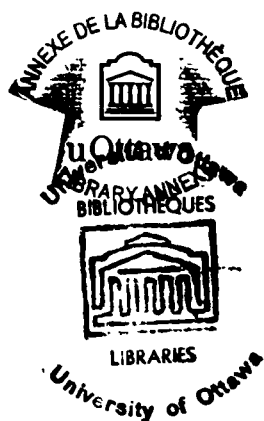


NARRATIVE POETRY IN EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND:
A STUDY OF FICTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ORIGINAL
NARRATIVE VERSE BETWEEN 1700 AND 1740

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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

W. Glenn Clever was born February 10, 1918, in Champion, Alberta. He received the Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Ottawa in 1964, and the Master of Arts from the same university in 1966.

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INTRODUCTION

This study arose from the apparent paradox during the early eighteenth century of the rise of the novel, with its continuing appeal to readers, and the virtual disappearance during the same period of correspondingly viable fiction in verse. Narrative poetry was written at this time, and in quantity, as the titles in Appendix 1 show; yet except for Alexander Pope's The Rape of the Lock and The Dunciad narrative poetry from the period 1700-1740 is notably absent from recent anthologies of eighteenth-century literature, and very little is available in twentieth-century editions of individual poets.

This study concerns such poetry. It does not set out to be an exhaustive account of the narrative poetry of the early eighteenth century and leaves perhaps more problems unattempted than it attempts. Foremost of these is one of texts, for relatively few of the poets considered are accessible in recent publications; except for major names, few studies exist of the individual poets; studies might also be done in the fables and other specific modes in which the narrative poetry of the period is cast; finally, this study excludes the larger problem of the extrinsic causes for the low vitality of the narrative poetry of the period. Such extrinsic causes, affecting the writer and his work

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may, if only in part, account for the virtual disappearance of enduring narrative poetry at this time; but causes intrinsic to the poetry may also be responsible. This study looks at the intrinsic causes and looks at these from a narrative point of view; it deals with narrative poetry as narrative, rather than as poetry per se. Narrative poems are not always clearly separable from other modes; frequently other features, such as satire, didacticism, or meditation, all but overwhelm the story element. This study seeks to separate out those poems in which a story, whether obvious or implied, may be discerned, and to examine the fictional characteristics of the story; it deals particularly with the meaning or insight the story gives form to, and how well such primary narrative elements as character, setting, and narrator technique themselves shape and express this.

This study then, looks at narrative poems primarily as they purport to tell stories; by an analysis of those features of a poem which contribute to or detract from the story interest it seeks to account in part for the decline of fiction in verse during the period. It considers particularly such questions as: What kinds of narrative poetry were written at the time? Are the poems really unworthy of attention today, or have they disappeared because of received critical disparagement from earlier years? What about them may have consigned them so universally to the

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limbo of literature? Do they show any redeeming features? What trends appear in narrative poetry over the period?

In seeking to answer such questions a wide array of poems in microfilms, miscellaneous collections, and works of individual poets has been examined, since one of the major problems was the establishing of a representative selection of narrative poems from the period, many of which have not been republished since then. The study does not attempt an exhaustive account of narrative poetry of the time but does aim to assemble, examine, and assess a sufficiently representative sample of poems that valid conclusions may be drawn of the range and fictional characteristics of the narrative poetry of the early eighteenth century.

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND

The original narrative poetry of early eighteenth-century England scarcely survived beyond its own day. The thesis of this study is that this poetry failed to endure because, as earlier writers have maintained, it is inferior, and that its essential inferiority stems from the shortcomings of its narrative elements. This work aims, then, by a study of representative poems to determine the main fictional characteristics of this poetry and to show that these characteristics adversely affect the power of enduring appeal of the narrative poetry of the period.

The narrative modes of early eighteenth-century poetry are predominantly heroic, mock-heroic, and metrical tale, each with its own substance and form. This study will therefore deal separately with each of these narrative modes. Before proceeding to such discussion, this chapter presents the bases of the study and the critical literature found most useful. It also presents a survey of the possible influence of narrative poetry of earlier periods on that of the early eighteenth century.

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1. The Bases of the Study.

The basic assumption of the study is that narrative poems can be selected from other kinds of poetry and can be studied from the point of view of how well their stories are told. Selection and study require, first, a definition by which narrative poems may be distinguished; and, second, some criteria by which the story content of such poems may be criticized. The definition and criteria adopted for the study stem from those of Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg: narrative consists essentially of a story--involving characters in action in a situation or atmosphere--and a story-teller or method of telling, and may well be approached critically through its meaning, plot, character, and point of view.¹

More specifically, this study defines narrative poetry as metrical composition in which may be recognized as a distinctive part of the poem the imaginative narration of characters in a progressive action. It accepts that in some poems the story dominates, while in others it scarcely holds its own against didacticism, witticism, or other features. However, as long as a story, whether obvious or implied, is apparent the poem is accepted as a narrative.

¹Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

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This definition is itself a general critical criterion: the more the story stands clear of other components of the poem the less likely are they to mar it, yet an excess of mere story may itself mar the effect of the whole. The ideal is a functional and harmonious interrelationship in which all the parts coalesce into the story. Nevertheless, a narrative poem by its nature tells a story and thus includes features common to all fiction, such as: the story's relevance to human experience; its plot, characters, and setting; and the manner of its telling. This study concentrates on these fictional characteristics of the poem in order to assess primarily the integrity and validity of the story the poem presents, other aspects being considered in so far as they help or hinder the fusion of all parts into a unified narrative poem.

The poetry being examined in this thesis is listed in Appendix 1, which lists poems alphabetically by author, together with their narrative mode, length, verse form, and date. The appendix does not purport to be a definitive register of the narrative verse of the period. It excludes: translations; verse published only in periodicals or magazines, or remaining in manuscript; and, except for a few poems which exhibit peculiar narrative quality, incomplete poems, as well as narrative poems which constitute part of longer poems. It also excludes such narrative poetry as may

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exist in some minor works which have not been accessible for this study, as listed in Appendix 2.

While the application of the definition of narrative poetry given above to some poems yields an easy and obvious decision, applied to others it leads to doubt and an arbitrary choice. Within the bounds of this choice, however, Appendix 1 does include the narrative verse written by poets listed in The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature for the period under review, and is considered to be an adequate basis for the study. Writers of the period whose works do not show any completed original narrative poetry are listed for reference in Appendix 3.

This study deals in depth with relatively few of the poems listed in Appendix 1, but these few are considered representative of all. The main criteria for discussion in detail are: the narrative mode in which the poem is cast--to ensure that the full range of narrative modes, and of types within each major mode, are considered; the richness of the poem as an example of its mode of narrative--against which to discuss and assess the relative worth as fiction of other poems of the same mode; the authorship--to ensure a wide range of poets and a full coverage of the time period; and the critical attention to and popular appeal of the poem--to ensure that poems with claims to fame are duly considered. The similitude in narrative nature of many of

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the poems, particularly among the shorter ones, as well as the derivative nature of all the anonymous poems, and of most of the poems by little known writers, who mainly ape either Samuel Butler or Pope, simplifies this problem. Since the sampling technique used has been designed to be representative of the range of narrative poetry of the period, the conclusions are considered to rest on reliable evidence.

A history of narrative poetry in England up to 1700 has not been written. Several reasons might be advanced for this. Not all critics, for example, agree that narrative poetry per se exists. Alex Preminger, Frank J. Warnke, and O.B. Hardison define a narrative poem as "one that tells a story" and discuss it as one of the types of poetry;² but Nigel Alexander says that "narrative is not a separate kind of poetry in its own right but a technique used by many poets for an infinite variety of effects."³ However, even though he disclaims narrative as a genre, Alexander links it closely to epic, asserting that narrative "technique is most closely associated with the classical epic."⁴ The dearth of studies of narrative poetry, in contrast with the numerous

²Alex Preminger, Frank J. Warnke, and O.B. Hardison, eds., Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 542.

³Nigel Alexander, Elizabethan Narrative Verse (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), p. i.

⁴Ibid.

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studies of heroic or epic poetry, evinces the predilection of critics towards narrative as epic; but in studies involving epic, critics disagree about what constitutes the subject matter to be studied. Where E.M.W. Tillyard, for example, in his survey of the English epic,⁵ omits Blake, Northrop Frye⁶ treats Blake as a significant maker of epic poetry. Moreover, since its rise in the early eighteenth century, the novel has become overwhelmingly the principal narrative mode and has perhaps accordingly usurped critical attention concerning narrative.

Whatever the causes, the only survey of English narrative poetry of the period before 1700 is that by Louis R. Zocca,⁷ which, in very general terms, tells the course of Elizabethan narrative poetry up to 1600. Alexander, in the introduction to his anthology, comments briefly on the narrative poetry of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but chiefly with reference to the Ovidian influence on narrative poetry of the period.

Existing scholarship in the field of early eighteenth-century narrative verse is not extensive and,

⁵E.M.W. Tillyard, The English Epic and Its Background, a Galaxy Book (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).

⁶Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake (Boston: Beacon Press, 1947), pp. 269, 313, 310, 405.

⁷Louis R. Zocca, Elizabethan Narrative Poetry (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1950).

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again, most of what exists deals with the heroic mode. Within the eighteenth century Samuel Johnson provides a biographical and critical sourcebook in which occasional specific comments on narrative may be found.⁸ His work is complemented by the additional "Lives" by Alexander Chalmers in his 1810 edition of the English Poets.⁹ John Dennis,¹⁰ alone of the eighteenth-century critics, comes to grips exegetically and specifically with narrative poetry. Nineteenth and early twentieth-century critics contribute little to an awareness or appreciation of early eighteenth-century narrative verse; rather they seem to accept the opinion of the few critics before them, such as Johnson, as being terminal on the topic.

Other works deal more tangentially with the problem of the narrative poetry of the early eighteenth century.

⁸Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets (2 vols.; London: Oxford University Press, 1952).

⁹Alexander Chalmers, ed., The Works of the English Poets, from Chaucer to Cowper: including the Series Edited with Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, by Dr. Samuel Johnson: and the Most Approved Translations. The Additional Lives by Alexander Chalmers (21 vols.; London: Johnson et al., 1810). Volumes IX to XVII include poets of the early eighteenth century. The work is cited hereafter as Works of the English Poets.

¹⁰John Dennis, "Remarks on a Book Entituled Prince Arthur," The Critical Works of John Dennis, ed. Edward Niles Hooker, I (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1939).

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Marion Bragg¹¹ treats of pastoral poetry, in summary up to 1700 and in detail for the eighteenth century. Though she does not comment on narrative features of the genre, her work provides a useful perspective for the pastoral narrative of the period. Roberta Florence Brinkley¹² traces the role of the Arthurian legend, including its political significance in the seventeenth century. Her work offers useful insights into eighteenth-century narrative verse which incorporates Arthurian material. Two writers help to explain the pre-Romantic trend, slight though it is, in eighteenth-century narrative verse: Arthur Johnston¹³ studies the extent of eighteenth-century scholarship related to the medieval romance; Karl Kroeber,¹⁴ though primarily concerned with the Romantic period, offers a useful perspective on the "subjective" epic. W. MacNeil Dixon¹⁵ and

¹¹Marion L. Bragg, The Formal Eclogue in Eighteenth-Century England, University of Maine Studies, 2d Series, No. 6, The Maine Bulletin, No. XXVIII (Orono, Maine: University of Maine Press, 1926).

¹²Roberta Florence Brinkley, Arthurian Legend in the Seventeenth Century, Johns Hopkins Monographs in Literary History, No. III (New York: Octagon Books, 1932).

¹³Arthur Johnston, Enchanted Ground: the Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century (London: Athlone Press, 1964).

¹⁴Karl Kroeber, Romantic Narrative Art (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960).

¹⁵W. MacNeile Dixon, English Epic and Heroic Poetry (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1912).

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Tillyard¹⁶ both survey the epic; but because they restrict their respective studies to specifically epic characteristics and background, their works deal only cursorily with eighteenth-century heroic narrative poetry generally.

Earl R. Wasserman¹⁷ and Raymond Dexter Havens¹⁸ provide the most useful works on the influence of previous narrative poets on eighteenth-century narrative poetry. Wasserman discusses the Spenserian influence, though he concentrates mainly on Spenserian influence during the second half of the century. Havens deals with Miltonic influence; his work is more significant to this study than Wasserman's in that he criticizes epic type verse which shows the influence of Milton and also provides a register of this type of poem from Milton's day to 1950.

Useful specialist studies are Richmond P. Bond on the burlesque,¹⁹ and John W. Draper on the metrical tale.²⁰

¹⁶Tillyard, The English Epic.

¹⁷Earl R. Wasserman, Elizabethan Poetry in the Eighteenth Century, Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, Vol. XXXII, Nos. 2-3 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1947).

¹⁸Raymond Dexter Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961 [1st publ. 1922]).

¹⁹Richmond P. Bond, English Burlesque Poetry 1700-1740 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1932).

²⁰John W. Draper, "The Metrical Tale in XVIII-Century England," PMLA, LII (1937), pp. 390-97.

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Bond describes the fictional characteristics of many anonymous narrative poems of the period. Draper shows the continuity of narrative tradition throughout the century and the contribution of the eighteenth-century metrical tale to the nineteenth-century short story and romantic poetic narrative.

Even a cursory glance at narrative poetry of the early eighteenth century shows that it is a continuation of past English narrative poetic tradition. The remainder of this chapter briefly considers those features of earlier narrative poetry which appear to affect the narrative poetry of the period from 1700 to 1740.

2. The Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Periods.

Anglo-Saxon narrative poetry did not directly influence that of the early eighteenth century. Poets of the latter period neither translated nor paraphrased Anglo-Saxon works. Sir Richard Blackmore chose an Anglo-Saxon king for the hero of his epic Alfred, and Arthurian heroes for his Prince Arthur and King Arthur alike, but his poems have practically no points of contact with Anglo-Saxon literature other than their derivative topics. The Anglo-Saxon poetic form awoke no echoes either in Blackmore or his contemporaries, and the language even of a period as late in English literature as Chaucer's time (c. 1340-1400) appeared

so archaic to the later age that the eighteenth century found paraphrase or "translation" necessary.

One Anglo-Saxon narrative, Finnsburh (c. 750), was printed in 1705.²¹ This, Stanley B. Greenfield says, "is no curtailed epic, but a bona fide lay, a brief narrative with compressed description and rapid conversation."²² George Sampson suggests that had a translation also appeared the poem might have influenced the eighteenth century.²³ However, none appeared; this example of early verse narrative remained locked in its own language during the period.

Middle English verse narrative had only slight influence on early eighteenth-century narrative poetry, its major effect occurring after mid-century. Ambrose Philips, for instance, published A Collection of Old Ballads in 1723; but Thomas Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poets, of 1765, which incorporated narrative ballads from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, made the greatest impact. Some narrative poetry of the Middle English period was read, however, during the early eighteenth century; some was even converted into contemporary style. Herbert J.C. Grierson and

²¹ Stanley B. Greenfield, A Critical History of Old English Literature (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 91.

²² Ibid., p. 92.

²³ George Sampson, The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 535.

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J.C. Smith point out, for example, that William Hamilton of Gilbertfield modernized Blind Harry's Wallace (c. 1475), an epic of some 11,000 lines, into the heroic couplet form and the contemporary idiom of 1722.²⁴ Geoffrey Chaucer reappeared in modernized version in the works of several eighteenth-century poets, for example Henry Brooke's Constantia, or the Man of Law's Tale, 1741, and sparked works such as John Gay's An Answer to the Sompner's Prologue. The Arthurian legend, so prominent in Middle English narrative, underlies Blackmore's Prince Arthur and King Arthur. Some of the early eighteenth-century metrical tales derived from Middle English narrative: Matthew Prior's Henry and Emma, for example, stems from the ballad The Nut-Brown Maid, first printed in 1502; William Hamilton tells his Speech of Randolph: A Fragment of Bruce in pseudo-medieval mode.

Certain modes, popular in medieval narrative poetry, recurred in the early eighteenth century; and though the later users did not always know the original source, they did inherit and use the mode. Examples include: the linked series of tales and pentameter couplet of Chaucer; the chronicle or history of John Barber's Bruce (1375); the allegory with personified characters; the Aesop fable in contemporary colloquial idiom, as in the Fables of Robert

²⁴ Herbert J.C. Grierson and J.C. Smith, A Critical History of English Poetry (London: Chatto and Windus, 1936), p. 51.

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Henryson (1430-1506); and the general didactic, burlesque, and satiric tone of medieval poetry.

The medieval concept of the hero may also have affected the narrative poetry of the early eighteenth century. John Lydgate (c. 1370-1449) transmitted into English literature from Italian Renaissance literature. E.M.W. Tillyard says, the humanistic view of man as hero, replacing the earlier medieval allegorical view of man as pilgrim.²⁵ The poets of the early eighteenth century used both concepts: a few attempted a spiritually allegorical resolution of the human situation, Richard Savage, for example, in The Wanderer: A Vision; and many used allegory for purpose of panegyric, for example Thomas Tickell in Kensington Gardens, which praises the monarch. However, most commonly the poets made contemporary man the operative centre of their worlds.

3. The Renaissance Period.

Louis R. Zocca shows the continuing interest in narrative poetry from the period of Chaucer on into the Renaissance, "even though the quality may not have been as high or the production as great as it had been in former times."²⁶ He also shows the great variety of form: the

²⁵Tillyard, The English Epic, pp. 137, 190-201.

²⁶Zocca, Elizabethan Narrative Poetry, p. 97.

earlier poets, he says, sang to both court and tradesmen: sang mysteries and romances, fables, satirical poems, burlesques of chivalric romances, stirring ballads, fabliaux, novellas in verse, and other songs such as testaments and facetiae.²⁷ Early eighteenth-century poets used almost all these varieties of form.

The flamboyance of Renaissance literature would suggest that it differs essentially from neo-classic literature, yet eighteenth-century narrative poetry reflected many characteristics of the narrative verse of the Renaissance period. Zocca describes, for example, the high popularity of the mirror genre, dealing with the lives of significant personalities, and shows how this genre, in the Renaissance overflowing with nationalistic and moral fervour, by the close of the sixteenth century became essentially fiction, intended to amuse.²⁸ Early eighteenth-century poetry reflected both these trends: on the one hand the serious moral and national panegyrics to King William and to Queen Anne, and on the other hand the satiric and amusing burlesques of less eminent contemporaries.

The Renaissance epic exerted perhaps the greatest influence on early eighteenth-century narrative verse. its influence including form, substance, and motivation.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 97-101.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 34-35, 93.

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Tillyard points out that following the translation of Aristotle's Poetics in the mid-sixteenth century, an assumption arose "that such a thing" as the epic form existed, together with "a reverence for the abstracted form itself, apart from its manifestations" in particular epics.²⁹

Tillyard adds that by the time of the neo-classic age this became an "almost mystical notion of the epic form," with the result that the heroic poem became "to the other forms of poetry what the king is to the rest of a polity and the sun to the rest of the heavens."³⁰ The Renaissance epic, Tillyard asserts, is "primarily social and political";³¹ the Renaissance tends "not to draw any clear line between the two narrative forms of epic and history."³² These characteristics, which appear, for example, in the Poly-Olbion of Michael Drayton (1568-1631), reappeared in early eighteenth-century "epics" such as James Grainger's utilitarian Sugar Cane, or John Philips' political Bleinheim. Though the modes of the Renaissance led to no significant epics in the early eighteenth century, the many attempts of the poets of the later period to apply Renaissance epic form

²⁹Tillyard, The English Epic, p. 223.

³⁰Ibid., p. 229.

³¹Ibid., p. 261.

³²Ibid., p. 203.

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to contemporary utilitarian purposes attests to the reverence for the form which the earlier age passed on to the later.

Renaissance narrative verse displays more reflection, contemplation, comment, and description than it does action. Both short narratives, such as William Shakespeare's The Rape of Lucrece, and long works such as Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene, show these characteristics. Early eighteenth-century narrative poetry displays similar attributes; and many of the long poems which seem to have a narrative base, Prior's Solomon, for example, are excluded from the present study on the grounds that meditation dominates and subsumes, as in the Elizabethan poetry, whatever action there may be.

Whereas the medieval metrical tale, for example, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, scarcely affected the narrative poetry of the early eighteenth century the Renaissance metrical tale influenced it considerably. The chivalrous romances of the medieval era, William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard point out, under the steady disparagement of the Renaissance moralists, lost the high standing which they enjoyed in the fourteenth century.³³ Zocca asserts that

³³William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, Handbook to Literature, rev. C. Hugh Holman (New York: Odyssey Press, 1960), p. 279.

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they also became bourgeois. While the more sophisticated readers, he says, tended to reject these romances because of their improbability, the middle and lower classes reacted favourably to this very characteristic; moreover, as the puritan spirit intensified over the years, the romances became increasingly didactic and moralistic until eventually they were "a typical bourgeois medium" for moral preaching as well as being popular tales.³⁴ Even the more realistic metrical tales from Boccaccio and Bandello, for example, The Spider and the Gout of Thomas Churchyard (1520?-1604), as Zocca comments, bear moral lessons, present a distinctive middle-class tone, deal with situations close to reality and with people from all walks of life, and consequently appealed strongly to the middle class of the time.³⁵

These verse romances, whether chivalric or realistic, display little poetic quality. They function, Zocca says, to emotional, violent, and didactic ends to the degree that this impairs their artistic growth, style becoming subordinate to moral intent.³⁶ C.S. Lewis suggests that if the verse romances of poets such as George Turbeville (1540?-1610) and Barnaby Googe (1540-1594) are bad it might be because they turned away from "the thin but real, trickle of

³⁴Zocca, Elizabethan Narrative Poetry, pp. 103-4.

³⁵Ibid., p. 112.

³⁶Ibid., p. 151.

poetry that still survived among the people"; for example. he says, though seven of the ten stories in Turbeville's Tragical Tales come from Boccaccio, "the sixth tale ('Gerbin and the King's Daughter of Tunis'), which has a purely medieval content and admits ballad irregularities of metre, is easily his best work."³⁷ The metrical tales of the early eighteenth century evince little of the emotion or violence to which Zocca refers but they too are heavily moralistic and didactic and tend to subordinate style to content.

However, from about 1590 the popular verse romance gave way to the erotic mythological tale such as Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis (1593). Grierson and Smith state that the unfinished Hero and Leander of Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) set the fashion of Ovidian mythological stories in verse.³⁸ Three factors, Zocca says, caused the change: the increasing influence of Italian culture, Queen Elizabeth's hardening attitude towards the Puritans, and the new spirit of paganism sweeping over England.³⁹ However, the censorship of 1599 curbed the vogue and in the seventeenth century the mythological narrative verse gave way to the

³⁷C.S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century excluding Drama, Vol. III of the Oxford History of English Literature, ed. F.P. Wilson and Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 261.

³⁸Grierson and Smith, Critical History of English Poetry, p. 79.

³⁹Zocca, Elizabethan Narrative Poetry, p. 105.

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newer verse romance of heroic and pastoral pretension. Nevertheless, the vogue became prominent in the narrative poetry of the early eighteenth century, though frequently burlesqued.

The heroic epistle also affected the early eighteenth-century narrative poetry. Drayton used it in England's Heroical Epistles (1597), on the model, Lewis comments, of Ovid's Heroides, and in the heroic couplet "here in its early perfection."⁴⁰ It reappears in such early eighteenth-century poems as Elijah Fenton's Phaon to Sappho.

The Faerie Queene (1586-1596) stands by itself because of its specific influence in stanza form, archaic diction, tone, and romance-like content. With its plot of multiplicity of action as distinguished from the plot of unity of action of the Aristotelian epic tradition, it warrants Arthur Johnston's comment that it is "the last great epic to make use of what was regarded as the form of romance."⁴¹ Its influence in the early eighteenth century was none too strong, yet during the period 1700-1740 several poets tried to imitate Spenser, as Samuel Wesley does, for example, in The Battle of the Sexes (1735).

The Renaissance thus presents a wide variety of verse narrative modes. Their recurrence in the early

⁴⁰Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, pp. 533-4.

⁴¹Johnston. Enchanted Ground, p. 62.

eighteenth century shows that the narrative poets of the later period, while naturally caught up in the temper of their own age, were nevertheless aware of the narrative tradition behind them.

4. The Seventeenth-Century Period.

Early seventeenth-century narrative poetry, before the Restoration, thrusts less deeply into the eighteenth than does that of the latter part of the century, and the quality of the heroic narrative of the entire century is low. Dixon points out that Milton excepted, "the history of the heroic poetry" in the seventeenth century, "is a chronicle of failure," caused not so much by poetical as by narrative weakness, "an inability to march." He cites, for example, Abraham Cowley's Davideis (1657) as a poem that never lived, William Davenant's Gondibert (1651) as one now dead, and William Chamberlayne's Pharonnida (1659) as a poem more dead than alive.⁴² In general, verse narrative in this period appears as the serious poetry of heroic romance or Christian epic, or as satire or burlesque.

The concept of the Christian epic challenged many early eighteenth-century poets. J.W.H. Atkins points out that Davenant's Preface to his epical romance Gondibert

⁴²Dixon, English Epic and Heroic Poetry, pp. 224, 239

states that epic should "embody a Christian theme as being most conducive to virtue"; and that Cowley, in the Preface to his Poems (1656), spiritedly argues on behalf of poetry that would restore the kingdom of God, instead of the contemporary poetry which he thought more illustrative of the Devil in flattering the great, idolizing women, or telling "senseless fables."⁴³ These doctrines in practice produced poor models. Neither Davenant nor Cowley completed religious epics though they both, through their incompleted attempts, exerted a continuing influence. Other completed examples, such as Francis Quarles's Job Militant (1624), Thomas Heywood's Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels (1635), Milton's epics, and the elder Samuel Wesley's The Life of Our Blessed Lord (1693), provided continuity for the Christian epics which appeared in the following century.

Excessive length and lack of action flaw the heroic romances, which Tucker Brooke calls "elongated works."⁴⁴ Dixon observes that an aristocratic, "polite society" attitude, similar to the heroic drama of the Restoration period, also flaws these verse romances. This flaw stems, Dixon says, chiefly from the lengthy French prose romances which

⁴³J.W.H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: 17th and 18th Centuries, University Paperbacks (London: Methuen and Co., 1966 [1st publ. 1951]), pp. 35, 40-41.

⁴⁴Tucker Brooke, "The Renaissance," A Literary History of England, ed. A. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), p. 652.

became the favourite reading of seventeenth-century England. Dixon adds that the heroic poems of Davenant and Chamberlayne and their contemporaries are of the same family as these romances "in which the sentiment and reflection suitable to persons of 'quality' overpower both plot and characterization, in which a formidable thicket of commentary overarches and almost completely conceals a thin trickling stream of narrative."⁴⁵ Dixon notes that Francis Kynaston in 1642 entitled a romance Leoline and Sydanis: or, A Romance of the Amorous Adventures of Princes, and adds that the two titles together serve to reveal the intentions of all the poets of the seventeenth-century group.⁴⁶

As the century waned, the world of the romantic narrative poets became even more unreal. Mrs. Aphra Behn (1640-1689), for example, in A Voyage to the Isle of Love, wrote an allegorical, rhapsodic, almost operatic romance of some 2,500 lines, in which characters, setting, and action are dissociated from plausible reality.⁴⁷ John Chalkhill, in his unfinished Thealma and Clearchus, published in 1683, produces, Dixon says, a beautiful but lifeless pastoral

⁴⁵Dixon, English Epic and Heroic Poetry, pp. 226-29.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 239.

⁴⁷Mrs. Aphra Behn, "Poems by Mrs. Aphra Behn." Poems by Eminent Ladies, ed. Mrs. Mary Barber (London: [publisher not shown], 1755), I. 59-141.

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account of a society that never could have existed.⁴⁸ The seventeenth century thus bequeathed lax models of the heroic romance to the ensuing age.

However, the epic intent stirred the poets of the century. The epics and heroic romances can be seen as demonstrating an epic motive. As Brooke comments:

Davenant's unfinished Gondibert (1651) is another work of which the significance depends on what came after. It hardly connects at any point with earlier English poetry, but is an important landmark in neo-classic art. It was to be an epic on a very modern plan, presenting love and ambition in their highest forms. . . . The characters and actions were to illustrate classic notions of poetic justice and ethical grandeur.⁴⁹

"I intend this poem," Davenant says, "to strip Nature naked and clothe her again in the perfect shape of Virtue."⁵⁰

Alexander M. Witherspoon and Frank J. Warnke feel that Davenant tried "to lead epic traditions in directions agreeable to the growing rationalistic and scientific concerns of the time," and that Cowley, in his unfinished Davideis, marks a beginning in epic of the closed couplet and classic manner which later predominates.⁵¹ Warren L. Cherniak comments that

⁴⁸Dixon, English Epic and Heroic Poetry, p. 239.

⁴⁹Brooke, "The Renaissance," p. 672.

⁵⁰William Davenant, "Postscript" to the edition of 1651, cited by Brooke, loc. cit.

⁵¹Alexander M. Witherspoon and Frank J. Warnke, eds. Seventeenth-Century Prose and Poetry, 2d ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), pp. 670, 949.

Waller tried to write full-fledged heroic narrative based on the formula of "topical detail treated in epic manner, with a strong element of praise."⁵² The earlier seventeenth-century poets thus moved strongly in the direction of heroic narrative poetry, but with a rather uncertain principle of the "heroic" to guide them. Dixon terms Chamberlayne's Pharonnida, for instance, "our first and perhaps still our best novel in verse" but cites as evidence its epic length of almost 14,000 lines, and its lack of plot, discursive nature, and careless construction.⁵³ The same lack of narrative principle and form appears in the long narrative poetry of the early eighteenth century.

The Restoration of 1660, Samuel Holt Monk says, while it brought a "radical and apparently sudden change of taste" did not break completely with the past:

It retained the Renaissance admiration for the typically aristocratic heroic ideal as expressed in the "heroic poem" or epic. Paradise Lost [1667], carefully modeled though it is on the structure and conventions of ancient epic poetry, did not meet the expectations of most Restoration readers, who associated the heroic poem with "fierce wars and faithful loves" and expected it to offer patterns of ideal virtue and heroism for the emulation of princes and generals. General enthusiasm for Milton's epic did not develop until the early 18th century. The romantic idealism of the heroic mode was most characteristically expressed during the Restoration not in the heroic poem (except for Dryden's translations of the Aeneid and of Chaucer's Knight's Tale), but in the heroic play.⁵⁴

⁵²Warren L. Cherniak, "The Heroic Occasional Poem: Panegyric and Satire in the Restoration," MLQ, XXVI (1965), 525.

⁵³Dixon, Epic and Heroic Poetry, pp. 234-5.

⁵⁴Samuel Holt Monk, "The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century," The Norton Anthology of English Literature, ed. M.H. Abrams et al. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1962), I, 1131, 1142.

Nevertheless, as Alexandre Beljame points out, records show that between 1688 and 1730 the Tonsons published twelve editions of Paradise Lost; ⁵⁵ and J.A.K. Thomson comments that "most of the English poets since Milton who have essayed the heroic epic have gone to school with him." ⁵⁶

Milton was also seminal for some of the religious didacticism of early eighteenth-century narrative poets; for those, such as John Bulkeley in his theological epic The Last Day, who take Milton for their model, mimic mostly what James Reeves calls the "versified theology" of Paradise Lost, the Milton who appeals "as a master of reasoned exposition in verse." ⁵⁷

Seventeenth-century caricature of serious narrative verse appeared as early as the brief mock-epic of The Battle of the Summer Islands in which Edmund Waller (1606-1687) treats of an ineffectual effort to capture two stranded whales. The mode peaked in the Restoration in the works of

⁵⁵Alexandre Beljame, Men of Letters and the English Public in the Eighteenth Century. ed. Bonamy Dobrée, trans. E.O. Lorimer (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1948), p. 315n. [In which he cites Masson, The Poetical Works of John Milton, Introduction to Paradise Lost, as the authority for this statement.]

⁵⁶J.A.K. Thomson, Classical Influences on English Poetry (New York: Collier, 1962 [1st publ. 1951]), p. 65.

⁵⁷James Reeves, A Short History of English Poetry (London: Heinemann, 1961), pp. 103-4.

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Samuel Butler and John Dryden. In the early eighteenth century it became the dominant genre: satire, burlesque, parody, travesty, mock-heroic, mock-epic--these became the fashionable modes of narrative poetry.

Butler's Hudibras (1663-1678), a 12,000 line octosyllabic verse narrative directed against the Puritans, lacks both form and focus to support its length. Dr. Johnson says of it:

The discontinuity of the action might however have been easily forgiven, if there had been action enough: but I believe every reader regrets the paucity of events, and complains, that in the poem of Hudibras, as in the history of Thucydides, there is more said than done. The scenes are too seldom changed, and the attention is tired with long conversations.⁵⁸

Defective as it is as a model it was seminal for much of the burlesque narrative poetry of the early eighteenth century. Indeed, many poems of the period include the term "Hudibrastic" in the title, as for example the anonymous The Mitre. A Tale in Hudibrastic Verse (1731).

A much more polished form of caricature appeared in the works of Dryden (1631-1700) in a perfected form of pentametric couplet which itself influenced the early eighteenth century. Reuben A. Brower states that Dryden prepared the way for Alexander Pope in his development of

⁵⁸Samuel Johnson, "The Life of Butler." Works of the English Poets, VIII, 91.

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the "'true heroic' narrative manner."⁵⁹ This manner marks such narrative poems as MacFlecknoe (1684), Absalom and Achitophel (1681), and The Hind and the Panther (1688). MacFlecknoe leads the way, the first of the great English mock-heroic poems, Sampson calls it.⁶⁰ Absalom and Achitophel, a topical, allegorical, political narrative, introduces the sharply drawn characters or sketches of contemporary figures, and also sets a norm for narrative poetry in which incident is almost eliminated in favour of satiric description and comment, a development which in the early eighteenth century makes poems such as Pope's The Dunciad scarcely warrant consideration as narrative. The Hind and the Panther gave a contemporary prestige to the beast fable, a form highly popular with many poets, for example, John Gay, in the early eighteenth century. Dryden's Fables, Ancient and Modern (1699), which paraphrases in verse, tales by Chaucer, Boccaccio, and Ovid, was highly popular, as H.G. Wright says,⁶¹ and also was an influence on subsequent writers.

⁵⁹Reuben A. Brower, "Dryden and the 'Invention' of Pope," Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature, ed. Carol Camden (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 211.

⁶⁰Sampson, Concise History of English Literature, p. 407.

⁶¹H.G. Wright, "Some Sidelights on the Reputation and Influence of Dryden's Fables," RES, LVI (1945), 23-37, cited by Johnston, Enchanted Ground, p. 48.

Louis I. Bredvold writes of Dryden and his contemporaries:

The poet was in this age close to his public, was, indeed, presumably a part of it: a gentleman who wrote for ladies and gentlemen. He found his audience in this select circle, and his works were appraised not by reviews in literary journals but by the judgements voiced in the coffee-house or drawing room. The poet was a man of the world, and he wrote about politics, war, religion, or scientific progress, whatever might interest the society in which he lived. He wrote verses for social or festive occasions as a matter of course, poetry being one of the delightful amusements of life.⁶²

Bredvold concludes that their work reflects this milieu. His comment applies to form as well as to content for by the end of the seventeenth century poets were highly form conscious; they bequeathed to the early eighteenth century as its prime narrative mode the epic-heroic, or its mock form, as practised by Butler, Milton, and Dryden.

5. Eighteenth-Century Poetic Form.

The poets of the early eighteenth century inherited a specific attitude towards poetic form. René Wellek and Austin Warren comment, for example:

⁶²Louis I. Bredvold, The Literature of the Restoration and the Eighteenth Century, Vol. III of A History of English Literature, ed. Hardin Craig (New York: Collier, 1962), pp. 15-16.

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That genres are distinct--and also should be kept distinct--is a general article of Neo-Classical faith. But if we look to Neo-Classical criticism for definition of genre or method of distinguishing genre from genre, we find little consistency or even awareness of the need for a rationale.⁶³

This attitude, inherited from the seventeenth century, took sharper focus in the eighteenth. Wellek and Warren note the development of a social differentiation in which "epic and tragedy deal with the affairs of kings and nobles, comedy with those of the middle class (the city, the bourgeoisie), and satire and farce with the common people."⁶⁴ John

Sutherland comments on the strong orientation towards kinds in poetic form:

The eighteenth-century poet set out to write not only a poem rather than poetry, but a poem which belonged to one of the recognized Kinds. . . . 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.⁶⁵

Sutherland quotes W.P. Ker on the mystique which developed around the poetic form:

⁶³René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1956), p. 219.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 224.

⁶⁵John Sutherland, A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 122-23.

There were . . . exact patterns of different kinds of poetry laid up in some heaven to which the true scholar might rise in his contemplation. . . . What influence these ideal patterns had, what reverence they evoked, is scarcely conceivable now.⁶⁶

The different genres of narrative poetry, as distinguished in poem titles in Appendix 1, comprise principally the epic or heroic, the mock-epic, and the tale and fable. Samuel Johnson remarks that "by the general consent of the critics the first praise of genius is due to the writer of an epic poem, as it requires an assemblage of the powers which are singly sufficient for other compositions."⁶⁷ In the eighteenth century the epic became so important, as Sutherland says, "that the neo-classical critics sometimes extended to all poetry rules which were applicable only to the heroic poem";⁶⁸ and Tillyard notes that both Milton and Dryden believed in the patriotic value of writing an epic.⁶⁹ The epic was thus the paramount form.

6. Summary.

Critical studies of the narrative poetry of periods of English literature are uncommon, perhaps because of a

⁶⁶Quoted in Sutherland, op. cit., p. 122.

⁶⁷Samuel Johnson, Lives of the Poets (Cowley to Prior), Dolphin Books (New York: Doubleday, n.d.), p. 120.

⁶⁸Sutherland, Eighteenth Century Poetry, p. 123.

⁶⁹Tillyard, The English Epic, pp. 3, 466.

concept that narrative is a technique rather than a genre, or because of the pre-eminence of epic as a narrative poetic mode, or because since the eighteenth century the marked ascendancy of the novel as the main form of narrative has usurped critical attention relevant to narrative. Whatever the causes, most discussion of English narrative poetry focuses on epic. This study considers narrative poetry of the early eighteenth century in terms of the basic elements common to all story telling, modified as appropriate for heroic, mock-heroic, and shorter tales.

Whether or not the narrative mode is accepted as one of the types of poetry, as a poetic mode it was continuous, if with great variety and change in its manifestations, not only over the four centuries or so preceding 1700 but also through the early eighteenth century. The continuity of specific features of narrative poetry into the early eighteenth century varies. Little of the Anglo-Saxon mode appeared, rather more of the medieval, and a great deal of the Renaissance and seventeenth century. This is not to claim that the poets of the early eighteenth century consciously aped their predecessors, but rather to point out that they did follow in the footsteps of their predecessors in narrative poetry.

Perhaps the most marked feature of the earlier periods to reappear in the narrative poetry of the early

eighteenth century was a Renaissance reverence for the epic as at once an ideal poetic form and the peak of poetic achievement, together with a seventeenth-century spirit of didacticism and burlesque. Other features also appeared. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the stock form for narrative poetry was that of Dryden, and to a lesser extent that of Butler, Milton, and Spenser. By this time, too, nearly all the modes of verse narrative which appeared in the early eighteenth century were already well established in the canon of English narrative verse. Also, the narrative poetry leading up to 1700 reflected the successive changes in cultural outlook: the medieval, the Renaissance, the seventeenth century, each reflected a new orientation of the human spirit towards its environment and presented its realistic and its idealistic matter, its serious and its mocking tone; and these, too, continued on into the early eighteenth-century narrative poetry.

From this background the early eighteenth-century poet, in turn, reflected his world. How he does so, and how well, is the substance of the following chapters. Narrative poetry in the heroic mode, which comprises most of the longer narrative poetry of the period, will first be considered.

CHAPTER II

HEROIC NARRATIVE POETRY

The writers of the seventeenth century bequeathed to those of the eighteenth a critical awareness of the epic-heroic as the principal narrative poem. By the latter part of the seventeenth century, according to William K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks, the epic type poem became the lodestar of poetry:

Witness not only the numerous original epic attempts and the epic translations of the century but the epic straining of even such a topical poem as Dryden's Annus Mirabilis and the dreams of the strong poets like Dryden and Pope about writing a British epic.¹

The eighteenth-century poets also inherited examples of heroic narratives and epics (these terms are used synonymously in this study), such as those mentioned in Chapter I, and a body of related theory. Both examples and theory helped to create the epic mystique which induced poets of the early eighteenth century to attempt heroic poetry as being the epitome of poetic achievement.

The seventeenth century, as J.W.H. Atkins explains, expressed two main theories of the epic mode: the first,

¹William K. Wimsatt Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), p. 198.

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voiced chiefly by William Davenant, that epic should be shaped by a dramatic five-part story of love and ambition which would teach Christian virtue; the second, voiced chiefly by Dryden, that epic should be shaped by a moral thesis of public duty and heroic virtue, as exemplified by a perfect hero in a single heroic action. In both views the epic required a sublime style, a setting in a former age, and incorporation of the marvellous and the probable together with devices such as Christian machinery to make these compatible; in both views the epic was intended to invoke admiration in the reader; and in both it existed as an empty pattern which could be used to tailor any suitable material into epic dress.²

In the eighteenth century Henry Fielding announced in the Preface to his prose fiction Joseph Andrews that this work was a comic epic, and later writers have seen in the eighteenth century the commencement of a shift of the epic to prose. E.M.W. Tillyard maintains that "in the eighteenth century, prose fiction began potentially to be the best epic medium invading what had been mainly the province of verse"; "I hold," he adds, "that in the eighteenth century the epic impulse left poetry for the novel." He cites Robinson Crusoe (1719) as "containing not a few features that had in

²J.W.H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: 17th and 18th Centuries, University Paperbacks (London: Methuen and Co., 1966 [1st publ. 1951]), pp. 33-36, 94-95, 102, 112, 117-121.

practice raised the epic to prominence" and continues:

"Defoe began the transfer of the true epic instinct from the verse narrative . . . to the middle-class prose romance" and Fielding "continued the process begun by Defoe."³ Raymond Dexter Havens feels that Tom Jones is perhaps "a truer epic than any of its ponderous verse contemporaries that claimed the title."⁴ René Wellek and Austin Warren assert that the novel is "the modern descendant of the epic."⁵ H.T. Swedenberg says that earlier seventeenth-century French writers thought of the novel as an epic in prose and that various later writers "considered the novel a type of epic."⁶

Davenant, on the one hand, and Tillyard et al., on the other, are obvious talking about two different art forms: one, the neo-classic concept of epic as expressed by its writers and critics; and, two, another concept which this study terms "epic proper,"

³E.M.W. Tillyard, The English Epic and Its Background, a Galaxy Book (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 12-13, 496.

⁴Raymond Dexter Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961 [1st publ. 1922]), p. 279.

⁵René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1956), p. 201.

⁶H.T. Swedenberg Jr., The Theory of the Epic in England 1650-1800 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1944), p. 150.

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expressed by modern writers who favour characteristics which they feel epic once had but lost to the novel during the early eighteenth century. The following examples show that the features of this concept of epic proper vary somewhat from critic to critic. Tillyard lists four features: an elevated style; an ordered, comprehensive complexity of material; a single unifying principle; and "the feeling of what it was like to be alive at the time."⁷ Lascelles Abercrombie would have the epic express the spirit and social milieu of its own age through a well-told story.⁸ William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard require an "elevated style presenting characters of high position in a series of adventures which form an organic whole through their relation to a central figure of heroic proportions and through their development of EPISODES important to the history of a nation or race."⁹ Karl Kroeber wants its story to be founded deep in the general but unmistakably real experiences of men, and to embody some profoundly significant idea.¹⁰ This study

⁷Tillyard, The English Epic, pp. 5-12.

⁸Lascelles Abercrombie, The Epic, The Art and Craft of Letters (London: Martin Becker [1914]), pp. 26, 41, 88.

⁹William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, Handbook to Literature, rev. C. Hugh Holman (New York: Odyssey Press, 1960), pp. 174-75.

¹⁰Karl Kroeber, Romantic Narrative Art (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), p. 85.

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accepts the following as the main criteria of an epic poem: first, it has an organic unifying principle, a publicly important action comprehensive of its world, and a protagonist who illustrates or represents the heroic ideal of his time; second, it communicates the feel of its own age and puts into focus some constant human experience; and, finally, it is presented at length in a verse style that enhances its components.

The novel may incorporate some of these features, but if it absorbed them all it would cease to be a novel and become an epic. Critics of the rise of the novel feel that this did not occur in the early eighteenth century. Lionel Stevenson, for example, includes as differentiae between previous prose fiction and the emerging novel of the early eighteenth century a pre-eminent illusion of reality and an individualization of character.¹¹ The stress here on verisimilitude of action and of people sets the early novel apart from the epic as it had been written up to this time. Nevertheless, as shown above, critics feel that enough features of the epic proper moved from the epic as practised during this period to the contemporary novel to devitalize the epic, and to help to invigorate the novel.

