare I such a doctrine here admit,<sup>28</sup>  
 As would destroy the providence of wit.

The specific application of these lines concerns the contemporary war against "conceited" verse and "fine writing," but in a larger sense the passages comment on what Dryden and many of his fellow writers felt should be aimed at in the way of poetic qualities. We see, for example, Dryden

praising poetry which has been made but which gives the appearance of being natural because the art involved has been disguised.<sup>29</sup> There is also the notion that poetry, although carefully contrived, should wear the appearance of ease. And finally Dryden says that the best poetry will involve "rich ideas" or "truths" which are "pleasantly severe." In brief, I wish merely to call attention to the fact that poets writing complimentary epistles between 1650 and 1688 turned often to a critical examination of poetry itself to establish criteria by which they might justify their own art and judge what was best in other works. And I might add that the points stressed -- the appearance of ease, "naturalness," rich ideas, "Truth smoothly told," manliness, and strength -- demonstrate a regard for poetic qualities that may remind us of the Augustan ideal mentioned in Chapter One.

A third area of consideration, still concerned with the central subject of poetry in this first group of complimentary epistles, involves the return of the professional poet to his place in society. We find, for example, the word "restoration" used in this period in connection with poetry as well as Charles II. The idea is inherent in Dr. Chetwood's claim that Roscommon has restored the "Muses' empire" to its rightful place, thus preparing the way for poets to serve their nation in substantial ways.<sup>30</sup> It also appears in "To Mr. Creech, Upon His Translation of Lucretius" in which Otway claims that Creech's pen has "restor'd" the "majesty

of Poetry." And it appears in Richard Duke's statement that Dryden's muse has restored fair Cressid's "fading eyes" and "to a new youth recall'd the lovely maid." "Shakespeare," he says, "'tis true, this tale of Troy first told,"

But, as with Ennius Virgil did of old,  
 You found it dirt, but you have made it gold.  
 A dark and undigested heap it lay,  
 Like Chaos ere the dawn of infant Day,  
 But you did first the cheerful light display.  
 Confus'd it was as Epicurus' world  
 Of atoms, by blind Chance together hurl'd,  
 But you have made such order through it shine  
 As loudly speaks the workmanship divine.<sup>31</sup>

The immediate purpose in these three poems is, of course, to praise the literary accomplishments of Roscommon, Creech, and Dryden; but in a larger sense, Duke, Otway, and Chetwood are really drumming for the cause of the professional poet. By using the epistolary mode they establish a line of communication between the poet and his audience; by stressing the literary basis of this communication, they focus on a subject of primary interest to the professional man of letters. And most important, by paralleling the restoration of a king with that of poetry, they suggest that the two events are equally significant.<sup>32</sup>

The dominance of this kind of **subject** matter -- the restoration of poetry, the praise of poetic qualities either achieved or desired, and some talk of the purposes of poetry -- is reasonable because complimentary epistles written between 1660 and 1688 seem most often occasioned by the appearance of literary works. It is difficult to imagine that a poet would talk about a non-literary subject

under the circumstances. But in light of later developments and the different subjects to which epistolary compliment turned, this early concentration is important. Of the twenty-seven compliments I have read, twenty-one focus on literary matters. Although my examples may be limited, therefore, I would say that the complimentary epistle in this first period is primarily, if not exclusively, a vehicle of literary criticism and related praise.

One final matter involves the stance of the poet and the manner of address in these first epistles. Again some allowance must be made for the relationship between the poet and the addressee; however, because of the complimentary nature of these poems, there is in most of them a celebratory air and a tendency toward hyperbole. This is in keeping with the essential function of both imagery and diction in panegyric -- "to emphasize and heighten." We have, for example, the following passage from Dryden's "To my Honour'd Friend, Dr. Charleton..." (1663):

Nor are you, Learned Friend, the least renown'd;  
Whose Fame, not circumscrib'd with English ground,  
Flies like the nimble journeys of the Light;  
And is, like that, unspent too in its flight.  
What ever Truths have been, by Art, or Chance,  
Redeem'd from Error, or from Ignorance,  
Thin in their Authors, (like rich veins of Ore)  
Your Works unite, and still discover more.  
Such is the healing virtue of Your Pen,  
To perfect Cures on Books, as well as Men.  
Nor is This Work the least: You well may give  
To Men new vigour, who makes Stones to live.<sup>33</sup>

Charleton had published a refutation of Inigo Jones' theory that Stonehenge was the work of Romans and had "restored" this most famous of antiquities to the Danes. Dryden's complimentary epistle, prefixed to Charleton's work, is "virtually an essay on the conquest of Aristotelianism by experimental science."<sup>34</sup> But it includes also a clear celebration of the Stuart reign by building a "providential correspondence" between political developments (the restoration of Charles II) and the rise of the new science.<sup>35</sup> The passage I have quoted follows some lines celebrating the discoveries of Harvey and Boyle and illustrates the heightened manner of address that is characteristic of the early complimentary epistles. I refer in particular to the movement from negative understatement in the first line to the confident hyperbole of the last line; to the contrast between the full high vowel sounds of "Light" and "flight" and the paltry sound of "Thin," matching the contrast between truth, which Charleton's work has redeemed, and error; and to the emphatic mixture of light, mining, and medical imagery -- "rich veins of Ore," "healing virtue," "Cures." This last is particularly appropriate because Charleton was physician in ordinary to Charles II, had written several medical treatises, and was an archeologist.

Also adding to the heightened formality of the statement are the rhetorical devices of inversion and parallelism. Inversion is used very effectively in the sentence,

What ever Truths have been, by Art, or Chance,  
 Redeem'd from Error, or from Ignorance,  
 Thin in their Authors, (like rich veins of Ore)  
 Your Works unite, and still discover more.

Just as Charleton had dug up the truth about Stonehenge and had put this rich "Ore" under one cover, thereby redeeming it from the mines of error and ignorance, so the delayed verb "unite" (an echo of "Light") binds the sentence together. I would call the manner of address here fairly typical of at least half of the complimentary epistles of the period. It does not employ the metaphysical excrescencies of some earlier complimentary poems, but it is not plain. It strikes a mean between extravagance and downright simplicity. And the dominant note seems to be one of confident hyperbole in which the thoughts are dressed for the occasion.

The relative formality in this manner of address is also evident in the stance of the poet or the place he assumes in relation to his audience. In the early complimentary epistles, depending always on the social position of the author and the addressee, the poet tends to put himself somewhat below and at a distance from his audience.<sup>36</sup> He functions primarily as a memorializer or a recorder of literary landmarks and focuses attention away from himself. Normally he speaks as one of a group who look on and applaud the work or character of a man socially above ~~the~~ group but with a common interest in political, literary, or moral recovery. And the result involves little emotion or personal warmth, much formal diction, and practically no humor or lightness. This distant

and depersonalized stance, however, changes in the complimentary epistles of the 1680's, when poems begin to broaden out and include subjects that go beyond compliment.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps we can best note these differences by comparing Dryden's "To my Honored Friend, Sir Robert Howard.." (1660) and Prior's "Epistle, to Lord [Dorset]" (1687).

The first forty lines of Dryden's poem praise the "native sweetness," the "soft numbers," the "calmnesse" and "strength" of Howard's poetry and attribute these qualities, because they appear to have been achieved with such great ease, to Howard's genius. The lines form a general critique of Howard's book and introduce a second passage (lines 41-102) in which Dryden takes up the individual merits of each part of the book. He mentions Howard's "easier Odes," his excellent translations of Virgil and Statius, and his "curious Notes," adding that what readers most admire are the poems addressed to the King and General Monk (Howard's "peculiar talent" is "to write worthy things of worthy men"). And then just as Howard foresaw the return of Charles, so Dryden takes up the mantle of prophecy, concluding with the following lines:

"This Work by merit first of Fame secure  
 "Is likewise happy in its Geniture:  
 "For since 'tis born when Charls ascends the Throne,  
 "It shares at once his Fortune and its own."<sup>38</sup>

As I have noted, the poem stresses the idea of restoration, both political and literary; and it is, in manner, distant and elevated. The fiction of direct address is not strong. Howard is another Hercules, a brave captain, and a prophet;

his muse is a mighty river, a sign of genius; and his art  
has found the way

To make improvement of the richest ground,  
That soil which those immortall Lawrells bore,  
That once the sacred Maro's temples wore.<sup>39</sup>

The distance between Dryden and Howard is suggested further  
by the pointed references to "your Verse," "your soft  
numbers," "your Muse," "Your easier Odes," and in passages  
like the following:

Ere our weak eyes discern'd the doubtfull streak<sup>40</sup>  
Of light, you saw great Charls his morning break.

Never is the word "our" used to point out something which  
Dryden and Howard share, and I can see nothing in the poem  
to suggest that Dryden would marry Howard's sister three  
years later. The main note is one of serious though not  
subservient admiration.

Prior's poem, although a complimentary epistle, is  
quite different.<sup>41</sup> Not specifically concerned with a literary  
topic, it is a discursive philosophical chat attributing  
vice to men's misuse of their abilities. In lines 1-15  
Prior notes that Dorset is blessed with material abundance  
and a noble family background, that he has served his  
country's good and is a first rate poet, but that he most  
deserves praise for his ability to use his talents wisely.  
Prior then turns to the main business of the poem (lines  
16-118). Stating that he believes everyone, with the proper  
cultivation, could contribute to the common good and that  
organized society depends upon its members doing what they



are best suited for, he says that vice and absurdity arise from the fact "Not that Men want, but use their Parts amiss."

The Coward Sieges and Campaigns recites,  
The Cripple dances, and the Coxcomb writes.<sup>42</sup>

This theme is then developed in terms of a host of specific examples -- poets who attempt things far beyond them, painters who aim high and misfire, wealthy men ~~who~~ turn to divinity or law and become either madmen or economic vultures, and poorly talented people who print their poetry and strive to be wits. The rough sailor turns spark; the ugly soldier, a beau. Thus society collapses, victimized by men who cannot rightly choose even their vices.

I firmly stil aver  
Tis not through want of parts, but want of care,  
To use those parts aright, so many err:  
They wont spare time to weigh the good or ill,  
We blame their Intellect, the Fault lyes in their will.<sup>43</sup>

And the poem ends with an anecdote, Prior's self-effacing account of meeting and talking with a "hopeful Youth" who is naturally designed for peace and the ministry but who herds with the fighters.

I met the Youth, and truly, far from spight,  
Told him his Tallent never was to fight --  
He frown'd, and said "Nor Yours perhaps to Write."<sup>44</sup>

Probably written in the summer of 1687 in response to Dorset's request for some verses and his compliments upon Prior's The Hind and the Panther Transvers'd, the poem is in manner totally different from Dryden's verses to Howard.<sup>45</sup> Dryden's poem, as I have noted, is a panegyric and has all of the elevating comparisons appropriate to that kind of poetry.

Prior's poem is much more informal and conversational. It employs no similes; and where we have Hercules and prophetic judgments in Dryden's poem, here there are muted references to husbandry, the bad habit of nail biting, and contemporary news. For example, Prior cites himself and Higden as poets who insist upon printing their work although they have just enough sense not to give offense; and to emphasize the troublesomeness of wealthy men with a whim for religion, he compares their actions to those of Andrew Pulton, a joint master of the Jesuit college, who opened in the Strand at Whitsuntide in 1687.<sup>46</sup>

Replacing the formality of Dryden's poem is the note of verse talk or civilized discourse included in Prior's liberal use of words and phrases like the following (my italics):

Thô I dont fancy an impartial dole  
Of Sense distributed to every Soul....

\*\*\*\*\*

Painters and Poets any thing may dare --  
I grant You, Sir, but with a previous Care  
O what their Strength denys, and what t'wil bear.

\*\*\*\*\*

Tis odds but he shall Print his Poetry,  
Tho such perhaps as Higden writes or I.

\*\*\*\*\*

Well; most their business, their Discourse, their Cloaths,  
Their very Vice, unfit for them they chuse.

The manner is one of casual offhandedness -- the colloquial verb "fancy," the apostrophic and conversational "I grant You," the idiomatic "Tis odds," and the exasperated "Well,"

with its note of "Need I say more to prove my point?" And this is reinforced by such further techniques as breaking off in the middle of a sentence much in the manner of an actual conversation.

The Squire from Mother sent unfleg'd and raw,  
To learn good breeding and to read the Law,  
Though he has little else to justify  
His Parts, but Innocence and modesty,  
Quitts these as soon as possibly he can,  
And swears, and drinks, and fain wou'd be --

But to my Theme -- I firmly still aver....<sup>47</sup>

There is nothing remote or formal about these lines; in place of the distant manner of address in Dryden's poem, we have rather a poet talking in person to his friend.<sup>48</sup>

In discussing the complimentary epistles of this first period, I have tried to give some idea of their central purposes, subjects, and manners as well as their infinite variety. The contrast between Dryden's poem to Howard and Prior's to Dorset is a case in point. Whereas they are both complimentary poems, they are quite different. Dryden's poem, I believe, represents the norm of complimentary address between 1660 and 1688 if such a norm can be said to exist. It was occasioned by a literary event, it is predominantly critical, its subject is the restoration of poetry, and in manner it is adulatory and distant. Prior's poem, on the other hand, is an indication of things to come. It was written for no particular occasion, it is lightly

satirical, its subject is social philosophy, and in manner it is conversational.

ii

The next period of epistolary verse compliment extends from 1689 to 1715, a time when this mode of poetry seems to have flourished. And to begin with, there are some changes in the kinds of epistolary compliment written. At least the following ideas characterize the twenty-nine poems I have seen. Mere literary puffs and tributes all but disappear and are subsumed in more far-reaching poems that often include critical remarks, the complimentary poem containing a more or less substantial discourse seems to dominate the type, and noticeable epistolary techniques affecting the manner of address begin to appear with some frequency. To be more specific, counting the epistles I have seen, approximately fifty percent of the complimentary poems written between 1660 and 1688 fall into what I have called a "minor" class -- small poems that make little or no attempt to express anything beyond the praise of an addressee. After 1688 and before 1715, among the twenty-nine poems I have read there are only three that I would call "puffs" or narrow tributes -- Joseph Addison's "To Mr. Dryden" (1693), C. Boyle's "To Dr. Garth, upon The Dispensary" (c. 1699), and Congreve's "To Mr. Dryden, On His Translation of Persius" (1693). The others -- ranging from poems that offer a few critical remarks to those that indulge in a full-fledged discourse -- vary, of course,

depending on the nature of the person addressed and the author's purpose; but at least we can say that "substantial" compliments appear more frequently than they do before 1688.<sup>49</sup> Also with regard to the manner of address, as I have said above, after 1688 there seems to be some growth in the use of techniques associated with epistolary verse, like attention to the nature of the addressee (his interests and character) and talk of oneself. Before 1688 I have seen approximately five poems that have one or more of these earmarks, and after 1688 I have seen at least eight. In brief, complimentary poems written between 1688 and 1715 continue to expand their concerns, they become somewhat more epistolary; and although their manner of address -- as we shall see -- is often formal, they include some of the signs of familiar verse.

Turning to the poems themselves, among those that are perhaps midway between a mere tribute and a substantial discourse, we have such works as Wycherley's "To my Friend, Mr. Pope on his Pastorals" (1708) and Pope's "Epistle to Miss Blount, with the Works of Voiture" (c. 1705-10). Both are alike in that they include general critical remarks, but they are quite different in their modes of address and their intentions. Wycherley preserves the distance and the formality evident in literary compliments of the past (perhaps because he writes to a young boy), whereas Pope is much more familiar, personal, and gay. Concentrating on the quality of the pastorals, Wycherley praises Pope's "unforc'd Care," his "unaffected Ease," and his "lively Images," noting

that the best pastoral poetry should be written, as is Pope's, in a style that strikes a mean between the courtly and the common. Throughout the poem, however, there is the note that Wycherley is only saying what he feels he must say by way of compliment. It is not remote praise, but it conveys the feeling that Wycherley is doing his duty. He speaks not so much as a friend, as a depersonalized "Muse."

A Muse sincere, that never Flatt'ry knew, 50  
Pays what to Friendship and Desert is due.

There is no real warmth of feeling, no close personal application.

On the other hand, Pope's poem minimizes literary comment and includes much that is personal. In recommending Voiture to Martha Blount, Pope actually recommends a way of life.

Ah quit not the free Innocence of Life!  
For the dull Glory of a virtuous Wife!... 51  
Aim not at Joy, but rest content with Ease.

He uses the enclosed copy of Voiture's works not as a stepping stone for literary comment but as a means of qualifying his relationship with Martha Blount. And to accomplish this, he assumes a stance comparable to that of Voiture in his letters to the eldest daughter of the Marquise de Rambouillet. Just as Voiture was "wisely careless" and "innocently gay," so Pope wishes his own manner to appear more diverting than regular. What he says of Voiture, he says equally of himself.

Sure to charm all was his peculiar Fate,  
Who without Flatt'ry pleas'd the Fair and Great;  
Still with Esteem no less convers'd than read;  
With Wit well-natur'd, and with Books well-bred;

His Heart, his Mistress and his Friend did share;  
His Time, the Muse, the Witty, and the Fair.<sup>52</sup>

This same division between a relatively remote manner of address and one more personal is also true of a second type of complimentary poem written between 1689 and 1715, the compliment including a substantial discourse. We have, for example, "To Mr. Addison, Occasioned by his Dialogues on Medals" (c. 1713-19) written by Pope, and Dryden's "To my Dear Friend Mr. Congreve, On His Comedy, call'd The Double-Dealer" (1694). Pope's poem, probably first drafted as a work on antiquities, opens with a lengthy description of contemporary Rome and the observation that marble busts, statues, and columns serve less efficaciously as memorials than do coins. This is followed by a passage on rare coins, some panegyric lines to Addison on his study of antique coins, and the concluding wish that Great Britain, like Rome, immortalize some of her great men -- Bacon, Newton, Addison, and Craggs. The manner is neither friendly nor adulatory. Pope seems more like a distant admirer, and even this admiration is buried in the middle of the poem.

Dryden's poem, on the other hand, is much more warm-hearted. It begins as a progress piece, tracing drama through "the Gyant Race, before the Flood" and Charles II up to Congreve, who is said to combine the best of Fletcher's ease and Jonson's strength of judgment.

In Him all Beauties of this Age we see;  
Etherege his Courtship, Southern's Purity;  
The Satire, Wit, and Strength of Manly Witcherly [sic].<sup>53</sup>

Then Dryden focuses his attention on the quality of his relationship with Congreve, compares it to famous ones involving age and youth -- that of Fabius and Scipio, for example -- and links himself with Congreve by calling attention to their mutual concern for the fate of poetry in England. This topic is developed by paralleling political references to the recent usurpation of the British throne and the lineal descent of the laureate's crown, which Dryden lost to Shadwell in 1688 and which was held by Rymer when Dryden wrote his poem. Speaking directly to Congreve, Dryden says,

Oh that your Brows my Lawrel **had** sustain'd,  
 Well had I been Depos'd, if You had reign'd!  
 The Father had descended for the Son;  
 For only You are lineal to the Throne....  
 But now, not I, but Poetry is curs'd;  
 For Tom the Second reigns like Tom the first.<sup>54</sup>

Poetry is thus cursed, although Dryden continues with a note of hope by prophesying great things for Congreve ("Thou shalt be seen...High on the Throne of Wit"). And he ends with an emotional appeal for support from his friend.

Already I am worn with Cares and Age;  
 And just abandoning th' Ungrateful Stage:  
 Unprofitably kept at Heav'n's expence,  
 I live a Rent-charge on his Providence:  
 But You, whom ev'ry Muse and Grace **adorn**,  
 Whom I foresee to better Fortune born,  
 Be kind to my Remains; and oh defend,  
 Against Your Judgment, Your departed Friend!  
 Let not the Insulting Foe my Fame pursue;  
 But shade those Lawrels which descend to You:  
 And take for Tribute what these Lines express:  
 You merit more; nor cou'd my Love do less.<sup>55</sup>

Certainly there is nothing depersonalized about these lines;



and although there are some rather puzzling echoes from MacFlecknoe, they form a natural conclusion to what Sir Walter Scott called "one of the most elegant and apparently heartfelt effusions of friendship, that our language boasts."<sup>56</sup>

Taken together the poem to Congreve and Pope's lines to Martha Blount accompanying the copy of *Voiture* suggest that the complimentary epistle was undergoing some significant changes between 1689 and 1715. Although, as we shall see, we can still find ample evidence of the old manner of address, the distant and adulatory (or should I say declamatory) compliment, there is a slight increase in the number of complimentary epistles which emphasize the personal relationship between the poet and his addressee. In fact, in some cases that I have seen, the poem seems to be as much about that relationship and its quality as it is about the unique merits of the addressee. For example, in Dryden's poem to Congreve the idea of relationship is paramount. Dryden looks at this idea from several different angles: he is the father, Congreve the son; he is the deposed king, Congreve the rightful heir; he is the old man, Congreve the youth; he is the friend, Congreve the helpmate. We see, in other words, a tendency still to write worthy things of worthy men but with more emphasis on the ties that bind the poet to his addressee, on the things they share. In 1694 Dryden speaks of "our sires," "our age, "our builders" as things which he and Congreve have in common; and although he also uses "We" as he speaks for a

group apart from Congreve, it is not the same separateness that I have mentioned in connection with the 1660 poem to Sir Robert Howard.<sup>57</sup>

The more personal nature of the complimentary epistles is also marked in the poet's tendency to parallel his own situation with that of his addressee and to write about himself. Dryden's epistle to Congreve demonstrates this, and we have further examples in Dryden's "To Sir Godfrey Kneller" (1694) and Pope's "Epistle to Mr. Jervas, With Dryden's Translation of Fresnoy's Art of Painting" (1715). Pope's poem recalls the days spent at Jervas' house in Cleveland Court when Pope was there taking lessons in painting and is less a compliment than an offer of the continued hand of friendship and condolences on the death of Lady Bridgewater, with whom Jervas "affected to be in love." As an example of a new tendency in epistolary compliment, though, the poem is particularly interesting because of the way in which Pope emphasizes what he and Jervas have shared, what they have in common: a love of painting and poetry, days spent working together and criticizing each other's work, and a mutual realization that art, however excellent it may be, preserves little from the grave. The note of common interests appears specifically in the following passages. Urging Jervas to read Dryden's translation, Pope says,

Read these instructive leaves, in which conspire  
Fresnoy's close art, and Dryden's native fire:  
 And reading wish, like theirs, our fate and fame,

So mix'd our studies, and so join'd our name,  
 Like them to shine thro' long succeeding age,  
 So just they skill, so regular my rage.<sup>58</sup>

And when Pope praises the ladies he and Jervas have known -- Lady Bridgewater, Arabella Fermor, Lady Worsley, and the Blount sisters -- he does so in language equally applicable to poetry and painting.

Oh lasting as those colours may they shine,  
 Free as thy stroke, yet faultless as thy line!  
 New graces yearly, like thy works, display;  
 Soft without weakness, without glaring gay;  
 Led by some rule, that guides, but not constrains;  
 And finish'd more thro' happiness than pains!  
 The kindred arts shall in their praise conspire,  
 One dip the pencil, and one string the lyre.<sup>59</sup>

The lines suggest that Pope and Jervas not only share an admiration for these fine ladies, but that the excellence which characterizes the behavior of the women can be translated into aesthetic principles applicable to both painting and poetry. The idea of common interests is thus expanded to include something like a common attitude toward living, a mutual admiration for a particular way of life.<sup>60</sup>

Whereas agreement seems to be the note of Pope's poem, Dryden praises Kneller's art noting what they have in common but how they appear to have reacted differently to King William. Dryden sees the contemporary climate as hostile to art; and although he praises Kneller's joining Raphael's color and Titian's design and thanks him for a picture of Shakespeare, he suggests that Kneller has sold out to the new regime.

Thus thou sometimes art forc'd to draw a Fool:  
 But so his Follies in thy Posture sink,

The senceless Ideot seems at least to think....  
 Mean time, while just Incouragement you want,  
 You only Paint to Live, not Live to Paint.<sup>61</sup>

The times have had a pernicious effect on art, Dryden's and Kneller's alike: they both share the misfortune of living in a "stupid Military ~~State~~"; they both are attacked by malicious and envious critics; both are "bounded by the Times." Yet Dryden has not sold out. He still preserves the memory of the days when

...Hymns were sung in Edens happy Earth,  
 By the first Pair; while Eve was yet a Saint;  
 Before she fell with Pride, and learn'd to paint.<sup>62</sup>

Poems such as these demonstrate a movement away from depersonalized and perfunctory compliment and a slight tendency toward individualized compliment with a corresponding rise in the autobiographical element. Poets using the complimentary epistle begin to talk of themselves, and there is in at least eight out of twenty-nine I have seen the sense of a community of interests which the poet and addressee share.<sup>63</sup> Finally, as most of the poems I have mentioned will show, there is no longer much in the way of mere compliment. Something is always added -- be it a relatively remote discourse on antiquities, or a personal recollection of some days spent together, or a discourse on the history of painting -- with the result that mere compliment or praise, when conveyed in the form of a verse epistle, comes to occupy a less central position.

Still with these earmarks that might tend to make complimentary verses more epistolary, the manner of this sort of

poetry written between 1689 and 1715 remains essentially formal. The voice that we hear is not that of the easy conversationalist but the formal public speaker. Whether it be in the praise of literature or politics or character, the manner of address, in brief, is raised (and, I might add, sometimes unintentionally ludicrous). This quality dominates the Whig panegyrics which began to appear at this time, and it also pervades most of the other poems I have seen.<sup>64</sup> For example, we have the following random opening passages:

Patron of verse, O Halifax, attend,  
The Muse's favourite, and the poet's friend!  
Approaching joys my ravish'd thoughts inspire:  
I feel the transport; and my soul's on fire!

\*\*\*\*\*

Though Cato shines in Virgil's epic song,  
Prescribing laws among th' Elysian throng;  
Though Lucan's verse, exalted by his name,  
O'er gods themselves has rais'd the hero's fame;  
The Roman stage did ne'er his image see,  
Drawn at full length; a task reserv'd for thee.

\*\*\*\*\*

I yield, O Kneller! to superior skill,  
Thy pencil triumphs o'er the poet's quill:  
If yet my vanquish'd Muse exert her lays,  
It is no more to rival thee, but praise.<sup>65</sup>

Here the tone is not familiar or conversational as we might expect in an epistle. Rather it tends toward exclamation, toward a rather orotund manner of speaking ("I yield, O Kneller! to superior skill"), and toward public declamation. "Ravish'd," "exalted," and "vanquish'd" are not the words of the club or sitting room; they belong to the platform. In brief, I believe that if during the years 1689 to 1715 the complimentary

epistle took some steps toward a more familiar manner, it remained essentially apart from that manner continuing in the relatively formal way established earlier by Dryden and already illustrated with reference to his epistle to Charleton.

With regard to subject matter, the complimentary epistles I have seen during this period concentrate again on poetry, but there are some changes. Echoes from the past include the paralleling of the status of poetry and the political situation and some talk of achievement in terms of poetical qualities to be wished for -- purity, strength, manliness, unaffected care, ease -- but to these notions are added discussions of the problems which poets must face and a distinct note of optimism based on pride of accomplishment. Among the problems are those already referred to in connection with Dryden's epistles to Congreve and Kneller: poetry's falling stock in a military state, bad poets being rewarded, good poets being subjected to ~~unjust criticism~~, and personal cares involving the future fate of one's works. Related to these subjects is some discussion of fame and reputation with the note that England would do well to recognize and remember not only its best "active" men but its best poets.

In Dryden's "To my Dear Friend Mr. Congreve..." (1694), for example, optimism and pride of accomplishment underlie the talk of progress in drama and the superiority of Restoration wit to Jacobean humor. The same spirit is inherent in Congreve's

claim that "poets have unquestion'd right to claim, / If not the greatest, the most lasting name."<sup>66</sup> But most often in the epistles of this period, pride of accomplishment appears in a favorable comparison of English with French poetry. In an "Epistle to the Right Hon. George Lord Lansdowne" (1712), for instance, Edward Young includes a passage on the relative merits of English and French drama. Young treats the French fairly, calling attention to their delicately styled plays involving close intrigues which arouse the curiosity of the audience; but his sympathies lie obviously with English dramas containing grandly styled plain actions which move the affections of the audience. The French sigh because of doubt and care; the English weep because of terror and despair. And although the French products may be more artistic, the English dramas are more natural. The same distinction between English ~~strength~~ and French refinement appears in Dryden's "To my Friend, the Author [Peter Motteux]" (1698). Dryden contrasts Motteux's one fault -- "too much Plenty" -- with the French tendency to be "thinly regular" and comes to the standard linguistic conclusion:

Our sturdy Teuton, yet will Art obey,  
More fit for manly thought, and strengthen'd with Allay.<sup>67</sup>

And in a third example, the French are treated more severely. Writing "To Mr. Granville, on his Excellent Tragedy, call'd Heroick Love" (1698), Dryden refers to French drama as "the Crab-Vintage of the Neighb'ring Coast."<sup>68</sup>

I take this mode of compliment -- i.e. praising a person's work by setting it off against French accomplishments, as opposed to concentrating on the individual merits of a particular work -- as a sign of the expanding scope of epistolary compliment. And this same tendency is perhaps even more evident in the growth of advice and in the political tenor of epistolary verse after 1688. Before the bloodless revolution only three poems of the twenty-seven I have read offer advice.<sup>69</sup> Two are overtly political, and ten include commentary on the times. After 1688 six of the twenty-nine epistles I have read offer advice, six are overtly political, and sixteen contain comments on the times. Writing to Dryden, for example, Wycherley suggests that

None just, or fit, can their Invention call,  
If 'tis not easie, free, and natural.<sup>70</sup>

Pope urges Martha Blount to "rest content with ease." Dryden speaks to Sir Godfrey Kneller of the "stupid Military State" and "these Inferiour Times." And in what C. A. Moore calls a "typical Whig panegyric of William III," Stepney reviews the King's heroism in battle, England's unselfish motives in Ireland and on the continent, William's right to the throne, and the benevolent wisdom and humanity of Whig patriots.<sup>71</sup> In brief, after 1688 epistolary compliments seem much more far-reaching; and this quality together with the other small points I have mentioned -- the occasional tendency for the poet to talk of himself, for example -- takes us somewhat closer to the Horatian way.



The major trends I have noted -- the expanded content of complimentary epistles, an increase in the amount of advice and general commentary, a continuation of a raised manner of speech together with the occasional appearance of a more familiar way -- make it very difficult to select any one representative poem; but perhaps what I have said about epistolary compliments written between 1689 and 1715 can be summarized with reference to John Dryden's "To my Honour'd Kinsman, John Driden ..." (1700). Although it is misleading to talk of a norm in this kind of poetry, Dryden's poem comes close to the middle ground of this time -- lying in manner, as it does, between Ambrose Philips' hysterical apostrophe to property,

But who advances next, with cheerful grace,  
Joy in her eye, and plenty in her face?  
A wheaten garland does her head adorn:  
O Property! O goddess, English born!  
Where hast thou been?<sup>72</sup>

and the more conversational lines of George Stepmey:

Sir,  
Since you oft invite me to renew  
Art I've either lost, or never knew,  
Pleas'd my past follies kindly to commend,  
And fondly lose the critic in the friend;  
Though my warm youth untimely be decay'd,  
From grave to dull insensibly betray'd,  
I'll contradict the humour of the times,  
Inclin'd to business, and averse to rhymes,  
And, to obey the man I love, in spite  
Of the world's genius and my own, I'll write.<sup>73</sup>

At least Dryden's poem is among the better complimentary

epistles I have seen, and it may serve as a final example of the changes that took place in this form between the middle and the end of the seventeenth century.

Dryden begins his poem with a eulogy of country life in general and of the beneficence of his relative in particular.

How Bless'd is He, who leads a Country Life,  
Unvex'd with anxious Cares, and void of Strife!  
Who studying Peace, and shunning Civil Rage,  
Enjoy'd his Youth, and now enjoys his Age:  
All who deserve his Love, he makes his own;  
And, to be lov'd himself, needs only to be known.<sup>74</sup>

Dryden praises his cousin as a settler of disputes between contending neighbors, a just and wise man who saves the expense of "long Litigious Laws," a generous man who closes the door to no one and is "industrious of the Common Good," and one who exercises his wit, solid sense, and integrity in the service of his country. But the poet saves his particular praise for that part of his cousin's character which shows him to be an exemplary "Parliament Man" or patriot. He steers between the Country and the Court, neither gratifying the great nor begrudging what the public need requires; he serves both king and country, assuring the preservation of a balance of power; and he asserts the rights of the people in time of peace not so vigorously as to oppose the idea of monarchy but enough to preserve the Englishman's birthright of liberty and to oppose unjust force. The principle Dryden supports is that of a parliamentary or constitutional monarchy.

A Patriot, both the King and Country serves;  
Prerogative, and Privilege preserves:

Of Each, our Laws the certain Limit show;  
 One must not ebb, nor t'other overflow:  
 Betwixt the Prince and Parliament we stand;  
 The Barriers of the State on either Hand:  
 May neither overflow, for then they drown the Land.  
 When both are full, they feed our bless'd Abode;  
 Like those, that water'd once, the Paradise of God.<sup>75</sup>

And to this ideal political stand Dryden adds his practical vote for peace and against the maintenance of a standing army.<sup>76</sup>

Enough for Europe has our Albion fought:  
 Let us enjoy the Peace our Blood has bought.

Now the political commentary alone would be sufficient to qualify the poem as a complimentary epistle including a substantial discourse, which dominates this kind of poetry between 1689 and 1715; but Dryden takes matters even further by digressing from his main theme to write sardonically of marriage and medicine. In these passages the poem becomes more personal and more familiar. Dryden, perhaps, has in mind his own marriage to a woman about whom "we know next to nothing"; but the immediate reference is to his cousin's successful resistance to marriage.<sup>77</sup> John Dryden of Chesterton was a confirmed bachelor. The talk of medicine and doctors, born of excess and sustained by sloth, also has this twofold reference. Dryden suffered periodic attacks of the gout; and his cousin, sixty-five years old in 1700, must have been sympathetically interested in the ailments and infirmities of age. And Dryden adds a third personal touch in his mention of healthy hunting. "Hunting," as he had written his Cotterstock relatives "is my cousin's life."<sup>78</sup>

Next, Dryden's poem to his cousin is a representative epistle of the time because it demonstrates the poet's tendency to parallel his own situation with that of his addressee and to talk of himself. For example, Dryden speaks in the following manner of his cousin's love of the gentle sport of hunting hares.

The Hare, in Pastures or in Plains is found,  
Emblem of Humane Life, who runs the Round;  
And, after all his wand'ring Ways are done,  
His Circle fills, and ends where he begun,  
Just as the Setting meets the Rising Sun.  
Thus Princes ease their Cares: But happier he,  
Who seeks not Pleasure thro' Necessity,  
Than such as once on slipp'ry Thrones were plac'd;<sup>79</sup>  
And chasing, sigh to think themselves are chas'd.

The last four lines refer directly to the fate of James II, then in exile and hunting in the famous forest of St. Germaine. But they also suggest Dryden's memory of the "slipp'ry Throne" of the laureate from which he was "chas'd" or driven away. Just as the hare, "after all his wand'ring Ways are done," ends his journey where he began, so Dryden sees himself back where he started -- although this time his sun is setting instead of rising. In this manner Dryden turns a passage about his cousin's favorite sport into a thinly veiled statement of his own political sentiments and speaks emblematically of his own life. The same is true of the passage on physicians, in which doctors who kill their patients and outrage the science of medicine are equated with bad writers and translators whose work murders the Muse of epic poetry.<sup>80</sup> And more specific parallels occur when Dryden calls to mind a common ancestor, Sir Erasmus Dryden, whose noble

stubbornness and resistance to tyranny had twice put him in prison during the reigns of James I and Charles I, or when he suggests an analogy between his cousin's preservation of liberty and his own poetic task of preserving his cousin's fame.

Two of a House, few Ages can afford;  
 One to perform, another to record.  
 Praise-worthy Actions are by thee embrac'd;  
 And 'tis my Praise, to make thy Praises last.  
 For ev'n when Death dissolves our Humane Frame,  
 The Soul returns to Heav'n, from whence it came;  
 Earth keeps the Body, Verse preserves the Fame.<sup>81</sup>

Lastly, the epistle is representative, I believe, because with all of its "familiar" tendencies, it remains essentially a raised discourse, what Dryden called "a Memorial of my own Principles to Posterity."<sup>82</sup> More specifically, it uses a formal mode of address -- what Dryden referred to in his preface to Religio Laici as a style that is "Plain and Natural, and yet Majestick." It is not declamatory, but neither is it altogether conversational. And as such it contains the note of at least eighteen of the twenty-nine poems I have seen. It is also useful at this point because it shows the middle ground of complimentary epistles written between 1689 and 1715: its roots are in the past, in the approved practice of memorializing virtuous men and in the relatively formal mode of address that we have seen in works like the epistle to Charleton; but at the same time it looks forward to the future, to the idea of the poet as a moral legislator for his society and perhaps to a more familiar manner.

## iii

Complimentary epistles written between 1689 and 1715, I believe, represent the high point of development in this form because after 1715 such poems seem to diminish rapidly, to become trivial and minor in the extreme. At least this much is implied by what I have read. To be specific, after 1715 complimentary epistles appear most often as inconsequential personal tributes. Twenty-five of the forty poems I have read fall into this category. The letter including a substantial discourse -- such as we find in Whig panegyrics -- appears infrequently. I have seen seven. And to these now familiar types we might add the eulogy in the form of a letter and the mock encomium. In brief, after 1715 the complimentary epistle, although never a major form of epistolary poetry, becomes so minor as to be almost negligible. Up to 1715 at least we have a few poems -- like Dryden's epistles to his cousin, to Charleton, to Roscommon, and to Howard -- which are anthologized and fairly well known; after 1715 we are in a remote area indeed.

In the category of mock compliment are Gay's "A Panegyric Epistle to Mr. Thomas Snow" (1721) and "To my ingenious and worthy Friend William Lowndes, Esq." (1720). The second poem lauds facetiously the appearance of the Land-Tax Bill, a "celebrated treatise," and suggests ironically that if Homer

could gain fame by singing of every Grecian chief and town  
 then Lowndes, whose prose "sweetly counts" 5000 knights and  
 shires, "Their seats, their cities, parishes, and shires,"  
 deserves much more.

And shall no laurel deck thy famous head,  
 In which the Senate's annual law is bred?  
 That hoary head, which greater glory fires,  
 By nobler ways and means true fame acquires.  
 O, had I Virgil's force to sing the man,  
 Whose learned lines can millions raise per ann.  
 Great L---- his praise should swell the trump of fame,  
 And rapes and wapentakes resound his name.<sup>83</sup>

Gay clasifies Lowndes' masterpiece as a satire, because it  
 "Makes the rich miser tremble o'er his cash"; and he makes his  
 point clear at the end when he urges the abandonment of a  
 standing army and suggests that the Land-Tax Bill will only  
 pay for trouble.

Truce with thy dreaded pen; thy annals cease;  
 Why need we armies when the land 's in peace?  
 Soldiers are perfect devils in their way,  
 When once they're raised, they're cursed hard to lay.<sup>84</sup>

More sustained irony appears in the poem to Thomas Snow, a  
 London goldsmith, who apparently bought and attempted to sell  
 South Sea stock long after everyone knew it was fraudulent  
 and who was, accordingly, "taken in by the Directors...at a  
 thousand per cent." The mock seriousness is effective, and  
 Snow emerges as a grasping economic madman engaged in the  
 fanciful business of buying and selling non-existent property  
 with non-existent credit.<sup>85</sup>

Contrasted with the mock seriousness of these poems is  
 the somberness of the eulogy exemplified by Edward Young's

"A Letter to Mr. Tickell, Occasioned by the Death of the Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq." (1719) and Gay's "Epistle to Her Grace, Henrietta, Duchess of Marlborough" (1722). Young begins by recalling the happy days spent with Tickell "in Oxford groves" when they were joined "In social arts and sacred friendship," continues with a eulogy of Addison -- a ~~statesman~~, patriot, Christian, and friend -- and ends by urging Tickell to proceed with the preparation of Addison's works for publication.

But haste to thy illustrious task; prepare  
The noble work well trusted to thy care,  
The gift bequeath'd by Addison's command,  
To Craggs made sacred by his dying hand.<sup>86</sup>

Gay's lines to the Duchess of Marlborough, occasioned by the death of the Duke, are those of "A prudent friend, who seeks to give relief." The poet offers his consolation, reminds the lady that a nation shares her loss, praises Marlborough as the savior of Holland, Belgium, and Germany, and urges the Duchess to be mindful of her husband's immortal honor.

Where'er men talk of war and martial fame,  
They'll mention Marlborough's and Caesar's name.<sup>87</sup>

But the most notable feature of the epistle is Gay's awareness of his addressee's state of mind. He returns often to the idea that nothing he can say will really ease the Duchess's pain, and that it might be better to mourn and admire in silence. In the middle of the poem, for example, Apollo speaks to the poet and tells him that Marlborough's merit transcends mortal praise, which only succeeds in awaking



sorrow. And at the end of the poem, Gay, fearful of seeming to indulge the lady's woes, includes the following bit of common sense and praise:

But vain are all the counsels of the Muse,  
A soul like yours cou'd not a tear refuse:  
Could you your birth and filial love forego,  
Still sighs must rise and gen'rous sorrow flow;  
For when from earth such matchless worth removes,  
A great mind suffers. Virtue virtue loves.<sup>88</sup>

Although there is an element of condolence in two previously cited epistles -- Pope's epistle to Jervas, in which the poet extends his sympathies on the death of Lady Bridgewater, and Young's epistle to Lansdowne, in which the poet includes an elegaic passage on the loss of his college friend, William Harrison -- the eulogy is essentially a new development in epistolary compliment.<sup>89</sup> There are also some significant changes in epistolary compliments which include a substantial discourse. Exemplified by such works as James Thomson's "To Doddington: The Happy Man" (1729) and Doddington's "An Epistle to the Right Hon. Sir Robert Walpole," (1726), poems of this third type written between 1715 and 1758 appear much less often than they did between 1689 and 1715, and they come very close to being Horatian epistles.<sup>90</sup> Advice and philosophical observations on the good life appear occasionally in some of the free-ranging complimentary epistles written before 1715 (in Dryden's epistle to his cousin, for example).<sup>91</sup> But after this date, advice and moral philosophy all but take over this sort of poem; and except for what appears to be a major intent to praise, the line

between complimentary and Horatian epistles becomes, in some cases, almost imperceptible. For example, in his epistle to Doddington, to whom he dedicated Summer, Thomson writes mellifluously of the good life. He begins with an enumeration of externals which alone cannot make a man happy -- plenteous fortune, gilded roofs, painted walls, hospitable cheer, various bounty, full cellars, attending crowds, youth, health, and vigor:

Even not all these, in one rich lot combined,  
Can make the happy man, without the mind.<sup>92</sup>

And he ends with a traditional statement about internal moral harmony necessary for true happiness. Man needs a "mind,"

Where judgement sits clear-sighted, and surveys  
The chain of reason with unerring gaze;  
Where fancy lives, and to the brightening eyes  
Bids fairer scenes and bolder figures rise;  
Where social love exerts her soft command  
And lays the passions with a tender hand,  
Whence every virtue flows, in rival strife,  
And all the moral harmony of life.<sup>93</sup>

Material such as this -- with talk of the "chain of reason"; its mental equivalent, judgement and fancy arranged hierarchically; and its social equivalent, social love controlling the passions -- goes far beyond anything we have seen in this sort of poetry before. In fact, were it not for Thomson's major intent to praise Doddington for having both the fortune and the mind requisite for true happiness, this poem, borrowing freely from the stock in trade of the Horatian epistle, would cease to be a compliment.

Even more problematical is Doddington's poem to Walpole, in which the "inexperienc'd friend" writes of problems

involved in giving patronage and place. Intending no mean interest, malice, or flattery, Doddington -- having reassured his addressee -- mentions that those who do not deserve patronage will most often ask for it, that the great are too often prone to sell their favors freely, that few are gifted either to ask with grace or to give (like Walpole) with dignity, and that gifts frequently breed envy and hatred. He closes by advising Walpole to continue acting as he has before in rewarding the just and the honest and in choosing to raise the true man over the genius. Doddington's major intent seems that of holding Walpole up as an exemplary patron and as one who has mastered "The chief perfection of the statesman's art" --

To give to fair assent a fairer face,  
Or soften a refusal into grace.<sup>94</sup>

But this praise is overshadowed by the poet's advice and his discourse on a subject with which he, as a patron, must have been familiar. The poem thus moves away from compliment and toward the more Horatian epistle, one in which compliment has only a minor role and philosophical discourse or advice are dominant.<sup>95</sup>

The fourth type of epistolary poetry written after 1715 is the personal tribute, including dedicatory poems, such as Pope's "Epistle to Robert Earl of Oxford, and Earl Mortimer" (1721); birthday poems, like Thomson's "To His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales" (1737); and works like Swift's "To his Grace the Arch-Bishop of Dublin," (1724), in praise of the Archbishop's strong opposition to Wood's coinage.<sup>96</sup> All are

distinctly minor, but they are perhaps of some interest here because they exemplify the sort of poetry which dominated epistolary compliment after 1715 and because they employ a new manner of address.

Whereas in the past the poet addressed his superiors deferentially or wrote to a friend, fellow poet, or relative as an equal, in the personal tributes written after 1715 the poet more often speaks as equal to his addressee regardless of social position and sometimes places himself in a slightly superior position.<sup>97</sup> For example we have Pope's epistle to Oxford, a dedicatory poem accompanying the works of Parnell and sent to the Earl after he had fallen from power and was living obscurely in the country. Throughout, Pope speaks as an equal of his addressee; and although he praises Oxford, he also reminds the Earl of the faithfulness of his poetic friends -- Swift, Parnell, and himself -- as opposed to the fickleness of his court acquaintances, calling to mind that time of Oxford's life that was happiest.

For him [Parnell], thou oft ~~hast~~ bid the World attend,  
Fond to forget the Statesman in the Friend;  
For Swift and him, despis'd the Farce of State,  
The sober Follies of the Wise and Great;  
Dextrous, the craving, fawning Crowd to quit,  
And pleas'd to 'scape from Flattery to Wit.<sup>98</sup>

Such lines have the ring of approval rather than praise, and the note of equality is emphasized with reference to what the poet and Earl have shared. Pope freely criticizes the court circles in which Oxford walked, and there is not the least hint of his fearing to offend. The letter is candid, confident,

reassuring, personal, and dignified. And we know that it was perfectly appropriate. Pope had written to Oxford on October 21, 1721, "tis the only Dedication I ever writ, & shall be, whether you permit it or not." And on November 6, 1721, Oxford sent his permission that Parnell's poem be so dedicated and included the following: "I look back, indeed, to those Evenings I have usefully & pleasantly spent with Mr. Pope, Mr. Parnell, Dean Swift, the Doctor, &c. I should be glad the World knew you admitted me to your Friendship."<sup>99</sup> It is almost as if the statesman and the poet had exchanged places, and in fact that was the case. With the translation of Homer finished, Pope was riding high; and Oxford was out of favor.

The note of superiority, obvious in the mock compliment, is exemplified by Pope's "Epistle to James Craggs, Esq; Secretary of State" (1720). In what has been called "the least attractive of the Epistles to Several Persons," Pope advises Craggs to be candid, free, sincere, and unashamed of his friends, as in the past. And at the end Pope says that if Craggs does not take this advice to heart, he will no longer enjoy the poet's support.

The Patriot's plain, but untrod path pursue;  
If not, 'tis I must be asham'd of you.<sup>100</sup>

This is almost democratic. At least it is the address of a poet supremely confident of his position in society. And this same confidence appears in other poems like Gay's "Mr. Pope's Welcome From Greece" or, to some extent, in the epistle to

Lady Marlborough, wherein the poet seems to have become a spokesman for his society.<sup>101</sup> In mourning the death of Marlborough, Gay speaks really for the whole nation; and in "Mr. Pope's Welcome...", written upon completion of the Iliad, he includes an epic catalogue of over eighty noble ladies and gentlemen, poets, actors, and friends who share his joy and have assembled beside the Thames to cheer their hero. No longer is the poet on the outside looking in and attempting to find a place for himself in his society. Just as Pope has made his way up the Thames to a victorious landing, the professional poet has "arrived"; and just as Pope is surrounded by friends, so the poet has found a secure place for himself in his society and can speak freely both to and for that society. Whereas in the past the poet might have praised for gain or have written grateful letters of thanks to those who supported his career, Pope, as the independent, can now gracefully deny that he deserves all this attention.

All this, my friends, I owe to Homer's strain,  
 On whose strong pinions I exalt my lay.  
 What from contending cities did he gain?  
 And what rewards his grateful country pay?  
 None, none were paid -- why then all this for me?  
 These honours, Homer, had been just to thee.<sup>102</sup>

This stance, born of confidence and equality, is also matched in the complimentary epistles written after 1715 by a noteworthy shift in subject matter. We have seen that in the past poets tended to write most often of poetry or of poetic qualities to be wished for in an attempt to establish standards of excellence and, in a sense, to defend the poet's

place in society by calling attention to what had been accomplished. At least these subjects stand out in the verse letters I have seen. After 1715 complimentary epistles seem less defensive about poetry, and there is proportionately less emphasis on literary subjects in general.<sup>103</sup> Gay's poem welcoming Pope, for example, concentrates not on poetic merit, which is taken for granted, but on the reception of the Iliad. And in place of subjects like the sacredness of poetic art, the way in which poetry can confer immortality, or the superiority of English to French work, we have quiet reminders about the usefulness of poetry. Pope, in the closing lines of his epistle to Oxford, calls to mind the faithfulness of the Muse which has followed the Earl to his retreat and remains with him even in disgrace -- "No Hireling she, no Prostitute to Praise." And in the same way, Gay tells the Duchess of Marlborough that poetry may help to ease her grief.

Excuse me, Madam, if amidst your tears  
A Muse intrudes, a Muse who feels your cares;  
Numbers, like music, can ev'n grief control  
And lull to peace the tumults of the soul.<sup>104</sup>

Pope and Gay speak as though what they say is already well known and accepted.<sup>105</sup>

Besides the diminishing tendency to concentrate on poetry as a major subject is a greater emphasis on both public and private virtues and the social arts as central subjects.<sup>106</sup> For example in his "Epistle to James Craggs," Pope advises the new Secretary of State to be "candid, free, sincere,"

to be unaffected by flattery, to value intrinsic worth, to hide nothing because of guilt and fear, and to show warmth but not passion in his personal conduct. And when Young eulogizes Addison in the letter to Tickell, he speaks of Addison's wit -- "the blossom of soundest sense" distinct from a "gay but worthless power" -- his wisdom in the Senate, and his grace at court. Here is nothing profound or altogether new, but the emphasis on public virtues -- common sense, honesty, sincerity -- which appear endlessly in complimentary poems, should be clear. Even more pointed are the frequent references to the general area of social arts. For example, Young mentions by way of recalling his days with Tickell at Oxford that they were joined in "social arts" and "sacred friendship." And in praising Addison, he refers to the former Secretary's concern for the "public welfare." Similarly in "Mr. Pope's Welcome," Gay speaks of St. John, "for ev'ry social virtue priz'd"; of Lewis, who "has never forsaken a friend"; and of Withers, a "friend of human kind." And finally in his epistle to Jervas, Pope recalls in particular the candid, free, and sincere relationship which they enjoyed when each spent some time

finding like a friend  
 Something to blame, and something to commend.

Completing the shift of interest away from poetry toward more social concerns is the tendency after 1715 by poets using the complimentary epistle to write not of threats to the immediate "world" of poetry but of threats to society as a



whole -- the Land-Tax Bill, Wood's coinage, and the South Sea scandal. In the past when current events were mentioned, they were most often, but not always, treated in terms of the effect they might have on literature or art. Dryden does this, for example, in his epistle to Kneller by calling attention to the hostile regime of a warrior king and its pernicious effect on art.<sup>107</sup> After 1715 this application is not specified, with the result that poets seem more concerned with the welfare of their total society and in a position from which they can speak with some authority. They speak not as members of a group apart from the main stream of political and social life, but as members of an inner and important circle in society much concerned about public affairs and public welfare. Reinforcing this idea is the fact that social and political, not literary, occasions often provide the impetus for complimentary epistles after 1715.<sup>108</sup>

We have seen in this final period (1715-1758) two mock compliments, the tendency of the poet to speak to his addressee as an equal, the long compliment replaced by a poem of advice and philosophical discourse, and a shift in subject matter from literary concerns to broad social topics. These changes may explain why the epistolary compliment tended to diminish in importance after 1715 and give way to the Horatian epistle, because in many ways they suggest that the

poet after 1715 would have been encouraged to use the more familiar mode. He was no longer always dependent upon his superiors; he often scorned the notion of indiscriminate praise; he was given to writing didactic and philosophical poetry; and because of his relatively secure position in society, he may well have tended to think of himself as a master of decorum. After 1715 the mutual admiration society that bred complimentary epistles before this date seems to give way to a confident group of professional men who have much in common and who share the central Horatian interest in posing moral and artistic standards for society as a whole. In brief, to follow the main line of epistolary verse written in England between 1660 and 1758, we should, I think, move directly from epistolary compliments appearing between 1689 and 1715 to the familiar epistles written after 1715.

### CHAPTER III

#### HORACE

quod petis hic est,  
est Ulubris, animus si te non deficit aequus.

#### "To Bullatius"

Turning from epistles written primarily to praise, we face a mode of verse at the heart of our matter, what Ambrose Philips called "Familiar, Critical, and Moral" epistles and "Letters of Mirth and Humour" in the Horatian way. That the Horatian epistle dominated the type during the first half of the eighteenth century will, I believe, become apparent as we examine a number of poems written between 1660 and 1758. Also I believe that epistles, neither Ovidian nor complimentary, will ~~prove~~ to be progressively more Horatian as we go from earlier examples written during the Restoration to those written in the 1730's. And I can suggest now that the general pattern of familiar epistles more or less Horatian is analogous to periods of seedtime, growth, and harvest (1660-1688, 1689-1715, and 1716-1758, respectively). But before we look more closely at examples that may illustrate this pattern, there are at least two

definitive problems which are the central concern of this chapter.

The first is suggested by my rather abandoned use thus far of the word "Horatian," a "notoriously ambiguous term." Reuben Brower lists three meanings:

First, there is 'Horatian' as applied to poetry deriving from the Odes, the term being used to describe the fine poise of urbanity and feeling in poems on love and patriotic themes, the qualities so beautifully exemplified in Marvell's Ode on Cromwell or To His Coy Mistress. Next there is the 'Horatian' manner of Dryden and his contemporaries, the style of public address and instruction. This Restoration style was ultimately indebted to the true Horatian satirical-epistolary mode, to Horace's own style and 'manner of proceeding' in satire. Finally, there is Pope's own 'Horatian' mode, a variation on Dryden's style of public address and the manner of Horace himself.<sup>1</sup>

In brief, there is obviously a need for definition and for establishing criteria which may be used to measure whether a poem is "more" or "less" Horatian than another or even to determine whether a poem is essentially Horatian or complimentary.<sup>2</sup> A second problem is suggested by Mr. Brower's phrase, "the true Horatian satirical-epistolary mode," in which he seems to assume that Horatian satiric and epistolary poems are so nearly the same in manner as to be inseparable. Now I have no wish to do battle with Mr. Brower. In fact, my indebtedness to his book The Poetry of Allusion will become clear as we go on. But on this point, the nature of Horatian satiric and epistolary verse, I want at least to attempt to describe a few differences that seem to separate the two and

thus, hopefully, to individualize the nature of the Horatian epistolary way.

These then are two basic problems -- the extent to which an epistolary poem neither Ovidian nor essentially complimentary can be called "Horatian," and the thin line, if any, dividing Horatian satiric from epistolary verse. They raise the questions with which this ~~chapter~~ is concerned. And hopefully the tentative answers to these questions will produce a basis for a further discussion of the familiar way in English epistles written between 1660 and 1758. Briefly outlined, my plan in this chapter is to illustrate the Horatian mode at work in the Latin epistles by examining Horace's themes and his manner. Out of this should come a tentative definition of the familiar epistolary way, or at least some criteria of this way. And in subsequent chapters I shall illustrate the major varieties of familiar epistolary verse, note the presence or absence of Horatian themes, and measure the extent to which the Horatian way actually appears in epistolary verse written between 1660 and 1758. My next chapter will take up the period 1660 to 1688. Subsequent chapters will concern the periods 1689 to 1715 and 1715 to 1758. And I shall end my discussion with a separate chapter on the ethic epistles of Alexander Pope, concluding with some of the major trends in this mode and a section on the masterpiece of its kind -- the "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot." But before we start the journey, it would be best in order to see what is meant by the term "Horatian" to mention something about Horace

himself, his Epistles, and what those trained in the classics have said about this influential collection of twenty-three Latin poems.

## i

One of a group of poets -- including Virgil, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid -- Horace wrote his Epistles during the Augustan age of Rome, probably between 23 and 13 B. C. In his forties at the time, he divided his days between Rome, which he visited occasionally, and his beloved Sabine farm, given to him in 33 B. C. by his patron Maecenas. And when he wrote his Epistles, he evidently felt himself too old to pursue the ordinary active pleasures of life, appearing to have turned gratefully to retirement and the pleasures of the mind. This is the note of Ep. I. i. addressed to Maecenas, in which Horace explains his reasons for no longer writing satires, epodes, and odes and his intention to turn to philosophy. He says that his years and his mind are not what they once were, that what is right and seemly will now be his only study and concern, and that he is "putting by and setting in order the stores" on which he may someday draw.<sup>3</sup> Incompletely the devotee of any philosophical school -- Stoic or Cyrenaic -- he intends not to withdraw summarily from the world but to avoid whatever worldly ambition, fashion or folly might prevent him from taking a few steps in the direction of philosophical ease and the cultivation

of a wise and virtuous life. He compares himself to an old gladiator, experienced in the ways of the arena, who has won the approval of the crowd, who wishes to avoid battles, and who looks forward to a not completely carefree but less exacting way of life.

No longer a young man stirred by the prospect of fighting, as he had, with the Republican army of Brutus, Horace by this time accepted the political realities of the Augustan Empire as for the best; and he was a recognized and admired member of the central literary circle of his time. Certainly not a struggling poet competing with other poets, he had no public career to take time away from his central concern -- the art of living -- and he was at that period of life when a man most wants days to enjoy what he has earned, to please himself and others with observations on life, and, if he is Horatian in temper, to be free of the immediate cares of the world although still in touch with it, to be an amused spectator rather than a participant, and to devote hours to the free play of the mind over matters philosophical and literary. He was not bent on a complete withdrawal from the world; rather he wanted to mull over his experiences, to refine his thoughts, to work occasionally on his poetry, to offer advice when it was called for, and to enjoy life perhaps more deeply and more fully than he had in the past.

I have the feeling that sometime in life a man wants to take stock, to ask and attempt to answer questions about where

he has been, what is best for him now, and where he may be headed. It is a time of reflection, when one is perhaps most aware that there are no easy answers although he may seek satisfaction in what appear to him to be the best tentative answers. And it is a time when a man, ideally speaking, moves most frequently between the ~~po~~ies of tolerance and a defence of what he believes to be right, between relative ease in the midst of his surroundings and a sometimes jealous preservation of those surroundings to suit his own tastes. This was the "time" of Horace's Epistles, and if there is such a thing as a middle-aged temper or attitude -- comfortable, easy, mellow, amused, gentle, friendly, practical, gracious, restrained, reflective, self-effacing, and relatively tolerant -- I would call Horace's Epistles the examples of this attitude, the exemplars of Horace himself.

The Epistles, almost a necessity of Roman social and political life because of frequent absence in distant provinces or separation from one's associates, Horace addresses for a variety of purposes to a close circle of intimate friends. In what I take to be typical fashion, he directs letters to the superintendent of his small estate (Ep.I.xiv.) and to a messenger carrying a copy of his poems to the Emperor Augustus (Ep.I.xiii.); but most of the addressees are aristocrats.<sup>4</sup> To Maecenas, his well-bred and worldly-wise patron, he sends



word of his intention to turn to philosophy (Ep.I.i.); a refusal to surrender his personal independence, having been reproached for spending too much time in the country (Ep.I.vii.); and a defence of his poetic practices in the face of adverse criticism (Ep.I.xix.). To Lollius Maximus, apparently a rich and promising young man studying rhetoric in Rome and about to seek recognition, Horace sends an epistle of advice to interest his addressee in Homer, moral reformation, and the control of the passions (Ep.I.ii.). Later he gives this same friend a lecture "on his favourite theme bene vivere, which here may be taken to mean 'How to get on in the world.'"<sup>5</sup>

And there are others. He sends a letter of introduction to Tiberius on behalf of Septimius (Ep.I.ix.). Writing to Julius Florus, one of a number of young literary men in the train of Tiberius, Horace inquires about a breach of friendship and advises the pursuit of wisdom and self-dependence (Ep.I.iii.). Having been ordered by his physician to take the cold water cure, Horace requests information from Vala about Velia and Salernum, two seaside resorts (Ep.I.xv.). Elsewhere he invites Torquatus, a busy lawyer, to dinner (Ep.I.v.). And in a long letter to the Emperor Augustus, Horace praises the wisdom of his ruler, attacks the notion that writers should venerate the ancients merely because they are ancient, defends the social and moral usefulness of the modern poet, and comments on the contemporary degenerate taste in stage fare (Ep.II.i.).

What we have then is a series of epistles which advise, request, invite, admonish, describe, discuss, defend, praise, reflect, inquire, tease, introduce, and explain -- a homely and ~~thoroughly~~ human poetic symphony in which Horace plants his feet firmly on the solid ground of "his own life and his intercourse with his fellow men" and writes of genuine matter (as opposed to matter based on conventional literary themes, imagined characters, or imagined scenery), "sometimes mere trifles, sometimes serious difficulties and conflicts, but always matter arising from real situations in the lives of real persons, and always the kind of matter that lends itself naturally to the form of communication which we call a letter."<sup>6</sup>

ii

I have used the expression "poetic symphony" not only to indicate the diversity of the Epistles but to suggest the recurrence of favorite themes which appear in the Latin poems and which were especially congenial to eighteenth-century poets writing epistolary verse. Mainly philosophical and literary, four themes seem to stand out: the ideas of happiness or contentment, of common sense or moderation, of faithfulness or consistency, and of artistic excellence.

The cornerstone of Horace's first theme is that happiness is a state of mind attainable by those who are content with their surroundings and capable of gratefully enjoying the

present. This idea appears frequently in the Epistles. For example, in Ep.I.xi. Horace tells his friend Bullatius, who had been traveling widely in the province of Asia, that he should take whatever he has been given "with grateful hand, nor put off joys from year to year," and that the happiness Bullatius seeks can be found even at Ulubrae, a decaying town in the Pomptine marshes, "if there fail you not a mind well balanced."<sup>7</sup> The same idea appears in Ep.I.xiv, the famous letter to the dissatisfied vilicus, in which Horace reminds his baliff that one who dislikes his surroundings "is foolish and unfairly blames the undeserving place; what is at fault is the mind, which never escapes from itself."<sup>8</sup> And finally, in perhaps the most pointed statement about the primary dependence of happiness on one's mental state, Horace tells Quinctius, evidently prominent and perhaps holding a public office, that only a man who is a friend to himself can be happy, that happiness is not a matter of what others think, that it depends on one's inner integrity, on being in fact good and wise, on practicing virtue ~~for~~ its own sake. The man who does not steal because he fears being caught is neither happy nor free. He is a slave. The truly good man, who does not steal because he loves virtue, because he knows that it is wrong to steal, is happy; he is morally free and does not subject himself to the worldly opinion of others.

Happiness for Horace, then, was predicated on moral principle, but it would be misleading to leave him in this realm alone. Not unduly given to the ionosphere of "virtue,"

"goodness," and "moral freedom," he finds the good life firmly fixed on the earth of the present. For example, this idea underlies his frequent and loving descriptions of his Sabine farm, as in Ep.I.xvi: "This retreat, so sweet -- yes, believe me, so bewitching -- keeps me, my friend, in sound health in September's heat."<sup>9</sup> It supports his invitation to Albius Tibullus in which Horace advises his friend to enjoy what he has been given, to believe that every day may be his last. And it underlies his statement to Torquatus that the man who does not use what he has been given, who out of regard to his heir "pinches and spares overmuch, is next door to a madman."<sup>10</sup> A grateful enjoyment of the present, in fact, forms the basis of much Horatian advice and comment. Writing to Vala, for example (Ep.I.xv.), Horace humorously admits that when forced to he will "cry up a safe and lowly lot" and be "resolute enough where all is paltry," but that when something better comes along he is equally capable of claiming among the good and wise only those men who display their wealth in handsome villas.<sup>11</sup> But more often the message is one of modified enjoyment or content. In Ep.I.x. Horace says, "You will live wisely, Aristius, if cheerful in your lot, and you will not let me off unrebuked, when I seem to be gathering more than enough and never to rest."<sup>12</sup> Thus, at the outset, Horace blends both inner principle and a measure of outer circumstance as prerequisites of happiness, never pretending that the cares of the world can be completely avoided but always optimistic that some degree of contentment can be attained

if one takes advantage of the day, accepts one's surroundings, and is patient in the face of life's black cares.

The idea of patience leads us to a second idea associated with the theme of happiness -- tranquillity and poise, or what Horace called the aequus animus. This is the central point of the famous epistle to Numicius (Ep.I.vi.), beginning Nil admirari, in which Horace offers another "clue to happiness" by referring to "a philosophic calm, a composure of mind and feeling, a freedom from exciting emotions, which ancient philosophy often regarded as the summum bonum."<sup>13</sup> One of his favorite ideas under the general theme of happiness and contentment, it appears elsewhere in the epistle to Lollius (Ep.I.xviii.) when, at the end of some advice on how one should "conduct himself in his intercourse with the great," Horace adds the following:

Amid all this you must read and question the wise, how you may be able to pass your days in tranquillity. Is greed, ever penniless, to drive and harass you, or fears and hopes about things that profit little? Does wisdom beget virtue, or Nature bring her as a gift? What will lessen care? What will make you a friend to yourself? What gives you unruffled calm -- honours, or the sweets of dear gain, or a secluded journey along the pathway of a life unnoticed?<sup>14</sup>

And the idea underlies Horace's telling Bullatius that he would be happy anywhere were he to carry with him a "mind well balanced."<sup>15</sup>

Composure or philosophic calm obviously has close ties with the concept of happiness as a state of mind characterized by freedom from the opinion of others and an ability to enjoy

the present. It also leads directly to two final ideas -- self-dependence and the power of culture to control the passions -- which are included here under the general theme of happiness or contentment. Horace believed that unhappiness was the result of slavery and that slavery was begotten of desire; consequently, he often advised his addressees to refuse the rein to passion and suggested that a patient review of philosophy was the best means to fashion this refusal. In Ep.I.i. to Maecenas, for example, he says the following:

Is your bosom fevered with avarice and sordid covetousness? There are spells and sayings [the lessons of philosophy] whereby you may soothe the pain and cast much of the malady aside. Are you swelling with ambition? There are fixed charms which can fashion you anew, if with cleansing rites you read the booklet thrice. The slave to envy, anger, sloth, wine, lewdness -- no one is so savage that he cannot be tamed, if only he lend to treatment a patient ear.<sup>16</sup>

Also in Ep.I.ii. to Lollius we have, "Rule your passion, for unless it obeys, it gives commands. Check it with bridle -- check it, I pray you, with chains."<sup>17</sup> And finally, returning to the inner basis of happiness as a state of mind and well-being, Horace supports the idea of self-dependence. In Ep.I.vii. to Maecenas, Horace refuses to surrender his personal independence and says, in effect, that if not allowed to remain self-dependent -- in this case to remain in the country against the wishes of Maecenas -- he will have to give up all the honors conferred on him. His general principle is clear at the end: "'Tis right that

each should measure himself by his own rule and standard."<sup>18</sup> Happiness for Horace, then, lies in the individual heart and mind, in a calmness and equanimity of spirit born of the ability to enjoy the concrete present, guided by a firm rein on the passions and protected by a degree of self-dependence that allows a man the freedom to compose and enjoy his own life.

