

THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT  
OF ALEXANDER POPE'S CORRESPONDENCE

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Thesis embodies the results of my own original work and that it has been composed by myself.

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ABSTRACT

Even quite recent critical evaluations of the letters Pope published in his own lifetime have continued to remain obstinately rooted, whether consciously or not, in the moral indignation experienced by Pope's Victorian editors on their discovery that he had not only surreptitiously engineered the publication of a selection of his letters but also had misdirected a number of letters, conflated or spliced or even fabricated others. This thesis holds that the response of moral indignation is not only generally misleading and unproductive but unfair. It arises from three areas of shortsightedness. There is, first, the failure firmly to place Pope's letters in the humanist tradition of the published 'familiar' letter dating from Cicero, through Pliny and Seneca, up to the letters of the Renaissance humanists, Erasmus and Petrarch. Second, there is the failure to appreciate sufficiently the revival of interest in the familiar letter which, in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Britain, precipitated a great number of diverse experiments in the letter form. And, third, Pope's own motives in publishing a selection of his letters have either been described too cynically, as compounded in the idea that vanity alone drove him to this step, or the letters themselves have not been seen, as Pope undoubtedly meant them to be, in the context of his other published work. This thesis will seek to redress the balance or, at least, to pave the way towards a more balanced appraisal of the literary achievement the published letters represent by focusing on these three largely neglected areas.

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CHAPTER ONEINTRODUCTION

This chapter limits itself to discussion of reactions to the 1735 and 1737 publications of Pope's letters; it has been established that Pope engineered Curll's 1735 publication, leading to the possibility of his presenting, in 1737, a 'genuine', authorized edition of letters.<sup>1</sup> The first section is composed of contemporary responses to their publication; apart from a few notable exceptions, the general consensus agreed with Dr. Johnson's estimate of their reception: 'Pope's private correspondence...filled the nation with praises of his candour, tenderness, and benevolence.'<sup>2</sup> The second section covers, roughly, the period from 1780 to 1854. This is the period in which opinions of the letters were tempered by two important factors: first, the changing fashions in literary taste strongly affected popular and critical response to Pope's letters and, second, individual opinion of the letters tended to vary to the extent the critic believed Pope had deliberately engineered their publication. Reference to the views of individuals who edited Pope's works during this period as well as to those of several leading literary figures should clarify the pervasive influence of these two factors on estimates of the literary achievement represented by Pope's published letters. C.W. Dilke's chance discovery of the Caryll transcripts and his subsequent report on his findings in a series of

articles in The Athenaeum in 1854 necessarily signals the end of the second section and the beginning of a third in this record of critical responses to Pope's letters as doubt about Pope's possible involvement in the 1735 publication was then replaced conclusively by certainty. The fourth section deals with more modern evaluations of the letters, and the fifth summarizes the accusations and condemnations of Pope's correspondence, discusses their implications, and points out the justification of this thesis by delimiting areas of discussion which have been neglected or only obliquely addressed.

## i

On 7 May 1735 Edmund Curll, notorious piratical Augustan bookseller, received fifty copies of Letters of Mr. Pope, and Several Eminent Persons.<sup>3</sup> These books, lacking titles and prefaces, had been delivered already printed to Curll by a mysterious individual who identified himself only as 'P.T.'; on 12 May he sent Curll one hundred and ninety more copies of this edition.<sup>4</sup> The second issue of books varied from the first in possessing titles and prefaces, but this 'Afternoon edition', as it has been labelled by R.H. Griffith, lacked the letters to Jervas, Digby and Blount and the letters at the end of the volume.<sup>5</sup> Curll immediately began printing his own edition of the letters, entitled Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence. With the copyright of the publication yet ambiguous - the 'Afternoon edition's' title page had proclaimed the book as 'Published by the Booksellers of London and Westminster' - a number of booksellers followed suit, with

twenty separate editions which claimed to present either Pope's 'Literary Correspondence' or his 'Letters' appearing between 12 May and 21 December and, as Norman Ault points out, 'there were at least three more before the publication of his long-awaited, much advertised, authoritative edition, in folio and quarto, on May 19, 1737.'<sup>6</sup>

There was suspicion from the very start that Pope had somehow been involved in the printing and publication of Letters of Mr. Pope. Before looking at the contemporary response to the publication it should be helpful to summarize the circumstances surrounding that publication actually accessible to Pope's public. The first account was provided by Pope himself in A Narrative of the Method by Which the Private Letters of Mr. Pope have been Procur'd and publish'd by Edmund Curll, Bookseller, published 12 June, 1735.<sup>7</sup> Curll countered this recital shortly after with his own account, The Initial Correspondence, or, Anecdotes of the Life and Family of Pope, which he published in the second volume of his Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence. The two versions of the story do not differ substantially, apart from their attribution of guilt.<sup>8</sup>

The circumstances are as follows. In 1733 Curll advertised for facts and documents for a life of Pope. On 11 October an individual identifying himself only as 'P.T.' responded, giving Curll biographical information - what George Sherburn describes as 'plausible but erroneous information about Pope's family'<sup>9</sup> - and promising Curll more should he favourably reply by placing the message 'E.C. hath received a Letter, and will comply with P.T.' in the Daily Advertiser for 18 October.<sup>10</sup>



Curll failed to place the advertisement and was contacted by P.T. again in a letter dated 15 November 1733, offering a 'large Collection of [Pope's] Letters, from the former Part of his Days to the Year 1727.'<sup>11</sup> On being unable to arrange a meeting with P.T., Curll refused the offer. Nothing further happened until, sixteen months later, Curll himself approached Pope directly, sending him P.T.'s letters and asking for some agreement between them. Pope responded by placing the following advertisement in the Daily Post-Boy of 3 April 1735:

Whereas A.P. hath received a Letter from E.C. Book-seller pretending that a Person, the initials of whose Name are P.T. hath offered the said E.C. to print a large Collection of Mr. P.'s Letters, to which E.C. requires an Answer, A.P. having never had, nor intending to have, any private Correspondence with the said E.C. gives it him in this Manner. That he knows no such Person as P.T. that he believes he hath no such Collection, and that he thinks the whole a Forgery, and shall not trouble himself at all about it.<sup>12</sup>

P.T., claiming to have seen Pope's advertisement, wrote to Curll 4 April. He told Curll he had had the letters printed already and Curll negotiated for the copy. He never met P.T. but dealt with a man in a clergyman's gown purporting to be one R. Smythe. Curll received fifty books on 7 May and one hundred and ninety more on 12 May but, shortly after the second delivery, Curll and the books were seized by officers of the House of Lords - an advertisement announcing the imminent publication of Pope's letters, including a list of correspondents, which Curll had been persuaded to place by Smythe in the Daily Post-Boy of 12 May had implied that letters from peers would be included in the collection: the unauthorized printing of letters by lords, according to law, was an illegal 'breach of privilege'. In the event, the

volumes were discovered to contain Pope's letters to peers but none from them, and Curll and the volumes were released. Pope now offered by advertisement a reward of twenty guineas for information about the 1735 publication and twice that sum for the identity of 'P.T.' and 'R.S.'. He also advertised in the London Gazette of 15 July 1735 that he would republish so much of his correspondence as was genuine, as well as some additional letters, thus announcing the publication of his 'official' edition of his letters, which appeared in May 1737.

It was Curll who first raised the alarm, who suspected that Pope's involvement in the affair was deeper than the loudly protesting poet ever acknowledged. It is unlikely that Curll was pleased with his part in the transactions with the anonymous P.T. and then with the clerically-dressed R.S. The wily bookseller had long been accustomed to manipulate others; it must have been unpleasant to apprehend that the shoe was, for once, on the other foot. Curll apparently sensed intrigue in 1733 when he broke off epistolary negotiations with P.T. The unfamiliar sensation of being out-manoeuvred, heightened by a series of misunderstandings and mutual recriminations in his dealings with P.T. and R.S., achieved its dramatic climax when, having just received the promised additional volumes of Pope's letters, Curll and the books were seized by officers of the Black Rod. Curll naturally believed that he had been betrayed by P.T. and R.S., suspected the involvement of Pope himself, and a month after the appearance of Pope's Narrative, he published his rebuttal, The Initial Correspondence, beside a reprint

of the Narrative in his second volume of Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence - probably to emphasize his belief that Pope was too knowledgeable in the affair not to have actually participated in it himself. The bulk of Curll's account is contained in The Initial Correspondence, with reiterated accusations appearing in the second volume's prefatory letter addressed to Pope, which identifies P.T. as 'Trickster Pope' and explicitly describes Pope's letters as collected and published by Pope's direction.<sup>13</sup> Curll explains in the preface to the third volume that 'MR. Pope's Project to usher his Letters into the World by my Means, was the Foundation of this Scheme of A Literary Correspondence; which has been so well received, that it shall be continued while People of Taste approve of it.'<sup>14</sup> Curll also revenged himself on Pope by issuing in his five volumes entitled Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence fewer and fewer letters actually written by Pope or even ostensibly addressed to him - volume four, for example, contains no letters from Pope - thus flagrantly capitalizing on the popularity of a publication which, purportedly, included Pope's writings.

While it was not likely that the 'infamous Curll', notorious for publishing anything that might turn a profit, should be believed rather than Pope in this matter, a footnote to a libellous poem on Pope and Colley Cibber, Sawney and Colley, published in 1742, suggests that there were some who were convinced by Curll's Initial Correspondence.<sup>15</sup> And, of course, Pope's enemies were always prepared to believe the worst. In 1743 in The Egotist Cibber slyly alluded to suspicions that Pope had intrigued to ensure a

seemingly disinterested publication of his own letters by positing a hypothetical case; Cibber pretended that he possessed some papers not worth printing, concluded that he should get them printed apparently without his consent by having a third person sell them, and then, when the surreptitious edition appeared, to be paid twice for the same copy, should publish a 'genuine' edition.<sup>16</sup> In 1754 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu also laid the charge of avarice at Pope's door in relation to the publication of his letters; in a letter to Lady Bute of 23 June she claimed that

Pope courted with the utmost assiduity all the old men from whom he could hope a Legacy...There cannot be a stronger prooffe of his being capable of any Action for the sake of Gain than publishing his Literary Correspondance, which lays open such a mixture of Dullness and iniquity that one would imagine it visible even to his most passionate admirers.<sup>17</sup>

In general, however, the contemporary response to the published letters was highly favourable. William Broome, one of Pope's collaborators in the Homer translations and thus no blind enthusiast where the poet's virtues were concerned, voiced what was probably the common view of the collection of Pope's letters Curll had published by admitting that he could not understand why Pope, although understandably upset by having his letters thus published, should be so desperate to recall any remaining letters from his correspondents to prevent another such publication. In a letter to Pope of 1 December 1735 he observed that the published letters would undoubtedly do Pope honour rather than harm:

I do not wonder at your caution in recovering your letters, after the late publication. Yet, after all, some few passages being retracted, where is the mighty

grievance? With the good they certainly do you honour, and the worst that the ill-natured can say is what is no dishonour...the humane companion, the dutiful and affectionate son, the compassionate and obliging friend, appear so strongly almost in every page, that I assure you I had rather be the owner of the writer's heart than of the head that has honoured England with Homer, his Essays, Moral Epistles, &c.<sup>18</sup>

Swift, on receiving a copy of Pope's authorized quarto edition of letters, remarked in a letter to Pope of July 1737 that

my opinion is, that there might be collected from them the best System that ever was wrote for the Conduct of human life, at least to shame all reasonable men out of their Follies and Vices.<sup>19</sup>

It was the contemporary perception of Pope's published letters as representing the elevating spectacle of the moral life of a poet and his illustrious friends which prompted the philanthropist Ralph Allen to urge Pope in 1735 to publish an 'authentic' edition and to offer him generous financial assistance toward this end; as Owen Ruffhead observed in his 1769 biography of Pope: 'no sooner had [Allen] read our author's letters, than he loved him for the goodness and virtues of his heart: and ever after entertained the most cordial affection for him.'<sup>20</sup> Lord Orrery, too, was particularly struck by the moral aspect of the letters, as he remarked in 1752: 'If we may judge of Mr. POPE from his works, his chief aim was to be esteemed a man of virtue. His Letters are written in that style.'<sup>21</sup>

Ironically Ruffhead's own glowing praise of Pope's letters signalled the end of Pope's hitherto undisputed pre-eminence in the province of letters - he had begun to be championed by the wrong people and for the wrong reasons. Ruffhead began his analysis of the letters by quite properly pointing out parallels between Pope's style and those of two epistolary

predecessors he undoubtedly modelled himself upon - Voiture and Balzac - but, unfortunately, Ruffhead spoilt his commendation by praising the letters for the very qualities they patently lacked: artless simplicity and freshness. In Ruffhead's words, Pope's letters

afford the most perfect model of epistolary writing ...what principally recommends them, is that frank sincerity, that artless naivete, that unaffected openness, which shews the amiable and virtuous disposition of the writer.<sup>22</sup>

Thomas Gray had, more than twenty years earlier, in 1746, provided one of the last balanced appraisals of Pope's letters:

it is not from what he told me about himself that I thought well of [Pope], but from a Humanity & Goodness of Heart, ay, & Greatness of Mind, that runs thro his private Correspondence, not less apparent than are a thousand little Vanities & Weaknesses mixed with those good Qualities, for nobody ever took him for a Philosopher.<sup>23</sup>

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Gray's own letters, with Cowper's and Walpole's, came to supersede Pope's in popularity when, as the eighteenth century progressed, the criteria used to judge a good letter changed: classical allusions and learned wit and, in the case of Swift's, Pope's and Bolingbroke's correspondence, an adherence to the principles of the humanist tradition, were succeeded by a preference for those very qualities which Ruffhead, in his blundering panegyric, had attributed to Pope - spontaneity and sincerity. It is somewhat ironic that Gray's insightful praise of Pope's letters occurred in a letter to Walpole; thirty years later, motivated possibly in part by a spirit of professional rivalry, Walpole himself -

the consummate letter writer of the eighteenth century - criticized the element of artificiality in Pope's letters: 'Mr. Pope laboured his letters as much as the Essay on Man, and as they were written to everybody, they do not look as if they had been written to anybody.'<sup>24</sup>

As early as 1756 Joseph Warton in An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope had initiated the process of attrition which would wear down Pope's reputation throughout the next century and a half by relegating Pope to the second class of poets in drawing his famous distinction between a 'MAN OF WIT, A MAN OF SENSE, and a TRUE POET.'<sup>25</sup> Warton's Romantic sensibility logically damned Pope as letter writer as well as Pope as poet. In his 1797 edition of Pope's Works Warton accorded the letters of Swift, Arbuthnot, Peterborough and Trumbull special praise as 'written from the heart, and in an easy, familiar style.'<sup>26</sup> Those of Bolingbroke, however, Warton described as 'in the form of dissertations; and those of Pope himself, like the elegant and studied Epistles of Pliny and Balsac...They seem to be chiefly valuable for some literary particulars incidentally mentioned.'<sup>27</sup>

The damage to the reputation of Pope's letters inflicted by the change in the literary standards applied to epistolary writing - with the humanist reliance on predecessors and precedents superseded by an emphasis on frankness and unstudied composition - was intensified by a revival of interest in the circumstances surrounding the 1735 publication of the letters. After the publication of Johnson's influential Life of Pope in 1781, attention came increasingly to be drawn to Pope's suspected involvement in Curll's 1735

edition of the letters. It is not that Johnson himself failed to provide intelligent or sympathetic analysis of Pope; rather, that he also provided such a plausible account of Pope, including his reasons for believing that Pope had engineered this publication of his letters, that Pope's complicity came to be generally accepted. Johnson's inclusion of personal anecdote only heightened the circumstantial realism of his account; for example, Johnson observed

That Curll gave a true account of the transaction, it is reasonable to believe, because no falsehood was ever detected; and when some years afterwards I mentioned it to Lintot, the son of Bernard, he declared his opinion to be that Pope knew better than any body else how Curll obtained the copies.<sup>28</sup>

In his account of Pope's motives in publishing his own letters Johnson's resounding periods and turns of phrase carry their usual weight of conviction:

It seems that Pope, being desirous of printing his letters, and not knowing how to do, without imputation of vanity, what has in this country been done very rarely, contrived an appearance of compulsion: that when he could complain that his letters were surreptitiously published, he might decently and defensively publish them himself.<sup>29</sup>

Johnson perceptively noted that 'Pope may be said to write always with his reputation in his head;'<sup>30</sup> this insight, however, did not soften his criticism of the letters:

If the Letters of Pope are considered merely as compositions they seem to be premeditated and artificial. It is one thing to write because there is something which the mind wishes to discharge, and another to solicit the imagination because ceremony or vanity requires something to be written.<sup>31</sup>

The Reverend William Lisle Bowles, Pope's next editor, crossed swords with a number of people over his unsympathetic portrayal of Pope. Bowles's and, later, the Reverend Whitwell



Elwin's denunciations of Pope's morals as revealed in his letters seemed to justify Byron in his cry 'We must rescue Pope from the priests!'<sup>32</sup> Bowles prompted this protest in English Bards, and Scotch Reviewers:

Each fault, each failing scan;  
The first of poets was, alas! but man.  
Rake from each ancient dunghill ev'ry pearl,  
Consult Lord Fanny, and confide in Curll;  
Let all the scandals of a former age  
Perch on thy pen, and flutter o'er thy page (ll.369-384).