¹¹Lionel Stevenson, The English Novel: A Panorama (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1960), p. 8.

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The poets of the early eighteenth century who wanted to write heroic narrative could conceivably write in accord with the epic norms inherited from the seventeenth century, with the norms provided by extant examples of the epic proper, or with other norms, for example, those of the contemporary novel. Critical opinion about their efforts is generally pejorative. Most critics writing about the history of the epic in English close the account with Milton, perhaps because of the prevailing impression that the early eighteenth century is, as W. MacNeile Dixon says, "the most desolate region of English poetry . . . reported to be barren beyond hope."¹² Nevertheless, the poets of the period wrote a great deal of heroic narrative; for example, of the 80 poems in Appendix 1 which exceed 500 lines in length, 51 are either heroic or mock-heroic.

The purpose of this chapter is to determine the fictional characteristics of the heroic narrative poetry of the period and to show that the best narratives are those which least conform to the norms of the neo-classic concept of epic poetry. The discussion centres on the epics of Sir Richard Blackmore, particularly Eliza, as representative of the early eighteenth-century version of the neo-classic epic

¹²W. MacNeile Dixon, English Epic and Heroic Poetry (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1912), p. 241.

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form, and considers in less detail representative samples of other heroic narrative of the period.

1. Blackmore's Epics.

Blackmore provides the prime example of the neo-classic epic aimed at teaching by moral example. In the Preface to the first of his four epics, Prince Arthur, he gives a concept of epic which is close to that of Dryden, but stresses particularly that giving pleasure is only a subordinate means to the main end of promoting "the public good of mankind." Prince Arthur reached four editions by 1714: "A very uncommon instance," Samuel Johnson says, "of favourable reception at a time when literary curiosity was yet confined to particular classes of the nation."¹³ Together with its successor, King Arthur, it brought Blackmore widespread popular fame. The critics demurred. Alexander Pope mocks him in Book III of The Dunciad as the winner of a braying contest, and Robert Lloyd, a fellow poet, writes:

For who can bear to read or hear,
Though not offensive to the ear,
The mighty Blackmore gravely sing
Of Arthur Prince, and Arthur King,
Heroic poems without number
Long, lifeless, leaden, lulling, lumber;¹⁴

¹³Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), II, 37.

¹⁴Robert Lloyd, "On Rhyme," Works of the English Poets, XV, 127.

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Edward Niles Hooker says that despite some praise most critics of Blackmore's day condemned his epics.¹⁵ Recent critics agree: for example, George Sherburn denies them true epic quality; Warren L. Cherniak terms them panegyrics; E.M.W. Tillyard says they are noteworthy for the mechanical completeness of their epic components but "in that resides the whole of his interest."¹⁶ Blackmore thus presents the anomaly of a narrative poet of apparent skill in the craft of epic construction, who aims to write poems of epic quality, and appreciates that delight and pleasure are desirable effects, even if subordinate ones, yet fails on all counts to satisfy his critics.

Eliza,¹⁷ Blackmore's third epic, exhibits him at perhaps his best in the genre and also shows many features of the epics of his contemporaries. Blackmore uses a historical base--the reign of Elizabeth I--but unifies his poem more by

¹⁵Edward Niles Hooker, ed., The Critical Works of John Dennis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1939), p. 447-54.

¹⁶George Sherburn, "The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century," A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), p. 898; Warren L. Cherniak, "The Heroic Occasional Poem: Panegyric and Satire in the Restoration," MLQ. XXVI (December, 1965), p. 527; E.M.W. Tillyard, The English Epic, pp. 483-84.

¹⁷Sir Richard Blackmore, Eliza: An Epick Poem. In Ten Books. By Sir Richard Blackmore, Kt. M.D. and Fellow of the College of Physicians in London. To which is annex'd, An Index, Explaining Persons, Countries, Cities, Rivers, &c. (London: Awnsham and John Churchill, 1705).

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didactic moral tone and by panegyric of contemporaries, than by historical narrative. These unifying principles shape the poem and its style.

The poem has no prefatory explanation, other than its opening lines:

Let, Heav'nly Muse, Enthusiastick Fire,
With Heat Divine, my lab'ring Breast inspire;
That I may sing of Military Toil,
And of the Queen, that rul'd the British Isle;
Who zealous pure Religion to defend,
Did to the Belgick Shore her Cohorts send,
To save reform'd Batavia, and restrain
The persecuting Rage of superstitious Spain. (p. 1)

The moral subjectivity reflected by expressions such as "zealous pure [my italics] Religion to defend," "save reform'd Batavia," and "the persecuting Rage of superstitious Spain," prefigures the type of incidents and characters Blackmore will stress and his tone towards them.

Book I opens with Satan raging over Protestant England's armed help to Batavia against the occupying troops from Catholic Spain, for Satan has taken over the Catholic church:

Thy Miter'd Sons, O Rome! I did inspire
With my own Pride, my own Ambition's Fire. (p. 6)

Satan finally decides to act:

Shall proud Eliza's impious Arms sustain
Fanatick States, and break the Pow'r of Spain?
And shall these Schismatics from Rome and Hell,
Against me with Impunity rebel?
Shall these Calvinian Hereticks succeed
In this unjust, rebellious, impious Deed?
No, Hell shall all its Pow'r and Skill exhaust,
Before it sees Iberia's Empire lost. (p. 9)

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He next exhorts his war counsel, hears various proposals by his lieutenants, and finally sends a fury, Bigotry, to incite Philip of Spain to attack England, in the hopes that this will cause Eliza to withdraw her troops from Batavia. Philip next appears, tossing in his sleep, wracked with unrest over Eliza's success against him in the Netherlands. Incited by Bigotry, "He Albion to invade, at last resolv'd" (p. 29).

Book II opens on a meeting between Lords Arundel and Westmoreland, two English Catholics hostile to Eliza. Bigotry "did Ignatius Rev'rend Form assume, / And with his Mein, advanc'd into the Room" (p. 32). She incites the English traitors--comprising both Catholics and "Some Preachers too, who Faith reform'd profest, / No way inferior to the Roman Priest" (p. 34)--to aid Philip's invasion. In a scene which parallels Satan's war counsel, the traitors agree to raise their rebellious standard, once Philip lands in England. Philip, meanwhile, sends envoys to Rome for aid. They receive great promises from the Pope ("I will my Gold and Silver Stores exhaust, / Rome of her Wealth, Iberia to sustain" (p. 44)), but return with less tangible assistance:

Of Gifts and Pardons from the Vicar-God;
Of pow'rful Reliques, consecrated Arms,
Blessings and Curses, superstitious Charms,
And Spells of famous Force against invading Harms.
(p. 44)

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Spain prepares for war, readying the Armada. Eliza begins counter-preparations. Satan, perturbed at Eliza's action, directs a fiend, Treachery, to persuade Philip to send ambassadors to Eliza with a false peace treaty. Treachery, in the guise of a priest ("She did Caraffa's Face and Form assume, / One of the Purple Sanhedrim of Rome" (p. 53)), advises Philip, who in turn "three great Lords, as proper Envoys, chose" (p. 55).

Book III consists of many small scenes. The envoys, coming up the Thames, much admire England's beauty and her rough, weather-worn navy. Eliza feasts them royally and the treaty is signed, lulling Eliza into a false sense of ease. Meanwhile, in heaven God asks Gabriel, the "watchful Prefect of Britannia's Isle" (P. 71), about the situation, then sends Gabriel to warn Eliza, who recommences preparations for war. The scene then shifts abruptly to Belgium, where Eliza's general, Vere, and the Belgian Prince, Nassau, plan joint action against the Spaniards. Depicted in a tapestry Vere sees a summary of Spanish cruelty towards the Netherlands. The two commanders decide to attack but the foe withdraws and the book ends with a catalogue:

Now, Muse, the mighty Hero's Names record,
Who to suppress the Belgian, drew the Sword. (p. 83)

Book IV begins with a catalogue of the Allied force, sees Vere's arming for battle, and describes the battle. The Spaniards lose:

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And their entire Destruction had ensu'd,
 Had not beneath her Sable Wings, the Night
 Conceal'd the vanquish'd from the Victor's Sight.
 (p. 113)

Next morning "Great Vere arose, and gave due Thanks to
 Heav'n" (p. 113); then Mauritius, the king of Belgium, as
 they await the victory feast, asks Vere:

To tell what Cares the Queen had under-gone,
 From Papal Foes to guard her envy'd Throne.
 With how much Patience, and with how much Toil
 She planted pure Belief in Albion's isle:
 What Snares she 'scap'd, and thro' what Dangers run;
 The British Chief comply'd, and thus begun. (p. 115)

Book V is Vere's reply, a flashback account from
 "when Great Eliza, to Britannia's Throne / From a base
 Prison rais'd, Illustrious shone" (p. 117), to the present.
 Blackmore includes: the conflicting advice given her on her
 accession about how to treat the Catholics who under Queen
 Mary had persecuted Protestants; her acceptance of Lord
 Cecil's policy of leniency to prevent civil discord; a
 lengthy description of the reform'd church under Eliza; her
 excommunication; the machinations of English Catholics to
 instal Mary Queen of Scotland in Eliza's place; the insurrec-
 tion in Northumbria put down by Sussex; and the Catholic
 underground attempt to assassinate Eliza. The book closes
 with the victory feast which Mauritius gives for Vere.

Book VI is the battle of the Armada. Gabriel drives
 it back with storms "'Till Albion's Queen her Navy has
 prepar'd, / And Forces rais'd her threatened Coasts to

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guard" (p. 151). Eliza orders Vere to return to England to command the army but hostile winds hold him in Belgium. After a catalogue of the British admirals, the sea-fight rages until Satan orders the winds to "Spread o'er the Spanish Navy welcome Night, / And save our faithful Friends from ignominious Flight" (p. 166). Eliza "mean time, in fam'd Tilburia's verdant Plains . . . in Person took the Field" (p. 167) and surveyed her land forces. Drake then destroys the enemy fleet by use of fire-ships by night, and next day Eliza's navy harry the remnants of the Armada northwards until storms take over. The rebel English army hear about the fleet action and "Not bold enough to undertake the Fight, / The Troops dispers'd, and Safety sought by Flight" (p. 180).

Book VII describes the public celebration of the victory in England, including Eliza's procession to St. Paul's cathedral: the sermon (over half the book); the games and night fireworks; and the palace feast at which Spenser, as the court bard, sings of Satan's insurrection and fall and subsequent provocation of Old Testament battles.

In Book VIII Gabriel, next day, takes Eliza on a chariot visit to heaven. She sees the celestial city and the blessed and hears of Britain's future, of "a new Eliza" (p. 219). On her return:

Long in her Thoughts Britannia's Queen revolv'd
 These Heav'nly Scenes, doubtful and unresolv'd,
 If while the wond'rous Vision she had seen,
 Out of, or in the Body she had been. (p. 224)

Meanwhile in Belgium the Spanish army attacks in Vere's absence; Vere's son, Alban, is killed, and Vere returns in time to mourn.

In Book IX, after Vere's funeral oration, Alban's body is sent to England. Blackmore describes the mother's great grief and the funeral scene. In Belgium Vere musters to attack; Satan incites Lopez to assassinate Vere but Lopez goes mad. The book ends with a second catalogue of the Spanish forces, though the names differ from those in the catalogue in Book III.

Book X opens on the eve of battle. Vere in a vision sees Edward the Confessor, Seymour, and Cranmer. Edward forecasts his success and "Illustrious Vere awak'ning, did with Joy / On the well-boding Dream his Thoughts employ" (p. 275). As the forces close for battle, in the skies above they see two lions kill a great dragon, forecasting the joint victory of Vere and Nassau over the Spaniards. After the battle Blackmore closes his epic with the lines:

Thus as I could I've sung the Great Campaign,
 An Army taken, and an Army slain;
 One of the Glorious Wonders of Eliza's Reign. (p. 306)

As outlined above, Eliza could be considered as a five-act dramatic action. Its initial conflict pits Eliza

against Philip, with their respective agents confronting each other in Belgium. The rising action includes the counsel scenes, Rome's aid to Philip, the treacherous envoys to Eliza, Heaven's aid to Eliza, the background to the Belgium situation, the preliminary and inconclusive battle, and the background to Eliza's situation. The turning point is the defeat of the Armada, for Philip's design to relieve his troops in Belgium by attacking England perishes with his fleet. In the falling action the English rebels disperse, England celebrates its victory, Eliza visits heaven, and Alban's son is buried. Finally, the initial conflict is resolved when Vere destroys Philip's army in Belgium. The battle of wits between Philip with his treachery and Eliza with her alertness in the opening books, and the heroic battles of Books IV, VI, VIII, and X, sustain the narrative momentum; and though some of the intervening actions, the funeral of Alban, for instance, in Book IX, are extraneous to the main narrative, their slower tempo and lower key serve to help intensify the heroic exploits. Eliza could thus be viewed as an heroic picture, the parts of which serve to sharpen the focus of the whole.

On the other hand, some of the parts do not match such an interpretation and seem to insist that the poem is a thesis which the fictional picture supports or illustrates. The thesis has two poles which might be termed "bigotry"

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and "panegyric." Ironically, both seem to stem from Blackmore's insistence on extremes without a moderating means. The irony enters because moderation is itself one of the ostensible themes of Eliza.

The theme of moderation occurs first in Book II when Bramhal, one of the English faction, a Scottish dissenter, says:

'Tis true, ye worthy Men, we disagree
In some Religious Points; but to be free,
I think the Breach is not so vastly wide,
But Wise and Mod'rate Men on either side,
Might to a happy End our Diff'rence bring,
Which does from diff'rent Modes of Language spring,
Lies more in Phrase and Form, than in the Thing.
But if our Faiths require a diff'rent Name,
'Tis plain our Civil Int'rests are the same. (p. 40)

Blackmore comments that Bramhal's moderation is onesided, embracing only the anti-Anglican position. In Book V he has Cecil advise the young Eliza that "rough Methods would the State embroil, / And with seditious Uproar fill the Isle" (p. 119), therefore Eliza should adopt "mild Means," and "soft and gentle steps" (p. 120). But this moderation is a political expedient only; Cecil adds that Eliza:

Should in the Ship allow them some Command,
But never let them in the Steerage stand. (p. 120)

Blackmore says of Eliza that:

She Knew, that rash Attempts, and Zeal too warm,
Would sooner ruin Albion, than reform. (p. 121)

In Book VII he says that "wise Moderation one side did adorn" (p. 183) of her triumphal arch, yet he also says:

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One vers'd in Human Nature, Wise, Sedate,
 Shall steer with steady Hand the fluctuating State.
 Shall by his Skill, and masterly Address
 Faction compose, and Bigottry suppress.
 Shall angry Mens intemp'rate Hearts controul,
 And make contending Parties serve the Whole. (p. 219)

Here the verbs "suppress," "controul," and "make," stand in opposition to the idea in the passage of "skill," "masterly address," and "compose." Blackmore thus extols moderation as a concept but ironically exemplifies it as being extreme in its nature.

Much of Eliza concerns bigotry. Blackmore uses the term itself repeatedly, always as a pejorative term for immoderate and non-orthodox English government attitudes, for example: "A fiery Bigot . . . of the Ignation Gown" (p. 34), "Bigots, and the half Reform'd" (p. 39), "all furious Bigots . . . For of all Parties, Bigots are the same" (p. 67), "To raise a Roman Bigot to the Throne" (p. 93). Other passages show more explicitly Blackmore's own immoderation and bigotry. Speaking as narrator, for example, he has the fiends show themselves as Catholic saints; he uses expressions such as "impious Rome's corrupt Inventions," and "from adult'rous Rome's unclean embraces" (p. 47); he declares "Right and [orthodox English] Religion" a "blessed Coelestial Pair!" (p. 273); he debases Eliza's foes by implication:

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Should you Remorse or Scruple feel, you know
Rome's Holy Father will absolve your Vow.
 Good Catholicks will ne'er your Conduct blame,
 Or once reflect Dishonour on your Name.
 The Means, which none can else as just defend,
 Once consecrated by a pious End,
 By which we shew our Heav'nly Zeal and Love,
 Are purg'd from Guilt, and meritorious prove. (p. 54)

Blackmore thus shows himself as a bigot.

This tone helps shape the poem into a contrast of sharply divided opposites. Structurally, God, Gabriel, Eliza, and Eliza's commanders, contend with Satan, fiends, Philip, and Philip's commanders. The first set are always at white perfection, the second at black distortion. For example, God is depicted as "solid Glory," "embody'd Light" (p. 69); when Gabriel appears "A sudden Glory, like the Virgin Day, / Dawn'd in the Place, and did mild Light display" (p. 74); Eliza shines with "Diamonds, beauteous as the Morning Star" (p. 61); Vere rises with "the Morn," to "dawning Light," and dons "burnish'd Armour" (p. 94). On the other hand, Satan appears with the distortion of "flashes of Light'ning from his Eyeballs," and "from his dreadful Nostrils Clouds of Smoke" (p. 3), and he and his confederates are painted in black: "Hell . . . blacker grew" (p. 17), "they push'd their black Design" (p. 31), "The black Brigades [monastic orders], that did on Rome depend" (p. 125), "from their black Mouths envenom'd Arrows flew" (p. 135).

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This black and white opposition marks the whole poem. It applies, for example, regardless of speaker. Vere says:

The Gospel, which a Pris'ner was, no less
Than those, who did its Sacred Truth profess,
Was next enlarged, and suffer'd to display
Immortal Light, and Beatifick Day:
More than Aegyptian Darkness to dispel,
The complicated Shades of Rome and Hell. (p. 122)

Bigotry speaks with the same sense of dichotomy of values; even with some of the same rhymes:

The Fogs, that Cloud Britannia's Skies, dispel,
And drive the Darkness to its native Hell.
Chace far away this black Fanatick Night,
That Rome may bless the Isle with Heav'nly Light. (p. 33)

Blackmore as narrator speaks with the same sense of contrast:

She pass'd the dark, Tartarean Atmosphere,
And saw the Regions bless'd with Day appear. (p. 52)

This antithesis also marks the action. Not only does Philip always fail but his warriors are all villains. They die either with the implication that they deserve death, or with overt narrator comment, as for example: "shudd'ring felt the cold Embrace of Death. . . . Stung with Remorse, and grip'd with conscious Fear" (p. 285), "grip'd with inward Care" (p. 287). Eliza's heroes, on the other hand, die in an atmosphere of sympathy and regret:

Untimely Triumph! beauteous Spoil of Death!
Thy Deeds, brave Youth, thy rigid Fate survive,
Thy Name, enroll'd with mighty Chiefs, shall live
Distinguish'd from the unrecorded Throng,
In British Annals, and in British Song. (p. 289)

One side is all bad, the other all good.

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Eliza thus reflects an immoderate attack on views at variance with the aristocratic orthodox English position, but the polemic is set off and sharpened by a direct hymning of the acceptable position. Heaven, for example, is an exalted Whitehall where God "does with Care his Government attend, / And to and fro his swift-wing'd Envoys send" (p. 71); the monarchy and its great lords are sanctioned by God who "the Crowns and Laurels does bestow, / Which grace the Monarch's, or the Conqu'ror's Brow" (p. 182); the paradox of the human situation is God's will:

The awful Depths of Providence Divine,
 Unfathomable by weak Reason's Line,
 We with profound Submission should adore;
 Should own the Justice of transcendent Pow'r,
 Which the most piercing Wit can ne'er explore.
 Short-sighted Man has lame, imperfect Views
 Of Things which Wisdom infinite pursues.
 Knows not to what the dark Proceedings tend,
 Nor sees the Means connected with the End. (p. 187)

Nature also functions as God directs; for though;

Things chiefly here in the same Order go,
 As Rivers in their known frequented Channels flow.
 Common Effects from common Causes spring,
 And Nature runs her customary Ring. (p. 189)

yet "least Mankind to wrong Conceptions prone, / Should Heav'ns superior Will and Pow'r disown" and "ascribe / Private Events . . . to a fixt Chain of Things, and necessary Fate," God "sometimes bids his Servant Nature take / A Path unknown, and her old Course forsake" (p. 189).

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The direct hymning also shapes the structure. Blackmore uses about a quarter of Book III to describe Heaven, God, Christ, as well as Gabriel's appearance before Eliza. He devotes most of Book V to Eliza's re-establishment of the Church of England during her reign: "did by Law restore, / The pure Belief that Albion own'd before " (p. 123), which "A great Example . . . to Princes set, / To free their Thrones, and break the Roman Net" (P. 126). Most of Book VII is a sermon praising God for his victory over the Armada. A long passage in Book VIII shows Eliza the blissful life of Heaven:

Passing, she saw in what extatick Joy.
 Coelestial Guests their happy Hours employ.
 In Transports some with undecaying Flow'rs,
 And Heav'nly Garlands crown'd in blissful Bow'rs,
 Or spread beneath the Tree of Life, that stood
 Upon the Living Water's peaceful Flood,
 Did with Angelick Food their Palates feast,
 And tasted Pleasures not to be exprest. (p. 214)

If one of the unifying principles of Eliza is bigotry, another is panegyric. In a way the two fuse; for the very principle of immoderation when applied to characters pushes them into the two types of good or bad, white or black; and the black serve to focus the white more clearly. The supernatural characters are clearly extremes. Gabriel, for example, has "An Aspect that dispels all Woe and Care, / Sooths sad Distress, and solaces Despair" (p. 71), a distinct contrast with Satan:

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He with prodigious Malice, Envy, Hate,
 Vastly dilated, on the Mountain sate.
 Hell's rankest Vipers did their Rage exert,
 And sting th' Infernal Monarch to the Heart.
 The Flames of all the sulph'rous Caves beneath
 Did scorch his Breast, and interrupt his Breath.
 Flashes of Light'ning from his Eye-balls broke,
 And from his dreadful Nostrils Clouds of Smoke.
 Thus fir'd and swoln with Rage, did Satan glow,
 Like a hot Furnace on a Mountain's Brow. (p. 3)

Extremes of contrast between angels and devils might be expected as inherent in the concepts of such beings. Blackmore, however, similarly contrasts his human characters, without providing adequate background to make such a parallel of extremes strike the reader as appropriate. Eliza appears as almost saint-like:

A Queen, who thoughtless of her private Ease,
 Has watch'd o'er Britain's Sons in War and Peace.
 Who has no Interest, but her People's known,
 Hast still esteem'd their Happiness her own.
 Has God-like Pleasure truly understood,
 Known what a Heav'n there is in doing Good. (p. 201)

Philip, as might be expected, becomes Satan-like in his pride:

I my Divinity assert, and all
 Shall prost'rate Vot'ries at my Altars fall,
 And me their Sovereign Lord, and Saviour call.
 Thus with Infernal Pride and Arrogance,
 Th' elated Monarch did his Pow'r advance. (p. 195)

The panegyric principle pervades the poem as much as does the didactic-bigotry principle. Blackmore exalts not only his heavenly characters and Eliza but also many of Eliza's court, including Lord Cecil (p. 67); Sir Philip Sidney, who merits some 30 lines (pp. 89, 105, 107); Lord

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Fulke Greville; Edmund Spenser, who becomes the court scop (pp. 205-10); and of course the "Great Vere":

So did Great Vere advance against his Foes,
And to their dreadful Fire his Breast oppose.
Thro' Storms of loud Destruction, Flames and Smoke,
And whistling Deaths th' intrepid Hero broke. (p. 108)

Belgium's heroes, such as "the Great Nassau" (p. 79), draw similar if less extensive praise.

In addition to Elizabethan personages, Blackmore also praises many of his own contemporaries: "Sidney was then, what Montague is now" (p. 89); "The Priors, and Congreves of the Times" (p. 183). He praises King William, Queen Anne, and the Duke of Marlborough extensively, hoping, for example, that all future English monarchs may "like William, and like Anna reign" (p. 94); picturing William as sent by God:

Th' Eternal will their Pray'r in Mercy hear,
Will raise a Just, and great Deliverer,
Who will her Faith defend, and dissipate her Fear.
A mighty Hero of Nassovian Blood,
A Lover of Mankind, and publick Good,
At Heav'n's Command will from Batavia come,
To guard Britannia from insulting Rome. (p. 218)

and extolling Marlborough:

One great in Arms by Anna's high Command,
Shall lead her Cohorts to Germania's Land.
Shall Faith reform'd, and Liberty defend,
And Anna's Terrors far and wide extend. (p. 219)

Blackmore praises Queen Anne to the point of mawkishness. He has Britannia wish "That her Victorious Monarch's Human Frame, / Was as Immortal, as her Deathless Fame" (p. 23).

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He depicts Louis XIV as so black that by comparison Philip of Spain is "Faithful, Kind, Benificent, and Good" (p. 221), the more to exalt Anne's powers which "shall his proud course restrain, / As now Eliza's curb the Pow'r of Spain" (p.221):

Anna, the Prop of pure Religion's Cause,
Anna, th' Assertor of Britannia's Laws,
 Kind to her Subjects, faithful to her God,
 Will Mercy show at home, and Pow'r abroad.
 What Spain is now, the World shall Gallia see,
 And Anna, what Eliza is, shall be. (p. 220)

Such fulsome panegyric tends to belittle by comparison the titular object of the panegyric principle of the poem.

Blackmore also devotes two pages of praise to Anne's son and makes the English dissenters the cause of her son's untimely death:

The Child will in a burning Fever lie,
 But by your more malignant Guilt will die.
 Some the Disease, Physicians some accuse,
 For what their own destructive Crimes produce.
 'Tis Albion's Sin, that with infernal Fire
 Kindles the Flame, by which her Hopes expire. (p. 222)

This twofold panegyric, at once Elizabethan and eighteenth century, helps shape the structure. Eliza first appears, for example, at court, attended by Vere's wife and daughters:

Here mighty Vere's distinguished Consort shone,
 Bright by Eliza's Beams, and by her own.
 She did her Monarch's high Commands attend,
 A faithful Subject, and a constant Friend.
 The four bright Daughters of the valiant Vere
 Did in their place not far remote appear. (p. 62)

After the funeral of Alban, Vere's son. Alban's mother "did Eliza at her Court attend, / Who with concordant Woe,

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receiv'd her faithful Friend" (p. 255). But Vere did not marry until after Elizabeth's death and had no children, while the Duchess of Marlborough was a close friend to Queen Anne, did have daughters, and did lose a son while the Duke was in battle in Europe. Moreover, Vere is depicted as a joint commander:

Noble Mauritius, and the valiant Vere,
The Pow'r and Honour did agree to share.
The Troops did each alternately obey,
And each, as Chief Commander, had his Day. (p. 82)

Vere, in fact, did not serve under these alternate command arrangements, but Marlborough did. Thus much of the praise ostensibly directed at Eliza and Vere, actually relates to Anne and Marlborough; and episodes such as Alban's death, and his funeral, which neither Eliza nor Vere attend, though extraneous to the action, cohere because of the dual panegyric principle.

Most of the panegyric discussed so far seems deliberate. Some is more subtle. For instance, Gabriel and Vere conduct their battles with close tactical parallels, each battle beginning with a cannonade following which the hero takes spear in hand and personally leads his troops forward. Again, in heaven God "does with Care his Government attend," flanked by "officers of State, / Who to observe his Nod, obsequious wait" (p. 71); while in England "on her Throne the bright Eliza sate, / And crowding Lords on this and that side wate" (p. 63). In heaven:

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Distinguish'd Michael drew in long Array,
 Heav'n's bright Brigades, that his Command obey.
 Th' Illustrious Cohorts with Seraphick Grace,
 In long Review before their Gen'ral pass. (p. 216)

While in England Eliza acts similarly:

She pass'd the Squadrons and Battalions thro',
 Drawn out in long Array for her Review.
 She thro' the Muskets rode, and thro' a Wood
 Of bristling Pikes, that in Battalia stood.
 She did a Leader Amazon appear,
 Forgetful of her Sex, and ignorant of Fear. (p. 168)

The panegyric principle thus pervades the poem, and, together with the didactic, imposes a unity on the heterogeneous material of which Blackmore makes his epic. These principles tend to shape the poem to pre-determined antithetical extremes, which the fictional components sharpen and illustrate. The epic thus exists as primarily didactic, its meaning pre-determined, its narrative mechanically constructed to serve didactic and panegyric ends.

These principles tend also to make caricatures out of the characters, who never seem to be more than named personifications serving panegyric or didactic ends. Eliza is shown in terms of "great Eliza" (p. 47), "the pious Queen" (p. 48), "th' indulgent Queen" (p. 49), loved by people anxious "to guard her Sacred Throne" (p. 50), "Britain's sharp-sighted Queen" (p. 53). She half believes Philip's false envoys because:

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Such was her Goodness, she could ne'er believe,
 That a Crown'd Head, with Purpose to deceive,
 Would solemn Vows, and sacred Contracts make,
 Which, whilst he made them, he design'd to break.
 She never thought, that she should ever find
 In Noble Blood, and in a Royal Mind,
 Falsehood so black, and Malice so refin'd. (p. 68)

She favoured moderation: "The Queen believ'd the Steady,
 Wise, Sedate, / Were fittest Men" (p. 121); she "drew her
 Life out on an even Thread," "unelated," "undisturb'd,"
 nothing "the equal Balance of her Temper broke" (p. 133).
 She impresses people with "Her God-like Looks" (p. 146). In
 danger "she did a Leader Amazon appear, / Forgetful of her
 Sex, and ignorant of Fear," "intrepid" (p. 168). She is
 also highly devout:

None than the Pious Queen did better know,
 That Heav'n the Crowns and Laurels does bestow,
 Which grace the Monarch's, or the Conqu'ror's Brow.
 (p. 182)

Eliza never changes, never slips. This accords with the
 neo-classic concept of the epic hero; but since Blackmore
 forbids even heroic emotion, except in his evil characters,
 his heroes become wooden personifications. Eliza, in her
 immaculate innocence, never thinking that "Noble Blood" or
 "Royal Mind" could harbour falsehood or malice, reflects by
 implication Blackmore's aristocratic bias; for the corollary
 of course is that classes other than the noble do harbour
 such motives.

Blackmore depicts Eliza only in adjectival terms, as
 in the passages above, or by association with gems,

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brilliance, whiteness, power, pageantry, pomp, and personified virtues, which she is in effect herself. From the point of view of Satan and Philip she appears as a feminine principle, in opposition to the masculine Catholic: "Should this proud Woman, Rome's Imperial Right / By Force usurp'd, maintain in Rome's Despight" (p. 129), "Shall a proud Queen th' Apostate Sect sustain? / Eliza rule the Monarchy of Spain?" (p. 257). The irony turns this into panegyric to Eliza; but Blackmore scarcely shows her as feminine except for her companionship with Vere's wife, itself an anachronism.

A feminine principle also emerges when Eliza is considered as the titular epic hero; for she does very little, her role is more passive than active. She receives Philip's envoys, but Cecil, "the Queen's Chief Councillor of State, / With Philip's Envoies, manag'd the Debate" (p. 67); she receives Gabriel, and accompanies him as a voiceless admirer to survey heaven; she is similarly a silent spectator at the victory celebration after the defeat of the Armada; she does not attend Alban's funeral. Even the mustering of the army for Belgium is done by another:

Cecil in Arms, and War-like Conduct great,
Son to the famous Councillor of State,
Enroll'd these valiant Troops, and pass'd them o'er
From the Britannick, to the Belgick Shore. (p. 88)

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Her active role, like that of God in the poem, consists of sending others into action. Given the liberties which Blackmore takes with Vere as an historical personage, he could well have made Eliza a true warrior Amazon; but the panegyric principle disallows this. Eliza is a surrogate Queen Anne; and with Anne still living at the time when he wrote the poem, Blackmore, to praise her, had to make Eliza's fictional role conform with Anne's actual role.

Similarly in depicting Vere, Blackmore had to show him in a way which would flatter the living Marlborough. He keeps Vere physically separated from Eliza in Belgium throughout the action of his poem. This enables him to display each in separate heroic roles: Eliza as ruler, Vere as warrior. It also splits the poem into two fictional worlds; and though Blackmore entwines them narratively, they could well stand apart as independent heroic narratives. Blackmore tries to interlock them, mainly by supernatural machinery, by Vere's flashback account of Eliza's earlier reign, and by Alban's funeral; but the fusion is mechanical rather than rising organically from the interaction of the narrative elements of the poem. Gabriel, for instance, affects only Eliza and Philip; Satan, in Belgium, drives Lopez mad but this incident scarcely impinges on Vere. Alban's funeral, unattended by either Eliza or Vere, serves more as a means for a sermon on moderation in grief, than as a linking

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device. Moreover, Blackmore's plot makes the Armada battle a means to divert Eliza from Belgium, but this battle takes up so much of the first half of the poem and is related in such vivid terms that it tends to seem a more significant heroic battle than do the two monotonously similar land battles led by Vere.

Vere appears as a noble epic hero, with "flaming sword . . . whose fatal Force unnumber'd Warriors felt" (p. 94):

Such Flame, such Ardor sparkled in his Eyes,
As from a perfect inbred Courage rise.
And which are never seen, but where we find
True Vertue mixt with Nobleness of Mind. (p. 95)

He shows a warrior's courage and command presence: when his troops begin to flee "his Person he advanc'd with Sword in Hand, / And that his Men should follow, gave Command" (p. 108). Blackmore also likens him to both Caesar and to Michael: "As Caesar Look'd," "as Illustrious Michael did appear," "so Seraph-like his Port, so Caesar-like his Air" (p. 95). Thus, just as Eliza becomes equated with God, and Philip with Satan, so Vere does with Gabriel. Blackmore also invests Vere with eighteenth-century attributes of reason and sentiment. On the death of Alban "The tender Chief, (such all Great Heros are,)" "did no unbecoming Passion show" (p. 237). The closest Vere comes to excess itself becomes a matter of panegyric, as in battle when he displays "Majestick Rage . . .

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Peculiar to the Great, and not to be express'd" (p. 276); but Blackmore never particularizes such displays of temperament, they remain adjectival. Since he is portraying eminent people who are still living (Eliza, as Queen Anne, and Vere as Marlborough), he cannot conduct his characters through psychological or emotional states which would in any way reduce their heroic dimensions. They are static by decree. The heroic ideal which emerges is aristocratic, hierarchal, orthodox Church of England, anti-dissenter and Church of Rome, and bound by eighteenth-century decorum and sentiment.

As with Eliza and Vere so with the other characters: they serve ends other than the creation of a fictional world, ends either didactic or panegyric, or both. None displays sufficient personality to be of interest for what he is, or induces sufficient dramatic tension to be of interest for what he does. The principles which form Eliza tend to make puppets of the other characters.

Some individuality appears in the counsel scenes, where each speaker voices his own view; but all speakers reflect the same spirit, their difference is only one of method. Moreover, all act in a similar, stock fashion. The supernatural figures, for example, appear in visions, or, if evil, in the form of Catholic priests, in order to motivate human beings. Bigotry, for instance, appears to Philip. takes out a "Fire-brand . . . Which secretly she with

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unerring Art, / Did at the Bosom of King Phillip dart"

(p. 27). Philip then reacts violently:

Th' insinuating Flame his Veins possest,
And with Infernal Heats inspir'd the Monarch's Breast:
His Blood boil'd high, and on th' impetuous Tide
Wild Fury seated, did in Triumph ride:
His Pulse beat swift, his lab'ring Heart in Pain,
Did the uneasy Task of Life sustain.
He greater Rage, and more Disorder show'd,
Than in Iberian Princes is allow'd;
From the fierce Fury's Flame, this strange Emotion
flow'd. (p. 27)

The assumption is apparently that Philip, in such an inflamed state, will decide as Bigotry wishes. In the same scene, however, he does not come to a decision until "He to a Temper cool'd more like his own" when:

He with a Judgement more consistent, weigh'd
The Application by Ignatius [Bigotry] made. (p. 28)

Bigotry incites Arundel and Westmoreland in the same stock fashion:

She said, and to their Bosoms she convey'd
A livid Flame, that did their Breasts invade,
And in their swelling Veins Infernal Heat display'd.
(p. 33)

Satan incites Lopez similarly in Book IX, in which the reaction is so violent that Lopez goes mad. This technique of characterization, stemming from Blackmore's bigotry, makes serpents of the evil spirits, but also presents the evil spirits and their actions in stock melodramatic terms.

As the previous discussion shows, Blackmore is a partisan narrator, vehemently attached to his fictional

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polarity. This runs through the poem. As narrator he says "Pagan Superstition governs Spain (p. 46); he catalogues Vere's troops at twice the length of the catalogue of the Spanish array. He speaks at times with heavy irony, for example against immoderation he has Vere say, with relation to Eliza:

None yet to her the Secret did reveal,
That those who keep a Temper, lose their Zeal,
That none but those who Wound, are fit to Heal. (p. 121)

He also speaks with an ironic tone against Rome:

The pious Father for Coverisions brought
Crosses and Racks with Skill and Labour wrought.
Instructive Whips, persuasive Rods of Wire,
And Demonstrations harden'd in the Fire.
Here stood high Fate with Confutations stor'd,
And pow'rful Reasons form'd of Steel or Cord.
Here heap'd in Piles awak'ning Scourges lay,
Which Heav'nly Light upon the Back display,
And Hereticks convince the shortest Way. (p. 176)

Generally his irony principally serves to heighten invective and does not become a technique relative to plot.

Blackmore speaks pleasantly and moderately in descriptive passages such as the following:

Here they observe, what fertile Fields of Corn
The Kentish Hills luxuriously adorn:
Which this and that way mov'd by Zephirs Breath,
Vie in green Waves, with the salt Flood beneath.
There num'rous bleating Flocks o'er-spread the Plains,
Which still resound with loud, melodious Strains,
And Songs alternate of contending Swains. (p. 58)

However, in most of the poem his voice fluctuates between panegyric adulation and didactic praise or polemic. This tends to create a general melodramatic tone. Satan, for

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instance, appears like a Chinese dragon or devil in the following lines:

Dreadful in Arms the King of Terrors stood,
Threatning his Mein, his Garments roll'd in Blood.
Shot from his Eyes a red, destructive Glare
Of kindled Sulphur, flash'd along the Air.
Ruddy Eruptions from his Nostrils came,
And from his num'rous Mouths thick smoke and baleful
Flame.
His countless Hands uplifted in the Field,
Ten thousand Spears, ten thousand Swords did weild.
(p. 282)

This vivid description is not made to serve functionally, for despite the implication of prowess. Satan never demonstrates effective force. One of the few passages in the genuine sublime tone which Blackmore strives for is the funeral oration for Alban, an ode to death which is scarcely linked to the main progress of Eliza except for its panegyric value relative to Marlborough.

Eliza is particularly noteworthy for the sameness of dramatic tone: all the speakers sound alike: they all speak with the voice of the narrator. For example, every speech includes repeated triple statements. Blackmore uses the term "Bolts and Bars and Arms" (p. 260); Satan says "Empire, Riches, and Renown" (p. 6); Vere says "Distinction, Pity, or Respect" (p. 118); the Moderator of St. Paul's says "plac'd, dispis'd, and poor" (p. 108); Spenser as bard sings "That Rout, what Ruin, what Angelic Spoil" (p. 207); Gabriel says "Religion, Law, and Right" (p. 222); the funeral speaker says "the Just, the Pious, and the Pure" (p. 253). This kind of

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triple statement occurs some fifty times in Eliza, and most show the same double alliteration, as in the examples above, which makes the sameness of its use by all speakers the more marked.

Many speakers also use the expletive "Good Heavens!"; for example: Vere (p. 136), the Moderator (p. 196), the funeral orator (p. 251), Vere's troops (p. 281). All speakers repeatedly use the emphatic "did," often at the beginning of a line; the following is a typical example:

Th' Iberian Fleet, drawn out in long Array,
Did o'er the Deep its dreadful Wings display.

· · · · ·
Perez, Medina's Duke, who did command
The mighty Fleet, did in the Center stand.
Howard, th' illustrious General did assail,
(p. 163)

This usage appears several hundred times in Eliza. The speakers all voice the same set of stock expressions: terms such as "aetherial," "coelestial," "prodigious," "pond'rous," reappear with monotonous regularity, regardless of speaker. Finally, all speakers adopt the same monotonous couplet style, of which the following by Vere is a typical example:

She would her Friends dismay, revive her Foes,
And tempt them to disturb her Realm's Repose.
That faithless Zealots of the Roman Breed,
To Crowns reform'd, were Traytors by their Creed.
That their Religion plunges them in Blood,
And makes them call the blackest Actions good.
That while she gave them Posts of Pow'r and Trust,
She deadly Vipers in her Bosom nurst.
That thus her Sacred Life she did expose
To the known Mercy of her cruel Foes. (p. 119)

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Such mechanical passages occur regardless of the sense freight their lines bear. Examples such as these show that Blackmore made no effort to differentiate his speakers.

Other features besides tone tend to weaken the poetic reality of Eliza. The poem opens, for example, with the impression that the battle in heaven is, as in Paradise Lost, newly over, Satan still aching from the wounds "inflicted by Victorious Michael's Steel" (p. 2); yet the time is ostensibly Elizabethan. Books I and II extensively develop a supernatural machinery and counsel of English rebels, neither of which play any important role thereafter. Satan as a person remains a caricature, not developed either as a foil to human action, through whom the prowess of the heroes of the poem would be amplified, nor as a symbolic force through whom the poem would gain depth of significance. Moreover, he does not act himself but only reacts and to no real effect, just as the decision of his counsel to send Bigotry to incite Philip is merely rhetorical action; for Philip exercises his own free will, and "having all things in his Mind resolv'd" (p. 29) makes his decision.

The weak conclusion to Eliza also impairs the sense of poetic reality. The ending completes the plot, in that Philip's hopes meet final defeat in Vere's crushing victory, but throughout the poem Vere has played a rather minor role. He does not appear in person in an active role until the

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battle of Book IV. He then drops from prominence, except for a brief reappearance on Alban's death, until the last book. Yet the poem focuses at the end almost exclusively on Vere, and ends abruptly with no attempt to put the final action in a meaningful perspective with the rest of the poem.

Blackmore's use of setting also weakens the poetic reality of Eliza, for he rarely particularizes. Where he tries to do so he uses such a grand manner that the scene becomes an historic pageant. For example, he shows Eliza in the opening of Book VII en route to St. Paul's but the picture becomes a baroque tapestry set off by a triumphal arch:

There Britain's Queen, in a high Chair of State,
Awful, Serene, mildly Majestick sate.
On one side Justice with her Sword did stand,
Soft Mercy kneeling by, held the Stern Figure's Hand:
Wise Moderation one side did adorn,
And plump Abundance, with her flow'ry Horn. (p. 183)

The repeated abstract descriptions of this nature turn the setting of Eliza into a two-dimensional world; the characters seem to move against a flat stage prop. Concrete description especially of nature, rarely appears.

The sense of poetic reality suffers perhaps most of all, along with the sense of poetic beauty, from the monotonous style with which Blackmore tells his story. The battle scenes typify this. The expression "Storms of Fire, and Show'rs of Leaden Hail" (p. 98) reappears, with such variations as "whistl'ing Show'rs of Lead, and Storms of artful

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Fire" (p. 105), in each fighting scene. The final battle alone contains such stock passages as: "Storms of Fire" (p. 281), "Storms of Hostile Shot" (p. 282), "Show'rs of Leaden Ball" (p. 283), "prodigious Fire" (p. 279), "heaps of Dead" (p. 285), "Prodigious Heaps of slaughter'd" (p. 290), "slaughter'd Heaps" (p. 294), "prodigious Numbers (p. 302, 304).

Blackmore shows variety in the location of battle wounds but turns this into a catalogue. Wounds occur to forehead (p. 103), jaw (p. 102), ear (p. 101), nose (p. 106), neck (p. 98), shoulder (p. 301), breast (p. 301), navel (p. 104), ankle (p. 104), and wrist (p. 101). Severed limbs and heads are frequent. Blackmore compounds these mechanical listings and repetitions by melodrama, for example:

The gasping Head leap'd off amidst the Crowd,
Sprinkling their Faces with the scatt'ring Blood.
The Lips still speaking, as they flew, appear'd;
Some thought they low imperfect Accents heard.