This is perhaps the great theme of Horace's Epistles, but it is not much more prominent than a second philosophical theme -- common sense or moderation. Closely related to the idea of happiness, which, as might be noted, seems to lie for Horace between an epicurean delight in and a stoic rejection of the normal pleasures of this world, the idea of moderation in all things appears frequently in the Epistles. In principle it is stated in Ep.I.xviii. to Lollius. Describing for a protégé the proper mode of behavior as a mean between parasitism and clownish rudeness, Horace says that "Virtue is a mean between vices, remote from both extremes," that one who seeks recognition should be neither grossly servile nor overweeningly self-important. The principle of moderation also appears in Ep.I.vi. in which Horace tells Numicius that "Nothing in **excess**," even in the pursuit of virtue, should be one's rule: "Let the wise man bear the name of madman, the just of unjust, should he pursue Virtue herself beyond due bounds."<sup>19</sup> And moderation and common sense form the basis of much Horatian advice. To Lollius (Ep.I.ii.), for example, Horace, urging his young friend to pursue the

study of philosophy, says the following:

Well begun is half done; dare to be wise;  
begin! He who puts off the hour of right  
living is like the bumpkin waiting for the  
river to run out: yet on it glides, and  
on it will glide, rolling its flood forever.<sup>20</sup>

And in Ep.I.xiv. to his baliff, Horace sees only foolishness in the ox's desire for the horse's trappings, in a man's desire to practice a trade other than the one he understands.<sup>21</sup>

Never one to be merely sententious, however, Horace uses the theme of moderation and common sense most vividly when he applies the principle either to a friend's life or to his own. We have seen him do this in all the examples cited thus far. Others include the epistle to Scaeva (I.xvii.) in which Horace defends, for obvious reasons, the practice of winning the favor of the great; the epistle to Celsus Albinovanus (I.viii.) in which Horace laughs at himself because of his own immoderate anger, lethargy, and quarrelsomeness; and finally in the epistle to Torquatus (I.v.) inviting him to share a "modest dish." A spokesman for the simple life, Horace is "always for moderation, and sometimes for austerity." "The extraction from life of the honey of enjoyment was indeed the highest purpose, but the purpose could never be realized without the exercise of discrimination, moderation, and a measure of spiritual culture."<sup>22</sup>

A third philosophic theme is that of faithfulness or consistency, an idea which Horace applies to family, country, purpose, and friendship.<sup>23</sup> He never forgot that he was the



son of a freedman and that his father had provided for his education in both Rome and Athens. For this education and his father's "constant and intimate companionship," he was everlastingly grateful. His attitude is mirrored in his faithfulness to his family. Stated in Sat.I.vi., this idea does not appear explicitly in the Epistles; but I think it underlies Horace's occasional nostalgia when he recalls the past as in Ep.II.i:

The farmers of old, a sturdy folk with simple wealth, when, after harvesting the grain, they sought relief at holiday time for the body, as well as for the soul, which bore its toils in hope of the end, together with slaves and faithful wife, partners of their labours, used to propitiate Earth with swine, Silvanus with milk, and with flowers and wine the Genius who is ever mindful of the shortness of life.<sup>24</sup>

It may also have something to do with his preference for a relatively simple country life "agreeable to Nature."<sup>25</sup> And it certainly plays a part in Ep.I.xx. when Horace instructs his book to tell the world that he "was a freedman's son" who "amid slender means" spread wings too wide for his nest, thus adding to the merits he had from birth.<sup>26</sup>

Faithfulness to one's country, purpose, and friends, if not explicitly stated, also underlies the whole spirit of the Epistles in the reassurance and advice which Horace offers his close associates. In Ep.I.iii. to Florus, for example, Horace urges his young friend not to neglect philosophy: "This task, this pursuit let us speed, small and great alike, if we would live dear to our country, and dear to ourselves."<sup>27</sup>

More specifically in Ep.I.v. Horace tells Torquatus, whom he invites to dinner, that "there [will] be none to carry abroad what is said among faithful friends."<sup>28</sup> And in Ep.I.xviii. Horace advises Lollius to keep his patron's secrets faithfully, to be loyal and circumspect. Finally, in one example Horace brings together all of the lessons of faithfulness when he mentions the "instructive pattern in Ulysses, that tamer of Troy, who looked with discerning eyes upon the cities and manners of many men, and while for self and comrades he strove for a return across the broad seas, many hardships he endured, but could never be o'erwhelmed in the waves of adversity."<sup>29</sup> Horace does not vigorously press for an heroic way of life, but he is impressed by Ulysses' steadfastness and endurance and his consummate faith not only to his purpose but to his companions and family. If moderation is essentially a negative virtue -- "nothing in excess" -- faithfulness, steadfastness, endurance, and consistency are among Horace's positive virtues and those that he urges in others.

In a collection of poems that begins with the stated intention of turning to philosophy, the ethical themes I have mentioned are those that stand out. To do justice to Horace, however, something must be said about a fourth major idea in the Epistles, that of artistic excellence.

Although there are occasional references to literary or aesthetic matters in some of the philosophical epistles of Book I -- like the inquiry about Celsus's poetical activities in Ep.I.iii. -- Horace generally confines "literary talk" to the last two epistles of Book I, the two epistles of Book II, and, of course, the Ars Poetica or the Epistle to the Pisos, in all of which he discusses literary matters from essentially three different points of view. At times he defends his own practices, elsewhere he defends the cause of "modern" poetry in general, and he offers random advice to poets who wish to excel.

I intend here no thoroughgoing summary of Horace's poetic theory and practice. But because the eighteenth century knew Horace as a literary critic and practicing poet as well as a genial philosopher, the major literary ideas that appear in the Epistles deserve mention. Joseph Addison, for example, called Horace "the greatest Wit and Critick in the Augustan Age."<sup>30</sup> With this in mind, then, we turn to some of Horace's self-defensive remarks about his own work, a good example of which appears in Ep.I.xix. addressed to Maecenas and apparently occasioned by what Horace felt to be unjust criticism of his previous work. In this epistle Horace, who had stopped writing lyric poetry, boasts of his Odes and Epodes. It had been claimed that they were "mere imitations of Greek exemplars"; and to answer this charge, Horace denies slavish copying, says that by using the "rhythm and spirit of Archilochus" he has done just as Sappho and Alcaeus (the

"ancients") did, and locates the real source of irritation in his critics' jealousy. He denies the charge of arrogance and says that he writes for the "gently born," that he will not subject his work to the vote of the fickle public or enter a contest.<sup>31</sup> And about servile imitation he notes finally that he will always prefer his poetry to that of the herd who copy him -- o imitatores, servum pecus. Less confident are the remarks about his own work in Ep.I.xx. wherein he addresses his book as though it were a young slave anxious to see the world. He predicts a possible temporary vogue, then poverty, obscurity, deportation to the provinces, and an eventual mauling by the stubby hands of boys learning their lessons. Lest the ultimate picture appear too bleak, however, Horace adds a reassuring note at the end with talk of a "milder sun" that will bring a larger audience and of his major intention in this first book of Epistles: "you will tell them about me."<sup>32</sup>

Always in the Epistles drawing on his own experiences and, in a sense, talking about himself, Horace also defends the cause of modern poetry in general and comments on the special functions of the poet in society. For example in the epistle to Augustus (II.i.), wrung from the poet by an Emperor who did not find his name among the addressees of the previous poems, Horace applies common sense to what he thought was undue veneration of the ancients at the expense of some of the more modern poets. Where, he says, are we to draw the line? If one passes the hundred year mark, is he an ancient? What if he is one month short of a hundred years? In what class is he then to be reckoned? And so on to the point that

literary merit is not a matter of age; rather it is to be decided on the basis of taste and style. Believing always that a poet should "handle Greek models by night, handle them by day," Horace still could say,

At times the public see straight; sometimes they make mistakes. If they admire the ancient poets and cry them up so as to put nothing above them, nothing on their level, they are wrong. If they hold that sometimes their diction is too quaint, and oftentimes too harsh, if they admit that much of it is flat, then they have taste, they take my side, and give a verdict with Jove's assent.<sup>33</sup>

One parting shot at those who in spite of reason will continue to rave jealously over the less than perfect poetry of the ancients is Horace's reminder that there would be no ancient literature to thumb through had the Greeks themselves found novelty offensive. At the same time Horace asserts the special value of the poet in society and his services to the state, saying that despite the contemporary craze of scribbling the modern poet often has merit.

The poet fashions the tender, lisping lips of childhood; even then he turns the ear from unseemly words; presently, too, he moulds the heart by kindly precepts, correcting roughness and envy and anger. He tells of noble deeds, equips the rising age with famous examples, and to the helpless and sick at heart brings comfort.<sup>34</sup>

And he aids the boys and girls who sing choral songs in association with religious ceremonies.

Now remarks such as these show Horace's stoic tendency to value poetry chiefly for its instructiveness, however much his insistence on the utility of poetry may have been guided by Augustus, a "busy and prosaic patron of letters," and

Horace's subsequent desire *not* to hurt his own cause by talking of art on a high plane.<sup>35</sup> More important though is Horace's tendency to draw the criteria of poetic art from its "effect upon the minds of those to whom it is communicated" and to stress the ethical nature of the impression made.<sup>36</sup> For Horace the proper function of poetry is moral improvement; and it follows that the most worthy poet will be a man naturally well-equipped and able to give moral inoculations that take.

At the same time, however, Horace knew that to succeed a poem must exhibit craftsmanship and charm its hearers; and the means to this end is the subject of much random Horatian advice to poets who wish to excel. "The man whose aim is to have wrought a poem true to Art's rules, when he takes his tablets, will take also the spirit of an honest censor."<sup>37</sup> The poet must be willing to delete; he must avoid obscure terms and adopt those currently in use; he must cultivate and prune the language; he must "wear the look of being at play, and yet be on the rack."<sup>38</sup> From the Ars Poetica we have the injunctions to keep a work simple and uniform, to avoid the extremes of brevity and diffuseness, and to choose a subject within one's power. Horace says also that a poet should feel the emotion he wishes to convey, that a poet should be consistent in the drawing of character, stamp the universal with the mark of individual genius, and keep abhorrent scenes off the stage. And finally he advises

the Pisos to so mould the familiar or commonplace style that it may seem new and imitable, "to keep clear of the fallacy of poetic madness," to search for the source and fountain of all good writing in wisdom and experience with men, to aim at both pleasure and instruction, "to remember the mutual indispensability of genius and cultivation," to seek counsel from a trustworthy critic, and to refine and revise endlessly for the sake of grace.<sup>39</sup>

These precepts in no way constitute Horace's complete critical message, but they are a fair sample of the literary advice he included in his Epistles. Clearly, he is out of sympathy with anything like a "fine frenzy," he regards conscious art as the superior partner but does not rule out the necessity of native talent or genius, he lays great emphasis on the poet's wisdom and the proper moral function of poetry in society, and he insists on the primary importance of style.<sup>40</sup> In brief, if Horace is thematically the poet of philosophic moderation, he is preeminently the poet of literary common sense and classic principle.

### iii

Contentment, happiness, consistency, self-control, common sense, moderation, faithfulness, and artistic excellence -- these are among the great Horatian themes; but they constitute only half of the Horatian "way" because they tell us little about the manner of address and convey only part of the spirit of the Epistles themselves. I am fairly sure that the themes

appearing in Horace's Epistles are well-suited to that kind of poetry and that we will find the familiar epistles of the English Augustan age treating more or less the same kind of material. But I am also fairly sure that Augustan poets especially wanted to capture in their epistles the careless elegance, the urbane ease, the gentle authority, the studied negligence, and the frank intimacy in the manner of Horace. Addressing Aristius Fuscus, a dramatic writer and scholar living in the city, Horace composes, for example, a letter that is at once serious, playful, admonitory, genial, easy, epigrammatic, and, above all, friendly. His purpose seems to be to convince Fuscus that country life is, after all, much more pleasant than city life; but he does not lecture. He notes his preferences and is not above laughing slyly at them.

The letter begins in a most genial way, with Horace emphasizing not the one difference between himself and Fuscus but all that they share.

Urbis amatorem Fuscum salvere iubemus  
ruris amatores. hac in re **scilicet** una  
multum dissimiles, at cetera paene gemelli  
fraternis animis (quidquid negat alter, et alter)  
adnuimus pariter vetuli notique columbi.

To Fuscus, lover of the city, I, a lover of the country, send greetings. In this one point, to be sure, we **differ** much, but being in all else much like twins with the hearts of brothers -- if one says "no," the other says "no" too -- we nod a common assent like a couple of old familiar doves.<sup>41</sup>

The tone here is playful as we envision Horace and Fuscus nodding at one another or bobbing up and down. And it is essentially epistolary because Horace does not take himself



too seriously. He is, of course, serious enough about his love of country life, and he can speak warmly about the "country's brooks, its grove and ~~moss-grown~~ rocks"; but he still sees himself not without amusement as one of those "old familiar doves" who prefers the simple life -- a life that for him is royal. In an almost noble way he says vivo et regno, "I live and reign," when I leave the city behind.

A mixture of seriousness and lightheartedness runs throughout the letter, nowhere better illustrated than by what follows vivo et regno.

utque sacerdotis fugitivus liba recuso;  
pane egeo iam mellitis potiore placentis.

Like the priest's runaway slave, I ~~loathe~~ the sweet wafers;  
'tis bread I want, and now prefer to honeyed cakes.<sup>42</sup>

At first a ~~king~~, Horace now comically pictures himself as a fugitive running furtively into the country toward freedom and away from a steady diet of sacrificial cakes such as a slave in the household of a priest might have to eat. And the mixture is repeated in more philosophic terms in lines 11-12. Quoting stoic doctrine -- Vivere Naturae -- he says, "If 'to live agreeably to Nature' is our duty, and first we must choose a site for building our house, do you know any place to be preferred to the blissful country?" Note, for example, the question. Horace does not belabor his addressee with an announcement. Rather he seems to assume that life according to Nature is something that Fuscus might think about, and he immediately comes down to earth with his talk of a building site. The tone is at once serious and playful.

On the one hand, Horace concretely applies a well-known rule. He gives a rarified concept the dimension of common sense. On the other, however, he seems to imply that pure devotion to "life according to Nature" can be of little help unless one finds an agreeable place to live; and soon he is talking rhapsodically of mild winters, soothing summer winds, sound sleep, and fragrant grass.

Horace's tone here and in his other epistles is constantly varied. He contrasts the comic sounds of bursting city pipes with the lyrical and limpid flow of a mountain stream.

purior in vicis aqua tendit rumpere plumbum  
quam quae per pronum trepidat cum murmure rivum?

Is the water purer which in city-streets struggles to burst its leaden pipes than that which dances and purls adown the sloping brook?<sup>43</sup>

Elsewhere he speaks like a crackle-barrel philosopher (and an experienced farmer) when he says,

Naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret,  
et mala perrumpet furtim fastidia victrix.

You may drive out Nature with a pitchfork, yet she will ever hurry back, and, ere you know it, will burst through your foolish contempt in triumph.<sup>44</sup>

Sometimes he is the orator urging Aristius to "distinguish false from true"; fuge magna, he says with the voice of exhortation. "Flee grandeur: through humble be your home, yet in life's race you may outstrip kings and the friends of kings." Or he is a genial story-teller, citing the instance of the horse that took the bit from man and drove the stag from the pasture but lost his freedom. In still

other lines he is proverbial and epigrammatic. Urging Fuscus not to sell out, he says,

cui non conveniet sua **res**, ut calceus olim,  
si pede maior erit, subvertet, si minor, uret.

When a man's fortune will not fit him, 'tis as  
ofttimes with a shoe -- if too big for the foot,  
it will trip him; if too small, will chafe.<sup>45</sup>

And after speaking in tones that are alternately light and stentorian, Horace ends with a characteristic glance at himself. He urges Fuscus to rebuke him "when I seem to be gathering more than enough and never to rest"; and he concludes with the ideas that if country life is best, it is not without its crumbling shrines; and that, after all, friendship matters most of all.

Haec tibi dictabam post **fanum** putre Vacunae,  
excepto quod non simul esses, **cetera** laetus.

These lines I am dictating to you behind  
Vacuna's crumbling shrine, happy on all  
counts save that you are not with me.<sup>46</sup>

iv

Now the air of spontaneous educated talk by a man of good manners, the grace and glide of poetry without any semblance of a rigid systematic method, the concentration, lucidity, and finish of style, the unpretentious, mellow, and thoroughly human note -- all are part of the Horatian "way" that might not win admirers but certainly wins friends. And it is this manner or style or "way" that Augustan poets cultivated in their familiar epistles, or at least attempted to cultivate. Further, it is this manner that may help us

toward answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter.

The answer to the first question -- the extent to which an epistolary poem which is neither Ovidian nor complimentary can be called Horatian -- lies in the degree to which a poem achieves the manner I have described above. To be more specific, we might ask the following questions. Does the poem avoid the appearance of rigid systematic proceeding? Does it progress conversationally? Does the poet often record actual conversations or take the part dramatically of the person he addresses? Does the poem include anything that we could call intimate or personal or autobiographical? Is the poem primarily didactic but not obtrusively so? Is it discursive? Does the tone pass at will from grave to gay, from lively to severe? Does the poet make use of illustrative stories or personal experience? If "yes" is the answer to most of these questions and if at the same time we see a letter in verse that employs an Horatian theme, then I think we have a poem that must be called a familiar Horatian epistle. If not, the poem, although possibly entitled an epistle, is something else.

The answer to the second question -- the thin line, if any, dividing Horatian satiric and epistolary verse -- is more problematical because almost all of the qualities I have noted thus far might apply equally to Horace's Satires as well as his Epistles. Horace himself regarded both as sermones,

chatty essays or causeries in verse, in order to distinguish their style from that of the carmina or lyric poems. In Sat. I.iv. he refers to his lines as "more akin to prose" (sermoni propiora) and in Ep. II.i. he fears that he will delay Augustus "with a long talk" (longo sermone).<sup>47</sup> Both the Satires and Epistles were written in hexameter verse. Further, we know that epistles as well as satires were assigned to the poetic genus of satura, with its suggestion of a mixture or medley and meaning literally a "stuffing with many ingredients."<sup>48</sup> And finally we have the tendency of some modern commentators to regard Horace's epistolary and satiric poems as essentially the same. For example in Classical Influences on English Poetry, J. A. K. Thomson says, "The Epistles are not all satirical, and what satire is in them has become little more than a gentle irony. But they belong to the same genre and therefore exhibit the same style as the Sermones."<sup>49</sup>

The difficulty lies, I think, in the modern tendency to use the terms satura (sometimes spelled satira) and "satire" as meaning more or less the same thing and to use interchangeably the generic terms satura and sermo, when in fact a distinction should be made. Among the early poets, Ennius used satura, a word "borrowed from the kitchen," to specify his collection of minor compositions in prose and verse published in rolls. Fifty years later, Lucilius' satires were probably called the same thing; but his use of sarcasm,

irony, invective, his bellicose temperament and critical tone, and his corrective purpose gave the word a new connotation.<sup>50</sup> In brief, the word satura became associated with at least some of those attitudes we identify with satire. And to add to the confusion, Lucilius himself used the term sermones for his more serious philosophical satires.

To point up the differences between Horatian satiric and epistolary verse, in our sense of the terms "satire" and "epistle," I believe we must preserve the following distinctions. Satura should be used as a generic term for any poem which seems to be a medley of things. The term sermo should be limited to matters of style "fittest for discourse and nearest prose," including discursiveness and conversationality. And the terms "satire" and "epistle" should be used to indicate different modes of the genus satura. If these distinctions are accepted, I believe we can distinguish between what are translated as Horatian Satires and Epistles.

And to begin with, the Epistles are satura with at least two formative differences. Unlike satires which are apt to address somebody and then forget him, an epistle never forgets the addressee. Satire I.i., "The Race for Wealth and Position," for example, is addressed to Maecenas (Qui fit Maecenas...) and serves as a dedication of the whole Book; but after the opening line, Horace more or less forgets Maecenas, who seems to have been open-handed, and turns to a discussion of men's restlessness caused by avarice. On the other hand, in the epistle to Maecenas (I.i.), an introduction to the first

Book, Horace carefully keeps his addressee in mind, particularly at the beginning and at the end of the poem. Maecenas would have Horace continue to write the sort of poetry he had in the past ("you Maecenas, seek to shut me up again in my old school"), but Horace wishes now to turn to philosophy and he must convince Maecenas that such a change is for the best. This he does by calling attention to the use of philosophy as a cure for all diseases of the soul (avarice, covetousness, ambition, envy, sloth, lewdness) and, most important, by appealing directly to one of Maecenas' idiosyncracies. At the end Horace says that Maecenas, who would laugh at a "tattered shirt beneath a new tunic" or "flare up at an ill-paired nail of the friend," could not reasonably begrudge a man's intention to take a few steps toward correcting his more serious inner faults of judgment. This careful attention to the addressee is a mark of Horace's epistolary verse and sets it apart from his Satires.

A second formative difference includes the occasion and the moral. In the Satires the occasion is sometimes nothing more than a point of departure; and the moral content of the poem, which for Horace would have been one of its most important features, is not always specifically related to the occasion. In some of the Epistles, however, the occasion is the "formal cause"; and the moral content is carefully suited to the occasion, or the specific event which prompts the writing of the poem, such as the dinner which elicits

an invitation to Torquatus or the grumbling which lies behind the letter to Iccius. In Sat.I.vi, prompted by malevolent gossip about his supposed intimacy with Maecenas, for example, Horace not only defends himself and his patron's good judgment in choosing friends, but also includes much autobiographical material about his being introduced to Maecenas by Virgil, his upbringing in the country, the folly of ambition in general, and the joys of the simple life. What is included in the poem, in other words, seems to go somewhat beyond what we might expect Horace to say by way of silencing the wagging tongues of jealous Romans.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand in Ep.I.vii, prompted by Maecenas' reproach, Horace defends his decision to remain in the country, his personal independence, and illustrates his feelings with reference to several stories -- a fat fox trapped in a corn bin, Telemachus' refusal to accept the horses and chariot offered him in friendship by Menelaus, and the tale of Philippus and his client, Volteius Mena, in which the patron's generosity only leads the client to say, "I implore and entreat you, put me back in my former life."<sup>52</sup> The moral point of the epistle to which each of these stories is related is that each man should "measure himself by his own rule and standard"; and this point is specifically related to Horace's manly refusal to give up his independence merely to please his patron.

In addition to these two formative differences, which are admittedly weak, there is one stronger and important distinction that many critics have noted. The Epistles are more



personal than the Satires. Eduard Fraenkel has said that in the "foreground of the epistles there is, not a thesis [as in the satires], but a human situation, a personal problem, arising out of another man's circumstances, or Horace's own, or both."<sup>53</sup> Thus Bullatius's travels give rise to Horace's reflections on happiness as a state of mind, the baliff's complaints occasion a lecture on contentment, and a physician's advice brings about the letter to Vala inquiring about resorts. The movement, in other words, is more or less from the specific to the general. In the Satires, however, just the reverse is true. The movement is often from general to specific. Writing on the folly of running to extremes, Horace details his thesis with reference to Tigellius, usurers, prodigals, whoremongers, and adulterers; and he follows this same movement from a thesis to specific examples when he defends his satire against the opposite charges of "savagery" and "nervelessness" (Sat.II.i.).

To illustrate the personal quality further, Horace occasionally makes a statement in general terms in the Satires; whereas in the Epistles his point almost always has an intimate application. In Sat.I.iii. Horace writes of mutual forbearance, saying that "one who craves indulgence for failings should grant it in return."<sup>54</sup> In Ep.I.ix. this principle is applied personally when Horace asks that Tiberius overlook what might appear to be a lack of modesty in the poet and accept his recommendation of Septimius. Again in Sat.I.i., writing of the race for wealth and position, Horace illustrates his

thesis (the failure of people to be content with what they have) by saying that the man who "is dragged into town from the country cries that they only are happy ~~who~~ live in town," a general notion that is personally and intimately applied when Horace writes to his baliff (Ep.I.xiv.).

In this manner, I believe, the Epistles are more personal; and it should also be noted that they add to the social and personal criticism of the Satires an informal didactic tendency. In Sat.I.i. Horace discusses a widespread Roman disease; in Ep.I.xiv. he urges his baliff to avoid contamination. Similarly in Sat.II.iv. Horace describes the joys of country life and healthy conversations about virtue, happiness, friendship, and the nature of the good life which he has enjoyed; in Ep.I.xviii. Horace urges Lollius to cultivate these same areas of concern.<sup>55</sup>

An unswerving attention to the addressee, the tendency to write for a particular occasion, the more personal note, and an informal didactic tendency -- these, I believe, mark the differences between Horatian satiric and epistolary poetry, although I admit that the distinction is very difficult to support. And if we add to these qualities a certain mellowness of tone, encouraged perhaps by Horace's increased satisfaction with life and affairs, the philosophical and literary themes, and the urbane ~~ease~~ of manner, we now may have a not too muddy notion of what a familiar Horatian epistle should be and how it can be distinguished from other modes of poetry.

## CHAPTER IV

### FAMILIAR EPISTLES: 1660 - 1688

I receiv'd thy kind letter, good Lord, how it eas'd me  
Of the villanous spleen that for six days had seiz'd me:  
I start from my couch, where I lay dull and muddy,  
Of my servants inquiring the way to my study,  
For, of truth, of late days I so little do mind it,  
Should one turn me twice about I never should find it:  
But by help of direction, I soon did arrive at  
The place where I us'd to sit fooling in private.

Charles Cotton, "Epistle to Sir Clifford Clifton..."

With some knowledge of Horace's themes and manner, we are perhaps now in a better position to measure the extent of the Horatian way in English epistolary verse written between 1660 and 1758. And here, as in the chapter on complimentary epistles, we will follow a basic division of three periods. This chapter concerns the first period (1660-1688) roughly analogous to the seedtime of familiar epistolary verse. Subsequent chapters will tend to the growth and harvest.

Beginning with representative works by Cotton, Pomfret, Dryden, Oldham, and Wycherley, the familiar epistles which were written between 1660 and 1688 and which are neither Ovidian nor essentially complimentary seem to fall into three distinguishable groups. The first includes descriptive epistles and letters, among which are pleas for news or funds.

Without wishing to disparage such poems, I will call them "minor"; and I take them as roughly equivalent to Horace's less substantial letters, like his invitations or his Sat.I.v, "A Journey to Brundisium." A second group I will call "literary epistles," those treating matters of primary concern to writers -- accounts of the poetic process, practical problems of support, or criticism -- and analogous to Horace's epistles concerning similar if not identical material. And a third group includes poems predominantly philosophical, matching, of course, Horace's epistles which best convey his unsystematic ideas about the good life.

## i

A division in the minor poems is, perhaps, somewhat artificial because throughout the familiar epistles written between 1660 and 1688 and even later there is much overlapping. In terms of degree, however, some poems, like Charles Cotton's "To my Friend, Mr. John Anderson From the Country" and "A Journey into Peak. To Sir Aston Cockain," appear to be more descriptive than others. In the first, Cotton invites John Anderson to join him and describes the advantages of country over city life. Here, he says, there are no "bawling Duns," no "Cuckold-Constable, or Watch," no "unwholesome dames"; rather there are plenty of willing and healthy girls, "excelling ale," mirth, and games to be enjoyed. At times, Cotton, who numbers himself among the "Country Bumpkins," seems

to speak with tongue in cheek. For example, he praises with dreadful enthusiasm the music of the bagpipe, a dance called the "Tom Thump," and the fierce independence of country folk.

We have too errant Knights so stout,  
As honest Hobinol and Clout,  
With many another stiff and sturdy lout  
That play at wasters,  
Shoe the wild mare, and lick the board,  
That for stiff tuck, or cutting sword,  
For man, or woman, care not of a turd,  
But their own Masters.<sup>1</sup>

At the end, however, Cotton discards his role as bumpkin and speaks with more even sincerity.

And now the Spring comes on apace,  
Sweet flowers crown the Earth's green face,  
Nor can I doubt, but thou wilt have the grace  
To wish thee here, Jack.<sup>2</sup>

In the second poem, addressed to Sir Aston Cockain, Cotton is perhaps a little more philosophical about country life; but the major emphasis is again on description, this time in terms of a contrast between the winter weather of the Peak country and the warmth of Pooley, Cockain's seat in Warwickshire. Cotton has just come home to Beresford Hall, on the border of Staffordshire and Derbyshire, with each hair "frozen to an icicle" after his journey over hills so hard that had Pegasus kicked the ground, "Homer's Odysseus had been writ in prose." And he recalls the joys left behind at Pooley, which outvie "the fabled pleasures of blest Paradise":

The humble Chapel, for religious rites,  
The inner rooms, for honest, free delights;...  
Without, you have the pleasure of the woods,  
Fair plains, rich meadows, and transparent floods;  
With all that's good and excellent, beside  
The tempting apples by Euphrates side.<sup>3</sup>

There nothing is wanting to improve either piety, peace, or love; and Cotton ends with a promise to return soon.

Robert A. Aubin classifies the work as a journey poem, which it is; but it is also a letter of thanks, and as such it marks a lesser type of epistolary verse that should be noted.<sup>4</sup> With the epistle to Anderson it exemplifies one kind of minor epistolary verse in which description plays a large part.<sup>5</sup>

A second kind of minor letter in verse includes works like Cotton's "Epistle to John Bradshaw, Esq. III" and an "Epistle to the Earl of [Chesterfield]." As are many of the poems in this group, the first is a jocular personal trifle. Cotton begs forgiveness for his many poetic shortcomings, but adds that he has written nothing so bad as to make Bradshaw bristle and that he will never be able to please an "over-dainty ear."

What man! all amblers are not Couryats,  
Neither can all who rhyme be Laureats:  
Besides the Moor-lands not a clime is,  
Nor of the year it now the time is  
To gather flowers, I suppose,  
Either for Poetry or Prose.<sup>6</sup>

And the letter ends with Cotton's wish to see his friend and with the promise of some good fishing in "April, May, or then abouts." Meanwhile, says Cotton,

I long as much as new made bride  
Does for the marriage eventide;  
Your plump corpusculum t'<sup>7</sup>embrace,  
In this abominable place.

The second poem to Chesterfield, is a plea for help. Facing financial disaster, Cotton tells his cousin of his plans to

flee to France, if he can get money for passage, and paints a half-sad, half-humorous picture of his present and future condition. To write at all is a bold undertaking, his previous letters have not been answered, "Poor Charles has eat and drunk his last," the house is in such condition as to seem uninhabited, and there is nothing left to do but hoist sails for France. Then follows a dramatic scene describing a future meeting.

Some two years hence, when you come o'er,  
 In all your state, Ambassador,  
 If my ill nature be so strong  
 T' outlive my infamy so long,  
 You'll find your little Officer  
 Ragged as his old colours are;  
 And naked, as he's discontent,  
 Standing at some poor sutler's tent,  
 With his pike cheek't, to guard the Tun  
 He must not taste when he has done.  
 "Hump," says my Lord, "I'm half afraid  
 My Captain's turn'd a Reformade,  
 That scurvy face I sure should know,"  
 "Yes faith, my Lord, 'tis even so,  
 I am that individual he:  
 I told your Lordship how 'twould be."  
 "Thou did'st so, Charles, it is confest,  
 Yet still I thought thou wer't in jest;  
 But comfort! Poverty's no crime,<sup>8</sup>  
 I'll take thy word another time."

And the poem ends with a plea for an answer and some assurance that the present financial disgrace (one of several) will not affect a friendship that is Cotton's only support.

The manner in which Cotton dramatically takes the part of Chesterfield is a noteworthy Horatian epistolary technique, as is, of course, the presentation of material in the form of dialogue and the conversational procedure; but essentially this second poem, like the first, is at best a minor epistle,

narrow in range. Like most of the epistles in this category, it makes no attempt to reach beyond immediate personal concerns, it is not "philosophic," and it is perhaps more amusing than interesting. Prosaic, chatty, light, often jocular, narrow and newsy -- these are among the qualities that distinguish the minor personal epistles.<sup>9</sup>

ii

Exemplifying a second category of familiar epistolary poetry -- the literary -- is John Oldham's "A Letter From the Country to a Friend in Town" (1678), giving an account of the author's inclinations. The poem is largely a tongue in cheek account of Oldham's struggle to write poetry, his attempts to avoid writing it, and his pleasure in writing after a long period of pain. In the opening lines, he compares himself and the joy he has had in receiving a letter from his friend to that which exiled Ovid must have felt when some news from Rome arrived.

If a kind paper from his country came,  
And wore subscribed some known and faithful name,  
That, like a powerful cordial, did infuse  
New life into his speechless gasping muse,  
And straight his genius, which before did seem  
Bound up in ice, and frozen as the clime,  
By its warm force and friendly influence thawed,  
Dissolved apace, and in soft numbers flowed;  
Such welcome here, dear sir, your letter had  
With me, shut up in close constraint as bad.<sup>10</sup>

And he then makes an important distinction between his friend's poetry and his own. The friend has given his time to things other than poetry, and can afford the kind of offhandedness



about writing that seems ideal.

Each strain of yours so easy does appear,  
 Each such a graceful negligence does wear,  
 As shews you have none, and yet want no care;  
 None of your serious pains or time they cost,  
 But what thrown by, you can afford for lost.<sup>11</sup>

For Oldham, on the other hand, poetry is an affliction. It is a "vile and wicked lust," a "foul infection," a "distemper" that has led him to waste his time in the service of the "worst of jilts, a muse" and to practice a "trifling barren trade."

The rest is an account of Oldham's fruitless attempts to avoid verse, his process of writing, and finally his commitment to poetry. Sometimes "to divert the wild caprice," he turns to philosophy, but finds that Aristotle admired poetry and often employed his important thoughts and pains in the study of poetry; at other times he belabors himself, curses his work, resolves never to write and runs "stark mad." But then fancy gives birth to an imperfect lumpish thought, judgment begins its shaping process, and pleasure arises from the power that creates "what was nought before."

When at first search I traverse o'er my mind,  
 Nought but a dark and empty void I find:  
 Some little hints at length, like sparks, break thence,  
 And glimmering thoughts just dawning into sense:  
 Confused a while the mixed ideas lie,  
 With nought of mark to be discovered by,  
 Like colours undistinguished in the night,  
 Till the dusk images, moved to the light,  
 Teach the discerning faculty to choose,  
 Which it had best adopt, and which refuse.<sup>12</sup>

Poetry thus becomes a "sweet beguiler," a "gentle spell," for which Oldham is willing to forego the normal pleasures of

the world.

For thee, I this vain, worthless world forego:  
 Let wealth and honour be for fortune's slaves,<sup>13</sup>  
 The alms of fools, and prize of crafty knaves.

And fearing that he has grown tedious, he ends abruptly by returning to the original thought of the poem and the hope that his letter will be as welcome as was his friend's letter written to one in "exile pent."

Oldham's poem is epistolary in its easy transitions from one thought to the next; in its mixture of autobiography, poetic ideals, and satirical asides; and in its changing tones suited to changes in mood. To pass from initially thanking his friend to an account of his poetic wrestling match, Oldham says, for example, that the friend has praised him too much, that praise is dangerous because it will spur him on to write, and that as a result he will be more "diseased" than ever. The mixture comes from the primary autobiographical material in the poem, the critical references to graceful negligence and ease, and a few asides about scribblers who write as if they had a "stranguary of wit." And the tone and mood pass from an hysteria of frenzy and madness to a sense of peace in the arms of the "sweet beguiler." It is almost as if in the process of writing this letter to a friend, Oldham has purged himself of the pain caused by the close constraint of his situation.<sup>14</sup>

### iii

In the third category are epistles which are more philosophic.

Offering advice or giving comfort, they are exemplified by Pomfret's "To His Friend, Under Affliction" and Wycherley's "An Epistle: To a Handsome, Brave Young Man, making a Campaign in Flanders, upon Mistaken Honour." The first begins with the observation that "perplexing care" is an inherent part of earthly life:

To be from all things that disquiet, free,  
Is not consistent with humanity.<sup>15</sup>

And the poem offers comfort derived from observing that earthly pain is, in fact, God's way of encouraging the kind of virtue and wisdom that arise from a "good conscience and a soul resign'd." Pomfret has in mind the virtues of humility and faith, and he urges his friend to accept afflictions and to be content.

So that when Providence, for secret ends,  
Corroding cares, or sharp affliction, sends;  
We must conclude it best it should be so,  
And not desponding or impatient grow.<sup>16</sup>

Some comfort, of course, is based on a philosophy of Christian stoicism assuming that "whatever is, is right," that man must accept everything as for the best, and that God is good.

The second poem, Wycherley's epistle, distinguishes between false valor and true gallantry. Advising a young friend who has risked his life too openly in battle, Wycherley reminds him that strength of arms shows only weakness of mind, that rash courage is a sign of madness, that valor in excess is but senseless vanity, and that the young man could better prove his mettle by endangering himself less, thereby proving

his love for his friends at home, who are much concerned about his safety. From a philosophical standpoint, Wycherley is skeptical and iconoclastic, although he is also pretty clearly engaged in raillery. To one who has apparently distinguished himself in battle, Wycherley says, "I'm much asham'd, to hear such things of you"; and in Wycherley's terms, courage, valor, and fame become weakness, vanity, and senselessness.

Now epistles such as these lead me to a first generalization. Tentatively, I would say that familiar epistolary verse written before ~~1688~~ was in an embryonic stage and that it had not yet escaped from the doldrums of miscellaneity. At least this is suggested by the examples I have been able to find, approximately twenty-three poems. And it is further supported by what appears in the third category. Where we might expect to see something truly Horatian in the way of philosophy or advice, we have instead only minor pieces by Wycherley, Cotton and Pomfret.<sup>17</sup> Of the poems as a whole, none that I have found are far-reaching from a philosophic or literary point of view, only two (Cotton's "Epistle to the Earl of [Chesterfield]" and his burlesque "Epistle to Sir Clifford Clifton...") include the kind of dialogue or conversation that appears so often in Horace's Epistles, and the authors very infrequently make use of the special nature of the addressee.

Despite these disappointing generalizations, however, some slight pressure from Horace's Epistles is apparent; and if the poets of this first period did not produce many works that we can call fully Horatian, they did, in a sense, prepare the ground for later and perhaps more successful efforts. Specifically, I suggest that in the familiar epistles written between 1660 and 1688 we find some Horatian themes and that toward the end of the period we find evidence of at least one part of the so-called familiar style -- the "legislative."

Unlike the complimentary epistles of this same period, which as we have seen were largely concerned with the subject of poetry, the works that I have classified as "familiar or Horatian epistles" have as their major subject the enjoyment of life. Allowing for ever-present exceptions, one theme is that of happiness or contentment treated most often with reference to the joys of country life. This is the subject, for example, of Cotton's Horatian "Epistle to John Bradshaw, Esq.I." Modeled in part after Horace's "Journey to Brundisium," Cotton's poem begins with an account of a journey from London to Beresford Hall -- through St. Albans, Dunstable, Brickhill, Stratford, Dunchurch, Coventry, "Lichfield," and Uttoxeter -- with some mention of eating, drinking, and lodging along the way. Just as Horace has his "lazy boatman," Cotton frets about his "vile Charioteer"; but the most Horatian part comes

at the end when Cotton describes his joy upon arriving home and his subsequent activities at his country seat.

And now I'm here set down again in peace,  
 After my troubles, business, voyages,  
 The same dull Northern clod I was before,  
 Gravely enquiring how **ewes** are a score,  
 How the **hay** harvest, and the **corn** was got,  
 And if or no there's like to be a rot;  
 Just the same sot I was e'er I remov'd;  
 Nor by my travel, nor the Court improv'd;  
 The same old-fashion'd Squire, no whit refin'd,  
 And shall be wiser when the Devil's blind;  
 But find all here too in the selfsame state,  
 And now begin to live at the old rate,  
 To bub old ale, which nonsense does create,  
 Write lewd epistles, and sometimes translate  
 Old Tales of Tubs, of Guyene, and Provence,  
 And keep a clutter with th' old Blades of France,  
 As D'Avenant did with those of Lombardy,  
 Which any will receive, but none will buy  
 And that has set H. B. [Henry Brome] and me awry.  
 My river still through the same channel glides,  
 Clear from the tumult, salt and dirt of tides,  
 And my poor fishing-house, my seat's best grace,  
 Stands firm and faithful in the selfsame place  
 I left it four months since, and ten to one  
 I go a-fishing e'er two days are gone:  
 So that (my friend) I nothing want but thee  
 To make me happy as I'd wish to be;  
 And sure a day will come I shall be bless'd  
 In his enjoyment whom my heart loves best;  
 Which when it comes will raise me above men  
 Greater than crowned Monarchs are, and then  
 I'll not exchange my Cottage for Whitehall,  
 Windsor, the Louvre, or th' Escurial.<sup>18</sup>

Such verse lacks the polish and perhaps some of the urbanity of Horace, but in spirit I believe it is essentially Horatian. The self-effacing manner, the complete informality, the clutter of concrete details, the "cracker-barrel" sincerity, and the conversational ease of this passage -- all are Horatian. And of course the subject, involving a grateful enjoyment of country life, has its parallel in Horace's loving descriptions of his Sabine farm.<sup>19</sup>

Also a part of the Horatian theme of happiness is the idea of inner contentment. In the passage quoted from Cotton's "Epistle to John Bradshaw, Esq. I," although the poet does not specifically mention the kind of inner peace and satisfaction that we associate with contentment, this spirit seems to lie behind the notion that Cotton wants nothing, except perhaps his friend's company, to make him completely happy. The very ease of the lines themselves suggests that Cotton enjoys peace of mind as well as the pleasures of his country surroundings. Pomfret, in his familiar epistles, speaks more directly of content and "inner happiness." For example in "To His Friend, Under Affliction," he says,

External pomp and visible success  
Sometimes contribute to our happiness;  
But that which makes it genuine, refin'd,  
Is a good conscience and a soul resign'd.<sup>20</sup>

And in "To Another Friend, Under Affliction," he gives wider scope to the same idea by urging that his addressee use right reason, "a steadiness of soul and thought," to control stubborn anguish, that he refrain from pursuing "knowledge forbid," and that he concern himself only with the present. This kind of subject matter involving faithful acceptance, moderation, and contentment does not appear often in the epistles written between 1660 and 1688; but it underlies enough of what was said in epistolary verse to deserve mention and is not unrelated to the Horatian idea of happiness as a state of mind.<sup>21</sup>

Concerning the manner of these early poems, there seems to be no clear adherence to any one particular "way" within the epistles themselves. We have everything from the galloping doggerel of Cotton's "Epistle to Sir Clifford Clifton" to the smoother lines of Pomfret's epistles and Thomas Otway's "An Epistle to R[ichard] D[uke]." As we have seen, moreover, there is a slight tendency toward Horace's conversational style in Cotton's "Epistle to John Bradshaw, Esq. I"; but this is more the exception than the rule. In brief, whereas some evidence of the Horatian theme of happiness and content appears -- and I would call it minimal -- it is difficult if not impossible to find epistolary poems written between 1660 and 1688 which also consciously cultivate the manner of familiar Horatian verse. Specifically, of the twenty-three familiar poems I have read by Wycherley, Pomfret, Dryden, Cotton, Oldham, and Otway, sixteen are not Horatian. Of the remaining seven, five use Horatian material -- philosophy as a possible comforter, the joys of the easy retired life, or happiness based on content and a good conscience -- and only two (Cotton's "Epistle to the Earl of Chesterfield" and "Epistle to John Bradshaw, Esq. I") approximate what might be called the Horatian way.

Still with regard to the Horatian epistolary manner, however, we do have a significant development toward the end



of this first period -- the use of the "epistolary way" in at least one poem not called an epistle. I refer to Dryden's Religio Laici (1682). The immediate occasion of the poem was a translation of Father Richard Simon's Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament, which set out to undermine the central point of Protestant uncritical belief in Scripture as the sole basis for faith and prompted Dryden's inquiry into the matter of religious authority.<sup>22</sup> Doubtless the poem is a very significant one from the standpoint of the religious controversy which it embodies, but for our purposes it is most important as an early "Horatian" poem and as a precursor of things to come.

Specifically, Religio Laici marks the appearance of the Horatian epistolary way in poetry designed to instruct and written in "unpolish'd, rugged Verse...fittest for Discourse, and nearest Prose."<sup>23</sup> In his preface Dryden tells us that since his poem is addressed to Henry Dickinson, translator of Simon's Histoire, the style is "what it ought to be, Epistolary."<sup>24</sup> And he then qualifies this style with the following statement:

If any one be so lamentable a Critique as to require the Smoothness, the Numbers and the turn of Heroick Poetry in this Poem; I must tell him, that if he has not read Horace, I have studied him, and hope the style of his Epistles is not ill imitated here. The Expressions of a Poem, design'd purely for Instruction, ought to be Plain and Natural, and yet Majestick: for here the Poet is presum'd to be a kind of Law-giver, and those three qualities which I have nam'd are proper to the Legislative style. The Florid, Elevated and Figurative way is for the Passions;

for Love and Hatred, Fear and Anger, are begotten in the Soul by shewing their Objects out of their true proportion; either greater than the Life, or less; but Instruction is to be given by shewing them what they naturally are. A Man is to be cheated into Passion, but to be reason'd into Truth.<sup>25</sup>

Clearly, Dryden's major intention is to distinguish the epistolary way from that of heroic poetry (and perhaps the manner of Ovidian epistles), and in the process he emphasizes four important points. I call attention particularly to his concern for the effect that poetry will have on its audience, to the stress placed on the didactic nature of poetry written in the epistolary way, and to his insistence that such poetry must reason with its audience if it is to succeed. But most important is the fact that Dryden announces his intention to imitate the style of Horace's Epistles, that he characterizes this style as "Plain and Natural, and yet Majestick," and that he does not mention familiarity or ease.

Religio Laici is perhaps a little more obviously organized than some epistolary poems in the way it passes through a rejection of religious authority based totally on reason, Biblical text, or church tradition; but its use of queries for transitions, plain connectives like "But stay," expressions like "with as little pains" or "write it new," and one digression "to the translator" (lines 224-275) successfully disguise the appearance of any rigid or systematic order. The dominant note is one of patient examination and discussion and, as such, corresponds with some of Dryden's main points in the poem -- that private reason ("Zeal") should be curbed,

that dispute should not disturb the public peace, and that people with religious differences should, if at all, discuss their differences patiently and in such a way so as not to shatter the "Common quiet."

One example of this part of the poem's manner will have to serve. Having called attention to the mangled texts of the Bible (which is the subject of Simon's work) and the uncertainty of church tradition, Dryden continues in the following way:

Oh but says one, Tradition set aside,  
Where can we hope for an unerring Guid?  
For since th' original Scripture has been lost,  
All Copies disagreeing, maim'd the most,  
Or Christian Faith can have no certain ground,  
Or Truth in Church Tradition must be found.  
Such an Omniscient Church we wish indeed;  
'Twere worth Both Testaments, and cast in the Creed:  
But if this Mother be a Guid so sure,  
As can all doubts resolve, all truth secure,  
Then her Infallibility, as well  
Where Copies are corrupt, or lame, can tell;  
Restore lost Canon with as little pains,  
As truly explicate what still remains:  
Which yet no Council dare pretend to doe;  
Unless like Esdras, they cou'd write it new:  
Strange Confidence, still to interpret true,  
Yet not be sure that all they have explain'd,  
Is in the best Original contain'd.  
More Safe, and much more modest 'tis, to say  
God wou'd not leave Mankind without a way:  
And that the Scriptures, though not every where  
Free from Corruption, or intire, or clear,  
Are uncorrupt, sufficient, clear, intire,  
In all things which our needfull Faith require.  
If others in the same Glass better see  
'Tis for Themselves they look, but not for me:  
For MY Salvation must its Doom receive  
Not from what OTHERS, but what I believe.<sup>26</sup>

Here we have the accents of conversation and the tone of sweet reasonableness. To make his point, Dryden dramatically takes the part of an interlocutor, who searches in vain for religious authority; and he then patiently reasons his way toward a

tentative and "More Safe and much more modest" position based on revealed religion and faith. The enjambed couplets suggest the idiom of actual and natural speech, as do the down-to-earth metaphors -- the church as "Mother," the Scripture as a "Glass" -- and the colloquial phrases like "we wish indeed"; yet there is a certain air of majesty in the longer Latinate words -- "Omniscient," "Infallibility," "explicate" -- in the steady stride of adjectives ("uncorrupt, sufficient, clear, intire"), and in the calm easy assertion of the line, "God wou'd not leave Mankind without a way."

An air of patient educated discussion characterizes the manner of the poem, and in this way the layman reasons with his audience. Also worthy of note, moreover, is the variety of tones. Any "conversation" or discussion would be dull indeed if the speaker continued on one monotonous level never bothering to vary his manner of address, never allowing himself a moment of excitement or perhaps even an occasional outburst. So it is that Dryden, while pursuing the middle way, varies his tone from the majestic opening lines to the notes of the passage quoted above and finally to some satirical thrusts at those whose zeal has disturbed both the Biblical text and the public peace. From the majesty of the following:

Dim, as the borrow'd beams of Moon and Stars  
 To lonely, weary, wandering Travellers,  
 Is Reason to the Soul: And as on high,  
 Those rowling Fires discover but the Sky  
 Not light us here; So Reason's glimmering Ray  
 Was lent, not to assure our doubtfull way,  
 But guide us upward to a better Day.<sup>27</sup>

To the patient summary and sweet reasonableness of the following:

For granting we have Sin'd, and that th' offence  
Of Man, is made against Omnipotence,  
Some Price, that bears proportion, must be paid;  
And Infinite with Infinite be weigh'd.  
See then the Deist lost: Remorse for Vice,  
Not paid, or paid, inadequate in price:  
What farther means can Reason now direct,  
Or what Relief from humane Wit expect?

To the more openly scornful note of the following:

The tender Page with horney Fists was gaul'd;  
And he was gifted most that loudest baul'd:  
The Spirit gave the Doctoral Degree:  
And every member of a Company  
Was of his Trade, and of the Bible free....  
While Crouds unlearn'd, with rude Devotion warm,  
About the Sacred Viands buz [sic] and swarm,  
The Fly-blown Text creates a crawling Brood;  
And turns to Maggots what was meant for Food.

The qualities cited -- an absence of an obtrusive order, the conversational idiom, the mixture of familiar and somewhat formal diction, the variety of tones suited to the mood of the speaker -- suggest that Dryden did in fact use the manner of Horace's Epistles. But Religio Laici leaves undeveloped (or disregards) several other qualities also related to the Horatian way. Nothing in the poem seems "thrown in (and as it were by the by)," there is no refined raillery, the manner is not what I would call "free and disengaged," and Dryden, except for one digression, takes no particular notice of the person to whom the poem is supposedly addressed. In other words, although we may accept Dryden's prefatory remarks and call the poem epistolary in part, it is not in fact an epistle. It is a verse essay and as such indicates that at the end of this first period, or in the 1680's, the

manner of Horace's Epistles, which does not appear to any great extent in epistolary verse per se, was being cultivated in poems which would tend to elevate the didactic element and to sacrifice for the sake of poetic argument the important personal element and the appearance of negligence that distinguish Horace's Epistles.

In brief, we have between the years 1660 and 1688 a division of the Horatian epistolary way. On one hand we have a body of relatively minor epistles which are familiar and personal, "easy" and informal, but **wich** lack depth and cannot, therefore, as a whole be called substantially Horatian. Few of them, as we have seen, consciously cultivate the Horatian manner or employ Horatian thematic material. On the other hand we have in Religio Laici one instance of an Horatian manner combined with the necessary substance and depth, but lacking the easy familiarity -- the personal note -- required by the Horatian way.

I believe that there are two reasons for this state of affairs. The first is the fact that between 1660 and 1680 the hexameter poems of Horace -- including his Satires and Epistles -- seem not to have been widely popular. One critic has said that Horace's "Satires and Epistles, were, as a matter of fact, more popular in the Elizabethan period than his lyrical poems; whereas, after 1620, it is the latter which are most read and translated, while the hexameter poems are neglected, and it is not till the appearance of Dacier's edition of Horace between 1680 and 1690 that the latter class of poems begins to recover

its place."<sup>28</sup> Also we know that Alexander Brome's English translation of Horace's poems was the only one between 1660 and 1680; and that in the second edition (1671) the satires and epistles remained the same as they were in the first (1666), whereas many of the odes were newly translated.<sup>29</sup> In his preface to Religio Laici, furthermore, Dryden speaks of reading and studying Horace's Epistles as though such an activity might be considered unusual -- this despite the fact that Horace was taught in every school in England for these twenty years. We cannot rightly expect the Epistles of Horace to exert much pressure on the style or manner or content of poetry if they were not especially popular, and this lack of popularity may in part explain the miscellaneous nature (the un-Horatian quality) of most of the epistles of the time.

A second and perhaps more important reason related to the trend toward purely didactic poetry is that interest in Horatian epistles in the 1680's was concentrated on the Ars Poetica, the effect of which was modified by Boileau's L'Art Poétique (1674), inspired itself in part by Horace's epistle to the Pisos. In the 1680's English poets tended to use what they considered the Horatian way in poetical treatises influenced by Boileau's L'Art Poétique, which had transformed and expanded an essentially desultory epistle making random remarks into a systematic verse essay on the art of poetry. In the process, of course, much of what was distinctly epistolary was sacrificed for the sake of absolute clarity and relative completeness. And what appears to have been

most in vogue, therefore, was not epistles but verse essays by poets who called Horace their "master" and modeled their work on Boileau. Examples include the Essay on Poetry (1682) by John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, and the Essay on Translated Verse (1684) by Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon, both of which demonstrate the prevailing tendency toward didacticism and argument at the expense of the more personal element that epistolary verse requires.<sup>30</sup> Briefly, the familiar Horatian epistolary mode between 1660 and 1688 languished for two reasons: in the early years it excited no widespread attention among writers, and toward the end of the period it was used in poetry written by men who chose to efface themselves behind something they proposed.<sup>31</sup>



## CHAPTER V

### FAMILIAR EPISTLES: 1689 - 1715

Pult'ney, methinks you blame my breach of word;  
What, cannot Paris one poor page afford?

John Gay, "Epistle to the Right Honourable  
William Pulteney, Esq."

Turning from the epistles of the first period to those written between 1689 and 1715, we might reasonably expect to find little of interest after so inauspicious a start. But fortunately this is not the case. The interest in an Horatian way of writing which appeared in the verse essays of the 1680's apparently continued to grow; and although familiar epistolary verse of the second period (1689-1715) does not represent the peak of development in this mode, it is an improvement upon what we have seen. Again the three categories established for familiar epistles written between 1660 and 1688 seem to stand out, but with some noteworthy changes. There are fewer epistles of the descriptive or minor sort that dominate the first period. Poets seem to give more attention to literary subject matter, some of it specifically Horatian. Imitations of Horace's Epistles begin to appear. And in all three categories -- the minor (including descriptive epistles), the literary, and the broadly

philosophic -- we see a slight tendency to cover more ground. In short, although between 1660 and 1688 it would be difficult to find an English poem specifically entitled an "epistle" treating substantial material, after 1688 such poems appear rather frequently.

## i

The few epistles which contain a relatively high degree of description can be exemplified by Gay's "An Epistle to the Right Honourable the Earl of Burlington. A Journey to Exeter" (1715), which, like Charles Cotton's earlier "Epistle to John Bradshaw, Esq.I," descends from Horace's "Journey to Brundisium."<sup>1</sup> After an opening passage which refers to the neighborliness of Burlington and briefly describes Burlington's villa on the waterside at Chiswick ("Where Pope unloads the boughs within his reach, / Of purple vine, blue plum and blushing peach"), Gay turns to an account of his journey from London to Exeter via Kensington Gardens, Hammersmith, Turnham Green, Bagshot-Heath and so on. Unlike Cotton, however, Gay adds bits of observation as he passes from place to place, including much specific detail in political and sociological asides. For example, Bagshot-Heath is "Where broken gamesters oft repair their loss"; Popham-Lane, once a hangout for thieves, is now apparently an enormous home for "unown'd infants" who, Gay feels, should be tended by their mothers; and at Hartley Row we have the fat talkative landlord.

Our host extoll'd his wine at ev'ry round,  
 Relates the Justices' late meeting there,  
 How many bottles drank, and what their cheer;  
 What lords had been his guests in days of yore,  
 And prais'd their wisdom much, their drinking more.<sup>2</sup>

Much in the manner of Trivia, Gay's attitude is lightly satiric as above. And no doubt the poem is of some interest today because of its concrete references to life in the early eighteenth century: the ostler's half-pence fee, a female barber, lobster and trout to eat at country inns, and a completely unromantic shepherd who can tell time by the sun but who is not given to piping "with his reed." A tavern stop reminds Gay that Blackmore (Maurus) should concentrate less on epics and more on ale-house signs, and the poem ends with the joy of arriving finally at Exeter.

Hail, happy native land! -- but I forbear,  
 What other countries must with envy hear.<sup>3</sup>

Gay's work is clearly a journey poem. We might say that it complements Cotton's poem insofar as the most interesting part of the "Epistle to John Bradshaw, Esq." concerns Cotton's activities at Eeresford, whereas Gay concentrates on what he sees along the way. In Gay's poem also, closed heroic couplets replace the run-on lines of Cotton so that the effect is one of precision as well as ease instead of total informality and looseness. Cotton is utterly simple.

And my poor Fishing-house, my seat's best grace,  
 Stands firm and faithful in the selfsame place  
 I left it four months since, and ten to one  
 I go a-fishing e'er two days are gone.<sup>4</sup>

Gay, in a not completely serious vein, is more witty.

Now swelling clouds roll'd on; the rainy load  
 Stream'd down our hats, and smoked along the road;  
 When (O blest sight!) a friendly sign we spied,  
 Our spurs are slacken'd from the horse's side;  
 For sure a civil host the house commands,  
 Upon whose sign this courteous motto stands,  
This is the ancient hand, and eke the pen;  
Here is for horses hay, and meat for men.<sup>5</sup>

One might say that Gay's poem has some of the Horatian polish and easy urbanity that Cotton's earlier poem lacks; and this, in addition to the other differences I have noted, is a step forward. The poem is not far-reaching, but its use of the epistolary technique of touching on a variety of subjects and then moving on rapidly is, I believe, a half-step in this direction.<sup>6</sup>

Among other minor epistles, there are also some significant changes. To begin with, I have not been able to find in the second period as many trifles of the sort that seem to have dominated familiar epistolary verse between 1660 and 1688. A few examples of this sort do appear, such as Prior's "To Dr. F[uller] in a Letter to Beverley dissuading him from drinking Waters" (1689) in which the poet advises his addressee to "Sitt up late, and drink all up"; but such poems are relatively uncommon between 1689 and 1715.<sup>7</sup>

The small number of trifles might suggest that after 1689 poets began to take the familiar epistolary poem (along with poetry in general) a little more seriously. At least this change is possible in view of a further development. Among the epistolary poems which fall between the trifling sort

and the more extensive literary and philosophical poems in other categories, we find a number of Horatian imitations. For example we have Prior's "Horace Lib.I. Epist.IX...Imitated. To the Right Honorable Mr. Harley" (1710) and Swift's "Part of the Seventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated" (1713). In the first poem Prior recommends Richard Shelton to Harley just as Horace had recommended Septimius to the young Prince Tiberius; and, like Horace, Prior disclaims all influence-peddling, expressing his desire to avoid the greater fault of seeming to preserve ~~for~~ himself whatever favor he may have. The style is as it should be -- conversational and easy; and Prior's attitude ranges between total familiarity and deference.

Dear Dick, how e'er it comes into his Head,  
Believes, as firmly as He does his Creed,  
 That You and I, Sir, are extremely great;  
 Tho' I plain Mat, You Minister of State.<sup>8</sup>

Here is the "much in little" so characteristic of Horace's verse epistles. Prior smiles at himself, alludes to Harley's fine reputation, supports Shelton with an aside about his religious convictions, and passes in manner from "Dear Dick" to "Sir." "Dear Dick," referring to Shelton, suggests Prior's essential sincerity but it is not without a touch of superiority. He might have said "My worthy friend" or "My deserving friend," deciding beforehand that which Harley must decide, but the request seems straightforward and unmasked. "Sir" conveys the note of respect and proper deference with no servility. And the combination of the two manners

undergirds the purpose of the letter -- to do his friend some good.

So, Sir, with this Epistolary Scroll,  
Receive the Partner of my inmost Soul:  
Him you will find in Letters, and in Laws  
Not unexpert, firm to his Country's Cause,  
Warm in the Glorious Interest You pursue,  
And, in one Word, a Good Man and a True.<sup>9</sup>

The second poem, Swift's imitation of Ep.I.vii. addressed to the Earl of Oxford, moves toward the area of the literary epistle. Writing on his return to England after his installation as Dean of St. Patrick's, Swift uses the Horatian story of Philippus and his client Volteius Mena to tell of his being discovered by Harley, being appointed Dean, and thereby incurring debts (the expenses of his travel and installation). Thanks to Harley's magnanimity ("A Canon! that's a Place too mean: / No, Doctor, you shall be a Dean") Swift is transported rather reluctantly to Ireland, where his income fades. Poverty-stricken (in the poem) he returns to London and begs Harley to leave him once more where he was found, "Cheapning old Authors on a Stall" near Whitehall. The favor of the great has proved disastrous.

In manner Swift's poem is ironic, witty, and a little disrespectful. Dramatic in nature, with much in the way of dialogue, the poem, for example, concentrates on the characters of Harley and Swift as well as the terrible outcome of preferment. Harley is said to love "Mischief better than his Meat," his motive in patronizing Swift is attributed to the desire "to crack a Jest," and he emerges as a pressing,

somewhat officious and rather grimly humorous nobleman with "All Europe's Bus'ness in his Breast" but very little of Swift's. In turn, Swift speaks of himself in the third person as a parson (the pun is Swiftian not Horatian) with some humor in his face, a "perfect Stranger to the Spleen" (at least before "good fortune" fell on him), and of a size that might fill a pulpit, but more inclined to "sit still." In an extended passage he characterizes himself in the following terms:

A Clergyman of special Note,  
 For shunning those of his own Coat;  
 Which made his Brethren of the Gown  
 Take care betimes to run him down:  
 No Libertine, nor Over-nice,  
 Addicted to no sort of Vice;  
 Went where he pleas'd, said what he thought,  
 Not Rich, but wou'd no Man a Groat;  
 In State-Opinions a-la Mode,  
 He hated Wharton like a Toad;  
 Had giv'n the Faction many a Wound,  
 And Libell'd all the Junta round;  
 Kept Company with Men of Wit,  
 Who often father'd what he writ;  
 His Works were hawk'd in ev'ry Street,  
 But seldom rose above a Sheet:  
 Of late indeed the Paper-Stamp  
 Did very much his Genius cramp;  
 And, since he could not spend his Fire,  
 He now intended to Retire.<sup>10</sup>

Here is all the Swiftian "truth-telling," honesty, outspokenness and seeming guilelessness with a strong undercurrent of role playing. Within the framework of the poem, Harley observes Swift sampling books and sends his secretary, Erasmus Lewis, to find out what kind of a man this parson is. We have to imagine Lewis, a "cunning shaver," approaching Swift, engaging him in conversation, and quickly

sifting out all kinds of information about Swift's religious, moral, economic, political, and social ideas as well as his plans for the future while Harley waits in the coach for his treasurer to return. The impossibility of all this is, I think, part of Swift's fun; and although his self-portrait seems completely straightforward, the circumstances under which it is given suggest the possibility of some Swiftian hocus-pocus. More dramatic and perhaps more grimly humorous is the passage at the end of the poem when Swift returns to London from Ireland. He is "dirty, pale, and thin"; Harley's porter, Old Read, barely lets him in; and then the "jest" concludes:

Said HARLEY, Welcome Rev'rend Dean!  
 What makes your Worship look so lean?  
 Why sure you won't appear in Town,  
 In that old Wig and rusty Gown!  
 I doubt your Heart is set on Pelf  
 So much, that you neglect your Self.  
 What! I suppose now Stocks are high,  
 You've some good Purchase in your Eye;  
 Or is your Money out at use? --

Truce, good MY LORD, I beg a Truce!  
 The Doctor in a Passion cry'd;  
 Your Raillery is misapply'd:  
 I have Experience dearly bought,  
 You know I am not worth a Groat:  
 But you resolv'd to have your Jest,  
 And 'twas a Folly to Contest:  
 Then since you now have done your worst,  
 Pray leave me where you found me first.<sup>11</sup>

Read against a background of Swift's increasing realization of his inability to heal the breach between Oxford and Bolingbroke, his statement in a letter to Archdeacon Walls (October 1, 1713) that he was "heartily weary of Courts and



Ministers," and the unfulfilled Harleian promise of 1000 pounds to clear his Deanery debts, such lines as "I have Experience dearly bought" give this poem the air of something more than a pleasant dunning of a noble associate and benefactor. In fact it is an ironic accusation. And as such it serves as an example not only of a new interest in imitations but of the many-sided nature of a familiar Horatian epistle and its tendency to suggest much.<sup>12</sup>

ii

The full flowering of the literary epistle between 1689 and 1715 is perhaps best illustrated by Prior's "A Letter to Monsieur Boileau Despreaux; Occasion'd by the Victory at Blenheim, 1704." The poem is really many things in one. It is an unsuccessful attempt to regain the favor of the Duchess of Marlborough, who was convinced that Prior had written Faction Display'd (1704), a satire on the Whigs in general and the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough in particular.<sup>13</sup> It is a continuation of the poetic warfare that Prior had been carrying on with Boileau. And in Prior's own words from the History of His Own Time (1740) the poem combines the "various Beauties of a familiar Epistle, a genteel Satire, and an epic Poem."<sup>14</sup> It seems, therefore, to have been designed purposefully as a satura, or a medley of things, and is of interest here principally because it demonstrates two important tendencies. It is more expansive than any

of the epistles seen thus far, and it shows clearly a rather happy marriage of the familiar epistolary style with serious literary and, in this case, national subject matter.

Prior begins with barbed lines asking Boileau what he will do now that the French have suffered a humiliating defeat:

Since hir'd for Life, thy Servile Muse must sing  
Successive Conquests, and a glorious King;...  
What Turn wilt Thou employ, what Colours lay  
On the Event of that Superior Day,  
In which one English Subject's prosp'rous Hand  
(So Jove did will; so Anna did command:)  
Broke the proud Column of thy Master's Praise,  
Which sixty Winters had conspir'd to raise?<sup>15</sup>

And he then ironically suggests the several poetic excuses that Boileau might use: the "Work of Chance," an accusation of "Bavaria's Stars," the work of some "Daemon," or perhaps even a mistake by Mars.<sup>16</sup> Referring to Boileau's Epitre IV (Le Passage du Rhin), Prior notes that the Frenchman this time will not be able to beg the issue on the basis of unpoetic names. Marlbrô, Ingoldsby, Lumly, Hamilton, Rhine, Maes, Vans, and Vanders have replaced Doësbourg, Zutphen, Wageningen, Harderwic, Knotzembourg, and the unspeakable Wurts. And, thanks to English titles and classical tastes, substitutions can help to avoid other harshness -- "Valiant Gouram" for "Cutts," "Sylvius" for "Wood." In this manner (lines 1-46) Prior plays with the two major concerns of the poem, including a genteel twitting of the French and, in a sense, a few notes on how one might write an heroic poem in celebration of the victory at Blenheim.

Lines 46-78 are transitional. Prior notes the difficulties of writing poetry as opposed to prose and proves his point by unsuccessfully attempting to make "Matter" and "Verse" agree in a statistical passage detailing the French losses. The message is clear: the French have lost eighteen squadrons, twenty-six battalions, thousands of canons and kettle-drums, and so forth. But the poetry is terrible; and Boileau, in his only "reply," says that this is but a "Commissary's List in Verse." Completing the transition, Prior admits the sense of Boileau's criticism and again points to the difficulty of writing a poem in celebration of the victory. "Tis mighty hard," he says, and would require all of Newton's thoughts and Dryden's style.

Again we see the twofold nature of the poem -- a genteel satire on the French and a series of notes on the problems of writing an appropriate celebratory poem. Prior feels no real animosity toward Boileau. In fact they are friends; and as often as Prior teases Boileau, he calls attention to his own inadequacies as a poet, the direction taken in the transitional passage leading from the opening ironic lines to his plan for an heroic poem (lines 79-176). In effect, Prior says that this is what he would do if he had a portion of Dryden's skill or inspiration. And he then summarizes his plan, beginning with a Virgilian echo and an announcement of the epic theme. The inspired poet, he says, should strive

Arms and a Queen to Sing; Who, Great and Good,  
From peaceful Thames to Danube's wond'ring Flood

Sent forth the Terror of her high Commands,  
 To save the Nations from invading Hands,  
 To prop fair Liberty's declining Cause,  
 And fix the jarring World with equal Laws.<sup>17</sup>

The plan continues with an account of the Queen in "Windsor's sacred Grove" being entertained by nymphs and Tritons and petitioned by "Master Thames" to aid "His Breth'ren Maes, and Waal, and Rhine, and Saar." Anne calls on "Marlbrô," reminds him of the heroic English past, commissions him to fight in the name of "Virtue" against "lawless Pride"; and, of course, Marlborough "bows obedient," afterwards retiring to silent woods to plan his campaign. There he is visited by "Victoria," who prophesies triumph; and when the news spreads, the armies gather, set sail, and land in Belgium, where Marlborough is welcomed as a second William, the comparison inspiring an epic simile.