Bowles followed Warton in considering Pope as belonging to an inferior class of poets; in his Invariable Principles of Poetry he asserted that 'the descriptive poet, who paints from an intimate knowledge of external nature, is more poetical...not than the painter of human passions, but the painter of external circumstances in artificial life; as COWPER paints a morning walk, and POPE a game of cards!'<sup>33</sup> It was not, then, likely that Pope's carefully revised letters would find much favour with him. Pope's 'Letters to Ladies', written in a style which, as we shall see, he consciously derived from Voiture, proved particularly offensive to Bowles who, judging them from Romantic criteria, found them 'constrained, affected, full of false wit, and false gaiety.'<sup>34</sup> The Augustan's occasional lapse into coarseness also upset Bowles; Byron observes in a letter of 1821:

Mr. B. says that he 'has seen passages in his letters to Martha Blount which were never published by me, and I hope never will be by others; which are so gross as to imply the grossest licentiousness.' Is this fair play? It may, or it may not be that such passages exist; and that Pope, who was not a Monk, although a Catholic, may have occasionally sinned in word and deed with a woman in his youth: but is this a sufficient ground for such a sweeping denunciation?<sup>35</sup>

Byron concluded that the licentiousness which Bowles perceived in Pope's letters was 'less the tone of Pope than the tone

of the time.'<sup>36</sup>

Although not many followed Byron's example in stepping forward to defend Pope in either his poetical or his moral capacity, a few remained loyal to Pope's old pre-eminence, both in Britain and abroad; a M. Villemain, deplored, for example, in an 1830 issue of the North American Review, the efforts of those who 'have labored to cast down [Pope's] statue from the elevated place, which the world has been contented to assign to it for near a century.'<sup>37</sup> Pope's next two editors, too, refused to believe the worst of him. In the first volume of his edition of Pope, Roscoe, in 1824, dismissed the suspicion of Pope's complicity in the 1735 publication as a 'supposition so far beyond the range of all reasonable probability, as to require only to be stated in order to obtain for it the degree of estimation it deserves.'<sup>38</sup> Similarly, in 1835 the Reverend G. Croly prefaced his Works with a memoir in which he claims that 'Johnson's narrative, always strongly engaging the reader by its poignancy and power, has arraigned Pope of disingenuousness; but later and calmer researches have done justice to an illustrious memory.'<sup>39</sup> Robert Carruthers, however, editor of the 1853 edition of The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope, agreed with Johnson Warton, Bowles and 'latterly, Mr. Macauley...that the poet was accessory to this publication, and for the obvious reason stated by Johnson.'<sup>40</sup> Carruthers concluded that 'we must set down the "surreptitious edition," as one of Pope's poeticae fraudes, intended specially to benefit himself and to gratify his innate love of stratagem.'<sup>41</sup>

C.W. Dilke's chance discovery of the Caryll transcripts effectively put an end to speculation as to whether or not Pope had engineered Curll's 1735 publication although, surprisingly, at least one of Pope's subsequent editors apparently chose to disregard the unambiguous evidence of Pope's complicity which the transcripts represented.<sup>42</sup> No uncertainty remained in Dilke's mind who, however, cautioned the readers of The Athenaeum to remember that Pope had laboured under physical as well as social handicaps:

We are sorry for the consequence--sorry at the exposure of such duplicity--sorry for the want of sincerity, honesty and truthfulness of our little hero; but, before the sensitive creature is absolutely condemned, let the reader...learn from Pope and Pope's conduct not to condemn the individual, but the system that made him what he was.<sup>43</sup>

The transcripts had made it apparent that Pope had 'remodelled some parts of his correspondence before publication, correcting, re-writing, conflating two or three letters into one, re-addressing letters to different persons, and so on.'<sup>44</sup> In general, Pope's horrified Victorian editors placed the worst possible construction on Pope's motives in thus 'cooking' his correspondence. Elwin was, unlike Dilke, indignant rather than condescending about the discovery. In the first volume of his edition of Pope he expressed his belief that the chief importance of the letters lay in their 'relation to the morality of Pope, and the fame of men whose reputation is involved in the question of his uprightness;' Elwin concluded that 'we have to decide whether [Pope's] letters are not many of them fraudulent, and the

circumstances attending their publication a series of ignominious plots, infamous false accusations, and impudent lies.'<sup>45</sup> Sherburn neatly summarizes the suspicions Pope's Victorian editors entertained on discovering that Pope had re-addressed letters originally sent to the obscure country squire Caryll as if written to Addison, Congreve, Sir William Trumbull and Steele: 'In Dilke's day it was assumed that Pope wished to emphasize his intimacy with Wycherley and Addison--perhaps even his ascendancy over one of them, and that he wished to put his own conduct towards them "in a good light."<sup>46</sup>

Few, however, were willing to go quite as far in their condemnation of Pope as Elwin and in 1872, when the first two volumes of Pope's poetry and the first three of his letters had appeared, 'the outcry against the religious and aesthetic bias shown in the editing was such that Elwin retired, and W.J. Courthope took over the completion of the work.'<sup>47</sup> Adolphus Ward's Globe edition of Pope's Poetical Works, published in 1869, had been somewhat more sympathetic. While Ward deplored the effects of Pope's editing of his letters, whereby he 'succeeded in depriving [them] of every vestige of natural freshness,' observing that a 'letter which is written with one eye to the person addressed, and the other to the public beyond, possesses no charm apart from all other literary compositions,' Ward generously championed Pope who, he believed, had served literature ardently all his life for neither fame, place, pay nor power but 'for her own sake.'<sup>48</sup> William Michael Rossetti, editor of the 1874 edition of Pope's Poetical Works, too, evinced a sympathy for the poet in

pointing out that 'of all the transactions of Pope's contentious life, the one which to the present day raises the greatest clamour of disdain and reprobation,' was Pope's involvement in the 1735 publication; the intrigue 'deserved punishment, and has amply received it.'<sup>49</sup> Rossetti then transcended futile preoccupation with the details of the 1735 publication by placing the poet, his letters, and his attempt to publish them without seeming to do so, into their contemporary context.

The accusations return in Leslie Stephen's 1880 Alexander Pope, in which Stephen too talks of 'underhand manoeuvres' and likens Pope to Blifil in his dealings with Squire Allworthy's prototype, Ralph Allen.<sup>50</sup> While Stephen considers that 'there is scarcely a more interesting volume in the language than that which contains the correspondence of Swift, Bolingbroke, and Pope,'<sup>51</sup> he is somewhat less taken with the rest of the letters which he judges by the epistolary criteria which had come into prominence shortly after Pope's death:

We should be indeed disappointed were we to expect in Pope's letters what we find in the best specimens of the art: the charm which belongs to a simple outpouring of friendly feeling in private intercourse; the sweet playfulness of Cowper, or the grave humour of Gray, or even the sparkle<sup>52</sup> and brilliance of Walpole's admirable letters.

In 1894, too, John Dennis in his Age of Pope observes that Pope's letters are 'full of artifice, and composed with the most elaborate care...weighted with compliments and with professions of the most exalted morality;' Dennis concludes, not surprisingly, that Pope's letters lack the charming 'ease and naturalness' of those written by Cowper and Southey.<sup>53</sup>

The tide of critical opinion began to turn in Pope's favour in 1930 when Edith Sitwell explained Pope's 'uncandid' behaviour in secretly revising his letters and then publishing them himself by theorizing that 'Pope had a longing to be regarded not only as a great poet, but as a great and good man.'<sup>54</sup> In 1934 Sherburn contributed to the cause of the rehabilitation of Pope's reputation as letter writer in The Early Career of Alexander Pope. Sherburn's pertinent observations include, first, the recognition that 'most letters printed in the eighteenth century were revised for publication;' second, that 'it is doubtful if Pope has so falsified his letters as to change the story fundamentally;' and, third, that usually Pope's revisions of his letters 'had no other purpose than literary effect.'<sup>55</sup> Norman Ault in his 1949 New Light on Pope believed that Pope 'thought of his letters as the raw material of literature rather than the finished product;' the problem thus presented by the letters returned to Pope upon correspondents' deaths or upon his recalling them was one of editorial method: 'how to lick that inchoate mass of good, bad, and indifferent correspondence into impeccable literary "copy" for publication.'<sup>56</sup>

Sherburn's excellent 1956 edition of the Correspondence of Alexander Pope heralded a new era in literary scholarship dealing with Pope's letters. As Sherburn noted in his introduction, 'Editors seemed to forget that Pope himself published only a very small part of his correspondence;'<sup>57</sup> thus most of Pope's surviving correspondence was not even

affected by his compulsive habit of incessant revision. The format of Sherburn's edition enabled scholars for the first time to view the correspondence chronologically - earlier editions, as a matter of course, divided the letters into groups to specific correspondents, a format commended by Elwin in 1871<sup>58</sup> - while also, helpfully, it distinguished between the various sources of the letters: Pope's original autograph letters, contemporary transcripts, or identification of the various editions in which a letter first appeared. Sherburn's practice of placing in brackets passages of letters omitted by Pope in his own editions (or omissions made by subsequent editors) enabled scholars for the first time, too, to assess the sorts of changes Pope did make in his letters before publishing them - rather than, as before 1956, having to rely on the generalities of Pope's not always unbiased editors. Sherburn's edition further indicates, through a system of symbols, letters 'not hitherto included in an edition of Pope's collected letters,' letters that rest 'only upon the authority of Pope's editions,' letters suspected of being confections or fabrications, and letters published by Pope 'but now available in a more authentic source than his editions.'<sup>59</sup>

The opportunity thus afforded to take an overall view of Pope's letters, undistorted by Pope's own editorial revisions or subsequent editors' prejudices, is reflected in some of the responses to Sherburn's publication of Pope's Correspondence. Maynard Mack's untitled review of the edition in the Philological Quarterly, for example, commends it for a presentation of Pope as letter writer 'hewn free of Victorian

prejudice and misinformation': 'the picture of Pope we are afforded is not only far fuller than before, but, in essentials, trustworthy.'<sup>60</sup> Mack observes that Pope emerges from the edition as 'Not a bad sort of man, on balance, despite his poses, vanities, and lies,' while concluding that Pope's editorial revisions of his letters lay 'mainly in the direction of elevation and generalization.'<sup>61</sup> Sherburn's edition also allowed John Butt to infer in 1957 that none of Pope's revisions were major ones, that 'Where the originals of these letters survive, or independent transcripts of them, a comparison reveals that what he omitted were trivialities and occasional profanities, but that his principal revisions were purely stylistic.'<sup>62</sup> The conclusion Butt reached in 1964 was that the letters Pope published were designed to exhibit 'the man of plain living, high thinking and unimpeachable integrity,' but that this was the view of himself that Pope 'discovered in his letters as he reread them, rather than the view that he designedly wrote into them.'<sup>63</sup>

One might be tempted to hope that Sherburn's edition of the letters had succeeded in exorcising, once and for all, the spectre which has haunted Pope's reputation almost ever since the 1735 publication - a spectre compounded of the suspicions that Pope had deliberately misrepresented himself and his friends in revising the correspondence and that he was guilty of avarice and vanity in publishing his own letters. This hope would, however, be premature. The Victorians' harsh judgments have continued to colour unduly critical response to Pope's letters up to the present day. Symptomatic



of this phenomenon is the Scriblerian review of a recent book on Pope's letters, James Winn's A Window in the Bosom, which concludes that 'In the end, for all [the author's] individual insights, his book also leaves the impression that it is less an introduction to Pope's letters than an apologia for Pope himself.'<sup>64</sup> Winn singles out Pope's treatment of Caryll, re-directing his letters to other men, as Pope's 'most shameful action':

The most profound irony is that among the redirected letters are several dealing with ethics...In the course of their friendship, Caryll did more than justice to Pope's intentions, believing with the credulous fondness of a parent, that the admirable intentions he expressed in his letters were in fact his guiding principles.<sup>65</sup>

Winn subscribes to the theory put forward by Elwin, that Pope re-directed these letters to testify to his friendships with more famous men; Winn surmises that Pope hid behind his 'unwillingness to force confrontations,'<sup>66</sup> that it was easier 'to lead Caryll to believe that the mangling of the letters was the work of Curll' rather than admitting that he was 'less proud of his long friendship with the obscure Caryll than of his more fleeting relationship with, say, the famous Addison.'<sup>67</sup>

This thesis seeks to address these accusations by placing Pope's letters in their contemporary context. I believe that we labour, whether consciously or not, under the heritage of moral indignation at Pope's involvement in even the unauthorized editions of his letters bequeathed us by the Victorian editors in particular and that this response of moral indignation is not only generally misleading and unproductive but unfair. It arises from

three areas of shortsightedness. There is, first, the failure firmly to place Pope's letters in the humanist tradition of the published 'familiar' letter dating from Cicero, through Pliny and Seneca, up to the letters of the Renaissance humanists, Erasmus and Petrarch. Second, there is the failure to appreciate sufficiently the revival of interest in the familiar letter which, in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Britain precipitated a great number of diverse experiments in the letter form. And, third, Pope's own motives in publishing a selection of his letters have either been described too cynically, as compounded in the idea that vanity alone drove him to this step, or the letters themselves have not been seen, as Pope undoubtedly meant them to be, in the context of his other published work.

The second chapter of this thesis will address these first two neglected areas, examining the history of the humanist tradition of the letter as publishable literature and discussing the revival of experiments in the letter form in Augustan England. The third chapter will chronicle the evolving epistolary tastes of Pope's own age: changes which Pope at once followed in his own letters and effected himself by offering his own letters as epistolary models. The fourth chapter will look at Pope as letter-writer; the fifth looks at him as editor of his own letters. The sixth chapter will discuss the special case represented by Pope's correspondence with Swift and Bolingbroke and his intentions in publishing their letters. The seventh chapter focuses on the 'question of propriety and moral purpose', offering the

number of motives behind the 1735, the 1737 and the 1741 publications and discussing the number of intentions the publication of these editions fulfilled for Pope. The eighth chapter, the conclusion, returns to the accusations against Pope contained in this chapter, re-examining them in the light of the preceding six chapters.