The Spaniard's Nose receiv'd the Fauchion's Edge,
Which did in sunder cut the rising Bridge.
The Blood that follow'd part distain'd his Breast,
And trickling down his Throat ran inwardly the rest.
(p. 106)

He struck his Head off with a single Wound,
Which star'd, and gasp'd, and bounded on the Ground;
(p. 285)

The melodramatic attitude Blackmore takes in battle scenes such as those above shows more clearly when contrasted with the vivid plausibility of heroic battle detail in Homer, for example:

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Sarpedon then aimed a spear at Patroclus and missed him, but he struck the horse Pegasus in the right shoulder, and it screamed aloud as it lay, groaning in the dust as the life went out of it. The other two horses began to plunge; the pole of the chariot cracked, and they got entangled in the reins through the fall of the horse that was yoked along with them; but Automedon knew what to do; without the loss of a moment he drew the keen blade that hung by his sturdy thigh and cut the third horse adrift; whereupon the other two righted themselves, and pulling hard at the reins again went together into battle.¹⁸

Blackmore strives for a sublime style but, except for the funeral ode, produces almost a parody of such a style. The causes for this are many. He uses abstractions and multi-syllabic words with extreme repetition. Words such as the following occur on almost every page, the same words frequently more than once on the same page: "wond'rous," "aetherial," "Coelestial," "prodigious," "perfidious," "pond'rous," "ambient," "astonish'd," "contiguous," "presumptuous," "stupendious," "promiscuous." For example, the following all appear on a single page: "scap'd Aetherial Wrath," "pond'rous Fate," "Prodigious Clamour," "promiscuous Sound," and "wond'ring Skies" (p. 164). Blackmore also makes extensive use of indefinite adjectives rather than concrete terms; and he develops scene after scene of joint activities, whether of funeral games as in the example below,

¹⁸Homer, The Iliad of Homer, trans. Samuel Butler, Great Books of the Western World, No. 4 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1960), p. 117.

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or the blessed enjoying heaven, by means of successive clauses introduced by the abstract "some":

Some fond of Conquest throw an Iron Wedge,
Some hurl huge Balls, some toss a Massy Sledge.
Some pond'rous Stones back o'er their Shoulders fling.
(p. 202)

Blackmore also repeats his rhymes with mechanical regularity. Of the some 800 lines of Book I, for example, over 70 repetitions of couplet endings occur, many repeated frequently, for instance: "alarm-arm," 5 times; "yield-field," and "engage-range," each 4 times; while "breast-rest" occurs 3 times within 40 lines (pp. 23-24). Moreover, the same pairs of rhymed words become the basic rhyming stock for the whole poem.

Blackmore scarcely employs colour, except for terms such as "bloody," or "fiery," used mainly as pejorative epithets. Even where the scene calls for colour imagery, as for example his description of Eliza's court in Book III, or her triumphal procession in Book VII, Blackmore paints with only blacks and whites. Other imagery is almost as mechanical as the rhyme. Metaphor is largely unimaginative, such as "Britain's green, unsettled Government" (p. 120), though a few effective uses occur, for example: "The lofty Firs which pregnant Canvas wear, / Bear thro' the floating Clouds the floating War" (p. 150), "To the North ocean wild, as their Despair" (p. 174), "The Uproar and Impertinence of

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Life" (p. 249). Blackmore uses simile some 30 times in Eliza, but in a mechanical fashion similar to his use of rhyme. Of the 30 similes, for example, over half employ either a lion or the weather as a base.

The heavily adjectival verse also dulls the sublime effect Blackmore strives after. For example, in a passage such as the following, the bracketed adjectives could well be omitted with the change of "A" in line 2 to "His," without much loss to the passage:

Did with (malicious) Vigilance employ
A (thousand) Arts, the Righteous to destroy.
Did War foment, and (impious) Kings engage,
To lay them waste with (unrelenting) Rage.

Conversely, Blackmore seldom uses adverbs, and his weak verbs lack force. For example, in the Armada scene the battle "rages" with such verbs as "brought," "grew," "give," "receive," (p. 162); the spirit of Edward "exhorts" Vere to action with verbs such as "move," "go," "lead," "advance," (p. 275). Passages such as the following, with strong verbs at work, rarely occur:

No Suff'rers wring their Hands, or tear their Hair,
No bitter Exacrerations of Despair,
Ring thro' the Graves, and fright the Dwellers there.
(p. 250)

Other stylistic techniques also act to deaden dramatic and poetic intensity. Blackmore tends to artificial syntax, such as:

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Ecchoes with Ecchoes Combate in the Skies,
 Clamours with Clamours meet, and Cries with Cries.
 (p. 102)

He tends to dissipate the effect of intense, concrete passages, with diffuse diversions which lead away from the scene being described, for example:

The deadly Bullet thro' his Forehead past,
 An Inch above the Eye-brows, and effac'd
 The Haunts and Tracks of Learning in the Brain,
 The num'rous Lodgings, which did entertain
 All Mem'ry's crowded Guests, and Fancy's aeiry Train.
 (p. 103)

He regularly uses a mechanical couplet in which a weak second line dissipates the effect of a stronger first line, for example:

Soon did the burning Spaniards blaze on high,
 At once enlighten, and affright the Sky. (p. 172)

Blackmore rarely attains organic rhythm; for the most part his lines flow regularly, regardless of the sense or emotion involved. The following descriptive passage, for example, moves with the same clockwork as the battle passage below it:

She does her Foes with Tenderness embrace,
 And hides deep Hate beneath a smiling Face.
 Courtiers from her have learnt their fawning way,
 And Sycophants by her their Prince betray.
 States-men imploring Aid, to her repair,
 To cover deep Designs, and hide the snare.
 Princes apply to her, to set them Free,
 When solemn Vows and Int'rests disagree. (p. 51)

Then on th' Iberian he his Fury spent,
 And mid'st the Cohorts dreadful Vollies sent.
 His Arms of Fire sure Ruin did convey,
 Death had no room to err, or miss its way.
 The Foe beat down by Show'rs of Leaden Ball,
 Like Rows of Trees before a Tempest fall. (p. 283)

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Blackmore incorporates a wide range of epic features, including: the Muse; opening in medias res; catalogues; proper names; formal speeches; supernatural machinery; omens; supplications to the gods before battle, and thanks, burial of the dead, funeral oration, and victory celebration with games, afterwards; visit to the other-world; death of a hero's son; single combat; and battle exhortation. He incorporates many themes, including: moderation, entropy, Chain of Being, fall of princes from pride, horror of the grave, God's vengeful nature and Christ's mercy, the Copernican system, the vanity of the world, predestination, and even racism. He also includes a wide range of historical and contemporary people and events. Thus the materials are present for an epic poem.

Yet Blackmore fails to make these materials coalesce into a structure of beauty and enduring significance. As an epic, Eliza comes close in a mechanical way to the Davenant-Dryden concept of epic, but not fully. The dual unifying principle mars its structure and splits its temporal atmosphere; the style vitiates the sublime manner; the mixed machinery fails to convince; and, though a strong panegyric meaning emerges, the Christian moral meaning ironically turns to bigotry. Eliza lacks all the prerequisites of epic proper, except length and a sense of the factious religious spirit of Elizabethan times. Thus the fictional

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characteristics of Eliza adversely affect its power of enduring appeal.

Blackmore, in using actual Renaissance events to parallel contemporary scenes, might be expected to crystalize some of the prevailing temper of either Elizabethan times or of his own, but he does not. Vere, in the flashback account of Elizabeth's reign, includes, for example, an account of her tolerance towards Catholics; but the tone of Eliza towards Catholics is scabrously hostile throughout and thus false to the poetic picture the poem purports to portray. On the other hand, as a reflection of actual Elizabethan times the poem falters in many ways, in the obvious Queen Anne setting, for example, and the neo-classic climate of opinion the poem creates. If taken as Blackmore's world, Eliza mirrors primarily religious intolerance towards Catholics, and adulation of the monarchy, whereas, as A.R. Humphrey notes, the early eighteenth century shows a "set toward tolerance and co-operation," its literature "speaks for the gradually more vocal middle class," and the "typical Augustan work is the record of normal life."¹⁹ Blackmore's ideal and aristocratically oriented world is dissociated from such a practical scene. The spirit revealed seems more Blackmore's than England's.

¹⁹A.R. Humphreys, The Augustan World: Life and Letters in Eighteenth-Century England, University Paperbacks (London: Methuen and Co., 1964 [1st publ. 1954]), pp. 42, 91.

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Furthermore, Blackmore speaks of the joy with which the British joined Vere's forces: "these valiant Troops . . . did a strange Alacrity express, / To aid reform'd Batavia in Distress" (p. 88). This may perhaps have been true in the more feudal military situation of Elizabeth's day. In Marlborough's it was not. Field-Marshal Montgomery comments:

Of the 40,000 men voted by Parliament as England's contribution to the allied force at the beginning of the war only 18,000 were British. Anti-military feeling was strong in England where . . . a standing army was regarded as a threat to liberty. [Some of the army consisted of conscripted] criminals and ne'er-do-wells.²⁰

Moreover, the tactical scenes of personal battle-charges led by Vere do not fit eighteenth-century reality. Montgomery explains that "a commander-in-chief. . . . sat his horse in the thick of activity . . . keeping in mind the position and fortunes of every unit on a four or five-mile front, studying the enemy, and adjusting his dispositions to the developing tactical situation."²¹ Anachronisms in narrative may heighten poetic reality, but where their inconsistency adversely affects the meaning of the poem they may also weaken the poetic reality. A panegyric aimed at Marlborough as a battle commander, which concentrates chiefly on his

²⁰Field-Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, A History of Warfare (London: Collins, 1968), p. 296.

²¹Ibid.

personal fighting prowess to the neglect of his strategic, tactical, and administrative genius, misfires. The fictional Vere is not the heroic military ideal of the early eighteenth century.

Blackmore's two earlier epics, Prince Arthur and King Arthur,²² in their characteristics prefigure Eliza, with a few exceptions. The principal difference, other than the legendary base drawn from Geoffrey of Monmouth, is that each of the earlier poems centers on a single epic hero who remains the focal figure throughout as a panegyric to King William; but, as in Eliza, the hero emerges as an aristocratic figurehead. Though such a figure may have represented the Whig aristocratic ideal of a leader devoid of the Stuart wilfulness, Arthur, like Vere, scarcely conforms to the developing ideal of the landed gentleman, jurist, or great merchant, of the early eighteenth century.

A striking similarity between these early poems and Eliza is the lack of any real probing of the complexity inherent in the human situation; the perspective is surface only. For example, in the skilfully structured version of the King Arthur story told in the medieval alliterative Morte Arthure, the rebellion in Britain serves to bring about the

²²Richard Blackmore, Prince Arthur: An Heroic Poem (London: Awnsham and John Churchill, 1695); Sir Richard Blackmore, King Arthur: An Heroic Poem in Twelve Books (London: Awnsham and John Churchill, 1697).

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crisis, leading to the fall of the Round Table and the death of Arthur and his knights in a morally significant action profound with the ambiguity of the human predicament. In King Arthur, as in Eliza, traitorous English nobles also plot rebellion, but Blackmore uses the action for invective rather than for plot development and character opposition and interaction.

Blackmore's last epic, Alfred,²³ focuses both backwards and forwards--back to the episodic, panegyric tradition of works such as Thomas Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveler, forward to the continental tours of works such as Lord Byron's Childe Harold. The dedication to Frederick of Hanover emphasizes the didactic unifying principle of the poem, and gives a doctrine of epic purpose which has more affinities with early Renaissance code books for princes, for example, Sir Thomas Hoby's translation of The Courtier, than it has with the new, middle-class prose fiction, such as Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, of its own day:

The Histories of excellent Kings . . . have great Influence in kindling a warm Desire in young Princes, to resemble them in their admirable Virtues and glorious Actions; And not only true Histories of applauded Monarchs . . . but likewise those, that are partly real and partly extended by a copious Variety of invented Incidents, and the Embellishments of a fertile Imagination, that by conveying Instructions in a delightful Manner, facilitate its Admission to the Mind, may much conduce to the Accomplishment of young Princes, and prepare them for the Exercise of imperial Authority.

²³Sir Richard Blackmore, Kt. M.D., Alfred. An Epic Poem. In Twelve Books (London: James Knapton, 1723).

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The action, in brief, takes Alfred, with his friend Guithun, on a European grand tour intended to broaden Alfred's capacity for eventual rule. Blackmore shows Alfred successively in Tunisia, Italy, Sicily, Spain, France, and Britain, in each of which Alfred exhibits his personal heroic prowess. However, Books II and III comprise discourses on education, statecraft, European geography and social customs, state support of poets, galley slavery, shipyards, and the Great Chain of Being. Alfred is told:

You shall regain Britannia, you will found
High Schools, where Science, with Applauses crown'd
And cheer'd with princely Bounty, may reside.
(p. 103)

In Book VI Alfred's prayers dissuade God from destroying the pagans in Sicily by means of an eruption of Mount Etna, though Blackmore aborts fictional reality: he shows epic machinery as the instrumental cause of volcanic activity, but subverts this by having Guithun give a lengthy scientific dissertation on the geological structure and aetiology of volcanic eruptions. These didactic interpolations not only reflect topical rationalistic and scientific curiosity but also prefigure in a way the novel of ideas of the later eighteenth century. They also break the rhythm of the narrative, however much they conform to the didactic intent of the education of a prince.

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In Book VII Alfred so far succumbs to a princess, Albana, that Guithun tries to warn him. Alfred vacillates until he falls ill; but as he nears death he repents, an angel restores his health, and he prepares to leave. The distraught Albana plots his death. However, her friend, also in love with Alfred, substitutes as a victim a villain who had murdered her brother. Meanwhile Albana, torn by love, rushes to prevent the assassination only to be told that it has already been done. In remorse she kills herself.

Dramatic intensity, rapid tempo unmarred by overt didacticism or other interpolation, and aesthetic unity mark this episode as unique in the Blackmore canon.

The remaining books complete the tour. Alfred in a dream vision tours heaven and hell and sees the royal line from his own time up to George I; seized as spies he and Guithun face execution for refusal to pay homage to the pagan sungod until Guithun, once an astronomer, and now foreseeing an eclipse, threatens the people with the death of their god; Alfred, summoned home on his father's death, defeats the invading Danes and grants them mercy; the Danes accept Christianity, and Alfred marries their princess. The wedding scene closes the epic.

Alfred differs from Eliza in its extensive topical allusions to matters such as education, political and natural science, and the administration of justice. Such

early eighteenth-century novels as Fielding's Joseph Andrews introduce similar expository material; but where Fielding skilfully weaves his allusions into the narrative pattern, Blackmore disconcertingly switches from narrative to expository discourse, breaking the dramatic continuity and suppressing its intensity. Alfred also differs in its extensive descriptions of countryside, seashore, and town which, coupled with the grand tour, bear some analogies to similar travelogues by later writers, for example, Oliver Goldsmith's The Traveller:

Nature appears, as in Eliza, as a background for man, most to be admired when it stands shaped by or in the service of man, for example:

And now advancing on the River's Tide
 They view'd Delights and Wealth on either Side,
 Where Nature all her fruitful Pow'r employs,
 Wantons and triumphs 'midst ten thousand Joys;
 While every Vale and each exalted Hill,
 Improv'd by Labour and adorn'd by Skill,
 Like Eden's walks the ravish'd Sight surprize,
 So fertile were the Fields, so soft the Skies.
 Here lovely Gardens rich in gen'rous Roots,
 Delicious blooming Bow'rs and golden Fruits,
 That Far in Beauty, Taste, and fragrant Smell
Hesperea's Arbours and sweet Groves excell,
 Glow'd with the solar intercepted Light,
 And to the Eye disclos'd a charming Sight. (p. 338)

Blackmore uses these descriptive passages as transitions between the narrative episodes; but they are so lengthy and so dissociated from the story that they, like the didactic interpolations, fragment the narrative.

Another significant difference is that during Alfred's tour through Italy the Pope crowns him as future King of Albion. Also, his enemies appear as true pagans, either as African sungod worshipers, or as historically pagan Danish invaders, and not as Catholic "pagans" as in all his previous epics. Thus, writing some twenty years after Eliza, Blackmore begins to reflect the temper of his age, in concessions to intellectual trends, in portrayal of nature, and in religious tolerance, as he had not done formerly.

Alfred differs also in structure. Like a seventeenth-century romance, it comprises a diversity of types of actions, including a Dido-like love story, the love story itself being new in Blackmore. Its supernatural machinery, rather than acting as an agent of psychological motivation, as shown in Eliza, serves to produce storms or other likely occurrences which affect the action in entirely probable ways; moreover, human action stems from psychological causes, for example, Albana's love-hate response, without any suggestion of supernatural causation. While the general structure is one of heroic episodes, within these Alfred displays sufficient individuality and natural human emotion not only to shape some of the action but also to round out his character to a degree not seen in Eliza or the earlier poems. Finally, from the title, and a knowledge of Blackmore's

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previous works, the reader might expect an account of how the hero defeats the perfidious pagans and saves his country for Christianity. Instead, the poem comprises eleven books of tours and exotic adventures bearing analogies to Byron's Childe Harold and Mediterranean romances, the events paralleling his previous works being compressed in the final book. A shift in unifying principle causes this. His previous focus, as shown in Eliza, was anti-Catholic, staunch Church of England polemic, as well as panegyric to established state personages. Alfred shifts from the bigoted and obsequious tone of Eliza to the more tolerant tone of a courtier book for a prince in training, enlivened by incidents not quite in keeping with a work aimed at a reigning monarch or state favourite. The form of Alfred thus matches its matter, the whole being shaped by its principle of princely education. Its potential as a mirror of significant trends in its own day, and as a piece of literature made with aesthetic propriety, is high; unfortunately the unfused juxtaposition of materials results in an aggregate, yoked together by journey sequence, not a synthesis. Moreover, the stylistic flaws of Eliza still appear.

Blackmore succeeds better in Alfred than he does in Eliza in character propriety, that is in shaping his characters consistently and plausibly in accord with the fictional world in which they live. Alfred, for example,

strays, if only momentarily in the love story with Albana, from the straight path of the Christian hero. Yet the characters remain wooden. Though Blackmore frees them from the supernatural motivation of Eliza, instead of letting them act freely in accordance with their temperament, as Samuel Richardson succeeds in doing, in Clarissa for instance he either manipulates them himself, puppet-like, or motivates them by melodramatic impulses such as those which urge Princess Albana. He closes the epic with what he terms a love-match; but the episode, from the first glimpse on to love and proposal, occurs in a single day and lacks the touch that vivifies:

Alfred Elfritha's Beauty much admir'd,
And found a secret Flame his Breast inspir'd:
His Thoughts her Form divine, her radiant Eyes,
Mild as the milky Lustre of the Skies,
Her features, Air, and graceful Mien approve,
And Liking quickly ripens into Love. (p. 440)

In summary, Blackmore attempted epics in the neo-classic mode advocated by Dryden, but his excessively argumentative design so moulds the substance and form that he attains a melodramatic instead of a sublime effect. His design relates primarily to the court political scene and the state approved religion; and since these were not representative of the whole of his culture, nor of one of the most dynamic parts of it--the Puritan middle-class, his poems are not lessons in conduct for those who were gradually

assuming the former role of the aristocracy in society. Moreover, since his design also caused him to create passive protagonists, his heroes are not the type to incite admiration among the aristocratic audience for whom the neo-classic epic was intended.

To some extent he remedied his position in Alfred, whose protagonist is much more a contemporary heroic ideal, exhibiting intellectual curiosity and emotional stability, than is Vere, for example. Alfred, however, does not connect through legend, history, or contemporary events, to publicly significant issues and thus tends more to the romance or private adventure story than to epic.

None of Blackmore's attempts fulfils the neo-classic epic concept. Still less do they meet such requirements of the epic proper as comprehensiveness of, or empathy with, their world; reflection of the current temper; or focus on significant human experience. The world of the novel lies even further off, for Blackmore makes scarcely no attempt at illusion of reality or individual characterization, and he lacks the ability to tell an interesting story in human terms.

Blackmore tried what Milton, Dryden, and Pope each seriously considered but rejected: to produce the epitome of literature, a national epic based on national myth or legend. Milton's choice may in part reflect his

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disappointment over the Commonwealth, but perhaps it also shows his awareness that the living myth of the times was no longer heroic in the old sense. Dryden's and Pope's rejection of any attempt at original epic shows perhaps that they concurred but could find no suitable alternative after Milton. Blackmore's persistence in what writers before and after him seemed to realize was a mode that had lost its currency, illustrates not only the sharper critical perception of contemporary writers such as Dryden, Defoe, Swift, Pope, Fielding, and Richardson, but also their modernity of thought in comparison with his reactionary position. The trend of the times, as evinced both in satire and in prose fiction, was to criticize life or to show the particular and changing world as it actually existed. Blackmore followed the idealists of tradition who would hold up for emulation abstract constant values.

The conservative principle seen in Eliza and Alfred typifies the controlling impulse of most heroic narrative poetry of the period. The principle shapes the product. It should not in theory so shape it as to deny the possibility of narrative of enduring quality, but in Blackmore's works the principle has become a mechanical one of complying with set modes of writing, derived from the past, regardless of the relevance of this to the living tradition of the day. The epic proper preceding, and the novel of, the early

eighteenth century show that living tradition encompasses both idealism and realism. Whatever it was as a concept, the neo-classic epic as exemplified by Blackmore, differs in kind from either epic proper or novel, and in dissociation from such tradition almost to the point of parody.

2. Wilkie's The Epigoniad.

William Wilkie, in The Epigoniad,²⁴ turns to Greek legend for subject matter. The poem was not published until 1753, but Alexander Chalmers says that Wilkie started it in 1739 and "had perhaps long finished the work before he ventured to publish it," and adds that though England reacted to it unfavourably, Wilkie's native Scotland endorsed a second edition in 1759.²⁵

In his Preface Wilkie says that an epic should be based on legend in a remote time and aim to make the hero larger than life, magnified in all virtues. Wilkie selects the legend of the Epigoni (the descendants of the Seven Champions against Thebes) who supposedly sacked Thebes shortly after the Trojan War. His hero, Diomede, goes to the siege of Thebes. His lover, Cassandra, without his knowledge and secretly disguised as one of his warriors, goes

²⁴William Wilkie, "The Poems of William Wilkie, D.D.," Works of the English Poets, XVI, 107-95.

²⁵Alexander Chalmers, ed. Works of the English Poets, XVI, 110.

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with him. Venus, who favours Thebes, provokes Diomedes to urge his fellow Greeks to lift the siege and go home, but he is overruled. In the truce after the first battle, he retires to his tent in petulance, like Achilles in the Iliad. During the ensuing funeral games he determines to take the city himself. Opposed by his trusted counsellor, in a fit of rage Diomedes kills him, an action which provokes his troops to a mutiny, quelled by Ulysses. Meanwhile, Diomedes sees through Cassandra's disguise and sends her to her doom, for through the artifice of Venus the Thebans capture her. Creon of Thebes suddenly and treacherously attacks the Greeks, whom Diomedes, urged by Ulysses, saves. Creon then has Cassandra slain and her head displayed from the ramparts of Thebes, whereupon Diomedes and Ulysses force a breach and the city falls, Diomedes sparing the life of Creon's wife in token that he has learned to control his temper.

The Epigoniad is unified, not by the didactic purpose which as shown in Eliza can lead to disproportion in substance and form, but by its fictional world. Its supernatural machinery, for example, is subordinate and ancillary to the human action. It does not serve, as does Blackmore's to didactic or panegyric ends. nor, as in epic proper, to help create the fictional cosmos of the poetic world of the

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story. If it were omitted from Wilkie's poem, the story would stand on its own.

In Diomede Wilkie seems to aim at a larger-than-life hero who would incite admiration and emulation; but he flaws such development in the concrete incidents of the story; for while Diomede's better traits appear by the conclusion, they are not given any early form. In contrast, his petulance, murderous instability of temperament, and insensitivity to the loyalty and love of those who serve him provide an adverse focus on his character and provoke a response in the reader detrimental to admiration. In Wilkie's day, amongst more aristocratic readers, Diomede's battlefield exploits might have redressed this; but because Wilkie gives no adequate grounds for Diomede's less admirable behaviour he does not stand forth as an exceptional hero. His flaw does, however, bring him to life as a character; he is made human as well as heroic, in contrast to Vere in Eliza; and his flaw, since it leads to the death of his trusted counsellor and of Cassandra, adds tragic dimension to the story.

Cassandra's fate stems from her love for Diomede but contributes little to the depth of the story. It puts Cleon in melodramatic focus, but the tragic effect depends on the impression her death makes on Diomede, and this does not stand out as significant. Nevertheless, in Diomede and

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Cassandra Wilkie draws psychologically convincing characters whose intrinsic motivation leads to fictionally realistic ends. The Epigoniad thus not only chronicles an action but also probes human nature and its consequences in a way that Blackmore does not attempt.

Wilkie verges on sentimentality in the protracted episode of Cassandra's fate, and on melodrama in the actual death scene:

. . . for the blow prepar'd
 With both her hands, her shining neck she bar'd,
 And round her head a purple garment roll'd,
 With leaves of silver mark'd and flow'rs of gold.
 Rais'd for the stroke, the glitt'ring falchion hung,
 And swift descending, bore the head along.
 A tide of gore, diffus'd in purple streams,
 Dashes the wall, and o'er the pavement swims.
 Prone to the ground the headless trunk reclines,
 And life, in long convulsive throbs, resigns. (p. 174)

Since Diomede does not witness her death, which takes place amid the unsympathetic Thebans, the pathos of the scene serves solely to evoke a response from the reader over Cassandra's undeserved end.

Wilkie's is one of the better narrative poems of the time, however, remarkably free from the didactic and panegyric overload which slows the narrative momentum and dramatic intensity of a poem such as Eliza. Wilkie seldom intrudes with direct authorial comment; and his equally few indirect didactic passages are brief, related to, and rise organically from, the story itself. For example,

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Diomedes's counsellor, in rebuking Diomedes's unilateral decision, says:

When Tyrants threaten, slaves alone should fear,
For whom the gods distinguish by their hate,
Themselves are made the ministers of fate; (p. 156)

For rash procedure wrongs the fairest course:
And private justice still insults the laws. (p. 157)

Wilkie creates dramatic clashes of diverse characters, develops his tale with variety of both scene and incident, and avoids repetitious individual combats. The poem moves with poetic force, drawing the reader into its mood, especially in the tragic unfolding of the Diomedes-Cassandra theme. Unlike Eliza, and more like its contemporary in prose, the novel, The Epigoniad may be read for the interest of seeing what happens next.

In Eliza Blackmore creates a fictional world which, however distorted to aristocratic ends, yet mirrors something of the actual history and spirit of both Elizabethan and early eighteenth-century eras. In The Epigoniad Wilkie creates a fictional world rooted in classic legend. In his Preface he says that he selected his particular period because of its proven popularity, as demonstrated by the success of Pope's Iliad, over a type of poem more topically related but less popular, as for example Spenser's The Fairie Queene; but in turning towards Pope he also turned, a generation later than Pope, towards the same kind of

audience that Pope had drawn, and away from the ever-increasing middle class audience which welcomed, in the novel, narratives embodying its own myths, heroes and values.

3. Glover's Leonidas.

Richard Glover, like Wilkie, turned to the classical past for the subject matter of his epic, Leonidas,²⁶ which had four editions by 1739, six by 1770, three reprints after 1800, and was translated into both French and German. Glover offers no prefatory epic doctrine, though his poem is the closest approach to epic proper which appeared in an original narrative in England between 1700 and 1740, "the first unrhymed poem after Paradise Lost," Havens asserts, "which can lay any claim to being an epic."²⁷

Like Blackmore in Eliza, Glover bases his story on history. It recounts the actual defence of the pass between the mountains and the sea on the coast of Greece at Thermopylae by the small force of Spartans under Leonidas against the massive invasion under Xerxes in 480 B.C. The poem opens in medias res. The Greeks consult an oracle which bids them offer a sacrifice to save their country. Leonidas offers himself and groups his sacrifice force at

²⁶Richard Glover, "The Poems of Richard Glover," Works of the English Poets, XVII, 22-80.

²⁷Havens, Influence of Milton on English Poetry, p. 262.

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Thermopylae. Xerxes, amused by Leonidas' insignificant force, attacks but meets decisive defeat. He regroups for a second assault, but the Greek prophetess, Melissa, suggests to Leonidas that he pre-position a great mass of tree trunks and rocks above the pass. This, when released, like an avalanche crushes the Persian troops.

At this juncture a Persian Princess, Ariana, comes to beg permission to bury the corpse of her lover, slain in the battle. Leonidas grants the request. He then learns that his allies have failed to keep the mountain pass above Thermopylae and that a force of Persians is about to debouch from the mountains onto the sea plain to his rear.

Xerxes, meanwhile, tries to buy Leonidas off; but Leonidas, remembering the oracle, summons his troops, tells them the situation, and bids any who wish safety to leave. He then makes a desperate spoiling attack by night into the very heart of the Persian camp. But the inevitable two-pronged assault on his force comes at last and one-by-one they fight to the death.

The poem keeps close to the course of events of 480 B.C. Glover perhaps mars the total effect of the poem by developing his theme of sacrifice too narrowly; the poem tends to become a story of a military campaign. He presents characters with responsive potential in a situation rich with suspense and drama and tells the story so as to induce

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a sense of immediacy but keeps most of the narrative in a rigid historical perspective. Perhaps Glover came to realize that it was too close to being history; for he added many of the more inventive elements, for example, the character and actions of Artemisia, an Amazon queen in the Persian host, when he expanded the poem in the 1770 edition. However, though the close historical parallel may stultify imaginative development, it unifies the story and helps make it plausible.

Glover accentuates the plausibility by tone, setting, and method of development. He writes with a realistic tone, unflawed by either Blackmore's polemic or Wilkie's sentimentalism. He vividly creates a believable setting, consistently related to, and in part instrumental in, the action. He etches the night attack, for instance, in sharp contrast to the day battles, and conveys a sense of the feel of darkness in dangerous and unknown places:

. . . Tow'rd the hostile camp
 In march compos'd and silent down the pass
 The phalanx moved, nor in whispers breath'd
 The rapt'rous ardour virtue then inspir'd.
 So louring clouds along th' ethereal void
 In slow expansion from the gloomy north
 Awhile suspend their horrors, destin'd soon
 To blaze in lightnings, and to burst in storm. (p. 75)

Here the parallel of the impending storm about to break in fury dramatically conveys the silent menace of the Spartans moving in on the sleeping Persian camp. Unlike Blackmore and

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Wilkie, Glover develops his story without the aid of supernatural machinery.

Glover renders several of his characters as individuals to the degree that they belong only to his fictional world and could not be transposed to others, as most of Blackmore's could be. Leonidas acts heroically but not with the woodenness of a Blackmore hero; consequently, he comes alive as a human being acting with dignity, courage, and wisdom in a desperate situation, as a military leader towering above any of the heroes so far seen in this study. None of Glover's other characters stands out as vividly as Leonidas, but in the relatively brief scenes in which they appear, Melissa, Artemisia, and Argestes, the wily counsellor of Xerxes, all display faceted personality. With Glover the early eighteenth-century epic demonstrates a proportioned narrative in which plot, characters, and setting function in unison.

Glover maintains a tone appropriate to this theme. The poem contrasts the Spartan love of freedom and native land with the slave attributes of the Persians under the yoke of a tyrant. Appropriately, the tone reflects moral dignity and patriotic fervour. Glover keeps the tone under control, however, and does not flood into sententious didacticism or into panegyric. Because of the equipoise of plot, character, setting, and tone, Leonidas functions

essentially as narrative. Like the contemporaneous novel it appeals to the reader's curiosity about what will happen next.

However, Leonidas also imparts an air of being a frieze-like succession of events rendered with life-like figures but without warmth or attachment. The cause of this frigidity rests in part on the form. The poem is packed with so much heroic incident that it leaves insufficient room for fuller development of such humanly interesting themes as that of Princess Ariana's night visit to Leonidas. But it also stems from the same cause that makes Eliza seem a heroic-size frieze, that is, from the idealized nobility of the hero. Leonidas betrays no human weakness. Another cause is the lack of any particularized human antagonist to provoke dramatic interaction. Glover does not focus on the man Xerxes even to the extent that Blackmore focuses on Philip in Eliza. The heroic form, coupled with the sacrifice theme, narrows the focus to a tale of noble suffering, motivated more by sociological and military factors than by the dramatic tension of characters in opposition.

Form also affects the positive narrative appeal of Leonidas. Glover tells the story swiftly; the rhythm of action surges with gathering momentum to the end. He chooses blank verse rather than the customary couplets of the heroic poem of his day, and this facilitates the

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swift unfolding of the story. Critics disparage Glover's style: Havens, for example, says that it is "obviously Miltonic," the "diction that of Milton conventionalized by Pope," and the "prosody a strange union of Puritan and Augustan conception; for it is blank verse fettered by the regularity of end-stopped lines of the heroic couplet."²⁸ Yet Glover writes many passages characterized by short cadence, simple direct syntax, run-on lines, and inter-line caesura, for example:

The animated hero upward springs
 Light, as a kindled vapour, which, confin'd
 In subterranean cavities, at length
 Pervading, rives the surface to enlarge
 The long-imprison'd flame. Ascending soon,
 He sees, he stands abash'd, then rev'rent kneels.
 (p. 50)

In many passages Glover aptly matches form to matter. In the following, for example, he compresses the syntax to convey dramatic tension:

The army silent halt. Their ensigns fan
 The air no longer. Motionless their spears.
 His eye reveals the ardour of his soul,
 Which thus finds utterance from his eager lips. (p. 35)

He uses epic similes functionally and effectively, for example:

²⁸Havens, Influence of Milton on English Poetry, pp. 282-83.

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On him look'd down Leonidas like Death,
 When, from his iron cavern call'd by Jove,
 He stands gigantic on a mountain's head;
 Whence he commands th' affrighted Earth to quake,
 And crags and forests in his direful grasp
 High wielding, dashes on a town below,
 Whose deeds of black impiety provoke
 The long-enduring gods. (p. 62)

The simile here graphically and emotionally illustrates the looming threat of Leonidas, poised to unleash the avalanche of rock and timber onto the unsuspecting Persians in the pass below.

Yet Glover flaws the overall appropriateness of form to matter. He structures Leonidas chronologically and restricts the incidents to episodes which build up climactically in an intense unity to the final clash, but intrudes the extraneous Ariana story. Though the story shows concretely Leonidas' generous nature and compassion, in contrast with the callous indifference of Xerxes, and thus renders the death of the more humane man more tragic, it is not assimilated into the dramatic action. Also, at times rhythm and action do not flow together, for example:

Mindful of their charge
 The chiefs depart. Leonidas provides
 His various armour. Agis close attends,
 His best assistant. First a breastplate arms
 The spacious chest. O'er this the hero spreads
 The mailed cuirass, from his shoulders hung
 A shining belt infolds his mighty loins. (p. 73)

The compression here presents information elliptically, but with mechanical rather than with corresponding rhythm. In

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another instance by similar squeezing Glover dehydrates the drama from a battle scene:

Ere they clear their way
Well-caution'd Medon from the close defile
Two thousand Locrians pours. An aspect new
The fight assumes. Through implicated shrubs
Confusion waves each banner. Falchions, spears,
And shields are all encumbered; till the Greeks
Had forc'd a passage to the yielding foe.
Then Medon's arm is felt. (p. 61)

On balance, then, Glover begins to move away from the neo-classic concept of epic form which in so many of the early eighteenth-century poets imposes a predetermined shape on what they have to say, but he moves only part way, still inhibited by the diction and the couplet-oriented syntactical statement of neo-classical style.

Glover's ethical assumptions are a mélange of Greek and Augustan world views: the gods are just; heroism is noble; the nation is a spiritual entity worthy of sacrifice; poetic justice prevails; human compassion should be extended to foes; the hero's acts, and indeed his thoughts and feelings, are public rather than personal. The poem's milieu is thus heroic in the same mould as in Eliza, but with the difference that Glover disparages the brutal savagery of war and focuses his epic on heroic sacrifice for one's fellow man.

Leonidas meets some of the norms of neo-classic epic better than Eliza does. It does teach the nobility of public

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duty, patriotism, and heroic valour, through a single heroic action set in the past and performed by a perfect hero; and it is presented in a sublime style. Unlike Eliza, it closely follows actual history and largely avoids supernatural or other devices normally used to add to the sublimity of the fictional world of the epic.

The poem also differs from Eliza in that it shows some features of the novel—unity, for instance, based on a realistic fictional world in which for the most part plausible human beings shape the action; but it excludes the circumstantial and particularized reality and the bourgeois world of Defoe, as well as the emotional exploration of Richardson and Fielding.

Also unlike Eliza, Leonidas presents features which mark epic proper: its interesting story and significant idea fuse into an organic unifying principle, each complementing the other; it displays a consistent fictional world which serves to illustrate enduring human values; it conveys a sense of participation in its action; its protagonist is a possible hero, perfect though he is, within the given world of the story; and its components including style serve to clarify and focus its story and meaning. On the other hand, the world of Leonidas like that of Eliza, is too small and too much concentrated on its aristocracy to be comprehensive of its own fictional age, and too heroic to capture

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the essentially middle-class spirit of its own age, just as the man Leonidas is too much the idealized aristocrat to represent the heroic ideal of Glover's day.

Glover's true focus shows best in the light of his implied reader. The popularity of his poem throughout the eighteenth century and on into the Romantic age shows that it incorporates features with a wider audience appeal than Blackmore's or Wilkie's epics. Glover is thus more attuned to the trends of his day than are his contemporary epic competitors.

Havens justly charges Glover with theatricality in style and action, and idealism in characterization.²⁹ But Tobias Smollett in Humphry Clinker exhibits theatricality, and Richardson in Sir Charles Grandison shows idealism. What seems most to limit Glover's enduring appeal is his deliberate focus, like Wilkie, on a dead age, without the illumination of universal human values and interests which plays across the novels of Smollett and Richardson. Glover and Wilkie lack even the appeal of national ethos which Blackmore strives for but fails to attain. Even Glover's admirers felt this lack: one of his contemporaries, in a poem of high praise for Leonidas, comments:

²⁹Havens, Influence of Milton on English Poetry, pp. 282-83.

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Let British valour thy brave care engage,
 With British valour fire thy glorious page.
 Bid Henry's honours in thy poem glow,
 On Edward immortality bestow,
 Let Agincourt, let Cressy's well-fought plain
 Run purple in thy lines and bleed again;³⁰

4. Ellwood's Davideis.

Another long significant heroic narrative, Thomas Ellwood's Davideis,³¹ differs in scope from those so far considered in that it chronicles a life span, that of the biblical King David. Ellwood, a Quaker, who submitted his epic for approval to a Quaker assembly, in the Preface announces a policy much like Blackmore's; for Ellwood says that he wants to offer the general public reading material of sufficient interest to wean it from the frivolous fiction of the time. The six English and many American editions during the eighteenth century show that the public found the work interesting.

The story follows generally its biblical original. The youthful David slays Goliath, becomes Saul's favourite, wins the friendship of Jonathan, the king's son, and the hand of Michel, Saul's daughter. Then the irrational Saul turns on him. David seeks sanctuary in Samuel's temple; and when

³⁰William Thompson, "To the Author of Leonidas,"
 The Poems of William Thompson, Works of the English Poets,
 XV, 15.

³¹Thomas Ellwood, Davideis, ed. Walther Fischer
 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1936 [reprint of 1st ed. of 1712]).

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Saul kills Samuel's priests for hiding him, David becomes an outlaw in the hills. On Saul's death David wins the civil war and the crown but sins by slaying Bethsheba's husband and marrying her, with consequent remorse. His son, Absalom, rebels against him and is killed. Finally, Solomon succeeds to the throne and David dies.

Ellwood calls his work an epic but it is actually a biblical chronicle which follows the sequence of David's life. The dramatic action reaches its climax with the death of Absalom in Book IV, but Ellwood then adds in Book V a second rebellion and Solomon's accession, thereby dragging the story out. Though Ellwood builds his poem like an Elizabethan drama in five acts, with the climax in the fourth, and ends it in the fifth with Solomon, like Fortinbras, restoring stability, he does not order and compress his material so as to achieve aesthetic intensity. The moral focal point of Ellwood's action is the Bethsheba episode, for Ellwood uses the causal force of the immoral act to bring David to repentance, but in failing to make this sequence predominate over that of Absalom's death he loses control over his material.

Ellwood's characters show deeper psychological depth than even those of Glover. David, for example, progresses from the young, intrepid, innocent, and invincible shepherd hero, to the aged, hesitant, conscience-stricken, and

powerless king; moving from innocence, to vice, to repentance. Louis Cazamian suggests that Ellwood's Davideis may be regarded, along with the work of John Bunyan and George Fox, as a "precursor," a "connecting link between the past and the future," revealing "the persistence of a psychological temperament, the gradual awakening of which, during the following century, will open the way to a renovation in literature."³² Fischer notes in his Introduction that Davideis contributes to the development of the psychological and sentimental novel of the eighteenth century which "is directly connected with the careful analysis of soul and mind"; that Ellwood is deeply interested "in psychological problems, the elucidation of which is coupled with a very marked tendency to exploit the emotional value of his story."

These tendencies are not, however, strongly evident, being diffused by neo-classic conventions of tone and form. Ellwood probes the problems of David, who is confounded by his own irrational nature and by the equally irrational motives and behaviour of those around him; but his search is restricted primarily to the psychological tensions between males. The relationship between David and Saul, David and

³²Louis Cazamian, "Modern Times," A History of English Literature, ed. Emile Legouis, Louis Cazamian, and Raymond Las Vergnas, rev. ed. (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1960), p. 691.

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Jonathan, and David and Absalom, is penetrating. For example, when David and Jonathan part, imagery warms the scene with sentiment:

At length, their Covenant renew'd, they part,
Each of them bearing with him t'other's Heart.
(ll. 1141-142)

On the other hand, like Blackmore and Glover, Ellwood makes little attempt to invest his female characters with the aura of psychological truth. He treats love and marriage most curtly. David's first wooing and wedding, for example, becomes part of a transitional statement:

The marriage-Rites perform'd the Shepherd's led,
With Nuptial Songs, to Princess Michel's Bed.
Where leaving them, in amorous Embraces
My Muse their Father's Machinations traces. (ll. 525-28)

The romantic prelude to his second marriage, to Abigail, receives even shorter shrift, in artificial rhetoric which chills the scene:

Then parting, He unto his Camp retir'd:
She to her House: he, Her: She Him admir'd.
(ll. 2111-112)

Even his affair with Bethsheba, the moral focus of the poem, receives this embryonic treatment. Ellwood, like his contemporaries, does not try to see the world through a feminine persona; and as a result his female characters are like those of his fellow poets, only names, and that part of his fictional world which might draw female interest is undisclosed.

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In Davideis, as in Eliza, the setting is an abstraction, used neither to invoke atmosphere nor to prompt action. Ellwood situates the story by biblical places and names but not by any concrete sense appeal; consequently, his story seems enacted against stage props and has a curiously two-dimensional effect, like a fairy-story, similar to Blackmore's. His male characters come alive and draw the reader into their fictional world in a way Blackmore's fail to do, but this vicarious participation does not apply to the tangibility of their environment.

Ellwood's abstract setting, however, is at least mundane, unobtrusive, and unexciting enough not to detract from the moral aim stated in the Preface and applied in the poem by direct narrator comment. Walther Fischer points out how Ellwood attacks the usual targets of the Puritan moralists, as, for example:

Ah! How unsafe it is to let the Eye
 Into the Privacies of Women Pry!
 How dangerous to let the Devil catch
 The Mind a Roving from its inward Watch!
 (ll. 2991-994)

How miserable is that Princes state,
 On whom a Pack of Parasites do wait!
 (ll. 3011-3012)

Great is the Diff'rence betwixt lawful Love,
 And lawless Lust . . . (ll. 3519-520)

In the main Ellwood tells his story in prosaic style. Like Glover he tells a purely human story; but the essentially non-sublime style sets Davideis apart from the epics so far considered, and makes it seem more a history than even Glover's Leonidas. Where Ellwood uses figurative language it is often biblical in nature, as for example: "A Sabbath now of Years was fully run" (l. 2327). He does not use epic simile. His heroic couplet curbs spontaneity even more than Blackmore's does and often to the point of epigram: "David Declin'd apace; ready to Set / Young Adonijah ready up to get" (ll. 5489-490). Where he tries to express sentiment, the form of his conventional couplets interferes, as for example, when David sheds tears:

Heart-rending Sorrows did, without controul,
Imprison all the Powers of his Soul.
Grief forc't a Vent at last, and outdid pour,
Thorow his fainting Eyes, an easing Show'r.
(ll. 2503-506)

The use of the emphatic "did" as a mere line-filler, and the forced yoking of "pour" with the lighter connotation of "shower" curbs the emotional movement of the lines.

The prosaic style conforms with the overriding rationalistic mood. In Davideis reason and order rather than emotion and anarchy unfold as the proper and just motives for conduct; and irrational or emotional conduct, such as Saul's psychotic rage and David's unlawful lust, causes

disorder and distress in society. The unemotional, epigrammatic treatment of David's love affairs; the generally abstract setting and atmosphere; the didactic tone; and the artificial style, as in:

This Doeg acted: but 'twas Saul that bid;
This Saul commanded: but this Doeg did.
(ll. 1595-596)

with its antithesis, parallelism, and chiasmus; all reflect the rational bent of Ellwood's poem. Fischer comments on the quiet humour of Davideis and cites as an example: "for Women then were thought / It seems, of Worth sufficient to be bought" (ll. 481-82). This may possibly be intentional humour, but such passages are few; humour and wit in Davideis are scarcely distinguishable from earnest Puritan satire.