So when great Atlas, from these low Abodes  
 Recall'd, was gather'd to his Kindred-Gods;  
Alcides respited by prudent Fate,  
Sustain'd the Ball, nor droop'd beneath the Weight.<sup>18</sup>

The battle follows, with cries of "Anne and St. George," echo replies, Europe's fate hangs in the balance, and Victoria fulfills her promise.

The Eagle, by the British Lion's Might  
 Unchain'd and Free, directs her upward Flight:  
 Nor did She e'er with stronger Pinions soar  
 From Tyber's Banks, than now from Danube's Shoar.<sup>19</sup>

And the "plan" ends on a note of "poetic warfare," indicating that if such a poem were written it would bear comparison with the work of Virgil.

Fir'd with the Thoughts which these Ideas raise,  
 And great Ambition of my Country's Praise;

The English Muse should like the Mantuan rise,  
 Scornful of Earth and Clouds, should reach the Skies,  
 With Wonder (tho' with Envy still) pursu'd by human Eyes.<sup>20</sup>

Prior's "Ideas" comprise something like the twenty-fifth book of The Faery Queen: we have the central court of the Queen, the complaint of one injured or in need of help, the assignment of a mission to a trustworthy "Gen'ral," the allegorical nature of the battle (Virtue vs. lawless Pride), and the transparent figure of "Victoria" guiding Marlborough's fate. The analogy is further strengthened in the closing lines of the poem (182-201) beginning with the epistolary "But We must change the style" and ending,

Nor ever shall Britannia's Sons refuse  
 To answer to thy Master, or thy Muse;  
 Nor want just Subject for victorious Strains,  
 While Marlbrô's Arm Eternal Laurel gains;  
 And where old Spencer sung, a new Elisa reigns.<sup>21</sup>

Prior throws down the gauntlet, admits that he is no "Master of the tuneful Trade," attributes the division of English opinion about Marlborough to a "consequential Ill" of freedom, and says that he will be well satisfied if his work inspires someone better able than himself to write the poem he has outlined.

I have included this lengthy summary to illustrate a considerable expansion of the epistolary poem that occurs between 1689 and 1715. Prior's poem has certain affinities with earlier epistles -- Oldham's "Letter From the Country to a Friend in Town," for example -- which concentrate on poetic concerns (both, in a sense, seem to emphasize some aspect of the poet at work).<sup>22</sup> But the scope of Prior's poem

is much larger. Whereas Oldham (and Cotton in his burlesque account of writing a letter in his "Epistle to Sir Clifford Clifton") is concerned with himself, Prior uses the same vehicle, an epistle, to take in matters of international importance. He writes not only of the difficulties of poetry and his own shortcomings, but of the Queen and her great servant Marlborough, English freedom, English power and disinterestedness, and England's crushing defeat of France. Furthermore, all these concerns are cemented by the figure of Boileau, who seems to represent French literary accomplishment, and Prior's own battle to reestablish a pure English mode of poetry.

The literary / military parallel unifies the poem, yet this organizing principle does not over-shadow its pervasive epistolary manner. Prior is at all times easy, except when the subject calls for "singing robes"; he is spirited in his praise of English accomplishments; his satirical passages are not ill-natured; he treats Boileau as a friend but with the air of an educated man who has "won"; and he uses several epistolary devices. Transitions such as "Why Faith," "I grant, old Friend, old Foe," "But We must change the Style. -- Just now I said"; the passage in which Prior dramatically takes the part of Boileau; the asides thrown in as it were by the by; and the illusion of one man speaking in person to another ("there's Sense in what You say," "Just now I said") -- all contribute to the central epistolary nature of the poem. Prior's epistle to Boileau is far from great.

Possibly in aesthetic terms it does not deserve the full treatment I have given it. But in the ways cited it is surely concrete evidence of a serious interest in epistolary poetry and the many-sided possibilities of the familiar mode.<sup>23</sup>

In Prior's epistle I believe we have perhaps the best evidence of the growth and cultivation of the familiar manner; but the political subject matter -- in this case the nationalistic strain -- takes the poem somewhat beyond the bounds of what I would call the total Horatian epistolary mode, i.e. a combination of the familiar manner and predominantly literary or philosophical matter. For this, or another step in this direction between 1689 and 1715, we must turn to other examples (one literary and one philosophical), predominantly didactic and sometimes philosophic epistles.

Still in the ~~area~~ of the literary poem we have Samuel Wesley's "An Epistle to a Friend concerning Poetry" (1700), an interesting descendent of the earlier Essays by Mulgrave and Roscommon. To begin with, Wesley's poem is expressly called "An Epistle"; and in keeping with this sort of poetry, Wesley fashions his work as a series of remarks to a friend (probably fictional) who wishes to achieve poetic fame. The opening lines are especially epistolary.

As Brother Prynne of old from Mount Orgueil,  
So I to you from Epworth and the Isle:  
Harsh Northern Fruits from our cold Heav'ns I send,  
Yet, since the best they yield, they'll please a Friend.

You ask me, What's the readiest way to Fame,  
 And how to gain a Poet's sacred Name?  
 For Saffold send, your Choice were full as just,  
 When burning Fevers fry your Limbs to Dust!  
 Yet, lest you angry grow at your Defeat,  
 And me as ill as that fierce Spark should treat  
 Who did the Farrier into Doctor beat;  
 You to my little Quantum, Sir, are free,  
 Which I from Horace glean or Normanby;  
 These with some grains of Common Sense unite,  
 "Then freely think, and as I think I write."<sup>24</sup>

Noteworthy are the pretense of having received a query, of being unequal to the task of writing a satisfactory answer, of not attempting anything definitive or complete, of writing as the thoughts come, and of being assured that the "friend" will excuse whatever weaknesses he may find in the poem.

At this point, however, Wesley seems to forget that he is writing an epistle and composes what amounts to a verse treatise on poetry, including much that is heavily moral. He attempts some casual epistolary transitions and the manner of direct address ("You'll ask, What Genius is, and Where to find?"). But these techniques are overshadowed by a more orderly discussion about the natural prerequisites of the poet (genius, wit, judgment, invention, and memory); a cultivation of natural ability (learning, conversation, reading); the proprieties of poetic subjects, methods, and measures; some "modern" exemplars (Dorset, Montague, and Dryden, among others); and finally the standard "kinds" -- epic, tragedy, comedy, ode, and satire. These topics occupy center stage. In the wings are bits of Horatian advice about choosing a suitable subject ("No Work attempt but where your Strength you know") and the necessity of finding an



impartial judge. We also have some interesting comments on the availability of patronage ("Distinquish'd Worth can rarely miss of Friends"), the need to write for the "Wiser Few," and a generous interlarding of moral sentiment, the last conveyed in an allegorical account of the triumph of "Envy," Lewdness," "Bold Blasphemy," "Ribaldry," and "glutted Desolation."<sup>25</sup>

As such, Wesley's epistle "is neither startling nor contemptible; it has, in fact, much more to say than the rhymed treatises on verse by Roscommon and Buckinghamshire [sic]."<sup>26</sup> But its primary importance for our purposes is that it says something about epistolary poetry written during the first part of the eighteenth century. In his preface Wesley says that "the direct Design" of his poem is "to serve the Cause of Religion and Virtue," and he adds that it was "necessary for that End to dispose the whole in such a manner as might be agreeable to the Taste of the present Age, and of those who usually give such sort of Books the Reading."<sup>27</sup> We may conclude that since he calls his poem an epistle, it is epistolary poetry that was "agreeable to the Taste of the present Age," and thus we have what may be the first non-conjectural indication that this mode of poetry was, in fact, popular at least by 1700.<sup>28</sup> Also within the poem itself, Wesley comments on the style of epistolary poetry and tells us something of his own "tast."

A vary'd Stile do various Works require,  
This soft as Air, and tow'ring that as Fire.  
None than th' Epistle goes more humbly drest,  
Tho neat 'twou'd be, and decent as the best.  
Such as th' ingenious Censor may invite

Oft to return with eager Appetite;  
 So Horace wrote, and so I'd wish to write.  
 Nor creeps it always, but can mount and rise,  
 And with bold Pinions sail along the Skies.  
 The self-same Work of different Style admits,  
 Now soft, now loud, as best the Matter fits:  
 So Father Thames from unexhausted Veins,  
 Moves clear and equable along the Plains;  
 Yet still of different Depth and Breadth is found,  
 And humours still the Nature of the Ground.<sup>29</sup>

This passage is of interest for several reasons. It emphasizes the unpretentiousness of epistolary poetry and the ease of manner that may invite re-reading. Lines three and four describe an epistolary style as humble but decent. And lines five and six suggest that an epistle may allow for complexity. The emphasis on stylistic or tonal variety is also clear, and in the last four lines we have a very important, albeit rather cryptic, metaphor that says much about Wesley's regard for the epistle. "Father Thames" is, I think, a clear reference to Denham's famous and often quoted lines from "Coopers Hill": "Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull, / Strong without rage, without ore-flowing full."<sup>30</sup> And coming as it does at the end of a passage on epistolary style, the reference implies Wesley's belief that this "perfect" style can be most nearly approached in epistolary verse. Finally the chain of thought that leads to the quoted passage is of interest. If we can believe that Wesley actually wrote as he thought ("as I think I write"), the sequence of ideas before the quoted passage indicates a subtle relationship between conversation, stylistic principle, and epistolary verse. Beginning at line 132, Wesley says that

wit, genius, sense, and learning will all be crude, stubborn, unpolished, and rough if left unrefined by conversation. The refining process then reminds him of style (lines 138-153), discussed in terms of a clothing metaphor; and he significantly defends the middle way.

Style is the Dress of Thought; a modest Dress,  
Neat, but not gaudy, will true Critics please:...  
 Happy are those who here the Medium know,  
 We hate alike a Sloven and a Beau.<sup>31</sup>

Still talking of style (lines 154-162), he next distinguishes between prose and verse styles, saying that in poetry variety is essential.

The Turn, the Numbers must be vary'd here,  
 And all things in a different Dress appear.

And the passage on epistolary poetry follows; moreover, in view of the remarks that come before, it seems to be exemplary. Its characteristic style is "Neat, but not gaudy." And just as conversation rightly cures the strong wine of "Natural Taste," so the Horatian epistolary style may be said to "humour" the "Nature of the Ground."<sup>32</sup>

I do not mean to imply that Wesley's poem is altogether typical of literary epistles written between 1689 and 1715. In manner it is like the epistolary treatises written in the early 1680's. But I do feel that it is an important link in the development of the familiar Horatian epistle; and if minor writers sometimes mirror more clearly the trends of the time than do major writers, I believe that we should take seriously the noted implications of Wesley's poem.

More or less the same holds true for one other verse letter written in this middle period -- Elijah Fenton's "An Epistle to Thomas Lambard, Esq." Like Wesley's work, one of a small group of didactic poems which treat literary topics, Fenton's is perhaps the best of another small group of predominantly philosophical epistles written between 1689 and 1715.<sup>33</sup> And it is important for our purposes because, as "Pope used to say," "Fenton's Epistle to Lambard" is "the most Horatian epistle in our language."<sup>34</sup> However much Pope's statement may have been motivated by his friendship with Fenton, the epistle to Lambard is more Horatian than anything we have seen thus far; and as such it marks the end of a developmental phase in epistolary verse and the beginning of a period during which this mode of poetry reached its peak.

Fenton's "Epistle to Lambard" is one of the earliest, if not the first, poems that combines Horatian matter and the Horatian manner in an original composition (i.e. not an imitation). Divided into two parts, "the poem is at once personal, philosophical, and critical."<sup>35</sup> In lines 1-209 Fenton pledges his poem and "lasting love" to Lambard, speaks of his indebtedness to Orrery and the ancients (Tully, Plato, Pindar, and Horace), couples some praise of Dryden with his own farewell to poetry, and says that the cultivation of virtue is the noblest pursuit of man. With Lambard in mind he writes,

Happiest of mortals he, who, timely wise,  
 In the calm walks of Truth his bloom enjoys;  
 With books and patrimonial plenty blest,  
 Health in his veins, and quiet in his breast!  
 Him no vain hopes attract, no fear appals,  
 Nor the gay servitude of courts enthrals,  
 Unknowing how to mask concerted guile  
 With a false cringe, or undermining smile;  
 His manners pure, from affectation free,  
 And prudence shines through clear simplicity.  
 Though no rich labours of the Persian loom,  
 Nor the nice sculptor's art, adorn his room,  
 Sleep, unprovok'd, will softly seal his eyes,  
 And innocence the want of down supplies;  
 Health tempers all his cups, and at his board  
 Reigns the cheap luxury the fields afford:  
 Like the great Trojan, mantled in a cloud,  
 Himself unseen, he sees the labouring crowd,  
 Where all industrious to their ruin run,  
 Swift to pursue what most they ought to shun.<sup>36</sup>

This ideal has Horace written all over it (health, quiet, content, ease, purity, prudence, simplicity, innocence, moderation); and the next lines turn our attention further to philosophical ideas. Fenton continues with talk of human failings, the necessity of discerning and using one's particular talent, and nature's law of compensation applied to the "culture of the mind." Again much of this is Horatian. Men unsatisfied with what they have; sacrifices of ease, innocence, and tranquillity of mind in the pursuit of fame, power, and wealth; the need to do what one is best suited for; and the foolishness of those blind to "the master-talent they possess" -- the soft fop who would face the foe, the wise man who flutters in the Mall -- all are reminiscent of Horatian matter.

In the second part of the poem, lines 234-391, Fenton continues his discussion of human failings on a different level.

Having drawn an analogy between nature's law of compensation in terms of human talents given to all men, he turns to psychology. Man's perverseness, he says, can be attributed to the usurpation of reason's throne by the will and the passions. On this basis he explains the egotism of poor poets (including himself) and railing critics. And he concludes the poem with a discussion of what feeds passion and will -- the intoxicants of the brain -- flattery, self-love, and sensual pleasure.

Few, wondrous few! are eagle-ey'd to find  
 A plain disease, or blemish in the mind:  
 Few can, tho' wisdom should their health insure,  
 Dispassionate and cool attend a cure.  
 In youth disus'd t' obey the needful rein,  
 Well pleas'd a savage liberty to gain,  
 We sate the kind desire of every sense,  
 And lull our age in thoughtless indolence:  
 Yet all are Solons in their own conceit,  
 Though, to supply the vacancy of wit,  
 Folly and Pride, impatient of control,  
 The sister-twins of Sloth, possess the soul.<sup>37</sup>

Alone, the main arguments of the poem would appear to be rather heavy. But they are lightened and brought alive by several familiar epistolary techniques. The discursive treatment of the idea that a man should be what he is designed to be is a case in point. Nothing in the organization of the poem is rigidly controlled. Fenton moves at will around his main theme, adding personal references to his own present activities and praise of his addressee. He also praises "as it were by the by" Dryden, Cervantes, Hanmer, and Kneller; and gently stings certain types of people ("critics"), individuals by name (Burgess), and one person disguised (the

"gay Pumilio" who "Imagines he alone is amply fit / To guide the state, or give the stamp to wit.").

Also serving to promote ease is the conversational procedure. In a transitional passage between the first and second parts of the poem, for example, Fenton takes the part of his addressee and laughs indirectly at himself.

"Whither," you cry, "tends all this dry discourse?  
To prove, like Hudibras, a man's no horse.  
I look'd for sparkling lines, and something gay  
To frisk my fancy with; but sooth to say!  
From her Apollo now the Muse elopes,  
And trades in syllogisms more than tropes." --  
"Faith, sir, I see you nod, but can't forbear;  
When a friend reads, in honour you must hear:  
For all enthusiasts, when the fit is strong,  
Indulge a volubility of tongue:  
Their fury triumphs o'er the men of phlegm,  
And council-proof, will never baulk a theme.  
So Durgess on his tripod rav'd the more,  
When round him half the saints began to snore."<sup>38</sup>

And in the most humorous passage of the poem, Fenton paints a scene involving himself and a "half-feather'd poet" bearing a "puny ode." The young man asks that Fenton judge the poem, and there follows a dramatic exemplum detailing the weaknesses of the "sly commerce of alternate praise."

His genius looks but awkward, yet his fate  
May raise him to be premier bard of state;  
I therefore bribe his suffrage to my fame,  
Revere his judgment, and applaud his flame;  
Then cry, in seeming transport, while I speak,  
"'Tis well for Pindar that he dealt in Greek!"  
He, conscious of desert, accepts the praise,  
And, courteous, with increase the debt repays:  
Boileau's a mushroom, if compar'd to me,  
And, Horace, I dispute the palm with thee!  
Loth, ravish'd, sing To Phoebus for success;  
Rise swift, ye laurels! -- boy! bespeak the press.  
Thus on imaginary praise we feed;  
Each writes till all refuse to print or read:  
From the records of Fame condemn'd to pass  
To Brisquet's calendar, a rubric ass."<sup>39</sup>

Again in the Horatian way, Fenton uses illustrative stories and personal experiences to highlight his discourse. To confirm "Flattery's smooth insinuating bane," he says that even as he writes to Lambard, "she" urges him to invoke every Muse, to sing of "Arms and the man" in an heroic outburst of praise. And he concludes with the mythological Juno's reply to a peacock who complained of not being able to sing like the nightingale: "Be what thou wert design'd, nor aim at more."

The tone of the poem passes at will from grave to gay, from lively to severe; we have the note of unobtrusive didacticism; and in general the piece is urbane, mellow, unpretentious, albeit at times unpolished. I can only conclude that Fenton must have had his own poem in mind when he wrote of Horace,

...his free Muse her sprightly force employ'd  
To combat vice, and follies to expose,  
In easy numbers near ally'd to prose:  
Guilt blush'd and trembled when she heard him sing,  
He smil'd reproof, and tickled with his sting.  
With such a graceful negligence exprest,  
Wit, thus apply'd, will ever stand the test.<sup>40</sup>

## iv

Fenton's "Epistle to Thomas Lambard" represents the highest point in the development of Horatian epistolary poetry during this middle period. I have not been able to find other poems like it written between 1689 and 1715, however, and must conclude that although the Horatian way enjoyed some popularity at the turn of the century and that poets used Horatian matter more freely than in the past, these two parts of the



Horatian epistolary mode came together infrequently before 1715.

But between 1689 and 1715 there are many advances. We see, for example, imitations of Horace's Epistles for the first time, a smaller number of trifles, quite a few poems which use the Horatian middle way, and some which use Horatian thematic material. Specifically of the twenty-two poems cited or discussed, approximately six are trifles; and of this six, three are imitations of Horatian epistles. Of the remaining sixteen poems, one (John Gay's "To the Right Honorable Earl of Burlington. A Journey to Exeter") is descriptive, five are predominantly philosophic, and ten touch upon literary matters. In manner, leaving out five imitations and three trifles, all of which are "conversational" in their own right, approximately eleven of the remaining fourteen poems use the familiar epistolary way.

With regard to Horatian themes two that appear are the joys of country life (a continuation of what we find in a few of the epistles of the first period) and man's lack of satisfaction or content. The first theme is inherent in the lines already quoted from Fenton's "Epistle to Thomas Lambard" in which the poet writes ideally of the "Happiest of mortals." The key words are "Health," "quiet," "simplicity," and "innocence," all of which must be associated with country life because the "Happiest of mortals" also lives unenthralled by "the gay servitude of courts." Hughes in his "Letter to a Friend in the Country" is even more specific about the same theme as he

writes of his wish to leave behind the smoke and clamor of the town.

Hail happy Woods! harbours of Peace and Joy!  
 Where no black cares the mind's repose destroy!  
 Where grateful Silence unmolested reigns,  
 Assists the Muse, and quickens all her strains.  
 Such were the scenes of our first parent's love,  
 In Eden's groves with equal flames they strove,  
 While warbling birds, soft whispering breaths of wind,  
 And murmuring streams, to grace their nuptials join'd.  
 All nature smil'd; the plains were fresh and green,  
 Unstain'd the fountains, and the heavens serene.<sup>41</sup>

The reference to Eden entails innocence and simplicity. And further talk of calmness and the joys of "friendship, poetry, and love" associated with country life suggests something like Horatian composure as a key to complete happiness.<sup>42</sup>

The second philosophic theme, man's lack of content, is usually associated with the attractiveness of wealth, power, and fame, the pursuit of which denies philosophic composure, makes necessary the sacrifice of innocence and ease, and leads a man to folly through his attempts to be something other than what he is. Fenton uses this theme in his "Epistle to Thomas Lambard."

Fantastic joys in distant views appear,  
 And tempt the man to make a rash career.  
 Fame, power, and wealth, which glitter at the goal,  
 Allure his eye, and fire his eager soul;  
 For these are ease and innocence resign'd,  
 For these he strips; farewell the tranquil mind!<sup>43</sup>

And it also appears in Congreve's "Of Pleasing. An Epistle to Sir Richard Temple," the opening lines of which say,

'Tis strange, dear Temple, how it comes to pass,  
 That no one man is pleas'd with what he has!  
 So Horace sings -- and sure as strange is this,  
 That no one man's displeas'd with what he is.<sup>44</sup>

Like Fenton, Congreve notes that many men make fools of themselves in the pursuit of wealth and power; and both poets lean heavily on the moral maxim that men should remain content within their sphere assigned by "Nature." As Congreve says,

"None are, for being what they are, in fault,  
But for not being what they would be thought."<sup>45</sup>

Such philosophic themes appear infrequently in the epistles written between 1689 and 1715 (in about 25% of the poems I have read), but deserve mention here if only because they represent additions to similar thematic material in epistles written between 1660 and 1688. On the other hand, literary themes in the epistles of the second period are quite common. Two progress pieces include critical remarks, three epistles either directly or indirectly offer literary advice, and four touch upon the problem of patronage.<sup>46</sup> In fact we might say that poetry and the professional concerns of poets are the central subjects of the familiar epistles written between 1689 and 1715. Prior and Gay talk, sometimes not too seriously, of how poetry comes about. Wesley and Gay offer advice on the standard kinds of poetry, Addison and Fenton rehearse the best of the past. In his epistle to Boileau, Prior touches on the possibility of great national poetry. And four poets talk of patronage -- Wesley, Swift, Prior, and Gay.

Combined with these concerns, probably the most important development in epistolary verse between 1689 and 1715 is

stylistic. Whereas in the first period the Horatian middle way seems to have been cultivated primarily in verse essays, after 1688 we see something of this "way" in poems which are called epistles and which significantly add the personal element. As examples we have part of Fenton's "Epistle to Mr. Southerne, From Kent, January 23, 1711" and Congreve's "Of Pleasing. An Epistle to Richard Temple."

The critical epistle to Southerne "is an extended and careful analysis of the history of the English stage in particular and that of English poetry in general, with some classical background and much eulogy of Southerne thrown in for good measure."<sup>47</sup> But it is also personal, specifically when Fenton talks of himself, his friends at Sevenoaks, and his wish to see Southerne.

When cares were to my blooming youth unknown,  
My fancy free, and all my hours my own;  
I lov'd along the laureat grove to stray,  
The paths were pleasant, and the prospect gay;  
But now my genius sinks, and hardly knows  
To make a couplet tinkle in the close.  
Yet when you next to Medway shall repair,  
And quit the town to breathe a purer air;  
Retiring from the crowd to steal the sweets  
Of easy life in Twysden's calm retreats  
(As Terence to his Laelius lov'd to come,  
And in Campania scorn'd the pomp of Rome;)  
Where Lambard, form'd for business, and to please,  
By sharing, will improve your happiness;  
In both their souls imperial Reason sways,  
In both the patriot and the friend displays;  
Belov'd, and prais'd by all, who merit love and praise.  
With bright ideas there inspir'd anew,  
By them excited, and inform'd by you,  
I may with happier skill essay to sing  
Sublimier notes, and strike a bolder string.<sup>48</sup>

Here we have a somewhat formal conversational idiom, a mode of address characteristic of polite gentlemen. Inversions,

careful balance, classical reference, and such words and alliterative phrases as "lov'd along the laureat grove," "improve" (for increase, strengthen, or repair), or "essay" (for try or attempt) heighten the style; but the familiar (or conversational) level is retained because of run-on as well as closed couplets, common everyday words and phrases ("hardly knows," "quit the town"), and an occasional note of personal humor:

But now my genius sinks, and hardly knows  
To make a couplet tinkle in the close.

The most important point about the *passage* is that Fenton does not offace himself behind what he writes. He praises Southerne not as a person apart, but as one with whom he has been closely associated; and he values the future meeting with Southerne not for itself but because it may affect his own poetic efforts. This is the personal note so important in epistolary verse.

Similarly in his epistle to Temple, having talked of vanity as the root of all attempts to please, Congreve says,

Thus I, dear friend, to you my thoughts impart,  
As to one perfect in the pleasing art;  
If art it may be call'd in you, who seem  
By Nature form'd for love, and for esteem.  
Affecting none, all virtues you possess,  
And really are what others but profess.  
I'll not offend you, while myself I please;  
I loathe to flatter, though I love to praise.  
But when such early worth so bright appears,  
And antedates the fame which waits on years;  
I can't so stupidly affected prove,  
Not to confess it in the man I love.  
Though now I am not at that known applause  
You've won in arms, and in your country's cause;

Nor patriot now, nor hero, I commend,  
 But the companion praise, and boast the friend.  
 But you may think, and some, less partial, say,  
 That I presume too much in this essay.  
 How should I show what pleases? How explain  
 A rule, to which I never could attain?  
 To this objection I'll make no reply,  
 But tell a tale, which, after, we'll apply.<sup>48</sup>

The passage is clearly intended to praise, but note how Congreve communicates. The idiom is conversational and easy. Moreover, Congreve emphasizes equally Temple's good qualities and his own carefully stated intentions so that our interest is divided between the two. In brief, the passage is personal. Congreve does not obscure himself behind Temple's excellence; rather he concentrates on his own motives, his own intentions, his own character. He ~~loathes~~ flattery, but he loves praise. He would be stupid not to admit that he can recognize real worth when he sees it; he has no ulterior motives in ~~noting~~ ~~patent~~ facts about Temple's accomplishments, and he knows his addressee well enough to ~~anticipate~~ possible objections. In this way the essay "Of Pleasing" becomes an epistle. Our attention is directed not so much to the subject as it is to the man Congreve (or what he would like to appear to be) -- candid, perceptive, self-effacing, honest, unaffected, and circumspect.<sup>50</sup>

I do not suggest that this familiarity was altogether absent from epistles written before 1689; but I do believe that the personal note in an epistle treating substantial

literary or philosophical matter is something new and indicates the growth of familiar epistolary verse. Now we might well ask why in the epistles of 1689 to 1715 literary subject matter overshadows philosophic material, why there is some tendency to use the epistle as a vehicle for serious subject matter, why poets include personal passages in serious epistles, why the Horatian epistolary way passes from the verse treatise to poems specifically called epistles, and finally why, with all these faint suggestions of growth, we have a relatively small number of truly Horatian familiar epistles.<sup>51</sup> The answer, I believe, lies in the changing status of the professional poet after the bloodless revolution. Alexandre Beljame documents the rise of the professional poet between 1689 and 1715 and makes clear his main point that during this time professional writers began to be "received in high society...on terms of full equality with the greatest" and to gain not only in the eyes of the public but in their own estimation.<sup>52</sup>

These changes, I believe, account for the lines of growth in familiar epistolary verse. Poets on relatively equal terms with their social superiors (Fenton with Lambard, Congreve with Temple, Prior with Shepherd) would naturally choose a familiar manner of address and might not be above calling attention to this new recognition by using a familiar mode of poetry most obvious in the form of an epistle. Released from

the "daily struggle for mere existence" and enjoying membership in a rising profession, poets also would naturally write of literary problems and possibilities. At the same time, however, if we remember that widespread social recognition and acceptance were new, that during this second period the complimentary epistle flourished, and that if places were available they could easily be lost, we may see why poets could neither write truly Horatian epistles in significant numbers nor philosophize extensively in epistolary verse. Certainly 1689 to 1715 was a golden age for authors, but poets were not yet independent and "there were plenty of writers who got nothing."<sup>53</sup> Moreover, even with those who did get something, there is reason to believe that the familiarity and ease promoted by a new relationship between statesmen and writers did not run deep. Poets writing epistles between 1689 and 1715 might be compared to bright new additions to a university faculty in danger of being split by factionalism. They arrive and are paid well for their talents, which they are encouraged to use. They meet new friends and perhaps even travel in heady circles. They are accepted. But they must walk lightly. Conversations with older teachers turn on course work. No senior member is likely to ask them for professional advice, and they do not give it unasked. For the sake of analogy, they have yet to gain tenure; and although personal charm may help, professional pressure is constant. They exist somewhere in that limbo between being dispensable members of a department and indispensable men. In literary



terms I believe this "world" of the professional writer is best suggested by some lines from Wesley's "An Epistle to a Friend Concerning Poetry." He warns his fictional addressee that to go unnoticed seems to be the fate of the professional poet and adds the following:

But this a Noble Patron will redress,  
 And make you better write, tho you write less:  
 Whate'er a discontented Mind pretends,  
Distinquish'd Worth can rarely miss of Friends:  
 Do but excel, and he'll at last arise  
 Who from the Dust may lift thee to the Skies;  
 For his own Sake will his Protection grant;  
 What Horace, e'er did yet Maecenas want?  
 Or if the World its Favours should refuse,  
 With barren Smiles alone reward thy Muse;  
 Be thy own Patron, thou no more wilt need,  
 For all will court thee if thy Works succeed;  
 At least the few Good Judges will commend,  
 And secret growing Praise thy Steps attend.<sup>54</sup>

Excellence provided, poets can hope. But "secret growing Praise" is cold comfort.

## CHAPTER VI

### FAMILIAR EPISTLES: 1715 - 1759

Sometimes 'tis elegy, or ode.  
Epistle now's your only mode.

Robert Lloyd, "The Poet. An  
Epistle to C. Churchill"

We have now surveyed several different kinds of familiar epistles written in England between 1660 and 1715 and have traced some of the changes which this type of poetry gradually underwent. We have seen a divided beginning comprised of relatively minor personal epistles and lengthy verse essays -- as in the poems of Charles Cotton and John Dryden -- followed (after 1688) by the appearance of Horatian epistolary imitations, a tendency to use original epistolary verse as a vehicle for talk about literary subjects, and, in selected examples, some advancement of that poetic manner we associate with Horace's verse letters. But perhaps most significant has been the need to look at relatively minor poets, like Elijah Fenton, in order to find the Horatian epistle unmistakably at work. And were we to stop at this point, we might conclude that Horace's Epistles had little effect on eighteenth-century poetry. However, a look at the several kinds of familiar

epistles written after 1715 will, I believe, support the idea that Horatian familiar verse dominated epistolary poetry during the first half of the eighteenth century. Before 1715, the planting; after 1715, the harvest and the subject of this chapter.

If numbers alone mean anything, epistles more or less Horatian certainly flourished after 1715. Reading poems written before this date by Cotton, Pomfret, Dryden, Oldham, Wycherley, Fenton, Broome, Prior, and Swift, I have had difficulty in finding representative familiar epistles and have felt as though I might be numbering a few too many streaks of a rather pale epistolary tulip. After 1715, however, the problem is reversed. In place of tulip streaks we have a variegated garden planted almost too thickly with every imaginable sort of familiar epistle, ranging from the simple friendly note -- the trifle "writ" with the left hand -- to the full-fledged and often tedious hybrid "epistolary treatise." The problem after 1715, therefore, is not a lack of material or the danger of making too much out of too little, but of finding the walks. With this limitation in mind, then, I have chosen to begin by noting a few representative epistles, to compare and contrast what is and what is not Horatian in the epistolary verse of this third period (1715-1758), to exemplify and explain a more widespread use of the Horatian manner, and to end my discussion with a separate chapter on the epistles of Alexander Pope, especially the "Epistle to

Dr. Arbuthnot."

i

Among the many familiar epistles written between 1715 and 1758, the first group that stands out includes relatively minor pieces which recall something of Cotton's playful spirit. Often brief, not particularly broad in scope, and written for a variety of purposes, as in the past they are rooted, at their best, in Horace's lesser epistles, like the letter of introduction to Tiberius, the invitation to Torquatus, and the cheery note to Tibullus. Here nothing much philosophical or literary is explored in detail, although occasional Horatian sentiments appear; and most always the poet seems wedded to speed and the demands of the moment.

Some of these minor pieces are clearly more Horatian than others. Perhaps least so are those written to request aid (usually financial) and to respond to such requests, including, among other, "An Epistle to his Grace the Duke of Grafton, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland" (1724), written by Jonathan Smedley, who sought additional preferment; and the reply to Smedley's request, "His Grace's Answer to Jonathan," written by the role-playing Swift. In the first poem Smedley -- who, as a Whig supporter of Wood's patent, was anathema to Swift -- praises his benefactor and then gracelessly gets on with his major reason for writing:

Oh! Tack, my Lord, some pretty Cure,  
In wholesome Soil, and Aether pure.

The Garden stor'd with artless Flowers,  
 In every Angle, shady Bowers.  
 No gay Parterre, with costly Green,  
 Within the ambient Hedge be seen;  
 Let Nature, freely, take her Course,  
 Nor fear from me ungrateful Force.<sup>1</sup>

The desire for a place snug, warm, and neat in the country is Horatian in sentiment, but the noisy "Tack," the poetic strain in such words as "Aether" and "ambient," and the unmannerly bluntness of the request are not. Swift replied, therefore, to this tactless man, "that rascal Smedley," with the following squib:

DEAR Smed I read thy Brilliant Lines,  
 Where Wit in all its Glory shines;  
 Where Compliments with all their Pride  
 Are by thy Numbers dignify'd....  
 Talk not of making of thy Nest,  
 Ah never lay thy Head to Rest!  
That Head so well by Wisdom fraught!<sup>2</sup>  
That writes without the Toil of Thought.

The irony of Swift's poem might be called a kind of Horatian attack, and in the quoted lines there is an undeniable deft simplicity which we might associate with the conversational idiom of Horace's Epistles. But when in the same reply we find references to fornication and cuckoldry, and acrobatic rhymes like "in the Skies" and "Mutton Pies," I believe we are in Swift's world and not Horace's. Horace wrote no epistles to attack the people he addressed, and he assumed in his Epistles no over-all identity other than his own.<sup>3</sup>

A second small group of trifles, more Horatian than the first, includes those which informally describe journeys or places. As such they may be loosely related to the "Journey to Brundisium," but in spirit they are also close, in varying

degrees, to Horace's minor epistles. Thomas Lisle, for example, addresses his sisters "at Crux-Easton" and describes his journey along the Mediterranean shores. And in "Part of a Letter to my Sisters..." (1734) he includes an account of a dream he has had of being a squire with a fine estate, a house of Portland stone with rooms not monstrous or small, and charming walks.<sup>4</sup> These poems seem to contain little thematic material that is definitely Horatian, but they are epistolary in the way they focus attention on the writer. Lisle says, for example, that just "twixt friends" he has found the old Mediterranean countries to be "Displeasing, rugged, black, and bare," that he has no ambitions as a writer of verse, and that he does not expect to be ranked with Pope! What he sees he values not for itself but for what it gives him a chance to be reminded of (the rocks where Juno "urged" the Trojan's fate), and at the end of the poem he calls attention to his own painful writing.

Let not malicious critics join  
 Pope's homespun rhymes in rank with mine,  
 Form'd on that very spot of earth,  
 Where Homer's self receiv'd his birth;  
 Add, as I said, t' enhance their worth,  
 The pains they cost in bringing forth;  
 While his, as all mankind agrees,  
 Though wrote with care, are wrote with ease.

Lines such as these represent one pole of this second small group. The slight teasing and jocularitv (Lisle begins his "Letter from Smyrna" by referring to himself as a "hero" about to frighten his sisters by singing of his travels) and the self-effacement in a sense match Horace's informal chattiness in his minor epistles. But the lines lack Horace's

warmth and sincerity, for which we must turn to another cited poem, John Byrom's "Description of Tunbridge."

Byrom's opening lines are warm and friendly, and they match in spirit the beginning of Horace's epistle to Albius Tibullus. Horace says, "Albius, impartial critic of my 'chats,' what shall I say you now are doing in your country at Pedum? Writing something to outshine the pieces of Cassius of Parma?" And in the same vein, Byrom writes,

Dear Peter, whose friendship I value much more,  
Than bards their own verses, or misers their store;  
Your books, and your bus'ness, and ev'ry thing else,  
Lay aside for a while, and come down to the Wells.<sup>5</sup>

The intentions are somewhat different; but both writers are sincerely concerned with their addressees. Lisle is not. Byrom's poem is also more Horatian in its conversational ease. Lisle's "Letters" reads a little like a catalogue of places visited, whereas Byrom's "Description" includes much that suggests direct speech, as in a passing reference to a Tunbridgian beauty:

If ever you saw her, I say, let me tell ye,  
Descriptions are needless; for surely to you,  
No beauty, no graces, can ever be new.<sup>6</sup>

Lastly, Byrom captures something of the genuine self-effacement of Horace that Lisle misses. Lisle seems to be trying too hard to write a witty letter.

The hero who to Smyrna bay  
From Easton Hants, pursu'd his way,  
Who travers'd seas, and hills and vales,  
To fright his sisters with his tales,  
Sing, heavenly muse; for what befel  
Thou saw'st, and only thou canst tell.<sup>7</sup>

Horace and Byrom seem more at home with mellow fun. "As for me, when you want a laugh, you will find me in fine fettle, fat and sleek, a hog from Epicurus's herd." And Byrom:

But now 'tis high time, I presume, to bid vale,  
Lest we tire you too long with our Tunbridgiale;  
Which, if the four critics pretend to unravel,  
Or at these our verses should stupidly cavil;  
If this be the case, tell the critics I pray,  
That I care not one farthing for all they can say:  
And so I conclude, with my service, good Peter,  
To yourself, and all friends--farewell Muse--farewell metre.<sup>8</sup>

Together the poems by Lisle and Byrom represent the poles of the Horatian spirit at work: they give some indication of the range of possibilities even within a small minor group of epistles written after 1715. And in varying degrees the Horatian tendencies I have noted continue in two final groups of minor epistles -- the jocular familiar note and the invitation.

The greatest writer of the note was undoubtedly Swift. And we might hope at this point for signs of a major writer following Horace's mode. Despite Lord Orrery's remarks, however, that when Swift wrote to Pope, Gay, Delany, or some other close friend, he mixed "ease, dignity, familiarity, and affection" because "They were his intimate friends, whom he loved sincerely, and whom he wished to accompany into the poetical regions of eternity" -- most of the notes I have seen have little about them that is distinctly Horatian.<sup>9</sup> Like the epistles of Lisle, they call attention to themselves and seem designed to emphasize the cleverness of the writer; they are always informal, often teasing, and sometimes chatty.



In "A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Sheridan" (1718), for example, Swift speaks of classic comedy and tragedy, ranks Plautus over Aristophanes and Aeschylus over Euripides, uses such rhymes as "Tragedies" and "sad Jade is," and ends with the following:

I chose these Rhymes out, for their Difficulty.  
Will you return as hard ones, if I call t'ye?<sup>10</sup>

It is as though Swift "writ" with his left hand, as he once did, in great haste; and, of course, he got what he wanted -- a reply, "The Answer, By Dr. Sheridan."

I like your nice epistle critical,  
Which does in threefold rhymes so witty fall;  
Upon the comic dram' and tragedy  
Your notion's right, but verses maggotty;...  
Because I'm troubled much with laziness,  
These rhymes I've chosen for their easiness.<sup>11</sup>

Behind poems like these the prevailing spirit seems to me one of an intimate group of men playing "Jack be nimble" and exchanging brief notes in which a premium is placed on rhyming oddity, cleverness, and agility. And as such most of the poems of this sort are not, I think, in the Horatian vein. Even in his minor pieces, Horace tended not to aim at a bright witty point but at the comment that might arouse a middle-aged chuckle, as in the warning to Vinus Asina not to sweat in carrying "verses that may win a hold on the eyes and ears of Caesar." And most important, Horace, as far as I know, never wrote his letters with the intention of continuing a poetic game or witty verse contest as did apparently Swift and his intimate friends.<sup>12</sup>

Matching the warmth and sincerity of Syrom and most clearly Horatian among the minor epistles written after 1715 are the invitations. Christopher Pitt's "Invitation to Mr. Dodington [sic]," for example is specifically subtitled "In allusion to Horace, Book I. Ep. V," and as such it borders on imitation. Both Horace and Pitt promise a plain but hearty meal, much friendship, and good talk. Similarly, Pope, in his minor "To Mr. C." (1730), invites his addressee to spend a few days at Twickenham; and again we are reminded directly of Horace, who in his epistle to Torquatus (I.v.) speaks of some mutual friends, Lutra and Septicius, and concludes by urging his addressee to "drop your business, and by the back-door give the slip to the client waiting in your hall." In this same vein Pope writes to William Cleland (Mr. C.) of their mutual friend, Mr. Bethel, and urges his addressee to escape from the press of business for a rest:

For three whole days you here may rest  
From office, business, news, and strife.<sup>13</sup>

ii

A second group of poems, demonstrating more clearly the vogue of Horace's Epistles, are the professed imitations. We have already seen something of this type in the poetry of Swift and Prior; but after 1715 it appears more frequently. Including poems that range from simple invitations to lengthy commentaries in defence of modern poetry, relatively complete English versions replace such truncated poems as Swift's imitation of

Ep. I.vii.<sup>14</sup> And the distinctive qualities of these imitations, especially the ways in which they either are or are not Horatian, are perhaps best illustrated by selections from the poetry of Christopher Pitt and Alexander Pope, who seem to have been the major writers in this mode.

To begin with, it was common practice in an imitation to substitute modern for ancient names, places, and details. In his "Invitation to Mr. Dodington," for example, Pitt transforms Roman wine into English punch and beer; in the "Epistle to J. Pitt, Esq." Horace's Sabine farm becomes Pitt's "Pimpern"; and in the "Epistle to Mr. Spence" Horace's reference to the "jester of the lowest couch" (I.xviii, 10-11) becomes "the great man's humble friend," in an oblique reference to Sir Robert Walpole. Pope does the same thing, but more extensively, as in his imitation of Epp.I.i. and II.i. In the first (1738), addressed to Lord Bolingbroke, "Gen'rails" replace gladiators, St. James and St. Pauls replace the Janus arcade, and Baiae becomes the Thames. In the second (1737), a parody of Horace's serious address to Augustus, France take the place of Greece, Edward III and Henry V are substituted for Romulus, and George II replaces Augustus. In essence, simple adaptations such as these give the imitations a rich texture of contemporary English life and, thereby, add to the Horatian quality of the work. Horace's Epistles were always firmly rooted in the daily life of his time.<sup>15</sup>

Once noted, however, such adaptations must be qualified because of the frequent practice of expanding Horace's text, sometimes by including extra material that does not change the intent of the original, but also sometimes by including passages which have no parallel in the Latin text and which do change Horace's intent.

An example of minor expansion occurs in the "Epistle to J. Pitt."<sup>16</sup> Horace had written,

Albius, impartial critic of my "chats," what shall I say you now are doing in your country at Pedum? Writing something to outshine the pieces of Cassius of Parma? Or strolling peacefully amid the healthful woods, and musing on all that is worthy of one wise and good?<sup>17</sup>

And Pitt imitates this passage with the following lines:

Dear Sir,  
 To all my trifles you attend,  
 But drop the critic to indulge the friend,  
 And with most Christian patience lose your time,  
 To hear me preach, or pester you with rhyme.  
 Here with my books or friend I spend the day,  
 But how at Kingston pass your hours away?  
 Say, shall we see some plan with ravish'd eyes,  
 Some future pile in miniature arise?  
 (A model to excel in every part  
 Judicious Jones, or great Palladio's art)  
 Or some new bill, that, when the house is met,  
 Shall claim their thanks, and pay the nation's debt?  
 Or have you studied in the silent wood  
 The sacred duties of the wise and good?<sup>18</sup>

Here the substitutions and additions are self-evident. Pitt has clearly added much (notably some news of himself), but he does not change the basic intent of the original epistle. Both poets want to praise and cheer their addressees, whom they know well.<sup>19</sup> A second example of minor change occurs in

Pope's imitation of Ep.II.i. Writing to convince Augustus of the need for the services of a good poet, Horace had mentioned Alexander's unfortunate choice of Choerilus, a poet who congealed his patron's reputation in bad verse (lines 232-237). Pope makes the same general point about poets, but with an expanded reference to Charles I and Quarles, to William III and Blackmore (lines 385-87).<sup>20</sup>

More common are major expansions involving a change of intent. At times, no doubt, circumstances were such that the imitator literally could not follow the argument of the original epistle. This is true of Pitt's "Horace, Book I. Ep. XIX, Imitated. An Epistle to Mr. Robert Lowth." Although both the original and the imitation are attacks on feeble versifiers, Horace can rally those who have imitated him and boast of his own work ("I was the first to show Latium the iambics of Paros"). Pitt, demonstrating the difficulty a small poet might have with Horace as his model, must content himself with laughing at those who were imitating Swift, Prior, and Pope. At other times, however, I am sure that the imitator, whether or not forced by circumstances, consciously wrote a poem quite different from the original.

The best example of this is Pope's imitation of Horace's "Epistle to Augustus." The original is a serious criticism of public taste in ancient and modern literature; and it is addressed to an emperor interested in literature, taste, and morals. On the other hand Pope's imitation is an ironic eulogy and a criticism of contemporary taste in poetry and

drama addressed to George II, a king who paid little attention to either. The result is an incredibly witty performance praising the strength "abroad" of a ruler who had little strength abroad, and the taste and judgment of a ruler who probably could not understand, let alone appreciate, what Pope had to say. One exemplary passage will have to serve. Near the end of Ep. II. i. Horace calls attention to the services a good poet can perform for his patron, he praises Augustus' choice of Virgil and Varius, but he excuses himself from writing as they do because, as he says, he does not want to "essay a task beyond [his] strength." The passage in full is as follows:

But Virgil and Varius, those poets whom you love, discredit not your judgement of them nor the gifts which, to the giver's great renown, they have received; and features are seen with no more truth, when moulded in statues of bronze, than are the manners and minds of famous heroes, when set forth in the poet's work. And for myself, I should not prefer my "chats," that crawl along the ground, to the story of great exploits, the tale of distant lands and rivers, of forts on mountain tops, of barbaric realms, of the ending of wars under your auspices throughout the world, of bars that close on Janus, guardian of peace, and of that Rome who under your sway has become a terror to Parthians--if only I had power equal to my longing; but neither does your majesty admit of a lowly strain, nor does my modesty dare to essay a task beyond my strength to bear.<sup>21</sup>

Here the emphasis is **centered** on the praise of Augustus, although Horace, in his characteristic epistolary manner, talks of himself. Also we have Horace's excuse for not writing of Augustus' greater exploits, supported, rather

ingeniously I think, by a casual allusion to the emperor's sensitivity about being made the subject of poor eulogies (the "lowly strain"). Now let us look at Pope's imitation. Outwardly much is the same, but look again!

Not with such Majesty, such bold relief,  
 The Forms august of King, or conqu'ring Chief,  
 E'er swell'd on Marble; as in Verse have shin'd  
 (In polish'd Verse) the Manners and the Mind.  
 Oh! could I mount on the Maeonian wing,  
 Your Arms, your Actions, your Repose to sing!  
 What seas you travers'd! and what fields you fought!  
 Your Country's Peace, how oft, how dearly bought!  
 How barb'rous rage subsided at your word,  
 And Nations wonder'd while they dropp'd the sword!  
 How, when you nodded, o'er the land and deep,  
 Peace stole her wing, and wrapt the world in sleep;  
 Till Earth's extremes your mediation own,  
 And Asia's Tyrants tremble at your Throne--  
 But Verse alas! your Majesty disdains;  
 And I'm not us'd to Panegyric strains:  
 The Zeal of Fools offends at any time,  
 But most of all, the Zeal of Fools in ryme.  
 Besides, a fate attends on all I write,  
 That when I aim at praise, they say I bite.<sup>22</sup>

Here is all the outward praise of another Augustus, but Pope means just the opposite of what he says.

In 1737, when the imitation was first published, the popularity of George II was low. In January 1737 he returned to England after almost eight months at Hanover, having survived the arms of Madame Walmoden and a stormy sea voyage; and we are told that it "was a common occurrence to hear people in the streets wish him at the bottom of the sea."<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, although he had strong opinions and was unquestionably brave, George II ruled with the help of Walpole and Queen Caroline. The lines above would make him seem the guiding spirit of the country, a serene and majestic emperor; but we

know that Walpole and the queen made many of the decisions and that Walpole's policy of peace at any price was extremely unpopular.<sup>24</sup> Hence the irony of Pope's heartfelt wish to sing of his sovereign's "Repose," of nations that "wonder'd," and of his reference to a peace "dearly bought," a peace bought at the price of dragging "Old England's Genius in the dust."<sup>25</sup> We know also of George's neglect of polite letters, his bad taste in pictures, his slight conversational powers, and his preference for opera; hence the additional irony in Pope's reference to a world rapt in "sleep" (an allusion to the Dunciad), and the waspishness of the final couplet. Addressing a King who "was totally incapable of any sort of dissimulation," Pope winks at his audience and shortly thereafter hides even more impishly behind the epigrammatic line, "Praise undeserv'd is scandal in disguise."<sup>26</sup>

This is not what we find in Horace. Whereas the "letter" has been preserved, the spirit is quite different. First, Pope focuses more attention on himself than does Horace. He mentions no poets other than himself, seeming to describe what he would do if the King did not disdain verse; he speaks ironically and therefore calls attention to his own cleverness; and he includes a reference to himself in the final couplet that is wholly additional. Second, although Pope captures the Horatian range of tones from heroic (or mock-heroic) to conversational and follows the same outward pattern of thought, his intent (as he tells an informed reader) is to bite.



Now these substitutions and changes are generally true of epistolary imitations written after 1715. But at the same time, I believe, the massive irony of Pope's "Epistle to Augustus" might be misleading. Although this poem demonstrates major expansion involving a change of intent, it is not what I would call a representative imitation.<sup>27</sup> For this we must turn to Pope's imitation of Ep.I.vi. (1738), which will serve here as a final example of this form after 1715, tie together some of the points already made, and, I hope, bring to light some pertinent details which I have not yet mentioned.

First of all, Pope's Ep.I.vi., addressed to William Murray, paints a rich picture of contemporary English life. It refers to the court (lines 15-17), modern tastes in dress and decoration (lines 30-33), religion (lines 63-66), trade and business (lines 69-76), London plays (lines 87-88), and politics and government (lines 34-37; 97-109). The last is due no doubt to the addressee's position as a member of Parliament. We find also the normal substitution of English for Roman names, places, and events: Murray for Numicius, the addressee; the House of Lords for the Appian Way, a fashionable gathering place; and, by the way, a reference to the meanness of the Prince of Wales' income (lines 83-84) in place of Horace's glance at the historically poor King of the Cappadocians.

Second is the fact that Pope, except for departures from Horace in matters of detail, follows the thematic outlines of the original.<sup>28</sup> As Horace had done, he inveighs ironically

against the immoderate pursuit of happiness, stating explicitly that happiness depends on restraint. "Marvel at nothing," says Horace -- "that is perhaps the one and only thing, Numicius, that can make a man happy and keep him so." And Pope begins with the same thematic statement:

"Not to admire, is all the Art I know,  
"To make men happy, and to keep them so."<sup>29</sup>

Both poets note that riches and position have no permanent value; both seem to associate virtue with the Stoic attitude of indifference to fortune or surprise; and both work ironically by reducing to absurdity the uninhibited pursuit of pleasure to be gained from wealth, power, place, eating, and debauchery.

Third, Pope follows Horace's familiar epistolary manner. Because nothing is known of Numicius, we cannot say how much attention Horace paid to his addressee; with Pope, however, such attention is clear in references to William Murray's unfortunate youthful love affair (lines 40-43), his gift of oratory (line 48), and his high current reputation in the government.<sup>30</sup> Also part of the familiar epistolary manner is the way in which Pope gracefully inserts comments by the by (as it were), exemplified in a passing compliment to Henry Hyde (lines 61-62) and such passages as the following on the inevitability of death:

Grac'd as thou art, with all the Pow'r of Words,  
So known, so honour'd, at the House of Lords;  
Conspicuous Scene! another yet is nigh,  
(More silent far) where Kings and Poets lye;  
Where Murray (long enough his Country's pride)  
Shall be no more than Tully, or than Hyde!<sup>31</sup>

The rhetorical equation between Kings and Poets and particularly the gratuitous suggestion of noise in the House of Lords are just the notes of which Horace was the master.<sup>32</sup> And finally we see the epistolary air of witty, educated, spontaneous talk found most frequently in small dramatized scenes offered by way of illustrating a general moral point. Expressions such as "believe me," "mark th' advantage," and "Upon my word" are notably conversational, but the point is more clear in a full passage like the following:

But if to Pow'r and Place your Passion lye,  
If in the Pomp of Life consist the Joy;  
Then hire a Slave, (or if you will, a Lord)  
To do the Honours, and to give the Word;  
Tell at your Levee, as the Crouds approach,  
To whom to nod, ~~whom~~ take into your Coach,  
Whom honour with your hand: to make remarks,  
Who rules in Cornwall, or who rules in Berks;  
"This may be troublesome, is near the Chair;  
"That makes three Members, this can chuse a May'r."  
Instructed thus, you bow, embrace, protest,  
Adopt him Son, or Cozen at the least,  
Then turn about, and laugh at your own Jest.<sup>33</sup>

The alliterative pounding which announces the irony, the pure conversationality of "do the Honours" and "give the Word," the busy attendant whispering **eagerly** about this one and that one, the politic bow and loud protestation, the offhandedness and control masking a real concern about political corruption -- all are Horatian and very much a part of the original.<sup>34</sup>

On the basis of such evidence there is little doubt that Pope consciously followed Horace's themes and tried successfully to reproduce his epistolary manner in this as in most of his imitations; but Pope was no slavish imitator and he was not Horace. When we come to matters of detail in Ep. I. vi, therefore,

we find in the texture a quality that is uniquely Popean, one that, to a lesser extent, can be found also in some of Pitt's imitations. I refer to Pope's habitual concreteness "in details of descriptions, in satirical touches, [and] in allusions to contemporary conditions, events, or persons."<sup>35</sup> Although Horace is more specific in his Epistles than in his Satires, beside Pope's imitations both appear sometimes impersonal, indefinite, and even abstract. At least this is true of Ep.I.vi, and the effect is sharp. Pope seizes on Horace's simple quare fugam morbi as an opportunity for satirizing Ward and Dover, two notorious quacks; Horace's proverbial expression, "Do you think Virtue but words, and a forest but firewood?" becomes in Pope's version an expanded slur against the Whiggish low-churchman, Matthew Tindal; and in three other places we find live contemporary Englishmen in place of Horace's historical or storied Romans. Under the general topic of foolish spending, Horace's reference to Lucullus becomes in the imitation a thinly veiled jibe at Lord Hervey. In gluttony an unidentified Lord Russel replaces Horace's "Gargilius in the story." And when under the general heading of debauchery, Horace uses the literary example of "the wicked crew of Ulysses," Pope turns on Francis Chartres, a notorious debauchee, and the Earl of Kinnoull and Baron Tyrrawley, two lively ambassadors at Constantinople and Lisbon. Finally there are some concrete references intended as praise. Pope mentions James Craggs as one whom

time has improved, and twice in added passages he cites Henry Hyde, Lord Cornbury, as a model of virtue.<sup>36</sup>

Such concreteness represents the primary way in which the imitations of Pope and, to a lesser extent, those of Pitt differ from their Horatian models. At best the additional concrete names and details may be taken as the English poet's attempt to match Horace's vivacity and to make up for the greater succinctness of the Latin. They might also evince an awareness of the personal appeal and relative concreteness of Horace's Epistles contrasted with his Satires. But the clearest point about the specific references is that Pope seems to veer toward the stinging remark, whereas Horace was more inclined to say in his Epistles nothing that would offend anyone in particular.

One final comment. Underlying what has been said about the Horatian and un-Horatian qualities of these imitations is the singular epistolary earmark of self-consciousness. As Horace had done before them, at every opportunity the English imitators express themselves. Pitt talks of his country estate, Pimpern in Dorset; of his love for "maps, globes, books, my bottle, and a friend"; of his resignation to the Will of Heaven; of his moderation, modesty, and sense (he is "glad to shun a fray"); and of his own poetic aims. "I too," he says, "like them [Prior, Pope and Swift], the poet's path pursue, / And keep great Flaccus ever in my view." Pope does the same, talking of his early childhood, of his success with Homer, of his love for ease, silence, and moderation. But

perhaps he seems more Popean when he talks less ingenuously of vile poets who badger him, of repressive measures against Catholics, and of his struggles to remain quiet when unjustly attacked.

Much do I suffer, much, to keep in peace  
This jealous, waspish, wrong-head, rhiming Race;  
And much must flatter, if the Whim should bite  
To court applause by printing what I write:  
But let the Fit pass o'er, I'm wise enough,<sup>37</sup>  
To stop my ears to their confounded stuff.

It is this sort of material that makes the imitations epistolary; and if they are not completely Horatian, the reason is that we are dealing with individual personalities.

### iii

A third group of poems written between 1715 and 1758 includes original literary or critical epistles about subjects of particular interest to writers. Corresponding in varying degrees with Horace's Epp.I.xix, II.i, parts of Ep.II.ii, and the Ars Poetica, such poems sometimes echo Horatian ideas discussed earlier in terms of "literary excellence"; but more often they appear to be attempts to do not exactly what but roughly as Horace did when he defended his own poetic art, chatted with Augustus about contemporary literature and the place of the poet in society, or sent random advice to the brothers Pisos. We have already seen this sort of epistolary verse selected before from the works of Prior, Fenton, Wesley, and Gay. In fact, I have suggested that between 1689 and 1715 poetry and the professional concerns of poets were the

central subjects of familiar epistles. After 1715 some interesting changes take place.

To begin with, we have the perennial subject of interest to eighteenth-century writers -- support or patronage. Between 1689 and 1715, four of the eleven literary epistles I have seen are concerned in some way with patronage; and of these four, three are addressed to aristocrats, are more or less thinly veiled appeals for help, and are distinctly jocular. I have in mind Gay's "An Epistle to a Lady. Occasion'd by the Arrival of Her Royal Highness" (1714), which includes, among other things, a serio-comic account of the poet's fruitless efforts to gain a place; Swift's imitation of part of Horace's Ep.I.vii addressed to Lord Marley (1713), in which the poet requests ironically to be let alone; and Prior's witty letter "To Mr. Fleetwood Shepherd" (1689):

My Friend Charles Montague's preferr'd,  
Nor would I have it long observ'd,  
That one Mouse eats, while t'other's starv'd.<sup>38</sup>

After 1715 talk of patronage appears less often, it is always discussed more disparagingly, and it is usually mentioned as one part of a contemporary picture in which, much to the disgust of responsible writers, literary wickedness and vice seem to have flourished. For example, in an early version of "Epistle IV. To the Right Hon. Paul Methuen, Esq." (1720), Gay says the following about the lack of disinterested patronage:

That 'tis encouragement makes science spread,  
Is rarely practis'd, though 'tis often said.  
When Learning droops and sickens in the land,  
What patron's found to lend a saving hand?<sup>39</sup>

And in the first of "Two Epistles to Mr. Pope, Concerning the Authors of the Age" (1730), Edward Young includes a relevant epistolary vignette.

A famous author visits a great man,  
Of his immortal work displays the plan,  
And says, "Sir, I'm your friend; all fears dismiss;  
Your glory, and my own, shall live by this;  
Your power is fixt, your fame through time convey'd,  
And Britain Europe's queen--if I am paid."  
A statesman has his answer in a trice;  
"Sir, such a genius is beyond all price;  
What man can pay for this?"--Away he turns:  
His work is folded, and his bosom burns:  
His patron he will patronize no more;  
But rushes like a tempest out of door.  
Lost is the patriot, and extinct his name!  
Out comes the piece, another, and the same;  
For A, his magic pen evokes an O,  
And turns the tide of Europe on the foe.<sup>40</sup>

Here is none of the former pleading jocularity. Rather we see a picture of a writer whose services are for sale, who is more or less independent, and who is potentially dangerous not only to his professed enemies but also to those who envisioned in such party practices the collapse of the art of writing responsibly and well.<sup>41</sup> This fault with its consequences both for the individual writer and society at large is, I think, the central subject of literary epistles written after 1715.<sup>42</sup>

The "cost" of writing seems to be treated basically in two ways. First there is some talk of the rash of scribbling -- of pamphlets that "stun the street," of "Letters, essays, sock, buskin, satire, song" thundering out of every garret, of the "black militia of the pen" -- with the attendant "cost" to society as a whole. Young, for example, sees in the writing



craze nothing but public profanity, dullness, and broken faith. Virtue has flown; and society is bedeviled by a motley train of writers who "love, and hate, extempore, for gold." But what is worse,

From these, their politics our quidnuncs seek,  
And Saturday 's the learning of the week:  
These labouring wits, like paviors, mend our ways,  
With heavy, huge, repeated, flat essays;  
Ram their coarse nonsense down, though ne'er so dull;  
And hem at every thump upon your skull:  
These stanch-bred writing hounds begin the cry,  
And honest folly echoes to the lie.<sup>43</sup>

A second related approach to the same general subject seems more common -- the personal cost of writing. Both of Young's epistles to Pope mention, for example, how published genius arouses envy, how fame invites the stings of "peevish insects."<sup>44</sup> The same idea is repeated by Robert Lloyd in his "Epistle to the Same [J. B. Esq.]" (1757).

Common experience daily shows,  
That poets have a world of foes.<sup>45</sup>

And it is fully developed in "The Danger of Writing Verse. An Epistle" (1741), when William Whitehead explains the several personal costs of a poet steering precariously through uncertain seas of fame. Here we have, in fact, most of the major themes of literary epistles written after 1715, with special attention to the idea that a poet knows all the cares and woes, real or imagined, that a man can know. He suffers, according to Whitehead, because "on parties now his fame depends"; because wit, judgment, and virtue have been replaced by "keen invective," factionalism, and ill-nature; because no

Pollio "sheds his genial influence"; because even the "knowing and the virtuous few..forget the poet's use"; and because too many poets have irresponsibly spread literary poison throughout the land. And he suffers doubly because all these parts of the writer's world are dangers which "clog the paths to fame," itself an unenviable state because once famous, a poet finds

His acts, his words, his thoughts no more his own,  
Each folly blazon'd, and each frailty known.<sup>46</sup>

If he is open and free, he is called vain and said to court applause. If he says nothing, he is still faulted. And if he is grave, he is labeled splenetic and derisive. Such are the costs and dangers of writing, and, I believe, the major if not inclusive subject of literary epistles written after 1715.<sup>47</sup>

Another at least partially thematic change that stands out in literary epistles written after 1715 is a slight increase in the proportion of advice. Counting the epistles I have read, before 1715 three out of nine are advisory; after 1715, six out of fifteen. And the advice is sometimes distinctly Horatian. For example, Horace's suggestion to the Pisos that they choose an appropriate subject, one suited to their talents ("Take a subject, ye writers, equal to your strength; and ponder long what your shoulders refuse, and what they are able to bear." A.P., 38-40) is repeated by Byrom in "An Epistle to a Friend, On the Art of English Poetry."

Soon as you can then, learn to lay aside  
All wild endeavours against Nature's tide;  
Which way she bends take notice, and comply;

The verse that will not, burn, or throw it by:  
 May be the subject does not suit your skill--<sup>48</sup>  
 Dismiss, dismiss--till one comes up that will.

Also the Horatian idea that mediocrity in poetry is not allowable (A.P., 372-73), even though the Latin seems designed to discourage an "elder youth" from attempting something over his head, is repeated by Robert Lloyd in his "Epistle to J. E. Esq." (1757).

Poets, 'tis said, are sure to split  
 By too much or too little wit;  
 So, to avoid th' extremes of either,  
 They miss their mark and follow neither;  
 They so exactly poise the scale  
 That neither measure will prevail,  
 And mediocrity the Muse  
 Did never in his sons excuse.<sup>49</sup>

And perhaps most important is the Horatian emphasis on correctness, on blotting and file work (Ep.II.i. 164-67; A.P., 291-94), and on the idea of a poet's wearing the "look of being at play" while "yet on the rack" (Ep.II.ii. 122-25). The first of these ideas underlies everything that Edward Young says so poorly in the second of his two epistles to Pope.

This weigh'd perfection know; and, know  
 Toil, burn for that; but do not aim at more;  
 Above, beneath it, the just limits fix;  
 And zealously prefer four lines to six.  
 Write, and re-write, blot out, and write again.  
 And for its swiftness ne'er applaud your pen.<sup>50</sup>

The second appears in Robert Lloyd's "Epistle to Mr. Colman" (1756).

I vent a notion here in private,  
 Which public taste can ne'er connive at,  
 Which thinks no wit or judgment greater  
 Than Addison and his Spectator,  
 Who says (it is no matter where,  
 But that he says it, I can swear)

With easy verse most bards are smitten,  
 Because they think it's easy written;  
 Whereas the easier it appears,  
 The greater marks of care it wears;  
 Of which, to give an explanation,  
 Take this by way of illustration:  
 The fam'd Nat. Prior, it is said,  
 Oft bit his nails, and scratch'd his head,  
 And chang'd a thought a hundred times,  
 Because he did not like the rhymes.  
 To make my meaning clear, and please ye,  
 In short, be labour'd to write easy.<sup>51</sup>

Such advice is not overwhelmingly prevalent in literary epistles written after 1715; but when contrasted in degree with the small number of Horatian ideas appearing in similar poems written before this date, it does seem to stand out. Reinforcing the fact that after 1715 some poets seem to have had Horace's Epistles definitely in mind, moreover, three poems allude specifically to the Latin originals. Advising a publisher to eliminate imitations of Prior, Swift, Milton, Spenser, and Pope from a forthcoming miscellany ("To\*\*\*\*About to Publish a Volume of Miscellanies. Written in the Year 1755"), Robert Lloyd speaks of "mimics vile" in direct reference to Horace's Ep.I.xix. In his "Epistle to Mr. Colman" (1756) he says,

Who, but a madman, would engage  
 A poet in the present age?  
 Write what we will, our works bespeak us  
 Imitatores, servum pecus.<sup>52</sup>

And another tag appears in Edward Young's first epistle to Pope. Describing crazed writers who have taken permanent possession of the Mint, he alludes to Ep.I.xi.30.

If you mistake, and pity these poor men,  
Est ulubris, they cry, and write again.<sup>53</sup>

These tags alone, of course, are not the most convincing evidence to show Horace's Epistles definitively at work in original verse; but such allusions do invite comparison with the Latin poems, an idea which might be further developed by a third point about English literary epistles written after 1715. I refer specifically to the more pervasive use of the Horatian familiar way. We have already seen this mode of poetry perhaps best illustrated in the work of Fenton, Congreve, Gay, and Prior; and we have notices that between 1689 and 1715 approximately three out of ten original literary epistles are more or less Horatian: Fenton's "Epistle to Mr. Southerne," Gay's "An Epistle to a Lady, Occasion'd by the Arrival of Her Royal Highness....," and Prior's "A Letter to Monsieur Boileau...." After 1715 of the fifteen literary epistles I have read approximately ten are Horatian in manner; and although it is always difficult to chose a single representative poem, a more widespread use of the familiar way is perhaps best illustrated with reference to Armstrong's "Taste. An Epistle to a Young Critic" (1753).

First of all, "Taste" cultivates an air of educated talk. To convince a young critic that second-hand judgments are useless, Armstrong begins by distinguishing between a connoisseur and a man of taste and then says, for example,

Good native taste, though rude, is seldom wrong,  
 Be it in music, painting, or in song.  
 But this, as well as other faculties,  
 Improves with age and ripens by degrees.  
 I know, my dear, 'tis needless to deny't,

You like Voiture, you think him wondrous bright:  
 But seven years hence, your relish more matur'd,  
 What now delights will hardly be endur'd.<sup>54</sup>

The expressions ("as well as other faculties" and "'tis needless to deny't"), the conversational rhythm, and the pretense of talking directly with the addressee ("I know, my dear...") are idiomatically "familiar" as are other parts of the poem where Armstrong records bits and pieces of overheard conversation and throws in an occasional comment as it were by the by. After praising the ancients and attacking pedantic commentary, for instance, he enumerates and undermines, as Horace does less splenetically in Ep. II. i. 50-59, the standard rote judgments passed by would-be critics.