CHAPTER TWOTHE TRADITION OF THE LETTER AS A LITERARY GENRE

The first section of this chapter will look at the letter as a literary genre, tracing it from its origins in antiquity to its prominence as a literary form in seventeenth-century France. This section will, in particular, discuss the letters of some of the seminal letter writers: Cicero, Pliny, Seneca, Petrarch, Erasmus, Balzac and Voiture. Brief description of the history and the nature of the literary achievement their letters represent will be accompanied by a look at the way in which the intention to publish their letters harboured by some of these famous letter writers seemed to affect their epistolary style. The second section will chronicle the rise of the familiar letter as a literary genre in Britain. In seventeenth-century Britain the spread of literacy and the establishment of an efficient postal system simultaneously generated a dramatic increase in letter writing. Epistolary manuals were devised to instruct the new bourgeois reading public in the proper way to write a letter while the use of Cicero, Pliny and Seneca in grammar schools for purposes of Latin translation as well as instruction in epistolary techniques meant that, at all levels of society, there was a developing interest in the letter as a literary form. The third section will briefly survey the complex issue of the propriety of the publication of personal letters in

seventeenth and eighteenth-century Britain. (This issue will also surface as appropriate throughout the rest of this thesis.) This period witnessed somewhat of a paradox in attitudes toward the art of letter writing. On the one hand, popular recognition of the letter as a literary genre culminated in a number of the greatest artists in the form, leading to the subsequent description of this time as the 'age of the great English Letter Writers.'<sup>1</sup> On the other, 'letters were still considered private communications and to publish one's own was a breach of taste.'<sup>2</sup> The paradoxical nature of the Augustan attitude toward the publication of personal correspondence is well illustrated by Lord Orrery in his Life of Swift who first complacently repeats the 'acknowledged observation, that no part of an author's writings give a greater insight into his natural disposition than his letters, (especially when written with freedom and sincerity)',<sup>3</sup> and then, apparently unaware of any contradiction, complains of the pernicious 'license which of late has too much prevailed of publishing epistolary correspondences.'<sup>4</sup> The irony that these observations are voiced in the context of a biography consisting of a series of letters purportedly sent to Orrery's son Hamilton is also ignored.

## i

It is important first to sketch, briefly, a picture of the ancient, lost art of letter writing as it may have appeared to Pope. The personal letter is now seen as a

valuable biographical or historical tool. The letter per se, however, held a fuller connotation in Pope's age, when it was viewed also as a rhetorical genre, as a literary form with precedents stretching back into antiquity. The first great exemplar of the art of letter writing was, of course, Cicero. Nearly eight hundred of Cicero's letters have survived as well as about a hundred written to him.<sup>5</sup> Cicero, an indefatigable correspondent, wrote his many letters apparently without thought of future publication. The lack of a proper postal system, however, and the chance that his messenger might be intercepted, with his letters stolen or damaged, led Tiro, Cicero's favourite freedman, who served as his amanuensis, to adopt the habit of making two fair copies of the letters which had been dictated to him, sending one on and keeping one for reference. It is to this practice, adopted for purposes of expediency, that we owe the invaluable heritage of the sixteen volumes of Ad Familiares preserved for us by Tiro who, long after his master's death, composed a biography of Cicero and arranged for the publication of the copies of the letters.<sup>6</sup> Cicero's friend Atticus also kept all the letters sent him, together with copies of other correspondents' letters Cicero occasionally sent him, bound in eleven volumes in his library, but his collection was not, apparently, made public until some hundred years after Cicero's death when, appropriately enough, the letters were first mentioned and quoted by Seneca in his Epistulae Morales.<sup>7</sup>

That Cicero intended to be remembered by posterity is plain in his life and writings. One of the strongest

impressions one is left with in reading his letters is of a restless but honest vanity, a transparent and unselfconscious ambitiousness which transcends in its intensity mere egotism. Thus we see him in a letter to the famous historian Luceius imploring his friend to write a history of his actions and, particularly, of his role in the defeat of the Catiline conspiracy in these terms: 'I am extremely desirous, and I hope the World can't blame me for it, to see my Name made immortal in your Works.'<sup>8</sup> The declaration of his unabashed desire for glory is tactically tempered by subtle flattery:

'tis not only my desire that Posterity should talk advantagiously of me hereafter, and that my Name should live in future Ages: I am ambitious while I am alive, to enjoy so authentic an Approbation as yours, to receive so distinguishing a Mark of your Friendship, and to be <sup>9</sup>praised by a Hand so universally esteemed.

The irony, of course, is that, rather than the historian making Cicero immortal in his memoirs, 'it is Cicero who has immortalised Luceius by writing him this letter.'<sup>10</sup>

Luceius never got around to writing the history Cicero proposed and Cicero, who generally wrote his letters without thought of publication, would be highly surprised to find that he is perhaps best remembered through his letters, that, of all his writings, they are probably the most widely read.<sup>11</sup>

It is likely that Cicero believed his name would be accorded lasting fame through the reception of his formal writings. Cicero even recommended the study of his own writings to his son, observing that such study 'will undoubtedly be of some Use toward the Improvement of your Latin Tongue.'<sup>12</sup> He hastened to dispel the notion of being thought egotistical

in this recommendation by adding:

And let me not in This be thought arrogant neither; For, allowing my self the meanest of many Philosophers, I have yet some Right, me thinks, after an Age spent upon This Study, to value my self upon all the Parts of an Orator; as Propriety, Perspicuity, and the Flowers, and Ornaments of Well-speaking. Wherefore I must Earnestly recommend unto you the Perusal, not only of my Oraçions, but likewise of my Philosophical Discourses.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly not one to deprecate his own achievements, it is all the more striking that Cicero should have failed to recognize the literary merit of his letters. R.G.C. Levens observes that the letter to Luceius is an anomaly in Cicero's correspondence; it is one of the rare letters Cicero deliberately wrote as a 'literary' composition: Cicero himself regarded it as a 'pretty composition' and advised Atticus to borrow it from Luceius.<sup>14</sup> What one critic identifies as the 'rhetorical complexity of the Ciceronian oratorical style,'<sup>15</sup> is notably lacking in the majority of his letters, written with easy fluency in the heat of the moment. While Cicero distinguished three types of letters: those relating news, those composed of friendly chat, and those discussing 'grave, moral topics,'<sup>16</sup> he successfully avoided any such compartmentalization in his own correspondence. For all the amazing extensiveness of his letter writing, Cicero managed to maintain a remarkably consistent tone: it is the voice of an eminently human - hence a complex and vulnerable - personality which speaks to us in genuine, simple words from the letters, whether he is engaged in defending his loyalty to Caesar and Pompey or in freely expressing his perplexities to Atticus. Cicero justly remarked in a letter to Lucius Papirius Paetus,



'But whatever are the subject of my letters, they still speak the language of conversation.'<sup>17</sup>

The publication of Cicero's Letters to Atticus about 60 A.D. was, in the revival of interest in the art of letter writing which it inspired, probably directly responsible for Seneca's decision to cast his series of philosophical essays into the form of letters in Epistulae Morales.<sup>18</sup> According to Levens, these are 'letters in form only'.<sup>19</sup> They are actually a set of essays directed to Lucilius, a friend who was abroad on imperial service and 'who looked to Seneca for philosophic guidance.'<sup>20</sup> That Seneca was, ultimately, addressing his thoughts and counsels to posterity rather than particularly to Lucilius is everywhere apparent in the letters, which often open with reference to specific events, friends or circumstances but which inevitably broaden into abstract generalizations on the human condition. Seneca made a habit of including in each letter, usually towards its close, what he variously described as a 'payment of dues,' a 'present', a 'toll', a 'daily stipend', or an 'excellent saying'. These 'payments' or 'presents' took the form of maxims or quotations garnered from philosophers. For example, Epistle X, 'On Solitude and Prayer,' concludes in these terms: 'But, according to custom, I shall subjoin to this epistle a small present; it is from Athenodorus; and I think it a just and excellent observation.'<sup>21</sup> That these philosophic 'gifts' were for the use of posterity as well as for Lucilius is made plain in Epistle XXI in which Seneca promises Lucilius immortality for having corresponded with him and in Epistle VIII in which

Seneca admits 'I am at work for posterity.'<sup>22</sup>

According to Robin Campbell, Seneca, in his one hundred and twenty-four letters to Lucilius, is actually the 'founder of the Essay'.<sup>23</sup> That this was subsequently generally recognized is apparent in Francis Bacon's dedication of his own essays to Prince Henry, in which he observes of the term 'the essay' that 'The word is late, but the thing is ancient. For Senecaes Epistles to Lucilius, yf one marke them well, are but Essaies, that is, dispersed Meditacions, thoughe conveyed in the forme of Epistles.'<sup>24</sup>

It is somewhat ironic to find Seneca making Cicero's claim for epistolary naturalness or for a conversational style in letter writing in his own carefully composed essays which he cast into the letter form. Seneca went so far as to define a proper epistolary style as 'talking upon paper'. Implicit in this definition was a belief that 'a discourse, designed to convey truth, ought to be plain and simple, not too much laboured.'<sup>25</sup> Yet Seneca's deliberate cultivation of Cicero's conversational style fails to convince, probably because of its very deliberateness. It appears that what Hedley Taylor terms 'dishonest egoism' spoils Seneca's letters if they are to be considered as familiar epistles while as essays they succeed.<sup>26</sup> While Seneca criticized Cicero's letters for their indiscriminating inclusion of apparently insignificant details of the orator's private life, it is the lack of the minutiae of daily existence which renders his own letters, considered as letters, vapid and patently artificial. It is interesting to discern in Epistulae Morales,

in any case, Seneca's apprehension of the familiar letter both as a vehicle for the expression of and as a testament of friendship. In terms echoing Cicero's De Amicitia he remarks in Epistle XL:

I am obliged to you, Lucilius, for your frequent Epistles: it is the only way I have to know you, when at such distance: I never receive one from you, but I suppose you present. If the pictures of our absent friends are agreeable to us, by calling them to our minds, and alleviating the discomfort of absence...how much more agreeable are the letters, that convey a lively representation of those, for whom we have an affection?<sup>27</sup>

A generation after Seneca came what Levens describes as, after Cicero's, the 'second great collection of Latin letters,'<sup>28</sup> those written by Pliny the younger. Levens attributes Pliny's consciousness of the letter as a literary form and his decision to publish, from time to time, selections of his own correspondence, to the continuing popularity of Cicero's letters. Pliny's most famous letters are descriptive narratives: an account of an uncle who perished in the eruption of Vesuvius, 79 A.D., and the subsequent escape of himself and his mother Plinia, for example, is contained in two letters to the historian Tacitus.<sup>29</sup> The first letter, a colourful, elegant composition, rather disingenuously closes with the observation that 'You will choose out of this narrative such circumstances as shall be most suitable to your purpose: for there is a great difference between what is proper for a letter and an history; between writing to a friend, and writing to the public.'<sup>30</sup> The second letter, a similarly eloquent piece complete with dialogue, also ends on a disingenuous note: 'And now, you will read this narrative without any view of inserting it in your history, of which

it is by no means worthy; and indeed you must impute it to your own request, if it shall appear scarce to deserve even the trouble of a letter.'<sup>31</sup>

With Pliny the pretence to epistolary naturalness is largely laid aside; the distinction between letters to friends and letters to the public did not seem to have been drawn. His correspondence is remarkable for its carefully wrought prose, by the air of studied elegance which, as an editor of his letters, the Rev. F.C.T. Bosanquet observes, contrasts markedly with the tone of Cicero's letters, his 'unaffected, almost careless, ease of expression.'<sup>32</sup> Bosanquet ascribes the disparity in tone to the variance in the political and social climates in which Cicero and Pliny lived. Cicero's age, the bitter closing chapter of the Roman Republic, was a time of impassioned political discussion and active involvement in the arena of public affairs. The energy and fire of Cicero's letters are, by Pliny's time, with the establishment of the Empire, subdued into an artificiality of tone and frivolity of topic. As it was simply dangerous for Pliny and his contemporaries to discuss politics, expediency led them to mannered descriptions of villas and social engagements and tasteful sketches of the public figures of their day.<sup>33</sup>

The polished tone of his correspondence accords with Pliny's confession that he had intended the letters for publication. This declaration is contained in a letter addressed to one Septitius: 'You have frequently pressed me to make a select collection of my Letters (if in truth

there be any which deserve a preference) and give them to the public. I have accordingly done so; not indeed in their proper order of time, for I was not compiling a history; but just as they presented themselves to my hands.'<sup>34</sup> Pliny admits in this letter that should his epistolary collection meet with a favourable reception, 'I may probably enquire after the rest, which at present lie neglected, and preserve those I shall hereafter write.'<sup>35</sup> According to Bosanquet's theory, Pliny was forced to turn to literature in his quest for fame. Denied the active political life of a Cicero, it is interesting that Pliny chose the letter form and that he felt able to confess openly that he was directing his letters to posterity. His ambition is especially apparent in the two letters describing the eruption of Vesuvius which he sent to Tacitus - letters in which, as Levens observes, 'we can see clearly enough that Pliny is straining every nerve to earn a place for himself in the pages of Tacitus.'<sup>36</sup> Pliny unconsciously prophesied the use to which his delightful, anecdotal letters would someday be put - in grammar schools, teaching Latin translation and letter writing simultaneously - in a letter to his friend Fuscus: 'as for the Purity of Language, and a close compendious way of expressing ones self, 'tis no where so happily learnt, as by frequent writing of Letters.'<sup>37</sup>

The literary heritage represented by Cicero's, Seneca's and Pliny's letters lapsed, as did all classical literature, into virtual obscurity until the fourteenth century. In 1345 Petrarch re-discovered Cicero's letters to Atticus, Quintus and Brutus in the Cathedral Library at Verona - a chance

discovery which has been called 'one of the most momentous occasions of the Renaissance.'<sup>38</sup> Cicero's letters once again prompted a renewal of interest in the letter as a literary form while firing the imagination of the humanists 'who were just then beginning with intense excitement to rediscover the fascination of man's individuality.'<sup>39</sup> The effect of Cicero's letters on Petrarch tells us something about the interest they were to hold for his and subsequent generations. On reading the manuscripts of Cicero's letters Petrarch was inspired to address an open letter to the intensely human personality the letters seemed, almost unconsciously, to reveal; Petrarch admits to Cicero that through the medium of the letters:

I have heard your voice, Cicero, in your copious talk, in your frequent lamentations, in your continual changes; and though I had long known you as an instructor of others, I have now at last discovered what you were in yourself.<sup>40</sup>

While Cicero's letters revealed an engagingly real individual to Petrarch, it was an upsetting as well as an affecting experience: when Petrarch read the letters he 'wept because they destroyed his exalted notion of Cicero's character.'<sup>41</sup> L.P. Wilkinson, an editor of Cicero's letters, considers it a blessing that Cicero did not have a chance to edit them. While Cicero apparently wrote some letters with the view that they might, in future, prove useful in explaining his motives or in justifying his political conduct, he planned only to publish a selection of these letters, not to 'cook' or edit them. In the event, the selection was never made and, instead, the whole picture has been laid before posterity, as Petrarch found, somewhat to his chagrin, in finding in the letters evidence of Cicero's weaknesses as well as of his

strengths. As Wilkinson observes, had the letters been 'doctored' by Tiro or Atticus, 'had they made a plausible selection, it would have been open to any hostile person to produce originals of letters they had suppressed, with far more damaging effect.'<sup>42</sup> The lesson seems clear: tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner.

Letter writing in the Middle Ages was a very different affair from what Petrarch discovered, in Cicero's letters, to be its expression in the classical world. It had come to assume a utilitarian function; from an exercise in rhetoric it had become an exercise in rehearsing the proper formulae. The medieval school included in its curriculum the ars dictaminis, with pupils taught, and expected to learn by heart, the rote example of the model letter:

There were phrases for beginning and ending a letter, suitable forms of address for different social categories, legal terms, ecclesiastical terms, formulae for felicitation and condolence, for the granting of requests, for their refusal, for their non-committal postponement, and the schools were <sup>43</sup>at special pains to teach these to their pupils.

Petrarch changed all that. According to his biographer, Morris Bishop, Petrarch's own 'idea of an epistolarium probably arose with his discovery of Cicero's Familiar Letters.'<sup>44</sup> Although the Middle Ages had lost the concept of the letter as a rhetorical genre, Petrarch characteristically chose to reject the limitations of his own age to return to classical freedom in letter writing. In E.N.S. Thompson's opinion, Petrarch was the 'first modern man to break away from the yoke of the formulary and write interesting and personal letters of real intrinsic merit.'<sup>45</sup>

Petrarch, like Cicero, was an indefatigable letter writer, but unlike Cicero, he treasured his letters and intended them to be published, keeping minutes and even duplicates of them. By 1350 Petrarch's decision to publish an edition of his own letters was a fully-defined project. In that year he wrote to his friend Lodewyck Heyliger, a Belgian musician whom Petrarch had rechristened 'Socrates', describing his intention to assemble his letters, to dedicate those in prose to him, and those in verse to his Neapolitan friend Barbato de Sulmona. The purpose of this publication was to prepare a 'truthful portrait of his own character.'<sup>46</sup> Petrarch divided his letters in prose into twenty-four books, following the format of the Iliad and the Odyssey, beginning the collection with a letter to 'Socrates' and concluding it with a series of letters addressed to his idols of antiquity: Cicero, Seneca, Livy, Horace, Virgil, Homer and others.