Ethically Davideis reflects an Old Testament milieu in that the sins of the father lead to the death of the son; Absalom dies to atone for David's crime against Bethsheba's husband. It also reflects an aristocratic mood: poetic justice functions for the lords but not for the commoners of its world; David's sins cause countless innocents to die of the plague or in war but not David himself; David refuses to slay the anointed king, Saul, when he has him at his mercy, despite the reasons he has for doing so:

Who but a David, would have let his Foe,
At such Advantage found, in Safety go! (ll. 1825-826)

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Davideis in the variety and depth of its characters and in coherence and swiftness of its action makes a better story than any of Blackmore's, though its biographical unifying principle denies it the intensity of effect of either The Epigoniad or Leonidas. The absence of epic marvel suits its biographical bias but its artificial style does not. Its decline in popularity (its last edition was 1796) may stem from such formal imbalance. It may also stem from the implied reader for whom Ellwood wrote; for he tried to deliver the ethics of the Puritan middle-class in an aristocratic vehicle: upper-class readers would not like the ethics, nor lower-class readers the vehicle. But perhaps the principal reasons for its declining appeal lie in its very nature; for Davideis, though it has features of the neo-classic epic, of epic proper, and of the novel, does not appeal on the level of any single one of these types of narrative. It lacks primarily the heroic quality of the first, the sense of the spirit of the time of the second, and the verisimilitude of the third; and it does not offer in lieu a satisfactory new type of story-telling form.

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5. Other Heroic Narratives.

In addition to the heroic narratives by Blackmore, Wilkie, Glover, and Ellwood, the writers of the early eighteenth century also produced a quantity of verse which, because it is marginal as either narrative or as epic, warrants less detailed consideration.

Another biblical chronicle, Elizabeth Rowe's The History of Joseph,³³ differs from Ellwood's chiefly in its use of supernatural machinery, for Mrs. Rowe uses devils as agents which incite Joseph's antagonists. Despite her close adherence to the episodes in the original story, she mars the chronicle unity by failing to integrate the supernatural machinery, and several extraneous episodes, into the action. Moreover, she tells the story in such a flat way that it has no peaks of poetic intensity or valleys of dramatic surprise or suspense. Joseph lacks so many of the desirable attributes of narrative of any type that it can scarcely be considered as a new piece of fiction; yet it illustrates the attempt to use epic machinery in a heroic chronicle story.

Joseph also has the incidental interest of being one of the few long narrative poems written by a woman since the

³³Elizabeth Rowe, The Works of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe (London: John and Arthur Arch, 1796), III, 273-343.

time of Mrs. Aphra Behn in the seventeenth century, and one of the few in the period under study. Mrs. Rowe curtails her heroic action but develops personal descriptions and scenes of romantic emotion at greater length than other contemporary epics display. Despite this colour of romance, however, her epic is more analogous to those of contemporary male writers of heroic narrative than to the work of female authors of long fiction, most of whom, like Mrs. Manley, were during this period writing novels of scandal.

The chronicle narratives of Ellwood and Mrs. Rowe, illustrating attempts at epic both with and without the use of supernatural devices, show the imbalance between matter and form common to much of the narrative poetry of the day. Ellwood in attempting to depict an edifying example of a Christian hero, for "common readers" of a young age, omits the marvellous and the truly heroic yet invests his poem with the trappings of heroic rhetoric: Bunyan illustrates the reverse; he deals largely with the marvellous yet uses a plain style. Mrs. Rowe tries to tell a rather realistic story of Joseph's struggles, temptations, and love, but omits character development of even the order of Ellwood's portrayal of David, and uses supernatural machinery without adequately controlling it to her purpose.

Blackmore's Eliza is in part unified by a panegyric aim. This aim provides the full unity for some heroic poems

of the early eighteenth century. A representative example is George Farquhar's Barcellona: a Poem, or the Spanish Expedition under the Command of Charles Earl of Peterborough until the Reduction of the City of Barcellona to the Obedience of Charles III, King of Spain.³⁴

In the poem Mordaunt, commander of a British expedition to Spain to help the Spaniards against a force of French and traitorous Spaniards holding Barcelona, arrives and besieges that city. Meanwhile, the Genius of France, serenely sleeping under the impression that King Louis is capably in charge, suddenly wakes to the alarm over the siege and sends Discord to vex the allied force. When the allies, disrupted, break off the siege, Mordaunt, cheered on by a good spirit, Fortune, attacks with his own troops and takes the city.

Farquhar briefly relates an account of a military incident but superimposes an epic treatment. He begins, for instance, in medias res with Mordaunt's fleet en route to Spain and ends abruptly with the fall of the city. He uses epic features such as supernatural machinery and battle counsel. The plot creates suspense about the outcome of the siege and some drama in the sack of the city, but otherwise exerts little appeal.

³⁴George Farquhar, The Complete Works of George Farquhar, ed. Charles Stonehill (London: Nonesuch Press, 1930), II, 361-402.

Nor does characterization spark the poem: Mordaunt alone stands out as a person. Nevertheless, human will and not supernatural power motivates Farquhar's characters. This shows most clearly in Mordaunt: the spirit of Fortune acts as an inciter and advisor, but Mordaunt makes his own decisions and conducts his own battle, without the lever of supernatural intercession. The supernatural agencies thus remain extrinsic and ornamental to both plot and character.

Farquhar's tone varies: serious in his exposition of military action, comic in his depiction of the Genius of France, satiric in his jibes against Mordaunt's foes and dissenting allies. Farquhar blends comic and satiric in depicting the Genius of France as sleeping until too late then waking in comically exaggerated distress. Farquhar gibes at an Admiral who refuses to go on with the siege:

Upon his Wooden Province, there command
Tyrant at Sea, and Spaniel on the Land. (p. 387)

Noteworthy about his treatment of war is that in an ostensibly heroic poem he depicts war in a manner entirely consistent with the times he is writing about. Instead of the typically heroic individual fights as in Eliza he uses contemporary weapons and tactical manoeuvre. In the assault on the city, for example, Mordaunt first feigns withdrawal to delude his enemy, then assaults rapidly on a narrow front, with artillery to give covering fire and to smash a breach in the walls for his troops to pour through.

Farquhar unifies his poem by making each component of it act to increase the heroic stature of the protagonist. Even his flashback, recounting the loss in the Bay of Biscay of a previous British fleet, coming as it does during Mordaunt's passage of the same Bay, helps to put him in heroic perspective. Similarly, interpolated panegyrics to Marlborough and Queen Anne serve to relate the hero to other extraordinary personages. Meanwhile the military mission and its execution progresses in an accelerating rhythm up to Mordaunt's final triumph. The poem focuses on Mordaunt; he and the action are paired; thus the poem, though heroic in tone, is essentially a panegyric.

If Farquhar intended an epic, he was content to forego the stilts of epic style. He writes generally with the language of prose, rarely enlivened with figures of speech. He uses, for example, in his 1,500 lines, only one extended simile. The force of the poem rises, rather from its concreteness, as, for example, the ships rising up in the water as the heavy cannon are unloaded, and from its accelerated movement, sweeping up to the final assault.

Farquhar's foci, like Blackmore's, are traditional and aristocratic. He presents his warrior hero, modern though he is, as unchangingly admirable, an object of emulation. He makes the martial action reflect not only military but also national superiority. He uses supernatural

machinery; and though he burlesques evil forces in the manner of Blackmore, he presents the good force, Fortune, as a dream in which the hero is given advice. No females appear; Farquhar's is an entirely masculine world.

But Farquhar departs from most of the neo-classic epic norms. He focuses his poem in specific and actual contemporary time and place, in such a way that it conveys a sense of what it would be like to be a participant in its small heroic world. Mordaunt, of course, is in fact the Earl of Peterborough, here placed in a heroic portrait for admiration, not as in the epic for the abstract valuable virtues he typifies, but as an individual living champion. As epic proper, Barcellona offers only the feel of life of its time. Except for its supernatural machinery and panegyric purpose, the poem is closer to the particularizing activity of the contemporary novel than to the abstract idealism of epic.

Another version of panegyric heroic narrative appears in John Philips' Blenheim,³⁵ a Tory counterpart to Joseph Addison's Whig military poem The Campaign of 1704. Both Philips and Addison celebrate Marlborough's victory at Blenheim, and both write overt panegyric. Neither of their

³⁵John Philips, The Poems of John Philips, ed. M.G. Lloyd Thomas, The Percy Reprints, No. X (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1927), pp. 380-84.

poems meets the definition of narrative poetry given in Chapter I of this study (metrical composition in which the imaginative narration of characters in progressive action exerts an interest for its own sake); but Philips comes closer to it than does Addison, and his poem Bleinheim is discussed here to point out the difference in technique from Farquhar's Barcellona, also a military panegyric and written about the same time.

In contrast to Farquhar's realism, Philips tells his account of an actual recent battle anachronistically, in the military terms of heroic tradition:

. . . in Gallic Blood again
He dews His reeking Sword, and strows the Ground
With Headless Ranks: (ll. 206-208)

Barcellona, though panegyric in principle, at least renders the illusion of reality; it creates a viable fictional world. Bleinheim, with its spilt blood, brains, and guts, and top-heavy with apostrophes, rings false and as narrative poetry is stillborn. Whereas Barcellona, in its appeal to readers who like Defoe would be interested in concrete contemporaneous detail, offers a way ahead for eighteenth-century narrative poetry, Bleinheim looks back to a time when readers reacted favourably to theatricality.

Direct patriotic panegyric in heroic form appears in the poems of two Scottish poets, William Hamilton and Allan

Ramsay. In Hamilton's The Episode of the Thistle,³⁶ Saint Andrew appears in a dream to Kenneth II, who is facing Saxon aggressors, and foretells the eventual triumph of the thistle on condition that like the thistle the Scots defend their country but do not attack others. Great victories are then followed by defeat, under subsequent kings who disregard the warning, until James V restores Scotland.

Hamilton's patriotism and verbose rhetorical style combine to preclude clarity and dramatic tension:

But wouldst thou know how first th'illustrious plant
Rose to renown? hear the recording Muse:

.
What though the humble root
Dishonour'd erst, the growth of every field
Arose unheeded through the stubborn soil
Jejune! though softer flowers, disdainful, fly
Thy fellowship, nor in the nosegay join,
Ill-match'd compeers; not less the dews of Heav'n
Bathe thy rough cheeks, and wash thy warlike mail
Gift of indulgent skies! (p. 615)

Somewhat akin to Hamilton's chauvinistic narrative is The Vision by Allan Ramsay,³⁷ a fellow Scottish poet, the theme of which is the eventual triumph of Scotland against the English. Most of the poem consists of the speech of the ghost of the Genius of Scotland addressing the narrator as he sleeps. Ramsay's allegory lacks action and characterization, and his account of a carousel of the gods interjects

³⁶William Hamilton, "The Poems of William Hamilton," Works of the English Poets, XV, 591-655.

³⁷Allan Ramsay, The Works of Allan Ramsay, ed. Alexander M. Kinghorn and Alexander Law (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1961), III, 81-85.

a ludicrous tone and scene at the expense of narrative consistency; but the dominant revenge theme imposes a nominal unity, while the imaginative power compels attention, as for example:

Thair in a wyde and splendit hall,
 Reird up with shynand beims,
 Ouhais rufe-trees wer of rainbows all,
 And paint with starrie gleims,
 Ouhilk prinked, and twinkled,
 Brichtly beyont compair,
 Much famed, and named,
 A castle in the air.

These two poems reflect one extreme of idealism in narrative, for here the panegyric almost suppresses the story. In contrast Smollett uses Humphry Clinker to extol Scotland but incorporates the praise easily into the narrative and, moreover, directs his attention to aspects of the country, such as agricultural methods and town planning, which would most interest bourgeois readers.

Few romances appear in verse between 1700 and 1740, and most of these are metrical tales rather than heroic poetry. However, the heroic romance may be illustrated from Hamilton's Speech of Randolph: a Fragment of Bruce, Book II.³⁸ Despite the title, this short poem tells a complete story. Edenthur of the Picts steals the Princess Ethelind, sister of the Scottish King Corbred. When Corbred tries to regain the princess, Edenthur by treachery kills him and his

³⁸Hamilton, "Poems," 621-24.

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followers. Edenthur then tries to ravish the princess, and imprisons her when she resists. Her tears induce her jailer to free her. While trying to make her way home she is discovered by the noble Mildred, a Pict chieftain fighting against her fellow Scots. King Edenthur seeks her at Mildred's castle, but Mildred protects her. Subsequently, after the Scots kill Edenthur and capture Mildred, peace ensues and Mildred and Ethelind marry.

The story unites this poem which in form is a frame narrative, told by Randolph, who answers King Bruce's questions about who he is by relating this tale of his ancestors, Mildred and Ethelind. Hamilton creates a dramatic medieval atmosphere, supported by effective imagery, as for example "sheath'd in jointed mail" (p. 623); but the poem contains only the surface level of meaning of its chronicle story. Though cast in heroic style, it comprises a heroic action in miniature rather than a developed epic; but its substance and spirit reach forward to the metrical romances of Sir Walter Scott more than out to contemporary neo-classic epic poetry.

Hamilton attempts little depth of characterization in his episodic romance, and the girl's too-frequent flights from the lustful Edenthur, as well as the extensive closing account of the progeny of Mildred and Ethelind, deprive the story of narrative coherence; nevertheless, in a way in which none of the other heroic narratives are it is rooted firmly in its native soil.

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Milton's cosmic epic stimulated later epic aspirants, of whom John Bulkeley may be taken as representative. His The Last Day³⁹ relates an entirely suprahuman action: God drives Satan off when Satan tries to interfere with God's plan to destroy earth; Elijah tells about Creation, man up to Herod's time, and Christ, together with Paul and several early martyrs; after the angels defeat the devils for possession of earth, the Messiah reigns on earth; God eventually looses Satan to ravage earth; and finally, the dead rise to the final judgment, the damned go to their eternal torment, and the blessed to their glory.

The Last Day is more of a thesis epic than even Blackmore's poems, and it represents a surprising quantity of similar versified theology, most, like Blackmore's Creation, having too little story to be considered as narrative; others, like The Last Day itself, having a story but a story presenting too weak a fictional picture to be of much narrative interest. Bulkeley imitates Milton, but where Milton focuses on Adam and thereby links the cosmic world with the concrete world of man, Bulkeley's sustained abstract perspective offers little vicarious human experience. He tries for a sublime style, as for example:

³⁹John Bulkeley, The Last Day. A Poem. in XII Books, ed. Thomas Purney (London: J. Peele, 1720).

That Day, when golden Trumps awake the Dead
 And the Great Judge display's his Scales aloof,
 When melting Worlds and flaming Orbs augment
 The Wreck of Nature and the Groans of Time,
 I tell. Etheriall Spirit, who enthron'd
 Sit'st upon Pleiades and with thy Skirts
 Hid'st Ophiencus, and Orion huge,
 Rise to mine Aid invok'd! (p. 3)

Unfortunately this grand rhetoric is unconstrained by any principle except the ultimate message of Doomsday: its action is entirely superhuman, its meaning the glory of God. The Last Day exists as an aggregate of theological treatise, religious chronicle, and panegyric to God. It represents perhaps the extreme in didactic idealism; the didactic excess, despite the heroic style, differentiates it from epic or novel.

Though all the poems treated of in this section are cast in heroic style, and though Barcellona and Speech of Randolph comprise potential epic episodes, none of these poems has sufficient scope to be called epic. Nevertheless the poems show the power of the epic mystique of the period, which moved poets to try to apply epic concepts to the diverse ends of biography, panegyric, romance and theology.

6. Summary.

By the time of Dryden's death the epic was regarded as the peak of poetic achievement. Its form was set, its matter agreed upon, its audience determined. It presented

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its challenging form to epic aspirants. But these very factors locked it to a fixed and idealistic pattern at a time when narrative form, subject matter, and audience were all in flux, presenting a plastic, realistic challenge. Those who wished to write long narrative could respond to either of these challenges, or attempt some middle way. In verse most chose to take up the first course. The very choice perhaps indicates that these were poets of lesser power whose narratives must necessarily fail in competition with those written by writers who chose to cope with the reality about them.

Of the twelve narratives considered in this chapter, though many are linked by allusion to the contemporary world, only two, Farquhar's Barcellona and Philips' Bleinheim, use contemporary subject matter; and in both the content functions to panegyric not narrative purpose. The three better narratives, Ellwood's Davideis, Glover's Leonidas, and Wilkie's Epigoniad, reach back to Greek and Hebrew history and legend for subject matter; and of these the two best, Leonidas and The Epigoniad, function almost exclusively to tell their story.

Chronological episodic plots predominate, and function generally to illustrate fixed values. Ellwood and Wilkie try plots in which character changes with experience but on too superficial a level to be convincing. Whereas

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the major fictional prose of the period progresses from the simple chronicle of Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719) to the intricate plot of Fielding's Tom Jones some twenty years later, the major fictional poetry remains static in plot.

Epic devices appear in most of the poems, but generally the poems which are most tolerable reading today use these mechanical appurtenances either unobtrusively or not at all, for example, The Epigoniad, Davideis, and Leonidas. It is noteworthy that the only significant novel of the period which is consciously epic-oriented, Fielding's Joseph Andrews, tends to use epic parallels unobtrusively.

None of these poems attempts an action based on the multi-dimensional meanings, or the temper of the age, as in Spenser, Milton, or Bunyan; on psychological conflict as in Richardson; or on verisimilitude as in Defoe. None attempts the character individualization which begins to appear in the novel about this time. Few emerge out of the masculine past into the increasingly feminine-oriented world of the early eighteenth century. Most, in fact, strive to fulfil the ideal of epic as postulated by Dryden. Though several attain unity, perhaps the most common characteristic of the narrative decline in these poems is the flawed propriety, the lack of a fitting suitability between matter and form. This denies poetic reality. The cause of distortion varies: neo-classic epic norms in Wilkie and Glover;

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didactic purpose or derivative style in Blackmore, Ellwood, Rowe, and Bulkeley; panegyric intent in the remainder. None surmounts the challenge of the inherited form he chose to work with.

The main principle which produces these characteristics is a dissociation of reality. The writers of acclaimed epic poetry of previous periods started from a base of aristocratic heroism but kept all the ingredients in harmonious proportion as they developed their stories. In the epic poetry of the early eighteenth century the poets tend to run to extremes of didacticism, idealized heroism, or of panegyric. Some create plausible worlds in which real evil challenges the hero, but most position their heroes as though, favoured by heaven, they are above the operative power of any real opposing force.

While heroism flourished in fact, or in spirit, such contra-realism represented reality; but in the early eighteenth century the age of personal heroic action faded: in war, artillery and the tactical unit superseded the individual knight-at-arms; and in peace, the man of business and trade superseded the lord and the courtier. When this occurred, narrated exploits based on the old order lost relevance and propriety to life. Thus one of the reasons for the poor narrative quality of the epic of the early

eighteenth century is that it suffered from dissociation of reality which in turn infected its matter and form.

To conclude, the epic poem between 1700 and 1740 neither illustrates, in the manner of epic proper, nor represents, as in the new mode of the novel, a world which is recognizable as related to the empirical world while at the same time displaying a distinct and coherent fictional picture. It purports to be heroic, yet its heroes are either not heroic, or, where they are heroic, are not representative figures of the age. These heroic narratives thus fail in imaginative sufficiency: they do not satisfy even the neo-classic norms to which they were supposedly written. The best heroic narratives of the period are those which least lean on the props of neo-classic method.

CHAPTER III

MOCK-HEROIC NARRATIVE POETRY

The writers of the early eighteenth century, as Reuben A. Brower says of Pope, were indebted to Dryden not only for the neo-classic epic discussed in the previous chapter, but also for the mock-heroic mode.¹ This mode, according to Richmond P. Bond, increased in quantity down to the fifth decade of the eighteenth century, its chief division being the mock-heroic, which in volume exceeded other divisions of burlesque.² The production of a large number of mock-heroic poems in the period does not necessarily imply a corresponding quantity of narrative poetry, for mock didactic epic and other forms of mock-heroic also appeared: nevertheless, the large number of mock-heroic poems listed in Appendix 1 shows that the writers of the period produced a considerable body of this kind of narrative poetry.

Some critics see mock-heroic as antithetical to, some even as derogatory of, heroic: a reaction, Bond says,³

¹Reuben A. Brower, Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion, Oxford Paperbacks (London: Oxford University Press 1968 [1st publ. 1959]), p. 147

²Richmond P. Bond, English Burlesque Poetry 1700-1750 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), pp. 231. 165.

³Ibid., p. 165.

against heroic and in favour of the unheroic subject; a vogue, Tillyard says,⁴ which showed reluctance to tackle heroic itself; the only form, Dobrée says,⁵ in which the age would accept the heroic. J.A.K. Thomson demurs, saying that people generally make fun of what they like and the mock-heroic is therefore a tribute to the heroic.⁶ Its writers, of course, must have assumed an implied reader who would be responsive to such intellectual anatomies of life's absurdities, responsive to a poetry which catered not to a sense of the heroic ideal as in epic, nor to craving for exotic adventure as in romance, nor to the sense of identity in the behaviour and fate of common man as in the novel, but to the sense of incongruity, exaggeration, irony--to the paradox of life.

Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg point out that satire is effective only insofar as it convinces the reader that its caricature more closely represents reality than does

⁴E.M.W. Tillyard, The English Epic and Its Background. A Galaxy Book (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966 [1st publ. 1954]), p. 494.

⁵Bonamy Dobrée, English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 510.

⁶J.A.K. Thomson, The Classical Background of English Literature (New York: Collier Books, 1962 [1st publ. 1948]), pp. 195-96.

the situation which it satirizes.⁷ This applies to mock-heroic: to the degree that a reader finds that the heroic ideal which is being mocked is the truer view, he will reject the mock-picture as being an insignificant view, though he may respond to the wit with which the mockery is contrived; to the degree that a reader is unaware of the heroic world he will not be in a position to respond to the witty incongruity, though the story and its paradoxes, if apparent, may appeal to him. Thus for full effect a mock-heroic narrative poem must appeal as a whole, through the integrity of its vision and design, to a reader who is attuned to heroic tradition, receptive to the mockery of such a tradition, and is also aware of the current actuality presented in contrast in the poem.

Narrative may, of course, appeal primarily because of the witty style, as for example John Lyly's Euphues, or because of plot and character, as for example Henry Fielding's Tom Jones; but such particular emphasis tends to remove the narrative from the category of mock-heroic: too much wit smothers the story, too much vraisemblance snuffs out the contrast between real and ideal. The better mock-heroic attains a balance between

⁷Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 112.

its style and its substance and challenges the reader on several levels at once. The ingenuity with which it seeks for a display of the incongruity in life, on the one hand, and for an imitation of recognizable heroic models, on the other, at once shapes it and characterizes it. Yet its true spirit involves more than just a clever contrast between what is said and the way it is said; for, as Mark Twain comments, "humour must not professedly teach, and it must not professedly preach, but it must do both if it would live forever."⁸

A felicitous combination of such requirements demands creative skill: "It is," William Somervile wrote in 1740, "no easy matter to blend together the Heroe and the Harlequin."⁹ The purpose of this chapter is to assess the principal characteristics of the mock-heroic narrative poetry of the period and to show that in general it fails to endure because it is not well blended, but rather diverges from the norms, as considered above, of good mock-heroic narrative. The chapter focuses first on Alexander Pope's The Rape of the Lock as a poem which best meets these norms,

⁸Quoted by John F. Enck, Elizabeth T. Foster, and Alvin Whitley, eds., The Comic in Theory and Practice (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1960), p. 108.

⁹Quoted by Bond, English Burlesque Poetry, p. vii.

then on examples of those which in various ways depart from them.

1. Pope's The Rape of the Lock.

Pope's The Rape of the Lock¹⁰ stands practically alone as an enduring mock-heroic narrative from this period. Geoffrey Tillotson deems it scarcely a story,¹¹ yet it presents a miniature epic action of arming the hero, journey to the field, fight, treachery and second fight, and divine intercession. James L. Jackson points out the similarity of this five-stage story to contemporary dramatic structure.¹² This gives a structural unity and helps in the expansion of a trivial incident into an extended narrative, but also limits the possible development to the five actions: first, Belinda the spoiled society goddess is "armed" for the "battles" of the day by her maid, while guarded by the diminutive supernatural beings who function as the machinery of the poem; second, Belinda charms her way to court while her lover, the Baron, sacrifices to the goddess Love that

¹⁰Alexander Pope, The Rape of the Lock, and other poems, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson, Vol. II of The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope, gen. ed. John Butt (London: Methuen and Co., 1962).

¹¹Geoffrey Tillotson, Augustan Studies (London: Athlone Press, 1961), p. 134.

¹²James L. Jackson, "Pope's The Rape of the Lock Considered as a Five-Act Epic," PMLA, LXV (1950), pp. 1283-287.

he may win Belinda; third, Belinda wins an epic card battle from the Baron who then suddenly snips off a lock of her hair; fourth, after a psychological struggle portrayed as a journey by one of the evil spirits to the underworld of Belinda's mind for winds of discord, Belinda reacts with unbecoming vindictiveness and a battle of the sexes follows: five, the Baron surrenders when threatened with a pin, but cannot restore the lock of hair because it has become a star in the heavens.

The unifying principle of The Rape of the Lock is the true burlesque spirit of contrast between heroic model and its trivial reflection. This shapes every facet of the poem, from the couplet style, as in:

Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade.
And she who scorns a Man, must die a Maid; (V. 27-28)

where the wry humour jostles the sombre truth, to the anti-heroic, feminine protagonist whose smiles charm her minute world: "Belinda smil'd, and all the World was gay" (II. 52). This principle informs the action, which moves by means of a succession of what Brower calls "little scenes of 'historic painting' that are the exact complements of the grander pictures of Pope's Iliad."¹³ The action proceeds as well through epic parallels, not only in its principal episodes, and its full display of epic devices, from invocation to divine intercession, but also obliquely, for example

¹³Brower, Pope: The Poetry of Allusion, p. 155.

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in the language of combat, as in "assault" (I. 8), "Militia" (I. 42), "guard with Arms" (II. 90), "War" (III. 47); and in echoes of epic oratory, as in Clarissa's speech which parodies that of Sarpedon in the Iliad:

[Sarpedon] Glaucus, why in Lycia do we receive especial honour. . . . Why are the choicest portions served us . . . why do men look up to us. . . . If, when we were once out of this fight, we could escape old age and death . . . I should neither press forward myself nor bid you do so.¹⁴

[Clarissa] Say, why are Beauties prais'd and honour'd most,
The wise Man's Passion, and the vain Man's Toast?
Why deck'd with all that Land and Sea afford,
Why Angels call'd, and Angel-like ador'd?

Oh! if to dance all Night, and dress all Day,
Charm'd the Small-pox, or chas'd old Age away;
Who would not scorn what Huswife's Cares produce,
Or who would learn one earthly Thing of Use?
(V. 9-22)

Perhaps the epic parallel shows most of all in what J.S. Cunningham calls the "switches in and out of the epic world and the heroic style" which run throughout the poem, including "many lines which would not look out of place in true epic,"¹⁵ as for example:

With beating Hearts the dire Event they wait,
Anxious, and trembling for the Birth of Fate.
(II. 141-42)

¹⁴Homer, The Iliad of Homer, trans. Samuel Butler, Great Books of the Western World, No. 4 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1960), p. 85.

¹⁵J.S. Cunningham, Pope: The Rape of the Lock, Studies in English Literature, No. 2 (London: Edward Arnold, 1961), pp. 19-20.

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Pope thus roots his story firmly in classical soil, from which it produces its brilliant topical blossoms.

Pope also roots his poem in the real world. Its setting in the court world of his own day deals with only a minute segment of society, showing a series of trivial events of idle people in a frivolous social milieu; but the setting carries the conviction of actuality; and the poem leaves the impression that it truly represents the minute world it portrays. Action and setting coalesce into a credible non-heroic place and time, which the heroic connotations put into ironic perspective. Pope also ties his private world of fantasy to the public actual world so that three dimensions appear; heroic ideal, heroic mimic, and the underlying reality of the London world implied by lines such as:

There stands a Structure of Majestick Frame,
Which from the neighb'ring Hampton takes its Name.
Here Britain's Statesmen oft the Fall foredoom
Of foreign Tyrants, (III. 3-6)

The hungry Judges soon the Sentence sign,
And Wretches hang that Jury-men may Dine;
The Merchant from th' Exchange returns in Peace,
(III. 21-24)

The burlesque principle ties Pope's poem to concrete reality but also informs it as a mock form of the apocalyptic epic, the epic which, in Northrop Frye's terms, progresses to complete a cycle, progresses towards a synthesized vision of the cultural milieu, towards a divine vision "of the whole

of life."¹⁶ The Rape of the Lock does this for its social world, and by implication, since in the aristocratic concept the aristocracy stands for its whole world, does this for the world of Pope's England.

As a progress poem The Rape of the Lock exhibits the three aspects of mock-heroic: ideal, mockery of ideal, and real. The real progress is from illusion to the actual. Canto I deals with a dream state; sleeping or waking Belinda subsists in the cocoon of her selfhood, of a self-absorption into which only the intimidations of subconscious inhibitions penetrate from the actual world beyond: "Beware of all, but most beware of Man" (I. 114). Canto II progresses to the Belinda still in the cocoon of self-absorption but now in society, where it requires cohorts of Sylphs to maintain her untouched independence. Canto III shows the impossibility of continuous detachment from mankind because of the irresistible reality of naked force: "The conq'ring Force" (III. 178) of reality. Canto IV displays the psychological reaction to the breakdown of the inviolability of commitment to self: Belinda exhibits successively "Ill-nature" (IV. 27); "Affectation" (IV. 31); wounded pride, "the horrid things they say" (IV. 108); and self-pity, "ah ten times happy,

¹⁶Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake (Boston: Beacon Press, 1947), pp. 110-11, 316, 323, 340, 405.

had I been, / If Hampton-Court these Eyes had never seen!" (IV. 150). Canto V progresses to the reality of a cosmos where all these attitudes may be resolved by the harmony of common sense; it shows the rationalization of Clarissa's speech:

How vain are all these Glories, all our Pains,
Unless good Sense preserve what Beauty gains:
(V. 15-16)

the anger of Thalestris's: "To Arms, to Arms! the fierce Virago cries" (V. 37); and the recognition by all the characters that with contention "all the Prize is lost!" (V. 108). Then the final transformation of the cause of contention into a cause of harmony occurs, as the "raped" lock is transmuted into a star. The progress is thus from self-absorption to social awareness, from Belinda externalized as a human "Shock," to Belinda as cynosure and sexual object, then to Belinda as an object of human love ("All that I dread," the Baron says, "is leaving you" (V. 100), and finally to Belinda as symbol of harmony at cosmic level.

This progress has many parallels. The poem progresses from morning to night, from the sunrise to night and stars; but the sun rises in Canto I to Belinda's world of illusion, in Canto II merges with Belinda (while she is still in her world of illusion) as sun goddess. Meanwhile, as the sun declines the reality of unlit man emerges and all but extinguishes the sun goddess. This finally resolves

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in the middle way of the starlit night in which the sun goddess becomes a star beacon.

Each of the five cantos, moreover, early in its development, shows authorial non-burlesque comment, as though to stress that the real world is primary, for example:

Some secret Truths from Learned Pride conceal'd,
To Maids alone and Children are reveal'd:
What tho' no Credit doubting Wits may give?
The Fair and Innocent shall still believe. (I. 37-40)

Love in these Labyrinths his Slaves detains,
And mighty Hearts are held in slender Chains.
(II. 23-24)

The Sun obliquely shoots his burning Ray;
The hungry Judges soon the Sentence sign,
And Wretches hang that Jury-men may Dine;
The Merchant from th' Exchange returns in Peace,
(III. 20-23)

The Fair-ones feel such Maladies as these,
When each new Night-Dress gives a new Disease.
(IV. 37-38)

Say, why are Beauties prais'd and honour'd most,
The wise Man's Passion, and the vain Man's Toast?
Why deck'd with all that Land and Sea afford,
Why Angels call'd, and Angel-like ador'd?
Why round our Coaches crowd the white-glov'd Beaus,
Why bows the Side-box from its inmost Rows?
How vain are all these Glories, all our Pains,
Unless good Sense preserve what Beauty gains:
(V. 9-16)

This movement climaxes in Canto III with the assertion of the bitter threat inherent in selfish aims:

But when to Mischief Mortals bend their Will,
How soon they find fit Instruments of Ill!
(III. 125-26)

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What Time wou'd spare, from Steel receives its date,
 And Monuments, like Men, submit to Fate!
 Steel cou'd the Labour of the Gods destroy,
 And strike to Dust th' Imperial Tow'rs of Troy;
 Steel cou'd the Works of mortal Pride confound,
 And hew Triumphal Arches to the Ground.
 What Wonder then, fair Nymph! thy Hairs shou'd feel
 The conqu'ring Force of unresisted Steel?
 (III. 171-78)

The movement closes in Canto V with the counterpoise of reason and sense:

What then remains, but well our Pow'r to use,
 And keep good Humour still whate'er we lose?
 (V. 29-30)

The progress from selfish, to social, and finally to cosmic, sensibility emerges even in the characters presented, canto by canto. Canto I shows really only Belinda, Canto II both Belinda and the Baron, Canto III adds Clarissa to make three, Canto IV adds Thalestris and Sir Plume, and Canto V displays all the characters interacting.

The progress moves as well at mock-heroic level, but tends also to move from an opening mockery to a closing seriousness. For example, the progress of the idea of war begins with the parade of toy soldiers implicit in "Files of Pins extend their shining Rows" (I. 137). It moves to the sexual manoeuvres of the card game in which "Troops, a shining Train, / Draw forth to Combat on the Velvet Plain" (III. 43-44), and "The Knave . . . wins . . . the Queen of Hearts" (III. 87-88), and to the sexual attack:

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The meeting Points the sacred Hair dissever
 From the fair Head, for ever and for ever!
 (III. 153-54)

The psychological battle of Canto IV follows and, finally, in Canto V the "war" expands into a social mêlée of the sexes, which Heaven resolves.

Similarly, the poem opens with the mock-heroic minute particulars of the boudoir: "Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux" (I. 137). In Canto II men and women usurp attention: "ev'ry Eye was fix'd on her alone" (II. 6). Canto III expands into a world where "Heroes and the Nymphs resort" (III. 9) with "the British Queen" (III. 13), a world also of the middle class of trade: "Indian Screen" (III. 14), "Judges" (III. 21), "Merchant" (III. 23). It is also a world of sexual interaction motivated by coquetry which, once begun, is irreversible in its effect: "dissever . . . for ever and for ever" (III. 153-54). Canto IV expands into the psychological nature of man, into the "anxious Cares" (IV. 1), "secret Passions" (IV. 2), and "Grief" (IV. 143). Canto V moves on to the cosmic level of "the Shining Sphere" (V. 142). The poem thus progresses from things, to individuals, to man externalized, to man internalized, and to man in cosmic perspective.

Pope thus intertwines through a series of progressions: first, the heroic ideal, for example, Belinda as sun goddess; second, the mockery of the ideal, Belinda, for

example, as petulant coquette; and, third, the real, for example, the concept of heavenly harmony ("mid'st the Stars inscribe Belinda's Name!" (V. 150). Yet he presents these in such an exquisite balance, and shared brilliance of wit, that none outweighs or outsparkles the others.

Pope's characters are representative of the fops and belles of his mimic-heroic world but, through the psychological function of the supernatural machinery, representative as well of men and women in general. Belinda, the focal figure, herself progresses. The Belinda of Canto I has the pristine innocence of a maid, whose instincts warn her to keep aloof from men. Wrapped up in herself, she is a mock-Achilles, all dazzle and glory but with a vulnerable point: her heroic veneer will crack into vexation, spite, and petulance at the touch of the scissors of reality. She performs the "Rites of Pride" (I. 128) yet she is "Sweetness void of Pride" (II. 15), a coquette yet innocent: "favours to none, to all she Smiles extends" (II. 11). In Canto II she is all innocent in her illusory world, "Belinda smil'd, and all the World was gay" (II. 52). She displays the innocence of Mary:

On her white Breast a sparkling Cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and Infidels adore. (II. 8-9)

and the naiveté of Eve, unaware of the social reality in which she moves:

Th' Adventrous Baron the bright Locks admir'd,
 He saw, he wish'd, and to the Prize aspir'd:
 Resolv'd to win, he meditates the way,
 By Force to ravish, or by Fraud betray;
 For when Success a Lover's Toil attends,
 Few ask, if Fraud or Force attain'd his Ends.
 (II. 29-34)

In Canto III, motivated by coquetry, "whom Thirst of Fame invites" (III. 25), she deviates from sexual impartiality and:

Burns to encounter two adventurous Knights,
 At Ombre singly to decide their Doom;
 And swells her Breast with Conquests yet to come.
 (III. 26-28)

Her provocative advance leads to near panic as she realizes the possible consequences: "She sees, and trembles at th' approaching Ill" (III. 91); but having emerged unscathed she rejoices with girlish glee, and "exulting" (III. 98) passes back to the innocence and protection of the social whirl. However, having once transgressed she is not unscathed. She wishes to turn back from this brush with sexual reality to her illusory world without any repercussion but finds that she cannot, for "an earthly Lover" is now "lurking at her Heart" (III. 144). In Canto IV the Baron claims a false victory, "While the Fops envy, and the Ladies stare" (IV. 104), which is more real than a true one would have been: with all Belinda's "Honour in a whisper lost" (IV. 110), for her companions it would "be Infamy to seem" her friend (IV. 112). Belinda wishes her rape were true and private rather than public and false:

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Oh hadst thou, Cruel! been content to seize
 Hairs less in sight, or any Hairs but these!
 (IV. 175-76)

Finally, in Canto V, she sees that she must adjust sensibly to the situation. With the recognition that "So Heav'n decrees! with Heav'n who can contest?" (V. 112), she accepts her lot and does not carry out her threat to destroy whatever the Baron had left unsullied: "My hands shall rend what ev'n thy Rapine spares" (IV. 168).

Her antagonist himself progresses, briefly though he appears. In Canto II he is pictured as ruthless and determined: "Resolv'd to win . . . By Force to ravish, or by Fraud betray" (II. 31-32), interested in Belinda as a sexual object to be conquered and boasted of. Beaten at the game of sexual manoeuvre in Canto III, he resorts to force and fraud and flaunts his victory publicly without remorse or consideration, though his verbal courage collapses at the threat of a pin. However, by Canto V he seems, like Belinda, ironically committed despite himself: "All that I dread," he says, thinking of death, "is leaving you behind" (V. 100). Pope does not clarify whether the Baron's statement is wit or true love. If wit, then, by Canto V he has shown the Baron as defeated both in his aim of actually gaining Belinda, and in his false claim to have done so.

Pope sketches the other characters even more lightly than he does the Baron. The choral counsels of Thalestris

and Clarissa deftly amplify the few characters actually introduced. Each of Pope's characters serves in a specific way to help point the moral of the poem: that reason and grace, not spite and violence, bind the social fabric, that a heroic issue should not be made out of a non-heroic incident. The characters also show the paradox of man. As shown above, Belinda the paragon would accept the "rape" if it were not socially evident. The Baron, if he cannot win by fair means, has no qualms about foul ones. Clarissa counsels restraint but voices also the expedient that "she who scorns a Man, must die a Maid" (V. 28). Thalestris counsels violence but to save appearances, not virtue:

Gods! shall the Ravisher display your Hair,
While the Fops envy, and the Ladies stare!
Honour forbid! at whose unrival'd Shrine
Ease, Pleasure, Virtue, All, our Sex resign.
(IV. 103-106)

The sylphide machinery particularizes Pope's sham world: Ariel and Umbriel and their respective hosts dance impatient attendance on people whose ~~decisive~~ acts they cannot directly provoke or prevent but whose self-centered natures they well represent, for these diminutive beings externalize only selfish motives. The chief supernatural power in the poem, that which magically transforms the lock into a star, acts in an opposite direction, towards social motivation. This power comes, however, at the end of the poem as a previously unprepared-for deus ex machina. Pope's

anti-heroic sylphs thus stand in contrast not only to their heroic counterparts but also to an actual if unspecified real supernatural power.

Pope's mock-heroic has thus a multi-dimensional significance. On one level it chastizes those who make much ado about nothing; on another it satirizes those who value honour over virtue; while on yet another it illustrates that it is the nature of man to take what he wants by whatever means and without regard for the virtue of his prey, that even those with real virtue may fall prey. Beyond this again it suggests the operation of some redressing agency watching over and interested in human affairs, and the progress of man from the chaos of self interest and of order on the scale of personal pettiness, exemplified by Belinda in her boudoir, to social harmony and order on the scale of cosmic concord.

To achieve this significance Pope works masterfully with the mock-heroic form, exploiting to the full by means of a mock fictional world not only the contrast of heroic with real but also the ironic voice which comments directly but remains aloof, reporting an unfolding action which he and the reader jointly share, in emotional detachment from its participants. In Brower's words, "Pope's Spectator tone, as Sherburn calls it, makes possible a personal moral seriousness rare in Dryden. . . . Through poetic laughter, Pope is everywhere urging his readers to view these

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'Follies' with the necessary distance, moral and aesthetic."¹⁷ A comic narrative whose story begins to absorb the reader so that he moves emotionally into its fictional world may rise into the broader vistas of humour but can hardly function as burlesque; for the reader, once he becomes involved with the characters, is no longer in a position to see them and their world dispassionately in the perspective of the actual world. Pope sets his world in a diminutive scale which detaches it from the reader, who can therefore see the characters not as they see themselves but as they, in all frankness, really are. Pope's distancing devices, such as epic parallel, couplet antithesis, rhetorical brilliance, and static characters, facilitate this point of view, so that the poem exists as spectacle, not as experience.

The Rape of the Lock as a story seems simple, even trivial. The narrative transition in the introduction of the card game seems perfunctory for Pope does not reveal until the game is half over that the Baron is one of Belinda's opponents. Also the conclusion seems narratively unsatisfactory: are Belinda and the Baron mated? Yet the immediate effect of the first few lines is that of satiric wit and delicate irony; by the end of Canto I the reader is caught by suspense and sparkle of style; and by the

¹⁷Brower, Pope; The Poetry of Allusion, p. 146.

conclusion becomes aware of a pulsing vitality and moral relevance.

This mock-heroic endures where none of the serious heroic narratives discussed in Chapter II continues to appeal to readers. Perhaps the principal cause for the viability of Pope's poem is that it meets so many of the criteria of mock-heroic: it is what it purports to be. The catalyst of burlesque spirit shapes the incongruous mixture of the heroic and the trivial into a unity which is both a witty and a significant statement. Its textual brilliance and persiflage, together with its imaginative versatility, poetic intensity, and sparkle of wit, fascinate the reader. At the same time, the heroic parallels, the story of Belinda's "rape," and the underlying ethical base together are making an equivalent appeal.

2. Other Mock-Heroic Narrative Poems.

As Ronald Paulson points out, Pope's The Dunciad¹⁸ "parodied not the epic structure but the epic paraphernalia, the actions and conventions of . . . the Aeneid [are] invoked to suggest the ideal in the past by which Pope judges

¹⁸Pope, The Dunciad, 3rd ed. rev., ed. James Sutherland, Vol. V of The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope, gen. ed. John Butt (London: Methuen and Co., 1963 [1st publ. 1943]).

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the present."¹⁹ The structure of The Dunciad is simple. A goddess carries off the hero, Bayes, and anoints him King of Dulness. At the coronation games, during a contest to determine which critics can stay awake during a poetry reading, everyone succumbs to slumber. The goddess transports the sleeping Bayes to Hades where he sees a vision of the past and future glories of the Empire of Dulness. Finally, the Empire of Dulness triumphs, spreading over science and university, until night and chaos prevail.

As in The Rape of the Lock Pope unifies this action by the principle of burlesque, but he tends to split the principle into two: one burlesque, one literary satire. The second, as in Pope's model, Dryden's MacFlecknoe, tends to turn the poem into a succession of sallies against its literary targets, for example:

She saw old Pryn in Restless David shine,
And Eusden eke out Blackmore's endless line.
She saw slow Philips creep like Tate's poor page,
And all the mighty Mad in Dennis rage. (l. 103-106)

This split principle reduces the narrative effectiveness of The Dunciad.