"Music has charms to sooth a savage breast,  
 To soften rocks, and oaks,"--and all the rest:  
 "I've heard"--Bless these lone ears.--"Heav'ns what a strain!  
 Good God! what thunders burst in this Campaign!  
 Hark! Waller warbles! ah! how sweetly killing!  
 Then that inimitable Splendid Shilling!  
 Rowe breathes all Shakespeare here! --That ode of Prior  
 Is Spenser quite! egad his very fire!--  
 As like"--Yes faith! as gum-flowers to the rose,  
 Or as to claret flat Minorca's dose.<sup>55</sup>

And Horace:

Ennius, the wise and valiant, the second Homer  
 (as the critics style him), seems to care but  
 little what becomes of his promises and Pythagorean  
 dreams. Is not Naevius in our hands, and clinging  
 to our minds, almost as of yesterday? So holy  
 a thing is every ancient poem. As often as the  
 question is raised, which is the better of the  
 two, Pacuvius gains fame as the learned old  
 writer, Accius as the lofty one. The gown of  
 Afranius, 'tis said, was of Menander's fit;  
 Plautus hurries along like his model, Epicharmus  
 of Sicily. Caecilius wins the prize for dignity,  
 Terence for art.<sup>56</sup>

The purposes here are somewhat different: Armstrong inveighs

against worthless literary gamesmanship, whereas Horace calls for a more sensible evaluation of literary merit. Also Armstrong is more exclamatory and openly scornful than Horace. And Armstrong actually quotes his connoisseurs, while Horace does so only indirectly. But both writers pile up critical clichés in order to deflate them, both speak in other words ironically, both use several specific examples and concrete references, both throw in statements by the way, and both use colloquial speech.<sup>57</sup>

Inherent also in the passages above from "Taste" are the Horatian tendencies to pass at will in tone from grave to gay, and to paint small dramatic scenes by way of vividly illustrating a general point. In the first Armstrong seems condescending; he speaks as an adult to an inexperienced child. In the second passage, he is at once amazed and appalled as he overhears the foolish knot of connoisseurs shrieking -- "egad," "Hark," "Good God!" And in later lines (where he advises his addressee to judge for himself and describes British vanity, which, he says, works against the development of a fine taste) Armstrong appears alternately amused, angry, and somewhat weary of well-doing because of the intransigence of the people he would reform.

Zounds! shall a pert or bluff important wight,  
Whose brain is fanciless, whose blood is white;  
A mumbling ape of taste; prescribe us laws...?  
For shame! for shame! the liberal British soul  
To stoop to any stale dictator's rule!...  
Alas! so far from free, so far from brave,  
We dare not show the little taste we have.  
With us you'll see ev'n vanity control

The most refin'd sensations of the soul.  
 Sad Otway's scenes, great Shakespeare's we defy:  
 "Lard, madam! 'tis so unpolite to cry!--  
 For shame, my dear! d'ye credit all this stuff?--  
 I vow--well, this is innocent enough."<sup>58</sup>

Lastly, "Taste" is Horatian in manner because it is personal. Just as Horace's Epistles involve the poet's expression of himself, so "Taste" is an expression of Armstrong's own personality. And in it he adopts a typically Horatian stance. Echoing Horace's distrust of the mob, he pictures himself as an independent gentleman concerned about literature, a man of taste half annoyed and half amused by fools and ninnies who seem beyond help. Just as Horace advised the Pisos to "handle Greek models by night" and day, but told Augustus of his impatience with blind admiration of the ancients (Ep. II. i. 76 ff.); so Armstrong advises his addressee to spend time on his own country's classics and chiefly "with the ancients," but shows evidence of his own critical common sense.

Ne'er be the dupe of names, however high;  
 For some outlive good parts, some misapply.  
 Each elegant Spectator you admire;  
 But must you therefore swear by Cato's fire?<sup>59</sup>

And as Horace before him, Armstrong talks directly of himself. He tells us that he is not sure every work existing for two thousand years deserves to last that long; that he may be wrong when he complains of "trite invention and a flimsy vein"; that he would rather never judge than wrong a deserving writer, but that he refuses to be the dupe of charms he cannot see; and that he is a shrewd observer always ready to cut down



those who set themselves up as connoisseurs.

Friend, I'm a shrewd observer, and will guess  
 What books you doat on from your fav'rite mess.  
 Brown and L'Estrange will surely charm whome'er  
 The frothy pertness strikes of weak small-beer.  
 Who steeps the calf's fat loin in greasy sauce  
 Will hardly loathe the praise that bastes an ass.  
 Who riots on scotchd collops scorns not any  
 Insipid, fulsome, trashy miscellany;  
 And who devours whate'er the cook can dish up,  
 Will for a classic consecrate each bishop.<sup>60</sup>

This personal note distinguishes the literary epistles written after 1715. It can be seen in William Whitehead's Horatian wish to enjoy "sacred silence," "humble peace," and "sweet contentment" ("The Danger of Writing Verse"); it appears in Edward Rolle's disclaimer.

Ev'n I, whose genius seems as much forgot,  
 (Mine when I write, as your's when you do not;)  
 Who gravely thus can other's faults condemn,  
 Myself allowing, what I blame in them;  
 With no pretense to Phoebus' aid divine,  
 Nor the least int'rest in the tuneful Nine....<sup>61</sup>

And in a most striking manner it marks the line between Wesley's "An Epistle to a Friend Concerning Poetry" (1700) and John Byrom's "An Epistle to a Friend, On the Art of English Poetry" (c. 1734?). Wesley's poem, as we have seen, is primarily a treatise. Its roots are in the earlier Essays by Mulgrave and Roscommon: despite its epistolary opening lines, it is a poem in which the author effaces himself behind what he proposes. On the other hand Byrom's epistle is thoroughly personal. Far from hiding, he tells his addressee ("Jenkins") about his own first inclinations to write poetry and his schooling; and he offers his "hints" in a most personal and unique way. As a "professor or teacher

of the art of short-writing," he applies the general principles of shorthand -- good sense, correctness, conciseness -- to the writing of poetry.

There fix your eye then,--if you mean to write  
Verse that is fit to read, or to recite...  
Consider how the short-hand scheme, in part,  
Maybe [sic] apply'd to the poetic art.<sup>62</sup>

In these three ways the literary epistles written after 1715 differ from their predecessors. In place of some fairly consistent and jocular pleading for support (not the only subject of epistles written before 1715, but one that is treated with some frequency), we find subjects centered on a bad state of literary affairs. We see also a slight increase in the proportion of Horatian literary advice and a more pervasive use of the Horatian middle way. One point remains. Before 1715, literary subjects seem to dominate epistolary verse; more than half of the epistles I have read concern subjects of particular interest to writers. After 1715, although I have found more poems of this sort (about fifteen), literary epistles are completely overshadowed by their philosophical counterparts.

iv

Marking the full flowering of epistolary verse written after 1715 is a final group of poems reaching beyond the immediate professional concerns of the writer. Characterized most often as philosophical or ethical, they are rooted at

best in such epistles as Horace's lecture to Lollius embodying common sense advice on how to get along with the great, or his sermon addressed to Quinctius on the nature of true goodness, or his rhapsody to Aristius Fuscus on the simplicity and charm of country life. And some of them demonstrate an interest in the continued development and use of the Horatian familiar way. Earlier, we have seen this sort of poetry in the work of Congreve, Prior, and Fenton, with Fenton's "Epistle to Lambard" standing out; and we have noted that familiar epistles with decidedly philosophic themes appear infrequently between 1689 and 1715. After 1715 such poems are no longer difficult to find (I have read thirty-two), and numbered among them are two or three masterpieces.

Beginning with the major themes in these poems, we find a certain consistency in their talk of happiness -- how it can be achieved and the reasons why it is so often lost. Robert Nugent, for example, in "An Epistle to a Lady" (1739), urges his addressee to be content with what *she* has and to make the best of a life for which she was intended by nature.

Man may for wealth or glory roam,  
 But woman must be blest at home;  
 To this should all her studies tend,  
 This her great object and her end....  
 Trace not the ~~fair~~ domestic plan  
 From what you would, but what you can!...  
 Hail sweet Content! where joy serene  
 Gilds the mild soul's unruffled scene;...  
 Effusion pure of bliss sincere,  
 A vestment for a god to wear.<sup>63</sup>

But a better example (Nugent's sentiment may be loosely Horatian; however, his poetry is insipid.) is "Life burthensome,

because we know not how to use it. An Epistle," in which Edward Rolle pictures himself as living proof of Horace's statement to his dissatisfied bailiff: "One who likes another's lot, of course dislikes his own. Each is foolish and unfairly blames the undeserving place; what is at fault is the mind, which never escapes from itself."

Away from town, Rolle says,

The country lately, 'twas my wish: oh there!  
Gardens, diversions, friends, relations, air:  
For London now, dear London, how I burn!  
I must be happy, sure, when I return.<sup>64</sup>

Later, he becomes something of an Horatian dramatist comically recreating his own alternation between the semi-serious pursuit of virtue and pleasures of the senses.

Alas, how short a reign!--the walk is o'er,  
The dinner waits, and friends some half a score:  
At first to virtue firm, the glass I fly;  
'Till some sly sot,--"Not drink the family!"  
Thus gratitude is made to plead for sin;  
My trait'rous breast a party forms within:  
And inclination brib'd, we never want  
Excuse--" 'Tis hot, and walking makes one faint."<sup>65</sup>

And in a closing story, he accepts full responsibility for his own unhappiness.

Whilom a fool saw where a fiddle lay;  
And after poring round it, strove to play:  
Above, below, across, all ways he tries;  
He tries in vain, 'tis discord all and noise:  
Fretting he threw it by: then thus the lout;  
"There's music in it, could I fetch it out."  
If life does not its harmony impart,  
We want not instruments, but have not art.<sup>66</sup>

Rolle's serio-comic realization that happiness is not dependent on one's location, his tacit belief that one should gratefully enjoy the present, and especially his allusion to

the "art" of living well seem thoroughly Horatian and are first among the ideas concerning happiness to be found in some of the philosophical epistles written after 1715.<sup>67</sup> Another closely related if not identical idea (inherent also in Rolle's epistle) is that of happiness or contentment in terms of philosophic calm and control of the passions, the subject of Horace's famous epistle to Numicius (Ep.I.vi.). Composure of mind and feeling, interpreted from a Christian viewpoint, lies behind Lady Mary Wortley Montague's somewhat smug "Answer to a Lady who advised Retirement."

Well as I can my tedious part I bear,  
And wait for my dismissal without fear.  
Seldom I mark mankind's detested ways,  
Not hearing censure, nor affecting praise;  
And, unconcerned, my future state I trust  
To that sole Being, merciful and just.<sup>68</sup>

It is the substance of "To the Rev. Patrick Murdoch" (1738), in which James Thomson advises his old and intimate friend and countryman to guard his "philosophic ease," to ask for nothing but "virtuous peace" as the best protection against the storms of fate. And in "To the Reverend Dr. Ayscough at Oxford" (1728), George Lyttelton refers mellifluously to "calm philosophy" as the best means of guiding the passions and mending the heart.

Happy who thus his leisure can employ!  
He knows the purest hours of tranquil joy;  
Nor vex'd with pangs that busier bosoms tear,  
Nor lost to social Virtue's pleasing care;  
Safe in the port, yet lab'ring to sustain  
Those who still float on the tempestuous main.<sup>69</sup>

A second group of closely related ideas (suggested in Lyttelton's lines) concerns the happiness to be found in an

active life, a use of one's talents, and a pursuit of social virtue (active benevolence). Sometimes the application is narrow. In "The Duty of Employing one's Self. An Epistle," for instance, Edward Rolle says only that activity of almost any kind is "better...far than none," and advises his friend to "move, labour, sweat, run" and fly to avoid "imaginary pains" and "distemper'd brains."<sup>70</sup> At the opposite extreme, active participation in life becomes a matter of either patriotic devotion or religious belief. In "An Epistle from Florence. To Thomas Ashton, Esq; Tutor to the Earl of Plymouth" (1740) -- a long harangue, in the heroic-declamatory manner of Dryden, against priestcraft and kings -- Horace Walpole urges his addressee to instill in the young Earl the same spirit that moved Cimon and Aristides. They knew how to guard their country and to bind their country's good in "the firm bands of social peace." In saving the nation put to use learning and philosophy, says Walpole.

Be this the goal to which the Briton-Peer  
Exalt his hope, and press his young career!  
Be this the goal to which, my Friend, may you  
With gentle skill direct his early view!<sup>71</sup>

And in his legislative poem, "An Epistle" (1739), Robert Nugent traces the earthly bliss enjoyed by virtuous men ("patriots" and "friends") to the inner workings of a divine spirit.

There must be pleasures past the reach of sense,  
Some nobler source must happiness dispense:  
Reason, arise! and vindicate thy claim,  
Flash on our minds the joy-infusing flame;  
Pour forth the fount of light, whose endless store  
Thought drinks insatiate, while it thirsts for more,  
And thou, seraphic flame! who could'st inspire

The prophet's voice, and wrap his soul in fire;  
 Ray of th' eternal beam! who canst pervade  
 The distant past, and future's gloomy shade:  
 While trembling reason tempts heav'ns dazzling height  
 Sublime her force, and guide her dubious flight;  
 Strengthen'd by thee, she bears the streaming blaze,  
 And drinks new light from truth's immortal rays.<sup>72</sup>

Between these extremes two poets talk of the active life, or the use of one's talents, and emphasize virtue (the basis of happiness) in terms of a somewhat more limited social good. In "Of Benevolence. An Epistle to Eumenes" (1751), John Armstrong calls attention to kindly acts that bring pleasure.

To sinking worth a cordial hand to lend;  
 With better fortune to surprize a friend;  
 To cheer the modest stranger's lonely state;  
 Or snatch an orphan family from fate;  
 To do, possess'd with virtue's noblest fire,  
 Such generous deeds as we with tears admire;  
 Deeds that, above ambition's vulgar aim,  
 Secure an amiable, a solid fame:  
 These are such joys as Heaven's first favourites seize;  
 These please you now, and will for ever please.<sup>73</sup>

And with less appeal to sentiment, William Whitehead advises the Earl of Ashburnham to seek happiness by following a similar path.

'Tis yours with judgment nobly to bestow,  
 And treasure joys the bounteous only know.  
 See, sav'd from sloth by you, with venial pride,  
 Laborious health the stubborn glebe divide;  
 Instructed want her folded arms unbend,  
 And smiling industry the loom attend.  
 Yours too the task to spread indulgent ease,  
 Steal cares from wrinkled age, disarm disease;  
 Insulted worth from proud oppression screen,  
 And give neglected science where to lean.<sup>74</sup>

These two groups of ideas seem to stand out in epistles written after 1715. The first -- philosophic calm, or wisdom that brings happiness -- is clearly related to Horace; the

ideas lend themselves to a mood of retirement and a day-to-day search for contentment in quiet self-possession. The second may seem unrelated to Horace. But if we remember that he joined his negative virtues of restraint and moderation with more positive loyalty, faithfulness, steadfastness, and consistency -- that he balanced his love of easy retirement with concern for the welfare and success of his friends -- I think we can say that a degree of benevolence (unsystematized) is not completely foreign to him. Certainly the best of Horace's thought stresses the value of a balanced mind attained by meditation and self-discipline. Horace does not belabor his addressees with the virtues of public service. But his Epistles suggest that he was at least interested in being a friend to others as well as himself. And in one epistle (I.i.), confessing his own inconsistency, he acknowledges the value of an active life -- "Now I become all action, and plunge into the tide of civil life, stern champion and follower of true Virtue."<sup>75</sup>

In brief, the themes of philosophical epistles written after 1715 show, if not an unwavering adherence to the best of Horace's thought, at least an interest in more or less the same kinds of subjects which underlie his Epistles -- the relative values of activity and retirement, of town and country life; the beneficial use of time in doing what one is best suited to do; the virtues of moderation, restraint, integrity, self-dependence, and common sense. Counting the epistles I have read and considering content alone, only six



express ideas which seem to have little to do with Horace. Allowing for differences in emphasis, the remaining twenty-six contain themes either patently Horatian or related in varying degrees to the ideal of being both a neatly self-possessed individual and a virtuous citizen -- an ideal that in one poem is specifically associated with Horace.

Happy is He, and He alone, who knows  
 His heart's uneasy discord to compose;  
 In gen'rous love of others' good to find  
 The sweetest pleasures of the social mind;  
 To bound his wishes in their proper sphere;  
 To nourish pleasing hope, and conquer anxious fear.  
 This was the wisdom ancient Sages taught,  
 This was the sov'reign good they justly sought;...  
 Horace, the wisest of the tuneful choir,  
 Not always chose from Greatness to retire  
 But in the palace of Augustus knew  
 The same unerring maxims to pursue,  
 Which in the Sabine or the Velian shade  
 His study and his happiness he made.<sup>76</sup>

The figures above suggest that Horace's ideas appear frequently in philosophical epistles written after 1715. But it should also be apparent that ideas alone do not make a poem "Horatian" and that in terms of manner we may have less in the way of decidedly familiar epistolary verse. In fact, I have quoted from a wide range of poems in order to demonstrate their stylistic variety, to show the difficulty of pinpointing any one central mode of poetry at work in the philosophical epistles written after 1715, and to make the following distinctions more clear.

Beginning with the term "Horatian" as it might be applied

to manner, we have after 1715 primarily two different sorts of poetry. Two varieties of the first are perhaps best illustrated in the following lines from William Whitehead's "On Nobility: An Epistle to the Earl of Ashburnham" (1743?) and Robert Nugent's "An Epistle" (1739):

Superior talents on the great bestow'd,  
 Are Heav'n's peculiar instruments of good:  
 Not for the few, who have them, are design'd:  
 What flows from Heav'n, must flow for all mankind.  
 Blush then, ye peers, who, niggards of your store,  
 Brood o'er the shining heap, not make it more;  
 Or Wilmot like, at some poor fool's expense,  
 Squander in wit the sacred funds of sense.  
 Wisdom alone is true ambition's aim,  
 Wisdom the source of virtue, and of fame,  
 Obtain'd with labour, for mankind employ'd,  
 And then, when most you share it, best enjoy'd.  
 See! on yon sea-girt isle the goddess stands,  
 And calls her vot'ries with applauding hands!  
 They pant, they strain, they glow thro' climes unknown,  
 With added strength, and spirits not their own.  
 Hark! what loud shouts each glad arrival hail!  
 How full fame's fragrance breathes in ev'ry gale!  
 How tempting nod the groves for ever green!  
 --"But tempests roar, and oceans roll between,"--  
 You see, my Lord, your friends around you brave  
 That roaring tempest, and contending wave.  
 See --- lab'ring through the billowy tide!  
 See --- impatient for the adverse side!  
 O much-lov'd youths! to Britain justly dear,  
 Her spring, and promise of a fairer year.  
 Success be theirs, whate'er their hopes engage,  
 Worth grace their youth, and honours crown their age,  
 And ev'ry warmest wish sincere, and free,  
 My soul e'er breathes, O Ashburnham, for thee!

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The hand that form'd us, must some use intend,  
 It gives us powers proportion'd to that end;  
 And happiness may justly be defin'd,  
 A full attainment of the end design'd.  
 Virtue and wisdom this alike implies,  
 And blest must be the virtuous and the wise.  
 Bliss is ordain'd for all, since heav'n intends  
 All beings should attain their destin'd ends:

For this the fair idea shines confess'd  
 To ~~every~~ mind, and glows in every breast.  
 Compared with this, all mortal joys are vain;  
 Inspir'd by this, we restless onward strain.  
 High though we mount, the object mounts more high,  
 Eludes our grasp, and mingles with the sky.  
 With nothing less th' aspiring soul's content,  
 For nothing less her gen'rous flame was meant;  
 Th' unerring rule, which all our steps should guide,  
 The certain test, by which true good is try'd.<sup>77</sup>

Now there are clearly some differences in manner. The Whitehead passage is an exhortation, whereas the lines by Nugent embody a calm assertion. Also the tone in the first passage is ~~more~~ varied than that of the second. Descending from an opening reminder that superior talents have their origin in heaven, to the relatively caustic lines about "niggards" and spendthrifts, to the earth-bound statement that shared benefits are "best enjoy'd," Whitehead then rises to a semi-heroic glimpse of fame's isle and ends with some heartfelt effusions about youth, success, honor, and a nation's hope. Nugent's tone, rising perceptively toward the end (with talk of ideas that "shine" and souls that aspire) for the most part is solemn and supremely confident. But together the two passages seem also to have some things in common. Both are directed to a refined audience; both are written by men who have adopted the stance of a public speaker or tutor; and both seem to echo parts of Pope's Essay on Man.

Superior talents on the great bestow'd,  
 Are Heav'n's peculiar instruments of good:  
 Not for the few, who have them, are design'd:  
 What flows from Heav'n, must flow for all mankind.  
 ("On Nobility")

In Faith and Hope the world will disagree,  
 But all Mankind's concern is Charity:  
 All must be false that thwart this One great End,  
 And all of God, that bless Mankind or mend.  
 (Essay on Man, III, 307-310)

\*\*\*\*\*

The hand that form'd us, must some use intend,  
 It gives us powers proportion'd to that end;  
 And happiness may justly be defin'd,  
 A full attainment of the end design'd.  
 ("An Epistle")

\*\*\*\*\*

Whether with Reason, or with Instinct blest,  
 Know, all enjoy that pow'r which suits them best;  
 To bliss alike by that direction tend,  
 And find the means proportion'd to their end.<sup>78</sup>  
 (Essay on Man, III, 79-82)

In brief, the passages from epistlës by Whitehead and Hugenot illustrate two varieties of poetry that is "Horatian" in Dryden's sense of the word as used in his preface to Religio Laici. The first appeals more to the passions than the second and is somewhat more elevated; but I think both are primarily indebted to Horace's teaching style ("Flee grandeur: though humble be your home, yet in life's race you may outstrip kings and the friends of kings."), to Dryden's "Legislative" style -- "Plain and Natural, and yet Majestick" -- or to part of Pope's version of that style in the Essay on Man. And allowing for a few familiar techniques -- Whitehead's apropos satirical allusion to Wilmot, his addressee's response with its suggestion of a one-sided conversation in progress -- both are throughout too deadly serious to be called epistolary. They are essentially essays using the manner of public address.<sup>79</sup>

Still with regard to manner, a second sort of poetry to which the term "Horatian" might be applied includes pieces more

personal, autobiographical, and satirical than the epistles already mentioned. I refer in particular to poems that are more casual in the sense that in some cases their authors seem to take themselves less seriously, to write less with an air of impressing their addressees, and to write more as observers than as teachers. In the poems by Whitehead and Nugent, which I take as fairly representative of one manner to be found in philosophical epistles written after 1715, we never quite get away from the pulpit or the lecture hall, from the feeling that what is being said is of the utmost importance. Nugent writes not as though he were offering hints or making random suggestions, but as if he were sure that his system was the one to which all reasonable men should subscribe. And the same kind of unbroken certainty and weightiness is to be found in most of the other epistles I have cited. The poems of the second sort do not create this effect. Although some of them are no less serious, they are more epistolary, more free-wheeling, more satiric, and more varied. Their "seriousness" may remain, but it is usually disguised or dramatized. And the result is infinitely more entertaining.

Again we are faced with problems of classification and ennumerable differences that exist between individual epistles, but two varieties of this second sort of poetry seem to stand out. The first consists of sometimes brisk and frequently autobiographical poems written in octosyllabic lines, an example of which is Matthew Green's "The Spleen: An Epistle

to Mr. Cuthbert Jackson" (1737). Apparently prompted by Jackson's request for an account of how he preserved his serenity in a stormy world, Green writes a genial hodge-podge. The poem retains in part some of the seriousness of the works already mentioned with its Horatian petition for a not quite absolute retreat (Green's "desire" hearkening back to Pomfret's "choice"), its spirited defense of freedom of the press, and its sincere expression of belief in the goodness of God. But Green's manner is never that of a lecturer or public speaker. He writes not to convince or to exhort, but simply to express his own ideas about day-to-day life, to explain what he does, what he avoids, what he dreams of, and what he thinks.

Most important for our purposes are the easiness of Green's manner, the constant variety of tone, and the air of graceful negligence. Writing a letter, he enjoys the privilege of not always taking himself seriously:

With Spleen's dead weight though heavy grown,  
In life's rough tide I sunk not down,  
But swam, 'till Fortune threw a rope,<sup>80</sup>  
Buoyant on bladders filled with hope.

And at times when expressing ideas closest to his heart, he is again not far from laughter. Note, for example, the ironic undertone of the following:

We to the nation's public mart  
Our works of wit, and schemes of art,  
And philosophic goods this way,  
Like water carriage, cheap convey.<sup>81</sup>

Taken from a passage defending freedom of the press, such lines root the defence in the earth of common sense. We are

reminded that while a free press waves "Truth's banner" and quells "lawless power" and makes general knowledge readily available to the public, it may also encourage a certain cheapness, suggested by the market-place metaphor and expressions such as "works of wit," "schemes of art," and "philosophic goods." And even in the central passage of the poem, a description of Green's ideal home in the country, there are details bordering on burlesque which suggest that part of Green's purpose is simply fun. Undoubtedly Green would have enjoyed an easy country life -- a farm, five servants, a decent cupboard, a neat velvet lawn, phalanxes of trees -- but his description is such that we cannot help but smile. A flourishing garden is one thing, but when thinly described -- "There see the clover, pea and bean, / Vie in variety of green" -- the poet is either nodding or grinning. And I wonder whether we are not supposed to laugh outright at the thought of "lesser nymphs on side of hills" pouring down the "rills" from "plaything urns."<sup>82</sup>

Adding also to the easiness of the poem is the organization and the mixture of tones now grave and now gay. The four-part arrangement of the poem is inobtrusive although clearly marked by such transitional passages as "Now, if untired, consider, friend, / What I avoid to gain my end"; and there are occasional digressions. In the second part of the poem (lines 280-601), for example, while concentrating on activities he avoids -- gambling, party strife, religious jars -- Green

wanders at will in lines which praise a free press, satirize crack-brained poets in search of fame, and applaud Richard Glover. The tone too wanders at will. In addition to the mock-epic cry of "Hail! water gruel!" we have humorous cracker-barrel common sense.

Hunting I reckon very good  
To brace the nerves, and stir the blood:  
But after no field honours itch,  
Achieved by leaping hedge and ditch.<sup>83</sup>

Elsewhere the note seems mock-Elizabethan, as in a passage ostensibly written to soothe the "fair":

But who can view the pointed rays,  
That from black eyes scintillant blaze?  
Love on his throne of glory seems  
Incompass'd with satellite beams.  
But when blue eyes, more softly bright,  
Diffuse benignly humid light,  
We gaze, and see the smiling loves,  
And Cytherea's gentle doves,  
And raptur'd fix in such a face  
Love's mercy-seat and throne of grace.<sup>84</sup>

Sometimes the tone has the bite of open disgust.

I rail not with mock-patriot grace  
At folks, because they are in place;  
Nor, hired to praise with stallion pen,  
Serve the ear-lechery of men.<sup>85</sup>

And still further we find a kind of warm and mellow vein of wish-fulfillment in what comes closest to the heart of the poem.

May I, with look ungloom'd by guile,  
And wearing Virtue's livery-smile,  
Prone the distressed to relieve,  
And little trespasses forgive,  
With income not in Fortune's power,  
And skill to make a busy hour,  
With trips to town life to amuse,  
To purchase books, and hear the news,  
To see old friends, brush off the clown,  
And quicken taste at coming down,  
Unhurt by sickness' blasting rage,



And slowly mellowing in age,  
 When Fate extends its gathering gripe [sic],  
 Fall off like fruit grown fully ripe,  
 Quit a worn being without pain,  
 Perhaps to blossom soon again.<sup>86</sup>

All this is surely different from the heroic declamation of Whithead and the utter solemnity of Nugent. And for the reasons I have mentioned Green's poem is, I think, more epistolary. At least its manner is different. It is, as Green says, no treatise ("I do not mean / To write a treatise on the Spleen"); and its infectious ease, its variety, its occasional indirection, its negligence, and its balance between impersonal observation and personal statement mark it in manner as one variety of a second sort of Horatian epistolary verse written after 1715. In terms that are too simple but more definite, its distinctive features are octosyllabic verse and much autobiography in poetry that is perhaps best described by Robert Lloyd, defending himself against critics:

What would your graceless form with me?  
 Is it t' upbraid me with the crime  
 Of spinning unlaborious rhyme,  
 Of stringing various thoughts together  
 In verse, or prose, or both, or neither?  
 A vein, which though it must offend  
 You lofty sirs who can't descend,  
 To fame has often made its way  
 From Butler, Prior, Swift, and Gay?<sup>87</sup>

## CHAPTER VII

### POPE'S MAJOR EPISTLES AND SOME TRENDS IN FAMILIAR EPISTOLARY VERSE

Know, God and Nature only are the same:  
In Man, the judgment shoots at flying game,  
A bird of passage! gone as soon as found,  
Now in the Moon perhaps, now under ground.

Alexander Pope, "Epistle to Cobham"

Coming now to the remaining poems of the second sort, original Horatian epistles distinct from what I have mentioned thus far, we find works which seem in manner to fall between the solemnity and weightiness of Robert Nugent and William Whitehead, and the relative informality of a poem like "The Spleen." Although it is difficult to generalize, such epistles are usually written in heroic couplets, they are more satiric and dramatic than the poems I have mentioned, and they combine important criticism with a sometimes conversational manner. They include less overt self-revelation than we find in "The Spleen," but they are just as varied; and they are less solemn and single-minded than the representative works of Nugent and Whitehead, but just as seriously didactic. I refer in particular to the ethic epistles of Alexander Pope, which mark the high point of philosophic

epistolary verse written after 1715.

## i

Fairly representative of the organization used by Pope is that found in his "Epistle to Burlington" (1731). Here the effect is not one of rigid design or point following point but of easy Horatian comment and observation, which focus the reader's mind in the first half of the poem on briefly sketched exempla of false taste and in the second half "on a single bad case and its nobler opposite."<sup>1</sup> Detailing the vanity of expense in people of wealth and quality, for example, Pope at first mentions "Virro," "Sir Visto," "Bubo," and "Villario," all of whom in one way or another have shown evidence of a lack of taste by violating the principles of usefulness and good sense; and in the second half of the poem he introduces the single bad example of Timon and its ideal opposite.

His Father's Acres who enjoys in peace,  
Or makes His Neighbours glad, if he encrease;  
Whose chearful Tenants bless their yearly toil,  
Yet to their Lord owe more than to the soil;  
Whose ample Lawns are not asham'd to feed  
The milky heifer and deserving steed;  
Whose rising Forests, not for pride or show,  
But future Buildings, future Navies grow:  
Let his plantations stretch from down to down,  
First shade a Country, and then raise a Town.<sup>2</sup>

Interspersed are passages of doctrine -- "let Nature never be forgot," "Consult the Genius of the Place in all," "Still follow Sense, of ev'ry Art the Soul" -- and occasional indirect thrusts to the side, as in the allusion to Dr. Clarke's

bust being out of place in the royal hermitage (his theology was supposedly unorthodox) or the jeering reference to Pembroke's "dirty Gods." And the result is an epistle of many eyes which at times look askance but never completely lose sight of the main theme - magnificence as a mean between vulgar display and shabbiness.<sup>3</sup>

A second perhaps more distinctly Horatian feature of Pope's ethic epistles is the way in which he varies his stance according to his addressee. In Horace we see this kind of variation illustrated in the differences between Epp.I.x. and I.xiv, both of which concern the joys of country life. The first, addressed to Aristius Fuscus, a "dramatic writer and a scholar," is a rhapsody to an "equal" in which Horace seems to pose as a cracker-barrel philosopher, combining with rustic maxims learned aristocratic references to the Stoic rules of life and Libyan mosaics.

When a man's fortune will not fit him, 'tis as oft times  
with a shoe--if too big for the foot, it will trip him;  
if too small, will chafe.<sup>4</sup>

I must guess, but I think such a "saying" is deliberately corn-fed and part of Horace's fun with his "lover of the city"; and certainly the more erudite allusions are designed for an educated and cosmopolitan addressee. On the other hand in the second, addressed to the bailiff of his farm, Horace speaks in a more condescending and straightforward manner. There are no learned references, and the idiom seems designed for a man of rougher upbringing, whom a perhaps somewhat irritated Horace would like to get on with the work at the farm.

'Tis the brothel, I see, and greasy cookshop that  
 stir in you a longing for the city....What I  
 shall advise is that each contentedly practise  
 the trade he understands.<sup>5</sup>

This same epistolary "attention" is characteristic of Pope's ethic epistles. The frames of reference in the "Epistle to Burlington," for instance, seem admirably suited to Richard Boyle's primary interests in Palladian architecture and landscape gardening.<sup>6</sup> And equally appropriate is Pope's conversational and urbane manner as he speaks as one "aristocratic amateur to another."<sup>7</sup> Note, for example, the following lines:

You show us, Rome was glorious, not profuse,  
 And pompous buildings once were things of Use.  
 Yet shall (my Lord) your just, your noble rules  
 Fill half the land with Imitating Fools;  
 Who random drawings from your sheets shall take,  
 And of one beauty many blunders make;  
 Load some vain Church with old Theatrical state,  
 Turn Arcs of triumph to a Garden-gate;  
 Reverse your Ornaments, and hang them all  
 On some patch'd dog-hole ek'd with ends of wall,  
 Then clap four slices of Pilaster on't,  
 That, lac'd with bits of rustic, makes a Front.  
 Or call the winds thro' long Arcades to roar,  
 Proud to catch cold at a Venetian door;  
 Conscious they act a true Palladian part,  
 And if they starve, they starve by rules of art.<sup>8</sup>

Alluding at first to Burlington's recently published Fabrique antiche disegnatæ da Andrea Palladio Vicentino (1730), Pope speaks to one obviously familiar with the terminology of architecture -- "Pilaster," "rustic," "Front," "Arcades," and "Venetian door." And he does so in a manner which expresses amused horror at the thought of what may happen when "Imitating Fools" misinterpret or misuse the ideal Roman and

Renaissance principles of architecture restored by Burlington. The first four lines are rather formal: balancing of values ("glorious, not profuse") and a Latinate accent ("profuse" and "pompous") suggest the voice of a polished aristocrat and an ideal combining usefulness, simplicity, nobility. Debasing of this ideal is specified by the words "Turn" and "Reverse" and an amusing mixture of casual references to the paraphernalia of Roman architecture with the brisk and deliberately low accent of such words as "dog-hole," "clap," and "lac'd." The last four lines are more finely ironic, with their comic picture of "Imitating Fools" sneezing ("catch cold") and starving, the victims of roaring winds and cold food. An aristocratic tone, I think, is inherent in Pope's attitude that both he and his addressee share a set of standards considerably above those of the imitators at whom they laugh. And Pope's epistolary "attention" is reinforced by the presentation of a "way of building" completely opposite that of his addressee. When the poem was written (1731), Burlington was erecting a model of the villa of Palladio near his suburban residence at Chiswick. The probable care with which he undertook this project and the seriousness of his preparatory studies contrast vividly with the indifferent slipshoddiness of one who might "clap four slices of Pilaster" on the end of a wall and summarily announce, "That, lac'd with bits of rustic, makes a Front."<sup>9</sup>

With similar epistolary "attention" Pope writes to Cobham,

a shrewd man primarily interested in military and political affairs, and speaks familiarly of judging men's motives and character. His references are largely to warriors and politicians -- "Patritio," Otho, Cromwell, Louis XI of France. And in at least one passage he seems especially mindful of his addressee. Reducing to absurdity the idea that all members of a single profession must share the same characteristics, Pope says,

'Tis from high Life high Characters are drawn;  
 A Saint in Crape is twice a Saint in Lawn;  
 A Judge is just, a Chanc'lor juster still;  
 A Gownman learn'd; a Bishop, what you will;  
 Wise, if a Minister; but, if a King,  
 More wise, more learn'd, more just, more ev'rything.  
 Court-virtues bear, like Gems, the highest rate,  
 Born where Heav'n's influence scarce can penetrate:  
 In life's low vale, the soil the virtues like,  
 They please as Beauties, here as Wonders strike.  
 Tho' the same Sun with all-diffusive rays  
 Blush in the Rose, and in the Diamond blaze,  
 We prize the stronger effort of his pow'r,  
 And justly set the Gem above the Flow'r.<sup>10</sup>

The references to "active" men -- Chancellors, Ministers, Kings -- seem pointed in light of Cobham's career in the service of his country; but even more so are the allusions to a certain lack of virtue at court (where virtues strike us as "Wonders") in view of Cobham's recent unjust dismissal from his regiment, and to landscape gardening in which the addressee was much interested.<sup>11</sup> Also appropriate, I think, is the tone of urbane and ironic "sang-froid" in which Pope meets one improbability (Cobham's dismissal) with another -- the ~~improbable~~ logic of saying that "if we want to understand the characters of men in high places, it is quite enough to

know their station"; because of his position a king is "more ev'rything."<sup>12</sup> "That, my friend," says Pope somewhat desperately, "is one way of the world. Isn't it wonderful."

Now if Pope's frames of reference and tone are suited to his addressees in the epistles to Burlington and Cobham -- if, as I have tried to show, Pope's idiom in the poems seems at least in part controlled by the interests and character of his addressees -- a third Horatian quality is the constant variation of tone within each separate epistle. In brief, if one note seems to dominate a single poem -- the voice of the Roman aristocrat in the epistle to Burlington, for instance -- we have also a considerable range of tones. The effect might be compared to that of listening to a complex musical composition governed by a single key and melody, but full of light arpeggios and thundering octaves, of passages now somber now broadly comic, of tones now grave and now gay. In the "Epistle to Bathurst," for example, Pope's opening lines seem to combine warm familiarity and flippancy.

Who shall decide, when Doctors disagree,  
And soundest Casuists doubt, like you and me?  
You hold the word, from Jove to Momus giv'n,  
That Man was made the standing jest of Heav'n;  
And Gold but sent to keep the fools in play,  
For some to heap, and some to throw away.

But I, who think more highly of our kind,  
(And surely, Heav'n and I are of a mind)  
Opine, that Nature, as in duty bound,  
Deep hid the shining mischief under ground:  
But when by Man's audacious labour won,  
Flam'd forth this rival to, its Sire, the Sun,  
Then careful Heav'n supply'd two sorts of Men,  
To squander these, and those to hide agen.<sup>13</sup>

Phrases such as "You hold the word," "I...Opine," and "two



sorts of men" are notably conversational, and the immediate impression is that of two men in the midst of a good-natured difference of opinion about the origin of misers and spend-thrifts.<sup>14</sup> Nothing seems to suggest that one opinion is more correct than the other; in fact, the poet's half-humorous aside that surely God is on his side and his reference to gold as "shining mischief" seem to imply that the subject is almost inconsequential. That this is not really so, however, is suggested by the tone of what follows when the poet considers the uses of money.

Useful, I grant, it serves what life requires,  
 But dreadful too, the dark Assassin hires:  
 Trade it may help, Society extend;  
 But lures the Pyrate, and corrupts the Friend:  
 It raises Armies in a Nation's aid,  
 But bribes a Senate, and the Land's betray'd.<sup>15</sup>

Here the poet's attitude is anything but indifferent: the references to death, corruption, bribery, and betrayal are a grim reminder that money often feeds evil. And what at first he called "mischief" he now sees as an instrument of destruction. Of this the poet, sounding his central note, speaks somberly.

Considering next the means by which the uses of money (and, therefore, bribery, corruption, etc.) might be controlled, Pope first shifts to light banter. Assuming hypothetically that "goods" might replace money as a medium of exchange, he imagines what a bribe would look like and presents a bulging comic scene.

A Statesman's slumbers how this speech would spoil!  
 "Sir, Spain has sent a thousand jars of oil;  
 "Huge Bales of British cloth blockade the door;  
 "A hundred oxen at your levee roar."<sup>16</sup>

His tone then gathers satiric force and his references become more personal as he envisions Sir Morgan "Astride his cheese," "Uxorio" (John Hervey, first Earl of Bristol) leading home six whores from the gambling tables at White's Coffee-house, and "soft Adonis" (Lord Bristol's son, John, Baron Hervey) driving home his winnings, a herd of swine. And finally, at the end of the first section of the poem in an apostrophe to paper-credit, the tone becomes less scoffing, less broadly satiric, and more "exquisitely ironic."<sup>17</sup> Having established that a barter culture would make bribery not only inconvenient but preposterous, and having noted (in the example of "Old Cato's" broken bag of guineas) that even a moneyed economy can betray gifts given under the table, Pope concludes that in his day, thanks to credit, corruption flourishes unchecked.

Blest paper-credit! last and best supply!  
 That lends Corruption lighter wings to fly!  
 Gold imp'd by thee, can compass hardest things,  
 Can pocket States, can fetch or carry Kings;  
 A single leaf shall waft an Army o'er,  
 Or ship off Senates to a distant Shore;  
 A leaf, like Sibyl's, scatter to and fro  
 Our fates and fortunes, as the winds shall blow:  
 Pregnant with thousands flits the Scrap unseen,  
 And silent sells a King, or buys a Queen.<sup>18</sup>

Now with so lengthy a poem it would be foolish to continue detailing every dip and curve. In lines 1-73 of Pope's "Epistle to Bathurst," described above, we have seen evidence of a tone that is progressively familiar, conversational,

flippant, good-natured, easy, unpretentious, grim, somber, bantering, satiric, and almost lyrically ironic. Suffice it to say that in the rest of the poem the notes sounded are equally varied. Sometimes the words are soberly prophetic ("At length Corruption, like a gen'ral flood,... Shall deluge all"); elsewhere we have elegant vulgarity (money will never heal old Narses "With all th' embroid'ry plaister'd at [his] tail"). A combination of heroic, pastoral, and Biblical notes seems to dominate the portrait of the Man of Ross.

Who hung with woods yon mountain's sultry brow?  
 From the dry rock who bade the waters flow?  
 Not to the skies in useless columns tost,  
 Or in proud falls magnificently lost,  
 But clear and artless, pouring thro' the plain  
 Health to the sick, and solace to the swain.<sup>19</sup>

And still further we find passages of noble exhortation.

Oh teach us, Bathurst! yet unspoil'd by wealth!  
 That secret rare, between th' extremes to move  
 Of mad Good-nature, and of mean Self-love.<sup>20</sup>

In brief, the varied tone of the "Epistle to Bathurst" -- used here as one instance of Pope's epistolary art -- is inconceivably complex; and as such it is, I think, a distinguishing feature. At least I have seen nothing quite like it in the other representative epistles already mentioned. The tone of "The Spleen" is certainly varied, but it is more completely casual than that of Pope's epistles. And while we find some serious criticism in the epistles of Nugent and Whitehead, they tend to be more single-mindedly doctrinaire and exhortative. The epistles of Pope, almost alone, illustrate what might be called an Horatian many-sided

seriousness.

A fourth distinctive quality of Pope's ethic epistles is that they are dramatic, perhaps even more so than those of Horace. Looking briefly at the Latin poems again, we note that Horace does not usually picture himself in the presence of his addressees.<sup>21</sup> From the country he writes to Maecenas in town; from Rome he writes to Iccius in Sicily. His Epistles are thus true verse letters. Furthermore, in only one instance that I can find does Horace actually record a direct response by his addressee -- Quinctius' reply to the poet's question, "Who is the 'good man'?"<sup>22</sup> More often, but not very frequently in the Epistles, Horace imagines and paraphrases what his addressee might say if he were present. In Ep. I. i, for example, having spoken of a determination to examine his own life, Horace imagines Maecenas' response and says, "Do you ask, perchance, who is my chief, in what home I take shelter?"<sup>23</sup> On the other hand Pope, in two of his ethic epistles, not only records the replies of his addressee but so expresses himself as perhaps to imply that he is conversing face to face. In the "Epistle to a Lady," for instance, 3 out of 292 lines are assigned to the addressee, with whom the poet might be walking in a picture gallery. And in the "Epistle to Bathurst," 21 out of 402 lines are assigned to the addressee with whom the poet might be conversing in a drawing room.<sup>24</sup> Admittedly, my point is tenuous; the figures above are not very convincing. But it seems worth mentioning if only because nothing in either

of these epistles suggests that the poet is apart from his addressee. Horace's epistles almost always include statements clearly indicating that the poet is not facing his addressee: to his bailiff he writes from Rome, "kept here by the love and grief of Lamia"; to Julius Florus he says, "Does Thrace stay your steps...?"; and he tells Torquatus that he is expected for dinner. In Pope's epistles I find nothing of this sort, and the results are at least two poems that seem more dramatic than what we normally find in the Latin poems. Two people conversing, or even the possibility of such a situation, is more dramatic than a man alone writing to a distant friend.

Another manner of proceeding somewhat more common than dialogue -- and still with regard to the drama inherent in the ethic epistles -- is Pope's occasional creation of satiric scenes. At least once (at the end of the "Epistle to Bathurst") he becomes a raconteur with a vengeance as he tells the story of Sir Balaam, bringing together many of the threads of the earlier sketches. Sir Balaam contrasts vividly with the "virtuous Bathurst and the saintly Man of Ross.... he combines in his early and later careers both the avarice of the elder Cotta and Cutler, and the prodigality of the younger Cotta and Buckingham; and he illustrates both the wretched existence (the Cottas) and the wretched death (Buckingham and Cutler) that the vicious extremes of liberality purchase."<sup>25</sup> Here also we have a full-fledged dramatic narrative as Pope details Sir Balaam's attempts to rise in the world and his slippery

progress down the moral ladder -- from indirect theft, to open and willful theft, to self-deception and avarice, to bribery, to spiritual pride, to final ruin and death. More often than a story-teller, Pope seems to be something of an Horatian comic dramatist as he recreates characters in the form of imagined speeches. Illustrating the ruling passion of avarice, for instance, he writes in his "Epistle to Cobham,"

"I give and I devine; (old Lucius said,  
And sigh'd) "My lands and tenements to Wed."  
Your money, Sir? "My money, Sir, what all?  
"Why,--if I must--(then wept) I give it Paul."  
The Manor, Sir?--"The Manor! hold," he cry'd,  
"Not that,--I cannot part with that"--and dy'd.<sup>26</sup>

And rapidly delineating the inconstancy of women, he says,

Papillia, wedded to her doating spark,  
Sighs for the shades--"How charming is a Park!"  
A Park is purchas'd, but the fair he sees  
All bath'd in tears--"Oh odious, odious Trees!"<sup>27</sup>

## ii

Now in the ways mentioned Pope's ethic epistles are, I think nearly Horatian. At least, as I have tried to demonstrate, they have some of the qualities associated with Horatian epistolary verse. They retain Horace's mindfulness of his addressee; they demonstrate a many-sided seriousness which the representative epistles of Nugent, Whitehead, and Green seem to lack; they contain a variety of tones that would be difficult to match except in the poetry of Horace; and finally, unlike the other philosophic epistles mentioned, they make some use of such Horatian dramatic devices as the tale and the

"conversational mosaic." For these reasons I think Pope's poems, among philosophical epistles written after 1715, come closest to the Horatian epistolary way. But I also think that the ethic epistles are unique, and in this respect two qualities stand out.

First, Pope's epistles tend to attack vice and folly, and for this reason they contrast vividly with more than two thirds of the other epistles I have mentioned. Looking back over representative selections from poets like Robert Nugent, George Lyttelton, and John Armstrong, we note that they seem to approach their subjects positively. If writing on a favorite subject such as benevolence or happiness, for instance, they usually praise an active life of useful service, argue that happiness on earth derives from social love and is part of God's divine plan, or simply urge their addressees to do good. Their approach is direct, involving relatively straightforward statements like those that appear in the following quotations.

Blest is the man, as far as earth can bless,  
Whose measur'd passions reach no wild excess;  
Who, urg'd by nature's voice, her gifts enjoys,  
Nor other means, than nature's force, employs.

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In our own breasts the source of Pleasure lies  
Still open, and still flowing to the wise;  
Not forc'd by toilsome art and wild desire  
Beyond the bounds of nature to aspire,  
But in its proper channels gliding fair;  
A common benefit, which all may share.

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Too seldom we great moral deeds admire;  
 The will, the power, th' occasion must conspire.  
 Yet few there are so impotent and low,  
 But can some small good offices bestow.  
 Small as they are, however cheap they come,  
 They add still something to the general sum:  
 And him who gives the little in his power,  
 The world acquits; and Heaven demands no more.<sup>28</sup>

Pope, on the other hand, seems more inclined to work indirectly. Certainly some passages in the ethic epistles are more or less positive like those quoted above: we find lines in which Pope praises virtue, urges his addressee to do good, or makes relatively doctrinaire statements. But what stands out is his tendency to set up contrasting extremes, to argue negatively in support of a particular virtue by attacking those who show no signs of it, to satirize vices which are inimical to the civilized way of life he wants most to preserve. The "Epistle to Burlington," for example, contains passages of positive advice like the following:

Still follow Sense, of ev'ry Art the Soul,  
 Parts answ'ring parts shall slide into a whole,  
 Spontaneous beauties all around advance,  
 Start ev'n from Difficulty, strike from Chance;  
 Nature shall join you, Time shall make it grow  
 A work to wonder at--perhaps a Stow.<sup>29</sup>

And in the closing lines (191-204) Pope urges his addressee to be a "responsible aristocrat who builds and plants for socially useful ends."<sup>30</sup> But the poem is, I think, dominated by the lengthy satiric portrait of Timon (lines 99-168), whose villa, with all its small pomposities and lavish uselessness, is at a pole opposite the Roman ideal Pope supports. At Timon's villa there are no "Spontaneous beauties":



His Gardens next your admiration call,  
 On ev'ry side you look, behold the Wall!  
 No pleasing Intricacies intervene,  
 No artful wildness to perplex the scene;  
 Grove nods at grove, each Alley has a brother,<sup>31</sup>  
 And half the platform just reflects the other.

Nature has been twisted.

The suff'ring eye inverted Nature sees,  
 Trees cut to Statues, Statues thick as trees,  
 With here a Fountain, never to be play'd,  
 And there a Summer-house, that knows no shade;  
 Here Amphitrite sails thro' myrtle bow'rs;  
 There Gladiators fight, or die, in flow'rs;  
 Un-water'd see the drooping sea-horse mourn,  
 And swallows roost in Nilus' dusty Urn.<sup>32</sup>

And all around are "huge heaps of littleness," presided over by one whose only purpose in life is "to be seen." Similarly, in the "Epistle to a Lady," while Pope writes at least partly in praise of Martha Blount, he devotes more than half of his lines to satiric portraits of women like Cloe and Atossa, who are selfish, heartless, unloved, hateful, and violent. This essentially negative approach is, I think, one quality setting Pope's epistles apart from three fourths of the others I have read, or about twenty-four out of thirty-two original philosophical epistles.

The nature and predominance of Pope's satirical passages, moreover, tend to give his ethic epistles an edge that is not especially characteristic of Horace. I would not say that Pope's epistles are un-Horatian simply because they are satirical. In fact, Horace's Epistles themselves sometimes include laughing portraits of muddled lives, as in the case of grossly self-indulgent Maenius, who, we learn, was fond of loudly proclaiming the virtues of a simple life.<sup>33</sup> But Pope's

poems are un-Horatian because they include many satirical references to living individuals -- special enemies of the poet and, sometimes, society. As I have said before, Horace in his Epistles was inclined to say nothing that would offend anyone in particular, and his use of satiric portraiture bears this out. Taking six such "pictures," we note that four are completely generalized (they refer only to "the rich man," "a Calabrian host," "the one man," or "the other man"), one is based on a story ("Gargilius in the story"), and one ("Maenius") is borrowed from Lucilius's satires.<sup>34</sup> Pope's epistles, on the other hand, are full of personal and decidedly satiric allusions to contemporary men and women. Sometimes the references are disguised through the use of such names as "Shylock," "Patritio," or "Atossa"; and certainly we have instances where it is unnecessary to assume that Pope had in mind a living original ("Rufa," "Silia," "Papillia"). Nevertheless, we have enough sneering allusions to people like Ward, Ripley, Chartres, Turner, Bond, and Slunt to suggest that part of Pope's aim was to bite. At least biting portraits -- whether real or imagined -- seem more common in Pope's epistles than they are in Horace's; and to reinforce what appears to have been part of the poet's intention (or constitution), we have Pope's own statement written in response to the tittle-tattle over the portrait of Timon.

And as the only certain way to avoid Misconstruction, to lessen Offence, and not to multiply ill-natur'd Applications, I may probably in my next make use of Real Names and not of Fictitious Ones.<sup>35</sup>

I may be wrong but this appears to be a threat -- one, by the way, which Pope amply fulfilled in his "next," the "Epistle to Bathurst."<sup>36</sup> In brief, while Horace's Epistles may convey the impression of a kindly and urbane philosopher in the process of observing what constitutes the good life, Pope's **epistles** seem at least in part to picture a witty poet observing his world and finding much in it that is disagreeable. This is, of course, a too general contrast because both Pope and Horace convey many other sides of themselves; but, in general terms, I think the difference is valid. Pope is more inclined to "hit" specific individuals; his ethic epistles include more attacks than do those of Horace; and for these reasons I think his four poems are unique.<sup>37</sup>

A second quality that seems to set Pope's epistles apart concerns the extent to which the poet actually reveals himself. I have said above that Pope and Horace convey many sides of "themselves" and have, thereby, firmly impaled myself on the horns of a dilemma, because both poets seem to have written their epistles with an eye to fulfilling an ideal stated by Horace in Sat.I.x.

You need terseness, that the thought may run on,  
and not become entangled in verbiage that weighs upon  
wearied ears. You also need a style now grave, often  
gay, in keeping with the role, now of orator or poet,  
at times of the wit, who holds his strength in check  
and husbands it with wisdom.<sup>38</sup>

The phrase "role of the poet" presents the problem. Although the exact meaning, as Reuben Brower says, is "not quite clear," it strongly suggests that a poet does not always speak in his

own voice. Rather he assumes a role in which he speaks now as an orator, a wit, or a poet. In brief, Horace seems to say that a writer must "go out of himself into other roles" and, therefore, implies that a poet writing in the epistolary way does not necessarily reveal himself. Horace's statement suggests, rather, that what self-revelation we may have is of a persona (or perhaps several personae) which the poet creates and behind which the real personality of the writer is hidden.<sup>39</sup>

Now the dilemma -- the extent to which the assumption of a role is actually true in practice -- raises several terrible questions. To what extent, for example, does Horace hide? To what extent does Pope assume roles in his epistles? To what degree can we say that assumed roles are projections of the actual personality of the author? To what extent can the words "Alexander Pope" and "the poet" be used interchangeably? And so on. To these and many other related questions I simply have no definite answers. That Horace and Pope do assume roles is supported by the constant variations in tone which we have noted, by the way in which both poets seem to adapt their voices (or the voices of their personae) to their subjects and addressees, and by a weight of critical opinion claiming that Pope speaks now as a "roman aristocrat," now as a "painter-entrepreneur," now as a "preacher."<sup>40</sup>

But the extent to which either writer adopts a role totally apart from his actual self is, I think, in doubt.

I do not believe we can know Pope and Horace well enough to make this kind of distinction. If Pope was not actually a "Roman aristocrat" or a "preacher," we might say that he had the unadopted sensibility of both and that these so-called roles are, therefore, momentary or perhaps sustained projections of at least one part of himself. In more general terms, is it not likely that any human being is actually several people in one? A man would not write to his future wife as to a future business associate. He would present himself in totally different lights. And he might in fact be sensitive and hard-headed, warm-hearted and calculating, easy and ambitious, convivial and determined, or all of these or none of these. Moreover, is not the act of playing so-called roles, of speaking in different "voices," part of the very business of being oneself or being human. As Irvin Ehrenpreis says, "this kind of rhetorical pose is absolutely inseparable from all language and communication. One could never reveal the whole truth about oneself, even supposing one knew it. If one could, the effect would be chaos, for to reveal all is to hide all. One cannot speak without selecting a limited number of remarks from among possible remarks; and it is animal instinct to choose those which suit the occasion.... In every conversation, we misrepresent our nature."<sup>41</sup>

Pope writes in his "Epistle to Cobham,"

Our depths who fathoms, or our shallows finds,  
Quick whirls, and shifting eddies, of our minds?  
Life's stream for Observation will not stay,  
It hurries all too fast to mark their way.

In vain sedate reflections we would make,  
 When half our knowledge we must snatch, not take.  
 On human actions reason tho' you can,  
 It may be reason, but it is not man:  
 His Principle of action once explore,  
 That instant 'tis his Principle no more.  
 Like following life thro' creatures you dissect,  
 You lose it in the moment you detect.<sup>42</sup>

And although he is saying principally that a man's character cannot be determined on the basis of observed actions, the same general motion of indeterminateness might be applied to the matter of finding an author amidst the several roles or "voices" he may adopt. In search of Pope I might, for example, attempt to make some "sedate reflections" about such passages as the following:

Behold a rev'rend sire, whom want of grace  
 Has made the father of a nameless race,  
 Shov'd from the wall perhaps, or rudely press'd  
 By his own son, that passes by unbless'd:  
 Still to his wench he crawls on knocking knees,  
 And envies ev'ry sparrow that he sees.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ah Friend! to dazzle let the Vain design,  
 To raise the Thought and touch the Heart, be thine!  
 That Charm shall grow, while what fatigues the Ring  
 Flaunts and goes down, an unregarded thing.

\*\*\*\*\*

Another age shall see the golden Ear  
 Imbrown the Slope, and nod on the Parterre,  
 Deep Harvests bury all his pride has plann'd,  
 And laughing Ceres re-assume the land.<sup>43</sup>

I might talk of the "voice" of the disgusted satirist dramatizing lechery in the first passage, of the good friend complimenting a lady in the second, or the idealized aristocrat signaling the decay of pride in the third. Certainly they are different. The phrases "crawls on knocking knees," "fatigues

the ring," and "re-assume the land" ring respectively with open contempt, feline assurance, and aristocratic formality. I might further say that Pope seems less indirect in the second passage and, therefore, "more himself"; that in the first passage he is playing the role of the contemptuous wit and comic dramatist; and that in the third he has assumed the dignity and Latinity of a leading Roman citizen. But once tentatively stated, would such observations bring me any closer to Pope? In fact, wouldn't it be less ingenious and just as correct to say that Pope himself speaks satirically in the first passage, rather warmly in the second, and formally in the third? What, after all, is the difference between saying that Pope speaks as a witty satirist (with the implication that he is not really a wit, but has adopted the role) or that he himself speaks in a witty and satirical manner?

Perhaps I have misinterpreted the meaning of the word "role," but I do not believe that Pope is someone other than himself in the epistles and that he is, therefore, completely hidden from view. In fact, if anything, because the epistles include a wide range of attitudes - satiric, ironic, and tragic -- because they involve poetry that is alternately descriptive, narrative, and dramatic, because they touch upon philosophy, fine arts, and religion, because, in brief, they paint a many-sided picture of the poet's mind and art -- they may reveal more of Pope than we see in his other poems. I use the word "may" because, quite frankly, I am not sure.

Literature is not autobiography, and Pope might well be presenting himself not as he actually was but as an idealized and "Englished" Horace -- a good friend, sometimes formal and sometimes gay; a witty conversationalist, wearing his learning with ease; a welcome companion in the best social circles; a socially conscious citizen; and an artist. I also use the word "may" because in so presenting himself, Pope possibly comes closer than he could in any other fashion to the truth about himself as a human being -- one whose lines may be dissected but whose constantly shifting identity may be lost the moment it is detected.

Our depths who fathoms, or our shallows finds,  
Quick whirls, and shifting eddies, of our minds?

Still with regard to self-revelation, one more definite point seems to stand out. While his personality is also elusive and complex because of his tendency to speak in many "voices," Horace seems more inclined than Pope toward overt self-revelation or autobiography. In the Latin epistles, for example, we find several lines and passages in which Horace seems to speak directly of himself.

My years, my mind, are not the same.... So now  
I lay aside my verses and all other toys. What  
is right and seemly is my study and pursuit,  
and to that am I wholly given.

\*\*\*\*\*

Small things befit small folk; my own delight  
to-day is not queenly Rome, but quiet Tibur or  
peaceful Tarentum.

\*\*\*\*\*



You keep the nest; I praise the lovely  
country's brooks, its grove and moss-grown  
rocks. In short: I live and reign, as  
soon as I have left behind what you townsmen  
with shouts of applause extol to the skies.  
Like the priest's runaway slave, I loathe  
sweet wafers; 'tis bread I want, and now prefer  
to honeyed cakes.<sup>44</sup>

And the same, by the way, is true of about half the post-1715 English philosophical epistles I have read. Pope, on the other hand, is somewhat less direct. Although like Horace he maintains the allusion of personal conversation through the use of informal contractions ("you'd," "you'll," "'Tis," "She'll"), vulgarisms ("Spew," "squirt," "tail," "dubs," "greazy," "punk," and "sits at squat"), and expressions like "'tis no easy thing," "dreads to be alone," "lives like other folks," and "for all his Lordship knows" -- all of which are "not quite suitable for written English" and contribute to a picture of the poet at ease -- he is less intimate, I think, than Horace and seldom speaks of himself autobiographically.<sup>45</sup> In the four ethic epistles, Pope uses the pronoun "I" in approximately seven instances. We have two or three relatively unimportant asides ("I grant," "I forget the year"), one spoken transition ("I'll tell a tale"), and four passages in which Pope speaks indirectly of himself as a satirist, an artist, and an optimistic philosopher.

Whether the Charmer sinner it, or saint it,  
If Folly grows romantic, I must paint it.

\*\*\*\*\*

I cursed such lavish cost, and little skill,  
And swear no Day was ever past so ill.

\*\*\*\*\*

From Peer or bishop 'tis no easy thing  
To draw the man who loves his God, or King:  
Alas! I copy (or my draught would fail)  
From honest 'hah'net, or plain Parson Hale.

\*\*\*\*\*

You hold the word, from Jove to Horus giv'n,  
That Jan was made the standing jest of Heav'n;  
And Gold' but sent to keep the fools in play,  
For some to heap, and some to throw away.  
But I, who think more highly of our kind,...  
Spine, that virtue, as in duty bound,  
Deep hid the shining mischief under ground:  
But when by Jan's audacious labour won,  
Flew'd forth this rival to, its Sire, the Sun,  
Then careful Heav'n supply'd two sorts of Jan,  
To explain in three, and three to hide again.<sup>4</sup>

Here again is the problem of the poet's "role," and I must admit that I am still not sure how to draw the fine distinction between words which reveal the man and words which contribute to a mask. This much, however, I will say. The "I" in the three passages from the Latin epistles seems to refer to Horace himself. The lines say, "I, Horace, am setting aside my verses," and "I, Horace, like other small folks, prefer quiet Tibur or peaceful Tarentum." They do not seem to invite a reading like "I, Horace, in my role as an unsystematic philosopher or genial lover of the country, am now wholly given to the study of what is right and to the praise of lovely country brooks." In the four passages from the ethic epistles, however, the "I" seems to refer less directly to Rome. The first couplet invites the addition of the phrase,

"as a satirist" -- "If folly grows romantic, I, as a satirist, must paint it"; and particularly in the third passage, Pope seems to be speaking of himself as an artist. He talks first of a general problem that all artists have, saying ironically that some subjects require more idealization than others; and he then specifies what he as an artist would have to copy from in attempting a portrait of the "man who loves his God, or King." I would not call this overtly autobiographical; in fact, the major point of the third passage is not what Pope "would do" at all. His lines veer away from direct self-revelation and seem to say, "Not many men today, least of all peers and bishops, love their God or King. And in attempting a portrait of such a man, an artist may search in vain for a model. I usually use Mahomet or Parson Hales. At least Mahomet was honest; and Dr. Hales (perhaps somewhat too spattered with the blood of rats and dogs) a good man." In brief, Horace "means" more or less what he says about himself, and Pope does not. Pope is suggesting all kinds of things, ranging from an aesthetic theory of imitation to the fact that perhaps the King doesn't deserve any respect or love. Horace seems to sit still long enough to be seen; Pope dances around and is very difficult to find.

## iii

We seem at this point near the end of a long walk through the sometimes weed-strewn garden of familiar epistolary verse

which flourished between 1715 and 1758. And in review several important points stand out. First, while some allowance must be made for the number of years involved and the fact that I have not read all the familiar epistles written, we have seen a sizeable increase in the number of such poems after 1715.<sup>47</sup> I have discussed or noted seventy-three in all, or roughly three times as many found in either of the two earlier periods.<sup>48</sup> Also in terms of numbers alone, we have seen more poems in each of the established categories. A contrast between the years 1715-1758 with the earlier period (1689-1715), for instance, shows that nineteen minor epistles succeed five, ten imitations succeed five, fifteen literary epistles succeed ten, and thirty-two philosophical epistles succeed five. I am skeptical of these figures because of the difficulties of classification, enumerable idiosyncracies of each epistle, and relative size of the third period; but at least I am sure that after 1715 English poets chose more often (perhaps twice as often as before 1715) to write in the familiar epistolary way.

Second, within three of the categories noteworthy changes seem to take place. The epistolary imitations written after 1715 tend to be somewhat more ambitious than those written before this date. Before 1715 Prior, Swift, and Rowe, concentrating their attention on minor epistles, wrote imitations of Horace's letter of introduction (Ep.I.ix.) and his invitation (Ep.I.v.). Also we have one imitation of part

of an epistle -- Swift's famous "Horace, Book I. Ep. VII. Addressed to the Earl of Oxford."<sup>49</sup> After 1715, while minor imitations continue to appear, we see in the work of Pope an interest in longer, more complex, Horatian originals. These facts suggest that after 1715 poets were perhaps somewhat more at ease in the Horatian epistolary mode -- at least it was possible for them to find ways in which Horace's Epistles applied to their public as well as private lives -- and were inclined, perhaps more than ever before, to look at their world through the eyes of Horace.<sup>50</sup>

This same tendency can be seen in the literary epistles written after 1715, which include some Horatian advice and make a more widespread use of the Horatian familiar way.<sup>51</sup> And it is inherent also in the philosophical epistles. As I have said, in terms of content alone about twenty-six of the thirty-two philosophical epistles I have seen contain themes either patently Horatian (such as the need for calm wisdom as a means to happiness) or related in varying degrees to the ideal of being both a neatly self-possessed individual and a virtuous citizen. And in terms of manner, while great diversity exists, there is noteworthy attention to the familiar Horatian way. More specifically, of the thirty-two philosophical epistles I have read (including the ethic epistles of Pope), about twenty-two are Horatian in either of two ways. Ten poems -- those by Horace Walpole, William Whitehead, John Armstrong, Mark Akenside, Robert Nugent, and

William Helmoth, for example -- while not identical, seem primarily indebted to Horace's teaching style, to Dryden's version of that style in Religio Laici, or to Pope's Essay on Man. They use a legislative manner which is least Horatian when it is heroic (Horace Walpole's "An Epistle from Florence"), most Horatian when it is familiar (Robert Nugent's "An Epistle"), and not epistolary because it leads often to the expression of ideas behind which the poet effaces himself. Twelve other poems by Pope, Edward Rolle, Matthew Green, James Cawthorne, Paul Whitehead, Robert Dodsley, Soame Jenyns, and Nathaniel Cotton are Horatian because they use one or more of the techniques associated with familiar epistolary verse.<sup>52</sup>

The poems by Green, Jenyns, and Cotton are decidedly personal. They include long first-person passages in which the poets talk more or less directly of themselves (more directly in Cotton's poem, less directly in Green's), and they use a familiar idiom. Sometimes they are dramatic (Soame Jenyns' "Epistle from S. J. Esq..." includes a country visit and dinner party scene which may have been suggested by Pope's day at Timon's villa), sometimes they are varied in tone as in the case of "The Spleen"; but for the most part they are light and too off-handed to be called completely Horatian. And finally we have the satirico-epistolary poems in the Horatian manner of Pope. Here, as stated before, I think we come closest to the Horatian way. Pope and the few poets who seem to have followed him write as though a conversation is

in progress.<sup>53</sup> Their epistles seem to some extent controlled by the interests of their addressees, their tones of voice are varied, and they tend to present their material dramatically.<sup>54</sup> In these ways, they are distinctly Horatian; but as I have tried to illustrate, the epistolary manner of Pope is also unique. He is more inclined than Horace (and other non-Popean epistolary poets) to attack specific individuals by name, he tends to argue in favor of a virtue like *charity* by picturing those who show no signs of it; and, unlike Horace, Pope in his ethic epistles is not autobiographical.<sup>55</sup>

Now the facts and tendencies I have mentioned -- the large increase in the number of familiar epistles written after 1715, the presence of Horatian themes in some of the epistles, and a somewhat more pervasive use of the familiar way -- are certainly not inclusive. We see also a striking number of philosophical epistles off-setting the earlier dominant literary epistles, a major poet using the Horatian epistolary mode as a vehicle for his opus magnum, a somewhat more frequent combination of serious literary or philosophical matter with passages that are personal, and what I would call the full-flowering of the tendency to exercise the kind of poetic freedom allowable within the framework of the epistle. Many of the indications are, in other words, that the familiar epistle enjoyed a kind of popularity it never

had before; and the reason why this was so lies at least partly, I think, in the continued change in the status of the "poet." I have mentioned before that between 1689 and 1715 there were faint suggestions of growth (a tendency to use this sort of poetry as a vehicle for serious subject matter, for example), but relatively few truly familiar Horatian epistles; and I suggested then that the place of the poet in society might be related to the apparent status of the verse epistle. The same relationship seems to exist after 1715, an evident rise in the popularity of the epistle corresponding with the rise of the professional poet and the general state of the poet's world.