Despite the great number of Petrarch's letters which survive, according to J.H. Whitfield, 'the letters he retained represent a fraction only of those he wrote.'<sup>47</sup> Whitfield believes that Petrarch was willing to write to a number of unknown correspondents out of a sense of duty: he intended his letters to inculcate virtue in his correspondents. Whitfield links this didactic intent of Petrarch's correspondence and its corollary, an emphasis on friendship, the idea that 'Virtue ...is the foundation of friendship, and mutual love preserves it,'<sup>48</sup> to the example of Cicero: the inspiration of Petrarch's humanism and of its expression in letters. As Whitfield notes, 'This constant insistence on the value of friendship, and of its meaning, has nothing in it to surprise us if we remember



Petrarch's dependence on Cicero and his contact with antiquity.'<sup>49</sup>

As for the style and content of Petrarch's letters, the correspondence jars somewhat on the modern sensibility although the published letters constituted the greatest source of Petrarch's influence in his lifetime and were instrumental in inspiring a renewed interest in the letters of the classical writers. At times Petrarch rather inappropriately repeats classical maxims; he tells a friend, for example, that the death of his brother should, as a test of stoicism and fortitude, 'be rather an occasion for rejoicing than grief.'<sup>50</sup> There are moral essays after Seneca's model and formal literary pieces filled with quotations from the Roman classics mingled with more 'normal' letters retailing his activities and thoughts. As Petrarch's fondness for writing letters to classical letter writers indicates, he saw his own letters in the context of an established literary tradition; they were obviously 'looking beyond the immediate addressee to the ultimate recipient, posterity.'<sup>51</sup> Cicero was Petrarch's model but Petrarch, who relegated the trivial and the mundane and the personal to his postscripts, preserving the body of each letter intact in the form of a Latin essay, ironically failed to comprehend the literary achievement which Cicero's unaffected and unrevised letters represent.

Erasmus, Petrarch's successor as foremost exponent of the art of letter writing, was, too, convinced of the value and relevance of ancient learning to his own age. In Johan Huizinga's opinion, 'Erasmus had always regarded classical studies as the panacea of civilization, provided they were

made serviceable to pure Christianity.'<sup>52</sup> Following Erasmus's preparation of an edition of Jerome's letters and a new translation of the New Testament from the Greek Erasmus was seen as 'the centre of the scientific study of divinity, as he was at the same time the centre and touchstone of classic erudition and literary taste.'<sup>53</sup> Not surprisingly, a consequence of Erasmus's new-found fame and authority was that his correspondence was 'prodigiously augmented'.<sup>54</sup> By 1523 Erasmus had written 'such a quantity of letters, that two waggons would scarcely be equal to carry them.'<sup>55</sup>

Huizinga, Erasmus's biographer, cautions us to remember that in the sixteenth century, as in antiquity, considering the few alternative means of communication, with literacy still the domain of the elite, that letter writing was seen as an art: 'People wrote, as a rule, with a view to later publication, for a wider circle, or at any rate, with the certainty that the recipient would show the letter to others.'<sup>56</sup> The semi-public nature of the letter in the sixteenth century as well as the circumstance of the extensiveness of his correspondence may well have prompted Erasmus to engage in the composition of his famous treatise on letter writing, De ratione conscribendi epistolas, published in 1522. Erasmus's dissertation on the epistolary art included a 'full theory of letter writing, an exhaustive classification scheme for types of letters, and a host of skillfully chosen examples.'<sup>57</sup> He did not prescribe a dogmatic adherence to rules or formulae in letter writing, however, condemning those who 'chain up the freedom of the letter-form with required parts, and force letters into a kind of slavery.'<sup>58</sup>

This attitude towards letter writing did not, however, prevent Erasmus from taking what we may now consider a deliberate, self-conscious attitude towards his own letters. He wanted them published. To this end he sent requests to his correspondents that they return both his letters and those of their own that they might want published as well. He intimated that he was driven to this extremity by necessity rather than by choice; as he observed in a letter to Thomas More of 1518: 'First of all I ask you to entrust to the bearer ...any letters of mine or yours which you consider fit for publication with the alteration of some passages; I am simply compelled to publish my letters whether I like it or not.'<sup>59</sup> Huizinga describes Erasmus as a 'master of reserve,' as a solitary who nevertheless attached the highest importance to friendship.<sup>60</sup> He observes that Erasmus's modesty and the contempt which he displayed towards the 'fame that fell to his lot are of a somewhat rhetorical character,' but that we should ascribe this apparent discrepancy between profession and practice to a recognition of it as a 'general form common to all humanists.'<sup>61</sup> Thus we see Erasmus deprecating his letters and claiming that he published them only because his friends insisted upon it, although, like Petrarch, he not only wrote prolifically, but also copied and preserved his letters, recalled them from friends, and corrected them with a view to publication. He concealed the circumstances of the publication, deflecting his responsibility for it, by printing a letter purportedly written by his friend Beatus Rhenanus to Michael Hummelberg in which Rhenanus claims that he stole the

letters.<sup>62</sup> William Irving observes that a letter from Erasmus to Rhenanus written two years later proves that Erasmus was responsible for the publication. In this letter of 27 May 1520 Erasmus, while admitting his duplicity in the affair, describes the publication as an act

which was extorted from me partly by the importunity of friends, and partly by absolute necessity, when I saw there were persons prepared to publish the epistles they had of mine, whether I liked it or not, and who plainly threatened to do so in letters they wrote me.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, although Erasmus intended his letters to be considered as literature for future generations, he managed the deception of addressing his letters to his own age artfully, openly disdaining anything approaching artifice and deliberation. His letters actually seem to be directed to particular correspondents. Erasmus was particularly adept at verbal portrait and character analysis. A letter to Ulrich Hutten of 1515 consists of a charming description of Thomas More: his appearance, habits, history and writings.<sup>64</sup> In a letter to Beatus Rhenanus Erasmus observed that 'if epistles are wanting in feeling and do not represent a man's real life, they do not deserve to be so called.'<sup>65</sup> Judging from this criterion, he condemned Seneca's letters and praised Cicero's and Pliny's which 'represent, as in a picture, the character, fortune and feelings of the writer, and at the same time the public and private condition of the time.'<sup>66</sup> Erasmus's own letters, easy, copious, and conversational, show that he, unlike Seneca, was able to match practice with precept.

We must now briefly look at the influence of Jean Louis Guez de Balzac and Vincent Voiture - two of the most important

exemplars of what has been described as the 'brilliant classic period of letters in French literature'.<sup>67</sup> Balzac and Voiture brought letter writing in seventeenth-century France to its highest artistic expression. Balzac was the author of twenty-seven collections of letters, the first of them published in 1624. In content and in style Balzac's letters resemble the moralistic essays of Seneca, with Balzac too disingenuously proclaiming his negligent, conversational epistolary style while gravely engaging in Senecan philosophical discourse. There are, too, Senecan commendations of virtue in Balzac's letters; in a letter to 'the Lord Cardinall of Valete,' for example, Balzac, after praising his correspondent's integrity and sincerity, remarks, 'This is it which I admire in you my Lord; and not your Red Hat, and your fifty thousand Crownes Rent.'<sup>68</sup> There is the same stoical indifference to death; in a letter to Richelieu Balzac observes, 'I could be well content you should send me your Collicke, and that it come to accompany the Feaver, the Scyatica, and the Stone. Since of so many Diseases, there can but one Death be composed.'<sup>69</sup>

It is obvious that Balzac was still constrained by the Middle Age's view of the letter, however, despite his recognition of and appropriation of classical wisdom. He intended his elegant letters to polish and to refine further the French language. Balzac's adherence to the principles of the ars dictaminis, the perception of the letter as an exercise in formal rhetoric, has meant that they appear

stifled and artificial to the modern reader. The sense of artificiality is, no doubt, enhanced by Balzac's obviously having written them for publication. That Balzac felt himself to be carrying on a well-established literary tradition in addressing his letters to posterity is the message of the preface to a 1634 English translation of the correspondence. Monsieur de la Motte Aignon, the author of the preface, first points out the moral and historical value inherent in the letter collections of classical writers and then proudly points to the literary achievement represented by Balzac's excellent letters.

The popularity of Balzac's letters, which ran through eight editions in the ten years following their first publication, was equalled and then eclipsed by the letters of his contemporary, Vincent Voiture. Voiture, although the son of a merchant, inhabited, like Balzac, the aristocratic social milieu of the Hotel de Rambouillet. The grave formality of Balzac's letters becomes a tone of gay insouciance in Voiture's while the reflections on moral and philosophic issues are exchanged for gossip, a love of retailing social anecdote and jests. What has been described as Balzac's 'heavy sententiousness',<sup>70</sup> is transformed in Voiture's letters into dazzling displays of gaiety and irreverent wit. In a letter to a Monsieur de Gordeau, for example, who apparently shared with Voiture the misfortune of very small stature, Voiture offers this consolation, 'As we pour the most exquisite Essences into the smallest Bottles, Nature infuseth the Divinest Souls into the smallest Bodies, and mixes more

or less of matter with them, as they have more or less in them of their Almighty Original.'<sup>71</sup> The alchemy of Voiture's wit transforms both his and his friend's shortness into a signal of divine favour. Subtle flattery and humorous self-deprecation are mingled in Voiture's claim that by the excellence of Monsieur de Gordeau's example 'the World will be undeceiv'd of that sottish error of valuing Men by their weight, and my littleness with which I have been so often upbraided by Mademoiselle de Rambouillet.'<sup>72</sup>

There is no definite evidence that Voiture intended these letters for publication. His lively, colourful descriptions of his aristocratic friends are frivolous but assured and, apparently, 'sincere': that is, unlike Balzac's, they seem to be actual letters sent to actual friends. If, to the modern reader, these letters seem a trifle too elegant and witty for all the protestations of easy negligence in their composition, it should be remembered that Voiture inhabited a society in which rhetorical skill was a measure of social class and breeding. The son of a tradesman was not likely to drop the social mask in even his most private correspondence. The epistolary style evolved by Balzac and Voiture came to be known as préciosité; it was a style compounded of exaggerated flattery and ingenious compliments delivered in a tone of delicate flippancy or sophisticated affectation. A sub-genre of the 'precious' style of letter writing was a type of letter which Voiture developed to perfection - 'letters to ladies'. In a letter to Mademoiselle Paulet Voiture observes 'I have always been us'd to mingle a Dram of Love in my Letters.'<sup>73</sup>

Voiture was being modest; a dram implies a small quantity whereas all of Voiture's correspondence betrays 'an assumption, usually tacit, that all ladies, whatever their age or marital status, are to be approached as if they were objects for romance.'<sup>74</sup> This coy attitude to women in his letters, the lighthearted tone and inevitable emphasis on delicate flattery characterize Voiture's correspondence and make it representative of the first, and most influential, example of the 'letter of wit' popular in Britain in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

## ii

Leslie Stephen described the eighteenth century as an age which strove to 'combine the interest of direct observation of man with a thoroughly concrete form of presentation.' In this vein he observed that the 'gradual extension of the reading class affected the development of the literature addressed to them,'<sup>75</sup> fostering the concurrent evolution of the novel and of journalism. The reading public still remained relatively tiny. Literacy at the turn of the century was yet largely confined to its old boundaries as the domain of the privileged, wealthy and leisured. An attempt to estimate the size of the London reading public in the early eighteenth century must be based, in default of other evidence, upon records of the circulation of magazines and newspapers.<sup>76</sup> James Sutherland offers one such statistic in observing that 43,800 copies of periodicals and news sheets sold weekly in 1704.<sup>77</sup> This would mean that out of a



population of six million, less than one person out of a hundred bought a newspaper. We may couple this statistic with Addison's estimate of twenty readers per copy of the Spectator, although Ian Watt notes that this is the highest contemporary estimate and possibly a 'wild (and not disinterested) exaggeration.'<sup>78</sup>

In any case, while the original percentage of the literate at the beginning of the century was undoubtedly small, it was a figure which grew steadily. Considering the fact that the population of England increased by almost two million during the period, it is not surprising that by mid-century a new class of bourgeois shopkeepers and tradesmen and their wives had begun to swell the size of the reading public. Watt estimates that it was from this increase in 'the numbers and wealth of shopkeepers, independent tradesmen and administrative and clerical employees' in the eighteenth century that 'the most substantial additions to the book-buying public were drawn.'<sup>79</sup> The Grub Street trade in cheap editions of fiction, translations, and pirated reprints for this newly literate section of society was complained of as early as 1667 when Sir Roger L'Estrange lamented in The Visions of Quevedo the

selling of Translations, so Dog-Cheap, that every Sot knows now as much, as would formerly have made a Passable Doctor, and every Nasty Groom, and Roguey Laquey is grown as familiar with Homer, Virgil, Ovid, as if 'twere Robin the Devil; The Seven Champions; or a Piece of George Withers.

Those who could read must, perforce, wish on occasion to write as well. A society's cultivation of, first, the habit and then the art of letter writing is a phenomenon dependent

upon not only that society's level of literacy but also, of course, upon its postal system. Herbert Joyce in his history of the post office repeats the old axiom that 'the easy and cheap corresponding doth encourage people to write letters.'<sup>81</sup> William Dockwra's establishment of the penny post in London in 1680 ensured the inexpensive but efficient delivery of letters and parcels in the city and in its suburbs. Dockwra's choice of London as the centre of his postal service was appropriate; of Britain's population of over five million, one tenth lived in London, which was more than fifteen times larger than her nearest rival, Bristol.<sup>82</sup> There is evidence to support the supposition that the majority of London's population was at least semi-literate.<sup>83</sup>

The founding of the penny post had an unexpected although foreseeable effect on trends in letter writing after 1680; it 'increased largely the number of letters for the country.'<sup>84</sup> Prior to that date the General Post Office in Lombard Street was the only receptacle for letters in all of London; letters could be posted from nowhere else. Dockwra's instituting an additional four or five hundred receiving offices meant, for London dwellers, that 'Every man had now a post office at his own door.'<sup>85</sup> The self-generating popularity of the improved postal system is apparent in statistics. By 1704, for example, the post office was receiving '75 percent more money per year than in 1688.'<sup>86</sup> The dramatic increase in revenue allowed the postal system to institute a network of cross-posts, which linked towns on separate main highways, and by-posts, which linked small villages and towns to larger centres, thus

ensuring a daily post in a number of places throughout Britain. As society in the early eighteenth century was still largely immobile, the letter assumed heightened significance as, often, the only means of communication available; it supplied the invaluable function of maintaining personal relations between people who were separated by what we should now regard as only short distances. The effect of the improved postal system must have been somewhat similar to that intended by Defoe in his A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain (1724-7), appropriately written in the form of letters: both served in opening up the country to those who hitherto had lived out their lives in their native villages with little information of and less contact with the outside world.