Assessments of the narrative effectiveness of the poem vary. Ian Jack says that the coronation, the heroic games, and the vision, which essentially constitute the

¹⁹Ronald Paulson, The Fictions of Satire (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), p. 6.

action, "are not connected in any satisfactory way."²⁰ Tillotson asserts that the poem reads well enough as a story if not read too quickly.²¹ Alvin B. Kernan holds that though the poem has no "tight cause-and-effect linkage between the four major scenes of the book" yet, he adds, this very looseness of plot "is a crucial part of the definition of the 'action' of dullness" and its manner of encroachment.²² In a sense all these views are right. As Paulson and Aubrey L. Williams well demonstrate The Dunciad has a progressive action;²³ yet the extensive satiric asides, many of which lean for comprehension on the equally extensive mock notation, hobble the narrative momentum. As James Sutherland comments, "in no other of his poems does Pope expect quite so much private knowledge from his readers."²⁴ Perhaps Paulson best sums up the narrative insufficiency of the poem:

²⁰Ian Jack, Augustan Satire: Intention and Idiom in English Poetry 1660-1750, Oxford Paperbacks (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 117.

²¹Tillotson, Augustan Studies, p. 134.

²²Alvin B. Kernan, The Plot of Satire (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 112.

²³Paulson, The Fictions of Satire; Aubrey L. Williams, Pope's Dunciad: A Study of Its Meaning (London: Methuen and Co., 1955). These authors, especially Williams, show The Dunciad as a progress from order to chaos.

²⁴James Sutherland, English Satire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 61.

"It is only with the greatest difficulty that the reader makes out the action or plot of The Dunciad Book I, and when he has discovered the plot of all four books, it is still the elaboration, the couplet and all it contains, that projects Pope's satire."²⁵

In Books I and II the story of The Dunciad is at least accessible and enlivened by passages such as:

Fear held them mute. Alone, untaught to fear.
 Stood dauntless Curl; "Behold that rival here!
 The race by vigour, not by vaunts is won;
 So take the hindmost, Hell."--He said, and run.
 Swift as a bard the bailiff leaves behind.
 He left huge Lintot, and out-strip'd the wind.
 As when a dab-chick waddles thro' the copse
 On feet and wings, and flies, and wades, and hops;
 So lab'ring on, with shoulders, hands, and head.
 Wide as a wind-mill all his figures spread,
 With arms expanded Bernard rows his state,
 And left-legg'd Jacob seems to emulate. (II. 57-60)

The echo of Paradise Lost in "flies, and wades, and hops" adds, of course, to the humour.

In Books III and IV, consistent with the sombre progression towards chaos, the action becomes diffuse and hard to follow. Moreover, the total effect of The Dunciad does not, as it does in The Rape of the Lock, emerge primarily from the story. It leans heavily not only on the annotation but also on the reader's knowledge of the actual works of the many minor writers referred to, most of which are inaccessible. A term, for example, such as "Blackmore's endless line" (I. 104) has little connotative thrust unless

²⁵Paulson. The Fictions of Satire. pp. 220-24.

the reader knows from a poem such as Eliza that what Pope says is true and in what sense it is true.

Another reason why The Dunciad makes dull fiction is that here Pope does not, as he so vividly does in The Rape of the Lock, adequately dramatize the objects of his satire. Belinda vibrates before us; Bayes only nods. Bayes, of course, conforms with his role; but, as Brower notes, Bayes and the other satiric targets are scarcely "'present' in the poetry"; and, although the story apes the epic, the heroic situations "arise suddenly to be used solely as occasions for satirical announcements and prophecies."²⁶ In The Rape of the Lock, on the other hand, the prime satire arises from what the prime characters do: where The Dunciad verbalizes, The Rape of the Lock dramatizes.

Nevertheless, The Dunciad presents the mock-heroic triangle: the epic substructure, from opening statement of epic purpose, to concluding cyclical completion as "Universal Darkness buries all" (V. 656); the fictional world of Dulness; and the relevance to the actual world in lines such as:

This labour past, by Bridewell all descend,
(As morning pray'r, and flagellation end)
To where Fleet-ditch with disemboing streams
Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames,
(II. 269-72)

²⁶Brower, Pope: The Poetry of Allusion, pp. 335, 345.

Though these three parts of the mock-heroic do not pull together towards a narrative effect, they do pull together towards the satiric end which yokes them. As mock-heroic narrative, The Dunciad suffers from the overpowering intellectual pressure of its sustained absurdities. Brower aptly calls it "an epic fantasia," "an epic of the mind."²⁷ The Dunciad demonstrates the "real" of the mock-heroic triangle taking over the "mock," with the "ideal" too obtuse to come readily to the support of the mock.

Samuel Garth, in The Dispensary. A Poem in Six Cantos,²⁸ like Pope in The Rape of the Lock, makes a mock-heroic poem about a topical controversy: Garth ridicules the opposition of London apothecaries to the supply of medicines to out-patients' dispensaries. The simple plot moves swiftly. The God of Sloth, perturbed that philanthropists are giving free medical care to the poor, asks help from Envy who, disguised as an apothecary, appeals to Doctor Horoscope, saying:

Our manufactures now they sell,
And their true value treacherously tell; (p. 434)

²⁷Ibid., pp. 342-43.

²⁸Samuel Garth, "The Poems of Samuel Garth," Works of the English Poets, IX, 431-46.

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Horoscope calls a war counsel, then flies to ask the advice of Fortune, who recommends battle. Health soon stops the fight and directs the aggressors to Hades for sounder guidance, from Lord Harvey:

Your wounds he'll close, and sovereignly restore
Your science to the height it had before. (p. 445)

Where Pope, dealing with the lightest of topics, particularizes his characters and setting, Garth, dealing with a more socially serious subject, uses allegorical characters and abstract setting which reduces the contrast and incongruity between the heroic and the actual, and the dramatic tension of his story. Like Pope, he uses a simple chronological plot; but, whereas Pope's culminates in a rising note, of moral significance, Garth's ends in farce. As a dramatic sequence, then, Garth's story limps. He vivifies the battle, but elsewhere his allegorical characters lack interest. Also, where Pope uses time functionally (Belinda the sun-goddess shining as the day waxes but dimming as it declines in the single day of his action), Garth spreads his story over three days, for no apparent purpose.

Like Pope, Garth interpolates social comment:

Not far from that most celebrated place, [Old Bailey]
Where angry Justice shows her awful face;
Where little villains must submit to fate,
That great ones may enjoy the world in state; (p. 431)

How sleek their looks, how goodly is their mien,
When big they strut behind a double chin! [clergymen]
(p. 432)

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But where Pope's comment on legal injustice serves to put his mock world in the perspective of actuality, Garth's comments, like Sir Richard Blackmore's moral precepts, serve more as didactic asides, with little organic relevance to his theme of avarice versus compassion.

Where Pope's style so well suits his substance, Garth's is less consistent. Some of the epic devices contribute to the action, as for example the invocation, the statement of epic purpose, the beginning in medias res, but others such as the counsel of war, the aerial voyage, and the journey to Hades, do not. The dissociation of these elements from the plot suggests that Garth incorporates epic devices regardless of appropriateness, just as he structures his story to span a specified three days, and organizes it into six cantos, for no apparent reason. Also, the final referral of the dispute to Harvey, and a closing panegyric on the monarch, mar the burlesque. Even the versification impedes the narrative. George Saintsbury praises its smoothness but points out that in Garth the balanced epithets of the couplet form lead to padding:²⁹

²⁹George Saintsbury, "Lesser Verse Writers," The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. IX: From Steele and Addison to Pope and Swift, ed. Sir A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller (London: Cambridge University Press, 1932), p. 180.

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With ~~breathing~~ fire his pitchy nostrils blow,
 As from his sides he shakes the ~~fleeey~~ snow.
 Around his ~~heary~~ prince from wat'ry beds
 His subject islands raise their ~~verdant~~ heads.³⁰

The Dispensary exhibits other narrative defects. As Dobrée points out, it is "too long, too elaborate . . . disproportionate to its purpose."³¹ Interpolations, such as an attack on the poetry of Blackmore which includes 14 lines cited verbatim from Prince Arthur and King Arthur, flaw its coherence. Yet, most serious from the point of view of narrative, the lack of an aesthetically satisfying resolution to the opening conflict destroys any narrative consistency; as a story it remains open ended. Form thus overbalances content in the poem.

In its day The Dispensary was immensely popular, with four editions appearing within the first year of its publication. Few today would find it tolerable reading, and one cause would be its formal speeches, which comprise a good third of the poem. This need not necessarily flaw narrative; Pope, for example, puts over a third of The Rape of the Lock into speech; but where Pope's speeches help advance plot, expand character, create setting, or amplify theme, Garth's are often oblique to both story and theme:

³⁰Cited by George Saintsbury, Historical Manual of English Prosody (London: Macmillan and Co., 1910), p. 85.

³¹Dobrée, English Literature in the Eighteenth Century, p. 129.

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Fortune's response to Horoscope's request for help, for example, is to lecture him on poetics:

Then dare not, for the future, once rehearse
 The dissonance of such untuneful verse;
 But in your lines let energy be found,
 And learn to rise in sense and sink in sound.
 (pp. 438-39)

Moreover, where Pope between his speeches speeds with action, Garth crawls: Pope, for instance, takes only 12 lines to introduce his story, and makes even these few contribute towards it; Garth takes almost a hundred lines on psychology to lead into his story; and these, if relevant to his title, are all as tedious to read as the following sample:

Now she unfolds the faint and dawning strife
 Of infant atoms kindling into life;
 How ductile matter new meanders takes,
 And slender trains of twisting fibres makes;
 And how the viscous seeks a closer tone,
 By just degrees to harden into bone;
 While the more loose flow from the vital urn,
 And in full tides of purple streams return;
 How lambent flames from life's bright lamps arise,
 And dart in emanations through the eyes;
 How from each sluice a gentle torrent pours,
 To slake a feverish heat with ambient showers;
 Whence their mechanic powers the spirits claim;
 How great their force, how delicate their frame;
 How the same nerves are fashioned to sustain
 The greatest pleasure and the greatest pain;
 Why bilious juice a golden light puts on,
 And floods of chyle in silver currents run;
 How the dim speck of entity began
 To extend its recent form, and stretch to man;
 (p. 431)

Form such as this, common to so many narrative poems of this period, checks the flow of action and impedes the dramatic intensity so that despite variety of incident and

witty humour the poem drags as narrative. Critics charge it with excess topicality: so much so, George Sherburn says, that it is unreadable;³² doubly dull, Bond says, "because of the forgotten background and the large amount of personal reference."³³ But it also constitutes poor reading because it is poor mock-heroic: it does not have an integrity of vision, design, and execution which presents a pattern wherein the incongruous relationships among heroic, fictional, and actual worlds provoke intellectual mirth.

William King, in his very short mock-heroic The Furmetary; a Very Innocent and Harmless Poem, in Three Cantos,³⁴ treats with some likeness to Garth's Dispensary a contemporary social problem concerning a furmetary, a stall at which worthy persons dispensed furmetary--a sort of porridge made of wheat--to the poor at philanthropic rates. King says in the Preface that he "thought this a very proper subject for an heroic poem", but nevertheless he does not imitate the epic except in the brief battle scene in the final canto. Most of the remainder of the poem comprises

³²George Sherburn, "The Restoration and Eighteenth Century," A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), p. 899.

³³Bond, English Burlesque Poetry, p. 158.

³⁴William King, "The Poems of William King," Works of the English Poets, IX, 281-83.

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either long formal speech or description.

The story is simple. Hunger asks Famine for help because:

. . . that which makes my projects all miscarry,
Is this inhuman, fatal, Furmetary.
Not far from hence, just by the Bridge of Fleet,
With spoons and porringers, and napkins neat,
A faithless syren does entice the sense,
By fumes of viands, which she does dispense
To mortal stomachs, for rewarding pence;
Whilst each man's earliest thoughts would banish me,
Who have no other oracle but thee. (p. 282)

Famine tells Hunger to round up the coffee-house grandees and overthrow the furmetary:

This said, she quickly vanish'd in a wind
Had long within her body been confin'd.
Thus Hercules, when he his mistress found,
Soon knew her by her scent, and by her sound. (p. 282)

Syrena wins the ensuing battle, which is fought in heroic style, but with ladles and pots for weapons, and "Plenty soon dispers'd the meagre rout" (p. 283).

King says in the Preface that he wrote the poem "to please a gentleman who thought nothing smooth or lofty could be written upon a mean subject." The subsequent mock-serious tone, and the indelicate overtones of passages such as the last cited above, make the Preface a delightfully ironic introduction.

King writes with a less delicate humour than Pope's incomparable innuendo, and with more slap-stick humour than Garth. He uses allegorical characters to extremes, as for

example a parade of the entire alphabet to signify coffee-house habitues: "A does on venison feed, / And bread and butter is for B decreed . . . " (p. 282); but while this exercise of wit serves satiric ends it also diverts the burlesque action. King fails to grace his poem with Pope's sparkle of wit as in The Rape of the Lock; King's couplets plod, for example:

Hunger rejoic'd to hear the blest command,
That Furmetary should no longer stand;
With speed he to Coffedro's mansion flies,
And bids the pale-fac'd mortal quickly rise.
"Arise, my friend!" for upon thee do wait
Dismal events and prodigies of Fate!
"Tis break of day, thy sooty broth prepare,
And all thy other liquors for a war: (p. 282)

Here the couplet form adds nothing to the sense; the passage might just as well be in prose or blank verse; moreover, the close repetition of "rise" and "arise" is clumsy, and the faltering rhythm of the last part of line five does not put the stress on "thee" where it properly belongs.

The Furmetary is more a satiric farce than a mock-heroic. King says in his Preface: "I write upon a case not treated of by the ancients. . . . I stand upon my own legs." He then introduces a non-heroic cast in what by the third canto becomes a mock-heroic action; but neither characters nor action properly fuse into the mock-heroic triangle of fictional world, actual world, and heroic world, each tugging at the incongruity of the others. Nor does King maintain

the ironic tone which so well serves in The Rape of the Lock to keep author and reader in amused detachment from the fictional world of the poem; for almost the whole of Canto I reflects the sombre mood of the following lines:

Near is a place enclos'd with iron-bars,
Where many mortals curse their cruel stars,
When brought by usurers into distress,
For having little still must live on less: (p. 281)

whereas Canto II shifts to humorous allegory and coarse wit, Canto III to farcial heroic battle. King's poem is thus more a satiric poem than a mock-heroic and has little appeal as either story or wit.

Thomas Purney, in The Chevalier de St. George; an Heroi-Comick Poem in Six Cantos,³⁵ provides an example of mock-earnest treatment of a topical politico-military subject. Purney relates a fictitious account of the attempt by Prince Charles to raise a rebellion in Scotland in 1715. The story comprises three main actions: first, at the bidding of the Genius of Britain, Morpheus troubles the Chevalier in Scotland with foreboding dreams, and Merlin conjures up the ghost of the Chevalier's father, who predicts the failure of the rebellion; second, the Chevalier announces that he is returning to France, his followers accuse him of cowardice, Baalzebub in the ensuing fracas fires the building, and the

³⁵Thomas Purney, The Works of Thomas Purney, ed. H.O. White, The Percy Reprints, No. XII (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1933), pp. 94-99. [White abridges the poem.]

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ladies rescue the Chevalier; third, Baalzebub brings the ghost of Louis XIV from Hades to forestall the Chevalier's flight, but to no avail.

Purney's poem is largely farce. He catches something of Pope's rococo feminine world, as in the periphrastic diction and the imagery of the world of fine manners in the following description of a tea table:

By the pallid Fire,
 Lofty a Toilet stood, with glasses strow'd,
 In India's precious Clay figural proud:
 The decent Range and Discipline so nice,
 Spoke the fair Hand and told her rich Device;
 Here Egypt's Cane Empith'd to Pleasure doom'd,
 There Lady-lov'd the Indian Weed perfum'd:
 When Morn awakes with golden Smiles 'tis grac'd;
 Then Circling Nymphs in shining Rings are plac'd;
 Their gentle Hearts are soft as wailing Dove,
 They talk of Scandal while They think of Love.
 (p. 95)

Purney also shows, as may be seen in the passage above, a disportive tone, unusual syntax, and a touch of romantic imagery; but he lacks Pope's epigrammatic wit of expression and nice balance of the serious against the humorous in structure. In Purney's poem the style becomes the end; neither characters nor action have intrinsic appeal; nor, through the delicate magic of mock-heroic technique, do they achieve a vicarious appeal by reflecting either the heroic or the actual world in an imaginative or intellectually stimulating way. As effective mock-heroic treatment of political rebellion The Chevalier marks a decided decline from Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel.

Many of the poems in Appendix 1 do not fit neatly into the schema of heroic, mock-heroic, and metrical tale or fable on which this study is organized. John Gay's The Fan. A Poem in Three Books³⁶ represents these marginal types. His poem begins with an invocation to the Muse, includes an appeal by the hero to Venus for help, but has little else "heroic" about it, and could perhaps be as well considered as a mock-serious pastoral with some mythological machinery. However, as Bond points out, The Fan is seminal for many heroi-comical poems in which Venus's role probably derives more from Gay than from Pope.³⁷

The poem tells how Strephon, unsuccessful in his pursuit of the disdainful Corinna, asks Venus for help. Venus has Cupid make a fan and paint on it scenes which show the results of selfishness: of Niobe's pride, Procris' jealousy, Camilla's avarice, and Narcissus' self-infatuation. Venus gives the fan to Strephon who gives it in turn to Corinna. Corinna has meanwhile become enamoured of Leander, but when she sees the fan she marries Strephon.

Gay apparently intended the poem more as a means of presenting stories of mythology than as the unfolding of an

³⁶John Gay, The Poetical Works of John Gay, ed. G.C. Faber (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), pp. 3-26.

³⁷Bond, English Burlesque Poetry. pp. 160-61.

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action, for verbal painting of the pictures proposed for the fan and of supernatural beings almost eclipses Strephon and Corinna.

Gay's stock diction moves with witty narrative ease:

[Strephon] now call'd more pow'rful presents to his
aid,
And to seduce the mistress, brib'd the maid;
(I. 45-46)

But still unmov'd remains the scornful dame,
Insults her captive, and derides his flame.
(I. 49-50)

The light tone displayed in these lines tops a didactic and somewhat cynical base. For example, when the gods debate which pictures should adorn the fan, merry Momus ironically proposes scenes of the lustful goddesses themselves:

Rather let heav'nly deeds be painted there,
And by your own examples teach the fair.
(II. 131-32)

Let these amours adorn the new machine,
And female nature on the piece be seen;
So shall the fair, as long as fans shall last,
Learn from your bright examples to be chaste.
(II. 190-94)

Despite the preponderance of mythological story, Gay's human and heroic worlds interrelate:

Narcissus' change to the vain virgin shows
Who trusts to beauty, trusts the fading rose.
Youth flies apace, with youth your beauty flies,
Love then, ye virgins, e'er the blossom dies.
(III. 209-12)

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Thus may the nymph, whene'er she spreads the fan,
 In his true colours view perfidious man,
 Pleas'd with her virgin state in forest rove,
 And never trust the dang'rous hopes of love.
 (II. 123-26)

In Pope's The Rape of the Lock, the wit so irradiates the story that the poem exerts narrative appeal. In King's, Garth's, and Purney's, an unpalatable form overpowers any possible narrative appeal. In Gay's the form also overpowers the story; the poem may draw a small audience, because of its graceful tone and sensuous mythological scenes, but not because of its mock-heroic narrative power. His tale exists as a piece of decorative rococo wit, too artificial to endure on the level of story, too superficial to endure on the level of resonance of meaning.

Thomas Tickell, in Kensington Gardens,³⁸ presents yet another type of mock-serious poem, a mock-heroic fairy tale panegyric. Tickell sets the story in fairy land. The female fairy Milkah, steals a mortal child, Albion, and keeps him for 200 years:

A foot in height, how stately did he show!
 How look superior on the crowd below! (p. 125)

He then falls in love with the fairy princess, Kenna, but Oberon overhearing their pledge of troth, banishes Albion, and delivers Kenna to Prince Azuriel, to the rage of Oriel,

³⁸Thomas Tickell, "The Poems of Thomas Tickell," Works of the English Poets, XI, 124-28.

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another of Kenna's suitors. Albion, meanwhile, flees to the banks of the Thames:

A long, long journey, choak'd with brakes and thorns,
Ill-measur'd by ten thousand barley-corns. (p. 126)

where Neptune, his father, promises to aid him. Oriel also comes to his assistance. The armies muster:

Thick rows of spears at once, with sudden glare,
A grove of needles, glitter in the air; (p. 127)

Albion then challenges the immortal Azuriel to single combat but is killed by him. The incensed Neptune turns Oberon's kingdom into a wasteland, though Kenna's tears, shed over Albion, change into snow-drops and reappear each spring:

Till great Nassau recloath'd the desert shade,
Thence sacred to Britannia's monarchs made.
'Twas then the green-rob'd nymph, fair Kenna, came
(Kenna that gave the neighb'ring town its name)
.....
She vow'd to grace the mansions once her own,
And picture out in plants the fairy town. (p. 128)

And thus the tale ends, with a panegyric to royalty, and an explanation of the origin of Kensington Gardens.

Tickell plots his narrative with more psychological cause and effect than many contemporary narrative poems attempt, for example: Kenna's undying love for Albion, Oberon's autocratic ire over their love, and Neptune's wounded pride at the fate of his son. However, he draws his characters with only two dimensions and in a world with which readers, other than those interested in the court, can have scant interest. In contrast, Pope in The Rape of the

Lock, with a simpler plot and fewer characters makes his characters come more alive and their court world seem real. Moreover, Pope creates a sense of the fitness between his diminutive scale and the theme of his poem. In The Rape of the Lock the scale of Belinda's ethical values and psychological awareness equates with and is focused by the miniature supernatural beings. In Tickell's poem the characters could have been made human-size, for nothing else exists in the poem against which their size may act as a foil.

Tickell's tone is panegyric. He uses plot, characters, and setting together, as in a masque, to praise the court, and speaks in 60 of the 532 lines of the poem with direct authorial voice in straight panegyric. This slanted tone blurs the moral and mars the aesthetic unity of the story. Morally, Oberon's aristocratic refusal to accept the alien Albion as a prospective son-in-law causes Oberon's ruin; yet the poem functions to praise aristocracy. Albion's innocence and heroic valour lead him to his death in an unchivalric one-sided fight; and though Oberon suffers for his part in Albion's death, the actual slayer does not. Aesthetically, Kenna's devotion unifies the narrative, but Albion's fairy god-mother, Milkah, prominent in the beginning of the poem, contrary to reader expectation, never reappears.

To some extent Tickell's fictional world mockingly relates to the heroic ideal. In the following lines on the

fate of Oberon, for example, the parallel to Milton's Satan in line one is antithetically mocked in line two:

Beneath huge hills of smoaking piles he lay
Stun'd and confounded a whole summer's day. (p. 128)

Tickell does not, however, effectively complete the mock-heroic triangle; for the reference to the actual world does not, as in Pope, proceed line by line from start to finish, but intrudes, panegyrically, only in the close.

Tickell's point of view is not quite dispassionate enough to keep the reader disparate from Albion's fate. In Pope's mock-heroics Pope and the reader together share the irony of seeing lesser people in action whose absurdity is not apparent to the actors. In Tickell's poem, on the other hand, the sympathy which accrues to Albion tends to shadow the mockery with tragic overtones.

Tickell's poem, like Gay's, may once have interested readers, and may still draw them because of its romantic colouring; but it falters as narrative because on the level of either fairy tale or mock-heroic it does not fulfil its potential.

Mock-serious urban social commentary appears early in the eighteenth century, in King's Furmetary and Garth's Dispensary. Similar treatment of the rural scene occurs later, in William Somerville's Hobbinol; or, the Rural Games;

a Burlesque Poem,³⁹ printed in 1740 and popular enough to warrant eight additional printings by 1767. In this poem the action centers on the rural May games at which Hobbinol, in love with Ganderetta, wins the wrestling and cudgel matches, while Ganderetta takes top place in the girls' race. At the moment of Hobbinol's greatest joy, however, when he is about to win Ganderetta, comes his former servant, Mopsa, with his two children by her. Law then drags Hobbinol before Sir Rhadamanth, the justice, for the punishment he has earned. The poem ends without saying what the punishment will be.

As with Gay's Fan, Hobbinol is marginal as mock-heroic. Bond calls it a Miltonic parody, particularly for its blank verse style.⁴⁰ Its epical compass includes dedication, preface, arguments for each of the three cantos, statement of epic purpose, invocation, games, feast, general battle, and epic simile. On the other hand, Somerville uses no epic machinery. Heroic parallels can perhaps be implied from the action, such as the battle, and possibly from the judge's name, Rhadamanth; but the whole temper of the poem is one of holiday and can just as appropriately be read on that level alone.

³⁹William Somerville, "The Poems of William Somerville," The Works of the English Poets, XI, 171-83.

⁴⁰Bond, English Burlesque Poetry, pp. 169, 407.

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The poem bounces with humour and concrete action. Twangditto, the fiddler, comes merrily alive as "his single eye / Twinkles with joy, his active stump beats time" (p. 175); in the battle:

. . . like bombs the bottles fly
Hissing in air, their sharp-edg'd fragments drench'd
In the warm spouting gore; (p. 177)

His diction, at odds with the peasant theme, contributes to a mock-pastoral atmosphere, for example: "her darling boy," "the jovial queen," "skims the verdant plain" (pp. 174-75).

Hobbinol also has a sombre tone; the narrator comments, for example:

. . . short is, alas! the reign
Of mortal pride: we play our parts a while
And strut upon the stage; the scene is changed,
And offers us a dungeon for a throne. (p. 182)

Hobbinol thus functions on two levels: first, the warm humour of the rural characters in their mock-heroic action; second, the narrator's sombre, moral comment, which provides a counter-mood. For example, after the comic-epic free-for-all, the narrator remarks:

How blind is popular fury! how perverse,
When broils intestate 'rage, and force controls
Reason and law! (p. 178)

Again, after the bedraggled Mopsa confronts Hobbinol with the evidence of his past indiscretions, the narrator interjects:

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O dire effects of lawless love! O sting
 Of pleasure past! No friends dare interpose,
 But bow dejected to th' imperial scroll:
 Such is the force of law. While conscience shame
 Sits heavy on his brow, they view the wretch
 To Rhadamanth's august tribunal dragg'd. (p. 183)

The "conscience shame" here implies a moral order in which sin is considered real. Thus Somerville through irony achieves a partial interpretation rather than a mere comical presentation of the human arena.

Somerville's point of view tends to set the reader apart from the narrator, rather than at one with him as with Pope where reader and narrator view together the absurd incongruity of the action. Likely such a gap did not exist in Somerville's day, but today's reader, removed from the narrator, appraises the veracity of both narrator and action; and this tends to weaken the mock-heroic power of the narrative.

As a story, Hobbinol moves swiftly, action predominating over speech or description; but Somerville ends his story mechanically by introducing Mopsa, without previous preparation, through whom Hobbinol drops from the peak of fame and love to the depth of arrest and judgment. The use of "Rhadamanth" as judge suggests a second possible level of meaning in which Hobbinol is arrested by Death and proceeds to Hell for punishment. Either way, the realism of his fate overshadows the burlesque spirit. Indeed, Hobbinol focuses

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so sharply in the actual world that fiction and reality blend together, without much counter-pressure from any heroic world. It succeeds as a story, but is not, in comparison with The Rape of the Lock, or even with the other poems discussed in this chapter, a mock-heroic poem.

William Meston provides examples of the numerous lengthy Hudibrastic narratives of the period, nine of which are named in Appendix 1. Meston shows two types,⁴¹ the first less topical than the second. Bond, speaking in terms of burlesque, terms the first, The Knight of the Kirk; or, the Ecclesiastical Adventures of Sir John Presbyter, as very likely the most readable Hudibrastics of the period.⁴² As narrative, the poem scarcely moves. Meston describes at length his hero's characteristics; his verbal battle with a robber, which he loses along with his purse; and other verbal affrays, all stemming from the dictatorial pretensions of the "Presbyter Knight."

The single canto closes with the statement that if this one pleases, a second will follow. Apparently it failed to please, despite Meston's avowal in his Preface that he writes to please the buyer; for though written about

⁴¹William Meston, The Poetical Works of the Ingenious and Learned William Meston, 6th ed. (Edinburgh: F. Robertson, 1767), pp. 1-70, 199-221.

⁴²Bond, English Burlesque Poetry, p. 151.

1723, the canto was not printed until 1767, and no additional cantos ever followed. The coarse language, for all its sharp wit, serves no purpose other than coarseness, and was perhaps a cause of the poem's lack of success with the public, as for example:

For as a Ship, when under sail,
Is manag'd by the helm her tail,
Just so the rudder of a verse,
Is the last syllab in its a--e, (p. 2)

I sing the man, read it who list,
A hero tru as ever pist, (p. 3)

Meston's Mob Contra Mob; or, the Rabblers Rabbled also lacks adequate dramatization, despite a particularized topicality. Based on an actual conflict between the church and the people of Aberdeen over the selection of a minister, the poem includes three main parts: first, a harangue to the effect that the rabble empowers the king; second, an assertion that the rabble enforced the Reformation in Scotland; third, the "battle" of Aberdeen over the installation of the minister, in which the people defeat the "kirk-Knight-Errants."

In contrast to an effective mock-heroic, such as The Rape of the Lock, the extensive personification, undramatized action, and lack of even episodic plot unity, spoil the narrative of this poem. Moreover, rather than a consecutive story such as Samuel Butler unfolds in the original Hudibras, this Hudibrastic copy amounts only to an

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excessively extended and disjointed anecdote. When compared with its original it marks a sharp decline in narrative quality.

Meston well illustrates the absence of mock-heroic balance in this type of fiction. He says in the Preface to his Poems, "if men will be ridiculous, why should they deny the world the freedom of laughing at them; and if deaf to reason, what other method remains but ridicule?" He follows this by writing burlesque with a rollicking air, but without finesse, for example:

Come on thou Muse, who only dwells,
In heads where there are empty cells.
Thou rattling, rhiming, raving gypsie,
Inspire me now till I be tipsie,
Not with thy Heliconian water,
But liquor that will make me clatter. (p. 1)

He knew Beelzebub's whole commanders,
Imps, satyrs, sylphs, and salamanders,
Familiars, brownies, water-kelpies,
And all the other hellish whelpies;
Hobgoblins, ghosts, and fairy legions,
That wander in the aery regions. (p. 41)

Like so many contemporary writers of Hudibrastic verse, Meston unifies his poems by ridicule but does not impose the intellectual control needed to articulate the mock-heroic triangle. He follows Butler into an excess of verbal and farcical absurdities, without following as well either Butler's positive structural example or the more advanced mock-heroic techniques of Dryden, let alone the arabesque wit of Pope or the vraisemblance of Somerville.

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3. Summary.

The eighteenth-century heritage from the narrative past was primarily the epic-heroic form. The number of heroic poems listed in Appendix 1 demonstrates the poetic urge to fill the form, but this urge also turned poets to caricature the elements of the form. The caricature took many modes, including: topical social allegory, as in King's Furmetary; topical social epic, as in Garth's Dispensary; politico-military epic, as in Purney's Chevalier; socio-mythological tale, as in Gay's Fan; panegyric fairy tale, as in Tickell's Kensington Gardens; bucolic epic as in Somerville's Hobbinol; topical society epic and literary epic, as in Pope's Rape of the Lock, and Dunciad; and Hudibrastic epics as in Meston's Knight of the Kirk, and Mob Contra Mob.

Chapter II of this study shows that the serious heroic also appeared in many modes but that few of these, and none of the better narratives, dealt with topical subjects. This chapter shows that the caricaturists much preferred topical subject matter: of the ten poems discussed in the chapter, nine are topical, including perhaps the best direct narrative of the group, Somerville's Hobbinol.

An analysis of dates of the burlesque narratives in Appendix 1 shows an increase in the numbers of poems by anonymous authors from 3, between 1700 and 1720, to 12,

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between 1721 and 1740; and a corresponding decrease in the numbers by known authors from 17, in the first period, to 14 in the second. Inconclusive though these figures are, they indicate a trend on the part of the more prominent poets away from burlesque, in contrast to the increasing attraction of the burlesque mode for writers of lesser repute. Supporting this inference is the fact that most longer burlesques are by anonymous or little known writers; and whereas of poems shorter than 15 pages, 8 appeared before 1721, and only 13 thereafter; of poems longer than 15 pages, 5 appeared before 1721, but 20 between 1721 and 1740. As a mode, then, the burlesque narrative seems on the wane among better known poets in the third and fourth decades of the century; it increases in quantity but decreases in narrative quality.

It is interesting to note that whereas at least one woman writer essayed the serious heroic poem, none tried the long burlesque; and that Purney, in England, burlesques the same Jacobite rebellion which prompts Ramsay to write The Vision as a serious heroic poem.

The burlesque heroic poets of the previous century, notably Samuel Butler and John Dryden, kept a fitting proportion between story and wit. The most common narrative characteristic of the mock-heroic poems discussed in this chapter is an excess in stylistic devices, which prevents

homogeneity of matter and form and impedes the narrative action. Only Pope, and to a lesser degree Somerville, manage to fuse aim and development. A second common feature is the subordination of narrative action to other aims such as satire, panegyric, or wit. Only Somerville reverses the tendency and produces a story which is of interest regardless of didactic content.

The eighteenth-century burlesque poets, running to extreme, produce at the one end the farcical extravagance of story and style exemplified by Purney, at the other the rococo elegance of style and wit of Pope. As Somerville illustrates, neo-classic tradition checks a possible middle way explored by some poets.

Yet perhaps the most significant feature which these mock-heroic narratives exemplify is failure in what they purport to be--mock epic. Pope, alone, contrives a story, in The Rape of the Lock, such that the three worlds, heroic, fictional, and actual, reinforce each other on all the narrative levels of the poem: plot, character, setting, style, and significance; and Pope alone endures.

CHAPTER IV

THE METRICAL TALE

The poets of the eighteenth century wrote other metrical fiction besides heroic and mock-heroic. This took two main forms: first, the metrical tale, defined for this study as verse narrative which does not aspire to the scope, tone, or technique of heroic poetry; and, second, the narrative fable, defined as a short metrical tale which uses non-rational characters to illustrate a moral truth. Many of the poets in this period used the terms "tale" and "fable" indiscriminately in titles; William Somerville, for example calls his thousand-line tale The Fortune Hunter a "fable," while Nathaniel Cotton titles his twenty-seven line fable Death and the Rake a "tale." This chapter adopts the generic term "metrical tale" for both forms. In the early part of the century the poets wrote a great deal of this type of narrative, as may be seen from the 378 poems by 62 poets shown in Appendix 1.

Despite its quantity, contemporary critics gave it little heed. This may have been, as John W. Draper suggests, because the tale had been "ignored by critics of antiquity," or because "its tendency toward the obscene gave it no merit

in the eyes of the stricter neo-classicists who had to defend their writings on moral grounds against the Puritanical prejudices of the bourgeoisie."¹ It may also have been because it tended to diverge from the heroic highway surveyed by contemporary critics, for the poets of the metrical tale tended to follow other roads. Their paths were many: in content they range from biblical to realistic scenes, in theme from deism to adolescent love, in tone from pornography to sentimental melodrama, and in form from beast fable to dramatic monologue. The metrical tale scarcely follows the usual paths of neo-classic poetry or its critics.

Chapters II and III of this study show that the heroic and mock-heroic narrative poetry of this period is for the most part no longer tolerable reading chiefly because it either was conditioned by a regard for the past which no longer pertains, or failed to link its moribund heroic ideal to enduring human interests in an aesthetically satisfying way. The range of the metrical tale suggests that it was not so prohibitively conditioned, that it might not only, as Draper says, reflect the general taste of its own age,² but also prefigure that of later audiences, as does its contemporary in prose fiction, the novel,

¹John W. Draper, "The Metrical Tale in XVIII-Century England," PMLA, LII (1937), 390-397.

²Ibid., p. 392.

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which was similarly less conditioned by the conventions of the past.

This is not to say that the metrical tale or the novel spring Minerva-like into being in 1700. The logic of narrative binds them as much as it binds The Faerie Queene, Venus and Adonis, or Paradise Lost. All alike, to the extent that they tell a story, must compound it of plot, character, setting, and narrative method; and all alike, to the extent that their stories proffer meaning, must either compound these elements so that they become the meaning, with relevance, grace, and coherence, or must inevitably join the legions of lesser known or forgotten narratives which lack such narrative propriety. But even the story with balanced matter and form slips in time from public awareness if it fails to continue to thrust referentially into the mind, heart, or imagination of the public. Much medieval, Renaissance, and seventeenth-century narrative poetry, marked by close correspondence of form and meaning, for example, bestiaries, allegories, and romances, show this kind of eroded appeal.

It may also be noted that before about 1700, at least in the heroic genre, poets could write in formulaic fashion. Given the concept of heroic form, the poet could, like some modern writers have done with the concept of the cowboy story, fit suitable plot, characters, setting, and

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method to it. However, about 1700 a new reading public appeared which was no longer responsive to the formula; and no new formula had yet been shaped, though writers in prose fiction were groping tentatively in a new direction.

The new direction was towards a close correspondence between actual life, as seen through the windows of experience, and virtual life, as seen in the pictures of fiction. This gave the new prose fiction a double potential appeal: that based on the necessary narrative conventions of the past; and, in addition, that of direct topical thrust in the present. To the degree that the metrical tale could escape from the unnecessary narrative conventions of the past, and could relate significantly to the present, it had a similar potential appeal, a potential to outdo the heroic and mock-heroic narrative poetry of the period.

In effect the poets had three main roads: first, they could stick to the outmoded ways of the seventeenth century and write serious thesis tales for Puritan readers, or comic tales for more humanistic and usually aristocratic readers, in either case writing largely for a male audience; or, second, appealing to a more middle-class audience including females, they could join the contemporary trend and write stories of scandal, romance, or realism, or verse essays designed to influence manners in the fashion of the Spectator papers; or, third, they could shape stories so as

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to experiment in the new sensibility of the pre-romantics.

To some extent these purposes would affect form, that is, the way in which a poem presents itself. On the one hand, the thesis-type, designed to teach moral improvement, tended as in the exemplum to use direct statement, illustrated with a fictional picture, to show things as they perhaps should be; on the other hand, the antithetical literature of the novel tended by a fictional picture, of action, setting, and people, to show things as they perhaps were actually perceived to be. In between, types such as the allegory shared the characteristics of both forms, with now the message, and now the fictional picture, making the most appeal and most shaping the form.

This chapter concerns the metrical tale, which is normally shorter than the heroic poem. The shorter tale differs essentially from longer stories in its focus on a single effect. It tends, consequently, to become a story of an episode, a character, an emotion, or an idea. Some of its forms, the exemplum, for example, or the fable, focus so finely on a single effect that they are almost by their natures subject to narrative imbalance and loss of topical relevance. Yet the shorter tale assumes so many other forms and acquires such a broad range of effects that it is admirably suited to reflect current trends.

The purpose of this chapter is to determine the fictional characteristics of the metrical tale and to show that such poems are more flexible and varied than those of the heroic or mock-heroic narrative poetry of the period and tend to escape from restrictions of form and to reflect their own era. Poems discussed all exceed 200 lines in length. They are considered in groups in accordance with their main unifying purpose. Though the groups merge into one another they are basically the didactic, the comic, and the sentimental and romantic.

1. The Didactic Tale.

Metrical tales of the early eighteenth century which are unified by their thesis generally take the form either of allegory or of story with moral. This section deals first with the allegorical tale, then with the moral tale, showing in each a range from tales which are primarily lessons to others in which the story dominates.

Perhaps the best narrative amongst the allegories is Allan Ramsay's The Three Bonnets: A Tale. In Four Cantos.³ Ramsay's thesis about the union of Scotland with England rises from the story. He tells about a dying Scottish father who bequeaths

³Allan Ramsay, The Works of Allan Ramsay, ed. Alexander M. Kinghorn and Alexander Law (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1961), III, 7-31.

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a bonnet to each of his three sons in return for their pledge to keep the family traditions:

Had up your Hands, now swear and say,
As ye shall answer on a Day,
Ye'll faithfully observe my Will,
An' a' its premisses fulfill. (I. 33-36)

No sooner is he dead than one of the sons vows to surrender all three bonnets in return for marriage with a wealthy girl. Though one brother refuses to part with his bonnet, the wedding takes place. The groom is soon cuckolded and driven by his father's ghost to drunkenness and gambling, and his acquiescent brother becomes the buffoon of the wife's servants; but the brother who kept the family faith gains honour, a satisfied conscience, and a happy family.

Ramsay's poem, as Lord Woodhouselee points out, in addition to the level of story, exists as a satiric allegory against the union of Scotland with England in 1707.⁴ However, its dramatic structure of opening conflict, rising action, climax, and denouement, scarcely coloured by overt didacticism, make the story itself of paramount interest.

A narrator referred to as the "Bard" introduces the story. He is himself introduced only by his name, in the fashion of a play script:

⁴Lord Woodhouselee, "An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Ramsay," The Works of Allan Ramsay, ed. G. Chalmers, I (Edinburgh: A Fullarton and Co., 1848), 82.

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Bard.

When Men of Mettle thought it Nonsense
 To heed that cleping Thing ca'd Conscience;

· · · · ·
 Then Duniwhistle worn with Years,
 And gawn the Gate of his Forbears,
 Commanded his three Sons to come
 And wait upon him in his Room: (I. 1-12)

The Bard's voice is minimal in the poem, most of which is comprised of vivid dialogue springing from character interaction, for example, the exchange between the wife's servant and the second brother, Bawsy, as he tries to see his brother, Jouk:

Beef.

Mest Jouk is bisy.

Bawsy.

My Lady Rose, is she at Leasure?

Beef.

No, Sir, my Lady's at her Pleasure.

Bawsy.

I wait for Her or Him, go shew;

Beef.

And pray ye, Master, wha are you?

Bawsy.

Upo' my saul this Porter's sawsy;
 Sirra, go tell my Name is Bawsy,
 Their Brither wha made up the marriage. (IV. 161-68)

Ramsay thus relates his allegory in dramatic style with characters who exist as individuals, and unfolds the

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action with compact directness. He uses a highly colloquial and frequently coarse Scots dialect in which the humour leans to satire. When Lady Rose, for example, asks her suitor to prove himself, he says:

My dearest Jewel, gie't a Name,
That I may win baith you and Fame:
Shall I gae feicht with Forrest Bulls,
Or cleave down Troops with thicker Sculls?
Or shall I dowk the deepest Sea,
And Coral pou for Beads to thee?
Penty the Pope upon the Nose?
Or pish upon a hundred Beaus? (I. 153-60)

For the most part, however, Ramsay's tone, intimate, and playful, creates an atmosphere of a fireside tale, as for example:

Here it wad make o'er lang a Tale,
To tell how meikle Cakes and Ale,
And Beef, and Brose, and Gryce, and Geese,
And Pyes a' running o'er wi' Creesh,
Was serv'd upon the Wedding-table,
To make the Lads and Lasses able
To do, ye ken, what we think Shame
(Tho' ilk ane does't) to gie't a name. (IV. 50-57)

The poem focuses morally on tradition and personal integrity, on the worth of a code of honour, on filial loyalty and trust, versus the hollow rewards of cowardice and expedient love. In foreshadowing the fate of Scotland's three parliaments, Ramsay applies retributive justice to the characters who represent submission to the political control of Queen Anne; but he keeps firm control of the meaning his poem conveys; the story is the thesis, and it relates not only to contemporary issues but also to the moral bases of society.

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Ramsay tells his story so well that it practically eclipses the allegory. Other poets present the allegory more plainly. John Pomfret, in one of the best of these, Love Triumphant over Reason: A Vision,⁵ uses a vivid dream allegory to unify his thesis that:

Reason no generous passion does oppose;
'Tis Lust (not Love) and Reason that are foes. (p. 311)

Pomfret, through allegory, moulds the substance of his poem to its didactic end and supports it by a fictional picture in which he almost achieves a narrative coherence parallel to the allegory. In the story, Strephon, the dreamer, is shown by his guide, Reason, the anguish, torment, and misery caused by love. Strephon pledges that he will give up Delia, his loved one, for Reason. Then a new guide, Love, shows him the fruits of true love, tells him that the scene he had formerly witnessed was caused by lust, not love, and conducts him to Delia; but, as he approaches her, he awakens.

Pomfret adopts an action which progresses with human interest; but rather than an articulated plot such as Ramsay uses, he presents an episode. It serves to illustrate his thesis, but nothing more. Strephon is as faceless as Reason is, or Love; he serves only as an illustration of the moral content which Pomfret also asserts by direct narrator comment, for example:

⁵John Pomfret, "The Poems of John Pomfret," Works of the English Poets, VIII, 308-13.

For Love and Lust, essentially divide,
Like day and night, Humility and Pride. (p. 311)

and by long moral speeches, of which five make up a full half of the poem. Pomfret's tale moves from an opening conflict towards a resolution, but its fictional picture is subsidiary, rather than complementary, to meaning. His poem exists rather like a seventeenth-century "emblem"; the meaning is clear; the picture illustrates it but also has some interest in itself.