I do not want to imply that after 1715 aspiring poets could easily succeed. In fact much of the evidence indicates that the writer's life then was grim indeed. The literary epistles speak with feeling of the bad state of literary affairs, of the several trials that a writer faced; "George II made no effort to conceal his complete contempt for 'bainting' and 'boetry'"; and with the advent of Sir Robert Walpole in 1721, authors generally found themselves with neither pensions nor posts.<sup>56</sup> At this same time, however, the prospect of an author's self-sufficiency seems to have been somewhat closer than it was before. A large reading public had evolved; the publishing business had grown competitive. And, more important, a number of poets after 1715 seem to have become true friends of those who before would have been, in the strictest sense,



their patrons or political associates.

Patronage did not cease altogether after 1715, patrons before this date did not always remain aloof from those they helped, and politics certainly continued as a factor in establishing friendships or associations after 1715; nevertheless, it seems that during the first and second quarters of the eighteenth century some poets moved with more ease in social circles that before this time probably would have been closed to them. William Whitehead, a baker's son, contracted lasting friendships with Lord Drumlanrig, Sir Charles Douglas, and Sir Robert Curdett at Winchester. As a private tutor to the second son of William, third Earl of Jersey, "he was received upon the most liberal footing"; and after a grand tour with the Earl's son and Lord Viscount Muncieham (1756), "he lived almost entirely in the house of the earl of Jersey, no longer as a tutor to his son, but as a companion of amiable manners and accomplishments, whom the good sense of that nobleman and his lady preferred to be the partner of their familiar and undisguised intimacy, and placed at their table as one not unworthy to sit with guests of whatever rank."<sup>57</sup> Robert Dodsley began as a footman in the family of "the hon. Mrs. Lowther," became with Pope's help one of the leading publishers of his time, and counted among his friends such men as Lord Chesterfield and Edmund Burke.<sup>58</sup> Prior, having lived through the golden age of authors, was a victim of the Walpole regime; but in his last years he remained

a close friend of Lord Harley, who gave him 4000 pounds for the purchase of Down Hall in Essex and at whose seat of Wimpole he died while on a visit.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, John Gay, who began in London as an apprentice to a silk merchant, seems to have been neglected by the court of George II, but passed the last years of his life "in the affectionate attention of the duke and dutchess [sic] of Queensberry, into whose house he was taken."<sup>60</sup> And finally we have the example of Pope, England's first man of letters.

This poet, who sought favours from none, was sought after by all, and the house at Twickenham became the trysting-place of a company which would have done honour to a royal palace. There were seen not only distinguished intellectuals like Swift, Atterbury, Gay and Arbuthnot, artists like Jervas and Kneller, politicians like Murray, Pulteney, Lyttelton and Wyndham, but those most eminent by birth, rank and station. Thither came Bolingbroke, the brilliant orator, the statesman who at one moment had held the destiny of England in his hand; Lord Oxford, colleague and rival of Bolingbroke, and his son, later the inheritor of his title (1724); Lord Peterborough, gallant and chivalrous commander of the English army in Spain; the fashionable and witty Chesterfield; Lords Burlington, Bathurst and Cobham; the Earls of Orrery and Marchmont; the Dukes of Shrewsbury and Argyle, in a word, all the most brilliant stars of aristocratic England. Even the King's son and heir, the Prince of Wales, went out of his way to call on the poet and accepted his invitation to dinner.<sup>61</sup>

Certainly this kind of success was not true of every poet writing after 1715. Some, of course, struggled and failed. Robert Lloyd, for example, endeavored to support himself by writing, was arrested for debt, and died in prison. And still others had no real literary ambitions to begin with.

Chalmers describes John Gilbert Cooper as a "gentleman of easy fortune" who does not appear to have "courted the fame of authorship."<sup>62</sup> Nathaniel Cotton, perhaps better known as the physician who tended Cowper during one of his periods of madness, wrote poems and prose pieces that "were probably the amusement of such hours as he could snatch from the duties of his profession."<sup>63</sup> "Of his character as a poet," Paul Whitehead was "very careless, considering it perhaps as only the temporary instrument of his advancement to ease and independence."<sup>64</sup> And George Lyttelton's poems are said by Samuel Johnson to be "the works of a man of literature and judgment, devoting part of his time to versification."<sup>65</sup>

One difference involving the status of the poet, however, is that he was somewhat more likely after 1715 to be considered or to consider himself on a footing of equality with his audience. If we take the major poets of the first half of the eighteenth century (excepting Edward Young), the one fairly consistent fact about their careers is that they move with some ease among influential friends and seem to acquire a degree of independence which, I think, the Horatian stance requires. To the examples already mentioned, I might add William Shenstone and James Thomson, who with Pope were probably the major poets of the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Shenstone, living like a sometimes benighted Horace at The Leasowes, was closely acquainted with a cross-section of the cultured society of the century:

"There was a cheerful Anglican sobriety in Jago and Graves; contact with the world of books, in Robert Dodsley, John Baskerville, Thomas Percy, and the continual flow of friendly authors who visited The Leasowes; the excitement of politics, in Lord Lyttelton; the benevolent rural oligarchy, in Lady Luxborough."<sup>66</sup> And with all of these people Shenstone was intimate. James Thomson became a close friend of Pope. He lived with George Subb Dodington "on terms of intimacy...for many years." He was the correspondent and visitor of Lady Hertford. He spent time with George Talbot's family at Ashdown Park. And he was treated with the utmost kindness and hospitality by Lord Lyttelton, who even tried to find a wife for him.<sup>67</sup> In brief, if it is true that "any contemporary man of letters who did not enjoy a private income had to seek out, secure, and flatter some patron if he wished to live" and that "Alexander Pope was the only poet whose writings provided an independency" -- it seems true also that support of men of letters, limited though it may have been, often entailed intimate associations going beyond mere patronage. It is this fact in the lives of Pope, Gay, Prior, Shenstone, and Thomson which I take as a sign of change in the poet's world contributing at least in part to the writing of epistolary verse in the Horatian way. Despite what Pope says about Gay in the "Epistle to Arbuthnot," the neglect of genius was not, I think, characteristic of the Augustan age.

Finally in review, having traced the development of familiar epistolary poetry from the relatively minor pieces of Charles Cotton to the masterful ethic poems of Pope, having illustrated the several varieties of familiar epistolary verse, and having discussed at length some of the more important landmarks -- Religio Laici (1682), a legislative poem in which Dryden hoped the style of Horace's Epistles was "not ill imitated"; Samuel Wesley's "An Epistle to a Friend Concerning Poetry" (1700), with its prefatory indication that epistolary poetry was then "agreeable to the Taste"; Elijah Fenton's "Epistle to Lambard" (1717), which Pope called "the most Horatian...in our language"; Pope's imitations (1737-38), which are certainly the best of their kind; and Matthew Green's "The Spleen" (1737), which is perhaps the most noteworthy of the light octosyllabic epistles -- I wish to illustrate once more the distinguishing features one might use in determining whether or not a poem is in fact an Horatian familiar epistle. In brief, because we have many diverse poems in the air -- some more familiar than others, and many that are obscure -- I think it worthwhile to end well within sight of the Horatian epistolary way and to reemphasize some of its combined characteristics with reference to one poem that is surely the masterpiece of its kind.

In many ways the culmination of what has been said about familiar epistolary verse, the "Epistle to Arbuthnot" is the most Horatian of Pope's original works."<sup>68</sup> It was immediately occasioned by Verses to an Imitator of Horace (1733), composed by Mary Wortley Montague, with the help of Lord Hervey, in response to Pope's libelous Imitation of the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace; and in a more general way, the epistle was also occasioned by Pope's genuine affection for Arbuthnot, "the Doctor" with whom he had been intimate since 1713. On July 17, 1734, Arbuthnot, who was ill and would be dead seven months later, wrote to Pope from Hampstead:

As for you, my good Friend, I think since our first acquaintance there has not been any of those little Suspicions or Jealousies that often affect the sincerest Friendships; I am sure not on my side. I must be so sincere as to own, that tho' I could not help valuing you for those Talents which the World prizes, yet they were not the Foundation of my Friendship: They were quite of another sort; nor shall I at present offend you by ennumerating them: And I make it my Last Request, that you continue that noble Disdain and Abhorrence of Vice, which you seem naturally endu'd with, but still with a due regard to your own Safety; and study more to reform than chastise, tho' the one often cannot be effected without the other.<sup>69</sup>

And to this letter Pope wrote at least two replies. The first (August 2, 1734) is a reaffirmation of friendship and a defense of satire.

I can most sincerely say, in a Friendship of twenty years, I have found no one Reason of Complaint from you, and hope I have given you as little, abating common human failings. I am almost displeasd [*sic*] at your Expression "Scarcely any of those suspicions or jealousyes which affect the truest friendships" for I know

of not one on my part. I thank you dear Sir for making That your Request to me which I make my Pride, nay my Duty; "that I should continue my Disdain & abhorrence of Vice, & manifest it still in my writings." I would indeed do it with more restrictions, & less personally; it is more agreeable to my nature, which those who know it not are greatly mistaken in: But General Satire in Times of General Vice has no force, & is no Punishment: People have ceas'd to be ashamed of it when so many are joind [sic] with them; and tis only by hunting One or two from the Herd that any Examples can be made. If a man writ all his Life against the Collective Body of the Banditti, or against Lawyers, would it do the least Good, or lessen the Body? But if some are hung up, or pilloryed, it may prevent others. And in my low Station, with no other Power than this, I hope to deter, if not to reform.

The second (August 25, 1734) refers specifically to the "Epistle":

I took very kindly your Advice, concerning avoiding Ill-will from writing Satyr; & it has worked so much upon me (considering the Time & State you gave it in) that I determine to address to you one of my Epistles, written by piece-meal many years, & which I have now made haste to put together; wherein the Question is stated, what were, & are, my Motives of writing, the Objections to them, & my answers. It pleases me much to take this occasion of testifying (to the public at least, if not to Posterity) my Obligations & Friendship for, & from, you, for so many years: That is all that's in it; for Compliments are fulsome & go for nothing.<sup>70</sup>

Now this series of letters is important for many reasons. First, there should be no doubt that Pope wrote his "Epistle" to a friend and equal. The letters are full of the greatest mutual respect and affection. Second, they show the matter of the poem arising from a real situation in the lives of real persons, a distinctive trait of the

epistle.<sup>71</sup> Specifically, we see at least some of the matter growing from a series of poems (Verses to the Imitator of Horace and An Epistle to a Doctor of Divinity from a Nobleman at Hampton Court, among others) which had been directed at Pope, and a last request by Arbuthnot which gave "cohesion to the miscellaneous snatches of attack and defense which Pope had already written."<sup>72</sup> Third, with direct reference to the "Epistle," the letters help in determining the extent of Pope's "epistolary attention" to his addressee. The last six lines of the poem, for instance, refer clearly to Arbuthnot's ill health and the uncertainty of his recovery. Lines like the following refer to Arbuthnot's concern for Pope's safety:

Still Sappho--"Hold! for God-sake--you'll offend:  
 "No Names--be calm--learn Prudence of a Friend:  
 "I too could write, and I am twice as tall,  
 "But Foes like these!"<sup>73</sup>

And most pervasive is Pope's response to Arbuthnot's urging him "to study more to reform than chastise." In fact, this response is the poem, in which "Pope makes an apologia for his whole career and defends himself against poetasters, critics, and personal enemies while expressing his affection for his parents and friends, especially for 'the Doctor', a man who was learned, witty, and good."<sup>74</sup> At a time when Pope was being pressed on every side by "enemies" who insisted that he was a mendacious backbiter, a twisted man in a twisted body, he literally had to answer Arbuthnot. At stake were the moral value of satire, Pope's reputation as a reformer of



morals, and the justification of his art. And fourth, the letter of August 25, 1734, leads us toward the organization and content of the "Epistle."

At face value, Pope's account of his poem "written by piece-meal many years" is not very helpful. The terms he uses to describe its content are wholly general: "my Motives of writing, the Objections to them & my answers...[and] my Obligations & Friendship for, & from, you, for so many years." But beneath the surface of this quick summary are at least two important implications. One is that Pope intended to focus attention on himself ("my motives...my answers...my Obligations"). And the other can be seen in the difference between the account and the "Epistle" itself, the dissimilarity between the order of "Motives...Objections...answers" and the seeming haphazardness with which these general topics appear in the poem. In brief, one of the most striking features of the "Epistle to Arbuthnot" is its discursive organization. In terms of subject matter alone, the poem is a hotch-potch that almost defies summary.

- (1-68) I am weary of being hounded by would-be poets.
- (69-104) I cannot forbear telling them they are fools; it doesn't hurt them; they continue to flourish.
- (105-124) I don't mind them so much when they are angry; it's when they flatter me that I can't stand them.
- (125-192) Why did I write? Primarily to assuage my pain; and then I was encouraged to publish. Even when I did not offend, I was attacked by ignorant petty critics, who would not spare even Atticus.
- (193-214) Character of Atticus.

- (215-230) I sought no flattery, but left that  
to Bufo.
- (231-248) Character of Bufo.
- (249-282) May good patrons flourish; I wish to  
be independent. Why do people  
anticipate my poems?
- (283-304) Character of a virtuous poet.
- (305-333) Character of Sporus.
- (334-359) Character of a virtuous poet  
continued.
- (360-387) I will attack knaves, of whatever  
degree. Yet I have been most  
forbearing toward my enemies.
- (388-419) Character of my parents. May my  
mother and Arbuthnot live long.<sup>75</sup>

We have, in other words, a poem which avoids the air of the treatise, which is epistolary because the poet "seems rather betrayed into his Subject, than to have aimed at it by Design."<sup>76</sup> "Like the best of Horace's Epistles, it is the kind of letter we dream of writing, our own talk brought to paper without any obvious plan or artifice, yet capable of embracing whatever concerns or amuses us."<sup>77</sup>

Still with regard to organization, however, the poem does have three characteristics which hold it together and which are epistolary because they focus our attention on the author. The first involves an emotional release. From beginning to end, the poem seems to validate Pope's statement that he, like Midas' Minister, must speak or burst.

'Tis sung, when Midas' Ears began to spring,  
(Midas, a sacred Person and a King)  
His very Minister who spy'd them first,  
(Some say his Queen) was forc'd to speak, or burst.  
And is not mine, my Friend, a sorer case,<sup>78</sup>  
When ev'ry Coxcomb perks them in my face?

The poem begins with a dramatic scene in which Pope pictures himself besieged by a swarm of scribblers and madmen.

Shut, shut the door, good John! fatigu'd I said,  
 Tye up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead,  
 The Dog-star rages! nay 'tis past a doubt,  
 All Sedlam, or Parnassus, is let out:  
 Fire in each eye, and Papers in each hand,  
 They rave, recite, and madden round the land.  
 What Walls can guard me, or what Shades can hide?  
 They pierce my Thickets, thro' my Grot they glide,  
 By land, by water, they renew the charge,  
 They stop the Chariot, and they board the Barge.<sup>79</sup>

Metaphorical references to warfare and insanity, words like "sick," "dead," "rages," "Fire," "rave," "pierce," and "charge," and the unmistakable note of intense nervous irritation combine to produce a mixture of amusement and desperation. At this point, in other words, Pope presents himself dramatically "betrayed into his subject" and compelled to speak. At the end of the poem, however, we see an entirely different scene.

O Friend! may each Domestick Bliss be thine!  
 Be no unpleasing Melancholy mine:  
 Be, let the tender Office long engage  
 To rock the Cradle of reposing Age.  
 With lenient Arts extend a Mother's breath,  
 Make Languor smile, and smooth the Bed of Death,  
 Explore the Thought, explain the asking Eye,  
 And keep a while one Parent from the Sky!<sup>80</sup>

No longer besieged, Pope now seems wholly at ease. Quiet references to the tender care of his mother, words and phrases like "Domestick Bliss," "reposing Age," "lenient Arts," "Languor," and "smooth," and the note of calmness combine to produce a feeling of serene content. The "Epistle" seems, in brief, to have acted as a kind of cathartic; and in the broadest terms it might be read simply as a poem in which Pope literally expresses himself in order to restore his peace of mind.

A second organizing principle is essentially metaphorical. In lines 1-333 developing his "Bill of Complaint" against poetasters, flatterers, and critics, Pope tends to describe his own state in terms of sickness and to use images of animals, filth, and disease, many of which come together in the scathing portrait of Sporus. The madmen raving in the "Grot," the "maudlin Poetess," the "rhyming Peer," the "Clerk" -- all are part of a "Plague" threatening both Pope and "The World."

Friend to my Life (which did not you prolong,  
The World had wanted many an idle Song)  
What Droo or Mostrum can this Plague remove?<sup>81</sup>

Those Pope treats with civility are asses who "bite and kick"; scribblers he attacks are spiders impervious to shame and busy in "dirty work." Flatterers are rabid dogs.

One Flatt'rer's worse than all;  
Of all mad **Creatures**, if the Learn'd are right,  
It is the Slaver kills, and not the Site.<sup>82</sup>

Piece-meal critics are preserved bugs, or "hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms." And finally all of Pope's scorn bursts forth in the portrait of Sporus, who is by turns a "Bug with gilded wings" (a "Butterfly"), a "Spaniel," a "Toad," and then a mere figure of speech. After line 333, the images of animals, filth, and disease turn more directly to "persecution, and persecution reveals the virtuous man."<sup>83</sup> Having described his own state in terms of "an aking head," a sore "case," and a "long Disease," Pope alludes to the attacks against his work and person, referring in particular

to the charges of obscenity ("Th' imputed Trash"), of setting his name to Broome's verses, and of libeling Addison ("The Tale reviv'd, the Lye so oft o'erthrown"), and to the vitriolic abuse of his "Shape," his friends, and his family. Through it all, he maintains that he has always been sustained by "fair Virtue"; that he has befriended enemies in distress (Dennis) and written lines for other poets, that he has acted with great prudence and restraint. And finally, through his father, he establishes his own blood relationship with the virtues of honesty, forthrightness, wisdom, and temperance. Metaphorically, we might say that Pope reaffirms the value of the medicine he has administered to the world and, in the process, transforms himself from a patient to a physician. Early in the poem he asks Arbuthnot for a "Drop or Nostrum" to remove a plague that will surely "end" him. In the closing lines Pope himself is the doctor keeping "a while one Parent from the Sky."<sup>24</sup>

A final organizing principle concerns the manner in which Pope presents himself, both as a poet and as a human being; and here we come closest to what is, I think, unique in the familiar epistle. First, Pope uses the Horatian "conversational mosaic" and thus shows himself as a comic dramatist.

Bless me! a Packet.--" 'Tis a stranger sues,  
 "A Virgin Tragedy, an Orphan Muse."  
 If I dislike it, "Furies, death and rage!"  
 If I approve, "Commend it to the Stage."  
 There (thank my Stars) my whole Commission ends,  
 The Play'rs and I are, luckily, no friends.

Fir'd that the House reject him, "'Sdeath I'll print it  
 "And shame the Fools--your Int'rest, Sir, with Lintot."  
Lintot, dull rogue! will think your price too much.  
 "Not Sir, if you revise it, and retouch."  
 All my demurrs but double his attacks,  
 At last he whispers "Do, and we go snacks."  
 Glad of a quarrel, strait I clap the door,  
 Sir, let me see your works and you no more.<sup>85</sup>

Here the element of dramatic contrast, character revelation, and conflict seem most pronounced. A descendent of Horace's bore, Pope's unwelcome visitor makes almost every possible mistake. He completely misjudges his audience (Pope would not have been impressed by "A Virgin Tragedy" composed by "an Orphan Muse"), he immediately loses his temper, he constantly interrupts, he speaks almost too quickly and certainly without thinking, and he is no artist. Pope, on the other hand, emerges as a principled man -- restrained and polite -- who might help a fellow poet if he deserved it. His circumspect "demurrs" stand in vivid contrast with the would-be poet's blunt "attacks." And as a poet he has clearly mastered the snip-snap exchange.

Pope also reveals himself as a conversationalist: his idiom in the epistle is essentially that of verse talk. He uses the Horatian technique of imagining what his addressee might say if he were present -- "You think this cruel?" "Why did I write?" "But why then publish?" He uses colloquialisms not quite suitable for written English: "he pay'd in kind," "I gave them but their due," "I kiss'd the rod," "either way I'm sped," "Father held it for a rule," "'tis past a doubt." And he includes passages of dialogue

such as the following:

'Tis sung, when Midas' Ears began to spring,  
 (Midas, a sacred Person and a King)  
 His very Minister who spy'd them first,  
 (Some say his Queen) was forc'd to speak, or burst.  
 And is not mine, my Friend, a sorer case,  
 When ev'ry Coxcomb perks them in my face?  
 "Good friend forbear! you deal in dang'rous things,  
 "I'd never name Queens, Ministers, or Kings;  
 "Keep close to Ears, and those let Asses prick,<sup>86</sup>  
 "Tis nothing"--Nothing? if they bite and kick?

The informal contraction "'Tis"; the familiar level of usage in expressions like "perks them," "deal in," and "Keep close to"; the intimate tone of one friend speaking to another; the exchange between long-suffering Pope and prudent Arbuthnot; the elegantly ambiguous reference to Walpole and the Queen; the asides thrown in as it were by the by -- all contribute to a mode of poetry in which talk is brought to paper.

And finally Pope reveals himself as a master poet, the surest evidence of which he provides in a constant and dazzling variety of tones. At the poles are the good-natured concern of a friend,

One Cares like these if Length of days attend,  
 May Heav'n, to bless those days, preserve my Friend,  
 Preserve him social, chearful, and serene,  
 And just as rich as when he serv'd a Queen!<sup>87</sup>

and the disgust of a satirist:

Whether in florid Impotence he speaks,  
 And, as the Prompter breathes, the Puppet squeaks;  
 Or at the Ear of Eve, familiar Toad,  
 Half Froth, half Venom, spits himself abroad,  
 In Funs, or Politicks, or Tales, or Lyes,  
 Or Spite, or Smut, or Rymes, or Blasphemies.<sup>88</sup>

And in between these extremes we have passages that are by turns broadly comic, slyly humorous, ironic, **elegiac**, temperate, and polite. We have shifts from blunt cynicism to the "mockery of heroic oath,"

You think this cruel? take it for a rule,  
No creature smarts so little as a fool.  
Let Peals of Laughter, Codrus! round thee break,  
Thou unconcern'd canst hear the mighty Crack.<sup>88</sup>

or from mock despair to grand indignation,

Poor guiltless I! and can I chuse but smile,  
When ev'ry Coxcomb knows me by my Style?  
Curst be the Verse, how well soe'er it flow,  
That tends to make one worthy Man my foe,  
Give Virtue scandal, Innocence a fear,  
Or from the soft-ey'd Virgin steal a tear!<sup>90</sup>

Elsewhere Pope is gossipy and insinuating as in the portrait of "Cato" and "his little Senate." And sometimes he is simply exasperated.

Why am I ask'd, what next shall see the light?  
Heav'ns! was I born for nothing but to write?<sup>91</sup>

In brief, Pope's talk "brought to paper" is not mere talk -- various thoughts strung together "In verse, or prose, or both, or neither." It is delightfully varied talk given the "finality of verse."<sup>92</sup> It is conversation raised to the level of art.

One final point. In the poem to Arbuthnot, Pope, I think, comes closer to being personal than he does in any of his other major epistles. This quality is especially true of the passages concerning his relationships with his father and mother and with Arbuthnot where he speaks not as an idealized son or friend, but as a human being who clearly



reveres his father's memory, and who seems naturally concerned with making his mother's last days as comfortable as possible. He is, I think, especially intimate and personal in his final wish:

On Cares like these if Length of days attend,  
May heav'n, to bless those days, preserve my Friend,  
Preserve him social, chearful, and serene,  
And just as rich as when he serv'd a Queen!<sup>93</sup>

Nothing here that I can see or hear invites the interposition of a "speaker" or "interlocutor." This is Pope himself speaking directly to his good friend "the Doctor."

And a similar but perhaps not as direct personal note is, I think, present also in the more satiric passages of the poem. Much has been written about the "dramatic Alexander Pope" (not to be confused with Pope himself) and the way in which the satirist-poet establishes his ethos, convincing his audience (in the case of the "Epistle to Arbuthnot") that he is fundamentally a virtuous and tolerant man.<sup>94</sup> Such a rhetorical approach, in which Pope's art is usually called "impersonal," leads naturally enough to the idea that in an epistle like "Arbuthnot" Pope reveals not what he actually was, but what he wished others to think him. In small, this is the problematic persona again, the poet adopting a role or "going out of himself" in order to achieve a purpose definable only in terms of the work of art itself. It is the same knot I have tried to loosen around the ethic epistles, and it still involves questions for which I have no firm answers.

Certainly it would be naive to assume that Pope is always perfectly straightforward, that he means precisely what he says, and that he always tells the truth about himself in "Arbuthnot" or in any of his other major epistles. In fact, at times, as in his claim that he paid no attention to the scurrilous poems of the "Race that write" (lines 220-222), we catch Pope in an open contradiction. Had he paid no attention, he would not have written "Arbuthnot."<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, I think it equally naive to ignore completely the historical elements in "Arbuthnot," to say that the biographical truth of the poem is a minor part contributing only to the establishment of the proper satirist's character, and to conclude, in effect, that Pope never really shows himself, that he is never personal.

A rhetorical reading of the poem, for example, would probably lead us to interpret the portrait of Sporus as the attacking satirist's signature, the capstone of his arch, the climax of the poem, an essentially impersonal reduction of a representative victim (or vicious enemy) to a mere figure of speech. But at the same time are we wrong to read the description of Sporus as Pope's historical judgment of Hervey? I think not. "True, the character of Sporus does erupt at an appropriate point in the poem," interrupting the contrasting portrait of the virtuous poet (who may or may not be Pope himself). "True, Hervey's career is treated by Pope as a type of radical evil," a kind of horrible nightmare.

"True, we are indebted to those scholars who have demonstrated that far from expressing an odd fit of malice, the character has a significant position in a moral structure." Sporus, the "enemy" closely associated with the devil, is a rung in the satirist's moral ladder leading away from mere personal irritation toward something like a Christian defense of Civitas Dei. "But even more truly, in these verses we hear Pope attacking Hervey."<sup>96</sup> Elsewhere, when Pope writes of his own virtuous character (or that of the ideal poet), of the unjustified attacks on his works and person and family, the lines (334-357) surely contribute to the rhetorical purpose of establishing the satirist's ethos and lead directly to the moral triumph of good over evil. Only after the devil has been whipped can Pope write,

Welcome for thee, fair Virtue! all the past:  
For thee, fair Virtue! welcome ev'n the last!<sup>97</sup>

But just as surely, I think, these same lines are autobiographical enough to be called personal. Of course Pope is not being completely candid when he says that he "Laugh'd at the loss of Friends he never had," or when he writes of his disinterest in "Fame" and his love of "Virtue" -- the motivation of his every effort. We know that he did not merely fall into independency as a poet. But at the same time the portrait of the virtuous poet is thick with references which are true of Pope himself. He wrote little that we could call out and out flattery, he was not servile, he had constantly to contend with "imputed trash," he was

attacked unmercifully, and his enemies spared few if any of his friends. In brief, his "self-portrait," in addition to serving a rhetorical purpose, has a personal dimension. At least it is so written as to be more personal than anything I have seen and discussed in Pope's other major epistles.

Perhaps this quality appears in "Arbuthnot" because Pope is writing about a subject closer to his immediate situation arising from the need to justify his own satiric art. And perhaps the personal element may only be part of Pope's pose. But it is, I think, undeniably there; and it contributes strongly to the epistolary nature of the poem. Real matter growing out of a situation in the lives of real people, a clear attention to the interests and character of the addressee, the use of dramatic scenes and "conversational mosaics," a discursive organization of topics embracing whatever concerns or amuses the poet, the idiom of verse talk, a wide range of tones now grave and now gay, and much that seems personal -- these, I believe, distinguish Pope's "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot." And in a broader sense, these same qualities stand out in the Horatian epistolary way.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OVID AND HEROIC EPISTLES: 1660 - 1758

Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,  
Where, mix'd with God's, his lov'd Idea lies.  
Oh write it not, my hand--The name appears  
Already written--wash it out, my tears!

Alexander Pope, "Eloisa to Abelard"

On October 30, 1743, Lady Hertford -- James Thomson's Countess of Hertford, to whom he dedicated Spring -- wrote to her son on the grand tour:

I want to know whether the Paraclite ye [sic]  
pass'd by is the same where the Convent stands  
which was found'd by Abelard & which is so well  
known here, by Mr Papes Letter from Eloisa?<sup>1</sup>

And her concern is useful at this point because it suggests an interest shown by at least one eighteenth-century lady of cultivated taste in a form of epistolary verse distinct from what has been surveyed thus far. Without trying to attribute too much to Lady Hertford's request, I refer, of course, to verse letters rooted in Ovid's Heroides, or heroic epistles.

i

Of first importance, I think, is the fact that unlike

complimentary or familiar epistles, heroic verse letters are clearly definable. Complimentary letters, as we have seen, assume a host of forms, ranging from literary puffs to extended panegyric essays on high wonders; and familiar epistles are so varied as almost to defy a reader bent on making reasonable distinctions. Heroic epistles, on the other hand -- appearing in England as translations, paraphrases, and burlesques, as well as original letters in verse -- are reducible to a form including relatively fixed characteristics. It is sometimes difficult to draw the line between complimentary and familiar epistles, and often more difficult to distinguish between poems that are essentially essays and those that have the earmarks of familiar epistolary verse. In the heroic letter, however, we have a somewhat more exclusive form set off by a unique dramatic situation, a common manner of proceeding, and a number of stylistic features, which together distinguish this genre from other kinds of poetry. But we can be more specific; and a place to begin is with Ovid's Heroides themselves.

Judged from the original Latin letters grouped among the amatory poems Ovid wrote beginning around 23 A.D. (Amores, Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoris), heroic epistles might be defined as diffuse compositions in letter-form from heroines who are saddened by the absence of loved ones. And to this we should add two qualifications: the heroine is always an historical or mythological personage, supporting the basic

assumption that such a person's feelings have "'public' interest and power."<sup>2</sup> And the theme is always the universal theme of love, "of woman's love -- and of woman's love in straits."<sup>3</sup> Penelope writing to Ulysses, for example, is such a person. Her anxiety about her long-absent husband, her thinly-veiled fear that he may never return, her mixed feelings of desire, anger, and despair, and her awareness that she is no longer as attractive as she once was -- all are part of Penelope's letter. But in a broader sense her thoughts might well be those of any woman, no longer youthful, whose husband seems to have forgotten his home and his faithful wife. The same is true of Phyllis, who writes to Demophoon. Seduced and deserted before her wedding day, she speaks for all women who value their chastity; who, under similar circumstances, might naturally express mixed feelings of shame, hatred, and passion; and who might recall with some loathing their beguilement and the wheedling words of a false lover.

Now in these ways all genuine heroic epistles are the same. The heroines -- like Penelope, Phyllis, Briseis, Phaedra -- are historical or mythological characters; they are absent from their men; and they write of love. But within this broad context room exists for considerable diversity of situation and character. Phaedra, for example, consumed by her love for her step-son Hippolytus, writes in an attempt to shatter his legendary hard-heartedness.

Briseis, on the other hand, writes somewhat more pitiably in an attempt to persuade Achilles to take her back and to return to battle against the Trojans. Their situations are quite different. Phaedra has been unable to interest Hippolytus in the affair she so passionately desires; and her appeal is both desperate and dangerous (the later sequel to the story -- not included in the letter -- is that Hippolytus, continuing to spurn his passionate step-mother, was killed as a result of her false accusation). Briseis, once the prize of Achilles, has had a more tragic life and writes not only because she has been abandoned but because very rightly she foresees nothing but horror if Achilles does not rescue her from Agamemnon. And the faithful Fenslope writes out of grief and uncertainty. Her husband, she fears, will never return; her home has been overrun by a gang of suitors; and her son Telemachus needs his father. A passionate step-mother addressing her son, a slave-girl addressing her former master, a wife addressing her husband -- all involve different situations which mark individual epistles in the Heroides.

Equally varied are the characters of the heroines themselves. Just as we might say that in the Heroides we have climatic episodes in the lives of women who have been abandoned in one way or another, so too we have the letters of at least fifteen Ovidian heroines who commonly "burn" with passion, but not always for the same reasons or with



the same intensity. Some are consumed by sexual passion and hatred: they run distracted and they contemplate wickedness. Even as she writes to Jason, who has just deserted her to marry Creusa, Medea, for example, is clearly thinking about her revenge -- a poisoned robe for the bride and the murder of Jason's two children. Her letter ends ominously: "Something portentous, surely, is working in my soul!"<sup>4</sup> Other heroines are perhaps no less intensely emotional, but they are less wicked and their emotions are not quite so violent. Writing to Paris, for instance, Canone mixes her jealousy of Helen with righteous indignation; and she ends her letter not with a threat but with a ~~prayer~~ prayer. Contrasting herself with Helen, she says, "I come with no Danaï, and bear no bloody armour -- but I am yours, and I was your mate in childhood's years, and yours through all time to come I pray to be!"<sup>5</sup> And least violent are heroines like the faithful Penelope or the forgiving Eriseis.

Now to describe further the unique qualities of individual heroines, to cite instances of active and passive suffering (Dido and Penelope, for instance), or to discuss letters which mix calls for action with cries for pity (e.g., Hermione to Orestes) would, I think, further substantiate the many ways in which Ovid varies his heroic letters. More germane, however, are the general qualities ~~which~~ the epistles have in common; and still with regard to the characters of the heroines, two ideas seem to stand out.

First, despite their differences they are all genuinely heroic in the sense that they have a full awareness of their role and fame. And second, all the heroines suffer as a result of conflicting emotions or contrary states of feeling.

The first of these might be illustrated with reference to Sappho, who in her attempt to persuade Phaon to return from Sicily reminds her addressee that she has a name well-known and admired. "For me," she says,

the daughters of Pegasus dictate sweetest songs;  
my name is already sung abroad in all the earth.  
Not greater is the praise Alcæus wins, the sharer  
in my homeland and in my gift of song, though a  
statelier strain he sounds. If nature, malign  
to me, has denied the charm of beauty, weigh  
in the stead of beauty the genius she gave. I  
am slight of stature, yet I have a name that  
fills every land.<sup>6</sup>

Or it might be associated with any one of a number of references to a noble family, like that of Ariadne -- "I, whose father is Minos, whose mother the child of Phoebus."<sup>7</sup>

Or it might be illustrated in a letter like that of Hypsipyle, who emphasizes her part in great concerns, such as the fate of her country, and reminds Jason of her past patience, courage, sacrifice, and suffering. Surely the three examples I have mentioned are different: the heroines act in different ways and for different reasons. Sappho alone can talk of poetic fame, and not all of the heroines are descendants of gods. But at the same time they have much in common. All of them call attention to their past accomplishments: Sappho to her writing, Ariadne to her rescue of Theseus, Hypsipyle to saving her father. All of them are members of the

"nobility": Sappho, a kind of priestess on the isle of Lesbos; Ariadne, the daughter of a powerful king; and Hypsipyle, a queen in her own right. And all of them refuse to be forgotten. If Phaon decides not to return, says Sappho, he should know that he has deserted no common woman. And if Jason remains with Medea, says Hypsipyle, he should know that beside Hypsipyle, Medea is little more than a "barbarian jade." We have here, in other words, representative heroines, unique in some ways, but generally aware of themselves and their illustrious place in the world. Proud, sometimes defiant, and strong -- they are essentially heroic, and they suffer heroically because their suffering goes beyond that of ordinary humans.

But at the same time Ovid's heroines are also human, and this brings us to a second quality they have in common. If they suffer heroically, they also suffer understandably because of their contrary states of feeling. Some, like Medea and Phaedra, are torn between sexual passion and a sense of guilt. Phaedra knows that desire for a step-son is wrong, but she is also aware that she cannot control herself. Similarly, Medea is racked by her disloyalty to her family (she had betrayed her father and killed her brother) and her passionate love for Jason. Others somewhat less guilty and less openly wicked are torn between equally strong but perhaps less spectacular emotions. Phyllis hopes, for example, that Demophoon has been unavoidably detained, but she fears that

he has deliberately left her. Her dominant feelings seem to be a mixture of love and anger. And finally we have the more subdued conflicts to be found in Penelope's doubts about her attractiveness, or in Criseis' feeling that her own safety should not be her foremost concern.

These conflicts of feeling of course individualize the heroines, but for our purposes they are more important because they mark a general feature and help to emphasize other matters of substance which heroic epistles share. In the intense conflict of feeling is inherent an equally intense conflict of values -- such as loyalty to one's father or to one's husband. Also in the emotional outpouring that characterizes the heroic epistle we see Ovid's general interest in psychological states of mind and particular interest in feminine psychology. In the case of Ariadne, for instance, who has been abandoned by Theseus on the island of Naxos, we see the very natural fear of a woman left to get along as best she can in a barren land. Ariadne imagines all the worst forms of death: perhaps she will be attacked by wolves or tigers. But most intense is her fear of not dying and of therefore being unable to forget Theseus' sail disappearing over the horizon, the bleakness of the island, and her own part in starting the whole affair by giving Theseus a ball of thread and helping him to escape from the Minotaur. "Buried," as she says, "by the treason of a perjured mate," she is frantic and proud, so that her letter

is at once a plea for help, a confession of her own faults (like the betrayal of her father by freeing Theseus), and an angry cry. "Remember me, Theseus," she says bitterly, "when you tell of your adventures." And in what seems a most feminine manner she prods Theseus' masculine memory with references to her "loose locks," her flowing robes (now stained with tears), and her body "a-quiver like standing corn struck by the northern blast."<sup>8</sup> The conflicting feelings of love, guilt, anger, fear, and pride I would call fairly typical of an heroic epistle.<sup>9</sup> Also typical is the universality of Ariadne's suffering intensified by a conflict of loyalties and by her heroic nature. She is someone -- "I, whose father is Minos, whose mother the child of Phoebus" -- and she is "doomed to suffer...all that any woman left behind can suffer."<sup>10</sup> And finally representative, I think, is Ariadne's supremely feminine refusal to give up hope. She believes that if she can persuade Theseus to think about her, if she can paint a vivid enough picture of herself, he will return.<sup>11</sup>

Another earmark of the Ovidian epistle is a mood of great elegiac intensity, the voice of proud and sometimes tragic grief stressing the severity of fate suffered by a human being. It is not, I believe, essentially a lyric strain because the heroic love and grief expressed are not private. They are emotions embodied and dramatized on the stage of history.<sup>12</sup> Also the elegiac strain is not that of

the pastoral. Ovid's heroines (except perhaps Penelope) are not shepherdesses, and they are more inclined than pastoral speakers to the expression of natural pride and violent passions. We have, for example, a concluding passage from Phaedra's letter to Hippolytus in which, I believe, an heroic and elegiac voice emanates from an emotional storm-center -- a world of grand concerns and psychological turmoil. Still consciously aware of moral standards, Phaedra confesses her immodesty but then says,

Forgive me my confession, and soften your hard heart! That I have for sire Minos, who rules the seas, that from my ancestor's hand comes hurled the lightning-stroke, that the front of my grandsire, he who moves the tepid day with gleaming chariot, is crowned with palisade of pointed rays--what of this, when my noble name is prostrate under love? Have pity on those who have gone before, and, if me you will not spare, O spare my line! To my dowry belongs the Cretan land, the isle of Jove--let my whole court be slaves to my Hippolytus!

Bend, O cruel one, your spirit! My mother could pervert the bull; will you be fiercer than a savage beast? Spare me, by Venus I pray, who is chiefest with me now. So may you never love one who will spurn you; so may the agile goddess wait on you in the solitary glade to keep you safe, and the deep forest yield you wild beasts to slay; so may the Satyrs be your friends, and the mountain deities, the Pans, and may the Nymphs--though you are said to loathe womankind--give you the flowing water to relieve your parching thirst!

I mingle with these prayers my tears as well. The words of her who prays, you are reading; her tears, imagine you behold!<sup>13</sup>

And so the letter ends.

I do not want to imply that all Ovidian epistles are unvaryingly exclamatory in the manner above. It would be

foolish to do so simply because Ovid's heroines take part in different dramas and write for different reasons, as we have seen. But the quotation is useful because Phaedra's voice is fairly representative in its intensity, and it seems distinctive. We might note, for instance, Phaedra's allusions to her blighted ancestry (her mother, Pasiphae, conceived the Minotaur), her feeling that perhaps her uncontrollable and guilty love for Hippolytus is due somehow to the tragic workings of fate, her mixed pride and grief now "prostrate under love," and the tangle of conflicting emotions -- sexual passion foremost, but with ample evidence of abject sorrow and entrapped frenzy. Noteworthy also, I believe, is that Phaedra elevates her plea, making it heroic instead of lyric, by praying not only for herself but for her "line." Her love for Hippolytus is not merely a private affair. Its outcome will affect, she knows, her country and, she hopes, the gods themselves.<sup>14</sup>

Distraction, tears, wretchedness, agony, and fear -- all seem to stand out in the world of the heroic epistle; and for this reason, allowing for inevitable variations, I take the passage from Phaedra's letter as fairly representative of the heroic and intensely elegiac mood of the Ovidian epistle. But the quotation is useful in another way as well. In brief, it demonstrates the need to know the story, or the

close relationship between an heroic epistle and the story upon which it is based. And this, in turn, brings us to one final quality which heroic epistles share -- a common manner of proceeding to which familiarity with the larger story and the "moment" of the epistle give rise.

To comprehend the last passage quoted above, for example, a reader should know, in addition to what I have already mentioned, that Hippolytus, according to legend, was a skillful hunter marked for destruction by Aphrodite because of his lack of interest in and mockery of women. This information, in particular, makes Phaedra's "prayer" more meaningful. Clearly she knows the primary interests of her addressee. But we know that she wants a lover, not a hunter; and, therefore, her appeal to these interests is rhetorical. At the same time such information at this "moment" in the legend of Phaedra and Hippolytus makes her plea ironic in the grimmest sense of the word. By praying that the "agile goddess" (Venus -- Aphrodite) wait on Hippolytus in a "solitary glade," Phaedra is, in effect, already calling for her step-son's destruction.

The manner of proceeding in an Ovidian epistle is rooted in these two conditions. First, the audience's familiarity with the "story" precludes the need for an author to go into matters of detail; and it justifies a rhetorical approach by placing a premium not on facts or passions which must be proved to exist, but on the skill of the writer in terms of



the "quality of the manipulation."<sup>15</sup> The reader of an Ovidian epistle is invited to appreciate known passions and events that are, hopefully, made surprising as they are turned to account by an "artist" writing as good a letter as possible. And second, the "moment" of the Ovidian epistle adds immeasurably to the drama, principally to dramatic irony.

Now some earmarks of heroic epistolary verse -- an historical or mythical heroine, a dramatic abandonment, a conflict of emotions or states of feeling together with a conflict of values or loyalties, an interest in feminine psychology, and a mood of great elegaic intensity -- have already been illustrated with material drawn from separate Ovidian letters. To see these qualities combined and to see in detail the manner of proceeding described in general terms above, we must look at a complete letter. One example will have to serve, namely Dido to Aeneas.

Dido's letter characteristically moves through a series of remembered scenes and tirades in which Dido pleads her case and at the same time brings to light inconsistencies in her lover and herself.<sup>16</sup> Her story should be well-known to the audience. Founder and queen of Carthage, she fell in love with Aeneas, became his mistress, and, when after a year's stay he abandoned her in obedience to the command of Jupiter, she built a funeral pyre, mounted it, and killed herself with Aeneas' sword. The climatic "moment" of the

epistle, therefore, is shortly before Aeneas' departure and Dido's death. Hanging over the letter is the bleak atmosphere of final destruction. And rhetorically, Dido's epistle is her attempt to persuade Aeneas not to leave. Beginning with a tirade about broken pledges and faithlessness, Dido depends on Aeneas' love of his family by noting that "little Ascanius" deserves more than an uncertain future on a stormy sea, and she appeals to Aeneas' sense of honor by hinting that she may soon be a mother ("part of your being lies hidden in myself"). She argues that Aeneas' eagerness for glory in battle and his desire for peace (one of her addressee's inconsistencies) may be satisfied in Carthage as well as in distant unknown lands; and she agrees not to press her demands for marriage ("If you shame to have me your wife, let me not be called bride, but hostess; so she be yours, Dido will endure to be what you will."). She plays for time by saying that when the weather is more propitious she will not allow Aeneas to stay in Carthage; she questions the sense of obeying the guidance of a god who has thus far only tossed Aeneas around in the midst of "unfriendly winds" and "surging seas." And finally she pictures herself, her tears staining the drawn steel of Aeneas' sword, and she composes her own epitaph: "From Aeneas came the cause of her death, and from him the blade; from the hand of Dido herself came the stroke by which she fell."<sup>17</sup> In brief, the larger outlines of the letter suggest that Dido knows her man well and is wonderfully adept at coming up with reasons why Aeneas should not leave.

But the letter has another dimension that makes it truly Cvidian. Underlying Dido's sense that she has been unjustly abandoned and sinned against is her dark and obsessive knowledge that she is caught in a web of her own sins. And it is in this tangle of conflicting emotions -- hate, love, vengeance, and guilt -- that the heart of the epistle lies. The scenes she recalls, for example, serve primarily to remind her of her own faithlessness to her murdered husband, Sychaeus.<sup>18</sup> Her recollection of that "dreadful day" when a sudden downpour drove her and Aeneas to shelter in a "lofty grot" raises in her mind the spectre of "the penalty due Sychaeus." She views both Aeneas and herself as tossed about by adversity ("with God's will adverse I have begun the words you read"). And through the very things of which she accuses Aeneas, she refers indirectly to herself. With one hand she calls attention to Aeneas' falseness, broken pledges, faithlessness, ingratitude, and perjury; and with the other she points to her own misdeeds. "Burn me," she says, "I deserve it! The punishment will be less than befits my fault.... Exact the penalty of me, O purity undone! -- the penalty due Sychaeus."<sup>19</sup> Her thinking is a confused tangle of contradictions. She is afraid that Aeneas will perish at sea, but at the same time she is afraid that he will survive to pursue another "Dido." She wants him to live because she loves him, but she also wants him to live so that he will suffer when he learns of her death. She admits her

guilt in having violated her pledge to her murdered husband, but at the same time she pleads extenuating circumstances.

He was worthy who caused my fall; he draws  
from my sin its hatefulness. That his mother  
was divine and his aged father the burden of a  
loyal son gave hope he would remain my faithful  
husband. If 'twas my fate to err, my error  
had honourable cause; so only he keep faith,  
I shall have no reason for regret.<sup>20</sup>

And thus, alternately condemning and excusing herself as well as Aeneas, Dido moves inexorably toward suicide.

A letter demonstrating Ovid's interest in a highly-wrought emotional state, Dido to Aeneas is, I believe, a representative heroic epistle. Noteworthy, of course, is the conflict of values and emotions in which Dido is trapped -- the struggle between her sense of loyalty to her dead husband and her over-whelming passion for Aeneas, the mixture of love and hate, the confused desires for vengeance and for the safety of her lover. Also Dido is genuinely heroic, well aware of her illustrious though somewhat tainted past, and not above mentioning that she has had "a thousand suitors." And we have, finally, a letter demonstrating Ovid's manner of proceeding. The argumentative base of the epistle, Dido's several appeals to Aeneas' known love of his family, his reputed loyalty, his heroic nature; Dido's arrangement of the appeals, passing from outright accusations to asking "for a little time...to learn the strength to endure my sorrows bravely"; the mixture of tirades and remembered scenes -- all contribute to the "quality of the manipulation." Also contributing to this quality is the mixture of apostrophes,

exclamations, rhetorical questions, impassioned imperatives, antithetical plays on single words, and Ovid's "least amiable quality," a tendency to go on and on. With a sort of heroic abandon Dido frantically calls to the goddess of love (Aeneas' mother) using the imagery of warfare:

Spare, O Venus, the bride of thy son; lay hold  
of thy hard-hearted brother, O brother Love,  
and make him to serve in thy camp.<sup>21</sup>

Elsewhere accusing Aeneas, she "goes on," providing her letter with an appropriately stormy background:

Of rocks and mountains were you begotten, and  
of the oak sprung from the lofty cliff, of  
savage wild beasts, or of the sea -- such a  
one as even now you look upon, tossed by the  
winds, on which you are none the less making ready  
to sail, despite the threatening floods.  
Whither are you flying? The tempest rises to  
stay you. Let the tempest be my grace! Look  
you, how Eurus tosses the rolling waters!  
What I had preferred to owe to you, let me  
owe to the stormy blasts; wind and wave are  
juster than your heart.<sup>22</sup>

And we have such statements as the following:

Undone myself, I fear lest I be the undoing  
of him who is my undoing, lest I bring harm  
to him who brings harm to me, lest my enemy  
be wrecked at sea and drink the waters of the  
deep.

\*\*\*\*\*

I am all ablaze with love, like torches of  
wax tipped with sulphur, like pious incense  
placed on smoking altar-fires.<sup>23</sup>

The last, I believe, illustrates Ovid at his best, where the idiom is compact and the sharpness of the conflict abruptly clear. The grim irony of a self-destructive passion that Dido compares to "pious incense," the yoking of blazing love

and altar fires (which bring to mind the untended shrine of Sychaeus), and the foreshadowing of Dido's own funeral pyre -- all are very much to the point.

These then are, I believe, earmarks of the heroic epistle: a letter in verse from an historical or mythical heroine who is saddened by the absence of a loved one and who writes about the universal theme of love in straits; a heroine who commonly burns with passion and suffers because of conflicting emotions and values; a mood of great elegiac intensity commonly embodied in a world of grand concerns and psychological turmoil; an emphasis on the rhetorical manipulation of facts and emotions which the author assumes are well-known to his audience; a climactic "moment" in a story (often immediately preceded by abandonment and followed by death); the interspersing of tirades and remembered scenes; and an animated style that is most often rhetorical in the specific sense of using language to persuade. It now remains to be seen what variations of this kind of poetry appeared in England between 1660 and 1758.<sup>24</sup>

## ii

If heroic letters in verse differ from complimentary and familiar epistles in constituting a more definable genre, they differ also with respect to the manner of their appearance in English poetry written between 1660 and 1758. In the case of Horatian or familiar letters in verse (as well as

complimentary epistles) several authors -- Cotton, Dryden, Prior, Gay, Pope, and Lyttelton, for example -- wrote more than one poem apiece in this "way." And in the discussion of these two kinds of epistles a division of the years 1660-1756 into three separate periods seemed useful in establishing trends concerning the popularity of the "kind" and in treating a large number of poems. With heroic epistles, however, a similar division seems unnecessary. At least I have not seen a great many Ovidian epistles, and I know of very few poets who wrote more than one original poem of this kind. Therefore, I will consider the entire period with a few examples from each of three major varieties of heroic epistolary verse, trace the "Ovidian vogue" (such as it was), and conclude with a section on the acknowledged masterpiece -- Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard."

The first literary event of relevant significance was the translation of the Heroides in 1680 by Dryden and several other Restoration writers, among whom were Lord Mulgrave, who collaborated with Dryden in translating Helen to Paris; Aphra Behn, who contributed a loose paraphrase of Denone to Paris; Nahum Tate, who translated three epistles (more than any other contributor); Samuel Butler (Cydippe to Acontius); Thomas Otway (Phaedra to Hippolytus); and Thomas Rymer (Penelope to Ulysses).<sup>25</sup> As Dryden says in his preface, the Heroides were then "generally granted to be the most perfect pieces of Ovid," Ovid had a

"generality of...readers"; and although the translation was variously received because of its indifferent quality, it appears to have been popular on the market. Nine subsequent editions (with some occasional additions) appeared in 1681, 1683, 1688, 1693, 1701, 1705, 1712, 1716, and 1720; and thereafter this translation of the Heroides was issued with the Amores in 1725, 1729, 1736, 1748, and 1761.<sup>26</sup>

The translation by Dryden et al. brings up a number of points. First, the editions are clearly concentrated between 1680 and 1730, suggesting that Ovid was most popular during these years. Second, the fact that several writers contributed implies that although Ovid had "a generality of... readers," those who knew his Heroides felt that despite his attempts to vary his epistles there was in them a certain repetitiveness of subject matter. In his preface Dryden says, "There seems to be no great variety in the particular subjects which [Ovid] has chosen; most of the Epistles being written from ladies, who were forsaken by their lovers," adding later that perhaps a translation "by divers hands" will add "variety in the English which the subject denied to the author of the Latin."<sup>27</sup> And third we have the epistles themselves and the contemporary reaction to them.

Of the epistles themselves, the best that I can say is that they follow the genre dictated by the original and that among the letters I have seen from this collection some are much more successful than others. Dryden's two contributions



(Canace to Macareus and Dido to Aeneas) are noteworthy as examples of the way in which the translator has in places captured the melodramatic flavor of the originals and the fullness of the complaints, while at the same time eliminating some of the wordiness, softening some of the "crudity," and in general, substituting a more refined choice of words.<sup>28</sup>

In Dido to Aeneas, for example, the opening lines,

Sic ubi fata vocant, udis abiectus in herbis  
ad vada Maeandri concinit albus olor.

Thus, at the summons of fate, casting himself down  
amid the watery grasses by the shallows of Maeander,  
sings the white swan.

becomes in Dryden's paraphrase,

So, on Maeander's banks, when death is nigh,  
The mournful Swan sings her own Elegie.<sup>29</sup>

And a more extended passage,

Uror, ut inducto ceratae sulphure taedae,  
ut pia fumosis addita tura focis.  
Aeneas oculis semper vigilantis inhaeret;  
Aenean animo noxque diesque refert.  
ille quidem male gratus et ad mea munera surdus,  
et quo, si non sim stulta, carere velim;  
non tamen Aenean, quamvis male cogitat, odi,  
sed queror infidum questaque peius amo.  
parce, Venus, nurui, durumque amplectere fratrem,  
frater Amor, castris militet ille tuis!  
aut ego, quem coepi--neque enim dedignor--amare,  
materiam curae praebat ille meae!

I am all ablaze with love, like torches of  
wax tipped with sulphur, like pious incense placed  
on smoking altar-fires. Aeneas my eyes cling to  
through all my waking hours; Aeneas is in my  
heart through the night and through the day. 'Tis  
true he is an ingrate, and unresponsive to my  
kindnesses, and were I not fond I should be  
willing to have him go; yet, however ill his  
thought of me, I hate him not, but only complain  
of his faithlessness, and when I have complained  
I do but love more madly still. Spare, O Venus,

the bride of thy son; lay hold of thy hard-  
hearted brother, O brother Love, and make him  
to serve in thy camp! Or make him to whom I  
have let my love go forth--I first, and with  
never shame for it--yield me himself, the  
object of my care!

becomes in Dryden's version,

For, oh, I burn, like fires with incense bright;  
Not holy Tapers flame with purer light:  
Aeneas is my thoughts perpetual Theme:  
Their daily longing, and their nightly dream.  
Yet he ungrateful and obdurate still:  
Fool that I am to place my heart so ill!  
My self I cannot to my self restore:  
Still I complain, and still I love him more.  
Have pity, Cupid, on my bleeding heart;  
And pierce thy Brothers with an equal dart.<sup>30</sup>

Here we see that Dryden has eliminated the conceit about  
"clinging eyes," retained and tightened the antithesis  
("Their daily longing, and their nightly dream"), used the  
Latinate "obdurate" for Ovid's ad mea munera surdus,  
substituted a plea to Cupid for Dido's original plea to both  
Venus and "brother love" (Cupid), changed the unfeminine  
reference to warfare (castris militet ille tuis) to a more  
decorous and familiar "dart," and, most important, eliminated  
altogether Dido's apparent lack of shame in having yielded  
to Aeneas. In brief, Dryden seems to have tried with success  
to soften most of Ovid's weaknesses (his tendency to be "witty  
out of season," his penchant for "continually varying the  
same sense an hundred ways"), to imitate Ovid's "tenderly  
passionate and courtly" style, and to make the epistles as  
palatable as possible for those matrons who, as Dryden said  
in his preface, could read the epistles as Ovid intended  
"without a blush."<sup>31</sup>

Still, Dryden did not always succeed, nor did some of the other translators whose work I have seen.<sup>32</sup> For instance, in Canace to Macareus he seems somewhat too conscious of the fact that he is talking about the god of the winds when, in the description of a crucial discovery, he expands Ovid's

eripit infantem mentitaque sacra revelat  
 Aeolus; insana regia voce sonat.

Aeolus catches up the child and reveals the pretended sacrifice; the whole palace resounds with his maddened cries.

to

Swift as a Whirl-wind to the Nurse he flyes;  
 And deafs his stormy Subjects with his cries.  
 With one fierce puff, he blows the leaves away:  
 Expos'd the self-discover'd Infant lay.<sup>33</sup>

The "fierce puff" is simply ludicrous.<sup>34</sup> Also as an example we have the least successful venture of Aphra Behn. Her Cenone has almost nothing in common with the original. In place of a proud heroine, who begins her letter with a taunt, Mrs. Behn substitutes a rural maiden who describes herself as a "harmless Neighbouring Cotager [sic]," "soft and young as April Flowers." The paraphrase is also loaded with wholly additional material about Cenone's being wooed by "all the Village Herdsmen," or about her revisiting places borrowed from Sappho,

Where the dear Grass, still sacred, does retain  
 The print, where thee and I so oft have lain.<sup>35</sup>

And unfortunately the poem seems to retain only those parts of Ovid that irked contemporary critics -- elaborate conceits (wit out of season). Thus we see in the paraphrase such

lines as

Each Branch [sic] my Name yet bears, carv'd out by thee,  
Paris, and his Canone fill each Tree;  
 And as they grow, the Letters larger spread,  
 Grow still a witness of my Wrongs when dead!

and

Ah must we part, I cry'd! that killing word  
No farther Language cou'd to Grief afford.  
 Trembling, I fell upon thy panting Breast,  
 Which was with equal Love, and Grief oppress'd,  
 Whilst sighs and looks, all dying spoke the rest.  
 About thy Neck my feeble Arms I cast,  
 Not Vines, nor Ivy circle Elms so fast.

in which the only similarity between the English and Latin versions lies in the carving that grows and the clinging vine.<sup>36</sup> In Mrs. Behn's hands, Canone's pathos elays. Moreover, Dryden was evidently a little nervous when he wrote in his preface that Canone to Paris was the only epistle translated "in Mr. Cowley's way of imitation," "that the author, who is of the fair sex, understood not Latin." And despite his statement that "if she does not, I am afraid she has given us occasion to be ashamed who do," the Epistles in 1681 and thereafter included a closer version done by "Mr. Cooper."<sup>37</sup>

The critical reaction to Dryden's translation was not immediately widespread, but what little that was said suggests agreement as to its general quality, with opinion varying on the degree to which the individual poems succeeded.

John Sheffield, the Earl of Mulgrave, may have had the translation in mind (or perhaps his part in it) when he wrote "An Essay upon Poetry" (1682).

Next, Elegie, of sweet but solemn voice,  
 And of a Subject grave, exacts the choice,  
 The Praise of Beauty, Valour, Wit contains,  
 And there too oft despairing Love complains;  
 In vain, alas, for who by Wit is moved?  
 That Phoenix-she deserves to be beloved;  
 But Noisy Nonsense, and such Fops as vex  
 Rankind, take most with that fantastick Sex:  
 This to the praise of those who better knew,  
 The many raise the value of the few.  
 But here, as I too oft, alas, have tryed,  
 Women have drawn my wandering thoughts aside.  
 Their greatest fault, who in this kind have writ,  
 Is neither want of words, nor dearth of wit;  
 But though this Muse harmonious numbers yield,  
 And every Couplet be with fancy fill'd,  
 If yet a just coherence be not made  
 Between each thought, and the whole model layd  
 So right that every step may higher rise,  
 As in a Ladder, till it reach the Skies;  
 Trifles like these perhaps of late have past,  
 And may be lik'd awhile, but never last....<sup>38</sup>

The lines "This to the praise of those who better knew, /  
 The many raise the value of the few" seem ironically to  
 support Dryden's strategy (as a last resort) involving  
 several collaborators in the translation of the Epistles,  
 one "try" in the Ovidian "way" seems to have satisfied the  
 Earl of Mulgrave ("here, ...I too oft, alas, have tryed"),  
 and the last two lines speak for themselves. Three years  
 later in his "Satyr on the modern Translators" (1685),  
 Prior used the translation as a basis for his reply to  
 Dryden's claim that the clergy "are commonly the first  
 corrupters of eloquence, and the last reformed from vicious  
 oratory."<sup>39</sup> Of the work as a whole Prior suggests that it

might "in good manners" have been left to those who understood Latin, he charges the translators in general with corrupting "the Stream" by burlesquing "what nobler Muses better write," and for the individual authors he has nothing but contempt.

Now why should we poor Ovid yet pursue,  
And make his very Book an Exile too,  
In words more barbarous than the place he knew?<sup>40</sup>

In 1703 John Oldmixon "pilloried" Rymer's version of Penelope to Ulysses, noting particularly the use of such words as "Santer'd," "napp'd," "dowdy," "Cupboard," and "Skipper" and, in general, the "Indecencies and Absurdities" of "Authors, who have written in this kind."<sup>41</sup> In a letter to William Pattison, Walter Harte mentioned several of the translated Epistles which he thought "capable of many Amendments," and he said that "Nothing can be more stiff and prosaic than the modern Version," that "they have nothing Pathetical....

'Tis the very Soul of all [Ovid's] Epistles, nor can a Translator be supposed to be ignorant of so essential a Beauty."<sup>42</sup> And much later (January 1759) in a review of Stephen Barrett's translation of Ovid's Epistles, Oliver Goldsmith wrote of Dryden's earlier version, "This eleemosynary translation...was extremely unequal, frequently unjust to the poet's meaning, almost always so to his fame."<sup>43</sup> In brief, the critical reaction seems to have been almost completely negative, not it may be noted to Ovid, but to the quality of the English version.

There were, however, some positive results, one of which deserves mention here -- namely Pope's translation of

Sappho to Phaon. Added to Ovid's Epistles ...Translated by Several Hands in 1712 principally because Sir Carr Scrope's earlier version was incomplete, Pope's Sappho [sic] was regarded by Walter Harte as the one epistle "that no Man living can exceed" and the version from which "I would draw my Rules."<sup>44</sup> Henry Cromwell, Pope's friend, also seems to have approved because in the margin of the extant manuscript he wrote exclamations like Fulchrè, Gené, Fulcherrimè, bellissimè, Fulchrum epiphonema et rectum and only occasionally haud liquet ("this is obscure") or Scroop melius hic (i.e. Scroop does better here).<sup>45</sup>

Pope's attempt to capture the sense and spirit of his author is perhaps most clear in his reproduction of "turns," or "beautiful repetitions," considered one of Ovid's most pleasing "sins."<sup>46</sup> Sometimes Pope follows Ovid closely, "as in his translation of et semper causa est, cur ego semper amem by 'Still is there cause for Sappho still to love.'<sup>47</sup> But more often Pope's "turns" are more elaborate than those of the original. Sappho's inscription,

grata lyram posui tibi, Phoebæ, poetrix Sappho:  
convenit illa mihi, convenit illa tibi.

Sappho the singer, O Phoebus, hath gratefully  
brought a zither: token well suited to me,  
token well suited to thee.

becomes

"Here She who sung, to Him that did inspire,  
"Sappho to Phoebus consecrates her Lyre,  
"What suits with Sappho, Phoebus, suits with thee;  
"The Gift, the Giver, and the God agree."<sup>48</sup>

And Sappho's warning to the Sicilian women, quae dicit vobis, dixerat ante mihi, becomes in translation,

Nor be with all those tempting Words abus'd,  
Those tempting Words were all to Sapfo us'd.<sup>49</sup>

In keeping with paraphrase, or translation with latitude, Pope also does not follow his author exactly. He omits certain parts of the original, like the passage about Sappho's pirate brother (lines 65-66); he abridges Ovid's enumeration of Sappho's "guilty loves" (lines 15-19) and substitutes a "note of solitary melancholy which has no precedent in either Ovid or Scrope."<sup>50</sup> He softens realistic passages, principally the lines in which Sappho frankly memorializes many afternoons of love (lines 123-134). And occasionally he heightens the dramatic effect of a passage with material altogether his own. Compare the following passage, for example, with the original.

But when with Day the sweet Delusions fly,  
And all things wake to Life and Joy, but I,  
As if once more forsaken, I complain,  
And close my Eyes, to dream of you again.  
Then frantick rise, and like some Fury rove  
Thro' lonely Plains, and thro' the silent Grove,  
And if the silent Grove, and lonely Plains  
That know my Pleasures, cou'd relieve my Pains.  
I view the Grotto, once the Scene of Love,  
The Rocks around, the hanging Roofs above,  
That charm'd me more, with Native Moss o'ergrown,  
Than Phrygian Marble or the Parian Stone.  
I find the Shades that veil'd our Joys before,  
But, Phaon gone, those Shades delight no more.

\*\*\*\*\*

At cum se Titan ostendit et omnia secum,  
tam cito me somnos destituisse queror;  
antra nemusque peto, tamquam nemus atraque prosint--  
conscia deliciis illa fuere meis.  
illuc mentis inops, ut quam furialis Enyo  
attigit, in collo crine iacente feror.



antra vident oculi scabro pendentia tofo,  
 quas mihi Mygdonii marmoris instar erant;  
 invenio silvam, quas saepe cubilia nobis  
 praebuit et multa texit opaca coma--  
 sed non invenio dominum silvaeque meumque.  
 vile solum locus est; dos erat ille loci.

But when Titan shows his face and lights up all the earth, I complain that sleep has deserted me so soon; I make for the grots and the wood, as if the wood and the grots could aid me--those haunts were in the secret of my joys. Thither in frenzied mood I course, like one whom the maddening Enyo has touched, with hair flying loose about my neck. My eyes behold the grots, hanging with rugged rock--grots that to me were like Mygdonian marble; I find the forest out which oft afforded us a couch to lie upon, and covered us with thick shade from many leaves--but I find not the lord both of the forest and myself. The place is but cheap ground; he was the dower that made it rich.<sup>51</sup>

Here Pope adds Sappho's mention of dreaming "again"; he retains the "turn" (antra nemusque peto, tamquam nemus antraque prosint) but changes the order of the thought somewhat by writing "Then frantick rise, and like some Fury rove" in place of Ovid's expanded reference to Enyo. He substitutes the equally famous Phrygian marbles for the Mygdonian of the original; and he adds some mossy rocks that are not in the Latin version.

But perhaps Pope is most Ovidian in the final lines of his translation,

O launch thy Bark, nor fear the watry Plain,  
Venus for thee shall smooth her native Main.  
 O launch thy Bark, secure of prosp'rous Gales,  
Cupid for thee shall spread the swelling Sails.  
 If you will fly--(yet ah! what Cause can be,  
 Too cruel Youth, that you shou'd fly from me?)  
 If not from Phaon I must hope for Ease,  
 Ah let me seek it from the raging Seas:  
 To raging Seas unpity'd I'll remove,  
 And either cease to live, or cease to love!<sup>52</sup>

in which there is ample evidence of repetition ("O launch thy Bark...O launch thy Bark"; "fly...fly"), exclamations, and parentheses -- all of which are earmarks of Ovid's style. And lastly we see further evidence of Pope's inventing appropriate material to heighten the dramatic effect. "Raging seas...raging seas" and the final antithetical turn are his own. In brief, if it is true, as Reuben Brower says, that Pope could not "handle directly and warmly the physical facts of love," it is also true, I believe, that Harte's opinion of the poem as the one ~~from~~ which translators should draw their rules was well justified in the eighteenth century. Pope's Sappho is not a poem to which many people would turn eagerly, but beside the other translations I have seen it is eminently readable.<sup>53</sup>

### iii

In addition to the translations of Ovid's heroic epistles, original poems more or less indebted to the Heroides also appeared in England between 1660 and 1758. Unlike the translations, however, poems of this sort are few in number and seem not to have been so popular as other modes of epistolary verse. At least I have not seen very many; and others referred to cursorily in a number of sources suggest that the Ovidian epistolary way had few followers. One poem alone, Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard," was widely noticed, admired, and, as we shall see, "imitated" or answered; but of the others, in all their variety, almost nothing was said.