The postage due from a letter varied, of course, with the number of its sheets, weight, and distance carried: 'the minimum charge under the Act of 1711 being 3d. for a single sheet sent up to 80 miles.'<sup>87</sup> Members of Parliament, however, were 'allowed to "frank" their letters to the number of ten a day, and to receive letters for which they had provided the senders with "franks" to the number of fifteen a day.'<sup>88</sup> It is hardly surprising, considering the amazing extent and variety of his correspondence, that Horace Walpole keenly regretted the loss of this privilege on resigning his seat in the House of Commons. The recipient of a letter, however, usually paid for its postage. This fact and two flaws in the postal system are observed by Lord Orrery in a letter to Mr. Salkeld in 1729: 'DEAR SIR,---I write to You with great

Pleasure always, but it is lessened when You have the Trouble of paying for my Letters, and the Postmaster the Trouble of opening and reading them. This I hope will go by a private Hand; if not I must commit it to the Post, and that is committing it to the Winds.'<sup>89</sup> Many early eighteenth-century letter writers complained of the unreliability of the post and of the miscarriage of their letters. Prominent figures of the period, too, among them Swift, Pope, Bolingbroke and Lord Orrery, suspected that their letters were opened by postal clerks. While Dr. Johnson sarcastically dismissed Pope's fears as evidence of his habitual egotism,<sup>90</sup> it is now accepted by historians that the government at that time 'suspicious of seditious or treasonable communications, issued warrants for the examination of suspected correspondence, and officials often acted without waiting for a warrant.'<sup>91</sup> Kenneth Ellis observes that the government's practice of opening, copying or detaining suspect correspondence dated from as early as the Tudor period, had become habitual by the early 1700s, and was even afforded legal sanction by the Post Office Act of 1711.<sup>92</sup> It transpired in the course of an investigation of Robert Walpole's administration that a private office was maintained in the post office expressly for the purpose of opening and examining letters.<sup>93</sup>

It is only natural that an age which witnessed a dramatic increase in the efficiency of its postal system, a corresponding increase in the quantity of correspondence sent and delivered from all parts of the country, and a rise in literacy, should begin to evolve theories as to the cultivation

and proper direction of the art of letter writing. Katherine Hornbeak, author of The Complete Letter Writer in English, claims that 'it is not unreasonable to perceive a causal connection between the improved postal facilities and the crop of bourgeois letter-writers appearing in 1687 and thereafter.'<sup>94</sup> The first printed English letter writer, William Fulwood's 1568 The Enimie of Idleness, translated from Italian, passed through at least eight editions in the fifty years after its first publication in English. It was followed in 1576 by Abraham Fleming's A Panoplie of Epistles. Both Fleming and Fulwood focused on the practicality of their epistolary formularies for the 'illiterate': that is, for those who were not literate in the age's sense of the word - with a 'knowledge of the classical languages and literature, especially Latin.'<sup>95</sup>

The 'literate' would automatically have been exposed at grammar school to Latin letter writers or even to Erasmus's De ratione conscribendi epistolas. English grammar schools well into the eighteenth century provided the letters of Cicero, Seneca and Pliny as exercises in Latin grammar, composition and translation. John Brinsley's Ludus Literarius (1612) particularly recommended Cicero's letters as a useful model of a good epistolary style. Charles Hoole's ordinal, A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching Schoole (1660), similarly suggested that students should translate 'Tully's epistles' to improve both their Latin and their own epistolary skills.<sup>96</sup> Thus while polite society, educated at grammar schools, was taught 'How to make Epistles, imitating Tully, short, pithie, sweet Latine and familiar; and to indite Letters

to our friends in English accordingly,'<sup>97</sup> for the rest of the reading public letter-writer manuals taught social and epistolary decorum simultaneously in such homely, utilitarian formularies as The Young Secretary's Guide (1687), which offered such practical letters as models for the 'illiterate' as 'A Letter from a Serving Man to his Master,' 'A Servant Maid's Letters to her Friends,' 'A Letter from a Youth to his Father, who is desirous to be bound Apprentice,' and 'A Letter of Trade and Commerce.'

The history of the letters read by the different sections of society in this period is not, however, a straightforward one. As we will see in the next chapter, even the humble letter-writer manual was deeply if incongruously affected by French préciosité. And the distinction between letters published for different classes of society began to blur as early as 1586 when Angel Day succumbed to the impulse to fictionalize and to dramatize 'formula' letters in his letter-writer manual, The English Secretorie. While Fleming and Fulwood had acknowledged their almost total dependence on Latin formularies, from which they had transcribed letters for inclusion in their own treatises on epistolography, Day claimed that he had himself composed the form letters in his collection. The English Secretorie thus represents a 'stage of transition between mere translations, such as The Enimie of Idleness and A Panoplie of Epistles, on the one hand, and Breton's independent Poste with a Packet of Madde Letters on the other.'<sup>98</sup> Breton's Poste, published in 1602, only carried Day's move towards original composition in the letter-writer manual to

its logical conclusion. While the earliest English letter writers had sought to offer models conventional enough to be suitable for general use, the temptation towards the elaborations of fiction, towards characterization of correspondents and dramatic description of the situation from which a letter was written, was always present. Breton's enormously popular Poste claimed to consist of actual letters dropped by a careless postman. The pretence of realism in the Poste is belied, however, by the fact that Breton printed the letters accompanied by their supposed recipients' letters in response to them. Humour and enjoyment of the fantastic are indicated by the Poste's contents, which included 'A disswasive from Marriage,' 'A Letter of scorne to a coy Dame,' 'A Letter to a fowle Dowdy,' 'To a faire proud Tit,' 'A merry Letter of newes of Complaints,' and 'A kinde Letter of a Creditor for money.'

As George Saintsbury observes, 'The rise of the novel in this century is hardly more remarkable than the way in which that novel almost wedded itself - certainly joined itself in the most frequent friendship - to the letter-form.'<sup>99</sup> Day's and Breton's leap from commonsensical advice on writing actual letters to the realm of fiction was followed by Richardson, whose Pamela evolved from the humble beginnings of the epistolary formulary Familiar Letters on Important Occasions. That the letter-writer manual came to occupy an intermediate position between volumes of actual letters and the novel itself can also be seen in the case of The Adventures of Lindamira (1702). Lindamira is distinguished by its being

'almost the first piece of original and extended English fiction to adopt the epistolary technique.'<sup>100</sup> The authorship of Lindamira has often been attributed to Tom Brown in default of a more likely candidate although Benjamin Boyce, Brown's biographer, dismisses the idea as improbable. While literary history, for convenience's sake, has awarded Pamela the palm as the first epistolary novel, Lindamira is clearly a forerunner of Richardson's work both in structural design and in thematic content. Lindamira purports to be a collection of actual letters; Lindamira tells her story of virtue tried and eventually triumphant in a series of letters to her correspondent, Indamora, often copying into them other letters to and from herself.

In the second edition of Lindamira (1713) its publisher, Richard Wellington, prefaced the title with the phrase, 'The Lover's Secretary,' thus suggesting a kinship between his novel and the volume of 'Billets Doux, Letters Amorous, Letters Tender,' entitled A New Academy of Complements; or, The Lover's Secretary (1640) - a popular and often reprinted letter-writer manual largely derived from two immensely influential treatises on epistolography by Jean Puget de la Serre.<sup>101</sup> While Lindamira's jaunty epistolary style might defy imitation by readers, Wellington's suggestive addition to the title must have aroused ideas of some parallel between Lindamira and such a popular letter-writer manual as the original Lover's Secretary.

The letter was no less instrumental in the development of the periodical essay than in that of the novel. The



earliest manifestations of this distinctively Augustan genre, John Dunton's Athenian Mercury (1698) and Defoe's Advice from the Scandal Club (1704), for example, consisted primarily of purportedly real letters from anonymous correspondents printed with responses from the editors - a format they may have deliberately adopted from Breton's popular Poste. The personal letter to the editor became a standard feature of the periodical essay. The Tatler and the Spectator combined included more than eight hundred letters, fictitious and actual, of authorship known or unacknowledged.<sup>102</sup> The inclusion and importance of the letter per se in these two influential periodicals must have encouraged the English public to see the letter as literature. It was generally known that most of the actual letters submitted to the Tatler or the Spectator would be revised and polished before their publication. In fact, this editorial revision was encouraged as well as expected. 'Mr. Spectator' once admitted that he felt he 'ought sometimes to lay before the World the plain Letters of my Correspondents in the artless Dress in which they hastily send them,'<sup>103</sup> but that the correspondents themselves, in submitting letters, often suggested that editorial art be applied to improve their letters.<sup>104</sup> George Sherburn suggests that such periodicals as the Tatler and the Spectator stimulated 'gentlefolk to write good letters,'<sup>105</sup> while promoting the view that a good letter, revised before publication, became, in effect a literary product. That, in fact, 'a very great stimulus towards self-conscious letter-writing came probably from the Spectator itself,'<sup>106</sup> as Sherburn concludes, is apparent from the overwhelming response



to Addison's and Steele's request for letters from the public. On the dissolution of their editorship they entrusted nearly three hundred letters not yet published to Charles Lillie who issued a volume of Original and Genuine Letters Sent to the Tatler and Spectator in 1725. Steele observed in 1710 that the Tatler's policy of asking for letters from its readers had proved a boon to the postal system:

I have lately been looking over the many packets of letters which I have received from all quarters of Great Britain, as well as from foreign countries, since my entering upon the office of Censor, and indeed am very much surprised to see so great a number of them, and pleased to think that I have so far increased the revenue of the Post Office.<sup>107</sup>

iii

In her thesis on 'The Formative Period of English Familiar Letter-Writers,' Maude Bingham Hansche draws a useful distinction between letters of state, actual private correspondence, and letters of 'conscious literary intent.'<sup>108</sup> We can use these three categories of letters as a departure point for a discussion of letters published in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Britain. The publication of state letters was perfectly permissible in that period. It was a practice which received its greatest impetus from the example of the reign of Henry VIII when the letters and papers preserved of this official kind, some of which were eventually published, numbered in the thousands. Hansche cites as an example of this type of letter collection the 'Cecil correspondence, preserved at Hatfield,' which 'extends from

the accession of Edward VI to the reign of Queen Elizabeth.'<sup>109</sup> This collection contains over '30,000 documents, only a portion of which is contained in 210 huge volumes.'<sup>110</sup> The only restriction laid upon this sort of publication was a tacit understanding that publication might be delayed until some years after the individuals involved were dead.

The eighteenth century was acutely aware of the historical value of official or letters of state; it was a consciousness which lasted throughout the century. In 1700, in his preface to Letters Written by Sir William Temple, Swift compared Temple's letters with Cicero's to Atticus, claiming that 'nothing is so capable, of giving a true Account of Story, as Letters are; which describe Actions, while they are alive and breathing; whereas all other Relations are of Actions past and dead.'<sup>111</sup> In his preface to his Life of Cicero, published in 1741, Middleton, too, reflected his age's opinion of the unique value of the 'historical' letter by according special praise to Cicero's 'familiar Letters' and, above all, those to Atticus, as 'they contain, not onely a distinct account of every memorable event, but lay open the springs and motives, whence each of them proceded...the man who reads them, will have no occasion for any other History of those times.'<sup>112</sup> In 1752 Lord Chesterfield recommended the following course of study for his son:

If you pitch upon the Treaty of Munster...do not interrupt it by dipping and deviating into other books, unrelative to it; but consult only the most authentic histories, letters, memoirs, and negotiations...particularly letters, which are<sup>113</sup> the best authorities in matters of negotiations.

In 1761 Horace Walpole observed in a letter to Sir David Dalrymple that 'nothing gives so just an idea of an age as genuine letters; nay, history waits for its last seal from them.'<sup>114</sup> Similarly in 1798 Gilbert Parke justified his publication of an edition of Bolingbroke's letters by asserting that 'with regard to the transactions during the ever-memorable four last years of the reign of Queen Anne, it will serve as a faithful record; and it were to be wished, that our history in general were founded more upon such authorities.'<sup>115</sup>

The publication of the letter of state or official or historical letter was not, then, affected by the opprobrium generally attached to the publication of familiar letters in the early eighteenth century which, as C.W. Dilke remarks in reference to Pope's letters, 'had been of very rare occurrence, and grave doubts were entertained as to the delicacy and propriety of such a proceeding.'<sup>116</sup> The explicitly 'literary' letter was also usually seen as a genre apart from the familiar letter and was not affected by this tacit prohibition on publication either. E.N.S. Thompson believes that Joseph Hall was one of the first individuals in England to 'use the letter for distinctly literary purposes.'<sup>117</sup> Hall published letters concerning his theological opinions in the early seventeenth century, letters which were obviously formal and intended for publication. In Brian Downs's opinion Hall's 1608 publication of Decads of Epistles followed the Elizabethan custom in which religious and political controversy took the form of published letters: Hall 'following illustrious

precedent' had written the letters 'for the inculcation of the true religion and virtue.'<sup>118</sup> Downs usefully points out that this precedent extended well into the eighteenth century, but with the published letters taking on discussion of more general or abstract questions, such as Arbuthnot's Essay on the Usefulness of Mathematical Learning in a Letter from a Gentleman in the City (1701), Swift's Drapier's Letters (1724), or Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Use of History (1736).

William Irving describes James Howell as the 'real pioneer' of the literary letter in England.<sup>119</sup> Howell issued Epistolae Ho-Eliane or Familiar Letters Domestic and Forren, in four successive installments, in 1645, 1647, 1650 and 1655. Howell's letters, supposedly written from his confinement for debt in Fleet Prison, enjoyed great contemporary popularity, passing through twelve editions from 1645 to 1754. The letters described the leading characters and most important events of Howell's time while including narratives of his extensive travels and reflections on his wide variety of experiences; this mixture of vivid description, thrilling narrative and personal reflection combined to lend Epistolae Ho-Eliane permanent value and interest and to ensure its rank as one of the first prominent specimens of epistolary literature in the English language. While Howell's Familiar Letters were purportedly actual letters, Hansche concludes, after consulting a preponderance of evidence against this claim, that it 'is probable that many of these letters were purely

fictitious,'<sup>120</sup> and that Howell may well have engaged in the composition of a collection of letters to relieve his 'necessities' in the Fleet. It is Hansche's opinion, however, that this discovery that the letters are fictitious - a discovery of relatively recent date - 'does not rob the letters of their literary value; rather intensifies it.'<sup>121</sup>

One last example of a representative collection of literary letters on this period should suffice. In 1664 the ebullient Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, published the CCXI Sociable Letters, 'Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious, and Excellent Princess, The Lady Marchioness of Newcastle.' Irving's belief that, apart from a few actual letters, the collection consisted largely of 'completely fictional' essays<sup>122</sup> is borne out by Lady Newcastle's preface to the work in which she confesses that 'they are rather Scenes than Letters, for I have Endeavoured under the Cover of Letters to express the Humors of Mankind.'<sup>123</sup> Lady Newcastle gives two reasons for her decision to cast her observations on life into the epistolary form: first, she had already written twenty plays, which she thought a sufficient use of that genre; and, second, 'I saw that Variety of Forms did Please the Readers best, and that lastly they would be more taken with the Brevity of Letters, than the Formality of Scenes, and whole Playes, whose Parts and Plots cannot be Understood till the whole Play be Read over, whereas a Short Letter will give a Full Satisfaction of what they Read.'<sup>124</sup> From these three examples of the 'literary' letter it should be apparent that the term covered a wide range of meanings or

potential expressions: the 'literary letter' ranged from the Duchess of Newcastle's patently fictional letters depicting London life to Hall's theological essays cast into letter form for the waging of controversial discussion to Howell's purportedly real if rather sensationalistic letters.

But, in the midst of these productions of invention and imagination, collections of actual letters were also being published in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Britain. In 1651, twenty years after his father's death, Dr. John Donne published one hundred and twenty-eight of the poet's letters in an edition entitled Letters to Severall Persons of Honour. These letters reflect Donne in his several capacities: as a family man, as a courtier, as a deeply religious man, as a poet, and as a man seeking patronage - the latter role not surprisingly adopted by a 'man whose family relied for a number of years on the support and encouragement of patrons.'<sup>125</sup> But, as M. Thomas Hester observes, the major preoccupation of the letters is 'the truth of religion.'<sup>126</sup> Although the letters were obviously not intended for publication, Donne used them as the medium for serious religious discussion, occasionally apologizing to a correspondent that he has given him a letter which 'is extended and strayed into a Homilie.'<sup>127</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, perhaps the most interesting aspect of the letters is not their fascinating revelation of their author's character but the circumstances of their publication. According to Hester, 'the younger Donne,' attempting to capitalize on his father's fame, 'tried to

disguise the real contents of his volume by altering and inventing letter headings, addressing letters to more famous persons, and carefully arranging the contents so that the names of eminent friends of his father appeared as recipients early in the collection.<sup>128</sup> Yet even with these precautions the edition apparently did not sell well.<sup>129</sup>

Somewhat more popular, although also composed of actual letters, was the publication of Sir Henry Wotton's letters to Sir Edmund Bacon, published in 1661, and those to Lord Gouch, published in 1685. In Hansche's opinion, the fact that Wotton's letters are the 'actual expressions of one friend to another,'<sup>130</sup> written and sent without thought of publication, meant that the letters lack rhetorical complexity although Wotton's style 'has the long, sweeping periods, and his statements have the balance,' associated with his public capacity as ambassador.<sup>131</sup> In this respect Wotton's letters verge on the historical or 'official' letter discussed above; one letter, however, contains a fascinating account of the burning down of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in 1613 and many others are valuable for their incidentally conveying a vivid picture of Elizabethan London. Wotton's letters, like Donne's, were published after his death and thus the public was able to enjoy them without attaching to their author imputations of either vanity or egotism; such posthumous publications of actual letters were, by and large, socially permissible in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Britain.