This interest stems from features in the poem which part company with seventeenth-century precursors and tend towards the future. He paints his picture, for instance, with hues of reality:

Before the entrance, mouldering bones were spread,
Some skeletons entire, some lately dead;
A little rubbish loosely scatter'd o'er
Their bodies uninterr'd, lay round the door.
No funeral rites to any here were paid,
But dead like dogs into the dust convey'd. (p. 309)

Moreover, as evinced in the passage preceding and even more clearly in the following, he touches his picture up with a Gothic gloss:

. . . I beheld an antiquated pile
Of rugged building in a narrow isle;
The water round it gave a nauseous smell,
Like vapours steeming from a sulphurous cell.
The ruined wall, compos'd of stinking mud,
O'ergrown with hemlock, on supporters stood;
As did the roof, ungrateful to the view:
'Tis both an hospital, and bedlam too. (p. 309)

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Pomfret also glosses his picture with sentimentalism as in the following:

Dare you be happy, youth? but dare, and be:
 I'll be your convoy to the charming she.
 What! Still irresolute? debating still?
 View her, and then, forsake her if you will.

 Then he expos'd the lovely sleeping maid,
 Upon a couch of new-blown roses laid.
 The blushing colour in her cheeks express'd
 What tender thoughts inspir'd her heaving breast.
 Sometimes a sigh half-smother'd stole away:
 Then she would "Strephon, charming Strephon," say.
 (p. 312)

Such vivid colouring extends the range of Pomfret's readers, by its grace and wit, to those who would not accept Ramsay's Scots dialect; but at the same time its patent artificiality denies it those readers who would respond more to Ramsay's psychological verisimilitude.

Samuel Wesley, in The Battle of the Sexes,⁶ departs even more than Pomfret from narrative towards allegory. In this poem the sexes, represented by male heroes such as Fortitude, Wisdom, and Patience, and by female heroines such as Beauty, Cunning, and Scorn, contend in battle on the Plains of Life. Lust incites both sides to fiercer war until Love, aided by Marriage, pairs off many of the contestants in treaties of union, which Ambition and Avarice work to destroy.

⁶Samuel Wesley, Poems on Several Occasions by Samuel Wesley, ed. James Nichols (London: Simpkin, Marshal, and Co., 1862), pp. 51-81.

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Wesley tells his story with economy in a style which links rapid narrative with vivid pictorial power, intentionally, as he says in his Preface, in the spirit of Spenser:

Led by their chieftain Lust, a giant-man,
 With boastful voice, loud shouting from afar;
 Like mountain-torrents swell'd by winter-showers,
 Resistless, fierce he sweeps along the plain:
 His leprous mouth a flame infectious pours,
 Darting slow death and strength-consuming pain;
 His ever-rolling eyes like beacons glare,
 Shagg'd as the goat his limbs, and black his
 bristling hair. (p. 68)

Wesley tries for the heroic mode: he introduces the action with an apostrophe to Lord Hamilton, and uses a statement of epic purpose: "of arms, which fierce contending sexes bore, / I sing" (p. 61); but the allegorical characters, and the moral which he tacks on as the concluding stanza, vitiate an heroic aura. His sober heroic allegory also sharply restricts his audience to those who would respond to such seventeenth-century attitudes.

James Ralph exhibits still another type of allegory, supposedly, like Wesley's, Spenserian in nature. His poem, An Imitation of Spenser's Fairy Queen; a Fragment,⁷ recounts how Nature convenes a court at which Change challenges Jove's authority, since even the gods are subject to change.

⁷ James Ralph in Miscellaneous Poems by Several Hands (London: James Ralph, 1729), pp. 1-28. The authenticity of poems attributed in this study to Ralph is doubtful, for he does not name the authors of the poems in his miscellany.

Nature rules that Jove must be supreme and dismisses the court. Ralph develops his deistic topic mainly by speech and description of seasonal change, with scarcely any narrative movement. His typical neo-classic technique bears slight resemblance to Spenser, but his poem reflects the growing awareness of Elizabethan poetry in the period under review.

Ralph unifies his poem by mythology as well as by allegory, so that for an implied reader one must contemplate a classically educated person, familiar with Spenser, and responsive to serious deistic moralizing. The form restricts the audience.

William Shenstone similarly restricts the possible appeal of his moral allegory The Judgment of Hercules⁸ in which Hercules chooses Virtue over Vice, whereupon Vice vanishes. Matthew Prior adopts the same form in his brief tale Truth and Falsehood. A Tale⁹ in which Falsehood induces her girl friend to go swimming then runs off with her clothes so that ever after Falsehood appears in the guise of Truth, while Truth herself goes naked. Prior, by

⁸William Shenstone, The Poetical Works of William Shenstone, ed. George Gilfillan (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1854), pp. 186-201.

⁹Matthew Prior, The Literary Works of Matthew Prior, ed. H. Bunker Wright and Monroe K. Spears (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), I, 543-45.

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rendering his abstractions into concrete girls, and by the grace of his style, makes his story eminently tolerable reading even today, just as Ramsay does. In contrast, Wesley, Ralph, and Shenstone represent many poets of thesis tales who stifle the story element of their poems with overly-solemn allegory, perhaps appealing in its day, but increasingly less so with time.

Prior, in Alma: or, The Progress of the Mind, in Three Cantos,¹⁰ tells what purports to be the story of the progress of the soul from the feet, in childhood, to the head, in maturity. He develops his theme by brief narrative transitions between an extensive Hudibrastic dialogue of the two characters, who unfold the topic in colloquial idiom:

My Head, quoth DICK, to serve your Whim?
Spare that, and take some other Limb,
Sir, in your nice Affairs of System,
Wise Men propose; but Fools assist 'em.

Says MATTHEW: RICHARD, keep thy Head,
And hold thy Peace; and I'll proceed. (III. 182-87)

Alma progresses with so little character interaction that it is not, within the definition adopted for this study, a narrative poem; but it illustrates the tendency amongst poets of the period to use the metrical tale as a vehicle for discursive material. Prior's congenial tone and humorous characters keep his poem alive with an appeal which

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 470-516.

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does not exist in most similar tales of marginal narrative potency.

In addition to allegory, the poets of the early eighteenth century also wrote many moral tales. These are less subject in their form to past habits yet in the main present a thesis, supported or illustrated by a fictional picture.

William Somerville illustrates two types of moral tale.¹¹ In Fable XIV, The Fortune Hunter Somerville treats the theme of the wayward brother. He calls his story a "fable," perhaps because he gives it a fable form, including the formal moral ending; yet it is a fully developed story concerning only rational beings. It deals with two brothers: Frank, a happy-go-lucky spendthrift; and Bob, a sober and industrious squire. After many misfortunes the ne'er-do-well is taken in, repentent and wiser, by his forgiving brother. Somerville depicts types rather than individual characters and generalizes the English country estate as well. Nevertheless the action unfolds from character and setting and the poet develops the opening conflict with grace and clarity to a satisfying resolution.

The narrator intrudes his own sermon-like introduction and moral close and also interpolates occasional moral

¹¹William Somerville, "The Poems of William Somerville," Works of the English Poets, XI, 217-25, 234-36.

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statements directly into the story. He also comments normatively: for example, he refers in Canto I to Bob as "the silent, serious boy," and to Frank as "that unlucky rogue," and says that Bob at school learned "the real from th' apparent good," "while rakish Frank . . . Flies o'er the world where pleasure calls" seeking Dame Fortune. Somerville also uses indirect moral comment, for Bob in the end sums up the moral when he says to Frank:

Fortune's ador'd by fools alone,
The wise man always make's his own (p. 218)

Author and narrator thus stand together, separated by a moral gap from the protagonist.

Serious though his theme is Somerville treats it with humour, though not in a burlesque vein. He uses, for instance, a colloquial idiom appropriate to the character concerned: "Damme," thought Franky to himself." Somerville also uses indelicate humour:

With vapours choak'd, entranc'd she lies,
Belches, and prays, and f--ts, and dies. (p. 221)

But he clouds the sparkle of his tale with such neo-classic expressions as Tritons, Nereids, Boreas, "forky lightning," "the ridgy steep," "the monsters of the main," "finny train," and "the feather'd throng" (p. 223).

The story interests on the levels of both plot and character. Frank undergoes vicissitudes of fortune akin to those of Moll Flanders: he gets help from Bob, he tries a

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wealthy lady but her husband comes home, he is ready to commit suicide in London when his aunt stakes him, he tries gambling and loses all, he even makes good as a sea captain with his own ship until a storm ruins all. Somerville fails, however, to achieve a central moral focus. He uses the figure of Fortune throughout as a controlling and unifying device but without consistency: Frank, whether wastrel or industrious sea captain, comes to the same ill end; yet the story implies that Fortune's power stops short at the boundaries of Bob's estate. The concept of fixed order thus prevails; Frank should accept the status quo and forego ambition.

Somerville's tale Mahomet Ali Beg; or, the Faithful Minister of State deals with the moral theme that "'Tis education shows the way / Each latent beauty to display" (p. 235) but without becoming any more overtly didactic than does The Fortune Hunter. In the story, Sha Abbas, the King, out hunting, chances on a shepherd boy, Ali, who is so honest and innocent that Abbas educates him at court and in time makes him chief minister. The courtiers try to convince the heir to the throne that Ali is ambitious and avaricious, but the prince soon learns the truth and acclaims Ali's integrity.

As in The Fortune Hunter Somerville reflects neo-classic norms in language and subordinates characterization

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to theme; but here he deviates towards Romanticism in the oriental setting and in the slight oriental colour of some of the neo-classic lines, for example:

See stately palaces arise
And gilded domes invade the skies. (p. 235)

He uses, as do most of his contemporary writers of metrical tales, an editorial-omniscient narrator whose comments intrude on the objectivity of the story. The narrator gives for instance, a thirty-six line introduction on virtue, so that the tale becomes in fact an exemplum; but the vivid opening hunting scene, and the early introduction of conflict in the exposure of Ali's innocence to the courtly world, set the prevailing dramatic tone.

The poem focuses morally on pre-romantic universal benevolence: despite the aristocratic setting, Ali's innate goodness extends to the lowest in the land; and the organic moral, that virtue is its own reward, applies regardless of Ali's peasant origin. Somerville thus reflects more finely in form and matter the developing conscience of the eighteenth century than do the previous poets considered in this chapter.

In these two moral tales Somerville moves a long way from the narrative conventions of the past. He eschews all supernatural element. He matches structure and meaning so as to achieve a consistent narrative probability. He still

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restricts himself to episodes designed to show unchanging values, but the values have an enduring significance; and he portrays them with type-characters rather than with allegorical or abstract figures; and, at least in The Fortune Hunter, he displays his people with humour and idiomatic spontaneity which keeps them vivid today.

Much more attuned to novelistic developments is J.D. Breval, two of whose narrative poems are remarkable as verse equivalents to William Hogarth's drawings. Though Breval calls his narratives "Heroi-Comical" poems, they are more contemporary social documentary than heroic or comic in nature.

In Breval's Harlot's Progress¹² Maria, the heroine, spurns her simple Yorkshire home for the attractions of London. An old procuress, described as "This Load of Lust, this Lump of deadly Sin" (p. 8) soon cozens her into entertaining one of her clients, who quickly tires of her. Maria then joins a wealthy Jew but plays him false and is turned out. Now reduced to a Drury Lane prostitute, she is arrested and imprisoned in Bridewell, the terrors of which Breval graphically describes. Released, Maria learns that she has syphilis; and in the hands of a quack she dies, as

¹²J[ohn] D[urant] Breval, The Lure of Venus; or, a Harlot's Progress. An Heroi-Comical Poem. In Six Cantos, by Mr. Joseph Gay [pseudonym for J.D. Breval]. Founded Upon Mr. Hogarth's Six Paintings; and illustrated with Prints of them (London: [J. Wilford], 1733).

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her nurse steals her last possessions and her child--first mentioned in this scene--turns the spit at the fire. Her fellow whores attend her funeral, in a scene rich with skillful comments and moral asides on the various figures in Hogarth's painting of the same incident.

Breval tells his tale chronologically and merely caricatures his characters, but gives the setting a vivid circumstantial reality. The narration moves swiftly, with concrete descriptive passages; but Breval's morally didactic tone and the heavily moralizing authorial intrusions diffuse the dramatic intensity. Some dialogue occurs, including a lengthy lament for lost youth and beauty spoken by one of Maria's mourners; but otherwise the narrator relates the conversation; and this, too, tends to reduce the dramatic effect. Unlike Somervile, Breval uses very little figurative language or neo-classic diction.

In the Harlot Breval focuses realistically on a world of lust, bards, pimps, quacks, whores, and gallants:

This, a sly Satyr, swell'd with lawless rage,
And lewd in spite of impotence and age:
And that, a servile wretch, whose study lies
To spring the game, and bear his lord the prize.
(pp. 9-10)

Breval dramatizes the contrast between the country innocence of Maria's Yorkshire youth and the city corruption of her London dissolution. He displays an aristocratic cynicism

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towards women; for he exposes their weaknesses and moral turpitude, not that of the men. Little sympathy accrues to Maria; she dies of poetic justice. Breval ironically names her "Maria," and calls the avaricious old nurse "Grace."

As a narrative this story carries too heavy a weight of inorganic moral commentary and presents itself too matter-of-factly. It could be better done in prose, for the form does not contribute to the matter. Moreover its structure falters: for example, the child is casually mentioned once, late in the story, then disappears from sight.

Yet Breval steps forward in narrative poetry somewhat in step with his contemporary, Defoe, in the novel, and with a surer moral perspective than Defoe displays in Moll Flanders, his prose companion piece to Breval's The Harlot's Progress; for whereas Defoe rewards Moll for her life of crime with a conscience-free happy ever-after, Breval shows the remorseless effect of degrading experience.

In The Rake's Progress¹³ Breval provides a companion piece to A Harlot's Progress. The poem traces the rake from his first seduction of Sally, the girl who loves him, to London high life, prison, and final madness in Bedlam, all the while followed by the faithful Sally. Breval again uses

¹³J[ohn] D[urant] Breval, The Rake's Progress; or, The Humours of Drury Lane. A Poem. In Eight Cantos. In Hudibrastick Verse. Being the Ramble of a Modern Oxonian; which is a Compleat Key to the Eight Prints Lately published by the celebrated Mr. Hogarth (London: J. Chettwood, 1738).

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an episodic plot, and flat characters, other than Sally; but he gives the setting some verisimilitude. His predominantly satiric tone carries salacious overtones, but on the whole the poem functions as a didactic narrative which points out the pitfalls of the life of a rake.

Breval calls the poem "Hudibrastic" but this applies chiefly to the versification; no heroic tone, or epic or classical allusions appear. The first person onlooker tells the story with frequent moral interpolations, in highly colloquial voice:

'Till thirteen he lay with the Maid--
(Guess if he had a Maidenhead!) (p. 9)

Quoth she, my Girl, this silly Fool,
May prove a Matrimonial Tool: (p. 10)

And now and then I'll see thee Sall,
('Tis always so with Men of Quall.) (p. 15)

Breval depicts a world much like that in The Harlot's Progress. He speaks cynically, "For she ne'er sins who's Ne'er found out" (p. 18), satirically, "'Tis not the Fashion now to Think" (p. 20); and occasionally realistically, "His Life's but one, vast tiresome Void" (p. 19). He provides an inconsistent poetic justice: Sall receives no reward for her faithfulness, but the rake reaps what he sows. Sall, however, rouses reader sympathy as her few pitiful belongings "in sad Succession went away / One after 'tother every Day" (p. 45) until in the end "Poor Sall still faithful to the last, / Finds all her golden Wishes past" (p. 48).

Breval reaches to the world of Defoe but fails to achieve an effective synthesis of matter and form. The Harlot and The Rake both depict realistic human situations but the caricatural characters and didactic tone preclude dramatic tension. Breval, then, in content helps to broaden the potential range of narrative poetry, but in technique reflects the continuing effect of the neo-classic curb on narrative development.

Elijah Fenton, in Phaon to Sappho,¹⁴ produced a moral tale of yet another type; for he shapes his Ovidian tale as an epistle in which Phaon, writing to Sappho, tells his story. In youth he had raped a girl then deserted her. Now, aged sixty, he has tried to murder an old woman for her gold. The woman, Venus in Disguise, in revenge for his treatment of women, restores Phaon's youth, but renders him impotent:

My faultless form the Lesbian nymphs adore,
Avow their flames, weep, sigh, protest, implore.
There feel I first the penance of my sin
All spring without, and winter all within!
From me the sense of gay desire is fled,
And all their charms are cordial to the dead. (p. 412)

Fenton works with old conventions but surmounts them; the fiction complements rather than merely illustrates the thesis; and except for a long closing plea to Sappho to intercede with the gods, he keeps the two in balance, so that

¹⁴Elijah Fenton, "The Poems of Elijah Fenton." Works of the English Poets, X, 410-12.

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form and matter become the meaning. He uses Venus as a character but makes her more human than god-like, for example:

When bent for Tenedos, a country dame,
 (I thought her such) for speedy passage came.
 A palsy shook her limbs; a shrivel'd skin
 But ill conceal'd the skeleton within;
 A monument of time: (p. 411)

Fenton unifies his story with a moral thesis about the treatment of women but moves forward in time in his attitude towards them: his tone of sincere regret, and sense of poetic justice, contrasts with the attitude towards women shown in the heroic poetry, in which they are treated as pawns, and with the cynical attitude that Breval displays. Fenton's use of the dramatic epistle shows an interest in narrative technique, a desire to explore ways of shaping a story other than the usual editorial narrator style.

Thomas Parnell's moral tale The Hermit,¹⁵ drawn from the Gesta Romanorum, comes close to allegory. The hermit protagonist of the story enjoys his secluded life until he begins to question whether "vice should triumph, Virtue Vice obey" (p. 366). Accompanied by a youth he meets along the way, he starts off to find truth. The first night a rich host treats them lavishly, but the youth steals a gold cup; the next night a wealthy miser treats them poorly, but the youth

¹⁵Thomas Parnell, "The Poems of Thomas Parnell, D.D.," Works of the English Poets, IX 365-67.

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gives the cup to him; the third night an ostensibly virtuous host treats them moderately, but the youth kills the host's son and servant. The patient hermit, roused at last, turns on the youth who then assumes angelic form and advises the old man:

. . . taught by these, confess th' Almighty just,
And, where you can't unriddle, learn to trust!
(p. 367)

The angel adds that having learned these lessons the first host will henceforth be fittingly moderate, the second more gracious, the third virtuous in deed as well as in word. He concludes:

Thus Heaven instructs thy mind: this trial o'er,
Depart in peace, resign, and sin no more. (p. 367)

Parnell, like Somerville, structures his story with an opening problem, a succession of amplifying incidents, and a resolution, and incorporates, like Fenton, a surprise ending; but where Somerville's stories move to an expected end, and Fenton's unfolds in a single scene, Parnell's skillfully progresses with climactic dramatic suspense. Though he uses the supernatural as a deus ex machina to resolve the tension, and a sermon nearly a quarter of the poem in length to close the tale, he creates a narrative of sustained interest, not only through suspense and surprise, but also by the highlights of poetic description such as, for example, the scene of the youth's transformation into an angel:

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His youthful face grew more serenely sweet;
His robe turn'd white, and flow'd upon his feet;
Fair rounds of radiant points invest his hair;
Celestial odours breathe through purpled air;
And wings, whose colours glitter'd on the day,
Wide at his back their gradual plumes display.
(p. 367)

Of the moral tales, Breval's, particularly, lack this poetic intensity.

Parnell thus approaches narrative propriety--the meaning co-existent with and emerging from the harmony of matter and form. The poem likely seemed coherent to a contemporary reader, to whom the surprise close might seem an epiphany of all that preceded it. Yet the poem's coherence has lost consistency with time; for its plausibility rests upon reader acceptance of its ethical assumptions; but, rather than introducing these in parallel with the development of the three incidents of his poem, Parnell presents them for the first time in the conclusion. They do not grow organically from what has gone before. He uses his fictional picture to manifest to readers who are aware of it the neo-classic philosophical concept of an omnipotently virtuous cosmos, but he does not show for other readers any of the circumstantial reality which would make the philosophic assumption relevant to them. As a result, despite his narrative skill, Parnell produces for later readers an effect of artifice, of a story mechanically contrived to exemplify a previously determined scheme of ideas. This, of course,

is what the moral tale essentially does; but as poets such as Ramsay and Somerville demonstrate, the moral tale need not necessarily be so patently contrived; it can be written to appeal on the level of its story as well as its meaning.

Richard Savage, in The Wanderer: a Vision. In Five Cantos,¹⁶ exemplifies the type of moral tale in which the didactic almost eclipses the fictional: he fleshes out a verse essay on a narrative skeleton; but uncertainty of form confuses rather than clarifies the functions of the narrative components of the poem. The first person protagonist, the Wanderer, together with a hermit he meets, pass through various scenes of human lust and folly, and of cultural achievement, until finally the hermit urges the Wanderer to become a poet, shows him a procession of personified virtues and vices, then reveals himself as an angel and departs with the advice:

Justly to know thyself, peruse mankind;
To know thy God, paint nature on thy mind: (p. 317)

Savage practically eschews action in this rambling discursive poem in favour of nature description, emotional rhapsody, and didactic moral. His pre-romantic tone, for example in the lines "o'er all his soul, / The soft, wild wailing, amorous passion stole!" (p. 305), shapes and imbues

¹⁶Richard Savage, "The Poems of Richard Savage," Works of the English Poets, XI, 301-17.

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the entire poem. Despite some passages of poetic grace, for instance: "her charms decay, / And shape, through rustling reeds, a ruffled way" (p. 312), and some momentum of dramatic expectation, the poem is not clearly one thing or another; its story does not, as in the moral tales previously considered, serve to illustrate meaning; nor is the meaning made to climax the action, as in Parnell's Hermit. However, Savage's poem well illustrates a type of marginal moral tale much used by poets of the period, possibly precursors of similar philosophic excursions in poets, Wordsworth, for example, in the nineteenth century.

Parnell's The Gift of Poetry¹⁷ similarly illustrates the narrative insufficiency of the popular religious thesis story. The poem begins with a first person address to the Deity, continues with long rhapsodic speeches by Old Testament characters, from Moses on to Habakkuk, intermixed and ended with the narrator's apostrophes to God. Since the sole unifying device is a consistent sublime tone, the narrative components remain, even more than Savage's, an aggregate. No plot emerges; the poem becomes, in the tradition of the seventeenth century, a religious panegyric, or hymn.

¹⁷Parnell, "Poems," 371-401.

Parnell's theme is the great design of the universe:

See the grand round of Providence's care,
See realms assisted here, and punish'd there;
O'er the great circle cast thy wondering eyes,
Thank while you gaze, and study to be wise. (p. 401)

He keeps this theme in a steady lifeless focus, which, judging from the great amount of this type of poetry in the period, satisfied many contemporary readers. His thesis relates to the life of the times; but it so dominates the poem and shapes it as panegyric that however suitable and rewarding this was to contemporary readers, it becomes intolerable reading today because it offers nothing else but its now outmoded thesis.

Stephen Duck illustrates, in The Shunamite,¹⁸ the same didactic excess in relation to narrative as in The Wanderer and The Gift of Poetry, but with the narrative potency further weakened by almost lyrical form. Duck's thesis is deistic:

We live and die, and both, as he thinks fit,
Who may command: but Mortals must submit.
This Fate the King, as well as Peasant finds;
Nor is it evil, but to evil Minds-- (p. 21)

He conveys the theme through the biblical story of the girl who in despair over the death of her child, seeks aid from Elisha, who restores the baby. Duck structures his story

¹⁸Stephen Duck, The Beautiful Works of Stephen Duck The Wiltshire Bard (London: [publisher not shown], 1753), pp. 14-23.

with an invocative prayer by the girl, followed by a brief narrative transition; then a dramatic monologue interspersed with brief transitional narratives and a choral hymn; and a final choral praise to God.

Duck uses little of the typical neo-classic language of his day but draws from nature: he likens, for example, death to frost, fear to an eclipse, and links the child to nature by metaphor:

The glowing Rose was quickly seen to fade:
At once his Beauty, and his Life decay'd. (p. 18)

Duck thus shares with Savage a tendency to diverge from neo-classic norms, while his strong emotional overtone and the human interest of his poem keep the story in clearer focus.

William Meston¹⁹ shows perhaps the least sense of form of the writers of didactic tales. He says in his Preface that he wrote to please the buyer, and his poems reached a sixth edition by 1767; but, at least, in the narratives, incongruity of form renders them lifeless today. His Old Mother Grim's Tales is an example of the linked type of tale; for in structure it is a Decad, or set of ten stories, tied together by the common narrator, Old Mother Grim. However, she exists merely as a casual commentator,

¹⁹William Meston, The Poetical Works of the Ingenious and Learned William Meston, 6th ed. (Edinburgh: F. Robertson, 1767), pp. 71-148.

to effect transition, and does not appear between all the tales. The tales themselves are slight; mostly mythological in content, humorous in tone, and functioning to satirize, ridicule, and moralize. The form varies from sermon-exemplum-moral, to straight tale with implicit moral.

Most effective as narratives are The Cobbler. An Irish Tale, an exemplum about a rich man who thinks a cobbler has jumped down his throat, and Phaeton Burlesqued, from Ovid's story, but highly colloquial and with much concrete diction and imagery, excellent idiomatic dialogue and description, and only a brief, tagged-on moral:

So have seen, with armed heel,
A wight bestride a commonweal,

Generally, the tales in this poem lack originality and narrative propriety. They are referred to here only to illustrate the Decad characteristic.

The didactic tale, in summary, shows the same range in both its two main forms of allegory and moral tale. This extends from almost total thesis at the expense of story--as in Alma in allegory, or The Wanderer in the moral tale--to the predominance of the fictional picture--as in The Three Bonnets in allegory, or The Fortune Hunter in the moral tale. In most of the allegories the action comprises a brief episode designed to illustrate an unchanging value, though Ramsay and Somerville move part way

towards a progressive plot in which character causes action. Notions and emotions range widely: seventeenth-century sermon-like features, Gothic melodrama, sentiment, realism, and topical political relevance, all appear. The nature of these poems ties them largely to an upper-class audience; for the fictional characteristics of these highly form-conscious allegories do not diverge as much from those of the heroic narrative poetry of the period as do the characteristics of the moral tale.

The moral tale, like the allegory, still looks backward: The Hermit, The Gift of Poetry, and The Shunamite are close to exemplums. It shows, however, more freedom from the past narrative habit than the allegorical tale does: The Wanderer is romanticized philosophy, Ali Beg catches some of the emotional conscience of the times, The Fortune Hunter shows the effect of topical experience on character, Phaon to Sappho dramatizes its moral in an effective story. In the moral tale the fiction begins to exist at least on a par with the moral intent: character tends to become more distinctive, matter and form to fuse into more aesthetic wholes, and the general tone and form to forecast the future in verse narrative.

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2. The Comic Tale.

Metrical tales of the early eighteenth century which are unified by their comic tone generally take the form of bawdry, fabliau, or burlesque. This section deals with each in turn. The bawdy tale appeared in profusion during the early eighteenth century. In the hands of poets such as Prior this becomes merely indecorous light verse, for example, the following near-narrative squib:

Says Pontius in rage
 contradicting his Wife,
 "You never yet told me
 "one truth in your life."
 Vext Pontia no way
 could this Thesis allow,
 "You're a Cuckold," say's she,
 "do I tell you Truth now?"²⁰

Others, for example Richard Duke's A Song, carry the type to its carnal extreme of double entendre:

After the fiercest pangs of hot desire,
 Between Panthea's rising breasts
 His bending breast, Philander rests;
 Though vanquish'd, yet unknowing to retire:
 Close hugs the charmer, and asham'd to yield,
 Though he has lost the day, yet keeps the field.

When, with a sigh, the fair Panthea said,
 "What pity 'tis, ye gods, that all
 The noblest warriors soonest fall!"
 Then with a kiss she gently rais'd his head;
 Arm'd him again to fight, for nobly she
 More lov'd the combat than the victory.

²⁰Prior, "Truth Told at Last. An Epigram," Works, I, 686.

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But, more enrag'd for being beat before,
 With all his strength he does prepare
 More fiercely to renew the war;
 Nor ceas'd he till the noble prize he bore:
 Ev'n her such wondrous courage did surprise;
 She hugs the dart that wounded her, and dies.²¹

In between these extremes is a great quantity of bawdy narrative unified only by wit, unexpressive of the moral bases of society, and generally unillustrative of anything but a physical sexual relationship between men and women. It necessarily limits its audience accordingly.

William Congreve offers two examples of the long bawdy tale.²² In Homer's Hymn to Venus he tells the lascivious story of Venus, who in disguise seduces Anchises and next day reveals herself and tells him that their child shall be Aeneas. Congreve uses overt sexual imagery, for example: "her panting breast" (p. 308), so that his story becomes a literary strip-tease, flawed by a long digression by Venus on the future of Troy. Matter and form fail to reflect the witty purpose of this poem; its confusion of form makes it a poor story.

Congreve's An Impossible Thing. A Tale, more indecorous than erotic, comes with variations from La Fontaine.

²¹Richard Duke, "The Poems of Richard Duke," Works of the English Poets, IX, 224.

²²William Congreve, "The Poems of William Congreve," Works of the English Poets, X, 304-309.

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The Devil agrees to make a young man's mistress obliging, provided the youth keeps the Devil occupied with tasks. The youth soon runs out of tasks. When he tells his mistress the story, she gives him a pubic hair to be straightened. The Devil cannot complete the task and the contract lapses:

Away the fiend like lightning flies,
And all his wit to work applies:
Anvils and presses he employs,
And dins whole Hell with hammering noise.
In vain: he to no terms can bring
One twirl of that reluctant thing; (p. 305)

This anecdote functions only as indelicate wit, but it represents many similar tales of the period which, with the same characteristic, limit themselves to the same small audience of early eighteenth-century upper-class "wits."

Shenstone, in The Charms of Precedence; a Tale,²³ tells about a shepherd who, finding that his field is being robbed by night, lies in wait and catches a matron and two girls, and demands sexual recompense. The matron stands on social precedence that she shall be first, but the shepherd adheres to natural precedence and takes the prettiest girl first. Shenstone tells this tale well; but its bawdy content, pastoral tone, and heavy classical allusions put it in the same class of artificial witticism as Congreve's.

²³Shenstone, Works, pp. 88-94.

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Jonathan Swift's Strephon and Chloe²⁴ exemplifies the bawdy town pastoral, though Swift's moral, on man's animality, turns the tale into a narrative essay. Swift tells about Chloe, who seems to Strephon a virtual goddess until, married and bedded, she has to use the bed pot and he discovers that she is but mortal. Swift's diction in this anecdotal witticism matches his cynical and scatological tone. As a story the poem lacks any conclusion, changing in the end into a moral argument; but it illustrates a great number of similar coarse town pastorals and eclogues. In contrast to the sour humour of these stories, the felicitous comedy of the sexes in prose fiction such as Fielding's Joseph Andrews is refreshingly sweet; but these bawdy tales reach back into Restoration cynicism rather than forward to the demands of the rising reading public of the eighteenth century.

The fabliau, or comic tale of the contemporary scene, also attracted many poets. The fabliau tends to reflect life as it is--rather than life as it should be, as idealized in allegory or moral tale, or life made carnally callous, as in bawdry. It also by the nature of its form presents episode rather than an articulated plot: the action reveals a

²⁴Jonathan Swift, The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams, 2d ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), II, 584-93.

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situation which the unchanging characters manoeuvre within but do not act to change.

Of the many types of fabliau which appeared during the period, Wesley's exemplify those written in a vein of pleasant good humour. His tales are much alike in length, tone, structure, and texture, and one may be taken as representative not only of Wesley's but also of the many others shown in Appendix 1, of which most are similar to his. In The Basket,²⁵ Tom, a footman, sees a grocer beat his wife when she from pride refuses to serve in the store. Later, Tom tells his master the story. Their laughter so irritates the mistress that she tries to strike Tom, hits her husband instead, and is herself beaten. When Tom, belowstairs, relates all this to the maid, he and the maid also fall to blows.

Wesley writes his tales in the form of an exemplum with moral: the closing lines of The Basket, for example, include the moral:

If you're too weak to win the field,
'Tis best without a combat yield:

He writes the tales with colloquial humour, peoples them with tradesmen or servants and their masters and mistresses, and sets them in the domestic surroundings of daily life, within which their interactions produce amusing trifles or

²⁵Wesley, Poems, pp. 329-36.

anecdotes. Though Wesley, working within the confines of his form, produces only disparate episodes, several of his tales could be linked into the sequential patterns of novels such as Fielding's Joseph Andrews, or Tobias Smollett's Humphry Clinker, because the worlds are essentially similar. Like the novelists, and unlike the writers of heroic narrative poetry, Wesley paints from life, though his rendition is simplified.

Somerville exemplifies the more indelicate vein of fabliau, but otherwise his tales show the same characteristics as Wesley's and are equally representative of numerous similar metrical tales.²⁶ In The Night-Walker Reclaimed: A Tale, a young squire marries an old maid for her money. His servant spreads the tale that the squire sleep-walks but is all right if unmolested. So the squire moves at will by night through the house and impregnates all the maids. Finally his wife changes place with one of the maids; and when she reveals herself, her husband agrees to behave henceforth.

Somerville uses coarse diction and imagery, in a long simile, for example, likening a secret to a diarrhoea. Though a mild poetic justice operates, the double sexual standard vitiates the ethical significance and links this

²⁶Somerville, "Poems," 229-32, 225-27.

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tale rather closely to the bawdy tale; but Somervile unifies his poem by its humorous action, not by artificial wit.

In another fabliau, Somervile tells a "shaggy dog" story. This is The Officious Messenger; a Tale, in which a dinner guest who fouls his trousers en route to the meal, is betrayed when his dog drags into the host's dining hall, in the middle of dinner, the offensively odorous underthings which his master had discarded in the fields. The first person onlooker ironically comments:

The dog whom nothing can mislead
Must be a dog of parts indeed. (p. 225)

Despite the indelicacy of its topic, the wit and humour of this fabliau skips in tune to its lines:

Brisk as a snake in merry May,
That just his coat has slough away,
Gladsome he caper'd o'er the green,
As he presum'd both sweet and clean; (p. 227)

Ramsay's fabliaux show characteristics similar to those above but he varies the form and enlivens the tone. For example, Christ's Kirk on the Green²⁷ celebrates a topical rural wedding in highly indelicate ten-line stanzas, with a refrain: "At Christ Kirk of the Greene that day." Ramsay added two new cantos to the fifteenth-century original of this rollicking prothalamion in which vivid, comical description much outweighs action.

²⁷Ramsay, The Works of Allan Ramsay, ed. George Chalmers (Edinburgh: A. Fullarton and Co., 1848), I, 304-32.

The burlesque tale is distinguished in this study from the mock-heroic, discussed in Chapter III, mainly by its lack of epic parallels and allusion. Like the mock-heroic, the burlesque tale shows a wide range of content and style.

Surprisingly, one of the Restoration wits produced a burlesque bawdy tale which is more tolerable reading today than the bawdy tales of Congreve's, Shenstone's, or Swift's. William Wycherley, in Hero and Leander in Burlesque,²⁸ in its 1728 edition, draws on the traditions of the past. Wycherley follows fairly closely his classical original, but peoples it with contemporary types. In his story the inhabitants of Leander's town (the hero's) cross over the Hellespont to Hero's town (the heroine's) for their annual celebration. Leander and Hero fall in love. Leander later drowns while trying to swim back to Hero; while she, watching him from her window, falls and also drowns.

Wycherley caricatures his characters: Hero is a regular whore, Leander a naive bumpkin. He renders them with fair psychological validity, except that he fails to differentiate their respective modes of speech from that of the narrator: they all speak with the same voice. Wycherley

²⁸William Wycherley, The Complete Works of William Wycherley, ed. Montague Summers (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), IV, 75-102.

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does, however, develop the action from the nature of his characters. For example, when the pair are finally closeted together, in a reversal of sexual roles which mirrors their previous characterization, Hero must woo Leander, who prefers food and drink to sex. Fielding, in Joseph Andrews, also treats reversal of sexual roles in mock-heroic fashion; but where Fielding, by dramatizing his hero's country innocence in contrast to the depravity of men in the city, turns sexual reversal to social commentary, Wycherley turns it only to wit.

Wycherley develops his poem as a romance travesty, with a witty humorous tone:

But when you know his Education, you'll
Allow the Man in all points fit to rule. (p. 75)

Day in her large Cow-eyes was broad awake,
No heavy sleepy Morn' there seem'd to break. (p. 79)

In the next place the Queen of Sluts alone is
With dainty, fine, Hober-de-hoy-Adonis, (p. 86)

Can Female-hold keep Love's Wild-Fire within-dore?
No. If we shut the Gate, 'twill out at Windore.
(p. 91)

The burlesque swamps the story. Wycherley spends some eighty lines, for example, on a coarsely witty portrait of Hero's mother, who "kept the Empire of her Bed to cough, / Snore, belch, break wind . . . (p. 78); but he does not follow this up and use the mother functionally in the story. Those incidents which he does use functionally he depicts in equally coarse diction:

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And Lamp goes out, and into Bed she goes,
 Then (as I told you) ere cock crow'd thrice,
 And Hero had piss'd once, Leander twice. (p. 90)

In some passages the tone of coarse wit serves to help tell the tale, as for example in the following:

Alas, said he, good Hero, if your Tongue
 You had kept to your self but when you kist
 I likewise to my self had kept my Fist.
Catso, quoth Hero, was that all the Matter?
 Indeed you shan't find fault with that herea'ter,
 But from her Sluts trick she cou'd not refrain:
 Whereat Leander once more did look big,
 And, sputt'ring, call'd her impudent . . .
 (pp. 93-94)

But on the whole the coarse and salacious wit, in the cynical mode of the Restoration rakes, overpowers the story. Although he falls far short of the pornographic wit of John Cleland (1709-1739), Wycherley writes in a somewhat similar indelicate style; and he draws his narrative so much to this specific end that the finished picture excludes any broader perspective of reality. His use of the term "Eastward ho!" (p. 99), the usual cry of the Thames boatmen in his own day, makes a Thames of the Hellespont and by implication possibly identifies Leander with some seventeenth-century gallant; but such specifically topical allusions only narrow the focus; Wycherley provides no broad vistas.

His story comes alive because he peoples it with individuals who could not well be transposed to some other story. Moreover, in the true vein of the burlesque, he creates people who, as caricatures, seem at least as true to

Consider first, you save her diet;
Consider next, you keep her quiet: (p. 284)

"A Roasted ant, that's nicely done,
By one small atom of the Sun.
These are flies' eggs, in moon-shine poach'd;
This a flea's thigh in collops scotch'd,
'Twas hunted yesterday i' th' Park,
And like t' have 'scaped us in the dark.
This is a dish entirely new,
Butterflies' brains dissolv'd in dew;
These lover's vows, these courtier's hopes,
Things to be eat by microscopes:
These sucking mites, a glow-worm's heart,
This a delicious rainbow-tart!"
"Madam, I find, they're very nice,
And will digest within a trice;

Oberon finally takes Orpheus to purgatory where, as directed by Oberon, he sows the seeds of all the vices:

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"scatter them but well; and you'll deserve the gratitude of Hell."

King adroitly matches rhythm, rhyme, and language to achieve a colloquial persiflage, as for example:

"I come from Oberon," quoth prince Prim.
 "'Tis well," quoth Bocai: "What from him?"
 "Why, something strange; this honest man
 Had his wife died; now, if he can,
 He says, h'd have her back again." (p. 286)

For subject matter he reaches back, if in travesty, to the Elizabethan Ovidian tale. His imagery appropriately parallels the classical content:

A pearl of milk, that's gently prest
 From blooming Hebe's early breast;
 With half of one of Cupid's tears,
 When he in embryo first appears; (p. 286)

He develops his subject episodically, and to a conclusion which leaves the opening problem of Orpheus' reaction to Dice's death unresolved; and though by humour and imaginative inventiveness he enlivens the story, the life he gives it is only that of a game, not of reality. King thus writes in the seventeenth-century tradition of courtly wit, with the inherent limitation of appeal which this entails.

Swift provides an example of a more topical mythological burlesque. In Cadenus and Vanessa,³⁰ with court case technique and something of mock-heroic style, Swift tells a

³⁰Swift, Poems, II, 683-714.

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story in which the nymphs accuse man before Venus, the judge, of turning love into a matter of either intrigue or money. Man's defendant pleads that the case is irrelevant because the nymphs are such non-entities that they deserve nothing better. Venus defers judgment and creates Vanessa as the epitome of charm, grace, and wit, and possessing the intellect of a man, to serve as a model for the nymphs; but in practice the paragon bores the beaux and alienates the girls. Cupid, to vindicate his mother, makes Vanessa fall in love with old Cadenus, but he offers mere friendship. Venus finally rules that the men are at fault for lacking taste.

Wit unifies this episode, which perhaps should be considered a didactic metrical tale, except that the fictional process becomes itself the meaning, while usurping the reader's interest. However, despite its narrative propriety, the poem's orientation of wit and mythology tie it, along with the other burlesques discussed, restrictively to the past.

Ramsay, in The Battel; or, Morning Interview,³¹ burlesques another type of tale frequently written in the period: the topical town pastoral, sometimes appearing as a town eclogue. In Ramsay's town pastoral, Damon, the hero,

³¹Ramsay, Works, ed. George Chalmers, I, 275-83.

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awakes, rouses his valet to groom him, goes to Celia's where she, still a-bed and thinking him her cousin, bids him enter. He is dazed by the fair spectacle she presents; she is indignant at his unannounced entrance. Venus, however, sends Cupid in the shape of Celia's dog, Shock, to incite love in Celia; and she accepts Damon's engagement ring.

A first person onlooker tells this mock-pastoral, mainly by description and action and with a minimum of dialogue. Despite the mythological machinery, the characters come alive; and their love, though depicted comically, seems more real than pastoral.

Ramsay writes with something of the rococo elegance of Pope's The Rape of the Lock and the sensuous wit of Gay's The Fan. For example, he terms the petticoat "this oval conic vault of love" (p. 279); but he makes little use of the supernatural; and his action, though set like Pope's opening scene in an elegant boudoir, seems like Somerville's more realistic than mocking. Despite the editorially omniscient narrator, a tinge of sentiment links the reader to the character, closing up the gap of burlesque detachment:

. . . she lifted up her head,
And blush'd a smile that almost struck him dead;
(p. 278)

Speechless he stood, and waited for his doom:
(p. 279)

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He for a diamond ring receiv'd a kiss
Of her soft hand; (p. 282)

Ramsay's emotional patriotism also breaks in on the detached point of view:

Where once, alas! where once! the three estates
Of Scotland's parliament held free debates;
(p. 277)

and his moral earnestness leads him to close the poem in a sombre mood not quite in keeping with burlesque spirit:

What lofty thoughts do sometimes push a man
Beyond the verge of his own native span!
Keep low thy thoughts, frail clay, nor boast thy pow'r,
Fate will be fate; and since there's nothing sure,
Vex not thyself too much, but catch th' auspicious hour.
(p. 277)

The mythological machinery, an unobjectionable convention in its own day, does not create a background against which to show the absurdity of actual life through the mock-pastoral antics of a fictional one. On the other hand, it weakens the poem as a tolerable story by today's conventions. If the convention is accepted, The Battel is a charming and attractive story.

Breval also wrote a burlesque town pastoral, Mac-Dermot,³² verging on mock-heroic, but with much more topical atmosphere than any of the burlesques so far discussed. The hero, a young Irish rustic, Mac-Dermot, when

³²J[ohn] D[urant] Breval, Mac-Dermot: or, the Irish Fortune-Hunter. A Poem. In Six Cantos. By the Author of the Art of Dress. (London: E. Curll, 1717).

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elevated to the position of footman, soon steals off with all the loot he can carry to seek his fortune in London. A procuress introduces him to Rosaline, a lecherous wealthy widow, who tells him:

Since first in genial wars I try'd my skill,
Oft as I fought, I prov'd the Conqueror still;
But thou, triumphant Youth, hast made me yield,
And fairly quit the long contested Field. (p. 31)

He lives in splendor on her money until she asks him to marry her, when he runs off with all her jewels.

Breval in the Preface calls Mac-Dermot a true history. Several features support this: many of the names appear disguised by initials and dashes; Rosaline, particularly in her distress at Mac-Dermot's rejection of her, appears more real than caricature; the cynical tone and the disregard of poetic justice (though Rosaline perhaps deserves her fate) reflect the actual more than the mockery of it. On the other hand, Breval burlesques enough of the poem that its documentary actuality does not unify it. His cow, for instance, grieves at Mac-Dermot's leaving home:

Nor can his Cow extort a single Tear;
His melancholy Cow which lonesome stands,
No longer milk'd by her Mac-Dermot's Hands; (p. 7)

His grandfather's ghost advises him to go to London. When Rosaline praises his prowess after an heroic sexual bout, he rejoins with an heroic speech about his forbears, ending:

For know, from Giant Race, the Macs are sprung,
Hibernian Heroes, fam'd before the Flood. (p. 32)

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When Cupid reports Mac-Dermot's lusty prowess to the gods, they become jealous. The poem thus exists as a rather formless narrative. It exhibits traits of social actuality, of mock-heroic, and of burlesque metrical tale, with none of these sufficiently dominant to give the poem unity.