Included among original epistles of this sort, two lesser varieties deserve mention here because they are in one way or another related to the heroic epistolary way. First are the burlesque letters, most of which appeared before 1700. Ovidius Exulans by "Naso Scarronnomius" was published in 1673.<sup>54</sup> In 1680 Alexander Radcliffe's Ovid Travestie appeared for the first time and seems to have attracted some attention. It was issued again in 1681, 1696 ("Enlarged with Ten Epistles never before printed"), 1697, and 1705.<sup>55</sup> And in the same year, 1680, in response to Dryden's translation, we have The Wits Paraphras'd: or, Paraphrase upon Paraphrase. In a Burlesque on the Several late Translations of Ovid's Epistles, the author of which Radcliffe denounced as having "no other authority for his Paraphrase (as he calls it) then [sic] the Translation."<sup>56</sup> In 1678 Samuel Butler ended Part III of Hudibras with a pair of mock-heroic letters, "An Heroical Epistle of Hudibras to his Lady" and "The Lady's Answer to the Knight." And in 1727, prefixed to the second edition of Swift's Gulliver's Travels, appeared Pope's "Mary Gulliver to Captain Lemuel Gulliver."<sup>57</sup>

Of these last three, Pope's poem is incomparably the funniest, and it is the only mock-epistle I have seen that depends on the heroic genre. "An Heroical Epistle of Hudibras to his Lady" is little more than a satirical and solepsistic self-defense. Arguing that a violation of an oath is customary among all "Great and noble" persons (he

had earlier agreed to scourge himself in return for being released from prison by the lady), Hudibras characteristically defends lying, foul play, and injustice. For her part the "Lady" reminds Hudibras of his ignoble defeat, argues that men are only interested in wealth ("Diamonds," "Rubies," "Pearls," and "Guineys"), and, in answer to Hudibras' claim that men are naturally superior to women, **obliterates** her addressee by asserting the several ways in which women exercise control over men. Neither of these poems depends on the Ovidian genre.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, Pope clearly has Ovid and his own heroic epistles in mind. Much in the manner of serious letters he includes an "Argument" after the title.

The Captain, some Time after his Return, being retired to Mr. Sympson's in the Country, Mrs. Gulliver, apprehending from his late Behaviour some Estrangement of his Affections, writes him the following expostulating, soothing, and tenderly-complaining Epistle.<sup>59</sup>

And thereafter follow a series of mock-Ovidian tirades and remembered scenes expressing Mrs. Gulliver's anguish over the fact that her husband seems to prefer the "Sorrel Mare."

Like Eloisa and Sappho she runs distracted.

My Bed, (the Scene of all our former Joys,  
Witness two lovely Girls, two lovely Boys)  
Alone I press; in Dreams I call my Dear,  
I stretch my Hand, no Gulliver is there!  
I wake, I rise, and shiv'ring with the Frost,  
Search all the House; my Gulliver is lost!  
Forth in the Street I rush with frantick Cries:  
The Windows open; all the Neighbours rise:  
Where sleeps my Gulliver? O tell me where?  
The Neighbours answer, With the Sorrel Mare.<sup>60</sup>

Like many Ovidian heroines she argues, pleads, accuses, and promises in an attempt to persuade her husband to return.

There's Captain Fennel, absent half his Life,  
Comes back, and is the kinder to his Wife.  
Yet Fennell's [sic] Wife is brown, compar'd to me;  
And Mistress Biddel sure is Fifty three.

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Others bring Goods and Treasure to their Houses,  
Something to deck their pretty Babes and Spouses;  
My only Token was a Cup like Horn,  
That's made of nothing but a Lady's Corn.

\*\*\*\*\*

O teach me, Dear, new Words to speak my Flame;  
Teach me to woo thee by thy best-lov'd Name!  
Whether the Style of Grildric please thee most,  
So call'd on Grobdrinag's stupendous Coast,...  
May, wou'd kind Jove my Organs so dispose,  
To hymn harmonious Houyhnhnm thro' the Nose,  
I'd call thee Houyhnhnm, that high sounding Name,  
Thy Children's Noses all should twang the same.<sup>61</sup>

And comically she calls attention to her own notorious character: "never Neighbour call'd me Slut!"

Pope also mixes the language of a serious heroic epistle with deliberately coarse diction: "sweet Discourse," "Litter," tremble," "folks," "Piteous," "ramm'd," "weep," "squawle," "gentle," "cramm'd," and "Flame." He mockingly imitates Ovid's stylistic mixture of commands, exclamations, questions, and "beautiful repetitions," as in the opening passage:

Welcome, thrice welcome to thy native Place!  
--What, touch me not? what, shun a Wife's Embrace?  
Have I for this thy tedious Absence born,  
And wak'd and wish'd whole Nights for they Return?  
In five long Years I took no second Spouse;  
What Redriff Wife so long hath kept her Vows?  
Your Eyes, your Nose, Inconstancy betray;

Your Nose you stop, your Eyes you turn away.  
 'Tis said, that thou shouldst cleave unto thy Wife;  
 One thou didst cleave, and I could cleave for Life.  
 Hear and relent! hark, how thy Children moan;  
 Be kind at least to these, they are thy own:  
 Behold, and count them all; secure to find  
 The honest Number that you left behind.  
 See how they pat thee with their pretty Paws:  
 Why start you? are they Snakes? or have they Claws?  
 Thy Christian Seed, our mutual Flesh and Bone;  
 Be kind at least to these, they are thy own.<sup>62</sup>

And lastly this "tenderly-complaining Epistle" is perhaps most humorous because of Mrs. Gulliver's anything but tender nature. Only she would make the word "cleave" look both ways. And in expressing the hope that her husband is "Endu'd with all the Virtuæ of a Horse," she shows herself finally for what she is -- a Yahoo.<sup>63</sup>

A second variety of minor heroic epistle written after 1660 includes letters associated with a modified Ovidian tradition established earlier by the "English Ovid," Michael Drayton, in England's Heroicall Epistles (1597), which contains pairs of letters from men and women famous in English history. Here we find poems which retain some Ovidian anxiety and grief stemming from a forced separation, the remembrance of past happiness, or the tenderness of a last meeting; but which replace Ovid's deserted legendary women with correspondents such as Edward IV and Jane Shore from the chronicles, substitute a letter and its reply as the unit for the more common single Ovidian complaint, and emphasize material more political and patriotic than that

in Ovid's letters. Queen Isabel, for instance, writes from France to her husband Richard II, deposed and imprisoned in Pomfret castle. She speaks of her grief, of difficulty in holding back her tears, and she sorrowfully wishes Richard a "happy rest."

Something there is that danger still doth show,  
 But what it is, that Heaven alone doth know:  
 Grief to itself most dreadful doth appear,  
 And never yet was sorrow void of fear;  
 But yet in death doth sorrow hope the best,  
 And, Richard, thus I wish thee happy rest.

but most of her letter is devoted to recounting the fall of her husband and the treachery of "Henry Bolingbrooke," with particular emphasis on Henry's illegitimate claim to the throne.<sup>64</sup> She talks not of love but of Bolingbrooke's banishment and return, of the Percy's sudden disloyalty. And Richard's reply is similar. Like his wife, he is desolate; Pomfret castle, as she had said, a cold and forbidding place.

They praise the summer that enjoy the South,  
 Pomfret is closed in the North's cold mouth;  
 There pleasant summer dwelleth all the year,  
 Frost-starved winter doth inhabit here:  
 A place wherein despair may fitly dwell,  
 Sorrow best suiting with a cloudy cell.

Like that of his wife, moreover, his major interest seems to be political. He talks of the reason why he remitted part of Bolingbrooke's banishment (his popularity with the people), and he admits that he was not suited to rule. To his wife's mention of Henry's illegitimate claim, he replies with comments based on his knowledge of Edward's heirs. And he dwells on the dishonor done to the throne.

His power degrades, his dreadful frown disgraceth,  
 He throws them down whom our advancement placeth;  
 As my disabled and unworthy hand  
 Never had power belonging to command.  
 He treads our sacred tables in the dust,  
 And proves our Acts of Parliament unjust;  
 As though he hated that it should be said  
 That such a law by Richard once was made:  
 Whilst I, deprest before his greatness, lie  
 Under the weight of hate and infamy.<sup>65</sup>

Now England's Heroicall Epistles was enormously popular during Drayton's lifetime, possibly because historical characters at a significant moment of their relationship suited the public taste or because historical lovers were more concrete and credible than those found in sonnet cycles.<sup>66</sup> Five separate editions appeared between 1597 and 1602, and it was reprinted twelve times. But for our purposes the more important works come after 1660; and of the few I have seen or read about, two deserve mention here.<sup>67</sup>

The first is John Oldmixon's Amores Britannici (1703), written supposedly "In Imitation of the Heroidum Epistulae of OVID" but with Drayton's Heroicall Epistles very much in mind. In fact, Oldmixon's epistles stand out as little more than full-fledged paraphrases of Drayton's work.<sup>68</sup> In his "Epistle Dedicatory to the Right Honourable, the Lord Viscount Say and Sele," Oldmixon admits that he "took the hint of the following Letters from Mr. Drayton"; but he minimizes his indebtedness, condemns Drayton's artistry, and suggests that he himself is a better "Imitator of Ovid." In particular he finds Drayton's language "obsolete, his Verses rude and unharmonious, his Thoughts often poor and vulgar, affected



and unnatural." He claims to have "banish'd those Sentiments, which as beautiful as they are in Ovid, would be dangerous to Manners" and to have avoided Ovid's lack of diversity. And he concludes that despite the little light to guide a man in this way of writing, "Mr. Drayton was not so happy in his attempt, to deter me from making another with the same Persons."<sup>69</sup> The result is a group of fifteen pairs of epistles (the first twelve based on Drayton's collection to which are added letters between Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Essex; Mary, Queen of Scots and the Duke of Norfolk; and Mr. Waller and the Countess of Carlisle) in which Oldmixon's major effort seems to have been to make "an Elizabethan text acceptable to a neoclassic audience."<sup>70</sup> And here, because of the terrible historical complexity, one brief example will have to serve -- "Epistle IV. Queen Isabel to the Lord Mortimer."<sup>71</sup>

Writing to Mortimer after he had escaped from the Tower and fled to France, Oldmixon's Isabel is, like Drayton's, most Ovidian when she describes her grief, her "weeping eyes," and her uncertainties about Mortimer's ~~saf~~ety. She is Ovidian also in her heroic conception of herself, in her fury over her husband's favorite Gaveston.

A Rival Minion, I no more will bear:  
No more the Daughter of a Mighty King,  
Stoop to the Fortune of a nameless Thing.<sup>72</sup>

But like her counterpart in England's Heroicall Epistles, she is primarily interested in politics and in the history of Edward II's base behaviour as king. Therefore, the longest

passages in the letter (as in Drayton's version) concern not lost love but Edward's struggle with Lancaster and Warwick, the Spencers who replaced Gaveston in the king's favor, and Isabel's hope that Mortimer will be able to avenge the defeat at Boroughbridge.<sup>73</sup> We have, in brief, a complex historical letter requiring extensive annotation, one that owes some of its spirit or its inception to Ovid, and one in which Oldmixon has done little more than "correct" his Elizabethan predecessor.

For example early in her letter, describing the morning after Mortimer's escape, Drayton's Isabel speaks as follows:

That morrow, when the blessed sun did rise  
 And shut the lids of all Heaven's lesser eyes,  
 Forth from my palace by a secret stair  
 I stole to Thames, as though to take the air;  
 And asked the gentle flood as it doth glide  
 If thou didst pass or perish by the tide?  
 If thou didst perish, I desire the stream  
 To lay thee softly on his silver team,  
 And bring thee to me to the quiet shore,  
 That with his tears thou mightst have some tears more.  
 Then suddenly doth rise a rougher gale,  
 With that methinks the troubled waves look pale,  
 And sighing with that little gust that blows,  
 With this remembrance seem to knit their brows.  
 Even as this sudden passion doth affright me,  
 The cheerful sun breaks from a cloud to light me;  
 Then doth the bottom evident appear,  
 As it would show me that thou wast not there:  
 Whenas the water flowing where I stand,  
 Doth seem to tell me thou art safe on land.<sup>74</sup>

And in the paraphrase Oldmixon's Isabel says,

Soon as the Sun display'd his Orient Beams,  
 I walkt, where none observ'd me, by the Thames.  
 My Thoughts on Mortimer were all employ'd,  
 This Stream, I cry'd, has sav'd him, or destroy'd.  
 Oft of the Chrystal [sic] Current I demand,  
 Or, is he Lost? or, has he reach'd the Land?  
 Say, for to thee, and to the faithless Wind,

The Lord of all my Wishes I resign'd.  
 Hast thou convey'd him on a gentle Wave,  
 To the wish'd Shoar? or, is thy Deep his Grave?  
 Tell me, Oh tell! for I impatient wait,  
 To Joy in his Escape, or share his Fate.  
 But sure, if thus my Mortimer had dy'd,  
 A rougher Gale wou'd swell the guilty Tide.  
 The Tempest in the furious Billows roar,  
 And the Winds drive him breathless to the Shoar.  
 The Winds so silent, and the quiet Stream,  
 Reproach my Weakness, and my Fears condemn.  
 The River Nymphs at my Confusion laugh,  
 And all things tell me, Mortimer is safe.<sup>75</sup>

The substance is essentially the same: both heroines remember a morning walk by the Thames and recollect their uncertainties about Mortimer's safety. But Oldmixon has clearly made several stylistic changes. Indecorous thoughts and the cluster of conceits (the melodramatic "secret stair," the familiar "as though to take the air," and the waves that look pale) he has eliminated. He has improved the syntax by ridding the lines of sheer wordiness ("As it would show me that thou wast not there"), including Drayton's persistent use of the expletive ("did rise," "doth glide," "didst pass"). He has tightened the meter and avoided the double rhyme ("affright me"/"light me"). He has "corrected" the language, raising it to a level more appropriate for a queen, principally by using Latinate words or "poetical" expressions such as "the Sun display'd his Orient Beams" and "the Chrystal Current." And he has attempted, I believe, a closer imitation of Ovid's style through a more pronounced use of apostrophe, questions, and exclamations.

Now I mention this only to exemplify one sort of heroic epistolary verse written after 1660. Oldmixon's "correct~~ions~~ions"

are perhaps interesting as a guide to eighteenth-century neoclassic tastes; but the important point here is that his Amores Britannici, as I have tried to illustrate, is almost completely indebted to Drayton and the modified Ovidian tradition of England's Heroicall Epistles with its correspondents drawn from English history of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, its pairs of letters that are less elegiac than Ovid's, and its political substance. We might say that Amores Britannici embodies a mode of heroic epistolary verse half-way between translation and originality.

A second poem of this sort that I have seen moves even further in the direction of originality principally because its author apparently had read not only Drayton and Ovid, but Pope. I refer specifically to James Cawthorne's "Lady Jane Grey [sic] to Lord Guilford Dudley. An Epistle. In the Manner of Ovid" (1753).<sup>76</sup> As the title suggests, Cawthorne had England's Heroicall Epistles in mind; but he is indebted to Drayton only because he bases his letter on an event in English history, with Jane Gray writing to Guilford Dudley after they both had been imprisoned by Queen Mary.<sup>77</sup> And what is striking about Cawthorne's epistle is not its similarity to Drayton's but its many differences. Drayton's Jane Gray, like his other heroines, is primarily concerned with the political implications of her imprisonment. Although she resembles an Ovidian heroine when she describes how her

"briny teares doe make my **incke** looke pale," she talks mostly about "Vile ambition," about herself and Guilford Dudley as the innocent victims of those who would have unrightfully seized the throne, about Mary's just claim as "Henries lawfull heire," and about the "wicked age" of "persecution" and "new tortures" that will surely begin with the reign of England's new queen. She is strong: she has no doubts about herself. And her faith in God is unshakeable. Almost preaching to Dudley, she writes,

Then draw thy forces all up to thy heart,  
The strongest fortresse of this earthly part,  
And on these three let thy assurance lye,  
On faith, repentance, and humilitie;  
By which, to heav'n ascending by degrees,  
Persist in prayer upon your bended knees:  
Whereon if you assuredly be stay'd,  
You need in perill not to be dismay'd,  
Which still shall keepe you, that you shall not fall,  
For any perill that can you appall:  
The key of heav'n thus with you, you shall beare,  
And grace you guiding, get you entrance there;  
And you of those celestiall joyes possesse,  
Which mortall tongue's unable to expresse.<sup>78</sup>

Cawthorne's Jane Grey, on the other hand, is not sure of herself; and for this reason she is more Ovidian (more querulous). Like Ovid's heroines she trembles with anguish and uncertainty. With one breath she would assure herself and Dudley of a heavenly afterlife.

Call up the scaffold in its dread parade,  
Bid the knell echo through the midnight shade;...  
Yet shall my soul, all-conscious of her God,  
Resign'd, and sainted for the blest abode,  
The last sad horrors of her exit eye,  
Without a tremour, and without a sigh.<sup>79</sup>

But with another she remembers herself as a woman and a wife, and the abundant sorrow of her "melancholy tale."

Ah, no--while Heav'n shall leave one pulse of life  
 I still am woman, and am still a wife;  
 My hov'ring soul, though rais'd to Heav'n by pray'r,  
 Still bends to Earth, and finds one sorrow there:  
 There, there, alas! the voice of Nature calls,  
 A nation trembles, and a husband falls.<sup>80</sup>

Thus we have not an entirely confident heroine, but one who, in Ovidian fashion, is caught up in an internal struggle between her nature as a passionate lover and her desire for the comfort that she might enjoy if she could transcend "all earth-born wishes," forget her great loss, and revitalize her Christian faith. Furthermore, Cawthorne's heroine is unlike Drayton's because she is almost apolitical. She talks not of blood lines, "Vile ambition," power, and just claims to the throne (which, by the way, would have particularly interested an Elizabethan audience around 1530), but of pleasures now gone, of "the sad, the solemn day / That gave a Dudley to the house of Grey," of her intense sorrow in view of Dudley's impending execution, and principally of the internal struggle that I have described. And lastly, Cawthorne's Jane Grey is unlike Drayton's because Eloisa intervenes.

In almost every respect Cawthorne imitates Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard." Jane Grey's struggle, the conflict between her erotic memories of an earthly lover and her desire to idealize her love for Dudley, parallels a similar conflict between "grace and nature, virtue and passion" found in Eloisa. Both heroines are torn between two selves -- one idealized and the other earthly. And both use

language in such a way as to underline the closeness of the conflict. For example, Jane Grey writes,

Alas! vain effort of misguided zeal!  
 What pow'r can force affliction not to feel?  
 What saint forbid this throbbing breast to glow,  
 This sigh to murmur, and this tear to flow?  
 Still honest Nature lives her anguish o'er,  
 Still the fond woman bleeds at every pore.  
 Ah! when my soul, all panting to aspire,  
 Each sense enraptur'd, and each wish on fire,  
 On all the wings of heav'n-born Virtue flies  
 To yon bright sunshine, yon unclouded skies;  
 Spite of the joys that heav'n and bliss impart,  
 A softer image heaves within my heart;  
 Impressions Nature in the springs of life  
 And calls the seraph back into the wife.

in which the rhyming of "zeal" and "feel," the close combination of "saint" and "throbbing breast" (or "seraph" -- "wife"; "soul" -- "panting"), and the mention of "honest Nature" and "heav'n-born Virtue" perform this function.<sup>81</sup> And in Eloisa we find,

Ah wretch! believ'd the spouse of God in vain,  
 Confess'd within the slave of love and man.  
 Assist me heav'n! but whence arose that pray'r?  
 Sprung it from piety, or from despair?  
 Ev'n here, where frozen chastity retires,  
 Love finds an altar for forbidden fires.  
 I ought to grieve, but cannot what I ought;  
 I mourn the lover, not lament the fault;  
 I view my crime, but kindle at the view,  
 Repent old pleasures, and solicit [sic] new:  
 Now turn'd to heav'n, I weep my past offence,  
 Now think of thee, and curse my innocence.  
 Of all affliction taught a lover yet,  
 'Tis sure the hardest science to forget!

in which words like "piety," "chastity," "altar," and "heav'n" combined with "forbidden fires," "lover," and "slave of love" serve the same purpose.<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore, Cawthorne specifically echoes Eloisa.

The opening passages are almost identical:

From these dark cells, in sable pomp array'd,  
Where Night's black horrors breathe a deeper shade,  
Where ev'ry hour some awful vision brings  
Of pale assassins, and the shrouds of kings,  
What comforts can a wretched wife afford  
The last sad moments of her dying lord?

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In these deep solitudes and awful cells,  
Where heav'nly-pensive, contemplation dwells,  
And ever-musing melancholy reigns;  
What means this tumult in a Vestal's veins?

Jane Grey's description of her wedding day is patently modeled after Eloisa's profession.

Hide it, ye pow'rs! the sad, the solemn day  
That gave a Dudley to the house of Grey:  
For, O! when to the altar's foot we came,  
And each fond eye confess'd the kindling flame;  
Just as the priest had join'd my hand to thine  
An awful tremor shook the hallow'd shrine,  
A sudden gloom the sacred walls array'd,  
And round the tapers threw an azure shade;  
The winds blew hollow with the voice of pain,  
Aerial echoes sigh'd through all the fane:  
'Twas God himself that, from th' empyreal sky,  
Look'd inauspicious on the nuptial tie,  
And pitying taught, as prophecies of woe,  
The shrines to tremble, and the wind to blow.

\*\*\*\*\*

Canst thou forget that sad, that solemn day,  
When victims at yon' altar's foot we lay?  
Canst thou forget what tears that moment fell,  
When, warm in youth, I bade the world farewell?  
As with cold lips I kiss'd the sacred veil,  
The shrines all trembled, and the lamps grew pale:  
Heav'n scarce believ'd the conquest it survey'd,  
And Saints with wonder heard the vows I made.<sup>83</sup>

And Cawthorne repeats Pope's use of a coda at the end of his poem.

In short, Cawthorne's "Lady Jane Grey to Lord Guilford Dudley" is almost completely in Pope's debt and only



peripherally related to the tradition of Drayton.<sup>84</sup> It is, I believe, a minor mode of heroic epistolary verse more Ovidian than what we find in Amores Britannici because of its conflict of values and decidedly elegiac tone. And it is especially useful at this point as a bridge between heroic epistles more or less indebted to Drayton and those written apart from the tradition he established.

## iv

Among the original heroic epistles of the Augustan age one thing that stands out is their variety. In brief, if it is true, as Geoffrey Tillotson says in his "Introduction" to Eloisa, that the form "was developed as a medium for original poetry," it is also true, I believe, that Augustan writers showed no single-minded desire to adhere to the strict Ovidian mould.<sup>84</sup> This tendency is true of the poems indebted to Drayton and the burlesques I have already mentioned. And it appears in other variations and adaptations like Anne Winchelsea's "Epistle from Alexander to Hephaestion in His Sickness," Lord Hervey's "Nonimia to Philocles," and David Crauford's Ovidius Britannicus (1703). Lady Winchelsea's poem involves persons famous in history, but it is not a love letter. Lord Hervey's Nonimia is a love letter "in the Manner of Ovid"; but it was "designed for Miss Sophia Howe, Maid of Honour, to the Honourable Anthony Lowther" and cannot therefore be said to concern historical persons.<sup>85</sup> And

Crauford's collection is for the most part based on entirely fictional situations.

The first six of his fourteen epistles pass between Hermes and Amestris, two English 'Persons of Quality' whose 'Amour' Crauford alleges to have discovered in 'a great many Rusty Papers, very difficult to be read and understood, in an old, dark Closet, that had not been opened for twenty Years before': no one in 1703, therefore, knew the story which follows in the prose form of a 52-page roman addressed letter-fashion 'To the Charming Irena'. In the same way, though without the suspicion of subterfuge, six of the eight other epistles were based on fictional situations: 'Timandra to Adrastus', 'Lysander to Calista', and so on--each needs its page of 'Argument'.<sup>86</sup>

At the same time, however, some writers did follow Ovid more closely; and thus we have a few "replies to Ovid" and versified letters based on contemporary prose that supplemented and encouraged the form. Among the works of Elijah Fenton, for example, we find "Phaon to Sappho," in which Phaon tells his part of the story. "Call me not cruel," he says,

but reproach my fate,  
And, listening while my woes I here relate,  
Let your soft bosom heave with tender sighs,  
Let melting sorrow languish in your eyes;  
Piteous deplore a wretch constrain'd to rove,  
Whose crime and punishment is slighted love;  
Fix'd for his guilt, to every coming age,  
A monument of Cytherea's rage.<sup>87</sup>

And thereafter follows an account of his wooing and deserting a "shepherdess," of his sea-faring and fishing for sixty years "on the Sigrian shore," and his Tithonus-like punishment. Magically restored to youth by Aphrodite, he soon finds

"All spring without, and winter all within," realizes that he "would, but cannot, love," describes himself as the "black child of Guilt, extreme Despair," and begs Sappho not to pity him but to plead for him at the court of Venus.

O, plead my cause! in that auspicious hour,  
Propitiate with thy vows the vengeful power.  
Nor cease thy suit, till with a smiling air  
She cries "I give my Phaon to thy prayer;  
And, from his crime absolv'd, with all his charms  
He long shall live, and die in Sappho's arms."  
Then swift, and gentle as her gentlest dove,  
I'll seek thy breast, and equal all thy love.<sup>88</sup>

We have the language of love ("melting sorrow," "soft compassion"), the Ovidian furies that howl within ("Pride, Envy, Rage, and Hate"), the remembered scenes and tirades, and the lover pleading for restoration; but the poem is at best a very minor one and seems to have been written primarily to create a rather fanciful tale that the ancients had failed to tell. In his "Advertisement" Fenton writes,

The ancients have left us little farther account of Phaon, than that he was an old mariner, whom Venus transformed into a very beautiful youth, whom Sappho, and several other Lesbian ladies, fell passionately in love with; and therefore I thought it might be pardonable to vary the circumstances of his story, and to add what I thought proper in the following epistle.<sup>89</sup>

Apparently more popular than "replies to Ovid" were versified letters based on contemporary prose. While English poets were, in a sense, varying Ovid's letters ten-thousand ways, for example, Roger L'Estrange translated the prose Lettres Portugaises (1669) as Five Love-Letters from a Nun to a Cavalier (1678), which became "popular and were soon furnished with additions and replies."<sup>90</sup> Seven Portuguese

Letters; being the second part to the Five Love-Letters from a Nun to a Cavalier appeared in 1693; and in 1694, Five Love-Letters written by a Cavalier (the Chevalier Del) in answer to the five Love-Letters written to him by a Nun. All three collections were reprinted in 1716, and approximately six metrical versions of these Portuoguese Letters were published between 1701 and 1731.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, Lord Hervey ("Sporus") wrote "Roxana to Usbeck" based on Montesquieu's Lettres Persanes and "Arisbe to Marius Junior."<sup>92</sup> And it is now well known that Pope based his Eloisa largely on John Hughes' prose translation of DuBois' Histoire des Amours et Infortunes D'Abelard et D'Eloise and Sussy-Rabutin's letters from Eloisa and Abelard, a translation first published in 1713 and thereafter many times.<sup>93</sup>

The mention of Pope brings me to a second point that stands out in connection with original epistles written during the Augustan age -- namely, that Eloisa to Abelard (1717) completely overshadows the other poems of this sort. After 1717, in particular, it almost seems as if no one could write an heroic epistle without referring directly to Eloisa, a fact already illustrated in Cawthorne's "Lady Jane Grey to Lord Guilford Dudley," patent in the replies to Eloisa which followed Pope's poem, and demonstrable in John Gilbert Cooper's "Theagenes to Sylvia" (1746). At least I have seen no original heroic epistles written after 1717 which are not in some way indebted to Pope.<sup>94</sup>

Among the replies we have as an example Cawthorne's "Abelard to Eloisia" (1747). Cloistered in his cell, Abelard speaks of himself as "This sad apostate from his God" and of his struggle now intensified by the receipt of Eloisa's letter (the parallel with Eloisa is obvious). "Remorse," he says, "had rous'd an aching sigh," but "In that kind hour thy fatal letter came...Heav'n itself shut on me while I read." He wavers between his desire to respond to Eloisa and his fear of God's justice, alternately envisioning renewed "joys" and "A wounded Saviour." And the first climax of the poem comes with Abelard's cry,

O save me, save me, ere the thunders roll,  
And hell's black caverns swallow up my soul.<sup>95</sup>

With an abrupt change of mood he then remembers his early devotion to learning and the loss of that interest when he met Eloisa. And this in turn leads to a series of scenes and visions highlighted by his increased awareness of his surroundings,

...these dark, cheerless, solitary caves,  
Death-breathing woods, and daily-opening graves,  
Misshapen rocks, wild images of woe,  
For ever howling to the deeps below...

but dominated by his erotic memories of Eloisa and painful visions of his emasculation. A second climax comes when Abelard, giving himself over to matters of the flesh, curses Eloisa's uncle.

Thou thought'st it dull barbarity to kill;...  
Sublimar furies taught thy soul to glow  
With all the savage mysteries of woe;  
Taught thy unfeeling poniard to destroy

The powers of Nature, and the source of joy;  
 To stretch me on the racks of vain desire,  
 Each passion throbbing, and each wish on fire;  
 Faded to enjoy, unable to be blest,  
 Fiends in my veins, and Hell within my breast.<sup>96</sup>

The last section of the poem begins with another abrupt change, Abelard remembering his soul and pleading for assistance as he speaks particularly to "Oblivion." He urges Eloisa to "learn to be an abbess in thy heart," reminds her of the mystic pleasures of "Devotion," wishes that he himself could catch such "transports," envisions a "pious friend" who may

...drop one tender, sympathizing tear,  
 Prepare the garland, and adorn the bier;  
 Our lifeless relics in one tomb enshrine,  
 And teach thy genial dust to mix with mine...

and ends with a promise of renewed faith and purity. Thus, like Eloisa, Abelard "quibbles with his conscience, is subject to nocturnal visions and illusions, and makes sudden jumps from religion to sensuality."<sup>97</sup> The general outlines of the poem show Cawthorne following Pope from the receipt of the letter to the final entombment. And finally, we see specific words borrowed from Pope. Expressions like "chill thee into stone," "embrowning glooms," and "Prophetic tremours" remind us of Eloisa's "I have not yet forgot my self to stone," or her talk of trembling shrines and a "browner horror on the woods." And Cawthorne's lines beginning "Then take me, take me" closely echo Eloisa, lines 285-294.

Then take me, take me, lock me in thy arms,  
 Spring to my lips, and give me all thy charms.  
 No--fly me, fly me, spread th' impatient sail,

Steal the lark's wing, and mount the swiftest gale;  
 Skim the vast ocean, freeze beneath the pole,  
 Renounce me, curse me, root me from thy soul.

\*\*\*\*\*

Take back that grace, those sorrows, and those tears,  
 Take back my fruitless penitence and pray'rs,  
 Snatch me, just mounting, from the blest abode,  
 Assist the Fiends and tear me from my God!  
 Ho, fly me, fly me! far as Pole from Pole;  
 Rise Alos between us! and whole oceans roll!..  
 Forget, renounce me, hate whate'er was mine.<sup>98</sup>

The dominance of Pope's Eloisa is also suggested by the fact that it is the only heroic epistle mentioned with any degree of frequency in the eighteenth century. Lady Hertford, as we have seen, had read and admired it. She referred to it as "well known."<sup>99</sup> Joseph Barton praised Pope for his choice of subject matter, regretted notably that this species of verse was not more frequently attempted, and added that "of all stories, ancient or modern, there is not perhaps a more proper one to furnish out an elegiac epistle, than that of Eloisa and Abelard."<sup>100</sup> James Delacour in his Abelard to Eloisa, In Answer to Mr. Pope's fine Piece (Dublin, 1730) said, "I think [Eloisa] even excels Mr. Prior's Henry to [sic] Emma, which did charm the finest Tastes Abroad and at Home."<sup>101</sup> In his Alma Prior praised Pope's Eloisa.

O Abelard, ill-fated Youth,  
 Thy Tale will justify this Truth:  
 But well I weest, thy cruel Wrong  
 Adorns a nobler Poet's Song.  
Dan Pope for thy Misfortune griev'd,  
 With kind Concern, and Skill has weav'd  
 A silken Web; and ne'er shall fade  
 Its Colors: gently has He laid  
 The Mantle o'er thy sad Distress:  
 And Venus shall the Texture bless.

He o'er the weeping Nun has drawn,  
 Such artful Folds of Sacred Lawn,  
 That Love with equal Grief and Pride,  
 Shall see the Crime, He strives to hide:  
 And softly drawing back the Veil,  
 The God shall to his Vot'ries tell  
 Each conscious Tear, each blushing Grace,  
 That deck'd Dear Eloisa's Face.<sup>102</sup>

In his Life of Pope, Johnson referred to Eloisa as "one of the most happy productions of human wit" and seems to have been particularly pleased by the religious content: "The mixture of religious hope and resignation gives an elevation and dignity to disappointed love, which images merely natural cannot bestow."<sup>103</sup> And Walter Harte considered the poem a model of pathos, saying "I never hear what Tully calls the dictum ardens in Poetry, but I tremble extremely, though at that instant I cannot give any exact Reason why I am pleased. All I mean, may be found in Eloisa to Abelard, the Fairy-Queen, and the most tender Tragedies."<sup>104</sup>

Furthermore we have William Mason's later statement that "Eloisa to Abelard is such a chef d'oeuvre, that nothing of the kind can be relished after it" and a comment from the Critical Review, XXXI (1771), which suggests that when Cawthorne wrote "Abelard to Eloisa," "the awful idea of Pope's excellence probably checked the native vigor of his mind, and depressed his genius while it excited his emulation."<sup>105</sup> These statements suggest a curious and interesting possibility. In short, while agreeing with the general and widespread approval of Eloisa, they imply that Pope's poem -- certainly the best of its kind -- rather effectively discouraged all but



the most intrepid imitators and perhaps helped to end rather than perpetuate the writing of heroic epistles.<sup>106</sup>

## v

Pope's Eloisa to Abelard might be approached in a number of different ways: as a poem indebted to John Hughes' translation, itself "un mélange disparate de l'original latin, de la traduction de Gussy, de la paraphrase et des inventions d'un écrivain de Hollande"; as a "romantic" poem illustrating the influence of Milton in the eighteenth century or the rise of graveyard poetry; or as a poem of some biographical interest concerning Pope's personal relationships with Lady Mary Wortley Montague and Martha Blount.<sup>107</sup> Here, however, without wishing to disparage any of these approaches or the information to which they might give rise, I am interested in other matters -- in the ways in which Eloisa fits the Ovidian mould, the additions or changes that Pope has made, and the epistolary qualities of the poem.

As I have already suggested, it is possible that Pope's Eloisa comes near the end of a tradition that began with Ovid's Heroides. In view of the evidence I have presented, however, it is perhaps more clear that with "Pope's poem, the heroic epistle is brought back into its strictest Ovidian definition."<sup>108</sup> In short, preceded by a variety of works (some more Ovidian than others), it involves historical persons, a woman forsaken by a man, and many of the earmarks

of the Ovidian "way." First, as a pre-condition, the story of Eloisa and Abelard would have been familiar to Pope's audience. Translations on the continent (in France and Holland), which Hughes refers to as "well known," and the popularity of Hughes' own translation attest to this fact.<sup>109</sup> Second, we have in Eloisa a genuine heroine -- not, like many of Ovid's women, a member of royalty; but an aristocrat, the niece of the canon of the cathedral at Paris, and, in Pope's words, one of the "most distinguish'd persons" of her age "in learning and beauty."<sup>110</sup> Like Ovid's heroines, Eloisa is well-aware of her place in the world; at times she shows her natural pride ("Should at my feet the world's great master fall, / Himself, his throne, his world, I'd scorn 'em all"). Still, she is not so proud as to be self-confident, and her awareness of her place in the world leads to continual reflection on the uncertainties and grief associated with that place.

Eloisa's plight being well-known suggests a third element in the Ovidian way -- namely that Eloisa speaks not only for herself but as a representative figure whose feelings have "public interest and power." We might say, to begin with, that if her story did not have such power it would not have survived. Also from a critical standpoint, we have the contemporary idea that Passion and Nature ("in the sense of what is fundamental, universal, and permanent in the human mind and heart") not only were but should be the distinguishing "Character of such Epistles."<sup>111</sup> But most important we have in the poem itself signs that Pope wanted Eloisa to be a

representative figure, whose suffering any woman under similar circumstances might feel in kind if not always in degree.<sup>112</sup> Exemplary here is Eloisa's occasional use of the third person or her tendency to refer to herself in more general terms as "a Vestal" or "the visionary maid" or "Love's victim." And we have an intermingling of the general and the particular, suggesting that Eloisa considers her state not unique but applicable to others. Note, for example, in the following passage how she begins with a general statement and then applies it to herself.

Ere such a soul regains its peaceful state,  
 How often must it love, how often hate!  
 How often hope, despair, resent, regret,  
 Conceal, disdain--do all things but forget.  
 But let heav'n seize it, all at once 'tis fir'd,  
 Not touch'd, but rapt; not waken'd, but inspir'd!  
 Oh come! oh teach me nature to subdue,  
 Renounce my love, my life, my self--and you.  
 Fill my fond heart with God alone, for he  
 Alone can rival, can succeed to thee.<sup>113</sup>

The lines above suggest a fourth earmark of the Ovidian way -- Eloisa's suffering embodied in a tangle of conflicting emotions and values. The sharpness of this conflict is implied here by opposition of "love" and "hate," "hope and "despair"; but more subtly these same lines embody the major conflict in the poem, Eloisa's "struggles of grace and nature, virtue and passion."<sup>114</sup> Immured in a convent, Eloisa is torn between her love for Abelard, rekindled by the chance reading of one of his letters, and her awareness of Christian morality. Professed a nun, she knows what she ought to do; but as a woman she cannot rid herself of passionate desires. Sometimes

this conflict is openly stated.

I ought to grieve, but cannot what I ought;  
I mourn the lover, not lament the fault;  
I view my crime, but kindle at the view,  
Repent old pleasures, and solicit new.<sup>115</sup>

We see it in the essentially Ovidian poetic design of the poem, in which scenes, values, and emotions are set off against one another. And finally we find it most subtly embedded in the language itself.

To be more specific, as Reuben Brower says, "the larger effects come from setting one scene or tirade against another, Eloisa 'taking a ride' down one emotion only to be betrayed into its opposite."<sup>116</sup> Note, for instance the progress of the following lines:

O happy state! when souls each other draw,  
When love is liberty, and nature, law:  
All then is full, possessing, and possest,  
No craving Void left aking in the breast:  
Ev'n thought meets thought ere from the lips it part,  
And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart.  
This sure is bliss (if bliss on earth there be)  
And once the lot of Abelard and me.

Alas how chang'd! what sudden horrors rise!  
A naked Lover bound and bleeding lies!  
Where, where was Eloise? her voice, her hand,  
Her ponyard, had oppos'd the dire command.  
Barbarian stay! that bloody stroke restrain;  
The crime was common, common be the pain.  
I can no more; by shame, by rage suppress,  
Let tears, and burning blushes speak the rest.

Canst thou forget that sad, that solemn day,  
When victims at yon' altar's foot we lay?  
Canst thou forget what tears that moment fell,  
When, warm in youth, I bade the world farewell?  
As with cold lips I kiss'd the sacred veil,  
The shrines all trembled, and the lamps grew pale:  
Heav'n scarce believ'd the conquest it survey'd,  
And Saints with wonder heard the vows I made.  
Yet then, to those dread altars as I drew,  
Not on the Cross my eyes were fix'd, but you;  
Not grace, or zeal, love only was my call,

And if I lose thy love, I lose my all.  
 Come! with thy looks, thy words, relieve my woe;  
 Those still at least are left thee to bestow.  
 Still on that breast enamour'd let me lie,  
 Still drink delicious poison from thy eye,  
 Pant on thy lip, and to thy heart be prest;  
 Give all thou canst--and let me dream the rest.  
 Ah no! instruct me other joys to prize,  
 With other beauties charm my partial eyes,  
 Full in my view set all the bright abode,  
 And make my soul quit Abelard for God.<sup>11</sup>

Eloisa begins with an assertion of freedom, stated in terms that suggest total harmony ("possessing, and possess"; "thought meets thought"; "each warm wish springs mutual from the heart"). This is followed abruptly by an opposite scene of turmoil, or imprisonment; of Abelard's victimization and Eloisa's expressed feelings of shame and rage. And then we have the basic conflict. Christian morality dictates that Eloisa should remember the day of her profession with some fear, which she does. But at the same time her memory of that day is associated with Abelard and her love for him. Thus in describing her profession, she is led primarily to thoughts of Abelard and lost-love (her profession she remembers as a kind of imprisonment), and eventually to a full physical capitulation followed abruptly by a sudden reawakening of her conscience. The description of her vows is at first tinged with the language of love: "we lay," "with cold lips I kiss'd the sacred **veil**," "the conquest." Then, having been betrayed, her passion becomes a flood, her shame (the outward sign of her Christian conscience) all but vanishes, and she talks of panting on Abelard's lip. And finally, having "taken a ride," she suddenly remembers her soul and her God.

The conflicts of the entire passage are numerous and pronounced. Eloisa is alternately assertive and fearful. Passions and virtue vie with one another for supremacy (virtue getting the worst of it, I think). Altars, trembling shrines, and a public ceremony are set off against "eyes," "lips," and "looks." The gathering speed of the lines that end with "Give all thou canst" is checked by the sudden slow "Ah no!" And the lines together illustrate, I believe, Pope's Ovidian design, the deliberate juxtaposition of scenes and tirades which embody opposed emotions and values. Moreover, Eloisa's similarity to an Ovidian heroine is emphasized by the allusion to Dido's illa dies in "that sad, that solemn day," and indirectly by the rhetorical questions, the repetitions, and the impassioned imperatives.<sup>118</sup>

But at the same time these lines introduce the ways in which Pope and Ovid differ, three of which stand out. The first and most obvious is Pope's choice of conflict: in Eloisa a religious conflict is added to the usual Ovidian ones.<sup>119</sup> As we have seen, Ovid's heroines struggle primarily with mixed feelings of guilt, jealousy, sexual passion, and injured pride; and they are aware of a moral code. Witness the case of Phaedra, for example, who knows that she should not pursue her step-son. Ovidian morality, however, seems to be strictly social and to be based on principles of human decency. Pope's epistle, on the other hand, while it contains abundant evidence of Eloisa's shame, guilt, and passion, involves a specifically religious issue -- Eloisa's profession and her

choice between "complete acquiescence in her vows, or death, the solution which she foresees at the end of the letter."<sup>120</sup> In short, the conflict turns not primarily on "pagan" principles of loyalty and faithfulness, but on the principle of Christian faith. I do not want to suggest that loyalty and faithfulness are un-Christian; further, Eloisa's religious feeling is highly ambiguous. But it does seem clear that the "Christian experience," ritualistic and external though it may be in Eloisa, sets Pope's poem apart from the Heroides. Even a typical Ovidian emotion like guilt works from a Christian point of view. Eloisa suffers not because she has betrayed a father or husband, but because she has betrayed God.

This difference leads to a second that is less clear, perhaps because it involves a matter of degree rather than kind. I refer to the relative emphasis on feminine psychology and specifically moral issues. As we have seen, Ovid's heroines write more often in an attempt to persuade their lovers to return or (in the case of Dido) not to leave. They argue persuasively, and in so doing often reveal inconsistencies in their character -- Dido's feeling that she has been sinned against revealing her own sense of guilt, for example. Thus we might say that Ovid was interested in feminine psychology, in the twistings and turnings of the female mind under stress. Pope's letter evinces a similar but I think not an identical concern.

At least part of Eloisa's appeal stems from the fact that she is psychologically interesting and Ovidian in her persistent betrayal of one idea by its opposite. In the long quoted passage, for example, we see Eloisa using the language of love while expressing feelings of guilt and fear in association with "that solemn day" when she professed herself a nun. And in another passage (lines 203-206) we see her speaking to Abelard in such a way as to confuse God with man and the spirit with the flesh.<sup>121</sup>

Oh come! oh teach me nature to subdue,  
Renounce my love, my life, my self--and you.  
Fill my fond heart with God alone, for he  
Alone can rival, can succeed to thee.

Despite this similarity, this interest in the intricacies of character, however, there does seem to be a difference of degree. With Ovid's heroines, I believe, attention is focused on what they do under stress, not so much on what they ought to do. What makes them interesting is not the rightness or wrongness of their actions, but the adeptness with which they argue and the way they act under pressure. With Eloisa, however, attention is directed to the moral issue, not only to what Pope's heroine does but to what she ought to do. The distinction is, I believe, a difficult one to make, because, as we know, Dido is at least in part bothered by her betrayal of her dead husband Sychaeus. She is, in other words, partly involved in a moral issue: she ought not to have broken her vow, and yet she did.<sup>122</sup> Still, in the main, Dido and other Ovidian heroines -- like Sappho



and Cenone, for example -- concern themselves not with the rightness or wrongness of their actions but with their own personal feelings. Dido doesn't concern herself with whether or not she should let Aeneas go; she only knows that he is leaving and that she is frantic. Eloisa, on the other hand, wants Abelard to return but constantly remembers that she ought not to be so divided. The difference, I believe, is a matter of degree. I would not want to say (with E. Audra) that "Pope...n'avait ni la science ni même la curiosité du coeur féminin"; but I do believe that Ovid is more interested than Pope in feminine psychology and in the study of women under stress, and that Pope is relatively more interested than Ovid in the moral issues embodied in his heroine's plight. Ovid's heroines suffer primarily because of natural anguish. Eloisa's is a moral anguish.<sup>123</sup>

A third difference that stands out concerns the general atmosphere and language. Ovid's Heroides contain some passages or phrases designed to contribute to the atmosphere of gloom and sadness. Sappho, for example, refers to "woods and caves" and "caves hanging with rugged rocks" (line 136); Medea remembers "a grove, sombre with pine trees" (line 67); and Ariadne speaks of "hollow rocks" which echo her cries (line 23). Also, the subjects being what they are, these same heroines weep and sigh. But in Ovid's epistles this atmosphere is not quite so pronounced as it is in Eloisa. In brief, we find in Pope's poem an aura of melancholy gloom described in much richer detail than that of the Heroides.

Ovid seems to rely on only a few references to suggest a sympathetic landscape -- for example, the "seamy bark" of a poplar tree or "a mass of native rocks" that appear in Oenone to Paris. And his images are most frequently drawn directly from nature -- a clinging vine, stormy seas, sounding waves, and high cliffs.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, his mention of tears, sighs, sadness, softness, and trembling (or their equivalents) is relatively infrequent. For instance in Dido to Aeneas, a poem of 196 lines, we have tears mentioned only twice (lacrimae, lacrimis, 185-186), sadness or sorrow mentioned three times (tristia, 56, 180; tristis, 70), and wretchedness or misery referred to twice (miseramque, 7; miseram, 93). On the other hand, Pope multiplies such words and effects, repeating "sad twelve times, sadness, sadly, and saddens once each. Trembling and tremble(d) come seven times, and soft four times (and the allied words tears, sighs and weep very frequently since the theme is what it is.)"<sup>125</sup> Moreover, the atmosphere of melancholy gloom is much more pronounced in Eloisa and appears to be as much indebted to literature as to nature. Far from relying on relatively infrequent single phrases, Pope loads his poems with "deep solitudes and awful cells," "rugged rocks," "awful arches," and at least one lengthy descriptive passage:

The darksom pines that o'er yon' rocks reclin'd  
Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind,  
The wandring streams that shine between the hills,  
The grotts that eccho to the tinkling rills,  
The dying gales that pant upon the trees,  
The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze;

No more these scenes my meditation aid,  
 Or lull to rest the visionary maid:  
 But o'er the twilight groves, and dusky caves,  
 Long-sounding isles, and intermingled graves,  
 Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws  
 A death-like silence, and a dread repose:  
 Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,  
 Shades ev'ry flow'r, and darkens ev'ry green,  
 Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,  
 And breathes a browner horror on the woods.<sup>126</sup>

A. H. Mills, who visited the Paraclete in 1768, "found that Pope's scenery was imaginary":

I saw neither rocks, nor pines, nor was it a kind of ground which ever seemed to encourage such objects. On the contrary it was a vale.<sup>127</sup>

And again with the help of the Twickenham edition, we know that Pope was indebted here primarily to Milton. The line "Ye grotts and caverns shagg'd with horrid thorn!" echoes Comus ("By grotts and caverns shagg'd with horrid shades," l. 429). The grim and eerie opening lines of L'Allegro apply, with their mention of "loathed Melancholy," "horrid shapes," an "uncouth cell," and "low-brow'd Rocks, / As ragged as thy Locks...." And many expressions in Il Penseroso, if not identical to those that Pope uses, are similar: "glimmering bow'rs and glades," "secret shades," "the rugged brow of night," "the wand'ring Moon," "some wide-water'd shore," and "arched walks of twilight groves, / And shadows brown that Sylvan loves / Of Pine...." In brief, as Geoffrey Tillotson says, the "dim religious walls" of the Paraclete are Miltonic and "those walls abut on Miltonic glooms and woods."<sup>128</sup>

Now in these ways Pope's Eloisa is both like and unlike Ovid's Heroides. Both works involve well-known heroines who suffer because of conflicting emotions and values. Both

involve representative figures whose feelings have "public interest and power." Both make use of designed tirades and juxtaposed scenes. And both employ a mixture of rhetorical devices like questions, repetitions, and impassioned imperatives. They differ, however, with respect to the nature of the conflict, Pope introducing a Christian issue not found in Ovid. Also Ovid, I believe, is relatively more interested in feminine psychology; and Pope, in a moral struggle. And finally in Pope's Eloisa we have a more pronounced atmosphere of passionate sadness indebted in part to the literary expression of gloom and melancholy.

What is perhaps most germane to the general topic of this dissertation, however, are the ways in which Pope's Eloisa is epistolary, two of which stand out. First, it is based on real matter growing out of a situation in the lives of real people. No one in Pope's time (or probably in ours, for that matter) would have doubted the authenticity of the story of Abelard and Eloisa, of their unfortunate love affair; and no one would have doubted the essential outlines of that affair on which Pope's letter is based -- the passionate beginning, the revenge of Eloisa's uncle, the separation, the suffering, the chance reading of one of Abelard's letters, and so forth. The poem has the stamp of authenticity; it is not a romantic fiction, but the record of a moment in the life of a real person.

And second, the poem is epistolary because Eloisa writes with attention to the interests and character of her addressee. She recalls Abelard's great ability as a teacher and particularly her first erotic sight of him in his capacity as a tutor.

Guiltless I gaz'd; heav'n listen'd while you sung;  
And truths divine came madd'd from that tongue.  
From lips like those what precept fail'd to move?

Writing to the most famous scholar-theologian of his time, she sometimes uses the abstract language of philosophy, suggesting that she had learned her lessons well. She speaks, for example, in Platonic terms of the "lov'd Idea" of Abelard (line 12) and says,

Thou know'st how guiltless first I met thy flame,  
When Love approach'd me under Friendship's name;  
My fancy form'd thee of Angelick kind,  
Some emanation of th' all-beauteous Mind.

She refers to Abelard's particularly excellent voice: "Thy voice I seem in ev'ry hymn to hear" (line 269). And as the notes to the poem show, she echoes Abelard's own thoughts. For instance, Eloisa's statement,

Should at my feet the world's great master fall,  
Himself, his throne, his world, I'd scorn 'em all...

echoes what Abelard (in Hughes' translation) had said earlier of his love: "'I would not have exchang'd my happy condition for that of the greatest Monarch upon Earth.'"<sup>129</sup> She agrees with Abelard that "To forget, in the Case of Love, is the most necessary Penitence, and the most difficult" (ll. 189-90), that "'tis difficult in our Sorrow to distinguish

Penitence from Love" (ll. 191 f.). And like Abelard she is called by many voices (ll. 303f.). Of course these last examples might simply prove that Pope borrowed material from Abelard's letters, using the ideas he felt were appropriate for his composition. But from an epistolary point of view, that is just the point. What would be appropriate in an epistle (notably one in a supposed exchange of letters) would be references to what the other correspondent had said. Might we not conclude that Pope was thinking in an epistolary way?

In retrospect as a whole the heroic epistles written between 1660 and 1758 (those that I have seen) appear similar to the picture of Eloisa which shows her seated on a rock in the foreground, pen in hand.<sup>130</sup> Behind and to the sides are some trees and a goodly amount of non-descript underbrush. And in the distance we see the partly-shaded convent and a sky streaked with clouds and a few bars of light. In much the same way that Eloisa dominates the picture, Pope's Eloisa to Abelard stands out among contemporary original poems of its kind. It is the only one referred to with any degree of frequency, and it is the only original English heroic epistle that was answered and imitated.<sup>131</sup> Also just as Eloisa writes against a background of a few trees and much underbrush, Pope's Eloisa seems to have been written in an analogous literary situation -- against a background of heroic epistles

adopted and varied in translations, burlesques, "corrections" of Drayton, and poetic versions of love letters in prose. At least this is one pattern that I see.

Another pattern that emerges is a gradual change in the varieties of heroic epistolary verse that seem to have been popular. Between 1670 and 1700 poetry of this sort appeared primarily in the form of translations and burlesques. These were the years of Ovid's Epistles...Translated by Several Hands ("Dryden's" translation) and of Alexander Radcliffe's Ovid Travestie. During the first decade of the eighteenth century, interest seems to have shifted to poems indebted to Drayton (Oldmixon's Amores Britannici) and answers to Ovid, but translations persisted.<sup>132</sup> Then between 1710 and 1720 we have a period dominated by metrical versions of the Portuogesse Letters, John Hughes' prose translation of Bussy-Rabutin, and Pope's Eloisa to Abelard. And finally (1721-30) followed the answers to Eloisa and a few original poems, notably by Lord Hervey. Between 1731 and 1759, the pattern is scattered and inconclusive: two editions of Ovid's Epistles and Amores translated (1736, 1749) one edition of Ovid's Epistles translated (1759), one edition of Drayton's Heroicall Epistles (1737) and Drayton's Complete Works (1748, reprinted in 1753), one metrical version of the Portuogesse Letters (1731), one answer to Eloisa (Cawthorne's "Abelard to Eloisa," 1747), two original poems largely indebted to Pope (John Gilbert Cooper's "Theagenes to Sylvia,"

1746, and James Cawthorne's "Lady Jane Grey to Lord Guilford Dudley," 1753), and one poem based on a letter printed in The Spectator, No. 397 (William Whitehead's "Ann Boleyn to Henry VIII," 1743).<sup>133</sup> In brief, if at first there seems to be a gradual change from translation and burlesque, through poems indebted to Drayton and answers to Ovid, to metrical versions of well-known prose love letters and answers to Eloisa, after 1730 we return to miscellaneity and a little bit of every variety.

I suggest, therefore, that after 1730 the interest in heroic epistolary verse waned, probably because poets, if they chose this genre, were reduced to doing what already had been done and risked the burden of being compared with Pope. I also suggested that the greatest interest (at least among practising writers) in the heroic epistle as a form of poetry existed between 1680 and 1730, paradoxically at the supposed height of the neo-classical age. Counting the works I have seen or read about, approximately two-thirds of them appear during this time (originally published, re-edited, or reissued). But I also suggest, in conclusion, that metrical letters in the Ovidian way, although they were very much in vogue during the first three decades of the eighteenth century, did not generate (Pope's Eloisa excepted) much widespread and lasting enthusiasm.

What popularity they did enjoy is due perhaps to the classical origins of the form, the orthodoxy of the genre, and



the heroic couplet form in which they were written.<sup>134</sup> Also there seems to have been general agreement that there was an abundance of "Nature" in Ovid and that no one could equal him in describing the "Passions." In his preface to Ovid's Epistles...Translated by Several Hands (1680) Dryden wrote,

If the imitation of Nature be the business of a poet, I know no author, who can justly be compared with ours, especially in the description of the passions.<sup>135</sup>

Similarly, Ambrose Philips assumed that whoever would succeed in the Ovidian way "should first examine his Heart well, and feel whether his Passions (especially those of the gentler Kind) play easie, since it is not his Wit, but the Delicacy and Tenderness of his Sentiments, that will affect his Readers."<sup>136</sup> And Addison said, "Ovid is very justly celebrated for the passionate speeches of his Poems. They have generally abundance of Nature in them...."<sup>137</sup>

However, at least three things worked against the vogue. The subject matter was limited. Ovid himself had used the famous figures of antiquity and Drayton had done the same for English heroic lovers. Not many Abelards and Eloisas were available. Second, as I have said, after Pope' wrote Eloisa, poets using the same form risked the danger **of** being compared unfavorably with an acknowledged master **or** being called subservient imitators. And third, we have the contemporary feeling that Ovid, if he was a master of Passion, was frequently "too witty and too tedious."<sup>138</sup> Dryden referred

to this failing as wit "out of season" and said of Ovid, "he never knew how to give over, when he had done well."<sup>139</sup>

Leonard Walsted wrote, "had he but known, when he had said enough, he might, I think, have come the nearest of any Man towards a Rivalship with Homer, but he has too great a Redundancy, and dwells too long on the same Thing."<sup>140</sup> And

perhaps the best indication of a contemporary attitude toward such poetry comes in Addison's reply to "Asteria" (Spectator No. 241), who had written for advice on how to "relieve" herself while her husband was absent. The reply begins with Addison's serious comment that

Absence is what the Poets call Death in Love, and has given occasion to abundance of beautiful Complaints in those Authors, who have treated of this Passion in Verse. Ovid's Epistles are full of them.<sup>141</sup>

But then follows an ironic description of various ways others have relieved themselves, including the story of sending messages via a lettered "Dial-plate" and "Loadstone, which had such Vertue in it, that if it touched two several Needles, when one of the Needles so touched begun to move, the other, tho' at never so great a distance, moved at the same Time and in the same Manner." And Addison ends with the suggestion that

if ever this Invention should be revived or put in practice, I would propose that upon the Lover's Dial-plate there should be written not only the four and twenty Letters, but several entire Words, which have always a place in passionate Epistles, as Flames, Darts, Die, Languish, Absence, Cupid, Heart, Eyes, Mang, Drown, and the like. This would very much abridge the Lover's Pains in this way of writing a Letter, as it would enable him to express the most useful and significant Words with a single Touch of the Needle.

## CONCLUSION

If we disregard heroic epistles, which seem to have reached the height of their popularity in the second two decades of the eighteenth century and about which I can say little that I have not already said, the major trends of epistolary verse -- considering what I have called complimentary epistles and familiar Horatian letters in verse -- seem to correspond to some of the general developments taking place in poetry between 1660 and 1750. And I shall conclude with comments about a few trends that I think stand out. My purpose, in brief, is to review the progress of epistolary verse in a final attempt to show how well suited such poetry was not only to the temper of the Augustans but to a few larger patterns in poetry in general and to some of the ideas of the age.

One trend that stands out is the gradual development of a familiar, natural, and easy manner of writing. In the epistles of a single poet, for example, this change is observable if we contrast the opening lines of Dryden's "To my Honored Friend, Sir Robert Howard" (1660) with those of "To my Honour'd Kinsman..." (1700). In the first Dryden

begins with an elaborate comparison combining multiple references to the music of birds, to painting, and to "mighty Rivers." The syntax seems relatively complex.

As there is Musick uninform'd by Art  
 In those wild Notes, which with a merry heart  
 The birds in unfrequented shades expresse,  
 Tho better taught at home, yet please us lesse:  
 So in your Verse, a native sweetnesse dwells,  
 Which shames Composure, and its Art excells.  
 Singing, no more can your soft numbers grace  
 Then Paint adds charms unto a beauteous Face.  
 Yet as when mighty Rivers gently creep,  
 Their even calmesse does suppose them deep,  
 Such is your muse....<sup>1</sup>

In the second, however, we find no elaborate comparisons in the opening lines, the idiom is much more direct and natural, the diction seems less deliberately poetic, and the Horatian spirit is manifest.

How bless'd is He, who leads a Country Life,  
 Unvex'd with anxious Cares, and void of Strife!  
 Who studying Peace, and shunning Civil Rage,  
 Enjoy'd his Youth, and now enjoys his Age:  
 All who deserve his Love, he makes his own;  
 And, to be lov'd himself, needs only to be known.<sup>2</sup>

But perhaps stronger proof can be found in the changes in complimentary epistles written before and after 1715. One minor point is that before 1715 one sixth of the complimentary poems I have seen are specifically entitled "epistles"; whereas after 1715 this figure increases to over one third. More important, however, is the change in manner. Before 1715 the style of many complimentary epistles remains, as we have seen, essentially formal and is sometimes strained by references to mythology. To be specific, before 1715 about sixteen poems that I have seen contain claims ranging from

Dryden's statement about Hoddesdon's being another Prometheus ("To his friend the Authour, on his divine Epigrams...") to Stepney's full-fledged fiction in "An Epistle to Charles Montague, Esq....On His Majesty's Voyage to Holland" (1691). Imagining William afloat, Stepney has Neptune bidding "the cheerful Tritons play" and the Tritons, in turn, singing of William's illustrious birth, his "early wonders," and his courage in battle.<sup>3</sup> Also of the fifty-six compliments I have seen written before 1715, only about eleven use a familiar style.

After 1715, however, although the style of epistolary compliment does not change radically, there are a few trends (in addition to those already mentioned in Chapter Two) which suggest a relaxation of the traditional heightened and emphatic manner of panegyric verse. One is that mythological references appear less frequently (I have found them in about six out of thirty-nine complimentary epistles.)<sup>4</sup> A second is a larger proportion of compliments using the familiar way, approximately twelve out of thirty-nine. And a third is the appearance for the first time of complimentary verse letters that specifically answer other compliments and are, therefore, inherently more epistolary. Richard Owen Cambridge, for example, writes "To William Whitehead, Esq." (1754) in answer to an epistle that Whitehead inserted in Cambridge's Life.<sup>5</sup> And Allan Ramsay and William Somerville trade compliments -- "An Epistle to Allan Ramsay" (1721) and

Ramsay's "Answer to the Above Epistle" (1721).<sup>6</sup>

These developments are perhaps not tremendously significant by themselves; but they suggest a growing interest in the familiar way, and they introduce my first major point in conclusion. I believe that the popularity of familiar Horatian epistles is a natural outgrowth of the Augustan interest in a familiar and natural way of writing and speaking. Related to this interest and to the fewer references to mythology in complimentary epistles, for example, we have Addison's statement in Spectator No. 523 that "when we would write a manly panegyric, that should carry in it all the Colours of Truth, nothing can be more ridiculous than to have recourse to our Jupiter's and Juno's."<sup>7</sup> As part of the same interest in a struggle for plainness and naturalness we have also Thomas Sprat's earlier seminal description of the Royal Society's

Resolution to reject all amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style; to return back to the primitive purity and shortness, when men deliver'd so many things almost in an equal number of words. They have exacted from all their members a close, naked, natural way of speaking, positive expressions, clear senses, a native easiness, bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness as they can.

Similarly in terms of preaching, Joseph Glanvill inveighed against "hard words," "deep and mysterious notions," "affected Rhetorizations," and "Phantastical Phrases," concluding his Essay with "the first Rule and Character of Preaching: it should be PLAIN."<sup>8</sup> And in Tatler No. 230,

Swift called for a mode of expression in belles lettres founded on polite conversation and equally removed from pedantry and slang:

I should be glad to see you the instrument of introducing into our style that simplicity which is the best and truest ornament of most things in life, which the politer ages always aimed at in their building and dress, simplex munditiis, as well as their productions of wit.<sup>10</sup>

In brief, with these references to truth, primitive purity and shortness, clear sense, native easiness, plainness, and simplicity, we have the suggestion of a widespread and fairly constant preference for precisely those stylistic qualities which distinguish familiar verse. And in terms of familiar verse the epistolary way seems to stand out.

Here, as in Chapter One, I do not want to suggest that familiar verse appears in no poems other than epistles. In fact, J. J. Courthope's discussion of the development of the familiar style in English poetry refers (and rightly so) to several different kinds of poetry, ranging from Granville's prologues and epilogues through the songs and eclogues of Walsh to the epigrams and ballads of Prior and the fables of John Gay.<sup>11</sup> But what does seem important and interesting is that at least three of the poets mentioned by Courthope -- Prior, Swift, and Gay -- are also among the most prominent writers of epistles. And the thread of poetry with which their works are associated is also the one that stands out in familiar epistolary verse. In brief, one way of fitting the letters in verse which we have seen into the larger picture

of Augustan writing as a whole is to consider them as a manifestation of a widespread interest in a natural, colloquial, and easy manner of communication through language, and as part of the trend toward a familiar idiom in poetry.

In fact, the strain of epistolary verse that stands out (or is most virulent!) is precisely the one that is most familiar. It is not the satirico-epistolary mode of Pope, including, in addition to the ethic epistles and the "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," such works as Edward Young's "Two Epistles to Mr. Pope, Concerning the Authors of the Age" (1730), James Cawthorne's "Vanity of Human Enjoyments" (1749) or Robert Dodsley's "Modern Reasoning."<sup>12</sup> And it is not the legislative mode of Dryden. Rather it is the altogether colloquial mode of poets like Charles Cotton, Butler, Prior, Swift, Gay, Matthew Green, John Dryden, and Robert Lloyd. Of the 120 familiar epistles I have seen, about 60% use what might be called the "colloquial way," 25% use Dryden's legislative way, and about 15% are Popean. Furthermore, among the poets whose epistles I have read (those who seem to have found the epistolary way most congenial [Pope excepted] and who wrote, say, more than five such poems apiece) we see once more some of the same names -- Charles Cotton, Swift, Prior, Gay, Dryden, and Lloyd. In brief, I believe that Robert Lloyd, in a sense, was being quite fashionable, if unsuccessful, when he wrote "The Poet. An Epistle to C. Churchill."



Sometimes 'tis elegy, or ode.  
 Epistle now's your only mode.  
 Whether that style more glibly hits,  
 The fancies of our rambling wits,  
 Who wince and kick at all oppression,  
 But love to straggle in digression;  
 Or, that by writing to the great  
 In letters, honours, or estate,  
 We slip more easy into fame,  
 By clinging to another's name,  
 And with their strength or weakness yoke,  
 As ivy climbs about an oak;...  
 Whatever the motive, 'tis the mode,  
 And I will travel in the road,  
 The fashionable track pursue,  
 And write my simple thoughts to you,  
 Just as they rise from head or heart,  
 Not marshall'd by the herald art.<sup>13</sup>

Another general pattern applicable to Augustan poetry as a whole and observable in epistolary verse is the trend toward didacticism. As Bonamy Dobrée has said, "poetry from about 1720...was chiefly of the compendious kind -- contemplative, philosophic, variously didactic, and intrepidly descriptive."<sup>14</sup> And he supports his generalization by citing or discussing descriptive poems like John Dyer's "Grongar Hill" (1727), descriptive-didactic poems like Thomson's "The Seasons" (1726-46), "cosmic" poems like Moses Browne's "Essay on the Universe" (1735), and philosophico-contemplative poems like Edward Young's "Night Thoughts" (1742-46). He also notes the common recurrence of favorite ideas about liberty, patriotism, mercantile expansion, benevolence, and the wonders of God's creation. And he quotes a statement made by the author of a moralistic poem

called An Essay on Human Life (2nd edition 1735): "Of all Kinds of Poetry the Didascalie is the most valuable...."<sup>15</sup> In brief, although all generalizations can be riddled with exceptions and although no brief summary can do justice to Mr. Dobrée's chapter on "Poetry, 1720-1740," I think it fair to say that Augustan poetry after 1720 moved in the direction of philosophico-didactic moralizing.

But what is most germane here is that the same trend appears in familiar and complimentary epistolary verse extending somewhat beyond the limit of 1740. In the epistles written between 1700 and 1752, for example, the favorite themes mentioned above are common enough. The ideas of benevolence and active social virtue dominate the epistles of George Lyttelton (1720-30), they appear in Pope's verse letters to Burlington and Bathurst, and as late as 1751 we have John Armstrong's "Of Benevolence. An Epistle to Eumenes."<sup>16</sup> Concentrated in the second two decades of the eighteenth century, mercantile expansion of the sort that Gay writes about in "A Letter to a Lady. Occasioned by the Arrival of Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales" (1714) --

Now Commerce, wealthy Goddess, rears her head,  
And bids Britannia's fleets their canvas spread;  
Unnumber'd ships the peopled ocean hide,  
And wealth returns with each revolving tide.