Some individuals of the period, however, resisted the



notion that it was proper to publish letters, whether or not they were genuine, whether or not the publication was a posthumous one. Dorothy Osborne had little patience with women writers anyway and in a letter to William Temple of 1653 she remarked 'You need not send mee my Lady Newcastles book at all for I have seen it, and am sattisfyed that there are many soberer People in Bedlam, i'le swear her friends are much to blame to let her goe abroade.'<sup>132</sup> In 1668 Mrs. John Evelyn, apparently alarmed at her son's tutor's praise of her letters, observed that she had no ambition to aspire to the 'fame of Balzac,' and that, in any case, she questioned the intrinsic interest of published private correspondence: 'Buisnesse, love, accidents, secret displeasure, family intrigues, generally make up the body of letters, and can signifie very little to any besides the persons they are addressed to.'<sup>133</sup> Thomas Sprat also regarded with scorn such publications in his belief that a proper letter should be written in a style of easy familiarity: 'In such Letters the Souls of Men should appear undress'd: And in that negligent habit, they may be fit to be seen by one or two in a Chamber, but not to go abroad in the Streets.'<sup>134</sup> Although Sprat believed Cowley's letters to be among the best of his writings, he refused, in his role as literary executor, to include them in his edition of Cowley's Works (1668).<sup>135</sup> The issue of whether or not it was permissible let alone desirable that booksellers should publish personal letters was disputed throughout the eighteenth century. In 1752 in his biography of Swift Lord

Orrery explained his detestation of the practice in these terms: 'At present, it satisfies the curiosity of the public; but for the future it will tend to restrain that unsuspecting openness, which is the principal delight of writing to our friends.'<sup>136</sup> In a letter to Johannes Stinstra in 1753 Richardson recounts the curious story of a gentleman acquaintance of his youth. This unnamed gentleman was, according to Richardson, a 'Master of ye Epistolary Style,' but, fearing that his letters might someday be published, consigned his excellent letters 'to the Flames.'<sup>137</sup> Nearly thirty years later Samuel Johnson ironically observed that 'It is now become so much the fashion to publish letters, that in order to avoid it, I put as little into mine as I can.'<sup>138</sup>

The Augustan bookseller and the would-be author and publisher of his own letters found several ways of circumventing the sensitive issue of the publication of familiar letters. As posthumous publications were at least countenanced, some booksellers apparently adopted the 'habit of keeping any letters that might ultimately be of use.'<sup>139</sup> Tom Brown edited a great number of such posthumous letter collections. Not sharing Sprat's scruples he included, for example, Cowley's letters to Henry Bennet in his 1702 publication, Miscellanea Aulica. Brown began his successful career as a purveyor of letters in 1697 with a collection of Rochester's Familiar Letters, a collection sufficiently popular to pass through five editions in the next eight years. Brown's preface to the second edition of these letters hints at the market there

was for such published letters: 'The Extraordinary Success of the First Volume of my Lord Rochester's Letters, and the great Encouragement of several Persons of Quality...have engaged me to present you with this Second Volume.'<sup>140</sup>

Brown goes on to mention that he is also editing the Duke of Buckingham's and George Etherege's letters. For those who might wonder how these private documents found their way into Brown's eager hands or who might question their authenticity, the bookseller's preface, signed by Sam Briscoe, contained the following useful if rather vague information: 'Having, by the Assistance of a Worthy Friend, procured the following Letters that were written by the lat Incomparable Earl of Rochester (the Originals of all which I preserve by me, to satisfie those Gentleman, who may have the curiosity to see them under his Lordship's hand) I was encouraged...to make this Collection.'<sup>141</sup>

This volume also contained letters of Otway's and Mrs. Katherine Phillips's as well as letters written by Thomas Cheek, John Dennis, and Brown himself.

The heritage of classical and continental letter writers offered booksellers another means of sidestepping the issue of the publication of letters. In addition to his publications of the posthumous works of English letter writers, Tom Brown engaged in a great deal of translation, offering, for example, in 1702, Select Epistles or Letters out of M. Tullius Cicero, and the best Roman, Greek, and French Authors both Ancient and Modern. As Irving observes, certain authors invariably appeared in these popular seventeenth and eighteenth-century letter collections:

Cicero, Seneca and Pliny as the classical letter writers, with Voiture and Balzac and, latterly, Madame de Sévigné representing the continental contingent. These were the 'authors that were acknowledged on all hands to have performed the best in the epistolary way.'<sup>142</sup> In 1700 Brown had collaborated with Dryden, Henry Cromwell, Thomas Cheek, Joseph Raphson and John Dennis in producing a translation of Voiture in Familiar and Courtly Letters, 'Written by Monsieur Voiture. To Persons of the greatest Honour, Wit, and Quality of both Sexes in the Court of France.' The edition also included translations of letters by Aristaenetus who James Winn describes as 'an obscure but smutty sixth-century Greek,'<sup>143</sup> Pliny and Fontanelle, a collection of 'Letters of Friendship and Other Occasional Letters,' written by Brown, Dryden, Wycherley, Congreve and Dennis among others, and a third section entitled 'Letters of Friendship, and Several Other Occasions,' also written by Dryden, Wycherley, Congreve and Dennis. By including letters of their own devising in their translation of Voiture's letters, Wycherley, Dryden, Dennis and Congreve expressly allied themselves to the respectable classical and continental tradition of literary letter writing. This may be seen as a third means by which the Augustans sidestepped the controversy surrounding the publication of personal letters.

A fourth means of circumventing the obstacle presented by public disapproval of the publication of personal letters was offered by the author's casting a general topic into the letter form, rather in the mode adopted by Hall and,

later, by Addison and Steele in their journals. Charles Gildon's 1694 publication of Miscellaneous Letters and Essays on several Subjects, Philosophical, Moral, Historical, Critical, Amorous, etc. was typical of this sort of letter collection, including letters ranging from a defense of Paradise Lost to a criticism of women's education. Descriptions of foreign travel cast into the letter form were also popular; in 1686, for example, Gilbert Burnet published Some Letters. Containing An account of what seemed most remarkable in Switzerland, Italy, &c. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's 'Turkish Embassy Letters', published in 1763, also qualify as this sort of travelogue conducted in the form of personal letters. These fifty-two, purportedly 'actual' letters, are composed in the manner of a detached, broad-minded social historian; they contain Lady Mary's observations on Turkish customs and culture. According to her biographer and editor Robert Halsband, these 'are not the actual letters she sent to her friends and relations; they are, instead, a compilation of pseudo-letters, dated, and addressed to people either named or nameless.'<sup>144</sup> The material contained in the letters was transferred from a journal, later burned by Lady Mary's daughter, in which Lady Mary had jotted down her observations as she accompanied her husband's embassy to Turkey in 1718. The journal, then, served as the source from which Lady Mary could draw in composing these purportedly 'actual' 'Turkish Embassy Letters'.

The history of the publication of the 'Turkish

Embassy Letters' is an instructive tale. After her return from Turkey Lady Mary made the acquaintance of the feminist Mary Astell and subsequently allowed her to look over the manuscript of the Embassy Letters. Mary Astell urged Lady Mary to publish but she had 'condemn'd [the letters] to obscurity during her Life.'<sup>145</sup> Her own prominent social position as well as that of her daughter and son-in-law, Lord and Lady Bute, militated against her appearing in print. As Halsband observes, 'Lady Mary's literary interests offended her conventional daughter.'<sup>146</sup> It was probably the premonition that her daughter would indiscriminately destroy her surviving writings following her death that led Lady Mary to adopt the somewhat desperate expedient of giving an autograph copy of the Embassy letters to the Reverend Benjamin Sowden, minister of the English Church in Rotterdam, in 1761. In the event, her prudence was expedient. Shortly after Lady Mary's death Lady Bute attempted to retrieve the copy of the Embassy letters from the Rev. Mr. Sowden who, having heard of Lady Mary's death, had contacted her family, asking whether they had any objection to his intention to publish. For the sum of £500 Sowden was persuaded to relinquish the two manuscript volumes to Lady Bute. Lady Bute's attempt to frustrate her mother's scheme for literary fame was, however, itself frustrated when, in 1763, less than a year after Lady Mary's death, the Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M---y W---y M---e were published. Sowden had unwittingly allowed two English visitors access to the volumes when they were still in his possession; these mysterious individuals presumably

copied the letters and subsequently published them. Despite the immense popularity of the Embassy letters Lady Bute retained her belief that 'it was unseemly for Lady Mary to be an author'.<sup>147</sup> In publications of collections of letters such as the Embassy letters the distinction between the essay and the letter is blurred; Hansche justly observes that one's 'original conception that the letter was addressed to a limited audience but that the essay was consciously written for publication certainly cannot stand against the evidence,'<sup>148</sup> supplied by the variety of uses to which the letter was put in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Britain. The curious tale of the circumstances surrounding the publication of the Embassy letters serves as a timely reminder that the Augustan letter writer who wanted to print his letters was forced to engage in a number of ploys to avoid the controversy such publications inspired in his age; he could attempt to ensure that the letters might be published after his death; he might, like Wycherley, Dryden and Dennis, openly imitate the French epistolary models and print his letters in continental or classical letter collections; or he might renounce all pretence to epistolary naturalness in his letters and cast essays or travel literature deliberately in the letter form.

While the eighteenth century never openly countenanced the publication of personal letters it was a practice which was increasingly granted, if not social respectability, tacit acceptance as the century progressed. In a letter to Thomas Edwards of 1755 Richardson admitted to engaging

in a particularly Augustan form of entertainment: 'I am employing myself at present, in looking over & sorting, & classing my Correspondencies & other Papers. This, when done, will amuse me by reading over again, a very ample Correspondence: & in comparing the Sentiments of my Correspondents, at the time, with their present; & improving from both.'<sup>149</sup> The eighteenth-century habit of retaining copies of their letters had led to this uniquely Augustan habit of keeping copies of letters they had sent collated with letters received and reading them as though a book. Letitia Pilkington's famous anecdote of Swift's pasting letters from his friends into a translation of the Epistles of Horace from which the original pages had been removed should be borne in mind.<sup>150</sup>

Richardson did not hint at the idea of publication in this letter to Edwards but his answer was not discouraging when, two years later, a bookseller from Leipzig named Reich suggested that he publish a selection of his correspondence in German: 'the decent obscurity of a foreign language would presumably veil the immodesty of publishing letters while one was still alive.'<sup>151</sup> The project was abandoned several years later, apparently through Richardson's unwillingness to appear a prime mover in the affair. Reich's proposal was, however, later cited by Richardson as a reason for his requesting Lady Bradshaigh to edit their letters to each other and for his project to edit others of his letters; it had 'led the novelist to believe that an edition of his correspondence would be



called for after his death.'<sup>152</sup> The inevitable occurred, well-prepared for by Richardson himself, when a six volume edition of the correspondence was published posthumously in 1804.

In 1774, scarcely a year after Lord Chesterfield's death, his son's widow, Mrs. Stanhope, had demonstrated the economic expediency of such posthumous publications by selling Chesterfield's letters to his son to the publisher James Dodsley for the then fabulous sum of £1500.<sup>153</sup> Considering the number of burlesques which the publication inspired and the denunciations of Chesterfield's character which ensued, although the edition was an immediate 'best seller,' perhaps the lesson which famous eighteenth-century individuals learned from that publication was that, whether or not one intended or seemed to intend one's letters for publication, discreet revision beforehand was wise. The profitability of Mrs. Stanhope's 1774 publication of Lord Chesterfield's letters to her husband may well have inspired Lydia, Laurence Sterne's daughter, to her publication one year later of three volumes of her father's letters. In the opinion of the editor of his letters, Lewis Perry Curtis, Sterne had intended his letters to be published: 'If his eye rested chiefly upon the literary value of his letters, he did not resent publication of details of his private life. It might turn a penny for his daughter Lydia.'<sup>154</sup>

There were, then, two opposing attitudes to letter writing and to the publication of letters in the eighteenth century. On the one hand, for those individuals who

disapproved of the publication of personal letters, the writing of a letter was, foremost, an exercise in sincere and simple communication. In 1751, in a Rambler essay devoted to analysis of the letter form, Johnson offered a simple if perhaps simplistic epistolary rule to be observed: 'strict conformity to nature.'<sup>155</sup> His major advice to the letter writer was to shun those two perverters of 'epistolary integrity': 'affectation and ambition'.<sup>156</sup> Johnson himself wrote utilitarian letters; he used correspondence as 'a necessary form of communication with the world at large.'<sup>157</sup> He would have found little sympathy with or understanding of the nearly compulsive tendency of a Walpole or a Richardson to record scrupulously all, even the trivialities of life, in their correspondence. On the other hand, renewed interest in the classical and continental literary heritage represented by the popular letter collections of Roman and French writers, coupled with improved postal facilities and a spread in literacy, meant that letter writing was, once again, perceived as an art.

CHAPTER THREEEPISTOLARY PRECEDENTS AND AUGUSTAN DISCIPLES

This chapter will chronicle the gradual evolution of epistolary tastes from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century in Britain as the popularity of the literary 'letter of wit' came to be succeeded by a preference for simplicity and sentiment in letters. The first section will look at the 'letter of wit,' its origins in seventeenth-century France and its major exemplars in England and will conclude with a brief summary of the characteristic features of this type of letter. The second section will examine the letter of conversation, the third, the letter of news, and the fourth, the letter of sentiment and morality, with each section concluding with a summary of the style or content typical of each kind of letter. The fifth section will look at the early eighteenth-century's concept, derived from humanist tradition, of the unique role letters could perform in serving as a biography or memoir of their author.

## i

A number of circumstances conspired to bring the letter of wit to its greatest prominence in seventeenth-century Britain. One was, undoubtedly, the popularity of Voiture, who was translated into English as early as 1655 by John Davies. A related circumstance involves the changing fortunes of the Stuart monarchy. Charles II's and his courtiers'

years of exile in France meant that the French culture imbibed by the court in these years came to the forefront in Britain on their return. The influence of French culture was pervasive in Britain after 1660. Katherine Hornbeak observes, for example, that even the humble letter-writer manual was deeply affected by the epistolary models offered by the French in Balzac's and Voiture's letters: 'For half a century after 1640 we observe in this phase of polite intercourse the characteristic international relationship, with France as teacher and England as pupil.'<sup>1</sup> Voiture's and Balzac's letters were published, both in the original and in translation, in Britain at the time most favourable for their reception. Some hundred years later Dr. Johnson reduced the style of these famed French letter writers to its lowest common denominator in describing it in this formula: 'to aggravate trifling misfortunes, to magnify familiar incidents, repeat adulatory professions, accumulate servile hyperboles.'<sup>2</sup> While Johnson's opinion of the 'precious' epistolary style contains a certain amount of truth, it misses the essential playfulness of particularly Voiture's letters in its blanket condemnation of their artificiality.