Breval's first person onlooker in telling this picaresque story beckons to his readers with phrases such as "my Gentle Reader" but keeps an objective distance from the characters. Though Breval's story unfolds with force and speed, his verse scarcely warrants being called poetry. It has such typical stock diction as "the feather'd Kind" (p. 17), "the Female Kind" (p. 18), and "the Vermin-killing Race" (p. 24) [tailors]; but the many simple similes fail to compensate for the lack of metaphoric intensity.

In the Preface Breval says that the moral of Mac-Dermot is to teach women to judge men not by a co-efficient of sexual pleasure but by one of merit and sense. He interpolates serious passages, for example, "Shades themselves are touch'd with human Woe" (p. 12); but other than such inorganic asides the poem has no moral focus.

The comic tale, in summary, includes bawdry, fabliau, and burlesque, though these classifications in practice overlap. The bawdy tale in its regular form, as in Congreve, Shenstone, and Swift, shows little tendency towards change

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in form, substance, or technique. Its essence is anecdotal sexual wit.

The fabliau presents characteristically a fictional world, if in small and comical perspective, rather than the brief joke of the bawdy tale. Its characters react in episodes which give some impression of daily life among the ordinary people of the time but without much ethical significance, and with enough indelicacy to limit its audience even in its own day. It steps clear of the mythological and figurative props and the idealized action and setting of heroic and thesis narrative poetry, but stops short of creating characters who exist as individuals.

The burlesque tale ranges widely, from the laughing fun of King's mythological world, as in Orpheus and Eurydice, to the brutal cynicism of Breval's contemporary London, in Mac-Dermot. It walks beside the mock-heroic which casts its mythological shadow across most of the burlesque metrical tales; and where one stands apart, Wycherley's Hero and Leander, for example, its classical source nevertheless shadows it. The burlesque in substance reaches to the past. Few poets attempt, like Breval, to burlesque contemporary conditions as the novelists were doing. However, in spirit most of the burlesque metrical tales do reflect the temper of their own day.

The comic tale as a whole thus tends to part company with the heroic poem and with the didactic tale, and, like the mock-heroic, to reflect the spirit of its own times.

3. The Sentimental and Romantic Tale.

The poets of the early eighteenth century wrote many metrical tales unified by a romantic or a sentimental principle. These show greater variety of substance, form, and style than any of the narrative modes previously considered in this study, and many sharply diverge from the characteristics of the other modes.

Perhaps most divergent are the tales of Thomas Purney.³³ In substance Purney introduces psychologically realistic adolescent love affairs; in form he eschews the popular heroic, didactic, and witty modes evinced by the poems seen earlier in this study, in favour, as Bonamy Dobrée says, "of artless stories";³⁴ in style he evokes, by a medium bordering between narrative and drama, a sentimentalized never-never land of pastoral. Marion Bragg

³³Thomas Purney, The Works of Thomas Purney, The Percy Reprints, No. XII, ed. H.O. White (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1933).

³⁴Bonamy Dobrée, English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century 1700-1740 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 143.

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comments that the pastoral may consist of pure narrative, of pure dialogue, or of both.³⁵ Purney attempts the latter. The total effect is a voice peculiar to Purney.

The Purney mode appears first in a poem entitled Paplet: or Love and Innocence. Pastoral the I. In the story Paplet, age 13-14, talks with her friend Soflin about love and about Soflin's lover, Collikin, while the shepherd Cubbin, in love with Paplet, and fearful that she also should love Collikin, eavesdrops on their girlish confidences. What Cubbin overhears confirms his fear that he is losing Paplet to Collikin. He later catches Paplet alone to plead his suit. But Paplet has become enamoured with the idea of Collikin and sends the disconsolate Cubbin away.

Purney expands this simple tale by a mixture of approximately half narrative, half dialogue. The first person narrator speaks with the same tone of voice and language as the characters so that the narrator-character distance is closed up. For example, the narrator says:

In sooth some half endea! undeckt they be.
Honey-lip Gales soft breathed on their Hair,
Waved their Cloaths, and did their Bosoms bare.
And well Iwis, as bare their bosoms, all
The Flowerets out that decked 'em did fall. (p. 10)

The two girls talk in a similar vein of pastoral sensuality:

³⁵Marion Bragg, The Formal Eclogue in Eighteenth-Century England. University of Maine Studies, 2d Series, No. 6 (Orono, Maine: University of Maine Press, 1926), p. 37.

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Paplet

Now much I marl: 'Tis pretty; if tell Truth!
But say; Ha, Ha! Be He so soft in sooth?

Soflin

My gentle Mey, he is of gentlest mood.
Oh that he were my BROTHER! sure I would
Taken his Hand and tender lead him in,
When so he to the distant Field had been.
There pretty stroak his Hand, Ne have it said
See Soflin there, O see! A fawning Maid!
In his soft Bosom I my Hand would slip,
And hang upon the sweetness of his Lip.

Paplet

Don't Soflin, Don't! how can'st talk so? Lips sweet
How meanest sweet? How does know be sweet? (p. 12)

Purney keeps narrator and characters dramatically separated, even to setting the speakers off in dramatic typeset as above, yet he uses the narrator to relate Paplet's final speech. Thus Purney experiments with narrative technique as though seeking for the immediacy of the epistolary method, which the novelists adopt; but he makes only a tentative semi-dramatized step toward such narrative form.

Purney extends the sensual tone, noted above, even to the title, "Paplet," yet he skilfully modulates it to the substance. His theme is the mystery of sex in the awakening heart and consciousness of the adolescent girl. When Paplet speaks, all innocent, yet all eager to learn the nature and manners of the other sex, the tone conforms to her mood: "Be He so soft in sooth? Lips sweet / How meanest

sweet? How does know be sweet?" (p. 12). When Soflin speaks, on the other hand, the sensual tone intensifies for she is experienced, though pastorally tender, and by her demeanour arouses sexual desire towards Collikin in Paplet:

And oh, his ringlet-locks, where they fell
Tittled my breasts! and I was 'shamed to tell. (p. 15)

The narrator's voice, however, imposes an overall Watteau-like effect which stabilizes the sensuality in a pastoral sweetness:

They go: Their BOSOMS ope to th' Evening air:
And dip their blooming BEAUTYS fresh and fair:
The pretty play and paddle in the Wet:
And strew with fairest Flow'rs the Streamulet. (p. 18)

Such psychological verisimilitude reflects novelistic rather than narrative poetic trends of the day, but Purney is in advance of the contemporary novel in his freedom from message; his poem functions to please.

Purney treats time with similar realism. The narrated time runs from the early morning discussion between Paplet and Soflin through to Paplet's day-dream about Collikin "'til far the Night was spent" (p. 20). The total time encompasses not only the narrated time but also the past when Cubbin as a poet would eavesdrop, then record his overheard conversations, "out-scrawl and print em in the Sand, / All as he lay along with Crook in Hand" (p. 3). The total time also encompasses a time subsequent to the narrative time when:

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All he had seen or heard, in head kept he,
To cut in Crook, or mark upon his Tree. (p. 20)

The kernel of the tale Purney keeps in realistic time perspective, and in this marks a novelistic more than a contemporary narrative poetic technique.

Purney's Lallet: or, the Tender Shepherdess.

Pastoral the II resembles Paplet in form and style, but its substance differs. In this tale, Lallet the shepherdess tells her lover, Fauney, the shepherd, to wait for her while she goes off to pick strawberries. Artfully she stays away longer than expected to heighten his longing for her. Fauney, seeing Paplet, asks her if she has seen Lallet; when Paplet says she has not, Fauney runs off in search. Lallet, meanwhile, returns and laments her cruelty, comforted by Paplet and Cubbin, until Fauney returns, and:

Together thro' the WOOD they pass;
With eachen had his pretty Lass.
Merry as Lamkins on the LEA,
And well ye know how merry they. (p. 34)

Lallet tells a story but upon so thin a plot that the poem exists more as a mood painting than as a story. Its characters scarcely differ. Lallet coquettes:

Thus long he sate; still wondering why
She came not; but she then was by;
The Lass stood by; stood 'hind a BOUGH:
Laughing, to think what he would do
When found she came not. (pp. 24-25)

but her coquetry does not function as a foil to Paplet's innocence, as Soflin's sensual provocation does in the

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poem Paplet. Purney's tone is more highly sexual than in Paplet; but he imposes the tone by narrator comment, as for example:

Her pretty Paps, like clustering Grapes,
A-thru her VEST soft show'd their Shapes. (p. 28)

[Paplet's lamb] used lye in Lap along,
And touch her Bosom with the Tongue. (p. 25)

In Paplet the sexuality emerges organically from characters, motives, and actions. Lallet conveys the moral of false coyness but to no effect and exists more as an exercise in poetic wit than as an expression of a possible actuality.

The most unusual feature about the poem is its musical comedy atmosphere. Purney divides it libretto-like into scenes, as for example, "Scene 2. A GRASS-PLOT half enclosed by a streamulet." He uses such lyric repetition as "O what a merry Lass am I!" He uses his own brand of poetic diction which adds to the musical comedy atmosphere: "the Lilly-footen Lass" (p. 23), "YOUNGLING-LASS" (p. 25), "the fair-framed he" (p. 25), "the sloe-eyed SWEETONE noted none" (p. 28), "the Silver-shapen Lass" (p. 31). The overall effect is one of an artificial idyll, sensual and musical but dissociated from life.

In Paplet Purney probes adolescent sex interest. He returns to this theme in The Bashful Swain, Pastoral the First. Purney again uses children of about fifteen years of age for his characters. Cuddleit often comes to Paplet's

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house and sleeps with Paplet's brother in the room next to hers where with his ear against the wall he can hear Paplet's breathing. One such night he overhears her tell her little brother Dilly that she is going to sneak out to see Collikin. Cuddleit hurries ahead, but when she and Dilly come along he is too shy to speak of his love. She rebuffs him, overheard by Collikin. Later she overhears Collikin secluded with Soflin, but when Cuddleit comes upon her there, Collikin leaves Soflin to go off with Paplet:

The LAD was jolly as the Day;
 Merry the LASS as Month of May.
 He leap'd and laugh'd a-thwart the Mead;
 She simper'd, smil'd, and turn'd the Head.
 All Way her Vest he smooth'd, and stroak'd her Hair,
 And knew not why, but sigh'd when left the Dear.
 (p. 69)

Although he uses the slightest of plots, Purney's characters come alive in this poem and convey the uncertain gropings of adolescent sexual interest. The setting, too, is more realistic, less idyllic and pastoral, than that of Paplet or Lallet. Paplet and Dilly steal forth realistically down creaky stairs into a real winter morning:

One Night (a frosty Night it was)

 Chary from out the warm Cloaths too crep he; (p. 56)

 O Paplet! were not better now,
 Thy pure warm Bed? What's here but Frost and Snow!
 (p. 62)

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As narrative, however, The Bashful Swain suffers from repetitious scenes and speeches and too little direct action, and a sentimental, melodramatic and mawkish tone. No theme ties the poem together unless it is that the bashful swain never wins the fair. The possible implication that this child-like world reflects adult sexual immaturity remains only suggestive. Purney reaches toward the sentimental which the novel later reflects, but makes no other novelistic overture.

His last narrative, Beauty and Simplicity. Pastoral the Second, also uses the adolescent characters of Paplet, Soflin, and Collikin. Soflin asks Paplet why she weeps. Paplet says it is because she loves Collikin who is pledged to another. (to Soflin, though Paplet conceals this). Just then Collikin comes by, chases them, and catches and fondles Paplet while Soflin unseen looks on. When Collikin leaves, Soflin gives Paplet a bracelet once given to her by Collikin, and tells her to wear it and grieve no more:

. . . Do thou this BRACELET take:
Wear it, as I did, for his sake!
And now, sweet Boy! forever now farewell,
For ever fare thee, fare-thee well! (p. 83)

Though Beauty and Simplicity has the plot unity of the triangle of love, its resolution of the love conflict turns into sentiment. The sentimentality bears mawkish overtones:

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Lay head in Soflie's bosom, Child, and say;
Ne pretty finger put in Eye! (p. 72)

Look, that young Fawn licks t'other, pats it too,
With Footen! how they're happy now! (p. 73)

Anon the Sun gin set, and Stain the Sky,
And glisten on the brooke abie. (p. 75)

The female fondling scenes convey a sense of lesbianism, but the poem does not reach into the human core.

Purney's metrical tales reflect several fictional characteristics peculiar for the narrative poetry of the early eighteenth century. He plays narrative variations on a single theme and links the parts with common characters, tone, and language; yet each poem remains independent. Overall Purney composes a continuum of considerable length, but he does not use the length to develop characters, setting, plot, or ideas; and each of the poems is itself too short for such development.

Purney's use of adolescent characters and his idiosyncratic style convey a sense of parody of the pastoral mode but a parody encompassing some of the features of parody which mark the early novel. His female characters, for example, display genuine psychological traits: he eschews mythology; and, at least in The Bashful Swain, he uses a realistic domestic home in the setting. Purney's erotic sentimentality has affinities with similar characteristics

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in Samuel Richardson's Pamela and Clarissa. Moreover, his pastoral narrative breaks away in substance, form, and style from heroic modes and from other contemporary metrical tales. H.O. White says that Purney "had . . . a visionary glimpse of a kind of poetry utterly unlike anything his contemporaries saw fit to write. . . . His true kinship is with the romantics."³⁶ This is perhaps an exaggerated view of a writer of what are after all pastorals in a neo-classical age, yet White's comments reflect that Purney shares with contemporary novelists at least the characteristics of being experimental.

Stephen Duck's romantic tales show as heavy a neo-classic form as any of those by his higher-class contemporaries, yet derivative as his work is, in one, Avaro and Amanda, a Poem in Four Cantos,³⁷ he turns aside in subject matter from contemporary England. The poem tells of the avaricious Avaro who is shipwrecked in Africa and saved by Amanda, a negress. Avaro gets her with child, persuades her to sail with him in a passing ship, then sells her into slavery in the Barbadoes. Once again shipwrecked, he is killed.

³⁶H.O. White, ed. The Works of Thomas Purney. The Percy Reprints, No. XII (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1933), pp. xxiv-ix.

³⁷Duck, Works, pp. 34-55.

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Duck's characters act from plausible motives--Avaro from lust and avarice, Amanda from love; and they come alive to a degree unusual in the narrative poetry of this period. His settings are concretely vivid; of a storm at sea he says, for instance:

Redoubled Peals of roaring Thunder roll
And Flames, conflicting, flash from Pole to Pole,
(p. 54)

He opens with an invocation to the muse, introduces a dream warning, uses such stock language as "the tuneful Maid," and "Cupid's Dart" (p. 35); yet his imagery is functional. For example, he depicts Amanda's charm by similes of dance and masquerade, likens a wild boar startling the secluded lovers to a gunshot startling pigeons, and likens Amanda's going aboard the ship to a heifer being yoked.

A first person onlooker previews the action and states the theme:

Ingratitude, and broken vows, and Lies,
The mighty Ills that spring from Avarice. (p. 50)

But his detached tone shifts later to the sentimental:

How oft! alas! is Innocence betray'd
When Love invites and Flatterers persuade? (p. 43)

The implausible closing scene illustrates, as well, in contrast to the rest of the poem, a disappointing melodramatic tone:

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Meanwhile a howling Wolf, with Hunger prest,
 Leap'd on the Wretch! and seiz'd him by the Breast:
 Tore out his Heart, and lick'd the purple Flood;
 For Earth refus'd to drink the Villain's Blood.
 (p. 55)

Avaro and Amanda may be read on the level of both plot and character. Duck structures his story with skill. He uses a chronological sequence but avoids digression, and he concentrates on the scenes which contribute to the climactic drama. He thus achieves a narrative unity. Reader sympathy accrues to Amanda, especially after the moving description of their idyllic love affair. Both plot and character are throwbacks to Restoration heroic drama and the romances of writers such as Aphra Behn, but an incident such as the shipwreck and ensuing idyllic romance looks forward to the Romantics and Byron.

Duck's moral perspective is consistent; everything in the story contributes to the theme of the too trusting love of maid for man who "beguiles the harmless, unsuspecting maid; / Leans on her Breast, and, with a Kiss, betrays" (p. 42). Duck implicitly shows nature as innocent, civilization as impure. His moral position is thus part way along the road to the Romantic world.

James Ralph, in The Lunatik: A Tale,³⁸ also diverges widely from neo-classic narrative norms. He tells a topical

³⁸Ralph, Miscellaneous Poems, pp. 115-25.

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social story whose heroine, Zelinda, is a feminine ideal of a contemporary Londoner:

An Angel knew
No purer Thoughts, and all Humanity
Breath'd in her Voice, and languish'd in her Eye:
(p. 116)

While visiting a mad-house she becomes interested in an inmate who tells her that a girl much like her caused his insanity. Zelinda weeps over his story, henceforth tends him constantly, and on his recovery marries him. The three-dimensional characters and realistic setting produce the action of this simple plot.

Ralph's blank verse, though heavy with neo-classic stock diction, moves with simple sentences and paragraph structure. His earnest tone carries a pathetic sentimentality, as for example in the rhapsody which ends the poem:

Oh! my dear,
Lov'd charming Constancy! my fondest Hope!
My tend'rest Wish! can'st thou descend to bear
All this for me? May I indulge my Heart
In such a tempting Prospect of Delight,
Such a long View of never-ending Joy? (p. 125)

Despite such near pathos, the narrative variety and suspense, and the dramatic intensity, make this a readable romance today. Considering that it appeared in 1729, the poem, in its sympathetic commitment towards the unfortunate, and its realistic depiction of the mad-house, tends to the romantic:

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Within are seen
 The living, sad Originals, to Cells
 All dark, forlorn, and horrible, confin'd;
 Wedded to Pain, incapable of Joy,
 Debarr'd from sweet Society, condemn'd
 To Want, and Misery; to pine with Fear,
 Converse with Groans, yell on the Rack
 Of vehement Despair, or dye away
 With the Excess of Grief; (pp. 117-18)

In Timon and Flavia; or, the Fruitless Repentance.

A Tale,³⁹ Ralph tells the story of the disdainful Flavia who scorns her socially inferior suitor, Timon. Timon goes to war and comes home famous but wounded, to die at Flavia's feet after a long farewell accusation:

Flavia, I dye, with melancholy Voice
 He cries, for you I dye: the Hand of Fate
 Is on me . . . [etc., for nineteen more lines]
 This said, he groan'd, and dy'd . . . (pp. 50-51)

Ralph gives a pointless sixty-two line introduction and weakens his blank verse with such clichés as "Lamp of Life," "Storms of Life," "hopeless Passion," and "peerless Charms" (p. 50); and these, coupled with the implausible story and characterization, the sentimental and melodramatic tone, and the diffuse and verbose development, destroy the balance of matter and form.

In these poems Ralph marks the trend towards a renewed interest in blank verse and topical subject matter in narrative poetry, and towards stories of heroines rather than of heroes. Along with Duck he also marks the shift

³⁹Ibid., pp. 43-52.

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from episode to plot-type stories; for his characters are forces who act to change their situation, rather than merely illustrating some static aspect of it.

Pomfret's Cruelty and Lust: An Epistolary Essay,⁴⁰ is a type of dramatic monologue. The speaker pleads to a conqueror, Neronior (more Nero than Nero), for her husband's life. Neronior agrees, provided that she will give herself to him. She does this, but next morning sees her husband's body hanging on the gallows.

The wife's voice, heard in a letter she is addressing to a friend, melodramatically focuses Neronior's personality:

At every health the horrid monster quaff'd,
Ten wretches dy'd, and as they dy'd he laugh'd;
(p. 320)

The wife quotes his callous proposition:

The pert, gay coxcomb, by these little acts,
Gains an ascendant o'er the ladies' hearts.
But I can no such whining methods use:
Consent, he lives; he dies, if you refuse. (p. 322)

She describes the bloody savagery of his methods:

Here, in a crowd of drunken soldiers, stood
A wretched, poor, old man, besmear'd with blood;
And at his feet, just through the body run,
Struggling for life, was laid his only son; (p. 322)

Pomfret does not attempt to expand the character of any other of the participants, or of the actions, of this brief story. It remains, consequently, almost ballad-like

⁴⁰Pomfret, "Poems," 320-23.

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in its inferential presentation; its skeletal outline contains the basis for a much longer narrative. But Pomfret flaws the ballad-like intensity of his story by his technique. Rather than showing what happens, he has the wife tell about it in formal speech which thins out the dramatic intensity. Her reply to Neronior's proposition, for example, takes up forty lines.

Pomfret intensifies the drama by figurative language dominated by connotations of blood, butchery, cruelty, mockery of the victims, and ruthless rapaciousness. However, in conjunction with the totally helpless figure of the wife, such intensification makes the poem a contrast in blacks and whites, in melodrama and sentimentalism. Although this chiaroscuro looks ahead to similar juxtaposition in Richardson's Clarissa, where Richardson fulfils the authentic potential of his story, transfiguring it into a meaningful study of psychological cause and effect, Pomfret cuts his off at a point where mere pointless suffering leaves evil triumphant. The melodramatic intensity Pomfret achieves bears some analogy to the Gothic extreme in William Beckford's Vathek but does not, as Beckford's does, contribute to any final moral justification.

Cruelty and Lust, then, presents a skeleton rather than a fully fleshed story. Its excessive speech, melodrama, and sentimentalism fetter the potentially swift action. The

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poem prefigures some of the Gothic and sentimental tendencies of the later part of the century but without functional significance.

Edward Young, in The Force of Religion; or, Vanquished Love,⁴¹ tells the story of Lady Jane Grey and her husband on the eve of their execution. Their captors present Jane with her father's freshly severed head, and offer life, and the lives of her husband and his father, if she will accept Catholicism, but she refuses the offer.

Young treats his story dramatically, and gives it a macabre Grave-yard School atmosphere:

A spacious hall is hung with black; all light
Shut out, and noon-day darken'd into night.
From the mid-roof a lamp depends on high,
Like a dim crescent in a clouded sky:
It sheds a quivering melancholy gloom,
Which only shows the darkness of the room.
A shining axe is on the table laid;
A dreadful sight! and glitters through the shade.
(p. 380)

He well depicts the girl's psychological state, but in contrast to his treatment of her weak husband and father-in-law, shows her as so overly heroic that he impairs plausibility. Moreover, he gives his characters such elliptic speech that the story, even when known in advance, is difficult to follow. Young refers, for example, to both Jane's father and to her father-in-law indiscriminately as "father."

⁴¹Edward Young, "The Poems of Edward Young, LLD," Works of the English Poets, XIII, 377-81.

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The editorially omniscient narrator of the story identifies so closely with the heroine that objectivity is impaired, as in normative words such as "melancholy," or "dreadful," in the passage above, or in lines such as the following:

And wondering sees, in sad presaging thought,
From that fair neck, that world of beauty fall,
And roll along the dust, a ghastly ball! (p. 380)

The tone, hyper-emotional, sentimental, and melodramatic, thus lacks control, despite such intense language, as for example: "Life is a forfeit we must shortly pay" (p. 379), or "They stiffen into statues of despair" (p. 380).

Young writes one of the few narrative poems of the period in which time is a functional component. Though he does not use it to effect a cumulative dramatic tension, he does make it a part of the static dramatic setting; for throughout the tale the pressure of the coming execution chills the atmosphere.

Samuel Johnson comments that Young's story though elegant enough was never popular, Jane being "too heroick to be pitied."⁴² Since it appeared in 1714, the poem's pre-romantic emotionalism and Gothic atmosphere might also have clouded its popularity. Young, in writing with such lack of

⁴²Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, The World's Classics (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), II, 436.

control over his material, reflects a shift from the usual narrative practice of the neo-classic age.

Henry Brooke, the novelist, in an incomplete blank verse narrative, provides the beginning of a potential metrical romance. The poem, Conrad; a Fragment,⁴³ opens in a heroic setting, the hall of Conrad's castle, where Conrad sits musing in Shaksperian vein on life and fate:

Half the world,
Down the steep gulf of dark futurity,
Push off their fellows . . .
Whence is the stream of life? (p. 419)

A princess enters to ask for Conrad's daughter in marriage for her father. Conrad and his daughter greet her:

While thus the hero question'd on the height
And depth of vast infinitude, intent
To plumb it with his fathom; through the hall
A sudden radiance broke! All turned their eyes
Upon the coming glory; for of Earth
They did not deem the vision! On she came,
Shulama, daughter of the gold-thron'd king
Of Scandinavia--on she came, in all
Her pleasantness of beauty, as the morn
Blushing amidst the brightness of its east,
Rises on human sight!

.
Conrad advanced, He rais'd the awe-struck maid,
And, to his war-imprinted bosom, clasp'd
The dangers of her beauty.
.

. Segaleme
Appear'd to sight, and fill'd the pass with brightness!
As, should two moons, at east and west, arise
In aspects opposite; and each, in other,
Behold the image of its own perfection;
So shone, so mov'd, so gaz'd, the rival lights
Of Conrad and Ruthamor! They approach'd--
Their steps seem'd measur'd by the sound of music;
And each had lost the memory of herself,
In admiration of the other's beauty! (p. 419)

⁴³Henry Brooke, "The Poems of Henry Brooke," Works of the English Poets, XVII, 418-21.

The minstrel's song of past heroic action follows, then the story breaks off.

Fragmentary as this is, its blank verse, medieval subject, romantic intonation, and descriptive intensity reflect the Gothic and sentimental spirit of the later eighteenth century, and the spirit of romance of the early nineteenth-century metrical romance, more than typical trends of its own day.

The sentimental and romantic metrical tales so far considered reflect wide divergence from the norms of other verse narrative of the time, but some show more tendency to adhere to past narrative conventions. Duck, for instance, whose Avaro and Amanda has Romantic leanings, in Felix and Constance. A Poem, taken from Boccacce,⁴⁴ follows more traditional lines.

In this poem, Felix sails away after Constance's father bars their marriage. She follows, is shipwrecked in Tunis, rescued by Capresa, befriended by the noble Priscilla, and finally rejoins and marries the now famous Felix. The episodic plot of this romance arouses little curiosity or suspense, though it is intricately structured with three flashbacks, so that present and past intertwine. The setting could be anywhere. Duck puts his two-dimensional characters through the episodes as though they were puppets; Constance fails to draw the sympathy which Amanda does in Avaro and Amanda.

⁴⁴Duck, Works, pp. 87-106.

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The highly sentimental tone weakens the plausibility. For the grand reunion, for instance, even the husband of the minor character Capresa is brought back from the galleys to be with his wife. The rhetoric itself illustrates the emotionality:

O Virtue! Virtue! whither art thou fled?
 Why must such Evils in the Guiltless flow?
 Ye Heavens! is Innocence rewarded so? (p. 97)

Duck fails to achieve the dramatic unity and economy which helps make his Avaro and Amanda readable. Capresa, for example, tells her own life story at length, though it is irrelevant to the main plot; and Constance tells her tale three separate times.

Duck's narrator states the pre-romantic theme:

We falsely Man the World's Commander call;
Thou, mightier Monarch, Love! commandest All: (p. 105)

Nevertheless, the poem focuses morally on neo-classic norms: poetic justice reunites both Constance and Capresa with their lost loves, and Priscilla discourses at length on the Great Chain of Being and on cosmic goodness.

Ralph's dramatic epistle, Abelard to Philintus.⁴⁵ is one of many similar treatments of the story of Abelard and Heloise which appeared during the period under study. However, where most of these, like Alexander Pope's, function to disclose a state of sensibility, Ralph's functions

⁴⁵Ralph, Miscellaneous Poems, pp. 137-62.

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to tell the story, in a detached tone, with directness and simplicity, by means of an epistle written by Abelard to his friend, Philintus. Ralph shows only Abelard, whose situation he develops only as a sequence of events, with very little psychological dramatization. He thus unifies and develops his poem by its story. The introductory and concluding comments of the speaker frame the epistle; he begins, for example:

Yet one short Moment to my Lays attend,
 And pitying view your lov'd unhappy Friend!
 My Tale a scene, all gloomy, shall disclose,
 Then read, and in my Grief forget your own. (p. 137)

Within this frame the narrative moves swiftly, without digression or didactic pause, for example:

My youthful Soul bright Science all inspired; (p. 138)
 . . . I thought the Sex vain, thoughtless, gay
 Alas! my Soul did soon its Weakness prove,
 Love to my Eyes, presents a Virgin Dame,
 Fairest of Nymphs, and Heloise her Name. (p. 139)

A certain intensity of tone and the concentration on the story are the chief features which differentiate this poem from the typical verse narrative of the period.

William Shenstone's Love and Honour,⁴⁶ though a romance in blank verse, is heavily neo-classic. A Spanish hostage, Lady Elvira, confesses her love for her captor,

⁴⁶Shenstone, Works, pp. 252-62.

British Prince Henry; and when he spurns her. she turns to the cloister. Shenstone develops this tale, one of the few direct love stories of the period, mainly through Elvira's plea and Henry's reply. The story moves almost in spite of the set speeches, parading with a stiff formality through its heavily adjectival verse and such implausible diction as, "farewell, thou darling youth! the gem / Of English merit!" (ll. 248-49).

Most of the metrical tales unified by sentimental or romantic principle are tied together by a consistent probability; but some lack this organic unity. An example is Matthew Prior's Henry and Emma, a Poem, Upon the Model of the Nut-Brown Maid,⁴⁷ a mixed medieval-mythological romance. The hero, Henry, under the guise of an outlaw, tests the heroine's love by telling her the dangers and discomforts which attend his way of life. When she proves true, he reveals his identity as a nobleman and they marry under the auspices of Venus and Mars:

The Queen of Beauty stop'd her bridled Doves;
 Approv'd the little Labour of the LOVES;
 Was proud and pleas'd the mutual Vow to hear;
 And to the Triumph call'd the God of War:
 (ll. 731-34)

⁴⁷Prior, Works, I, 278-300.

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Prior disrupts the unity of his poem in other ways besides such mythological trappings, for example: he begins with an invocation to "Bright CLOE, Object of my constant Vow" (l. 5); he moralizes directly: "Beautiful Looks are rul'd by fickle Minds" (l. 163); he introduces an elaborate panegyric to Queen Anne and Marlborough, wrought with functionless mythological and personified figures:

And when, as Prudent SATURN shall compleat
The Years design'd to perfect BRITAIN'S state,
The swift-wing'd Power shall take her Trump again,
To sing Her Fav'rite Anna's wond'rous Reign;
To recollect unwearied MARLBRO'S Toils, (ll. 742-46)

Prior writes, like Shenstone, more in the traditional neo-classic vogue than in an experimental one. His tone is not only didactic, as noted above, but also masculine in an aristocratic way; Henry, for example, will take Emma on his terms only. Prior formalizes the dialogue in his poem as a flyting: "The Man / Broke Silence first: the Tale alternate ran" (ll. 250-51). Following this the two characters each have eight speeches, averaging thirty lines apiece, in a rhetoric which recalls the heavy voice of Richard Blackmore:

In Me behold the Potent EDGAR'S Heir,
Illustrious Earl: Him terrible in War
Let LOYRE confess; for she has felt his Sword,
And trembling fled before the BRITISH Lord.
(ll. 448-51)

Prior at other times compresses the discourse to the point where it becomes more wit than narrative:

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By Wonder first, and then by Passon mov'd,
 They came; they saw; they marvell'd, and they lov'd.
 (ll. 76-77)

Thus, despite his ostensibly romantic subject matter, Prior writes in the masculine perspective of the heroic poem, in contrast to the contemporary interest in real human interaction being tentatively explored in some of the metrical tales and novels of the day. He limits his potential audience to readers who would respond to the older tradition of the heroic world.

The sentimental and romantic metrical tale, in summary, moves farthest of all the poems discussed in this study away from past narrative tradition and towards that of the future. Though some poets, such as Shenstone and Prior, try to write romance in the style acceptable to readers of the heroic, most poets write this kind of metrical tale for readers who presumably would be at least as responsive to the common world about them as to the ideal world of the heroic or the artificial world of courtly wit. The tales unified by sentiment or by romance reflect the developing conscience of the age. The fictional process undeniably takes charge: the episode gives way to the plot; characters exert themselves to change their situations, whether for better or for worse; notions and emotions reflect pre-romanticism rather than neo-classicism, particularly the female presence in the reading world and the

increasing interest in the particular in man and nature. Arthur O. Lovejoy cites as perhaps the most significant and distinctive single feature of the Romantic revolution "the shift from the uniformitarian to the diversitarian preconception" and shows that the process of fragmentation of the seventeenth-century concept of cosmic unity began early in the eighteenth century.⁴⁸ A corresponding preoccupation with the particular begins to mark eighteenth-century fiction at least as early as Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719). This tendency, scarcely apparent in heroic or mock-heroic narrative poetry begins to appear in the metrical tale, particularly in the sentimental and romantic type, in the early eighteenth century.

4. Summary.

The poems discussed in this chapter are sufficiently representative of all the metrical tales or fables in Appendix 1 that the remainder need not be considered in detail. Considered statistically, however, they show some interesting implications.

In addition to the 40 odd metrical tales or fables, by 20 poets, discussed in this chapter, the representative

⁴⁸ Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea, Harper Torchbooks (New York: Harper and Row, 1965 [1st publ. 1936]), pp. 288-97.

corpus of narrative poems from 1700-1740 in Appendix 1 includes some 335 metrical tales or fables which have not been discussed, all but 26 of these being less than 200 lines in length. Of these shorter tales, 40 per cent are primarily didactic, including both moral tales, characterized by an explicit and usually tagged-on moral, spoken by the narrator; and fables, characterized by a moral conveyed through the actions and speech of irrational, or of mixed rational and non-rational, characters. Although dates of individual poems are too uncertain to draw conclusions from, of the 30 poets who wrote these primarily didactic poems, only 7 died before 1720. This suggests that the didactic impulse continued little abated throughout the period. But of equal significance is the fact that about 60 per cent of the narrative poems under 200 lines in length are primarily stories rather than didactic tales.

As a whole, the metrical tales and narrative fables of the period show a wide range of fictional characteristics. They exhibit a great many types, some overlapping within single poems, but generally comprising various forms of allegory and moral tale or fable; bawdry, fabliau, and burlesque tale; and sentimental or romantic tale. Four principal narrative characteristics stand out: first, the strong pre-romantic trend; second, the trend to stress the contemporary lower class social scene; third, the increasing

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relevance to the female reader; and fourth, the amount of pungent bawdry. These features have more in common with the developing trends in prose fiction than with the heroic verse fiction of the period and suggest analogously that narrative vitality pulses more in the metrical tales of the period than in the heroic poems or their burlesque counterparts.

Narrative method restricts the full development of the narrative potential in the metrical tale. All too often a didactic form or a satiric or witty tone, in conjunction with couplet versification, leads to epigrammatic, descriptive, or argumentative ~~blanketing~~ of the story. Few poets attempt narrative in blank verse, or in experimental forms such as Purney's or Breval's, or in a stanza form which would permit the full flexibility needed to fulfil plot and characterization within more rigid narrative structures.

The subjects chosen exert no inherent restriction on the narrative, but in the main the poets treat their subject matter universally rather than with concrete supporting detail and take an aristocratic point of view towards it. Even in the farm pastoral world of Purney, for example, no one has to work. This prevailing upper-class orientation yields artificially self-contained worlds. Even where the plot, characters, and setting are lower or middle-class, the narrator's voice, with few exceptions, is upper-class. This

perhaps served well in its day, but it now creates a gap between narrator and his virtual world. Defoe's Robinson Crusoe of 1719 envelops its readers and they become a part of its world; but in the contemporary metrical tale, tone and technique exclude the reader, he is only a spectator.

The poets build the short tales simply, but they do the same with the longer ones, and 29 of the metrical tales shown in Appendix 1 exceed 500 lines in length. The poets attempt little more than the flashback as a variation from chronological structure; tight plots do not exist. Many poets mar the structural unity of their narration by not proportioning it properly or by including extraneous material, and some by not aesthetically completing the story with an organic beginning, middle, and end. Others write embryo short stories but mar them by not adequately developing the dramatic potential.

Generally the poets drench their narratives with neo-classic language which dampens the characterization, washes out the drama, and chills the action. The poets seldom, for example, let their characters speak for themselves in their own voices, but instead impose a neo-classic idiom which is so standard that a character can seldom be identified by voice. This is appropriate in the earlier poems whose prime end is didactic, but as the century goes on and the story tends to overcome the message, this leads to a narrative

imbalance in which the winds of unique characterization and believable action should but cannot blow through the story. Some of the characters are individual, Avaro, for example, in Duck's tale, but most could be transposed from one tale to another without any real effect on the total value of the story. Similarly, instead of electric verbs or search-light epithets, the poet habitually elects the undramatic in language.

Most of the metrical tales of the period are not tolerable reading today because they are too didactic, have unsuitable form, are aesthetically incomplete or overly superficial, tell implausible action, or show faceless characters. A few are still tolerable reading because, despite the general function of most of them to convey ideas or states of sensibility, or to caricature society, these few attain a balance of matter and form in a way which gives them a continuous appeal to the mind, heart, or imagination of the reader.

The writer of metrical tales had three primary narrative routes open to him in the early eighteenth century: first, thesis tales for Puritan middle-class readers, and comic tales for more tolerant upper-class, both aimed predominantly at a masculine audience, and both essentially seventeenth century in mode; second, tales of scandal, romance, or realism, or stories designed to influence

manners, for a predominantly middle-class, mixed audience: third, the new pathways being taken in prose by the novelists, and in verse by the pre-romantic poets. Of these three routes, the poets writing metrical tales took all but those of scandal and manners; but as they departed from the shelter of the known form of the thesis tale, in which past conventions act to stifle vividness and relevance to daily life, they tended to lose coherence of form. This in turn reduced the potential appeal of the newer narrative modes which the poets pursued.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Narrative poetry, a strong impulse in English literature from its earliest times, seems to lack vitality in the early eighteenth century. The purpose of this study was to determine from a representative sample of English narrative poetry from the period 1700-1740 the fictional characteristics of the narrative poetry of the period, and to show that generally the characteristics which emerge adversely affect the power of enduring appeal of such poetry.

The shaping forces of the narrative poetry of the early eighteenth century come principally from the Elizabethan and later seventeenth-century periods, with most pressure on the heroic poem. In particular these forces bring about a reverence for epic as the apex of poetic achievement, but it is a reverence for a special form of epic marked by didactic purpose, perfect protagonist, heroic action, and sublime style. These criteria locked the heroic poem to the moribund traditions of an essentially aristocratically oriented society at a time when the social centre of gravity in England was shifting downwards from court to city, the shift which Pope attacks in The Dunciad but which

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writers of prose fiction, such as Defoe, were beginning to reflect in a more objective way.

Heroic verse fiction scarcely reflects this change. Where it does show its own social environment it does so mainly as panegyric towards the Court and its stars. Poets such as Blackmore produced proficiently built heroic poems (in that they attempted to reflect the desirable attributes of the neo-classic epic concept) but such technical proficiency did not ensure the production of epics which would be successful even as tributes to the waning values of a courtier world.

Blackmore, as representative of such writers, did not succeed. His epics are informed by: a dual unifying principle; action distorted by these principles; stock characterization, similarly distorted; abstract settings; partisan tone; and generally clumsy narrative technique. The total effect of such characteristics is to turn the epic intent into caricature in practice. Blackmore thus fails in imaginative sufficiency and produces neither epic proper, nor neo-classic ideals of epic, nor epic informed by the characteristics of contemporary prose fiction. Instead he produces a distorted and essentially "non-heroic" narrative poem in which an argumentative and panegyric principle wrenches both the poetic reality of the poem as story and its sublimity and cultural comprehensiveness as epic.

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Blackmore's Eliza demonstrates these characteristics, which for the most part are common to the heroic poem of the first half of the early eighteenth century; it is most representative in its predominance of message at the expense of story. His Alfred shows a change which marks the heroic narrative of the second half of the period: characters begin to come alive and incidents become more dramatic; the heroic poem begins to free itself from convention. The better heroic narratives, such as Glover's Leonidas and Wilkie's The Epigoniad, appear at the end of the period.

Nevertheless, throughout the period heroic poetry is stifled by aristocratic bias; episodic plotting designed to illustrate argument; unimaginative characterization; and the rigidity of structure and style imposed by a mechanical application of the concepts of epic, as announced by Davenant and Dryden in the seventeenth century. These conservative characteristics tied the writers to the past and to an artificiality of atmosphere, which is the more striking when contrasted with the tentative realism beginning to appear in the contemporary novel. A new culture was arising, but serious verse narrative was too rigid to capture its temper as the more flexible prose fiction was starting to do.

A similar situation prevails in the mock-heroic narrative poetry of the time. It begins about 1700 with the rather mechanical mixture of neo-classic epic conventions

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with topical substance, as in Garth's The Dispensary and King's The Furmetary, but also shows the balance of Pope's The Rape of the Lock in the next decade, and the tendency to avoid epic structure as shown in Somerville's Hobbinol and Pope's The Dunciad at the end of the period. The mock-heroic shows a less marked aristocratic bias than the heroic: King, Garth, Pope, Meston, and Somerville all explore topical social problems.

This study shows that the more prominent poets tended to move away from burlesque as a mode of poetic fiction, while simultaneously writers of lesser note turned increasingly to it. As narrators, with the exception of Pope and to a lesser degree Somerville, the writers of the period fail to write effective mock-heroic stories. Some cannot surmount the barrier of style and make their work a poor imitation of the Hudibrastic mode; others cannot keep the mock-heroic triad (the heroic base, the mockery of it, and the relevance to the actual) in proper balance. Most, because they do not ridicule enduring things, as Pope so well does, fail to provide a link to later generations of readers.

The metrical tale and fable appeared in profusion during the early eighteenth century, chiefly in didactic, comic, and sentimental and romantic modes. The metrical tale shows wide variety: in form from dream allegory to

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short story, in substance from religious piety to crude sexuality, in tone from sublime to almost macabre, in style from rigid neo-classic couplet to almost musical-comedy libretto. Perhaps most marked, in relation to both heroic and mock-heroic, is the tendency of the tale to escape from conservative tradition and to catch the range of attitude and social conditions of its own era. Most successful as narrative are those which most achieve this yet do so in a way that makes them still significant.

The didactic tale takes the two main forms of allegory and moral tale. Both show the presence of tradition and tend to reflect the past more than the present. This is less marked in the moral tale than in the allegory. In allegory Ramsay's Three Bonnets stands alone as an interesting and well told story of continuing significance and appeal. In many of the moral tales, on the other hand, the fiction begins to exist at least on a par with the moral intent, character to become more distinctive, matter and form to fuse into more aesthetic wholes, and the general tone and form to forecast the future in verse narrative.

The comic tale ranges from laughing humour to cynicism. It mainly reaches to the past for form and substance but in spirit reflects the temper of its own day. As a whole it tends to part company with the heroic poem and

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the didactic tale, and, like the mock-heroic, to catch the contemporary sensibility.

The sentimental and romantic tale moves farthest of all the poems considered in this study away from past narrative tradition and towards that of the future. Its writers tend to be responsive to the common world about them and to reflect the developing humanitarian conscience of the age and the presence of a feminine reading public. The fictional process undeniably asserts itself in plot, character, setting, atmosphere, and style.

Over sixty per cent of all the metrical tales (didactic, comic, and sentimental and romantic) are primarily stories rather than vehicles for didacticism. The aristocratic bias remains, but it becomes tempered by an increasing awareness of other social sensibilities. Similarly, the neo-classic barrier of style still stands, though writers of the metrical tale breach it more often than do the writers of heroic or mock-heroic narrative poetry. Unfortunately, as the barrier goes down so do the controls over form, so that the newer freedom does not carry with it a corresponding better narrative style.

In summary, the fictional characteristics which emerge from this study are such that they adversely affect the power of enduring appeal of the narrative poetry of the period. True heroic poetry entails an awareness of an

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actual heroic ideal and of a means by which that ideal can be transmitted into an art form which manifests that awareness as a valid vision to its audience. The characteristics of the writers of heroic narrative of the early eighteenth century generally deny one or other of these requirements; the writers thus fail to create fictional worlds which later readers can recognize as having a significant correlation to the empirical world.

The characteristics of the mock-heroic narrative poetry of the period also deny a continuing appeal. Most of the writers of these narratives either base their vision on that of the heroic poetry or lack the control of ironic vision so essential to burlesque, and are accordingly unlikely to reach across the years.