-- appears later in Richard Savage's "An Epistle to the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole" (1729).<sup>17</sup> And patriotic fervor or its close relatives -- English liberty and freedom -- are the stock in trade of epistolary poems from Charles

Montague's "An Epistle to Charles Earl of Dorset..." (1690) to Mark Akenside's "Epistle to Curio" (1744).<sup>18</sup> In brief, in the familiar and complimentary epistles written during the Augustan age it is not too difficult to find passages like the following about disinterested benevolence:

Where wild affliction rages, he appears  
To wipe the widow's and the orphan's tears:  
The sons of misery before him bow,  
And for their merit only plead their woe.  
So well he loves the public liberty,  
His mercy sets the private captive free.<sup>19</sup>

or about commerce:

From the smooth terass [sic] as he casts his eye,  
And sees the current sea-ward rolling by;  
What schemes of commerce rise in his designs!  
Pledges of wealth! and unexhausted mines!<sup>20</sup>

or about liberty:

But when your early Care shall have design'd  
To plan the Soul and mould the waxen Mind;  
When you shall pour upon his tender Breast  
Ideas that must stand an Age's test,  
Oh! there imprint with strongest deepest dye  
The lovely form of Goddess Liberty!<sup>21</sup>

More important, though, is the gradual shift toward didacticism that parallels the general pattern to which Mr. Dobrée calls attention. In terms of complimentary and familiar verse letters, the period 1700 to 1709 is negligible. I have found only nine such epistles, in which no one "character" seems dominant.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the interest in epistolary verse during this first decade seems to have been centered largely on the heroic mode. Two editions (the 6th and 7th) of Ovid's Epistles...Translated by Several Hands appeared, Oldmixon's Amores Britannici was published (1703), Radcliffe's

Ovid Travestie was re-edited (1705), and David Crauford produced Ovidius Britannicus (1703). The second and third decades, I believe, saw the peak of interest in the Ovidian way, with complimentary epistles -- many of them Whig panegyrics -- appearing in greater number than at any other time between 1660 and 1750, and familiar epistles devoted mainly to the ironic personal effusions of Swift, the epistles of John Gay, and the minor imitations of Prior, Swift, and Christopher Pitt.<sup>23</sup> The years 1710 to 1729 were those of Pope's Eloisa and its replies, of Ambrose Philips' or Edward Young's panegyrics, of Swift's "A Left-handed Letter to Dr. Sheridan" (1718), of Gay's epistles to the Earl of Burlington, to "A Lady," to Paul Methuen, and to William Pulteney. And I might add that these same years produced at least seven editions of Horace's Epistles translated.<sup>24</sup>

After 1730 some noteworthy changes took place, and in terms of epistolary verse the trend that Mr. Dobrée mentions began. In place of minor imitations we find the major imitations of Pope (1737-38). The effusions of Swift and the essentially light epistles of Gay are replaced by the ethic and didactic epistles of Pope (1731-35). And we have the heavy soporific poems of Robert Nugent (1739). Furthermore, after 1739 epistolary verse, with some exceptions of course, seems dominated by didactic epistles like William Whitehead's "The Danger of Writing Verse" (1741), Horace Walpole's "An Epistle from Florence..." (1740), Snayd Davies' "To Charles Pratt..." (1743), William Whitehead's "On Nobility..." (1743),

James Cawthorne's "The Vanity of Human Enjoyments..." (1749), and John Armstrong's "Of Benevolence..." (1751). Only at the end of the period (i.e. circa 1755) do we find in Robert Lloyd a return to the negligence of Prior; and Robert Lloyd did not succeed. He died in prison. Therefore, in brief, we have some evidence within epistolary verse itself of a pattern central to poetry at large written after 1720. In terms that are too simple but perhaps more clear, familiar epistolary verse written between 1700 and 1752 moves from minor effusions to satirico-epistolary essays, to overt moral disquisitions; and it would seem that after 1720 many poets using the epistolary way (or at least calling their poems epistles), although perhaps they did not mean quite the same thing as Pope, stooped to truth and moralized their song.

Now in these ways epistolary verse seems to follow at least two of the major trends in Augustan literature -- the development of a familiar mode of communication through language together with the shift toward a more overt didacticism in poetry after 1720. But if we remember that epistles were competing with other sorts of poetry like the ode, the mock-heroic, and the descriptive-didactic poem, and that the familiar style of writing was in competition with Spenserian and Miltonic imitations like Thomson's "The Castle of Indolence" or Dyer's "The Ruins of Rome," perhaps

a more convincing trend (to show epistolary verse in tune with its time) would be one cutting across the boundaries of style or kind and closely related to the epistolary way.

I refer in particular to the fairly widespread "anti-logical" drift of much Augustan literature, beginning perhaps with Butler's Hudibras and continuing at least up to the poetry of Robert Lloyd.

In what I take to be an excellent article on "'Logical Structure' in Eighteenth-Century Poetry," D. J. Greene has already said much that applies.<sup>25</sup> Arguing that the eighteenth century pretty consistently disparaged "logic, as a set of rules for intellection or for the use of language" and that Bacon's tendency to "disparage the competence of human 'reason' and its handmaid logic...is found throughout Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and most other thinkers of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," Mr. Greene very persuasively suggests that the "so-called Age of Reason...was pre-eminently an age of anti-Reason," where Reason "means 'The power by which man deduces one proposition from another, or proceeds from premises to consequences.'" And he notes that a major trend in the thinking of the time was "towards empiricism and away from rationalism, towards eclecticism and skepticism and away from system and dogma," and toward a sort of "reason" that "connotes long-sightedness, prudence, circumspection, judiciousness, practicality, shading at last into such things as common sense and moderation."<sup>26</sup>

But all this is by way of introduction -- fundamental as it is to the Augustan period -- and what I believe really matters is that Mr. Greene shows in much of the writing of the time precisely the sort of tendency away from rigid schematization and, in varying degrees, toward "hotch-potching" (including, by the way, an enjoyment of this quality) that distinguishes the verse epistle. If I may faggot with my own a few of Mr. Greene's points as they fall, for example, we have Samuel Johnson's approval of not the logical but the anti-logical "variety and vigour of sentiment" found in Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel or the "abundant multiplicity of images...with pointed sentences diversified by illustrations, and enlivened by sallies of invectives" in The Hind and the Panther.<sup>27</sup> We have in Religio Laici an essay that begins by "denigrating the power of reason -- not a good omen for an ostensibly ratiocinative performance."<sup>28</sup> In Absalom and Achitophel, II (lines 412-456) we have a passage of disjointed invective describing "Doeg," the effectiveness of which comes from its "fine inconsequentiality" and "splendid fun," not its "logical structure."<sup>29</sup> And to this last I might add from the same poem the equally devastating portrait of "Og" (lines 457-509), which is, if not altogether "faggoty," at least a little disjointed -- "Here comes Og, 'Liquor'd ev'ry chink,' a fat fool and rogue who curses God when is drunk. But God has cursed him and made him poor. He is no poet. The midwife gave him her blessing -- 'Be thou Dull' -- and told

him, above all, not to write. But I see that it was counsel given in vain. Treasonous poetry will be the rock that wrecks you. Do you dare compete in poetry when you can't even write decent prose? In every way Doeg is more talented than you are. You will be hanged for 'Non-sense.' Even if you had tried to write a panegyric on the King, you would have produced a satire; but you have shamefully defied the King. I will not elaborate on all your crimes; your verse speaks for itself. May all the King's foes be like the Duke of Monmouth, and may all my enemies be like you."

In addition, from the works of Pope we have the Essay on Criticism in which, Mr. Benson says, "no real logical order [exists] beyond that of simple enumeration."<sup>30</sup> It is not a "hodge-podge." It has perhaps a "larger design" held together by a theme of restoring "the decays in Critique, and in Criticism," and a certain "reasonable" progression from the celebration of "a golden past in art," to the revelation of the various ways in which the present (because of its "divisions, blindnesses, and failings") has fallen away, to the "means of reformation [or] the restoration of some kind of peace and order in art," and finally to an historical survey stressing the idea of cultural transmission "from country to country and from age to age."<sup>31</sup> But as the Twickenham editors note, Pope's friend Richardson maintained that "when often speaking of [the Essay, Pope] spoke of it always as an 'irregular collection of thoughts, thrown together as they offered themselves, as Horace's Art of



Poetry was,' he said, 'and written in imitation of that irregularity,' which he even admired and said was beautiful."<sup>32</sup> We have also Mr. Greene's very telling observation that "a glance at the subheadings reveals very little correspondence" between parts II and III; "opposed to such matters in II as 'imperfect learning,' 'judging by parts and not by wholes,' and 'party spirit,' we find in III, not 'perfect learning,' 'judging by wholes and not parts,' and 'impartiality,' but such things as 'good breeding,' 'sincerity and freedom of advice,' and 'candour.'"<sup>33</sup> And Pope himself wrote in his Essay,

Horace still charms with graceful negligence,  
And without Method talks us into Sense,  
Still like a Friend familiarly convey  
The truest Notions in the easiest way.

Finally, in addition, we have London in which

Johnson successively reprobates malice,  
rapine, accident, the mob, fire, street  
ruffians, attorneys, falling houses, female  
atheists, masquerades, excise, empty praise,  
**vice**,, gain, unrewarded Science, pensioned  
politicians, castrati, licensing of the stage,  
titled plagiarists, seducers, bribers, French  
immigrants, flatterers, contempt for poverty,  
mobs again, fire again, Argilio the builder,  
laureates, the current crime wave, the  
parliamentary Committee of Ways and Means, the  
royal visits to Hanover...a masterpiece of the  
higgledy-piddledy.<sup>34</sup>

And there is Thomson's Seasons which, as Dorothy Dobrée says,

became in the end the most extraordinary  
hotchpotch of direct observation and the  
poet's nervous response, landscape painting,  
with or without figures, moralizing, praises  
of that wedded love denied him by the  
obduracy of Miss Elizabeth Young, sentimental  
anecdote and humanitarianism, light satire,

history and geography, patriotism and panegyrics on politicians, applied science, a looking back to a golden age incompatible with an almost simultaneous progressivist looking forward to a similar perfection of living, [to which are added] the latest events and discoveries, the aurora borealis of March 1716, Newton with prism and telescope, the plague at Marseilles, botanists with microscopes, prison reformers, travellers' reports, and so on.<sup>35</sup>

Now I could go on, in Mr. Greene's debt, by noting the contemporary popularity of the essay, defined by Samuel Johnson as "A loose sally of the mind; an irregular indigested piece; not a regular and orderly composition" -- or by citing such notably digressive pieces as *Somerville's The Chase* -- but perhaps, with Samuel Johnson, I should say, "Such could I add, -- but see the boat at hand...." Against a background of fairly persistent digression and "fagotting notions as they fall" (or appearing to do so); in conjunction with, say, Pope's notion that Horace's irregularity was "beautiful"; alongside a number of "anti-logical" poems cutting across the boundaries of style and genre; and at a time when graceful negligence was considered admirable -- the epistolary way seems central. At least these qualities are very much a part of the "way" that we find, in varying degrees, in such landmarks as Dryden's "Religio Laici" (1682), Charles Montague's "An Epistle to Charles Earl of Dorset..." (1698), John Dryden's "To My Honour'd Kinsman..." (1700), Matthew Prior's "A Letter to Monsieur Boileaux Despreaux" (1704), John Gay's "A Letter to a Lady" (1714) or "Mr. Pope's Welcome From Greece" (1720), Elijah Fenton's "An Epistle to

Thomas Lambarde" (1713-15), Pope's ethic epistles and his "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" (1731-35), and Matthew Green's "The Spleen" (1737). And I can only conclude that because of the widespread nature of the tendencies to which "'Logical Structure' in Eighteenth-Century Poetry" calls attention, such epistles were within a main stream of the Augustan poetic. If they do not embody the Augustan mode, the best of them represent an Augustan mode that was prominent for a time.

One final point. In answer to the question, "What time?" -- on the basis of all the poems I have read, I would select the years 1714-1744. Early in this period we have the epistles of John Gay, and near the end we have Mark Akenside changing his "Epistle to Curio" (1744) into an ode.<sup>36</sup> Also during this period we have the best of the heroic epistles, Pope's Eloisa; the most masterful of the imitations; and, of course, the most notable epistolary poems of the eighteenth century, again Pope's. Preceded by some epistles that are worth reading but in the main by what I would call minor effusions, and shading off into some rather tedious didactic poems like Robert Nugent's "An Epistle" (1739) to no one in particular or John Armstrong's "Of Benevolence. An Epistle to Eumenes" (i.e. any young gentleman), these years also include in terms of number, the largest percentage of the verse letters I have seen. Including imitations, approximately 46% of the familiar epistles were written during this 30-year period. About 43% of the complimentary epistles appeared at this time.

And among the heroic letters, counting all the items that might apply (i.e. metrical versions of letters in prose and so forth), about 40% were published, re-edited, or reissued at this time. Finally, almost in the middle of this period (1727-28 to be exact) we have the publication of the Pope-Swift Miscellanies in Prose and Verse in which we find Swift saying in "Thoughts on Various Subjects,"

There is nothing wanting to make all rational and disinterested People in the World, of one Religion, but that they should talk together every Day.<sup>37</sup>

and about which Pope wrote in a letter to Swift on February 17, 1727,

Our Miscellany is now quite printed. I am prodigiously pleas'd with this joint-volume, in which methinks we look like friends, side by side, serious and merry by turns, conversing interchangeably, and walking down hand in hand to posterity; not in the stiff forms of learned Authors, flattering each other, and setting the rest of mankind at nought: but in a free, unimportant, natural, easy manner; diverting others just as we diverted ourselves.<sup>38</sup>

## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

1. The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, ed. George Sherburn, (Oxford, 1956), III, 37.
2. Two exceptions are Jay Arnold Levine, "The Status of the Verse Epistle Before Pope," SP, LIX (October 1962), 658-684; and Clay Hunt, "The Elizabethan Background of Neo-Classic Polite Verse," ELH, VIII (December 1941), 273-304. Close readings of single poems include Earl K. Wasserman, "A Critical Reading" of Pope's Epistle to Bathurst (Baltimore, 1960), pp. 11-56; Thomas E. Edwards, Jr., "'Reconcil'd Extremes': Pope's Epistle to Bathurst," Essays in Criticism, XI, (July 1960), 290-306; Arthur E. Hoffman, "Dryden's To Mr. Congreve," ELH, LXXV (November 1960), 553-556; Geoffrey Tillotson, "Pope's 'Epistle to Harley': An Introduction and Analysis," Pope and His Contemporaries, ed. James L. Clifford and Louis A. Landa (New York, 1949), pp. 58-77; Aubrey L. Williams, "Pope and Horace: The Second Epistle of the Second Book," Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature, ed. Carroll Camden (Chicago, 1963), pp. 309-321; and Henry Pettit, "Pope's Eloisa to Abelard: An Interpretation," University of Colorado Studies (July 1953), 67 - 74.
3. Jay Arnold Levine, "The Status of the Verse Epistle Before Pope," SP, LIX (October 1962), 661.
4. Levine, 659-60.

### CHAPTER I

#### THE AUGUSTAN TEMPER

1. The Augustan World, 2nd ed. (London, 1964), p. 1.

2. Henri Mission de Valberg, Mémoires et observations faites par un voyageur en Angleterre (La Haye, 1699). Quoted in The Spectator, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford, 1965), I, 3, n. 2. Hereafter The Spectator.
3. Robert J. Allen, The Clubs of Augustan London (Cambridge, Mass., 1933), p. 78 ff.
4. The Spectator, I, 40, n. 3.
5. The Spectator, I, 42.
6. "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," The Poems of Alexander Pope (The Twickenham Edition, 10 volumes, London, 1939-57), IV, 127. Hereafter cited as I. E.
7. Minor Poets of the Eighteenth Century, ed. Hugh P'Anson Fausset (London, 1930), p. 142. Hereafter Minor Poets.
8. "The Friend. An Epistle to Aaron Hill Esq.," in Alexander Chalmers, The Works of the English Poets (London, 1810), XI, 334. Throughout this study, unless otherwise noted, all quotations of poetry are from this collection -- cited hereafter as Chalmers.
9. Eighteenth Century Poetry and Prose, ed. Louis I. Arndt et al., 2nd ed. (New York, 1956), p. 146.
10. Journal to Stella, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford, 1949), II, 399.
11. "Macarius; or, the Confessor. An Epistle to the Rev. Dr. Robert Wort....," Chalmers, XVI, 390.
12. The Spectator, I, 324-25.
13. The Spectator, III, 62.
14. The Spectator, I, 438.
15. In Spectator No. 119 Addison writes, "At present...an unconstrained Carriage, and a certain Openness of Behaviour are the height of Good Breeding. The Fashionable World is grown free and easy; our Manners, sit more loose upon us: Nothing is so modish as an agreeable Negligence. In a word, Good Breeding shows it self most, where to an ordinary Eye it appears the least." The Spectator, I, 487.
16. The Spectator, II, 308-9.
17. The Spectator, II, 268.

18. Chalmers, X, 415.
19. Poems of John Gay, ed. John Underhill (London, 1893), I, 198-99.
20. I. E., III-ii, 57-8.
21. The Poems of John Dryden, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford, 1958), I, 231.
22. Miscellanies in Prose and Verse (London, 1722), II, 339-40.
23. The Works of Henry Fielding (Philadelphia, 1902), VI-ii, 199.
24. Adventurer 386, The Works of Samuel Johnson (The Yale Edition, New Haven, 1958-- ), II, 413. Hereafter Yale Johnson.
25. The Works of Henry Fielding, VI-ii, 200.
26. Yale Johnson, II, 416.
27. Quoted in John E. Mason, Sentimentalism in the Making (Philadelphia, 1935), p. 189.
28. A Large Account of the Taste in Poetry (1702) in Critical Essays of the Eighteenth Century 1700-1725, ed. Willard Higley Durham (New Haven and London, 1915), p. 137. Hereafter Durham.
29. Works of Henry Fielding, VI-ii, 200.
30. The Spectator, I, 289.
31. Yale Johnson, II, 414.
32. Works of Henry Fielding, VI-ii, 203.
33. Works of Henry Fielding, VI-ii, 204.
34. "On the Death of Mrs. Johnson [Stella]," Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford, 1939--), V, 230-34. Hereafter cited as Prose Works.
35. Works of Henry Fielding, VI-ii, 207. Swift enumerates several faults in his "Hints Towards An Essay on Conversation" (1733), including pedantry ("the too frequent or unseasonable obtruding our own Knowledge in common Discourse, and placing too great a Value upon it"), smartness (i.e. corrupted raillery), impatience, uneasiness, rude familiarity, repetition, haranguing,

contradiction, lying, gibing, arguing, loud talking, loud laughing, perpetual smiling, and the "Disease called the Wandering of the Thoughts." Prose Works, IV, 87-95.

36. Prose Works, IV, 91.

37. Works of Henry Fielding, VI-ii, 241-42.

38. The Spectator, III, 595.

39. Herbert Davis, "The Conversation of the Augustans," in Richard Foster Jones and others writing in His Honor, The Seventeenth Century: Studies in the History of English Thought and Literature from Bacon to Pope (Stanford, 1951), p. 183.

40. Prose Works, IV, 88.

41. The Spectator, II, 65.

42. The Spectator, I, 210.

43. I. E., IV, 109-10.

44. Durham, p. 257.

45. Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, ed. J. E. Spingarn (Oxford, 1908), III, 242. Hereafter Spingarn.

46. Durham, p. 323.

47. Spingarn, I, 67.

48. We have, for instance, the two excellent passages cited by Herbert Davis in "The Conversation of the Augustans" -- Addison's Spectator No. 463 contrasted with Donne's Second Prebend Sermon; and Berkeley's Preface to the 1713 edition of Three Dialogues. The Seventeenth Century, pp. 195-97.

49. The Spectator, V, 113.

50. In The Works of Samuel Johnson, New Cambridge Edition (Cambridge and New York, 1903) II, 247.

51. Durham, pp. 354-65.

52. Durham, p. 294.

53. "The Status of the Verse Epistle Before Pope," SP, LIX (October 1962), 660.

54. James Sutherland, A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry (Oxford, 1948), pp. 122-27.



## CHAPTER TWO

## COMPLIMENTARY EPISTLES: 1660 - 1750

1. The Poems of John Dryden, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford, 1958), I, 4. Hereafter Kinsley.
2. Mark Van Doren, The Poetry of John Dryden (New York, 1920), p. 145. Hereafter Van Doren.
3. Other poems of this sort include Charles Cotton's "To Sir Aston Cockayne, on his Tragedy of Ovid" (c. 1662); George Etherege's "To Her Excellence the Marchioness of Newcastle After the Reading of Her Incomparable Poems" (1664) and "To Mr. J. M. on his Translations out of French and Italian" (1672); Richard Duke's "To Mr. Dryden, On His *Troilus and Cressida*" (1679); Henry Watson's "To Madam John, on her Poems" (1683); and John Cooper's "To Mrs. Behn, on the publishing her Poems" (1683). Throughout this paper, unless otherwise noted, the quotations are taken from Alexander Chalmers, The Works of the English Poets (London, 1810) -- hereafter Chalmers. All quotations from the work of Charles Cotton are taken from The Poems of Charles Cotton 1638 - 1697, ed. John Beresford (London, 1923) -- hereafter Beresford. For Etherege see The Poems of George Etherege, ed. James Thorpe (Princeton, 1963); and for Cooper and Watson, see The Works of Aphra Behn, ed. Montague Summers (London, 1915), VI, 117 and 136.
4. See also William Davenant's "To Mr. Cotton" (printed in Beresford), Charles Cotton's reply "To Sir William Davenant In answer to the Seventh Canto, of the Third Book of his 'Gondibert,' directed to my Father..."; and John Wilson's "To His Excellence Richard, Earl of Arran, Lord-Deputy of Ireland, on the occasion of his Grace James, Duke of Ormond, etc., Lord-Lieutenant of the same, going to England and leaving the Government to him" (1682). Wilson's poem appears in the Dramatic Works of John Wilson, ed. James Maidment and W. H. Logan (Edinburgh and London, 1814), pp. xii-xiii.
5. Van Doren, p. 147.
6. Kinsley, I, 154.
7. Beresford, p. 117.
8. Van Doren, p. 146.

9. Kinsley, I, 15.

10. Kinsley, I, 14.

11. Beresford, p. 276.

12. Complimentary poems that I have seen demonstrating this tendency include Richard Duke's "To Mr. Creech, On His Translation of Lucretius" (c. 1682) and "To Mr. Henry Dickinson, On His Translation of Simon's Critical History of the Old Testament" (1682). In the second poem Duke moves beyond mere praise to comment on the religious controversy that Simon's translation started. See also "To Mr. Dryden, on his Religio Laici" (c. 1682) in John Dryden and others, Miscellany Poems, 4th ed. (6 volumes, London, 1716), I, 60-61 -- hereafter Dryden's Miscellany. Thomas Otway's "To Mr. Creech, Upon His Translation of Lucretius" (c. 1682); and Henry Needler's "To the Earl of Roscommon; Occasioned by His Lordship's Essay on Translated Verse" (c. 1684). Needler's poem ("From the Latin of Mr. Charles Dryden") is in Chalmers, VIII, 265.

13. Kinsley, I, 466.

14. Kinsley, I, 466.

15. For this same quality see Thomas Otway's "To Mr. Creech, Upon His Translation of Lucretius" (c. 1682) and Dr. Chetwood's "To the Earl of Roscommon, on his Essay on Translated Verse." Chetwood (Chalmers, VIII, 264) particularly takes note of Roscommon's interest in the refinement of language.

16. The Poems of George Etherege, ed. James Thorpe (Princeton, 1963), p. 15.

17. The background and motivation of these two verse letters are interesting. In 1678 the King gave Wycherley money for a recuperative journey to Montpellier, and in 1679 Wycherley became tutor to the King's son, the Duke of Richmond. In the same year, however, disaster struck in the form of Lady Drogheda; Wycherley met her when he was visiting Tunbridge Wells and in 1680, without acquainting the King, married her. Seriously annoyed by this breach of etiquette and lack of confidence, Charles banished Wycherley and his new wife from court. Lady Drogheda proved also to be terribly suspicious of her husband; and when she died in 1681, her will was contested. The result was that Wycherley had to bear some sizable court expenses and was thrown into prison for debt, where he remained for seven years before his "friends" at court remembered him. The epistles were probably written shortly before Wycherley was jailed and are both thinly veiled appeals for help. DNE, XXI, 1113.

18. The Complete Works of William Wycherley, ed. Montague Summers (London, 1924), II, 255. Hereafter Wycherley.

19. Wycherley, II, 253.

20. Wycherley, II, 261.

21. Beresford, p. 113.

22. Kinsley, I, 15.

23. Beresford, p. 274. In his epistle "To the Earl of Roscommon, On his Essay on Translated Verse" (1684), Dr. Chetwood says,

True poets' souls to princes are ally'd,  
And the world's empire with its kings divide.  
Heaven trusts the present time to monarchs' care,  
Eternity is the good writer's share.

Chalmers, VIII, 265. I do not understand the allusion to "Absalom and Achitophel."

24. Beresford, p. 113. This notion seems especially pronounced in the 1670's and early 1680's. See Dryden's "To Mr. Lee, on his Alexander" (1677), Etherege's "To Mr. J. D. on his Translations out of French and Italian" (1672), and Wycherley's "To the Duke" (1683). At the end of his poem Wycherley says,

My End is not at all to shew my Art,  
In Lying Verse, but here my-Your true Heart,  
Which from the Left-Right-Side can never part.

25. Alexandre Seljame, Men of Letters and the English Public in the Eighteenth Century, ed. Sonamy Dobrée and trans. E. O. Lorimer (London, 1946), p. 129.

26. One poem I have seen that does mask an insult in praise is J. Adams' "To the excellent Madame Dehn, on her Poems" (1683). Beginning with the notion that men are too coarse to be poets and that women alone are tender enough to preserve the "Aetherial flame," Adams says,

This Greece in Sappho, in Grinda knew  
Our Isle; though they were but low types to you.

This seems a clear echo of Dryden's Mac Flecknoe (1632):

Keywood and Shirley were but types of thee,  
Thou last great Prophet of Tautology.

And if it is, Adams' poem is anything but complimentary.  
The ironic praise, I believe, continues in such lines as,

Oft may we see some wretched story told;  
In ductile sense spread thin as leaves of Gold.  
You have ingrost th' inestimable Mine;  
Which in well polisht Numbers you refine,  
While still the solid Mass shines thick in every Line.

"Polisht" seems to look in other directions. And more irony appears in the concluding thought that Madame Behn's "Pen sheds Flames as dangerous as her Eyes." This practice of masking an insult was not, I believe, very widespread before 1688. Adams' poem is the only one of its kind that I have seen. It appears in The Works of Aphra Behn, ed. Montague Summers (London, 1915), VI, 120-21.

27. Kinsley, I, 387.

28. Kinsley, I, 13-14.

29. For the ideal of art hiding art see also George Etherege's "To Mr. J. K. on his Translations out of French and Italian" (1672) and Dr. Chetwood's "To the Earl of Roscommon, on his Essay on Translated Verse" (1684). Chetwood's work is of particular interest because the author, after noting that in Roscommon's poem "A secret grace fashions the flowing lines," associates this ideal with Horace.

Horace, if living by exchange of fate,  
Would give no laws, but only yours translate.

Chalmers, VIII, 264. Other poems that mention aesthetic criteria ("latent sense," clarity, strength of thought) include Richard Duke's "To Mr. Henry Dickinson, On his Translation of Simon's Critical History of the Old Testament" (1682) and "To Mr. Creech, On his Translation of Lucretius" (c. 1682); and Thomas Otway's "To Mr. Creech, Upon His Translation of Lucretius" (c. 1682).

30. Those that Chetwood mentions include making "warlike James's peaceful virtues known" and praising "Maria." See "To the Earl of Roscommon, on his Essay on Translated Verse," Chalmers, VIII, 264.

31. "To Mr. Dryden, On His Troilus and Cressida" (1679), Chalmers, IX, 225.

32. For similar comments see Dryden's "To my Honored Friend, Sir Robert Howard, On his Excellent Poems" (1660), "To my Honour'd Friend, Dr. Charleton, on his learned and useful Works; and more particularly this of Stone-heng, by him

Restored to the true Founders" (1663) and "To the Earl of Roscommon, on his Excellent Essay on Translated Verse" (1684). Earl R. Wasserman in his "Dryden's Epistle to Charleton," JEGP, LV (April 1956), 201-212, notes the political dimension of the epistle with its references to "restoration." He does not, however, mention that this element appears with some frequency in complimentary epistles written between 1660 and 1688. I have found it in six poems.

33. Kinsley, I, 33.

34. Van Doren, p. 147.

35. See Earl R. Wasserman, "Dryden's Epistle to Charleton."

36. See Dryden's "To his friend the Authour, on his divine Epigrams" (1650), "To my Honored Friend, Sir Robert Howard..." (1660), "To the Lady Castlemain..." (1663); Charles Cotton's "To Sir William Davenant..." (1652), "To Sir Aston Cockayne..." (c. 1662); Etherege's "To Her Excellence the Marchioness of Newcastle..." (1664); and Duke's "To Mr. Dryden, On His Troilus and Cressida" (1679).

37. See George Etherege's "To Mr. J. W. ..." (1672); Dryden's "To Mr. Lee..." (1677), "To the Earl of Roscommon..." (1684), and "To my Ingenious Friend, Mr. Henry Higden..." (1687); Otway's "To Mr. Creech, Upon His Translation of Lucretius" (c. 1682); Duke's "To Mr. Creech..." (c. 1682) and "To Mr. Henry Dickinson..." (1682); anon. "To Mr. Dryden, on his Religio Laici" (c. 1682, Dryden's Miscellany); Dr. Chetwood's "To the Earl of Roscommon..." (1684); and Henry Needler's "To the Earl of Roscommon..." (1684).

38. Kinsley, I, 15.

39. Kinsley, I, 14.

40. Kinsley, I, 15.

41. It points up, however, the weakness in my system of classification. It might be called an Horatian epistle.

42. The Literary Works of Matthew Prior, ed. H. Sunker Wright and Monroe K. Spears (Oxford, 1959), I, 58. All quotations from Prior's poetry are from this edition, hereafter Wright and Spears.

43. Wright and Spears, I, 60-61.

44. Wright and Spears, I, 61.

45. Wright and Spears, II, 838.

46. Wright and Spears, II, 239.

47. Wright and Spears, I, 69.

48. With one exception, Cotton's "To my old and Most Worthy Friend Mr. Izaak Walton, on his Life of Dr. Donne, etc." (1672) in which the title itself suggests the tone of the letter, complimentary poems written more in the manner of true epistles come at the end of the period. At least among the poems I have seen this is the case. See especially Thomas Otway's "To Fr. Creech, Upon His Translation of Lucretius" (c. 1682), Dr. Chetwood's "To the Earl of Roscommon, on his Essay on Translated Verse" (1684), and Dryden's "To the Earl of Roscommon..." (1684).

49. I have seen fourteen complimentary epistles written between 1660 and 1688 that I would say contain substantial thoughts on moral, political, or aesthetic subjects. Between 1689 and 1715 I have seen twenty-four such poems.

50. Tycherley, II, 275.

51. The Poems of Alexander Pope (The Trickerham Edition, 10 volumes, London, 1935-67), VI, 275. Hereafter I. E.

52. I. E., VI, 62. Before 1688 I have seen only one poem that I would call personal -- Prior's "Epistle to Lord [Dorset]" (1687). After 1688 the poems that seem personal include the following: Charles Hopkins' "To Fr. Congreve" (c. 1693), Dryden's "To my Dear Friend Fr. Congreve, On His Comedy, Call'd The Double-Dealer" (1694), Charles Codrington's "To My Friend the Author [Garth], Desiring My Opinion of His Poem" (c. 1699), Dryden's "To my Honour'd Kinsman, John Oriden..." (1700), Pope's "Epistle to Miss Clout, on her leaving the Town, after the Coronation" (1714) and Pope's "Epistle to Fr. Jervas, With Dryden's Translation of Fresnoy's Art of Painting" (1715).

53. Kinsley, II, 252.

54. Kinsley, II, 253.

55. Kinsley, II, 253-54.

56. Quoted in Kinsley, IV, 2026.

57. Other poems that demonstrate this same tendency include Charles Codrington's "To My Friend the Author [Garth], Desiring My Opinion of his Poem" (c. 1699), and Dryden's "To my Honour'd Kinsman..." (1700). Codrington's poem is in Chalmers, IX, 429.

58. I. E., VI, 156.

59. I. E., VI, 152.

60. Other works with passages in which poets parallel their own situations with those of their addressees (perhaps to a degree less than that found in Pope's epistle to Jervas) or in which there is the sense of a community of interests include the following: Charles Montague's "An Epistle to Charles Earl of Dorset, Occasioned by His Majesty's Victory in Ireland" (1690), Dryden's "To Mr. Granville, on his Excellent Tragedy, call'd Heroick Love" (1698), "To my Friend, the Author [Peter Motteux]" (1698) and "To my Honour'd Kinsman..." (1700); Addison's "A Letter from Italy" (1701), and Congreve's "To Sir Godfrey Kneller..." (c. 1710).

61. Kinsley, II, 262.

62. Kinsley, II, 260.

63. For the sake of comparison, the following figures might be helpful. Between 1660 and 1689, three out of twenty-seven complimentary epistles contain passages in which the poet talks about himself, and five are individualized, i. e. directed to the particular interests and character of the addressee. Between 1689 and 1715, nine out of twenty-nine contain passages in which the poet talks of himself, and six are individualized.

64. Of the twenty-nine poems I have read between 1689 and 1715, fourteen are heightened addresses, nine seem less public but are still relatively formal, and six seem somewhat more familiar than the others.

65. The lines are respectively from Ambrose Philips' "To the Right Hon. Charles Lord Halifax..." (1714), John Hughes' "To Mr. Addison..." (1713), and Congreve's "To Sir Godfrey Kneller, Occasioned by L---Y---'s Picture" (c. 1710).

66. "Epistle to the Right Honourable Charles Lord Halifax," Chalmers, X, 269.

67. Kinsley, III, 1436.

68. Kinsley, III, 1434. See also Charles Montague's "An Epistle to Charles Earl of Dorset, Occasioned by His Majesty's Victory in Ireland" (1690). Pride of accomplishment also underlies the occasional claim that Augustan Rome had been brought to England. See Thomas Tickell's "To Mr. Addison, on His Opera of Rosamond" (c. 1707), John Hughes' "To Mr. Addison" (1713), and Tickell's "To the Same [Mr. Addison] on his Tragedy of Cato" (1713). For the sake of comparison,

none of the complimentary poems I have seen between 1660 and 1688 develop their themes by contrasting French and English accomplishments.

69. In "To Mr. Creech, Upon His Translation of Lucretius," Otway urges his addressee to aim at high laurels, to "Secure great injur'd Haro." See also Mycherley's epistle "To the King" (1683) and Prior's "Epistle, to Lord Corset" (1687).

70. Mycherley, IV, 65.

71. "An Epistle to Charles Montague, Esq." (1691). See C. A. Moore, "Whig Panegyric Verse, 1700-1760," EMLA, XLI (June 1926), 352-401.

72. "To the Right Hon. Charles Lord Halifax" (1714), Chalmers, XIII, 118.

73. "An Epistle to Charles Montague, Esq." (1691), Chalmers, VIII, 352.

74. Kinsley, IV, 1529-30.

75. Kinsley, IV, 1534.

76. After the Peace of Ryswick in 1697, the King and Commons argued about this question. Kinsley, IV, 2071.

77. Charles E. Ward, The Life of John Dryden (Chapel Hill, 1961), p. 35.

78. Ward, p. 306.

79. Kinsley, IV, 1531.

80. Dryden aims specifically at Blackmore and Milbourne to repay them for their unprovoked attacks. Blackmore attacked Dryden in the character of Laurus in Prince Arthur. He referred to Dryden as an "old, revolted, unbelieving Card." Ward, p. 293.

81. Kinsley, IV, 1535.

82. Kinsley, IV, 2073.

83. Poems of John Gay, ed. John Underhill (London, 1893), I, 206. Hereafter John Gay.

84. John Gay, I, 206.

85. John Gay, I, 214-17. The paradoxical encomium was quite popular during the Restoration and eighteenth century. I have



not mentioned it before because it seems to me the least significant of a minor mode of epistolary verse. For a full discussion of its vogue see Henry Knight Miller, "The Paradoxical Encomium with Special Reference to its Vogue in England, 1600-1800," MP, LIII (February 1956), 145-179. And for a few specific examples see Waller's "To a Person of Honour (Mr. Edward Howard), upon his Incomparable, Incomprehensible Poem, intituled the British Princes" and its sequels. Dryden's Miscellany, III, 68 ff.

86. Chalmers, XIII, 415.

87. John Gay, I, 229.

88. John Gay, I, 220.

89. Other eulogies written in the form of epistles between 1715 and 1750 include Thomas Tickell's "To the Earl of Warwick, on the Death of Mr. Addison" (1721) and Walter Harte's "Macarius; or, the Confessor. An Epistle to the Rev. Dr. Robert Wort, Canon of Windsor." Harte's work is a eulogy of his father, who died in February 1735 (Chalmers, XVI, 392); but his poem was not written until after 1744. He refers to Pope and Dryden as being "no more." Aside from the poems mentioned I have seen no "eulogistic" epistles written before 1715.

90. Approximately twenty-four out of twenty-nine complimentary epistles written between 1689 and 1715 contain more or less substantial material. Between 1715 and 1750 I have seen only fourteen (including the eulogies).

91. Of the twenty-four more or less substantial complimentary epistles written between 1689 and 1715, six offer advice and two contain philosophical material related to the good life. Of the fourteen written after 1715, five offer advice and nine contain philosophical ideas related to the good life.

92. The Complete Postical Works of James Thomson, ed. J. Logie Robertson (London, 1908), p. 463.

93. Postical Works, pp. 463-64.

94. Chalmers, XIII, 517.

95. Other epistles that point up the difficulty of classification include William Brooms's "An Epistle to my Friend Mr. Elijah Fenton, Author of Mariamne, A Tragedy" (1726); William Somerville's "To Allan Ramsay, Upon His Publishing a Second Volume of Poems" (c. 1728) and "An Epistle to Allan Ramsay" (1721); and Allan Ramsay's "Answer..." (c. 1721).

96. Other minor poems of this sort are Christopher Pitt's "To Sir James Thornhill, on his excellent painting, The Rape of Helen, at the seat of General Erle in Dorsetshire" (1718), Walter Harte's "To a Young Lady, With Mr. Fenton's Miscellany" (1717), Thomas Farnell's "To Mr. Pope" (c. 1717), Richard Savage's "An Epistle to Mrs. Oldfield, of the Theatre-Royal" (c. 1719), John Gay's "Mr. Pope's Welcome From Greece" (1720), Christopher Pitt's "To Mr. Pope, On His Translation of Homer's Iliad" (c. 1720), Pope's "To Mrs. M. B. on her Birth-day" (1723), Richard Savage's "The Friend. An Epistle to Aaron Hill, Esq." (c. 1726), William Broome's "To Mr. Pope. On His Works" (1726), Christopher Pitt's "To Mr. Spence. Prefixed to the Essay on Pope's Odyssey" (c. 1727), Walter Harte's "To Mr. Pope" (c. 1727), Robert Dodsley's "An Epistle to Stephen Duck, at His First Coming to Court" (1732), George Lyttelton's "To Mr. Glover; On his Poem of Leonidas" (1734), Robert Dodsley's "An Epistle to Mr. Pope, Occasioned by His Essay on Man" (c. 1734), John Dyer's "To Aaron Hill, Esq. On His Poem called 'Gideon'" (c. 1741), William Collins' "An Epistle to Sir Thomas Hanmer, on his Edition of Shakespeare's Works" (1746), William Whitehead's "To Mr. Garrick" (c. 1746) and "To Richard Owen Cambridge" (c. 1754), and Richard C. Cambridge's "To Mr. Whitehead, On his being made Poet Laureate" (1757).

97. Before 1715 approximately 83% of the complimentary poems by poets to their social superiors are deferential. Among the poems written to fellow authors, "friends," etc., 30% are deferential. After 1715 for the same, the approximate figures are 20% and 11% respectively.

98. I. E., VI, 238-39.

99. The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, ed. George Sherburn (Oxford, 1956), II, 90-91.

100. I. E., VI, 210.

101. This same note, I believe, can be found in Robert Nugent's "An Epistle to the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cornbury" (1739) and other Whig panegyrics like Richard Savage's "An Epistle to the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole" (c. 1729) and Ambrose Philips' "To the Honourable James Craggs, Esq., Secretary at War, at Hampton-Court" (1717). As such, therefore, it is not entirely new. The earliest Whig panegyric I have seen is Charles Montague's "An Epistle to Charles Earl of Dorset, Occasioned by his Majesty's Victory in Ireland" (1690).

102. John Gay, I, 214.

103. Only about half of the poems I have seen after 1715 concern literary matters. Before this time about 70% involve such topics.

104. John Gay, I, 217.

105. Similarly in his "Epistle to Mr. Pope" (c. 1734), Dodsley concentrates not on Pope's merit (which is taken for granted) but on his own experience in reading the Essay on Man and his procedure in writing the compliment. At the end of the letter "Truth" steps forward and says,

"Forbear, vain bard, like them [fools] forbear thy lays;  
Alike to Pope such censure and such praise.  
Nor that can sink, nor this exalt his name,  
Who owes to virtue, and himself, his fame."

Chalmers, XV, 336.

106. I do not suggest that such subjects appear for the first time after 1715. Rather there is a proportionate increase. Praising a person for being sincere is the stock in trade of complimentary verse, as are references to good nature, intrinsic worth, candor, etc. Between 1699 and 1715 they appear in about 40% of the poems I have seen, after 1715 in about 70%.

107. The exceptions include Whig panegyrics which are generally concerned with the entire nation.

108. Twelve of the forty poems I have seen carry this implication. Aside from Whig panegyrics, for example, in "To Mr. Glover; On his Poem of Leonidas" (1734), George Lyttelton becomes appropriately concerned about liberty and says,

Lo! France, as Persia once, o'er every land  
Prepares to stretch her all-oppressing hand.  
Shall England sit regardless and sedate,  
A calm spectatress of the general fate?

Chalmers, XIV, 187. The impetus for the poem, in brief, comes not entirely from "Leonidas" but from Lyttelton's idea that England's liberty is endangered. Similarly William Whitehead seems to be thinking of his whole society when he says of Garrick,

A nation's taste depends on you:  
--Perhaps a nation's virtue too.

"To Mr. Garrick," Chalmers, XVII, 223.

## CHAPTER THREE

## HORACE

1. Alexander Foss: The Poetry of Allusion (Oxford, 1959), p. 165.

2. One of the weaknesses of my major division -- i.e. complimentary, Horatian, and Ovidian -- is that Horace sometimes included compliments in his verse letters. When the problem arises, I shall note it as I have in Chapter Two. But in general I think the distinction is still a valid one in terms of degree if not kind. Complimentary epistles are almost entirely given to the expression of praise. As the expression of praise is subsumed by other purposes -- such as literary advice or philosophical comment -- the poem may become more Horatian, depending on its content and manner. And finally when we find a writer talking about whatever concerns him (including perhaps an element of praise) in a poem that has the earmarks of familiar epistolary verse that I will attempt to define, we are, I think, closest to the Horatian way.

3. Horace, Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (London and Cambridge, 1955), p. 251. Hereafter Horace. All references, unless otherwise noted, are to page numbers in this Loeb Classical Library Edition. The translation, I understand, leaves something to be desired; but it has been available to me.

4. Horace was the son of a freedman and unlike those of "most of his associates among the upper classes to which he rose, his sympathies could include the freedman, the peasant, and the common soldier." Grant Showerman, Horace and His Influence (Boston, 1922), p. 20. Hereafter Showerman.

5. Ep. I. xviii., Horace, p. 367.

6. Eduard Fraenkel, Horace (Oxford, 1957), p. 309.

7. Horace, p. 325. This was Boswell's family motto at Auchinleck.

8. Horace, p. 339.

9. Horace, p. 351.

10. Horace, p. 281.
11. Horace, p. 347.
12. Horace, p. 319. See also Epp.I.xvii, 23-26 and I.xviii, 104-112.
13. Horace, p. 284.
14. Horace, p. 377.
15. Horace, p. 325.
16. Horace, pp. 253-55.
17. Horace, p. 267. See also Ep.I.xix. in which Horace applies the same principle in his decision not to enter into arguments with the general public or his critics.
18. Horace, p. 303. See also Ep.I.iii. in which Horace includes some advice to Celsus to depend more on his own literary abilities and less on earlier writers. And to this might be added Epp.I.xvii and I.xviii, which treat the subject of personal independence in terms of the relationship between patron and protégé.
19. Horace, p. 287. See also Ep.I.xi. in which Horace equates moderation with reason and wisdom and says that these "take away cares." Horace, p. 325.
20. Horace, p. 265.
21. This is essentially the theme of Prior's "Epistle to Lord Dorset."
22. Showerman, pp. 54-55.
23. He also applies it to literature. See A. P., lines 119 ff.
24. Horace, p. 409.
25. See Epp.I.x. 12-25, I.xv. 17, and I.xvi. 1-16.
26. Horace, p. 391.
27. Horace, p. 273.
28. Horace, p. 283.
29. Horace, p. 263-65.

30. Spectator, 183, The Spectator, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford, 1965), II, 220.
31. For Horace's rejection of popular literary success, see also Ep.II.ii.
32. Horace, p. 391.
33. Horace, p. 403.
34. Horace, p. 407.
35. Tenney Frank, Catullus and Horace (New York, 1928), p. 259.
36. J. Tate, "Horace and the Moral Function of Poetry," The Classical Quarterly, XXII (April, 1928), p. 67.
37. Horace, p. 433.
38. Horace, p. 435.
39. Shewarman, pp. 134-35.
40. Horace did not disparage, however, the ideas of noble imaginative power and lofty utterance as marks of the true poet. See Sat.I.iv. 39-44.
41. Horace, pp. 314-15. I have included the Latin text here because in some cases the sound of the words in Latin makes a difference. Fugitivus is a good example. It is a nervous comic word perfectly expressing what Horace wants to convey.
42. Horace, pp. 314-15.
43. Horace, p. 317. This might be an example of where the English translation fails.
44. Horace, p. 317. The translation contains a note of accusation that I don't believe is in the Latin.
45. Horace, p. 316-17.
46. Horace, p. 318-19.
47. See J. Wright Duff, A Literary History of Rome (London, 1910), p. 507; and George Converse Fiske, Lucilius and Horace (Madison, 1922), p. 426.
48. J. Wright Duff, Roman Satire: Its Outlook on Social Life (Berkeley, 1936), pp. 14-15. See also G. L. Hendrickson, "Are the Letters of Horace Satires?" American Journal of Philology,

XVIII (No. 71), 313-324; and Elizabeth Hazelton Haight, "Eoistula item quaevis non magna poema est: A Fresh Approach to Horace's First Book of Epistles," SE, XLV (October 1948), 525.

49. London, 1951, pp. 201-202.

50. Tenney Frank, Catullus and Horace (New York, 1928), pp. 173-75. See also Archibald Y. Campbell, Horace (London, 1924), p. 94.

51. See also Sat.I.ii. in which apparent grief by some over the death of the singer Tigellius prompts an extended piece on the folly of running to extremes.

52. Horace, p. 303.

53. Horace, p. 312. See also J. Wright Duff, Roman Satire (Berkeley, 1936), pp. 75-77; George Converse Fiske, Lucilius and Horace (Madison, 1922), p. 427; Archibald Y. Campbell, Horace (London, 1924), p. 252 and 264; and Jacques Ferret, Horace, trans. Gerthe Yunez (New York, 1964), p. 111.

54. Horace, p. 39.

55. Horace, pp. 217 and 377.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FAMILIAR EPISTLES: 1660 - 1688

1. Poems of Charles Cotton 1630-1687, ed. John Beresford (London, 1923), p. 112. Hereafter cited as Beresford.

2. Beresford, p. 113. See also Cotton's "To My Dear and Most Worthy Friend, Mr. Izaak Walton," which combines an idyllic description with an invitation. Earlier poems, different in manner though the same in substance, might include the following: Alexander Brome's "To His Friend W. C.," "To His Friend J. H.," and "To His Friend Mr. I. S. Being at London in the Author's Retirement"; and Habington's "To My Worthy Cousin, Mr. E. C. In Praise of the City Life, in the Long Vacation." Habington's poems have been edited by Kenneth Alcott (London, 1943).

3. Beresford, p. 271.

4. Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England (New York, 1936), p. 385.

5. See also Cotton's "The Storm: To the Earl of---," "Epistle to John Bradshaw, Esq, I," and the burlesque "Upon the Great Frost: To John Bradshaw, Esq." (1683). Earlier examples of similar epistles would include the following: Donne's two epistles to Christopher Brooke -- "The Storm" and "The Calm" -- and Katherine Philips' "A Sea-Voyage from Tenby to Bristol, begun September 5, 1652, sent from Bristol to Lucasia, September 8, 1652."

It might be helpful to note that in the list of topographical poems in Robert Aubin's book, three of the eleven "journey poems" listed between 1641 and 1688, four of the eight listed between 1689 and 1715, and eight of the twenty-three listed between 1716 and 1758 could be taken as epistles. This shows a jump from 27% to 50% and then a decline to 35% of the normally descriptive journey poems being cast in the form of an epistle. In all the other categories Aubin uses -- region, estate, hill, etc. -- I can find only five poems that could be taken as epistles listed before 1715. After that date, however, and up to 1758 approximately fifteen epistles appear. This would indicate that the epistolary journey poem was most popular between 1689 and 1715, that the epistle as a vehicle for a topographical subject was used generally after 1715, but that descriptive epistolary poems were not written in significant numbers at any time between 1660 and 1758. Aubin lists approximately 390 titles between 1660 and 1758. Of these, only twelve are called "epistles," eight are "letters," and twelve are poems addressed "to" someone.

6. Beresford, p. 264. "Couryat" is supposed to have walked 900 miles wearing one pair of shoes.

7. Beresford, p. 265.

8. Beresford, p. 254. In 1667 Cotton was appointed Captain in the Earl of Chesterfield's regiment. See Beresford, p. 21, n. 14.

9. Other epistles in this category include Cotton's "Epistle to John Bradshaw, Esq. III"; Dryden's "To Sir George Etherege. Mr. D.---Answer"; Wycherley's (?) "A Letter from Mr. Shadwell to Mr. Wycherley" and "The Answer"; and Wycherley's "An Epistle from the Country, to my Friend Sir C. S. in Town; in Answer to one of His, wherein He wonder'd, I did not Answer His last," and "An Epistle to a Witty Friend, in Excuse, for not Answering A Long One from Him, as soon as it was expected."



10. Poems of John Oldham, ed. Sonamy Dobrée (Carbondale, 1960), p. 72. Oldham was living with Sir Edward Thurland, a judge, and was tutor to the judge's two grandsons.

11. Oldham, p. 73.

12. Oldham, pp. 76-77. As Dobrée notes, this was Dryden's idea originally. See the dedication to the Rival Ladies (1664).

13. Oldham, p. 78.

14. One other "literary" epistle is Cotton's burlesque account of writing a letter to a friend in his "Epistle to Sir Clifford Clifton, then sitting in Parliament."

15. Alexander Chalmers, The Works of the English Poets (London, 1810), VIII, 318. Hereafter Chalmers.

16. Chalmers, VIII, 319.

17. See Pomfret's "To Another Friend, Under Affliction" and "To His Friend, Inclined to Marry"; Wycherley's "An Epistle, to a Brave Young Man, making a Campaign in Flanders; said to have done Wonders there, by which he was Wounded"; and Cotton's "To John Bradshaw, Esq." I would classify all these poems, different though they may be, as primarily philosophic and didactic.

18. Seresford, pp. 260-61. Cotton's "fishing-house" on the banks of the Dove was about 200-300 yards from the main building. Over the door he inscribed Piscatoribus Sacrum.

19. For an extensive discussion of this subject, see Karen-Sofie Rostvig, The Happy Man (Oslo, 1954). Other epistles (1660-1688) which associate happiness with country life include Cotton's "To my Friend, Mr. John Anderson. From the Country," "To My Dear and Most Worthy Friend, Mr. Izaak Walton," "A Journey into the Peak: To Sir Aston Cockain"; and Thomas Otway's "An Epistle to Richard Duke." All of these make either direct or indirect references to the easy careless pleasures of country life, with some emphasis on the joys of reading, drinking, dining, and conversing with friends. A noteworthy distinction is that most of Cotton's poems are based on his own concrete surroundings, whereas Otway's epistle is a dream vision more or less in the wish-fulfillment vein of "The Choice."

20. Chalmers, VIII, 318.

21. Sometimes the poets writing between 1660 and 1688 call attention to a lack of content, or the absence of a good

conscience, as one of man's ills. In his epistle "To John Bradshaw, Esq." Cotton writes of the happiness derived from a clear conscience, but adds

But very few (my friend) I fear,  
Whom this ill age has bred,  
At need have such a comforter  
To make their dying bed.

Ceresford, p. 257. And more often the poet's lack of content appears in his writing. Cotton's "Epistle to Sir Clifford Clifton..." begins with an account of a "villainous attack of the spleen" and ends with a picture of the poet besieged by duns and justices of the peace. His "Epistle to John Bradshaw, Esq. II" refers to the country as a second purgatory and to country people as less civil than dogs; and his "Epistle to John Bradshaw, Esq. III" makes light of the country as an "abominable place."

22. Charles E. Ward, The Life of John Dryden (Chapel Hill, 1961), p. 179.

23. The Poems of John Dryden, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford, 1959), I, 322. Hereafter Kinsley.

24. Kinsley, I, 311.

25. Kinsley, I, 311.

26. Kinsley, I, 317-19.

27. For this and following quotations see Kinsley, I, 311, 314, and 321-22.

28. A. F. B. Clark, Boileau and the French Classical Critics in England (Paris, 1925), p. 384.

29. Harold F. Brooks, "Contributors to Frome's Horace," N&Q, CLXXXIX (March 19, 1939), 200-201.

30. The primary interest in Horace's one epistle to the Pisos (as opposed to the Epistles) is seen in the fact that the Ars Poetica was translated into blank verse by Roscommon in 1690 and adapted in a modernized version by Oldham between 1680 and 1683. For the influence of Boileau's L'Art Poétique on these translations and the two essays above, see A. F. B. Clark, pp. 127-142. Oldham says in his introduction to his adaptation, "I have been careful to avoid stiffness, and made it my endeavour to hit (as near as I could) the easy and familiar way of writing, which is peculiar to Horace in his Epistles, and was his proper talent above any of mankind." Quoted in Dobrée's edition of Oldham's poetry, p. 144.

31. . . "The essential difference between the letter and the treatise has to do with the original intent, not with their final fate. Anything is a treatise that arises from our having ideas and principles; a treatise is anything written in which we efface ourselves behind what we propose, in which we use what we are to create something which will have a value apart from what we are. A letter is whatever is written in the opposite way, when the communication of ideas is only a means, an instrument, of the communication of persons." Jacques Perret, Horace, trans. Bertha Humez (New York, 1964), p. 113.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FAMILIAR EPISTLES: 1689 - 1715

1. I have not seen Laurence Eusden's "To Mr. L----; Occasion'd by His Travelling from Cambridge over some Parts of England" (1714), but the title suggests that it would fall under the descriptive familiar epistolary heading. Robert A. Aubin lists it in Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England (New York, 1936), p. 396.
2. Poems of John Gay, ed. John Underhill (London, 1893), I, 187. Hereafter John Gay. Gay may well be laughing at the whole genre of journey poems.
3. John Gay, I, 191.
4. Poems of Charles Cotton, 1680-1687, ed. John Jeresford (London, 1923), pp. 260-61.
5. John Gay, I, 190.
6. In the background of Cotton's poem is mere personal experience. Gay makes his experience "literary" by adding an undercurrent of mock-romance.
7. Other examples might include Pope's "Letter to Cromwell" (1707) and "An Epistle to Henry Cromwell, Esq." (1707), both of which are "high-spirited" unofficial octosyllabic effusions using acrobatic rhymes and old unpolite words.

DEAR Mr. Cromwell,

May it please ye!  
Sit still a Moment; pray be easy--  
Faith 'tis not five; no Play's begun;

No Game at Ombre lost or won.  
 Read something of a diff'rent Nature,  
 Than Ev'ning Post, or Observer;  
 And pardon me a little Fooling,  
 --Just while your Coffee stands a Cooling.

The Poems of Alexander Pope (The Twickenham Edition, 10 volumes, London, 1939-57), VI, 24.

8. The Literary Works of Matthew Prior, ed. H. Dunker Wright and Monroe K. Spears (Oxford, 1959), I, 394. Hereafter Wright and Spears.

9. Wright and Spears, I, 395. Shelton finally got his preferment in 1714 from Lord Oxford and became a Commissioner of the Stamp Office.

10. The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford, 1958), I, 171-72.

11. Swift's Poems, I, 174-75.

12. Other Horatian imitations written between 1689 and 1715 include Swift's "T--l--nd's Invitation to Dismal, to Dine with the Calves-Head Club. Imitated from Horace, Epist. 5. Lib. I" (1712); Rowe's "Horace, Book I. Epistle IV. Imitated. To Richard Thornhill, Esq."; Swift's "Horace, Book I. Ep. V. John Dennis the Sheltering Poet's Invitation To Richard Steele, The Secluded Party-Writer, and Member; To come and live with him in the Mint" (1714). Imitations of the Epistles are consistently over-shadowed by imitations of Horatian Odes, but I think it significant that not until after 1688 does this type of epistolary poem appear.

After 1688 translations of the Epistles are also more frequent. Creech published his first translation of the odes, satires, and epistles in 1684. Thereafter his work appeared in 1688, 1711, 1715, 1718, 1720, 1730, etc. Samuel Dunster published a translation of the works of Horace in six volumes in 1709. Jonas Hanway's translation of several odes, satires, and epistles appeared in 1730. And so on. See CHEL, II, 765-66.

Between 1660 and 1688, Brome and Creech edited translations of Horace which include the Epistles. Between 1689 and 1715 we have the translations edited by Creech and Samuel Dunster. Translations between 1715 and 1740 include those by Creech, Dunster, Leonard Walsted, Jonas Hanway, Charles Carthy, and George Ogle. From 1740 to 1758 the Epistles translated appeared in editions by Philip Francis, Samuel Patrick, John Stirling, Christopher Smart, and William Duncombe et al. The dates of the various editions indicate that between 1690 and 1720 the interest in Horace grew and then

levelled off. No translations of the Epistles appeared between 1680 and 1700. One translation appeared in the first decade of the eighteenth century, and five appeared in the second. Thereafter up to 1760, between three and five editions of Horace translated including the Epistles appeared during each decade.

13. Faction Display'd was probably written by William Shippen. Prior wrote in his diary, "upon the great victory of Hockstadt [i. e. Blenheim] I thought I had a fair occasion to shew the real respect I had for my Lord [i. e. Marlborough], and so vindicate myself for the scandal of having lampooned him or his family, upon which I wrote my letter to Monsr Boileau...." He sent two copies of the poem to the Duchess, who returned the packet unopened. Wright and Spears, II, 797 and 893.

14. Quoted in Wright and Spears, II, 893.

15. Wright and Spears, I, 220.

16. "Max Emmanuel, Elector of Bavaria, was one of the three commanders on the French side. Disagreement between him and Marshals Tallard and Marsin was partly responsible for their defeat." Wright and Spears, II, 893.

17. Wright and Spears, I, 223.

18. Wright and Spears, I, 225.

19. Wright and Spears, I, 226.

20. Wright and Spears, I, 226.

21. Wright and Spears, I, 226.

22. It has also some pretty clear affinities with earlier Whig panegyrics, especially Montague's "Epistle to Dorset on the Battle of the Boyne."

23. Perhaps I am wrong, but Prior's poem to Boileau might be taken as an interesting epistolary descendant of the first period in still another way. We have seen that originally the Horatian epistolary manner was cultivated in verse essays, with a major interest in the Ars Poetica modified by Boileau's L'Art Poétique. Prior's epistle to Boileau is, in a sense, a small "Art" of how to write an epic poem on the Blenheim victory and thus complete the task of taking the palm away from France.

Other literary epistles written between 1689 and 1715 include Gay's "An Epistle to a Lady. Occasion'd by the Arrival of Her Royal Highness..." (1714), Prior's "To Mr. Fleetwood

Shepherd" (1689); Rowe's "An Epistle to Flavia on the Sight of Two Pindaric Odes on the Spleen and Vanity. Written by a Lady to Her Friend"; and Prior's "An Epistle to Fleetwood Shepherd, Esq." (1689).

24. The Augustan Reprint Society. Series Two: Essays on Poetry, No. 2 (January 1947), sig. B1r. Hereafter cited as ARS. In 1637 William Prynne, a puritan pamphleteer, was imprisoned in Mount Orgueil Castle in Jersey as a result of writing an anonymous attack on Wren, bishop of Norwich, entitled "News from Ipswich." The opening lines probably refer to his Mount Orgueil or Divine and Profitable Meditations (1641), "a verse description of his prison," including "meditations on rocks, seas, and gardens." DNB, XVI, 433. Thomas Saffold (d. 1691) was a notorious quack (DNB, XVII, 603); and "Normanby" refers to John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave. I do not know who "that fierce Spark" is.

25. These fulminations look back to Jeremy Collier's attack on the stage published two years earlier and forward to Pope's Dunciad and universal darkness.

26. ARS, p. 6.

27. ARS, sig. A2r.

28. I have found no such references to epistolary poetry before this date. Dryden's prefatory remarks to Religio Laici bear only on the appropriateness of the epistolary style to a particular kind of poetry; and Oldham's statement in his introduction to his adaptation of the Ars Poetica indicates mainly that Oldham recognizes Horace's mastery of the "easy and familiar way" and that he wishes to reproduce it as nearly as possible.

29. ARS, sig. C1r.

30. Less often quoted lines from the same poem indicate that the "perfect" style, the dress of "perfect" thought will serve as does "Nature" to foster harmony, order, beauty and, thus, wonder and delight.

Here Nature, whether more intent to please  
Us or her self, with strange varieties,  
(For things of wonder give no less delight  
To the wise Maker's, than beholders sight.  
Though these delights from several causes move  
For so our children, thus our friends we love)  
Wisely she knew, the harmony of things,  
As well as that of sounds, from discord springs.  
Such was the discord, which did first disperse  
Form, order, beauty, through the Universe;

While driness moysture [sic], coldness heat resists,  
 All that we have, and that we are, subsists.  
 While the steep horrid roughness of the Wood  
 Strives with the gentle calmness of the flood.  
 Such huge extremes when Nature doth unite,  
 Wonder from thence results, from thence delight.

Quotations from "Coopers Hill" are taken from Seventeenth-Century Verse and Prose, ed. Helen C. White et al (New York, 1951), I, 406-413.

31. ARS, sig. C1r.

32. ARS, sig. C1r. A much less ambitious didactic epistle which talks of literary matters is Gay's "On a Miscellany of Poems to Bernard Lintott" (1712). It does not mention epistles; but in attributing the excellence of a "Miscellany" to variety ("Variety's the source of joy below"), it indirectly supports epistolary poetry. Might we not consider an epistle a kind of "Miscellany" in miniature?

Two other didactic poems in this same general category are Addison's "An Account of the Greatest English Poets. To Mr. Henry Sacheverell, April 3, 1694," and Elijah Fenton's "Epistle to Mr. Southerne, from Kent, January 28, 1711." Both appear in Alexander Chalmers, The Works of the English Poets (London, 1910), IX, 529 and X, 399.

33. Fenton's epistle to Lambard was first published in Poems on Several Occasions (1717). CBEL, II, 316. I suspect, however, that it was written sometime between 1713 and 1715 when Fenton undertook the education of the Earl of Orrery's son. Internal evidence shows that Fenton was doing much reading of the classics and was "By Orrery's indulgence wrapt in ease" when he wrote the poem. The reading might coincide with his activities as a tutor. Also after 1715, Orrery was out of favor; if Fenton's epistle had been written after this date, I would expect it to contain some hint of Orrery's political fortunes, which it does not. See DNE, VI, 1186 and II, 1017.

Other philosophical epistles include Hughes' "A Letter to a friend in the Country," a short poem on the joys of friendship, poetry, love, and obscure rural life; Prior's "To the Hon. Charles Montague, Esq." (1692), which concludes paradoxically that happiness depends on self-deception; and Congreve's "Of Pleasing. An Epistle to Sir Richard Temple," which attributes the desire to please to vanity. Congreve's poem was probably written before 1714, when Richard Temple became Baron Cobham.

34. Joseph Wharton, quoted by Earl Harlan, Elijah Fenton 1683-1730 (Philadelphia, 1937), p. 82.

35. Harlan, p. 80.

36. Alexander Chalmers, The Works of the English Poets (London, 1810), X, 415. Hereafter cited as Chalmers.

37. Chalmers, X, 417.

38. Chalmers, X, 416.

39. Chalmers, X, 417. Brisquet, jester to Francis I of France, kept a calendar of fools.

40. Chalmers, X, 415.

41. Chalmers, X, 27-28.

42. See also Nicholas Rowe's "Horace, Book I. Epistle IV. Imitated. To Richard Thornhill, Esq." Just as Horace tried to divert Tibullus with some reminders of his good fortune, so Rowe may be attempting to cheer his friend. Thornhill seems to be wealthy, wise, and articulate; and to these blessings Rowe, perhaps echoing Pomfret's "The Choice," adds the following Horatian advice:

On these let health and reputation wait,  
The favour of the virtuous and the great:  
A table cheerfully and cleanly spread,  
Stranger alike to riot and to need:  
Such an estate as no extremes may know,  
A free and just disdain for all things else below.  
Amidst uncertain hopes, and anxious cares,  
Tumultuous strife, and miserable fears,  
Prepare for all events thy constant breast,  
And let each day be to thee as thy last.

Chalmers, IX, 473.

43. Chalmers, X, 416.

44. Chalmers, X, 293.

45. Chalmers, X, 299. See also "To the Honourable Charles Montague, Esq." in which Prior talks of happiness in terms of "Imagin'd Pleasures." Whereas Fenton and Congreve attribute unhappiness to man's lack of content within his proper sphere, Prior ironically takes unhappiness as the normal state ("This Cheat of Life") and locates tenuous pleasure in man's hopes for a better future.

The hoary Fool, who many Days  
Has struggl'd with continu'd Sorrow,  
Renews his Hope, and blindly lays  
The desp'rate Bett upon to Morrow.

Wright and Spears, I, 108.



46. These poems include Fenton's "Epistle to Mr. Southerne, From Kent, January 28, 1711," Addison's "An Account of the Greatest English Poets. To Mr. Henry Sacheverell, April 3, 1694," Wesley's "An Epistle to a Friend Concerning Poetry" (1700), Gay's "On a Miscellany of Poems to Bernard Lintott," Prior's "A Letter to Monsieur Soileau Despreaux; Occasion'd by the Victory at Blenheim, 1704," Gay's "An Epistle to a Lady. Occasion'd by the Arrival of Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales" (1714), Prior's "To Mr. Fleetwood Shephard" (1689) and "An Epistle to Fleetwood Shephard [sic], Esq.; Burleigh, May 14, 1689," and Swift's "Horace, Book I. Ep. VII. Addressed to the Earl of Oxford, 1713."

47. Earl Harlan, Elijah Fenton 1683-1730 (Philadelphia, 1937), p. 57.

48. Chalmers, X, 401.

49. Chalmers, X, 299. This, by the way, again points up the difficulties in my system of classification. Both the epistle to Southerne and the epistle to Temple might be called complimentary.

50. Congreve's epistle to Temple and Fenton's to Southerne are serious in tone, and for the most part both use closed heroic couplets. Others like them, i. e. with passages containing the personal note that distinguishes epistolary verse, include the following: Addison's "An Account of the Greatest English Poets..." (the opening and closing passages); Fenton's "Epistle to Thomas Lambard"; the opening lines of Wesley's "An Epistle to a Friend Concerning Poetry"; Gay's "An Epistle to a Lady..." (1714); and Prior's epistle to Boileau.

More jocular epistles in octosyllabic verse with the personal note include Prior's two epistles to Fleetwood Shephard and Pope's epistles to Henry Cromwell. Lines 141-188 of Prior's "An Epistle to Fleetwood Shephard [sic], Esq.; Burleigh, May 14, 1689" sound very much like Cotton's "Epistle to John Bradshaw, Esq. I," although Prior is less serious.