To see how well these epistolary affectations translated from the French we can look at the letter-writing habits of some late seventeenth-century English writers: Rochester, Wycherley and Walsh, for example. While Rochester obviously never intended for his letters to be published, they are written with the self-conscious artistry we associate with the Restoration wits, with that 'casual-seeming grace for which the court wits labored and for which they are justly famed.'<sup>3</sup> Like Voiture, Rochester either expressed or implied

his negligence in the composition of his letters, but it is a carelessness which is belied in both cases by the easy grace of their letters. Rochester as one of the Restoration wits and Voiture as a merchant's son elevated to the dizzy social heights of the Hotel de Rambouillet were both equally inclined to adopt the pretence of casual writing and yet implicitly deny it by producing the elegant epistles expected by the members of their class or social circle. This is not to deny Rochester's considerable, highly individual, skill in imagery, ironic commentary and the acute character sketches we find in his letters. In a letter to Henry Savile of 1676, for example, Rochester slyly observes of their ambitious mutual friends, 'They who would be great in our little Government, seem as ridiculous to me as School-boys, who with much endeavour, and some danger, climb a Crab-tree, venturing their Necks for Fruit which solid Piggs would disdain if they were not starving.'<sup>4</sup> In both Voiture's and Rochester's letters there is the tone of an elite, the assured note of the aristocrat. While, in his biography of Rochester, Vivian De Sola Pinto argues that it is highly unlikely that Rochester was responsible for the anonymous attack on Dryden in Rose Alley in 1679,<sup>5</sup> a letter to Savile implies that Rochester felt some disgust at the bourgeois quality of the famed poet - a discrepancy between talent and temperament - for Rochester describes Dryden in these terms: 'He is a Rarity which I cannot but be fond of, as one would be of a Hog that could fiddle, or a singing Owl.'<sup>6</sup> Rochester's letters depart from the model of Voiture in not, generally, containing their elaborate compliments; Voiture's delicate

assumption that any woman was to be addressed as the object of his passion is, too, rudely transformed into the bawdy, explicit references to the sex in Rochester's letters.

The letters of Walsh, Wycherley and Dennis seem to begin invariably with the sort of compliment Hallam described as characteristic of Voiture: 'The object was to say what meant little with the utmost novelty in the mode, and with the most ingenious compliment to the person addressed; so that he should admire himself, and admire the writer.'<sup>7</sup> In Letters Upon Several Occasions (1696) featuring the letters of Dennis, Wycherley, Walsh and Congreve, we see this basic formula of compliment repeated ad nauseum. A few examples should suffice. In a letter to Dennis Wycherley plays upon the artificiality at the heart of this sort of compliment:

your Praise rather humbles than makes me (tho<sup>^</sup> a damn'd Poet) more vain. For it is so great, that it rather seems the Railery of a witty Man, than the Sincerity of a Friend; and rather proves the Copiousness of your own<sup>8</sup> Invention, than justifies the Fertility of Mine.

Most of the letters in this volume begin with the flattery and exaggerated expressions of affection which open this letter, with Wycherley protesting to Dennis that 'I value your Friendship more than Mony, and am Prouder of your Approbation than I should be of Titles.'<sup>9</sup>

The letter from Dennis in reply answers Wycherley in kind:

A Man who has the Vanity of pretending to write, must certainly love you extremely well, if he does not hate you after he has receiv'd from you such a Letter as yours: And he must undoubtedly shew a great deal of Friendship, when he assures you he does not envy you the very Lines by which you commend him.<sup>10</sup>

That Wycherley and Dennis easily appropriated préciosité is not, of course, surprising considering their collaboration with Dryden and Congreve in a translation of Voiture's letters which Dennis included in Letter Upon Several Occasions in 1696 and in Voiture's Familiar and Courtly Letters, published for Sam Briscoe in 1700. The complimentary opening of Wycherley's letter to Dennis cited above is also, however, reminiscent of Balzac's style, as we see in this opening of his letter to Richelieu: 'I Am as proud of the Letter you did me the Honour to addresse unto me, as if there were a thousand Statues erected for me.'<sup>11</sup>

The aristocratic milieu depicted in the letters of Balzac, Voiture and Rochester is replaced in Letters Upon Several Occasions by description of another elite - the litterati of the late seventeenth century. This elite consisted of a small, intimate coterie of friends, who were gaily competitive in their desire to outdo each other's displays of rhetorical skill in their correspondence. Letter writing thus becomes a sort of game compounded of a test of skill and a test of familiarity with epistolary models. Dennis's preface to Letters Upon Several Occasions makes it clear that he and his friends were writing letters from the context of a well-defined literary tradition. While emphasizing Dennis's familiarity with the 'classics' of the literary letter, the preface also justifies the style adopted by the collaborators of Letters Upon Several Occasions as Dennis complains that 'Cicero is too simple, and too dry, and that Pliny is too affected...That the Elevation of Balzac was frequently forced,' while 'Voiture was easy and unconstrain'd.'<sup>12</sup> With Voiture so openly acknowledged

as their chosen epistolary model, it is not surprising to find these writers are heavily indebted to Voiture's 'letter of wit'. As should be apparent from the few examples cited above, they particularly enjoyed devoting a great deal of time and energy in their own letters to discussion of one of Voiture's favourite themes: the paradoxical nature of the well-delivered compliment.

As for the content of their letters, insincere but playful compliments aside, there is much talk of rendezvous at Will's Coffee House, of gossip about each other, of diversions, plays and routs. Letters evidently represented a valuable source of both information and entertainment, reconciling these eminently urbane writers to rural life, for example, as Wycherley observes in thanking Dennis for sending him a letter whilst he was staying 'at Cleve near Shrewsbury': 'YOU have found a way to make me satisfy'd with my Absence from London.'<sup>13</sup> Wycherley closes this letter with the following postscript: 'Pray let me have more of your Letters, thô they should rally me with Compliments undeserv'd, as your last has done; for like a Country Esquire I am in love with a Town-Wit's Conversation.'<sup>14</sup>

Besides affirming the intimacy of the wits their letters also contain self-justification, as we see in a long letter from Dennis to Wycherley constituted entirely of his reflections on the superiority of men of wit to 'Blockheads,' while addressing the incidental issue of 'why Blockheads are thought to be fittest for Business, and why they really succeed in it.'<sup>15</sup> While a letter from Dryden to Dennis under-



takes another discussion of the ancients versus the moderns debate, with Dryden asserting the superiority of 'English Comedy' and tragedy to comparable productions from antiquity,<sup>16</sup> this coterie was anxious to avoid the charge of pedantry, as we see in a twelve page letter from Congreve to Dennis 'Concerning Humour in Comedy.'<sup>17</sup> Although Congreve enters into a detailed analysis of the subject he hastens to assert that he is, in the letter, rather playfully discussing than learnedly dissecting his topic; Congreve observes that to define his notion of humour:

would require a long and labour'd Discourse, and such as I neither am able nor willing to undertake. But such little Remarks, as may be contain'd within the Compass of a Letter, and such unpremeditated Thoughts, as may be communicated between Friend and Friend without incurring the Censure of the World, or setting up for a Dictator, you shall have from me, since you have enjoin'd it.<sup>18</sup>

This coterie shied, then, from the extremes of behaviour represented by 'blockheadism' and pedantry, preferring a success or an authority untainted by either gross striving in business or the single-minded awkwardness of the specialist. They wanted to be seen foremost as gentlemen, authors who were amateurs, dilettantes or spectators in the mold of Addison's famous 'Fraternity of Spectators who live in the World without having any thing to do in it; and either by the Affluence of their Fortunes, or Laziness of their Dispositions, have no other Business with the Rest of Mankind but to look upon them.'<sup>19</sup>

It is probably fortunate that Letters Upon Several Occasions, while generally modelling itself upon Voiture's correspondence, does not contain any 'letters to ladies',

the sub-genre of the 'letter of wit' which Voiture developed to perfection but which lent itself to generally poor or weak imitation. These letters invariably contained the same inflated compliments, exaggerated hyperboles and elaborate similes of the 'letter of wit' coupled with the implicit assumption that any woman must be addressed exclusively in the terms of love. In Voiture's letters to women, letter writer and recipient seemed to enjoy equally the charade. Voiture's letter to the Marchioness of Rambouillet in answer to a letter of thanks she had sent him is a representative example; Voiture, who has been compared by the Marchioness to Alexander, declares that even Alexander could have been ambitious of nothing further than being, like Voiture, the recipient of the Marchioness's gratitude: Alexander, 'as boundless as his Ambition was, would have confin'd it to so rare a Favour. He would have set more value upon this Honour, than he did on the Persian Diadem; and he would never have envied Achilles the Praise which he receiv'd from Homer, if he could but himself have obtain'd Yours.'<sup>20</sup>

The clever irony of Voiture's wit rescues his 'letters to ladies' from mere insipidity; his successors in this genre were not usually so fortunate. The letters of Sir John Suckling, first published in 1646, were written in this potentially vapid, mannered style, full of ingenious but hollow compliments and professions of 'love; William Irving observes that, although the letters were very popular in the late seventeenth century, 'Surely such letters could never have convinced any woman that Suckling was in love.'<sup>21</sup> In his

Letters and Poems, Amorous and Gallant, written in 1692 and published by Curll in his 1736 edition of The Works of William Walsh, Esq., Walsh also followed Voiture's model by including a large selection of 'letters to ladies'. The Letters in this volume consist of twenty letters, seventeen to women, professing love, and three to men, discussing love. Walsh writes with lighthearted wit on the absurdities of love, addressing, for example, several of these letters to masqued women for whom he confesses great passion while admitting, ironically, that he has never, in fact, actually even met them. Letter XX captures the essence of Walsh's matter and manner in these letters as he observes to a friend that 'I have been, without raillery, in love with the beauty of a woman whom I have never seen; with the wit of one whom I have never heard speak, nor seen any thing that she has written; and with the herioc virtues of a woman without knowing any one action of her life, that cou'd make me think she had any.'<sup>22</sup> This letter represents a fairly straightforward borrowing from one of Voiture's most famous letters which Dennis had printed in Letters Upon Several Occasions. Voiture sent the letter to a Madame de Saintot who had promised Voiture's services to two of her friends, unknown to Voiture, as a 'Gallant'. In response Voiture directed his letter to 'his unknown Mistress' in care of Madame de Saintot, asking her to give it to 'her, whom you believe that I love the more Passionately of the two.'<sup>23</sup> The letter to Voiture's 'unknown Mistress' begins:

WAS there ever so Extraordinary a Passion, as that which I have for you? For my part, I do not know any thing of you; and to my Knowledge I never so much as heard of you. And yet, I Gad, I am desperately

in Love with you; and it is now a whole Day,  
 since I have Sigh'd and look'd Silly and  
 Languish'd, and Dy'd, and all that for you.  
 Without having ever seen your Face, I am taken  
 with its Beauty; and am charm'd with your Wit,  
 thô I have never heard one Syllable of it.<sup>24</sup>

For all the similarities between these early English experiments in letter writing and their French epistolary models, one is always conscious that the English letter writers hoped to surpass rather than simply to imitate their predecessors. Balzac was apparently motivated by such a sense of rivalry in his own letters; this, anyway, is implied by Monsieur de la Motte Aigron's preface which claims that Balzac's letters have surpassed those of the classical letter writers, even Seneca's, and then observes, 'I have ever thought, that if any were able to raise our Language to the merit and reputation of such Eloquence, wherewith the Ancients were adorned, it should bee to him alone to whom our age oweth this glorie.'<sup>25</sup> In the preface to Letters and Poems, Amorous and Gallant Walsh also asserts that published letters represent an important literary achievement of which every nation has had its share of successes:

besides the great applauses have been given the letters of Cicero and Pliny among the Romans; we see no book has been better received among the Spaniards, than the letters of Guevara; or among the French, than those of Voiture and Balsac: not to mention the Italians, among whom there has been hardly any considerable man, who has not publish'd letters with good success.<sup>26</sup>

It was hardly surprising, then, that the English should consider themselves honour-bound to succeed also in this classical and continental literary tradition of the published letter. Dennis's preface to the 1696 edition of Letters Upon

Several Occasions accordingly included what has been aptly described as a 'nationalistic appeal to the English to excel in the art of letter writing:'<sup>27</sup>

I have nothing to add but to desire the Reader to excuse my bad Performance, upon the account of my good Endeavour, and for striving to do well in a manner of Writing, which is at all times useful, and at this Time necessary; a manner in which the English would surpass both the Ancients and Moderns, if they would but cultivate it, for the very same<sup>28</sup> Reasons that they have surpassed them in Comedy.

This view is also subscribed to by an anonymous, patriotic admirer of Curll's edition of Pope's letters, whose letter to Curll was included in the third volume of his Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence: 'I Have read the Three Volumes of your Literary Correspondence with Satisfaction.--A Collection of good Letters is much wanted in our Language. The French have several; and I think they outdo us in no other Article of polite Literature.'<sup>29</sup> In Curll's 1736 edition of Post-Office Intelligence, a collection of love letters, the capacity of the English for writing excellent letters which surpass their continental models is attested to in the preface which attributes to Donne the opinion that 'if any Carrier of London, going to Oxford or Cambridge, should chance to be robbed of his Letters by the Way; a Man would, peradventure, meet with more Wit, in that poor Budget, than in some whole Book of Foreign Modern Printed Letters, of some other Nations.'<sup>30</sup>

To summarize, the 'letter of wit' was very much a contrived, self-consciously imitative exercise. It was most popular in Britain in the late seventeenth century when a revived interest in classical letter writers and a sense of rivalry inspired by the achievements of contemporary continental letter writers

combined to make epistolary artistry a legitimate while exciting field of literary experimentation. Historically the 'letter of wit' was written by either the social or the literary aristocracy of the seventeenth century. These elite groups represented exclusive coteries united by a detestation of what was perceived as pedantry and by a firm recognition of themselves as gentlemen who incidentally delighted in the composition of allusive, playfully witty letters to each other. Beneath this social mask of the gentlemanly amateur writer, however, such professional writers as Dennis, Wycherley and Walsh deliberately engaged in an attempt to surpass the popular Voiture and Balzac in the art of letter writing.

## ii

It was not likely that the mannered, convoluted prose style represented by French préciosité could find undisputed favour with all or without interruption for any length of time. We see the first movement towards a change in epistolary fashion in the letter-writer manuals. E.N.S. Thompson justly observes that the 'ephemeral literature of any age is rich in significance,'<sup>31</sup> particularly in allowing one to observe the beginnings of a trend before the fashion is well-established. Thus it was not surprising that by the middle of the seventeenth century the French influence was predominant in the epistolary manual. Hornbeak attributes this phenomenon to the popularity of both Balzac and Jean Puget de la Serre. As we have seen, Balzac's letters inaugurated the era of French préciosité.

with its 'emphasis on exquisite sentiment and its inflated expression.'<sup>32</sup> For those unable to read the letters in the original, Balzac's letters were published in London in 1634, ten years after their first publication in France, and de la Serre's Le Secrétaire à la mode was first translated into English in 1640, the year of its publication in France. It is interesting to see the ornate style of Balzac and de la Serre transplanted into the supposedly practical or utilitarian sphere of the letter-writer manual. Hornbeak observes of The Academy of Complements, for example, a letter writer largely derived from another of de la Serre's popular collections - Le Secrétaire de la cour - that 'In all this "century of epistles" there is not one that suggests an actual situation, a problem or a difficulty of real life; nor is there anywhere the faintest glimmer of the personality of either the writer or the recipient.'<sup>33</sup>

In 1687, however, the letter-writer manual again presaged a shift in epistolary trends. In that year The Young Secretary's Guide appeared, featuring 'homely, utilitarian letters' which catered to 'the practical interests of the masses.'<sup>34</sup> Hornbeak attributes this change to three factors: the rise of the middle class, the spread of education, and to the development of the English postal system.<sup>35</sup> While it is difficult to assign reasons for such a complex phenomenon as a nation's evolving literary taste, certainly the growth of a literate bourgeoisie and the creation of an efficient postal system prompted, as we have seen, an increase in both letter writing and in theorizing about the epistolary art.