Writers of the metrical tale, less committed to heroic concepts, were freer in what they could turn their narrative impetus to and in how they could apply it, but the very freedom from tradition demanded a corresponding control if they were to achieve a new narrative poetry aesthetic. The characteristics of their work show that few used such control. Their work suffers accordingly.

The questions asked in the Introduction to this study may now be answered. Not all the narrative poems in Appendix 1 are worthy of the same attention today that Pope's The Rape of the Lock merits, but neither are they

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all unworthy of all attention. It is noteworthy that even as obscure a poet as Purney was republished as recently as 1933. Some of the indifference to the narrative poetry of this period seems to stem not so much from received opinion as from critical indifference to narrative poetry as a genre. Though the majority of these poems reveal fictional characteristics which largely preclude their appeal to today's readers, some also show narrative power worthy of more consideration than they have received.

APPENDIX 1

Representative Corpus of
Narrative Poetry
1700-1740

Author and Title	Type ¹	Length ²	Metre ³	Date
Addison, Joseph (1672-1719) <u>The Campaign</u> : panegyric	H	476	5c	1705
Akenside, Mark (1721-1770) <u>Ambition and Content</u> : allegory	T	120	5c	1737
<u>The Virtuoso</u> : parody of Spenser	T	90	Sp	1737
Alsop, Anthony (d. 1726) <u>The Fable of Ixion. To Chlorinda</u>	F	98	4c	
Amhurst, Nicholas (1697-1742) <u>The Bottle-Scrue</u>	MH**	13pp	5c	1720
Armstrong, John (1709-1779) <u>Progne's Dream</u> : mythological vision	T	44	bv	
Bacon, Phanuel (1700-1738) <u>The Kite. An Heroi-Comical Poem</u> ...: Popeian socio-mythological	MH**	31pp	5c	1722

¹H = heroic, MH = mock-heroic, T = tale, Tl = moral tale, F = fable. Where necessary, additional description of type follows the title in column one. Poems marked * are discussed in the study; those marked ** have not been reviewed, details concerning them are cited from Richmond P. Bond, English Burlesque Poetry 1700-1750 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1932).

²Length is in lines unless otherwise noted.

³4c = octosyllabic couplet, 5c = pentametric couplet, bv = blank verse, Sp = Spenserian stanza or variant, s = stanzaic, m = mixed versification.

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Baker, Henry (1698-1774)				
<u>The Feather</u> : bawdry	T	20	4cs	
<u>Kitty's Dream</u> : bawdry	T	74	4c	
<u>The Spinning-Wheel. An Epistolary Tale</u> : fabliau	T	232	4cs	
Barber, Mary (1690?-1757)				
<u>Jupiter and Fortune. A Fable</u>	F	30	4c	
<u>The Oak and Its Branches. A Fable</u>	F	28	4c	
<u>The Peacock. A Tale</u>	F	40	4c	
<u>A True Tale</u> : panegyric (to John Gay)	T	88	4c	
Barford, Richard				
<u>The Assembly. An Heroi-Comical Poem ...</u> : Popeian social epic	MH**	54pp	5c	1726
Bedingfield, Philip				
<u>The Education of Achilles</u>	T	126	Sp	
<u>The Female Drum; or, The Origin of Cards. A Tale</u> : allegory	T	102	4c	
Bellamy, Daniel, the Elder (b. 1687)				
<u>Back-Gammon; or, The Battle of Friars. A Tragi-Comic Tale</u>	MH**	16pp	5c	1734
Blackmore, Sir Richard (1655-1729)				
<u>Alfred. An Epic Poem ...</u> : legendary	H*	11,200	5c	1723
<u>Eliza. An Epic Poem ...</u> : historical	H*	9,150	5c	1705
<u>King Arthur. An Heroic Poem ...</u> : legendary	H*	10,290	5c	1697
<u>Prince Arthur. An Heroic Poem ...</u> : legendary	H*	8,500	5c	1695

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Boyse, Samuel (1688-1749)				
<u>Cupid's Revenge</u>	T	32	4s	c.1740
<u>Love and Majesty: oriental</u>	T	98	5c	1718
<u>The Olive. An Heroic Ode:</u> historical panegyric	H	600	Sp	c.1736
<u>The Vision of Patience. An</u> <u>Allegorical Poem</u>	T	260	Sp	c.1740
<u>Wine The Cure of Love. A Ballad:</u> mythological	T	40	4s	c.1740
Brereton, Thomas (1691-1722)				
<u>Charnok's Remains; or, S-L His</u> <u>Coronation. A Satire: Being a</u> <u>Parody upon Mac-Fleckno</u>	MH**	20pp	5c	1713
Breval, John Durant (pseudo. for Mr. Joseph Gay (1680?-1738))				
<u>A Harlot's Progress</u>	Tl*	1,000	5c	1733
<u>Mac-Dermot</u>	T	1,000	5c	1717
<u>The Petticoat. An Heroi-Comical</u> <u>Poem ...: socio-mythological</u> bawdry	MH**	39pp	5c	1716
<u>The Rake's Progress</u>	Tl*	1,500	4c	1735
Brooke, Henry (1703-1783)				
<u>Conrad. A Fragment</u>	T*	487	bv	c.1740
<u>The Fox-Chase: sporting chron-</u> icle	T	370	5c	c.1740
Broome, William (1689-1745)				
<u>A Dialogue Between a Lady and</u> <u>Her Looking Glass ...</u>	Tl	38	4c	
Browne, Moses (1704-1787)				
<u>Our Sex Outwitted in Love; or,</u> <u>Women the Best Politicians:</u> bawdry	T	20	4c	
<u>Piscatory Eclogue VII:</u> <u>Story of Sabra: classical</u>	T	87	5c	1729
<u>Story of Pytis: classical</u>	T	99	5c	1729
<u>The Reading Ballad: literary</u> criticism	T	48	s	

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Bulkeley, John (1694-1718) <u>The Last Day: religious</u>	H*	8,500	bv	1720
Burnet, Thomas (1694-1753) and George Duckett (1684-1732) <u>Homerides; or, Homer's First Book Moderniz'd</u>	MH**	38pp	4c	1716
Byrom, John (1692-1763) <u>The Ape and the Fox. A Fable</u>	F	48	4c	c.1730
<u>The Beggar and the Divine</u>	Tl	100	5c	c.1739
<u>The Belly and the Limbs: alle- gory</u>	F	32	5cs	
<u>The Country Fellow and the Ass</u>	F	54	5s	c.1738
<u>Extempore Verses upon a Trial of Skill ...</u>	T	96	4cs	1725
<u>An Horrid and Barbarous Robbery: topical</u>	T	160	5cs	1728
<u>Moses' Vision: topical</u>	T	46	5c	c.1718
<u>A Pastoral Ballad</u>	T	32	4s	
<u>The Pond</u>	Tl	113	5c	c.1729
<u>A Tale: topical dramatic mono- logue</u>	T	88	5c	
<u>The Three Black Crows. A Tale</u>	T	73	5c	1726
Carey, Henry (1687-1743) <u>The Agreeable Surprise: pastoral bawdry</u>	T	16	s	
<u>The Artful Shepherdess. A Cantata: [8 other similar mythological pastoral cantatas]</u>	T	36	m	
<u>Ballad of King John's Son and the Cyder Wench</u>	Tl	124	s	1713
<u>Blundrella; or, the Impertinent. A Tale: fabliau</u>	T	148	4c	
<u>The Conflict Between Love and Wine: cynical pastoral</u>	T	20	4s	
<u>The Cure of Love: cynical pastoral</u>	T	40	4s	
<u>Grumbletonians; or, the Dogs Without Doors. A Fable</u>	F	74	4c	
<u>Hue and Cry after M...K...: political allegory</u>	T	66	4s	1726

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Carey (cont'd.)				
<u>The Marriage of Bacchus ...:</u>	T	150	5c	1713?
Ovidian				
<u>Musick's Victory; or, the</u>	T	14	4c	
<u>Baffled Poet: pastoral</u>				
<u>Roger and Dolly: fabliau</u>	T	37	m	
<u>Phoebus Mistaken; or, the Way to</u>	T	16	4c	
<u>Catch a Fair One: mythological</u>				
<u>The Ballad of Sally in Our Alley</u>	T	56	s	1729
<u>A Story of a Cock and Bull</u>	F	60	4c	
<u>Story of Unfortunate Phyllis</u>	T	68	s	
<u>The Town Spark and the Country</u>	T	40	s	
<u>Lass: dialogue</u>				
<u>The Union of Parties</u>	T	36	s	
<u>Whimsical Dialogue. Between the</u>	T	56	5c	
<u>Author and His Favourite</u>				
<u>Mare ...</u>				
Cawthorn, James (1719-1761)				
<u>The Antiquarian: fabliau</u>	T	288	4c	
<u>The Birth and Education of</u>	T	352	4c	
<u>Genius: allegory</u>				
<u>The Lottery: love panegyric</u>	T	74	4c	
<u>Prussia, a Poem: historical</u>	T	204	4c	
Cobb, Samuel (1675-1713)				
<u>The Ass. From Monsieur Fontaine:</u>	T	41	4c	
bawdry				
<u>The Desperate Lover ...</u>	Tl	119	5c	
<u>Poem ... Marlborough: panegyric</u>	H	660	5c	
Concanen, Matthew (1701-1749)				
<u>A Match at Football: mythologi-</u>	MH**	44pp	5c	1720
cal sporting				
Congreve, William (1670-1729)				
<u>Homer's Hymn to Venus: bawdry</u>	T*	436	5c	
<u>An Impossible Thing. A Tale:</u>	T*	208	4c	
bawdry				
<u>The Peasant in Search of His</u>	T	28	4c	
<u>Heifer. A Tale: bawdry</u>				
<u>The Reconciliation. Recitative:</u>	T	32	4s	
pastoral				
<u>The Tears of Amaryllis for</u>	T	178	5c	
<u>Amyntas. A Pastoral</u>				

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Cotton, Nathaniel (1707-1788)				
<u>Death and the Rake. A Dutch Tale</u>	Tl	132	4c	
<u>It Seems an Owl in Times of Yore.</u>	F	154	4c	
<u>A Fable [6 other similar fables]</u>				
<u>The Lamb and the Pig</u>	Tl	54	4c	
<u>Neptune and the Mariners.</u>	Tl	74	4c	
<u>Fable III</u>				
Diaper, William (1685-1717)				
<u>Nereides. Eclogue XI. Eune:</u> sea eclogue	T	89	5c	
Dodsley, Robert (1703-1764)				
<u>Rome's Pardon. A Tale:</u> religious satire	T	100	4c	
<u>The Wife; a Fragment</u>	T	50	5c	
Duck, Stephen (1705-1756)				
<u>The Absent Lover: fabliau</u>	T	28	4c	
<u>Avaro and Amanda. A Poem ...:</u> romance	T*	675	5c	
<u>Felix and Constance. A Poem ...:</u> romance	T*	650	5c	
<u>The Shunammite: biblical</u>	Tl*	276	5c	
<u>Truth and Falsehood. A Fable</u>	F	116	5c	
<u>The Two Beavers. A Fable</u>	F	79	4c	
Duke, Richard (1659?-1711)				
<u>A Song: bawdry</u>	T*	18	s	
Ellwood, Thomas (1639-1713)				
<u>Davideis: biblical</u>	H*	5,758	5c	1712
Farquhar, George (1677?-1707)				
<u>Barcellona: historical panegyric</u>	H*	1,500	5c	1707
Fenton, Elijah (1683-1730)				
<u>A-la-Mode: bawdry</u>	T	38	4c	1707
<u>Cupid and Hymen</u>	Tl	32	s	1707
<u>The Fair Nun. A Tale: bawdry</u>	T	178	4c	1707?
<u>Phaon to Sappho: Ovidian</u>	T*	272	5c	
<u>A Tale, Devised in the ...</u> <u>Manere of Gentil Maister</u> <u>Jeoffrey Chaucer</u>	T	108	4c	
<u>A Widow's Wile. A Tale:</u> bawdry	T	106	4c	1707?

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Fielding, Henry (1707-1754) <u>The Vernoniad</u> : incomplete historical	MH**	37pp	5c	
Garth, Sir Samuel (1661-1719) <u>The Dispensary</u> : topical social	MH**	2,200	5c	1699
Gay, John (1685-1732) <u>Answer to the Sompner's</u> <u>Prologue ...</u>	T	70	5c	1720
<u>Daphnis and Chloe. A Song</u>	T	56	s	
<u>The Equivocation. A Tale</u> : bawdry	T	36	4c	
<u>Fables</u> [10 fables all much alike]	F			
<u>The Fan. A Poem ...</u> : socio- mythological	MH**	650	5c	1714
<u>The Mad Dog. A Tale</u> : bawdry	T	144	4c	1720
<u>The Shepherd's Week</u> : mock eclo- gues				
- <u>Tuesday; or, the Ditty</u>	T	106	5c	1724
- <u>Wednesday; or, the Dumps</u>	T	120	5c	
- <u>Thursday; or, the Spell</u>	T	136	5c	
- <u>Saturday; or, the Flights</u>	T	128	5c	
<u>Sweet William's Farewell to</u> <u>Black-Eyed Susan. A Ballad</u> : topical	T	48	s	1720
<u>The Story of Cephisa</u> : mythologi- cal	T	146	5c	
<u>The Toilette. a Town Eclogue</u>	T	106	5c	
<u>Town Eclogues</u> :				
- <u>the Tea Table</u>	T	100	5c	
- <u>the Funeral</u>	T	112	5c	
- <u>the Espousal</u>	T	106	5c	
<u>True Story of an Apparition</u> : vision	T	142	5c	1720
<u>Work for a Cooper. A Tale</u> : bawdry	T	162	4c	1720
Glover, Richard (1712-1785) <u>Admiral Hosier's Ghost</u> : ballad	T	80	s	1739
<u>Leonidas</u> : historical	H*	7,000	bv	1738

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Granville, George, Lord Lansdowne (1667-1735)				
<u>Beauty and Law, a Poetical Pleading: mythological</u>	T	171	5c	
<u>Cleora: social satire</u>	T	70	5c	
<u>A Receipt for Vapours: bawdry</u>	T	32	5c	
Graves, [Richard] (1715-1804)				
<u>Pepper-box and Salt-seller. A Fable</u>	F	96	4c	
Green, Matthew (1696-1737)				
<u>The Sparrow and the Diamond</u>	T	48	s	
<u>The Bee, the Ant, and the Sparrow</u>	F	148	4c	
Hamilton, William, of Bangour (1704-1754)				
<u>The Episode of the Thistle: chronicle allegory</u>	H*	280	bv	
<u>Miss and the Butterfly. A Fable ...</u>	F	100	4c	
<u>Mithridates: dramatic dialogue</u>	T	160	5c	
<u>Speech of Randolph ...: chroni- cle romance</u>	H*	350	bv	
<u>The Youngest Grace. A Love- Elegy: mythological allegory</u>	T	128	s	
Harte, Walter (1709-1774)				
<u>The Courtier and the Prince. A Fable</u>	T	1,450	5c	
<u>Eulogius; or, the Charitable Mason. An Historical Fable ...</u>	T	1,000	5c	
<u>The Vision of Death: dream allegory</u>	T	800	5c	
Hauksbee, Francis (d. 1713)				
<u>The Patch. An Heroi-Comical Poem ...: mythological</u>	MH*	17pp	5c	1723
Hughes, John (1677-1720)				
<u>The Birth of the Rose: mythological</u>	T	98	s	
<u>The Court of Neptune; on King William's Return from Holland: panegyric</u>	H	400	5c c.1699	

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Hughes (cont'd.)				
<u>Cupid's Review: social satire</u>	Tl	56	5c	
<u>The Triumph of Peace. Occasioned</u>	H*	160	5c	c.1697
<u>by the Peace of Ryswick:</u>				
<u>panegyric</u>				
Jacob, Giles (1686-1744)				
<u>The Rape of the Smock. An Heroi-</u>	MH**	26pp	5c	1717
<u>Comical Poem: sexual wit</u>				
Jacob, Hildebrand (1693-1739)				
<u>Apollo's Stratagem; or, Button</u>	T	3pp	4c	
<u>Unmasked: fabliau</u>				
<u>The Apparition: fabliau</u>	T	4pp	4c	
<u>The Curious Maid: coarse wit</u>	T	5pp	4c	
<u>The Escape: bawdry</u>	T	2pp	4c	
<u>The Indian Tale</u>	T	4pp	4c	
<u>The Judgement of Tiresias:</u>	T	5pp	4c	
<u>coarse wit</u>				
Ken, Thomas (1673-1711)				
<u>Edmund, an Epic</u>	H	13		c.1711
		books		
<u>Hymnothes; or, the Penitent</u>	H	13		c.1711
		books		
King, William (1663-1712)				
<u>The Beggar Woman: bawdry</u>	T	46	5c	
<u>The Eagle and the Robin. an</u>	F	250	4c	
<u>Apologue</u>				
<u>The Furmetary: topical social</u>	MH**	180	5c	1699
<u>allegory</u>				
<u>The Garden Plot: biblical</u>	T	29	4c	
<u>Hold Fast Below</u>	Tl	41	5c	
<u>Just as You Please; or, the</u>	T	74	5c	
<u>Incurious: fabliau</u>				
<u>Molly of Mountown: bucolic</u>	T	120	5c	1704
<u>burlesque</u>				
<u>The Old Cheese: fabliau</u>	T	80	5c	
<u>Orpheus and Eurydice: Ovidian</u>	T*	450	4c	1704
<u>travesty</u>				
<u>Robin Red Breast, with the</u>	F	164	4c	
<u>Beasts ...</u>				
<u>The Skillet: fabliau</u>	T	44	5c	

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
King (cont'd.)				
<u>The Soldier's Wedding. A Soliloquy ...</u>	T	29	5c	
<u>The Vestry: anecdote</u>	T	64	5c	
King, William (1685-1763)				
<u>The Toast. An Epic Poem ...: Hudibrastic</u>	MH**	64pp	6c	1732
Mallet [or Mallock], David (c. 1705-1765)				
<u>William and Margaret</u>	T	68	s	1725
Mandeville, Bernard de (c. 1670-1733)				
<u>The Grumbling Hive; or, Knaves Turned Honest: satirical beast fable</u>	F	435	4c	1705
Meston, William (c.1688-1745)				
<u>The Knight of the Kirk ...: Hudibrastic</u>	MH**	29pp	4c	1723
<u>Mob Contra Mob; or, the Rabblers Rabbled: Hudibrastic</u>	MH**	32pp	4c	1731
<u>Phaeton; or ...: Ovidian mythological burlesque</u>	T**	29pp	4c	1720
<u>Old Mother Grim's Tales [a "Decad" of ten tales told by a common narrator in which moralizing predominates]</u>	T*	77pp	4c	
Monk, The Hon. Mrs. (?-1715)				
<u>Orpheus and Eurydice ...</u>	Tl	40	4c	
Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley (1689-1762)				
<u>Ballad on a Late Occurrence</u>	Tl	60	s	
<u>The Bride in the Country: dramatic monologue plaint</u>	T	56	s	
<u>Epistle from Arthur Grey, the Footman, to Mrs. Murray ...: bawdy dramatic epistle</u>	T	101	5c	

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Montagu (cont'd.)				
<u>Six Town Eclogues.</u>				
<u>Wednesday, the Tête à Tête</u>	T	92	5c	1717
<u>Friday, the Toilette</u>	T	42	5c	1717
<u>Unfinished Sketches of a Larger Poem: satiric allegory</u>	T	107	5c	1714
Morgan, H.				
<u>Cynegetica; or, the Force and Pleasure of Hunting. An Heroi-Comical Poem ...: sporting</u>	MH**	39pp	5c	1720
Morrice, Bezaleel (1675?-1749)				
<u>The Battle of the Mice and Frogs: historical</u>	MH**	10pp	bv	1712
Newcombe, Thomas (1682?-1765)				
<u>The Last Judgement of Men and Angels</u>	H	12,383	bv	1723
Pack, Richardson (1682-1728)				
<u>Religion and Philosophy. A Tale</u>	Tl	30	5c	1720
Parnell, Thomas (1679-1718)				
<u>Anacreontic. Gay Bacchus ...</u>	Tl	64	s	
<u>An Allegory on Man: mythological</u>	T	102	4c	
<u>Bacchus; or, the Drunken Metamorphosis</u>	T	92	4c	
<u>A Fairy Tale, in the Ancient English Style</u>	Tl	192	s	
<u>The Gift of Poetry: religious apostrophe</u>	Tl*	4,350	5c	
<u>The Hermit: moral allegory</u>	Tl*	272	5c	
<u>Song. Thrysis: witty anecdote</u>	T	26	s	
Philips, Ambrose (1675?-1749)				
<u>The Fable of Thule, Unfinished: mythological</u>	T	100	5c	
<u>The Fifth Pastoral, Cuddy</u>	T	135	5c	
Philips, John (1676-1709)				
<u>Blainheim. A Poem: panegyric</u>	H*	500	bv	1705
<u>Poem on ... Chloe's P--s Pot ...: parody</u>	MH	114	bv	1713

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Pitt, Christopher (1699-1748)				
<u>The Fable of the Young Man and His Cat</u>	F	63	5c	
Pomfret, John (1667-1702)				
<u>Cruelty and Lust. An Epistolary Essay</u> : dramatic monologue	T*	440	5c	1699
<u>The Fortunate Complaint</u> : pastoral T plaint	T	200	5c	1699
<u>Love Triumphant over Reason. A Vision</u> : dream allegory	T	650	5c	1699
Pope, Alexander (1688-1744)				
<u>The Capon's Tale</u> : beast fable	F	30	4c	1726
<u>Chaucer</u> : bawdy anecdote	T	26	4c	1709
<u>The Discovery; or, the Squire Turned Ferret</u>	Tl	88	s	1726
<u>Duke upon Duke</u> : coarse humour	T	148	s	1719
<u>The Dunciad</u>	MH*	1,754	5c	1743
<u>Eloisa to Abelard</u> : dramatic monologue	T	366	5c	1716
<u>Macer</u> : anecdote	T	26	5c	1715
<u>The Rape of the Lock</u>	MH*	794	5c	1714
<u>Sandy's Ghost; or, a Proper New Ballad ...</u> : satirical anecdote	T	76	s	1717
<u>Umbra</u> : anecdote	Tl	17	5c	1714
Prior, Matthew (1664-1721)				
<u>Alma, or the Progress of the Mind</u> : Hudibrastic allegory	T*	1,683	4c	1718
<u>Colin's Mistakes</u> : vision	T	110	Sp	1720
<u>Chast Florimel</u> : bawdy dramatic monologue	T	32	s	
<u>The Despairing Shepherd</u> : pastoral anecdote	T	36	s	1703
<u>The Dove</u> : bawdy anecdote	T	124	s	1717
<u>Down-Hall, a Ballad</u> : topical travel	T	176	s	1721
<u>The Garland</u> : sombre pastoral	T	40	s	1718
<u>Henry and Emma</u> : mythological-medieval romance	T*	784	5c	1708
<u>Jinny the Just</u> : elegy	T	106	s	1708
<u>The Ladle</u> : bawdry	T	170	4c	1703
<u>Love Disarmed</u> : mythological	T	50	4c	1708

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Prior (cont'd.)				
<u>A Lover's Anger</u> : bawdy anecdote	T	16	4c	1718
<u>Mercury and Cupid</u> : mythological	T	58	4c	1718
<u>Paulo Purganti and His Wife ...</u> : bawdy anecdote	T	170	4c	1708
<u>Protogenese and Apelles</u>	Tl		4c	1718
<u>Solomon on the Vanity of the</u> <u>World</u> : didactic	T	2,652	5c	1708
<u>The Thief and the Cordelier. A</u> <u>Ballad</u>	Tl	60	s	1718
<u>To a Young Gentleman in Love. A</u> <u>Tale</u> : bawdry	Tl	72	4c	1702
<u>Truth and Falsehood</u> : allegory	T*	57	4c	1720
<u>Truth Told at Last</u> : wit	T*	8	s	
<u>The Turtle and the Sparrow</u> : dialogue	Tl	453	4c	1720
Purney, Thomas (1695-1727?)				
<u>The Bashful Swain ...</u> : pastoral	T*	426	s	1717
<u>Beauty and Simplicity ...</u> : pastoral	T*	338	m	1717
<u>The Chevalier de St. George ...</u> : politico-military	MH*	52pp	5c	1718
<u>Lallet; or, the Tender Shepherd-</u> <u>ess</u> : pastoral	T*	366	4c	1716
<u>Paplet; or, Love and Innocence</u> : pastoral	T*	346	5c	1716
Ralph, James (1705?-1762)				
<u>Abelard to Philintus</u> : dramatic epistle	T*	288	5c	
<u>Blew-Eyed Nancy; or, the</u> <u>Disappointed Lover ...</u> Ballad	T	88	s	
<u>Clarinda; or, the Fair Libertine</u> <u>...: Popeian social</u>	MH**	64pp	5c	1729
<u>The Courtier</u>	Tl	142	bv	
<u>The Fable of the Fox and the</u> <u>Grapes</u>	F	16	s	
<u>The Heron, a Tale for Old Maids</u>	F	30	4c	
<u>Imitation of Spenser's Fairy</u> <u>Queen. A Fragment</u> : mythological allegory	T*	600	5c	
<u>The Lunatik</u> : topical social love story	T*	250	bv	
<u>The Milk-Maid</u> : anecdote	Tl	82	4c	

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Ralph (cont'd.)				
<u>Timon and Flavia; or, the Fruit- less Repentance</u>	T*	262	bv	
<u>A True and Lamentable Ballad, called the Earl's Defeat: ballad burlesque</u>	T	112	s	
<u>Zeuma; or, the Love of Liberty: historical</u>	H**	3 books	bv	1728
Ramsay, Allen (1686-1758)				
<u>The Battel; or, Morning Inter- view: comic town pastoral</u>	T*	276	5c	1721
<u>Bobband and Tittypow, a Persian Tale: topical social story</u>	T	200	4c	
<u>The Broad Hint Cunningly Answered: witty anecdote</u>	T	56	4c	
<u>The Clever Offcome: witty fab- liau</u>	T	98	4c	1728
<u>Christ's Kirk on the Green: fabliau</u>	T*	720	s	1721
<u>The Daft Bargain: coarse witty anecdote</u>	T	26	4c	
<u>Miller and His Man, a Counter- part to the Monk and the Miller's Wife. A Tale: bawdry</u>	T	243	4c	1728
<u>The Tale of Three Bonnets: political allegory</u>	T*	669	4c	1722
<u>The Thimble: mythological anecdote</u>	T	106	5c	1721
<u>Tit for Tat. A Tale: bawdy anecdote</u>	T	49	4c	
<u>The Two Cut-Purses. A Tale</u>	T	34	4c	
<u>The Wife of Auchtermuchty. A Tale</u>	Tl	136	s	
<u>The Vision: historical allegory</u>	H*	392	s	1724
<u>Distress and Complaint of Mustapha for Loss of His Fur. A Dogrell [27 other similar fables]</u>	F	90	4c	
Rowe, Elizabeth (1674-1737)				
<u>The History of Joseph. A Poem: biblical</u>	H*	2,500	5c	
<u>Rosamond to Henry II: dramatic epistle</u>	T	100	5c	
<u>Mary Queen of France ... Suffolk: dramatic epistle</u>	T	142	5c	

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Rowe (cont'd.)				
<u>A Pastoral</u> : anecdote	T	113	5c	
Savage, Richard (1697-1743)				
<u>Recovery at Bath</u> : mythological anecdote	T	105	5c	
<u>The Wanderer. A Vision</u> : allegorical essay	Tl*	2,248	5c	1729
Shenstone, William (1714-1763)				
<u>From Lincoln to London Rode Forth Our Young Squire. A Ballad</u> : fabliau	T	24	s	
<u>Charms of Precedence. A Tale</u> : bawdry	T*	209	4c	
<u>Elegy ... a Licentious Amor</u> : pastoral	Tl	108	s	
<u>The Judgement of Hercules</u> : mythological	T*	524	5c	
<u>Love and Honour</u> : medieval	T*	325	bv	
<u>The Rape of the Trap. A Ballad</u> : allegory	Tl	48	s	1737
Somerville, William (1675-1742)				
<u>Bacchus Triumphant. A Tale</u> : topical mythological	Tl	100	4c	
<u>The Bold Batchelor ... Fable ...</u>	Tl	235	4c	
<u>The Busy Indolent. A Tale</u>	T	104	4c	
<u>A Dainty New Ballad</u> : witty soliloquy	T	84	s	
<u>Devil Outwitted. A Tale</u> : anecdote	T	44	4c	
<u>The Fortune Hunter. Fable</u>	Tl*	1,136	4c	
<u>The Happy Disappointment. A Tale</u>	Tl	116	4c	
<u>The Happy Lunatic. A Tale</u> : coarse wit	T	42	4c	
<u>Hobbinol; or, the Rural Games. A Burlesque Poem</u> : Miltonic parody	MH*	1,254	bv	1740
<u>The Incurious Bench</u> : fabliau	T	68	4c	
<u>The Inquisitive Bridegroom. A Tale</u> : fabliau	T	91	4c	
<u>Mahomet Ali Beg; or, the Faithful Minister of State</u>	T*	504	4c	

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Somerville (cont'd.)				
<u>The Night-Walker, Reclaimed.</u>	T*	380	4c	
<u>A Tale: bawdry</u>				
<u>The Officious Messenger. A Tale:</u>	T*	278	4c	
<u>fabliau</u>				
<u>A Padlock for the Mouth. A Tale:</u>	T	113	4c	
<u>anecdote</u>				
<u>The Sweet-Scented Miser: coarse</u>	T*	142	4c	
<u>humour</u>				
<u>The Two Springs. Fable: apologue</u>	F	208	m	
<u>The Wise Builder. A Tale:</u>	T	40	4c	
<u>anecdote</u>				
<u>The Yeoman of Kent. A Tale</u>	T	140	4c	
<u>The Captive Trumpeter. Fable</u>	F	20	4c	
[ten other similar fables]				
Steele, Richard (1672-1729)				
<u>Love's Relief: topical mythol-</u>	T	20	s	
<u>ogical</u>				
Swift, Jonathan (1667-1745)				
<u>Baucis and Philemon: travesty</u>	T	180	4c	1709
<u>Beast's Confession to the Priest</u>	F	220	4c	1732
<u>The Birth of Manly Virtue: myth-</u>	T	142	4c	1726
<u>ological allegorical panegyric</u>				
<u>Cadenus and Vanessa: mythologi-</u>	T*	889	4c	1713
<u>cal burlesque</u>				
<u>Cassinus and Peter, a Tragical</u>	T	118	4c	1731
<u>Elegy: town eclogue</u>				
<u>Clever Tom Clinch Going to Be</u>	T	24	4c	1726
<u>Hanged: anecdote</u>				
<u>Corinna: satire</u>	T	32	s	1711
<u>Desire and Possession: allegory</u>	Tl	58	4c	1727
<u>The Dog and the Thief: allegory</u>	F	20	s	1726
<u>An Elegy on Dicky and Dolly</u>	Tl	24	s	1728
<u>Fable of the Widow and Her Cat:</u>	F	25	s	1711
<u>allegory</u>				
<u>Fable of Midas: allegory</u>	F	82	4c	1711
<u>The Fable of the Bitches</u>	F	46	4c	1715
<u>Phillis; or, the Progress of Love</u>	T	100	4c	1719
<u>The Progress of Marriage</u>	T	166	4c	1721
<u>Stella at Wood Park</u>	Tl	92	4c	1723
<u>The Story of Baucis and Philemon</u>	T	180	4c	1709
...				
<u>Strephon and Chloe: coarse town</u>	Tl*	314	4c	1731
<u>pastoral</u>				

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Tate, Nahum (1652-1715) <u>Panacea: A Poem upon Tea ...</u>	MH**	34pp	5c	1700
Thurston, Joseph (fl. 1731) <u>The Fall ...: social satire</u>	MH**	58pp	5c	1732
Tickell, Thomas (1686-1740) <u>Colin and Lucy. A Ballad</u>	T	72	s	1725
<u>Kensington Gardens: panegyric</u>	MH*	532	5c	1722
<u>To Apollo Making Love: anecdote</u>	T	16	s	
Walsh, William (1663-1708) <u>The Despairing Lover: comic pastoral</u>	T	70	4c	
<u>Eclogue III</u>	T	72	5c	
Ward, Edward ("Ned") (1667-1731) <u>Vulgus Britannica; or, the British Hudibras: political satire</u>	MH**	180pp	4c	1710
Welsted, Leonard (1688-1747) <u>Acon and Lavinia. A Love Tale: bawdry</u>	T	1,200	5c	1719
<u>Thyrsis and Daphne. A Tale ...: bawdry</u>	T	66	4c	
Wesley, Samuel (1691-1739) <u>The Cobbler. A Tale: topical fabliau</u>	Tl	286	4c	1735
<u>The Basket. A Tale: topical fabliau</u>	Tl*	220	4c	
<u>The Battle of the Sexes: allegory</u>	T*	500	Sp	1735
<u>The Mastiff. A Tale: topical fabliau</u>	T	210	4c	
<u>The Pig. A Tale: topical fabliau</u>	Tl	208	4c	1735
West, Gilbert (1703-1756) <u>The Choice of Hercules</u>	T	270	Sp	
<u>Education. A Poem ...: didactic allegory</u>	T	864	Sp	
<u>On the Abuse of Travelling ...: unfinished allegory</u>	T	522	Sp	

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Wharton, Philip, Duke of (1698-1731) <u>Duke of Wharton. Parody of Chevy Chase</u>	T**	116	s	1727
Whistler, Anthony (1714-1754) <u>The Shuttlecock: Popeian mythological social satire</u>	MH**	39pp	5c	1736
Wilkie, William (1721-1772) <u>The Epigoniad: legendary</u>	H*	6,000	5c	1753
Winchilsea, Anne Finch, Countess of (1661-1720) <u>Atheist and the Acorn</u>	F	24	s	1713
<u>Battle Between the Rats and the Weasles</u>	MH**	19	5c	
<u>The Brass Pot and Stone Jug. A Fable</u>	F	56	4c	
<u>The Circuit of Apollo: mythological</u>	T	77	4c	
<u>For the Better ...: fabliau</u>	T	47	5c	
<u>The Hog, the Sheep and Goat ...</u>	F	30	s	
<u>Jupiter and the Farmer</u>	Tl	30	5c	
<u>Man's Injustice towards Providence</u>	Tl	60	5c	
<u>The Lord and the Bramble</u>	F	32	s	
<u>The Owl Describing Her Young Ones</u>	F	75	s	
<u>The Shepherd and the Calm</u>	Tl	58	5c	
<u>There's No To-morrow. A Fable ...</u>	F	21	5c	
<u>The Tradesman and the Scholar</u>	Tl	70	4c	
<u>The Young Rat and His Dam ...</u>	F	83	5c	
Wycherley, William (1640-1716) <u>Hero and Leander in Burlesque: Ovidian travesty</u>	T*	1,160	5c	1729
Yalden, Dr. (1671-1736) <u>Esop at Court; or, Select Fables</u>	F	c.40	s	1702
[16 other similar short fables] <u>Rape of Thentilla ...</u>	T	187	5c	
Young, Edward (1683-1765) <u>The Force of Religion; or, Vanquished Love</u>	T*	560	5c	1714

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Author and Title	Type	Length	Metre	Date
Anonymous				
<u>The Battle of the Sugar-Plumbs:</u> Popeian	MH**	56	4c	1732
<u>The Beeriad; or, Progress of</u> <u>Drink. An Heroic Poem ...:</u> Popeian	MH**	63pp	5c	1736
<u>Homer in a Nut-Shell ...:</u> travesty	MH**	66pp	5c	1715
<u>Hudibras at Court</u>	MH**	32pp	4c	1715
<u>Hyp, a Burlesque Poem ...:</u> Hudibrastic	MH**	82pp	4c	1731
<u>Little Preston. an Heroi-Comick</u> <u>Poem ...:</u> historical	MH**	12pp	5c	1717
<u>The Mouse and Oyster. A Tragi-</u> <u>Comic Poem</u>	MH**	116	5c	1736
<u>The Pettycoat. A Poem ...:</u> socio-mythological	MH**	36pp	5c	1738
<u>Phino-Godol ...:</u> Hudibrastic [against William Congreve]	MH**	13pp	5c	1732
<u>The Progress of Patriotism. A</u> <u>Tale:</u> Hudibrastic	MH**	4pp	4c	1729?
<u>The Prophetic Physician. An</u> <u>Heroi-Comical Poem ...:</u> bawdry	MH**	9pp	5c	1737
<u>The Rape of the Bride; or,</u> <u>Marriage and Hanging go by</u> <u>Destiny ...:</u> Hudibrastic	MH**	41pp	4c	1723
<u>Stirbitch-Fair. A Mock-Heroick</u> <u>Poem ...:</u> bucolic	MH**	24pp	5c	1736
<u>The Story of Cinyras and Myrrha,</u> <u>in Burlesque:</u> travesty of Ovid	MH**	15pp	4c	1720
<u>Tom K--g's; or, The Paphian</u> <u>Grove ...:</u> A Mock-Heroic-Poem...: town bawdry	MH**	64pp	5c	1738

APPENDIX 2

Inaccessible Primary Sources Which May Contain
Additional Original Narrative Poetry
1700-1740

- A Collection of Poems; Consisting of Odes, Tales, Ec, as well Originals as Translations. London: J. Roberts, 1731.
- A Miscellaneous Collection of Poems, Songs, and Epigrams, by Several Hands. Dublin: A. Khames, 1721.
- Cooke, Thomas. Mr. Cooke's Original Poems, With Imitations and Translations of Several Select Passages of the Ancients. London: [publisher unknown], 1742.
- Curll, Edmund. Cythereia: or, New Poems upon Love and Intrigue. London: E. Curll and T. Payne, 1723.
- Dixon, Mrs. S. Poems on Several Occasions. Canterbury: [publisher unknown], 1740.
- Eusden, Lawrence. Poems, ed. L.T. Hill. London: [publisher unknown], 1714.
- Haywood, Eliza. Poems on Several Occasions. London: [publisher unknown], 1724.
- Military and Other Poems upon Several Occasions and to Several Persons, by an Officer of the Army. London: [publisher unknown], 1716.
- Miscellany Poems. By a Gentleman of Oxford. Printed for the Author. London: [publisher unknown], 1737.
- Mitchell, Joseph. A Tale and Two Fables in Verse. London: [publisher unknown], 1727.
- Poems, Amorous, Moral, Divine. London: [publisher unknown], 1718.

Poems of Love and Gallantry. Written in the Marchalsee and New Gate, by Several Prisoners. London: J. Grantham, 1716.

Poems on a Variety of Subjects, Together with the Character of a Trooper, and Some Odes on Several Occasions. London: J. Woodward, 1710.

Sewell, George. Posthumous Works of Dr. G. Sewell. ed. Gregory Sewell. London: E. Curl, 1728.

Smith, John. Poems upon Several Occasions. London: [publisher unknown], 1713.

APPENDIX 3

Writers Whose Works Show No Completed
Original Narrative Poetry for the
Period 1700-1740

Arbuthnot, John (1667-1735)
Blair, Robert (1699-1746)
Browne, Isaac Hawkins (1705-1760)
Cambridge, Richard Owen (1717-1802)
Carter, Miss Eliza (1717-1806)
Cockburn, Mrs (1679-1749)
Cook, Ebenezer (fl. 1708)
Cotton, Nathaniel (1707-1788)
Croxall, Samuel (d. 1752)
Defoe, Daniel (1660-1731)
Dennis, John (1657-1734)
Dorset, Sackville, Charles Lord Buckhurst (1638-1706)
Dyer, John (1700-1758)
Ellis, John (c. 1739)
Evans, Abel (1679-1737)
Falconer, William (1736-1769)
Fielding, Henry (1707-1754)
Gildon, Charles (1665-1724)
Gray, Thomas (1716-1771)
Halifax, Charles Montagu Earl of (1661-1715)

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Hammond, James (1710-1742)
Hill, Aaron (1683-1750)
Hughes, Jabez (1685?-1731)
Jago, Richard (1715-1781)
Jenyns, Soame (1704-1787)
Johnson, Samuel (1709-1784)
Lyttleton, George Lord (1709-1773)
Moore, Edward (1712-1757)
Needler, Henry (1690-1718)
Pattison, William (1706-1727)
Porter, John (fl. 1720)
Rowe, Nicholas (1674-1718)
Rowe, Thomas (1687-1715)
Sedley, Sir Charles (1639?-1701)
Sheffield, John, Duke of Buckinghamshire (1684-1721)
Smith, Edmund [same as Edmund Neale] (1672-1710)
Spratt, Dr. Thomas (1635-1713)
Theobald, Lewis (1688-1744)
Thompson, William (1712?-1766)
Thomson, James (1700-1748)
Trapp, Joseph (1679-1747)
Watts, Isaac (1674-1748)
Whitehead, Paul (1709-1774)
Whitehead, William (1715-1785)

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- Bedingfield, Philip. "Poems." A Collection of Poems in Six Volumes by Several Hands, ed. J. Dodsley. Vol. III. London: J. Dodsley, 1770.
- Behn, Aphra. "Poems by Mrs. Aphra Behn." Poems by Eminent Ladies, ed. Mrs. Mary Barber. Vol. I. London: [publisher not shown], 1755.
- Blackmore, Sir Richard. Prince Arthur: An Heroic Poem. London: Awnsham and John Churchill, 1695, pp. 296.
- . King Arthur: An Heroic Poem in Twelve Books. London: Awnsham and John Churchill, 1697, pp. xvii+343.

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- . Alfred: An Epic Poem. In Twelve Books. London: James Knapton, 1723, pp. xlviii+428.
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- . The Lure of Venus: or, A Harlot's Progress. An Heroi-Comical Poem. In Six Cantos. By Mr. Joseph Gay [pseudo. for J.D. Breval]. Founded upon Mr. Hogarth's Six Paintings; and Illustrated with Prints of Them. London: [J. Wilford], 1733, pp. iii+56.
- . The Rake's Progress: or, The Humours of Drury Lane. A Poem. In Eight Cantos. In Hudibrastick Verse. Being the Ramble of a Modern Oxonian; which is a Compleat Key to the Eight Prints Lately Published by the Celebrated Mr. Hogarth. London: J. Chettwood, 1735, pp. 52.
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ABSTRACT

In England between 1700 and 1740 the novel with its continuing appeal to readers came into being but verse fiction of comparable enduring appeal virtually disappeared, although a great deal of narrative poetry, much of it highly praised in its day and some of it popular throughout the eighteenth century, was written during the period. This work aims to show by a study of the fictional characteristics of representative narrative poetry of the period that generally the failure of these poems to endure stems from inadequacy in their narrative elements.

Chapter I presents the bases of the study; surveys the possible influences of English narrative poetry of earlier periods on that of the early eighteenth century; and concludes that the main influence was the Renaissance concept of epic as the peak of poetic achievement, together with a seventeenth-century spirit of didacticism and burlesque.

Chapter II deals with heroic narrative poetry. It analyses Sir Richard Blackmore's Eliza as a representative product of the prevailing epic concept; discusses samples of other heroic narrative poetry in less detail; and concludes that throughout the period heroic narrative poetry was

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stifled by aristocratic bias, didactic form, unimaginative characterization, and the rigidity of structure and style imposed by a mechanical concept of epic. The chapter shows that these conservative characteristics tied the writers to the past and to an artificiality of atmosphere, which is the more striking when contrasted with the tentative realism beginning to appear in the contemporary novel; serious verse narrative failed to capture the temper of the new culture in the way that the more flexible prose fiction began to do.

Chapter III deals with mock-heroic narrative poetry. It focuses on Alexander Pope's The Rape of the Lock as a poem which best meets mock-heroic norms; more briefly considers examples of poems which in various ways depart from such norms; and concludes that conservatism impedes mock-heroic as well as heroic, except that the mock-heroic shows less aristocratic bias than the heroic. The chapter also shows that most poets of the period failed to write effective mock-heroic stories because they did not ridicule enduring things by which they might forge links with later readers.

Chapter IV deals with the metrical tale and narrative fable under the three groups of the didactic, the comic, and the sentimental and romantic, and concludes that writers of such metrical narrative, less committed to heroic concepts than poets working with heroic or mock-heroic, were

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freer in what they could turn their imaginative impetus to and in how they could apply it, but that this very freedom from tradition demanded for good results a corresponding control which few achieved.

The appendices provide listings for the period 1700-1740 of writers of narrative poems, with titles of their narrative works, and also of writers whose works do not include narrative poems.

The paper concludes that some of the indifference to the narrative poetry of this period seems to stem not so much from received opinion as from critical indifference to narrative poetry as a type of literature, and that though the majority of these poems reveal fictional characteristics which largely preclude their appeal to later readers, some also show narrative power worthy of more consideration than they have received.

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