For me, whom wandering Fortune threw  
From what I lov'd, the Town and You;  
Let me just tell You how my Time is  
Past in a Country-Life.--Imprimis,  
As soon as Phoebus' Rays inspect us,  
First, Sir, I read, and then I Breakfast;  
So on, 'till foresaid God does set,  
I sometimes Study, sometimes Eat....  
The Books of which I'm chiefly fond,  
Are such, as You have whilom con'd;...  
Of Unicorns and Alligators,

Elks, Mermaids, Mummies, Witches, Satyrs,  
 And twenty other stranger Matters;  
 Which tho' they're Things I've no Concern in,  
 Make all our Grooms admire my Learning...  
 Sometimes I climb my Mare, and kick her  
 To bottl'd Ale, and neighbouring Vicar;...  
 Thus, without much Delight, or Grief,  
 I fool away an idle life....

Wright and Spears, I, 89-91.

51. Strictly speaking there is only one perfectly Horatian familiar epistle -- Fenton's "Epistle to Thomas Lambard." Four others are near Horatian epistles: Fenton's "Epistle to Mr. Southerne"; Congreve's "Of Pleasing"; Gay's "An Epistle to a Lady"; and Prior's epistle to Boileau. Of the remaining twelve original familiar epistles (not imitations) approximately six contain some slight quality -- thematic or stylistic -- that might but probably should not be associated with Horace's Epistles.

52. Men of Letters and the English Public, ed. Sonamy Dobrée and trans. E. C. Lorimer (London, 1948). See especially pp. 212-222.

53. Beljame, p. 219, n. 39a.

54. ARS, sig. C1r - C2v.

## CHAPTER SIX

### FAMILIAR EPISTLES: 1715 - 1758

1. The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford, 1958), II, 358.

2. Swift's Poems, II, 361.

3. See also Swift's "An Epistle Upon An Epistle From a certain Doctor To a certain great Lord: Being a Christmas-Box for D. Delany" (1729), in which Swift compares Delany's solicitation of Carteret with Smedley's petition to the Duke of Grafton. Swift advises his friend,

Be Modest: nor Address your Betters  
 With Begging, Vain, Familiar Letters.

Other minor poems of this sort include Swift's satirical "Letter from D. S--t. to D. S--y" (1725); Henry Fielding's witty "Letter to Sir Robert Walpole" (c. 1728); and Richard Berenger's plea "To Mr. Grenville, on his intended Resignation" (c. 1757). The poems by Fielding and Berenger are in Robert Dodsley and others, A Collection of Poems... (6 volumes, London, 1748-58), V and VI. Dodsley's Miscellany hereafter cited as Dodsley.

4. "Letter from Smyrna to his Sisters at Crux-Easton" (1733) and "Part of a Letter to my Sisters at Crux-Easton, written from Cairo in Egypt, August 1734." Dodsley, VI, 182-189. See also Robert Dodsley's "The Footman, An Epistle to my friend Mr. Wright," an account of a footman's day in London; and John Byrom's "A Description of Tunbridge, in a Letter to P. M. Esq." both of which appear in Alexander Chalmers, The Works of the English Poets (London, 1810)--hereafter Chalmers.

5. Chalmers, XV, 186.

6. Chalmers, XV, 186.

7. Dodsley, VI, 182.

8. Chalmers, XV, 187.

9. Remarks (London, 1752), p. 126. Quoted in Swift's Poems, II, 405.

10. Swift's Poems, III, 989.

11. Swift's Poems, III, 989-90.

12. See also Swift's "A Left-handed Letter to Dr. Sheridan" (1718) and Sheridan's reply, "To the Dean of St. Patricks" (1718); Pope's "Mr. P-- to Dr. A--" (1726) -- of doubtful authorship; and J. Hoadley's "To the Rev. Mr. J. Straight" with its answer, J. Straight's "Answer to the foregoing." The poems by Straight and Hoadley appear in Dodsley V and have in common with some of the others cited passages of mock pedantry and acrobatic rhymes.

13. The Poems of Alexander Pope (The Twickenham Edition, 10 volumes, London, 1939-67), VI, 321. Hereafter cited as I. E. See also Robert Nugent's "Epistle to Pollio, from the Hills of Howth" (Dodsley, II, 215-218). Nugent touches on the Horatian theme of happiness dependent on a good conscience; but his invitation is perhaps too expansive to be called Horatian. Like Horace, he favors and defends the country life, but he seems more interested in criticizing both the Irish and the English courts.

14. I have seen five epistolary imitations written between 1689 and 1715. After 1715 I have seen about twice this number.

15. For many more specific examples of parallels and adaptations, see James W. Tupper, "A Study of Pope's Imitations of Horace," PMLA, XV (1900), 191-215. Hereafter Tupper.

16. Christopher Pitt's imitations can be found in Chalmers, XII, 394-401.

17. Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (London, 1947), p. 277. Hereafter Horace.

18. Chalmers, XII, 399.

19. I cannot identify J. Pitt.

20. See also Eg. II. i. 168-176 and Pope's imitation, lines 282-295. Talking of stage fare, Horace mentions only Plautus. Pope refers to Congreve, Farquhar, Vanbrugh, Aphra Behn, and Cibber.

21. Horace, pp. 417-419.

22. I. E., IV, 229.

23. DNB, VII, 1043.

24. "Whilst the King was Prince there were so few occasions for the Queen to show her credit with him that some were apt to imagine this latent dormant power was much less than it proved itself when the time came that made it worth her while to try, show, and exert it. But as soon as ever the Prince became King the whole world began to find out that her will was the sole spring on which every movement in the Court turned; and though His Majesty lost no opportunity to declare that the Queen never meddled with his business, yet nobody was simple enough to believe it; and few besides himself would have been simple enough to hope or imagine it could be believed, since everybody who knew there was such a woman as the Queen, knew she not only meddled with business, but directed everything that came under that name, either at home or abroad. Her power was unrivalled and unbounded." John, Lord Hervey, Some Materials Towards Memoirs of the Reign of King George II, ed. Romney Sedgwick (London, 1931), I, 44-45. See also I, 68-69.

25. See Pope's "Epilogue to the Satires. Written in 1738. Dialogue I", lines 152-158.

26. DNB, VII, 1050 and I. E., IV, 229.

27. Many epistolary imitations, with the exception of the minor invitations, etc., seem to have this characteristic. Remember, however, that "many" means primarily Pope. In numbers, after 1715, about seven of the ten imitations I have seen involve a change in intention. I distinguish between the "Epistle to Augustus" and the other imitations because of the degree of irony -- massive in "Augustus," not so pronounced in the others.

28. Although matters of detail often determine the total effect of the imitation and control its "meaning," the same general point is true of Pitt's "Epistle to Mr. Spence. In Imitation of Horace, Epist. X. Book I," "Epistle to J. Pitt, Esq. In Imitation of Horace, Epist. IV. Book I," and "Epistle to Mr. Spence. When Tutor to Lord Middlesex. In Imitation of Horace, Book I, Epist. XVIII," as well as Pope's imitations of Epp.II.ii, I.i, and even the "Epistle to Augustus."

29. I. E., IV, 237.

30. In 1738, when this imitation was published, William Murray was famous and popular because of his "eloquent speech before the House of Commons in support of the merchants' petition concerning the Spanish depredations." I. E., IV, 374.

31. I. E., IV, 239-41.

32. See Horace's Ep.I.vi. 22; 29.

33. I. E., IV, 243-45.

34. See also Pope's imitations of Epp.I.i.138-147, II.i. 334-337, II.ii. 127-124 and Pitt's "Epistle to Mr. Spence. When Tutor to Lord Middlesex," lines 37-42.

35. Tupper, p. 199

36. In his imitation of Ep.I.i. Pope substitutes "Linnen worthy Lady Mary" for Horace's talk of a "tattered shirt," and he adds both direct and indirect slurs against Sir Richard Blackmore, "Bug" (Henry de Grey, Duke of Kent), and a "Minister" (Sir Robert Walpole). He also adds complimentary references to George Lyttelton, Richard Mead, William Cheselden, and Sir John Barnard. For Horace's "populus Romanus" he substitutes "honest Schutz," and he makes concrete Horace's "physician" with a non-committal reference to Richard Hales. The ratio of slurs to compliments is about even. See also Pitt's "Epistle to Mr. Spence. When Tutor to Lord Middlesex." For Horace's generalized "rich friend" who advises his suppliant to be a "client of sense," Pitt substitutes Peter Walter, a contemporary

"money scrivener," who appears to have been fair game. For the pervasiveness of this practice in Pope's imitations, see Tupper.

37. "The Second Epistle of the Second Book of Horace," I. E., IV, 175.

38. The Literary Works of Matthew Prior, ed. H. Sunker Wright and Monroe K. Spears (Oxford, 1959), I, 85.

39. Chalmers, X, 471.

40. Chalmers, XIII, 514.

41. In "The Danger of Writing Verse, An Epistle" (1741), William Whitehead cites as one of the dangers the practices of such poets that Young has in mind. They injure all poets, because "Fame" reproaches all poets for the injury done to "Virtus." Dodsley, II, 257-58.

42. Scribblers were of course always fair game. My point here is that after 1715 the threat they presented to the responsible writer seems to have been more serious. There seem to have been more scribblers than ever before, and among the literary epistles I have read the degree of talk about the "motley train" increases.

43. "Two Epistles to Mr. Pope, Concerning the Authors of the Age, 1730. Epistle I," Chalmers, XIII, 515. See also Gay's "Epistle IV. To the Right Hon. Paul Bethuen, Esq." wherein the contemporary means of support for the writer are reduced to ironic and bitter absurdity; and William Whitehead's "The Danger of Writing Verse..." (1741), in which the poet allies poetic success with embroilment in factions, a loss of virtue, and the production of "senseless rapture...and empty song." Whitehead's poem is in Dodsley, II, 249-259.

44. See Epistle I, lines 25-34 and Epistle II, lines 97-102. Chalmers, XIII, 513 and 516.

45. Chalmers, XV, 90.

46. Dodsley, II, 250.

47. Of the fifteen post-1715 literary epistles I have found, five are primarily concerned with the bad state of literary affairs. I call this a major theme because it is the only one repeated with some frequency.

48. Chalmers, XV, 213. The same Horatian maxim is also referred to by Edward Rolle in "On Scribbling against Genius, An Epistle."

No single rule's more frequently enjoin'd,  
Than this; "Observe the bias of your mind."

Dodsley, III, 70.

49. Chalmers, XV, 89. See also the second of Edward Young's "Two Epistles to Mr. Pope..." and William Whitehead's "The Danger of Writing Verse." Young says, "Nothing but what is solid or refin'd / Should dare ask public audience of mankind"; and Whitehead notes that one of the dangers of writing poetry is that it does not admit any casual flights.

50. Chalmers, XIII, 516.

51. Chalmers, XV, 102. Lloyd probably has in mind not the Spectator but Guardian No. 15 in which Steele describes how difficult it is to "write Easily." That minor poets sometimes mirror trends clearly is proven by the contrast between Young and Lloyd. In 1730 Young emphasizes conscious craftsmanship and correctness: "Our age demands correctness." In 1757 Lloyd regrets that "the severity of taste / Has laid the walk of genius waste," that "all the grave imagination / Is dwindled into declamation," and he warns his addressee, Mr. J. C., of too much attention to correctness.

What task can Dullness e'er effect  
So easy, as to write correct?

Chalmers, XV, 89.

52. Chalmers, XV, 102.

53. Chalmers, XIII, 514.

54. Chalmers, XVI, 538.

55. Chalmers, XVI, 539.

56. Horace, p. 401.

57. The conversational idiom of Armstrong's "Taste" with its fairly strong admixture of disgust is repeated in Edward Young's "Two Epistles to Mr. Pope" and Edward Rolle's "On Scribbling against Genius. An Epistle." Whitehead's "The Danger of Writing Verse" preserves the technique of verse talk, but is more formal. Rephrasing his friend's question as to why he hasn't written, for instance, he begins with the following lines:

You ask me, sir, why thus by phantoms aw'd,  
No kind occasion tempts the Muse abroad?  
Why, when retirement soothes this idle art,  
To fame regardless sleeps the youthful heart?

In "An Epistle to Mr. Colman," an "Epistle to J. B. Esq.," and an "Epistle to the Same," Robert Lloyd is thoroughly colloquial in the manner of Prior.

You know, dear George, I'm none of those  
That condescend to write in prose;  
Inspir'd with pathos and sublime,  
I always soar--in doggrel rhyme.

And John Byrom is consistently familiar; he follows his own advice.

Form to yourself, directly, the design  
Of so constructing a poetic line;  
That it may cost, in writing it our way,  
The least expense of ink, as one may say;  
That word, or phrase--in measure that you please,--  
May come the nearest to prosaic ease.

See "An Epistle to a Friend, on the Art of English Poetry," Chalmers, XV, 212. Lloyd's poems are in Chalmers, XV; Solle's poem appears in Dodsley, III.

58. Chalmers, XVI, 540. Horace's technique of illustrating a general point by painting a **small** dramatic scene is exemplified in the Ars Poetica. Wishing to tell the Pisos of the need for disinterested criticism, Horace notes the folly of one's feeding a friend and then asking him to judge one's verse; "For he will call out 'Fine! good! perfect!' He will change colour over them; he will even distill the dew from his friendly eyes, he will dance and thump the ground with his feet " Horace, p. 485. See also the vignette already quoted from the first of Edward Young's two epistles to Pope, and Lyttelton's "An Epistle to Mr. Pope" (1730). Lyttelton advises Pope to give up satire, and does so by putting his words into the mouth of Virgil, whom he claims to have met while on his travels in Italy.

Great Bard, whose numbers I myself inspire,  
To whom I gave my own harmonious lyre,  
If high-exalted on the throne of Wit,  
Near me and Homer thou aspire to sit,  
No more let meaner satire dim the rays  
That flow majestic from thy nobler bays.

Dodsley, II, 42.

59. Chalmers, XVI, 539.

60. Chalmers, XVI, 540. Note incidentally the "saturic" metaphor.

61. "On Scribbling against Genius. An Epistle." Dodsley, III, 73.



62. Chalmers, XV, 212. For this more personal, and therefore more epistolary, mode of poetry see also John Gilbert Cooper's "The Apology of Aristippus" (1758), Robert Lloyd's "Epistle to J. B. Esq." (1757), "Epistle to the Same" (1757), "An Epistle to Mr. Colman" (1756), Edward Young's "Two Epistles to Mr. Pope" (1730), Lyttelton's "An Epistle to Mr. Pope, From Rome" (1730), and Gay's "Epistle IV. To the Right Hon. Paul Methuen, Esq." (1720).

63. Dodsley, II, 206-207.

64. Dodsley, III, 65-66.

65. Dodsley, III, 65.

66. Dodsley, III, 66.

67. The need for content, and man's responsibility for his own unhappiness are repeated in Lord Hervey's "To the Same [Mr. Fox]. From Hampton Court" (1731). Writing more bitterly than Rolle from a place that he calls "repugnant," Hervey finds man (and himself) perverse in his refusal to enjoy the pleasures immediately available to him, in his singular and often disastrous refinement of the "will of heaven," and in his capriciousness. Dupes of custom, prejudice, and interest -- says Hervey -- "Sure oft, unjustly, we impute to Fate / A thousand evils which ourselves create." Dodsley, V, 262-67. Moderate enjoyment of life's pleasures is inherent in Mr. Straight's advice "To Mr. John Hoadly" (1730); and in "Epistles to his Friends in Town, From Aristippus in Retirement" (1758), John Gilbert Cooper, while lacking an Horatian interest in sufficiency and simplicity, seems interested in making his life as an "innocent voluptuary" a work of art. He calls "Aristippus' world" a "poetic Heav'n." Straight's poem is in Dodsley, V. Cooper's poems are in Chalmers, XV.

68. Dodsley, IV, 209.

69. Dodsley, II, 30. Ayscough "was tutor to Lord Lyttelton, at Oxford, and afterwards, by marrying a sister of his pupil's, became brother-in-law to him." Dodsley, II, 28. See also Lyttelton's "To my Lord Hervey" (1730) and "To Mr. Ryntz, Ambassador at the Congress of Soissons" (1728); and William Whitehead's "To the Rev. Mr. Wright" (1751) in Chalmers, XVII.

70. Dodsley, III, 68. I will mention Matthew Green's "The Spleen. An Epistle to Mr. Cuthbert Jackson" later in a different context.

71. Dodsley, III, 79-80.

72. Dodsley, II, 204.

73. Chalmers, XVI, 536.

74. "On Nobility: An Epistle to the Earl of Ashburnham" (1743?), Chalmers, XVII, 210. My division of this second group of themes may seem somewhat artificial because in most of the poems I have mentioned the ideas are more or less the same -- happiness derived from virtue in terms of active social service and a concern for the welfare of others. However, I think the division is necessary in light of different emphases: Walpole's references, for example, are essentially political and nationalistic; whereas Whitehead seems primarily concerned with benevolent acts. See also Sneyd Davies' "To Charles Pratt, Esq; now Lord Camden" (1743) and "To the Worthy, Humane, Generous, Reverend, and Noble Mr. Frederick Cornwallis, now Archbishop of Canterbury" -- Dodsley, VI; Rev. Mr. Straight's "To Mr. John Hoadley, at the Temple" (1730) -- Dodsley, V; and George Lyttelton's "To Lord Hervey" (1730) -- Dodsley, II.

75. Horace, p. 263.

76. George Lyttelton, "To my Lord Hervey" (1730), Dodsley, II, 45. See also Horace's Ep. I.xi. 22 ff. and Pope's Essay on Man, IV, lines 15 ff.

77. Chalmers, XVII, 210 and Dodsley, II, 202-203.

78. For a detailed study of the "Horatian" elements in the Essay on Criticism and the Essay on Man, see Reuben Brower, Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion (Oxford, 1959), pp. 188-239. I have omitted these two poems from my discussion because I could not say anything Mr. Brower has not said.

79. The heroic-declamatory manner of William Whitehead's poem is repeated in Horace Walpole's "An Epistle from Florence" (1740), John Armstrong's "Of Benevolence" (1751), and Mark Akenside's "Epistle to Curio" (1744). The more calm legislative manner of Nugent's poem is repeated in his "An Epistle to Mr. Pope" (1739) and "An Epistle to a Lady" (1739) and William Belmoth's "Of Active and Retired Life. An Epistle to Henry Coventry, Esq." (1735).

80. Minor Poets of the Eighteenth Century, ed. Hugh I'Anson Fausset (London, 1939), p. 210. All quotations from "The Spleen" are from this text, hereafter Minor Poets.

81. Minor Poets, p. 219.

82. Minor Poets, pp. 225-26.

83. Minor Poets, p. 211.

84. Minor Poets, p. 214.
85. Minor Poets, p. 217.
86. Minor Poets, p. 226.
87. "The Whim. An Epistle to Mr. W. Wotty," Chalmers, XV, 136. Other epistles more or less in the same vein include Soame Jenyn's more satirical "An Epistle from S. J. Esq; in the Country, to the Right Hon. the Lord Lovelace in Town (1735) -- Dodsley, III; and Nathaniel Cotton's "Epistle to the Reader" (1751) -- Chalmers, XVIII. See also Lloyd's "A Familiar Epistle to J. B. Esq." in Chalmers, XV, 114-116.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### POPE'S MAJOR EPISTLES AND SOME

#### TRENDS IN FAMILIAR VERSE

1. Reuben Brower, Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion (Oxford, 1959), p. 244. Hereafter Brower.
2. The Poems of Alexander Pope (The Twickenham Edition, 10 volumes, London, 1939-57), III-ii, 154-55. Hereafter cited as I. E.
3. Concentration on briefly sketched exempla in the first half of the poem and on one or more lengthy cases in the second half is generally true of all Pope's ethic epistles. At least lengthy portraits seem to succeed shorter ones. In "An Epistle to a Lady," for example, the portraits of Atossa (115-150), Cloe (157-180), and the nobler opposite picture of an "estimable woman" (257-280) follow the much shorter sketches of Rufa, Silia, Papillia, Narcissa, and Flavia.
4. Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (London, 1947), p. 317. Hereafter cited as Horace.
5. Horace, p. 341.
6. As F. W. Bateson notes, the poem is "something of a hotch-potch, one third philosophy, one third gardening, and one third architectural compliment." I. E., III-ii, xxvi.

7. Brower, p. 244.

8. I. E., III-ii, 139-40.

9. I realize that the lines do not grammatically say what I imply here. However, I think my comment is a fair part of what Pope "means."

10. I. E., III-ii, 21-22.

11. Serving with Marlborough throughout his campaigns, Cobham distinguished himself at the siege of Lille in 1708 and led an attack on Vigo in 1719. Later he was appointed comptroller of the accounts of the army. When Pope's epistle was written (1733), Cobham had just been dismissed from his regiment "in consequence of a strongly worded protest against the protection of the South Sea Company's directors by the government," and bills had been introduced in both houses to take from the crown the power of breaking officers. The dismissal caused a great sensation. DNB, XIX, 519.

12. Brower, p. 263.

13. I. E., III-ii, 83-84.

14. Earl R. Wasserman in his detailed study of almost every line in the poem (Pope's "Epistle to Bathurst": A Critical Reading with an Edition of the Manuscripts, Baltimore, 1960) makes much more of this opening passage by referring to the traditions of theological dispute, Plato's etymology of the word anthropos, Ovid's Metamorphoses, and the opening "rhetorical gambit" (an epitrope in which a speaker "grants one thing to obtain another more advantageous"). My comments are indebted to Wasserman's brilliant study, but are necessarily much less complete. I wish only to illustrate in part of a single epistle the range of tones which Pope uses and to comment when I can on the more precise nature of those tones.

15. I. E., III-ii, 88.

16. I. E., III-ii, 89.

17. Brower, p. 253.

18. I. E., III-ii, 93. For a more detailed analysis see Brower, p. 254.

19. I. E., III-ii, 114.

20. I. E., III-ii, 111.

21. An exception is Ep. I.xiii.

22. Horace, p. 355.

23. Horace, p. 251. See also Epp. I.i. 101-105, I.viii. 13-15, I.xvi. 11. For Pope's use of this technique, see the "Epistle to Cobham," line 206.

24. Whether or not Pope intended his poem to be partly in dialogue and whether or not the interlocutor is, in fact, Bathurst, are problems. F. W. Bateson attributes the dialogue form to Warburton, but says that the "text...was unchanged" and concludes that in all likelihood "from the beginning Pope certainly intended the poem to be partly in dialogue." About the identity of the interlocutor, Bateson says that it "may or may not be Bathurst." Bathurst himself thought that he was implied and, incidentally, in a note reported by Warton, clearly says that a dialogue is not an epistle. "That very lively and amiable old nobleman, the Lord BATHURST, told me...that he was much surprised to see what he had with repeated pleasure so often read as an epistle addressed to himself, in this edition [Warburton's edition of 1751] converted into a dialogue; in which", said he, "I perceive I really make but a shabby and indifferent figure, and contribute very little to the spirit of the dialogue, if it must be a dialogue; and I hope I had generally more to say for myself in the many charming conversations I used to hold with Pope and Swift, and my old poetical friends." There are at least two important implications. First, Bathurst strongly implies that if an epistle is a "chat," it is a completely one-sided "chat" or that the term "chat" should be applied to the level of style rather than the form of the epistle. Second, I take Bathurst's statement as one way of expressing the distinction I am trying to make between Horace's Epistles and at least two of Pope's. A dialogue requires two speakers face to face and is, therefore, with respect to the relationship between the poet and whoever else may speak in the poem, more dramatic than an epistle, which ordinarily requires only one speaker and a distant addressee. See I. E., III-ii, 76-80.

25. Earl R. Wasserman, Pope's "Epistle to Bathurst": A Critical Reading with an Edition of the Manuscripts (Baltimore, 1960), p. 43. Hereafter Wasserman.

26. I. E., III-ii, 37.

27. I. E., III-ii, 53.

28. These lines are respectively from Robert Nugent's "An Epistle," George Lyttelton's "To My Lord Hervey," and John Armstrong's "Of Benevolence...." See also the lines quoted earlier from William Whitehead's "On Nobility...." The poems by Nugent and Lyttelton are in Robert Dodsley and

others, A Collection of Poems... (6 volumes, London, 1748-58), II, 201 and 44. Hereafter Dodsley. The poems of Armstrong and Whitehead are in Alexander Chalmers, The Works of the English Poets (London, 1810), XVI, 538 and XVII, 209. Hereafter Chalmers.

29. I. E., III-ii, 143.

30. Brower, p. 248.

31. I. E., III-ii, 148-49.

32. I. E., III-ii, 149.

33. Ep. I.xv. 26-41.

34. The portraits appear respectively in Epp. I.i. 80-89, I.vii. 14-21; I.xviii. 10-20, I.vi. 56-61, and I.xv. 26-41.

35. From a letter prefixed to the third edition of the "Epistle to Burlington." Quoted in I. E., III-ii, xxxii.

36. "Of the thirty-one satiric letters introduced into To Lathurst sixteen appear under their own names and fifteen under fictitious names." I. E., III-ii, xlv.

37. Among the non-Popean philosophical epistles written after 1715, only one (Paul Whitehead's "Epistle to Dr. Thomson, 1755") attacks individuals by name. Chalmers says that Whitehead was "a professed imitator of Pope in his satires." -- XVI, 204. Of the thirty-two philosophical epistles I have seen, approximately five (a surprisingly small number, I think) could be called satirico-epistolary in the manner of Pope. Aside from Whitehead's poem, three others that are clear imitations of Pope include Robert Dodsley's "Modern Reasoning. An Epistle," James Cawthorne's "Vanity of Human Enjoyments" (1749), and John Armstrong's "Taste" (1753). Less imitative but still satirical is Akenside's "Epistle to Curio" (1744), a "very acrimonious epistle to Pulteney, whom [the poet] stigmatizes...as the betrayer of his country." Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford, 1905), III, 414. Hereafter Johnson's Lives.

38. Horace, p. 117. These lines were used by Pope as an epigraph to the "death-bed" edition of the Epistles to Several Persons.

39. See Brower, pp. 167-68. See also pp. 183-84 and Brower's discussion of the "disguises" Horace assumes.

40. See particularly Brower and Wasserman. See also Elder

Olson, "Rhetoric and the Appreciation of Pope," MP, XXXVII (August 1939), 13-35, and Maynard Mack, "The Muse of Satire," The Yale Review, XLI (September 1951), 80-92.

41. "Personae," Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature: Essays in Honor of Alan Ducald McKillop, ed. Carroll Camden (Chicago, 1963), pp. 27-28.

42. I. E., III-ii, 17-18.

43. These passages are from Pope's epistles "To Cobham," "To a Lady," and "To Burlington." I. E., III-ii, 34-35; 70; 154.

44. These lines are from Epp. I.i, I.vii., and I.x. Horace pp. 251, 299, and 315. See also Epp. I.xviii. 106-110, I.xix. 21-34, I.xx. 19-28, II.iii. 41-54. Horace wrote only two epistles (Epp. I.vi. and I.xii.) in which the pronoun "I" does not appear.

45. Epistles with proportionately long first-person passages that seem autobiographical include the following: George Lyttelton's "To the Reverend Dr. Ayscough at Oxford. Written from Paris in the Year 1728" -- Dodsley, II; Soame Jenyns' "An Epistle from S. J. Esq; in the Country, to the Right Hon. the Lord Lovelace in Town. Written in the Year 1735" -- Dodsley, III; Edward Rolle's "Life burthensome, because we know not how to use it. An Epistle" -- Dodsley, III; Lord Hervey's "To the Same [Mr. Fox]. From Hampton-Court. 1731" -- Dodsley, III; Lady Mary Wortley Montague's "In Answer to a Lady who advised Retirement" -- Dodsley, IV; Dr. Littleton's "A Letter from Cambridge to Master Henry Archer, a Young Gentleman at Eton School" -- Dodsley, VI; Nathaniel Cotton's "Epistle to the Reader" -- Chalmers, XVIII; and Matthew Green's "The Spleen."

46. These passages are from Pope's epistles "To a Lady," "To Burlington," "To a Lady," and "To Bathurst." I. E., III-ii, 49; 153; 66; and 83-84.

47. To avoid the constant use of "approximate," I will admit now that my figures are so. Some difficulty in counting poems arises because a title may actually refer to more than one poem. For instance, I have counted John Gilbert Cooper's "Epistle to his Friends in Town, from Aristippus in Retirement" as one poem, when in fact, it is four.

48. Between 1660-1688 and 1689-1715 I found twenty-three and twenty-two familiar epistles respectively.

49. I have seen no epistolary imitations written between 1660 and 1689.

50. Reuben Brower says that Thomas Burnet "was historically naive in finding the world of Horace 'just the same' as the Age of Anne," but he talks also of the many parallels "between two societies in an era of concentration following an era of revolution, between nations just becoming aware of their imperial role, and between cultures enriched by increasing leisure and easier contacts with 'earth's distant ends.'" Also with reference to the Age of Anne, Brower says that "Pope and his friends -- writers, statesmen, artists, country gentlemen of many degrees of grandeur -- often saw their own world through Horace's eyes and to a surprising degree tried to shape the actuality to fit the dream." The Poetry of Allusion, p. 164. The growth in the number of Horatian epistolary imitations and the use of Horace's more complex poems after 1715 suggests that the same was true also after the Age of Anne, that perhaps Horace was being "felt" most strongly in the 1720's and 30's. Pope's imitations were published in 1737-38; some of Pitt's imitations were probably published in his 1727 Miscellany; and of the forty-five original epistles that I can date with some degree of assurance, twenty-five were published between 1724 and 1741.

51. Between 1689 and 1715, about three out of ten original literary epistles are Horatian in manner. After 1715, about ten out of fifteen are Horatian.

52. These poems include Pope's ethic epistles, Rolle's "Life burthensome, because we know not how to use it" and "The Duty of Employing one's Self," Green's "The Spleen" (1737), Cawthorne's "The Vanity of Human Enjoyments: An Ethic Epistle" (1749), Paul Whitehead's "An Epistle to Doctor Thomson" (1755), Robert Dodsley's "Modern Reasoning," Soame Jenyns' "An Epistle from G. J. Esq..." (1735), and Nathaniel Cotton's "Epistle to the Reader" (1751).

53. Compare, for example the opening lines of Pope's "Epistle to Cobham" and those of Cawthorne's "The Vanity of Human Enjoyments: An Ethic Epistle to the Right Hon. George Lyttelton..." (1749).

Yes, you despise the man to Books confin'd,  
Who from his study rails at human kind;  
Tho' what he learns, he speaks and may advance  
Some gen'ral maxims, or be right by chance.

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I grant it, Lyttelton! that ease, or joy,  
Forms ev'ry wish that glows beneath the sky....

Cawthorne's poem is in Chalmers, XIV, 254. For a less



pronounced impression of a conversation in progress, see Horace's Ep. I.xiii, I.xi, I.vii, and I.vi.

54. Showing an epistolary interest in the addressee, Paul Whitehead's "Epistle to Doctor Thomson" (1755) is related to what the author felt was the unjust treatment of his friend. In 1751 Frederick, Prince of Wales, died with Thomson and other physicians attending. "Upon that occasion, the doctor differed from all the physicians that attended his highness, which brought upon him their most virulent rage and indignation"; and in turn Whitehead published his epistle, justifying his friend and indiscriminately abusing "the college." See Chalmers, XVI, 221, and DNS, XXI, 105. Illustrating the use of a dramatic technique is the dinner party scene at the end of Dodsley's "Modern Reasoning" in which Sir Testy, one who always insists that all submit to him and damns those who refuse, is humiliated.

    Hillario, who full well this humour knows,  
 Resolv'd one day his folly to expose,  
 Kindly invites him with some friends to dine,  
 And entertains 'em with a roast sir-loin:  
 If this he knew sir Testy could not eat,  
 And purposely prepar'd it for his treat.  
 The rest begin,--"Sir Testy, pray fall to --  
 You love roast beef, sir, come--I know you do."  
 "Excuse me, sir, 'tis what I never eat."  
 "How, sir! not love roast beef! the king of meat!"  
 "'Tis true indeed." "Indeed it is not true;  
 I love it, sir, and you must love it too."  
 "I can't upon my word." "Then you're fool,  
 And don't know what's good eating, by my soul.  
 Not love roast beef!--come, come, sirs, fill his plate,  
 I'll make him love it--Sir, G-d--ye, eat."  
 Sir Testy finding what it was they meant,  
 Rose in a passion, and away he went.

Chalmers, XV, 338.

55. Poems by Cawthorne, Dodsley, and Paul Whitehead use this same manner, but there are some differences. All three seem dominated by a negative approach. Cawthorne, for example, spends most of his time detailing the fact that wisdom, material glory, taste, and power alone cannot contribute to the permanent enjoyment of life. Paul Whitehead attacks "the college," and Dodsley portrays several different kinds of modern "reasoners"--the formal sage, the skeptic, etc. But these three authors seem less inclined than Pope to present figures by name (Whitehead comes closest); and also unlike Pope, Whitehead includes a long autobiographical passage.

56. I am indebted to Alexander Beljame, who says, "Whatever

were the motives which actuated the new Minister's conduct, the patronage hitherto so extravagantly extended to authors ceased completely." I think this is a somewhat exaggerated statement, but the trend it indicates is accurate. Steele writing a pamphlet to pay for his dinner, Dennis' poverty, Johnson drudging for Edward Cave, and Hogarth's picture of The Distressed Poet dating from 1736 are among the examples cited by Seljame. See Men of Letters and the English Public in the Eighteenth Century, ed. Bonamy Dobrée, trans. E. O. Lorimer (London, 1943), p. 344.

57. Chalmers, XVII, 195-96.

58. As a publisher, Dodsley would naturally have been in touch with Pope and Burke. What I suggest is that the relationships he established seem to have been deeper and more friendly than those required merely for the sake of business. Chalmers, for instance, gives an account of Shenstone, Spence, Burke, Lowth, and Melmoth "clubbing their opinions to promote" Dodsley's interests in a second edition of the successful Select Fables of Esop and other Fabulists (1760). We have also the account of Lyttelton using his influence to gain contributors to The World, established by Dodsley and Moore; and of Lord Chesterfield encouraging and supporting the production of Dodsley's play Cleone. See Chalmers, XV, 318-23. Disinterested patronage and politics may have had something to do with Dodsley's good fortune, but in all of the examples I have cited there is a strong vein of solid friendship.

59. DNE, XVI, 399-400.

60. Johnson's Lives, II, 280.

61. Seljame, pp. 379-80.

62. Chalmers, XV, 503-506.

63. Chalmers, XVIII, 3.

64. Chalmers, XVI, 204-205.

65. Johnson's Lives, III, 456.

66. A. R. Humphreys, William Shenstone: An Eighteenth-Century Portrait (Cambridge, 1937), p. 109.

67. Douglas Grant, James Thomson: Poet of 'The Seasons' (London, 1951), pp. 66, 70, 74, and 251.

68. I. E., IV, 94.

69. The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, ed. George Sherburn (Oxford, 1956), III, 416-17.

70. Pope's Correspondence, III, 423 and 428. There is a third letter in response to Arbuthnot's "request," but George Sherburn notes that "It is most probably a 'forgery.'" Dated July 26, 1734, it elaborates on the authentic reply of August 2, 1734, and is "Pope's best defense in prose of his satire." In it he repeats the ideas that reformation without chastisement is impossible, and that specific examples of Vice are, in fact, necessary "to the aid of reformation."

71. Eduard Fraenkel, quoted earlier, says of Horace in his Epistles that he writes "of genuine matter, sometimes mere trifles, sometimes serious difficulties and conflicts, but always the kind of matter that lends itself naturally to the form of communication which we call a letter." Horace (Oxford, 1957), p. 309.

72. I. E., IV, xxii. For an account of the attacks on Pope and the "piecemeal" composition of the "Epistle," see I. E., IV, xiii-xxiv. See also W. L. MacDonald, Pope and His Critics (London, 1951), pp. 146-65.

73. I. E., IV, 103.

74. Brower, p. 294.

75. D. J. Greene, "'Logical Structure' in Eighteenth-Century Poetry," PQ, XXXI (July 1952), 330-31.

76. "Spectator No. 619," The Spectator, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford, 1965), V, 114.

77. Brower, p. 294.

78. I. E., IV, 100-101.

79. I. E., IV, 96.

80. I. E., IV, 127.

81. I. E., IV, 98.

82. I. E., IV, 103.

83. Elias F. Mengel, Jr., "Patterns of Imagery in Pope's 'Arbuthnot,'" PMLA, LXIX (March 1954), 189.

84. The imagery of disease and medicine is another sign, I believe, of Pope's attention to his addressee, a doctor.

85. I. E., IV, 100.
86. I. E., IV, 100-101.
87. I. E., IV, 127.
88. I. E., IV, 118-19.
89. I. E., IV, 101.
90. I. E., IV, 116.
91. I. E., IV, 115.
92. Brower, p. 294.
93. I. E., IV, 127.
94. A seminal article is Elder Olson's "Rhetoric and the Appreciation of Pope," MP, XXXVII (1939), 13-35. Thereafter, we have Maynard Mack, "The Muse of Satire," The Yale Review, XLI (September 1951), 80-92; Reuben Brower's Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion; Earl Wasserman's critical reading of the "Epistle to Bathurst"; and Thomas Edwards' This Dark Estate: A Reading of Pope (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963) among the more recent works which make a similar distinction.
95. Pope's attitude toward Dennis is also ambiguous if not contradictory. At one point he seems not to care at all about Dennis (line 270); later he remembers befriending Dennis in distress.
96. I am indebted to Maynard Mack, "The Muse of Satire" and Irvin Ehrenpreis, "Personae."
97. I. E., IV, 122.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### OVID AND HEROIC EPISTLES: 1660 - 1758

1. Quoted in Helen G. Hughes, "More Popeana: Items From an Unpublished Correspondence," PMLA, XLIV (December 1929), 1098.
2. Thomas E. Edwards, Jr., This Dark Estate: A Reading of Pope (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963), p. 25.

3. Ovid, Heroides and Amores, trans. Grant Showerman (London, 1947), p. 8. All quotations from Ovid are from this Loeb Classical Library Edition, hereafter cited as Ovid.

4. Ovid, p. 159. See also Deianira to Hercules ("Even as I write comes rumour to me saying my lord is dying of the poison from my cloak.") and Phaedra to Hippolytus.

5. Ovid, p. 69. See also Sappho to Phaon, and Hypsipyle to Jason.

6. Ovid, p. 183.

7. Ovid, pp. 127-129. See also Oenone to Paris, Ovid, p. 59.

8. Ovid, p. 131.

9. See also Dido to Aeneas, Hypsipyle to Jason, and Canace to Macareus.

10. Ovid, p. 127.

11. He did not return. According to legend, Dionysus found Ariadne on the shores of Naxos where Theseus had left her. "He comforted her, wooed her, and made her his bride. He gave her as a wedding gift a crown of stars, which after her death he fixed in the heavens as the constellation Corona." George Howe and G. A. Harrer, A Handbook of Classical Mythology (New York, 1947), p. 85.

12. Reuben Brower, Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion (Oxford, 1959), p. 65. Hereafter cited as Brower.

13. Ovid, pp. 55-57.

14. The term most often used by the heroines to describe their mode of writing is "complaint" (queror, quererer, querela). See Penelope to Ulysses, line 8; Phyllis to Demophoon, line 2; Briseis to Achilles, lines 5-6; Oenone to Paris, line 4; Hypsipyle to Jason, line 7; Dido to Aeneas, line 30.

15. The Poems of Alexander Pope (The Twickenham Edition, 10 volumes, London, 1939-67), II, 309. Hereafter cited as I. E.

16. A tirade here refers to a passage or section of verse, of varying length, treating a single theme or idea. It is also usually a "volley of words" or an harangue in the manner of declamation. Brower discusses Sappho to Phaon and says that "Sappho's complaint moves in a series of remembered scenes and tirades reminiscent of French tragedy." p. 66.

17. Ovid, p. 99.

18. According to the legend, Pygmalion (Dido's brother) murdered Sychaeus in order to get possession of his treasures. But Dido saved the treasure and escaped with it to Africa, attended by a number of followers. Here she bought as much land as could be enclosed with a bull's hide, which she cut into thin strips so that it surrounded a considerable tract. Here she built Carthage. Here she was wooed by a native king, Iarbas.. And here she built a sanctuary in memory of her husband, to whom ~~de~~ she vowed eternal loyalty. A Handbook of Classical Mythology, pp. 81-82.

19. Ovid, pp. 89-91.

20. Ovid, p. 91.

21. Ovid, p. 85.

22. Ovid, pp. 85-87.

23. Ovid, pp. 87 and 85.

24. I have limited myself to the first fifteen heroic epistles, to letters written by women; however, I do not want to exclude letters from men as a possibility in this kind. Because my primary interest here has been in describing the major qualities of a particular genre, I thought it best not to include Epp. XVI-XXI and, therefore, become embroiled in the question of whether or not Ovid actually composed heroic epistles from men to absent women. The Loeb translation includes Epp. XVI-XXI (Paris to Helen, Helen to Paris, Leander to Hero, Hero to Leander, Acontius to Cydippe, Cydippe to Acontius), pairs of letters from lovers to each other; and the editors assume that Ovid wrote them "at a period later than the appearance of the first fifteen." Arthur Palmer, who edited Ovid in 1898, says, "I hold very strongly the view (1) that they [Epp. XVI-XXI] were not written by Ovid...." Louis C. Purser, who completed Palmer's work and whose view "has gained ground," believed, however, that "These epistles [Epp. XVI-XXI], neither in matter nor in language, appear to offer a sufficient number of anomalies to make it necessary to disallow their Ovidian authorship." See Ovid, pp. 196-97. For our purposes I willingly admit the male correspondent as a possibility within the general framework of the genre. Eighteenth century poets did so, as we shall see.

25. Essays of John Dryden, ed. W. P. Ker (Oxford, 1926), I, 320. Hereafter Ker.

26. CEEL, II, 766. E. Audra, L'Influence Française dans L'Oeuvre de Pope (Paris, 1931), notes that Ovid's Heroical Epistles, "Englished by W[illiam] S[altonstall]," also were edited

after 1660. He cites the Term Catalogues "Vol. I, p. 68 (Fév. 1671) Vol. II, p. 182 (Déc. 1686) p. 160 (Fév. 1686), p. 582 (Mai 1696)" and adds, "Cette traduction ne tient pas devant celle de Dryden, qui atteint sa quatrième édition en 1688." p. 400, n. 2.

27. Ker, I, 236-37.

28. Brower, pp. 73-74.

29. Ovid, pp. 82-83 and The Poems of John Dryden, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford, 1958), I, 198. Hereafter cited as Kinsley. I have included the Latin text because the subject (translation) requires it.

30. Ovid, pp. 84-85 and Kinsley, I, 198.

31. Ker, I, 236.

32. Mark Van Doren's opinion is that "Only rarely did Dryden translate [Ovid] with distinction." The Poetry of John Dryden (New York, 1920), p. 122.

33. Ovid, pp. 138-39 and Kinsley, I, 189. An old nurse had attempted to spirit the dild (incestuously born of Canace) out of the palace; but the baby cried out and was discovered. Canace writes to her brother Macareus after Aeolus has sent her a sword with instructions on how to use it.

34. In this same translation Dryden writes,

By what expressions can my grief be shown?  
(Yet you may guess my anguish by your own)  
To see my bowels, and what yet was worse,  
Your bowels too, condemn'd to such a Curse!  
Out went the King; my voice its freedom found,  
My breasts I beat, my blubber'd Cheeks I wound.

Kinsley, I, 189. Should she (or Dryden) have said that words fail her?

35. The Works of Aphra Behn, ed. Montague Summers (London, 1915), VI, 219. Hereafter Behn's Works.

36. Behn's Works, VI, 216 and 218. The comparable passages are as follows:

incisae servant a te mea nomina fagi,  
et legor Denone falce notata tua,  
et quantum trunci, tantum mea nomina crescunt.

The beeches still conserve my name carved on them by  
you, and I am read there *Oenone*, characterized by your  
blade; and the more the trunks, the greater grows my name.

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Caesa abies, sectaeque trabes, et classe parata  
caerula ceratas accipit unda rates.  
flesti discedens--hoc saltim parce negare!  
miscuimus lacrimas maestus uterque suas;  
non sic adpositis vincitur vitibus ulmus,  
ut tua sunt collo brachia nexa meo.

The firs were felled, the timbers hewn; your fleet  
was ready, and the deep-blue wave received the waxed  
crafts. Your tears fell as you left me--this, at  
least, deny not! We mingled our weeping, each a  
prey to grief; the elm is not so closely clasped  
by the clinging vine as was my neck by your  
embracing arms.

Ovid, pp. 58-59 and 60-61.

37. The Literary Works of Matthew Prior, ed. H. Sunker Wright and Monroe K. Spears (Oxford, 1959), II, 824-25. Hereafter Wright and Spears. To give Mrs. Behn her due, I might add that Walter Harte called her *Oenone* "pretty good." See the preface to the Poetical Works of Mr. William Pattison (London, 1728), p. 47. Also, I must say that Mrs. Behn was not really attempting to translate closely in the first place.

38. Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, ed. J. E. Spingarn (Oxford, 1908), II, 288-89.

39. Dryden made this statement in the prose Defense of the Epilogue (1672) to the Second Part of Almanzor and Almahide: or, The Conquest of Granada. Wright and Spears, II, 824.

40. Wright and Spears, I, 23.

41. See Oldmixon's "Epistle Dedicatory" to Amores Britannici. Epistles Historical and Gallant, In English Heroic Verse... (London, 1703), sig. A6v and A7r.

42. Poetical Works of Mr. William Pattison (London, 1728), p. 47.

43. Goldsmith's contributions to "The Critical Review," The Works of Oliver Goldsmith, ed. Peter Cunningham (London and New York, 1900), VII, 232.

44. Poetical Works of Mr. William Pattison, p. 47. See also



I. E., I, 343, n. 2. "Scrope reduces the 220 lines of the Latin to 97 lines. Pope's version contains 259 lines." Pope used the spelling Sap̄ho, and I retain it here when speaking of his translation.

45. See I. E., I, 342. For my comments on Pope's translation I am wholly indebted to this most helpful introduction (I. E., I, 339-46).

46. In his Dedication of the Aeneis (1697) Dryden refers to Ovid's "turns" as "a darling sin, which he would not be persuaded to reform." Ker, II, 219.

47. I. E., I, 344.

48. Ovid, pp. 192-93 and I. E., I, 403.

49. I. E., I, 396.

50. I. E., I, 393.

51. I. E., I, 400 and Ovid, pp. 190-91.

52. I. E., I, 404.

53. Brower, p. 71. Other translations of Ovidian epistles between 1660 and 1758 include the following: "Sappho to Phaon" by Elijah Fenton; "Select Epistles from Ovid," which appeared in William Pattison's Cupid's Metamorphosis, or Love in all Shapes..., 1728 (DNE, XV, 509); "Dido to Aeneas," translated by Elizabeth Caroline Keene in 1758 (The Works of Oliver Goldsmith, VII, 233); and Ovid's Epistles translated into English Verse (1759) by Stephen Barrett. All the other translations that I know of were associated with "Dryden's."

54. Richmond Bond, English Burlesque Poetry (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 141. Bond notes that "One of the prefatory complimentary poems to Ovidius Exulans predicted Hudibras as the only rival." Hereafter cited as Bond.

55. CBEL, II, 285. John Oldmixon called the collection "merry." Amores Britannici, sig. A7r.

56. Bond, p. 141. I have seen none of these collections, only one of which -- Radcliffe's -- could be called popular. The other two (so far as I know) were never reprinted during the eighteenth century.

57. I. E., VI, 266.

58. Butler's "Epistles" are in Hudibras, ed. A. R. Waller (Cambridge, Eng., 1905), pp. 304-323.

59. I. E., VI, 276. Writers of heroic epistles in the eighteenth century commonly included such "Arguments" to acquaint their readers with the main circumstances under which the letters were written. Dryden, for example, in his translation of Helen to Paris, included the following: "Helen, having received the foregoing Epistle from Paris, returns the following Answer: wherein she seems at first to chide him for his Presumption in Writing, as he had done, which could only proceed from his low Opinion of her Vertue; then owns her self to be sensible of the Passion, which he had expressed for her, tho she much suspect his Constancy; and at last discovers her Inclinations to be favourable to him. The whole Letter shewing the extream artifice of Woman-kind." Kinsley, I, 190-91.

60. I. E., VI, 277. The editors note that similar scenes appear in Eloisa to Abelard (lines 233-249) and Sappho to Phaon (lines 145-160). Noteworthy are the sudden awakening, the frantic cries and futile search, and the final despair. The neighbors seems to fulfill much the same purpose as does "Echo."

61. I. E., VI, 276; 278; 279.

62. I. E., VI, 276. The last six lines of the quotation may mock Ovid's tendency to go on and on. Here also in character Mrs. Gulliver juxtaposes biblical teachings with her one interest in the flesh.

63. The lack of interest in such mock-epistles after 1700 is implied in English Burlesque Poetry. Richmond Bond's "Register" (pp. 235-453) includes no poems with titles that suggest heroic epistolary overtones. Of his own poem Pope said that he did "not much like it." I. E., VI, 266.

64. She argues that John of Gaunt, Henry's father, was not the natural son of Edward III.

65. For this and the other quotations from the letters that Richard II and Isabel exchange, see The Barons' Wars, Nymphidia, and Other Poems, intro. Henry Morley (London, 1887), pp. 190-192. I have had to use this text of the letter from Isabel to Richard II because it is the only one easily available to me.

66. Hallett Smith, Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meanings, and Expression (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), p. 127.

67. Of Drayton's several works England's Heroicall Epistles is the only one that was edited and published separately between 1660 and 1745. One edition of the Epistles ("Newly

Corrected and Amended") was printed twice in the 1690's, and another edition appeared in 1737. The Epistles were also included in the 1748 edition of Drayton's Complete Works, reprinted in 1753. See Oliver Elton, Michael Drayton: A Critical Study (New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), pp. 169-173; 183-185.

68. "Besides Oldmixon's paraphrase, at least four of Drayton's epistles were 'versified' by other hands, two appearing in the Gentlemen's Magazine and two by Elizabeth Rowe, one of which first appeared in Steele's Poetical Miscellanies (1714)...." Earl R. Wasserman, Elizabethan Poetry in the Eighteenth Century (Urbana, 1947), pp. 73-74.

69. Amores Britannici (London, 1703), sig. A5v - A8r.

70. Elizabethan Poetry in the Eighteenth Century, p. 73.

71. The "Argument" of the epistle in Oldmixon's text is as follows: "Queen Isabel, Daughter of Philip the Fair, King of France, and Wife to Edward II, King of England, being very much enrag'd to see herself despis'd by her Husband and his minions, engag'd the Valiant young Lord Roger Mortimer, in her Interest, who with several Potent Barons took Arms to rescue the King out of his Favourites Hands, and restore the Queen to the dignity of her Rank; but both Mortimer, and the Barons were defeated, himself imprison'd in the Tower, whence by the help of a sleepy Portion [sic] the Queen sent him he deceiv'd his Guards, and escap'd to France. She writes to him, and Congratulates his safety, and Mortimer replys as became a Person she had very much oblig'd." Amores Britannici, p. 66.

72. Amores Britannici, p. 70.

73. "The two Hugh Spensers, the father and the son, after the death of Gaveston, became the great favourites of the King, the son being created by him Lord Chamberlain, and the father Earl of Winchester." The Barons' Wars..., intro. Henry Morley, p. 172.

74. The Barons' Wars..., pp. 166-67.

75. Amores Britannici, pp. 62-63.

76. Alexander Chalmers, The Works of the English Poets (London, 1810), XIV, 244-45. Hereafter cited as Chalmers.

77. After the death of Edward VI, son of Henry VIII, some English noblemen -- principally the Duke of Suffolk and the Duke of Northumberland -- contrived to prevent Edward's Catholic sister Mary from becoming queen by claiming the title

for Jane Gray, who was married to Gilford Dudley. "Bloody Mary," however, soon prevailed, imprisoned the lovers in the Tower, and later executed them. Poems of Michael Drayton, ed. John Suxton (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), II, 483. This collection of poems by Drayton (much more satisfactory than that introduced by Morley) unfortunately does not contain the letters that pass between Isabel and Mortimer or Isabel and Richard II.

78. Poems of Michael Drayton, II, 487-88.

79. Chalmers, XIV, 245.

80. Chalmers, XIV, 245.

81. Chalmers, XIV, 245.

82. I. E., II, 334-35. The single word "Confess'd" looks both ways. In the section to come on Eloisa I will say quite a bit more about the language of the poem.

83. For these four passages see Chalmers, XIV, 244 and I. E., II, 319; 328-29.

84. See also William Whitehead's "Ann Boleyn to Henry the Eighth" (1743). Chalmers, XVII, 204-206.

85. Robert Dodsley and others, A Collection of Poems... (6 volumes, London, 1748-58), IV, 86. Hereafter cited as Dodsley.

86. I. E., II, 294-95. I have not seen Crauford's work.

87. Chalmers, X, 411. Fenton's poems were first published in 1707 (DNB, VI, 1186).

88. Chalmers, X, 412.

89. Chalmers, X, 410. David Crauford's Ovidius Britannicus (1703) includes two replies to Ovid, another "Phaon to Sappho" and "Theseus to Ariadne," neither of which I have seen. I. E., II, 295.

90. I. E., II, 295.

91. Godfrey Frank Singer, The Epistolary Novel: Its Origin, Development, Decline, and Residual Influence (Philadelphia, 1933), p. 46. Singer lists the dates for the metrical versions as "1701, 1713, 1716, and 1716, 1718, and 1731." I have not seen these collections but suspect that what Singer says might apply. "Concerning the letters themselves,

it may be said that the first five letters are a long complaint of the Nun for what she calls, after the fashion of the abandoned Ariadne, 'my Inconsiderate, Improvident, and most unfortunate Love'." p. 46. Tillotson calls one metrical version unappetising. *I. E.*, II, 295.

92. Both of Hervey's poems are in Dodsley, IV, 83-92; 99-105. "Roxana to Usbeck" I have traced to letter No. 161 in Lettres Persanes, written at the conclusion to the roman which is part of Montesquieu's work. Thought to be the only innocent and honest concubine in Usbeck's tumultuous seraglio, Roxana is caught with her lover (who is killed), and she writes a defiant and noble letter to the traveling Usbeck, asserting her rights and freedom as she dies of the poison she has taken. About "Arisbe to Marius Junior" I am uncertain. Dodsley (IV, 99) indicates that it is based on Fontenelle.

93. A third edition was published in 1719, a fourth in 1722. CSEL, II, 541. For an account of the French text see Robert K. Root, The Poetical Career of Alexander Pope (Princeton, 1941), pp. 94-95.

94. Cooper's poem is in Chalmers, XV, 517-19. Chalmers refers to it as "a faint imitation, although servilely intended, of Pope's Eloisia...." (XV, 506).

95. Chalmers, XIV, 234. I can't forbear mentioning that every time I read this couplet I think of the thunder in the mustard bowl.

96. Chalmers, XIV, 235. Chalmers probably had this passage in mind when he wrote, "where Pope has failed in delicacy of allusion to Abelard's misfortune, Cawthorne has yet more frequently failed, by more frequently recurring to a subject which no language can render decent." XIV, 231.

97. Lawrence S. Wright, "Eighteenth-Century Replies to Pope's Eloisa," SP, XXI (1934), 523. Wright says that this is a general characteristic of other Abelards.

98. Chalmers, XIV, p. 234 and *I. E.*, II, 343. Other similar poems which I have not seen include John Beckingham's "Abelard to Eloisa" (1721), James Delacour's "Abelard to Eloisa" (1725), and William Pattison's "Abelard to Eloisa" (1728). For a complete review of the subject see Lawrence S. Wright, "Eighteenth-Century Replies to Pope's Eloisa" and *I. E.*, II, 414-416.

99. Helen S. Hughes, "More Popeana: Items From an Unpublished Correspondence," PMLA, XLIV (December 1929), 1098.

100. An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope, 3rd edition (London, 1772), I, 308-09.
101. Quoted in I. E., II, 413.
102. Wright and Spears, I, 493. Alma was published in Prior's Poems on Several Occasions (1718).
103. Lives of the English Poets, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford, 1905), III, 105 and 235.
104. Poetical Works of Mr. William Pattison (London, 1728), pp. 47-48.
105. Quoted by Lawrence S. Wright, "Eighteenth-Century Replies to Pope's Eloisa," 524.
106. I have omitted other "love letters" from my discussion because the few that I have read seem to bear little resemblance to heroic epistles and are tedious in the extreme. Some like Soame Jenyns' "To a Lady in Town, soon after her leaving the Country" (Dodsley, III, 140-143) are mere "complaints" from separated lovers with no heroic pretensions. See, for example, "A Love Letter" (Dodsley IV, 114-116) and "An Epistle to a Lady" (Dodsley, III, 207-209). One other work that I have seen -- The Epistles of Clio and Strephon -- includes "A Critical Essay" by John Porter, who carefully distinguishes between the letters he so passionately approves in the collection and those "few that...seem'd to be the Works of Invention, and Starts and Sallies of Fancy, and have (as they proceeded from nothing but a lust of Wit) been accordingly filled and crowded with indecent Images" (p. xxvi). I think Mr. Porter had heroic epistles in mind, and although Clio and Strephon purport to be real persons of quality their exchange of letters has almost nothing in common with the Heroides. Rather it is an account of an "intellectual Courtship," and is perhaps a forerunner in verse of later epistolary novels. CBEL lists Porter's essay as published in "1720; [1728?]; 1729; 1732." II, 22.
107. E. Audra, p. 443 and I. E., II, 311-13.
108. I. E., II, 296.
109. I. E., II, 298.
110. I. E., II, 318.
111. John Oldmixon, Amores Britannici, sig. A8v. See also William Walsh's statement in his preface to Letters and Poems, Amorous and Gallant (1692) to the effect that elegies treating "love among gentlemen...ought to be smooth, clear, tender, and

passionate. The thoughts may be bold, more gay, and more elevated, than in pastoral. The passions they represent, either more gallant or more violent, and less innocent than the others. The subjects of them, prayers, expostulations, quarrels, reconcilements, threatenings, jealousies, and in fine, all the natural effects of love." Chalmers, VIII, 404.

112. I. E., II, 301.

113. I. E., II, 336. See also lines 206-248 in which Eloisa describes in general terms "the blameless Vestal's lot" which she then contrasts with her own particular experience.

114. I. E., II, 318. Henry Pettit argues that Eloisa's struggle is not satisfactorily stated as a conflict between grace and nature, and ties the poem to the philosophical temper of its time by calling it an "erotic lyric in an age of sensational materialism." Eloisa, he says, is "a highly intelligent English woman of the early eighteenth century, devoted to love at a time when the god of love was being materialized into a mere physical passion." See "Pope's Eloisa to Abelard: An Interpretation," University of Colorado Studies, No. 4 (July 1953), pp. 67-74.

115. I. E., II, 335.

116. Brower, p. 83.

117. I. E., II, 327-30.

118. Brower, p. 76.

119. Geoffrey Tillotson points out that Pope was not the first to add such a conflict. He cites earlier examples from the work of David Crauford and Michael Drayton, and notes that Eloisa is indebted in part to Isaac Watts' Horae Lyricae (1706). I. E., II, 302-304.

120. I. E., II, 304.

121. Brower, pp. 79-80.

122. Similar moral issues arise in Phaedra to Hippolytus and Ariadne to Theseus. Phaedra knows that she ought not to pursue Hippolytus and betray her husband; and Ariadne suffers at least in part because she betrayed her father.

123. E. Audra says, "ce qui est intéressant, ce qui est poignant dans Héloïse, c'est son angoisse morale." p. 431. Samuel Johnson's comment also underlines this difference.

124. See Denone to Paris, lines 46-48; Dido to Aeneas, lines 42-44; Ariadne to Theseus, line 25.

125. Geoffray Tillotson, On the Poetry of Pope, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1950), p. 71. For Tillotson's full explanation of where these words came from (Sandys's translation of Ovid, Thomas May's translation of Lucan, Ugilby's translation of the Iliad and the Odyssey) and how their "aristocracy" was sealed by Milton and Waller, see pp. 63-71. Pope's Eloisa uses sighs three times, weep (weeping, went) seven times, and tear(s) eleven times. As E. Audra says, "c'est un déluge." Tillotson also notes that "Such vocabulary is felt to be especially appropriate in heroic epistles." I. E., II, 296, n. 4.
126. I. E., II, 332-33. This passage Joseph Warton singled out at the most "truly poetical."
127. Quoted in I. E., II, 306.
128. I. E., II, 305.
129. I. E., II, 326. See also ll. 108 ff.
130. I. E., II, facing 293.
131. Oldmixon did not "imitate" Drayton; he "corrected" him.
132. Ovid's Epistles...Translated by Several Hands appeared again in 1701 and 1705.
133. Chalmers, XVII, 204. This summary, by the way, should not be taken as altogether complete. There are undoubtedly many heroic epistles (or "some") that I have not seen or read about.
134. Earl R. Wasserman, Elizabethan Poetry in the Eighteenth Century, pp. 73-74. Wasserman says this about Drayton's Heroicall Epistles, but the same words might be applied to heroic epistles as a whole.
135. Ker, I, 233.
136. "Spectator No. 618," The Spectator, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford, 1965), V, 112-13. Hereafter The Spectator.
137. The Spectator, V, 113, n. 1.
138. The Spectator, V, 113, n. 1.
139. Ker, I, 234.
140. "A Dissertation Concerning the Perfection of the English Language..." in Critical Essays of the Eighteenth Century 1700-1725, ed. Willard Higley Durham (New Haven, 1915), p. 394.



141. The Spectator, II, 436 and 438-39.

#### CONCLUSION

1. The Poems of John Dryden, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford, 1956) I, 13.
2. Kinsley, IV, 1529-30. In general terms this development (or change) is also observable in Swift's poetry. He began writing Cowleyan odes, and later wrote in a much more familiar way.
3. Extravagant praise and references to figures like Hercules, Orpheus, Venus, or Mars appear in the following poems: Dryden's "To My Honoured Friend, Sir Robert Howard..." (1660), Richard Duke's "To Mr. Dryden, on his *Troilus and Cressida*" (1679), John Cooper's "To Mrs. John..." (1683), Henry Watson's "To Madame Lehn..." (1683), John Wilson's "To his Excellence Richard, Earl of Arran..." (1682), Dryden's "To the Earl of Roscommon..." (1684), Dr. Chatwood's "To the Earl of Roscommon..." (1684), Wycherley's "To the Duke" (1683), Charles Montague's "An Epistle to Charles, Earl of Dorset..." (1690), Congreve's "To Mr. Dryden..." (1693), Dryden's "To her Grace the Duchess of Ormond..." (1700), Dryden's "To Sir Godfrey Kneller" (1694), and John Hughes' "To Mr. Addison" (c. 1713).
4. These poems include Ambrose Philips' "To the Honourable James Craggs, Esq..." (1717), Christopher Pitt's "An Epistle to Dr. Edw. Young..." (1722), John Gay's "An Epistle to Her Grace, Henrietta, Duchess of Marlborough" (1722), William Broome's "An Epistle to my Friend Mr. Elijah Fenton..." (1726) and "To Mr. Pope..." (1726), and William Whitehead's "To Mr. Garrick" (c. 1746).
5. Alexander Chalmers, The Works of the English Poets (London, 1910), XVIII, 242. Hereafter cited as Chalmers.
6. Chalmers, XI, 198-99.
7. The Spectator, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford, 1965), IV, 362.
8. "From The History of the Royal Society of London (1667)," in Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, ed. J. E. Spingarn (Oxford, 1908), II, 117-18.
9. From An Essay Concerning Preaching... (1676), Spingarn, II, 277.

10. The Tatler, ed. Lewis Gibbs (New York and London, 1953), p. 243.

11. A History of English Poetry (London, 1925), V, 89-155.

12. Others include John Armstrong's "Taste" (1753), Paul Whitehead's "Epistle to Dr. Thomson" (1755), Mark Akenside's "Epistle to Curio" (1744) and possibly William Whitehead's "The Danger of Writing Verse" (1741).

13. Chalmers, XV, 111.

14. English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century, 1700-1740 (Oxford, 1959), p. 475.

15. English Literature..., p. 500.

16. See also William Belmoth's "Of Active and Retired Life..." (1735), Christopher Pitt's "An Epistle to Dr. Edward Young..." (1722), Richard Savage's "An Epistle to the Right Honorable Sir Robert Walpole" (c. 1729), Robert Nugent's "An Epistle" (1739), Sneyd Davies' "To Charles Pratt, Esq..." (1743), and William Whitehead's "On Nobility..." (c. 1743).

17. See also Edward Young's "An Epistle to the Right Honorable George Lord Lansdowne" (1712), Ambrose Philips' "To the Right Hon. Charles Lord Halifax..." (1714) and "To the Honourable James Craggs, Esq..." (1717), and Christopher Pitt's "An Epistle to Dr. Edw. Young..." (1722).

18. An incomplete list would include Matthew Prior's "Letter to Monsieur Poileaux Despreaux" (1704), Joseph Addison's "A Letter from Italy" (1701), William Somerville's "To Mr. Addison..." (1711), George Lyttelton's "To Mr. Glover..." (1734), Christopher Pitt's "An Epistle to Dr. Edw. Young..." (1722), Robert Nugent's "An Epistle to the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cornbury" (1739), and Horace Walpole's "An Epistle from Florence. To Thomas Ashton, Esq..." (1740).

19. Christopher Pitt, "An Epistle to Dr. Edw. Young, at Eastbury, in Dorsetshire, on the Review at Sarum" (1722), Chalmers, XII, 371.

20. Ambrose Philips, "To the Honourable James Craggs, Esq..." (1717), Chalmers, XIII, 119.

21. Horace Walpole, "An Epistle from Florence..." (1740), in Robert Dodsley and others, A Collection of Poems... (6 volumes, London, 1748-58), III, 82.

22. They include Dryden's "To my Honoured Kinsman..." (1700),

Samuel Wesley's "An Epistle to a Friend Concerning Poetry" (1700), Addison's "A Letter from Italy" (1701), Prior's "A Letter to Monsieur Boileaux Despreaux" (1704), Pope's "Epistle to Miss Clout, with the Works of Voiture" (1705-10), "Letter to Cromwell" (1707) and "An Epistle to Henry Cromwell" (1707), Thomas Tickell's "To Mr. Addison, on his Opera of Rosamond" (1707), Wycherley's "To My Friend, Mr. Pope on his Pastorals" (1708) and Samuel Dunster's translation of Horace's Satires and Epistles (1709).

23. Counting the poems I have seen, five complimentary epistles appear between 1700-09, thirteen between 1710-19, twenty-one between 1720-29, and five between 1730-39. Familiar epistles (including imitations) for the same periods number approximately four, fifteen, fifteen, and twenty-four.

24. Creech's translation of Horace's Odes, Epistles and Satires appeared in 1711, 1715, 1717, and 1720. Samuel Dunster's translation was published in 1712 and 1729; and Welsted's translation of Horace's Works in 1726.

25. EL, XXXI (July, 1952), 315-336. Hereafter cited as Greene.

26. Greene, 315-16.

27. Lives of the English Poets, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford, 1905), I, 436 and 446.

28. Greene, 328.

29. Greene, 329.

30. Greene, 330. Here I think Mr. Greene is stretching a point; but if we take "logical" to mean direct nail-on-the-head argument, I think he is right.

31. The Poems of Alexander Pope (The Twickenham Edition, 10 volumes, London, 1939-67), I, 224-32. Hereafter I. E.

32. Quoted in I. E., I, 223.

33. Greene, 330.

34. Greene, 332.

35. English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century, 1700-1740, p. 485.

36. Johnson's Lives, III, 419. Johnson calls the ode

"disgraceful only to its author." I might add that at about this same time Joseph Warton wrote in the preface to his Odes (1746), "The public has been so much accustomed of late to didactic poetry alone, and essays on moral subjects, that any work, where the imagination is much indulged, will perhaps not be relished or regarded. The author therefore of these pieces is in some pain, lest certain austere critics should think them too fanciful or descriptive. But as he is convinced that the fashion of moralizing in verse has been carried too far, and as he looks upon invention and imagination to be the chief faculties of a poet, so he will be happy if the following Odes may be looked upon as an attempt to bring back poetry into its right channel." Quoted in Chalmers, XVIII, 146.

37. II, 354. About this "Thought" Herbert Davis says, "If Swift was not himself the first to utter this remarkable statement, he at least set his mark against it, as a thought that he had treasured and approved. Even if it should only be regarded as the momentary production of an agreeable conversation in the friendly company of men of wit and understanding, it is hardly the sort of doctrine we should expect from him. For this is indeed a new way of salvation, not by praying together or working together or fighting together, but 'that they should talk together every day.'" "The Conversation of The Augustans," The Seventeenth Century (Stanford, 1951), p. 186.

38. The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, ed. George Sherburn (Oxford, 1956), II, 426.

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