Before the infectious popularity of the French letter writers transmitted préciosité to the English, epistolary manuals such as Fleming's and Fulwood's emphasized practicality rather than artistry in letter writing. It is possible to see in the bourgeoisie's adoption of préciosité the first uncertain graspings of the new middle class after politeness, culture and learning. But the development of the middle class had a certain impetus of its own quite apart from any longings for culture and respectability. In Hornbeak's view, The Young Secretary's Guide with 'its preponderance of letters dealing with actual problems of the masses, brings to full development a democratic, bourgeois element latent in the English letter-writer from its first appearance in 1568.'<sup>36</sup>

In addition to Hornbeak's three reasons for the change in epistolary tastes in the late seventeenth century we must also add two more. One involves what has been often described as 'the great intellectual revolution' of modern history - the scientific revolution.<sup>37</sup> According to Basil Willey the scientific discoveries of Copernicus, Galileo and Newton eventually affected rhetorical patterns in Britain; the implications of their discoveries filtered down and changed the way people spoke and wrote in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. With the mysteries of the universe explained by these discoveries which, fortunately enough, seemed to confirm simultaneously the principles of religion as well, such key figures of the period as Locke felt confident in assuming a tone of sweet reasonableness which discounted wit and the products of the imagination among other irrational phenomena. Willey



notes that 'Locke's prose style is the best index of his mind, and the mind of his age as well...it is harmonious, lucid and severe...Locke writes philosophy in the tone of well-bred conversation, and makes it his boast to have discarded the uncouth and pedantic jargon of the schools.'<sup>38</sup>

The Royal Society undoubtedly played a major role in the rise of an informal, simple and plain style in writing in preference to the earlier, more rhetorically complex style. Sprat explained the Society's advocacy of a scientific yet democratic prose style in these terms in 1667:

They have...been most rigorous in putting in execution, the only Remedy, that can be found for this extravagance: and that has been, a constant Resolution, to reject all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style: to return back to the primitive purity, and shortness, when men deliver'd so many things, almost in an equal number of words. They have exacted from all their members, a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions, clear senses; a native easiness: bringing all things as near the Mathematical Plainness, as they can: and preferring the language of Artizans, Countrymen,<sup>39</sup> and Merchants, before that, of Wits, or Scholars.'

Twenty-one years later Sprat was to recommend Cowley's letters for following this recommended prose style; letters, Sprat observed in 'An Account of the Life and Writings of Mr. Abraham Cowley', 'should not consist of fulsom Complements, or tedious Politics, or elaborate Elegancies, or general Fancies.'<sup>40</sup> So much, in other words, for the 'letter of wit'. Sprat believed that letters instead 'should have a Native clearness and shortness, a Domestical plainness, and a peculiar kind of Familiarity.'<sup>41</sup>

The influence of the classical letter writers was a fifth factor *militating* against the continued dominance

of French préciosité in letters. As we have seen Cicero recommended and actually practised a conversational style in his letters while Seneca, although producing self-conscious, moralistic essays in place of personal letters, at least paid lip service to Cicero's preferred epistolary style by describing his own as 'talking upon paper'. Angel Day's English Secretorie defined a letter in terms similar to Seneca's and which anticipate Sprat's: 'A Letter therefore is that wherein is expreslye concueied in writing, the intent and meaning of one man, immediately to passe and be directed to another, and for the certaine respects thereof, is termed the messenger and familiar speeche of the absent.'<sup>42</sup> Although the popularity of this definition was temporarily eclipsed by Voiture and Balzac and their followers, it always had its adherents, particularly among those who were not overly fond of the French. James Howell who, as we saw in the last chapter, might be termed the 'pioneer' of the literary letter in England, was moved by his detestation of préciosité to devote the first few pages of Epistolae Ho-Eliane to lambasting

our next transmarin neighbours Eastward, who write in their own language, but their stile is so soft and easie, that their Letters may be said to be like bodies of loose flesh without sinews, they have neither joynts of art, nor arteries in them; they have a kind of simpering and lank hectic expressions made up of a bombast of words and finical affected complements only; I cannot well away with such sleazy stuff, with such cobweb compositions.<sup>43</sup>

Howell, it may be argued, was inspired to his contempt for the popular French epistolary style by a sense of professional rivalry. The same cannot be said of Dorothy Osborne who in 1653 complained to William Temple of the

fanciful verbosity then popular in epistolary writing: 'all Letters mee thinks should bee free and Easy as ones discourse, not studdyed, as an Oration, nor made up of hard words like a Charme.'<sup>44</sup> Howell agreed with Dorothy Osborne that the proper epistolary style was a conversational one: 'Indeed we should write as we speak; and that's a true Familiar Letter which expresseth ones mind, as if he were discoursing with the party to whom he writes in succinct and short termes.'<sup>45</sup>

Tom Brown, the successful publisher and editor of collections of letters whose success was, undoubtedly, largely due to his sure finger on the pulse of public taste, includes an interesting analysis of classical and continental letter writers in the preface to Select Epistles. His remarks are sufficiently apposite to be quoted at length; arguably they convey the essence of the change in epistolary taste which occurred at the turn of the century. Brown begins with a defense of Cicero's epistolary style:

I have often wondred why some late Writers should censure Tully's Letters for being too naked and jejune...I own indeed that the generality of his familiar Letters, which he addresses to his Friends, are written in all the Simplicity imaginable, without that Pomp and Magnificence of Figures, which reigns in most of his other Writings, and so they ought to be, otherwise he had made an unseasonable Ostentation of his Rhetoric...I wou'd much rather read those Letters of his, that have the least Art bestow'd upon them, than the most laborious Compositions of Balzac, whose Thoughts, especially<sup>46</sup> in his younger Works, are seldom just or natural.

Brown then descended to interesting description and criticism of some other famed letter writers: 'As for Pliny, indeed, I confess his manner is too affected to please...Balzac is an everlasting dealer in Hyperboles; and as for Voiture,

if we except some few of his Letters, that are truly elevated and sublime; to rob him of his dearly beloved Irony, is to take away from him at once all that is either beautiful or agreeable in him.'<sup>47</sup>

Those individuals not anxious to see their own letters published or who wrote without a sense of epistolary rivalry with France felt that Cicero's perception of the letter as a form of conversation with an absent friend was the most appropriate. Dismissing the extravagancies of the French epistolary models as well as the self-conscious artistry of such a writer as Pliny, obviously addressing posterity as well as his correspondent, they advocated a 'democratic' form of expression: simple, easy and clear. As John Donne, an advocate of the informal epistolary style, observed in one of his letters: 'this Letter shall but talke, not discourse; it shall but gossip, not consider, nor consult.'<sup>48</sup> It was recognized that such a letter of spontaneous conversation might, paradoxically, be the hardest to write. The author of The Courtier's Calling (1675) admitted that he 'was always of opinion, that the most difficult kinde of writing was that of Letters' as they represent 'the true production of our minde...the lively and natural Picture of our thoughts and imaginations.'<sup>49</sup> Letters should 'please us best, when they are wholly naked;' they 'begin without Exordiums, proceed without Narrations, explain without Artifice, prove without citing Authors, reason without Logick, delight and perswade without tropes and figures.'<sup>50</sup>

Lest this account give the impression that the process

of change from a continental, witty tradition of letter writing to a preference for simple direct letters was a straightforward one, it should be observed that even individuals who patently adopted an affected, literary approach to letters they hoped would one day be published often professed to be writing in the conversational style. Walsh observed in the preface to Letters and Poems (1692), for example, that 'The style of letters ought to be free, easy, and natural: as near approaching to familiar conversation as possible.'<sup>51</sup> There are several reasons for this apparently willful, perverse or contradictory discrepancy between profession and practice. The most obvious is that an individual intending his letters to be published must yet act out the charade of innocence of any such intention; he must pretend that letters actually carefully written, revised and edited were written carelessly and openly, that his letters were simply intended for his actual correspondents and not, ultimately, for posterity.

Another reason for this discrepancy involves the nature of early eighteenth-century society and also explains the formal, elegant letters of individuals of that age who obviously never intended their letters for publication. Virginia Woolf aptly remarks that in 'any highly civilized society disguise plays so large a part, politeness is so essential,'<sup>52</sup> that only between the most intimate friends is a loosening of the restrictions of formal observances possible. One glimpses something of this omnipresent spectre of society in the eighteenth century in a rather frightening guise in Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son

and godson. A typical fatherly admonition, for example, was 'Mind your diction, in whatever language you either write or speak; contract a habit of correctness and elegance. Consider your style, even in the freest conversation, and most familiar letters.'<sup>53</sup> The negligent ease the Augustans recommended in their letters represented a style which excluded the specialized terms of pedantry on the one hand and, on the other, the colloquial or vulgar. The same rules applied to Augustan conversation. In his 'Essay on Conversation' Henry Fielding observes that:

As Conversation is a Branch of Society, it follows, that it can be proper to none who is not in his Nature social...the Pleasure of Conversation must arise from the Discourse being on Subjects levelled to the Capacity of the whole Company; from being on such in which every Person is equally interested; from every one's<sup>54</sup> being admitted to his Share in the Discourse.

According to Clive Probyn, 'for the Augustan writer conversation could and did carry an enormous ethical and moral significance as the enactment of man's social nature.'<sup>55</sup> That the eighteenth century, described as the 'age of the great English letter writers,' should also be described as the 'age of great English conversation,' is not, then, surprising; as Herbert Davis notes, letter writing in the age 'was an art which they naturally looked upon as a continuation of the art of conversation; which for a generation that liked to imagine itself Augustan was the very mark of polite society, possible only among civilized men and women.'<sup>56</sup>

In confirmation of these modern assessments of the eighteenth century, it is interesting that, after his defense of the conversational style in letter writing, Walsh defined

conversation itself as composed of two essentially social characteristics: 'The two best qualities in conversation, are good humour and good breeding; those letters are therefore certainly the best that shew the most of those two qualities.'<sup>57</sup> The eighteenth century seemed to be preoccupied by the concept of language as a function and measure of civilization, with rhetoric accorded recognition as one of the noblest arts of which man is capable. Thus we find Lord Chesterfield, supreme arbiter of social values, counselling his son to a view of the very special role of language: 'You have with you three or four of the best English authors, Dryden, Atterbury and Swift: read them with the utmost care, and with a particular view to their language...Cicero says, very truly, that it is glorious to excel other men in that very article in which men excel brutes; speech.'<sup>58</sup>

To return to the letter-writer manuals, a fairly accurate gauge of public taste and opinion, in 1763 The Letter-Writer's Complete Instructor was still recommending the conversational style and describing Cicero as 'the most accurate person we find in this kind of writing.'<sup>59</sup> 'The surest rule is to write as we speak...Write as you speak; that is, without art, without study, and without making a shew of your wit.'<sup>60</sup> It is interesting that the Scylla and Charybdis against which this manual warns its readers are the extremes of pedantry and wit writing. Pedantry is derided as 'great and sounding words, or a swell of pompous thoughts,'<sup>61</sup> while the manual is presumably describing the 'letter of wit' when it declares

we may safely renounce these pretended ornaments, which were formerly so studiously sought after.

Add to this, the affectation so common to fine wits, of writing frequently without necessity and without matter...the sallies of imagination may, indeed, seem to amuse us; but it is not worth our while to lay ourselves under such continual perplexing restraints<sup>62</sup> for the sake of shining agreeably for nothing.

The manual describes the style to be aimed for as one 'easy, simple, natural,' and, at the same time, conveying 'an elegance and delicacy of expression, so much the more charming, as proceeding from nature alone...that beautiful simplicity, the distinguishing characteristic of the epistolary style.'<sup>63</sup> The truly casual or careless, however, were to be avoided: 'let not...a familiar ease be confounded with a graceless simplicity. Let it be remembered, that a character of politeness should always distinguish the letters of well-bred persons.'<sup>64</sup>

A summary of the distinctive features of the 'letter of conversation' necessarily concerns itself more with issues of style than of content. The same adjectives used to describe the proper conversational style invariably appear: easy, simple and natural. It is the easy simplicity and naturalness of an individual in whom the values of a highly civilized society have been inculcated, however, which is aimed at - not the garrulous or colloquial or the random discourse which might more realistically approximate the Augustan ideal of 'talking on paper'. In his preface to Letters Upon Several Occasions Dennis dwells at some length on the meaning of the Augustan notion of this proper epistolary style as 'talking on paper,' a notion which the modern reader, in confronting the elegance of eighteenth-century letters, might regard as disingenuous: the nature and end of letter writing, Dennis argued,



'was to supply Conversation, and not to imitate it, for that nothing but the Dialogue was capable of doing that; from whence I had drawn this Conclusion, that the Style of a Letter was neither to come quite up to that of Conversation, nor yet to keep at too great a distance from it.'<sup>65</sup>

iii

Although one of Voiture's most celebrated letters, the charming account of an extravagant outing with friends of the Hotel de Rambouillet, translated by Dryden and included by Dennis in Letters Upon Several Occasions, might be seen as a letter of 'news', it, like the majority of Voiture's letters, may be more accurately described as a lighthearted exercise in wit and social pleasantry. The conveying of facts or information was clearly not the aim of Voiture's letters, which more nearly resemble in style and content the elegant missives sent by Rochester and his friends. The court wits of the Restoration like the inhabitants of the Hotel de Rambouillet wrote literary letters designed to entertain rather than to deliver news. As John Harold Wilson observes of the content of the court wits' letters: 'News (when there was any) was delivered with all the whimsey and irony of a mock newspaper columnist.'<sup>66</sup>

Yet the original function of the letter must have been the relating of news. The lack of a newspaper in republican Rome, whose nearest approach to one was the 'Acta Urbana, a daily placard of public news from which copies could be taken for sale or private circulation,'<sup>67</sup> and the lack of a regular postal system meant that when Cicero wrote to his

friends, he usually wrote in copious detail, in the frequency and length of his letters offering them a running commentary on events and personalities of which they would otherwise be ignorant. Practically all of Cicero's letters to Atticus <sup>to</sup> (whom he sometimes wrote as often as three times a day) as well as a great many others can be classified as 'news' letters, ranging in content from the hastily scribbled note or letter of social gossip to the studied composition analyzing current political developments. While the content of these letters varied, Levens identifies the style of these letters of 'news' as their common factor: 'the essence of this type is the fluency and spontaneity of its style.'<sup>68</sup> As we have seen, Bosanquet, the editor of Pliny's letters, believed that Cicero's letters, written in an age of conflict and struggle by a prominent public figure, were naturally eloquent.<sup>69</sup> The establishment of the Empire led to a decline in literary standards: 'Public spirit became extinct, eloquence ceased, and prose suffered, naturally, in proportion.'<sup>70</sup> The importance of the letter as a vehicle of news, then, seemed to exercise a direct effect on its style, with an easy, simple style adopted when the informativeness of the letter was most prominent and an artificial, polished style dominating when the letter became, as for Pliny, merely a literary exercise.

On the one hand the many purported 'letters of news' published in seventeenth-century Britain cannot, by and large, be seen as true letters at all but as documents which anticipate the newspaper. According to Hansche, these were not actual 'personal' or 'private' letters but news pamphlets and news ballads: 'They were small quarto books of twelve or more pages,

with no more than three or four hundred words on a page, and generally, when not reporting noteworthy occurrences in England, they merely translated or reproduced the summaries of foreign news writers.'<sup>71</sup> The authors of these early news letters were 'originally the dependents of great men'<sup>72</sup> who were employed as forerunners of journalists - to keep their patrons well-informed.

On the other hand, there are all those letters of the period which have not survived, which generally had as their main object the conveying of news, the retailing of gossip and simple chat. The Purefoy letters and Dorothy Osborne's letters to Sir William Temple, not intended for publication but surviving by chance, can be seen as belonging to this latter type of the letter of news. Dorothy Osborne, separated from Temple by their families' objection to their courtship, faithfully corresponded with him on an almost daily basis for two years, from 1652-4. Temple was sent abroad and Dorothy suffered enforced rural isolation, a period of suffering on the order of Clarissa: 'Dorothy returned to Chicksands, to be pestered by her brother Henry with one proposal of marriage after another...a course of persecution only broken by the death of her mother.'<sup>73</sup> Out of this drama and unhappiness Dorothy Osborne's seventy-seven letters to her lover survive as a testament to her exceptional character and wit. We might expect in them, as G.C. Moore Smith observes, 'the endearing terms associated with modern love-letters,' but they 'belong in fact to an age which demanded from a girl reserve in the expression of her deeper feelings.'<sup>74</sup> They were letters

of news in the sense that their primary intention was communication. Dorothy Osborne had little patience with women who wrote professionally or for literary effect, describing the Duchess of Newcastle as 'a litle distracted, she could never bee soe rediculous else as to venture at writeing book's and in verse too, If I should not sleep this fortnight I should not come to that.'<sup>75</sup> She had, as we have seen, little more patience with the sort of oblique wit and ornate style popularized by Voiture. She remarked in one letter that 'tis an admirable thing to see how some People will labour to finde out term's that may Obscure a plaine sence, like a gentleman I knew, whoe would never say the weather grew cold, but that Winter began to salute us. I have noe patience for such Coxcomb's.'<sup>76</sup>

The Purefoy letters (1735-53), a collection of 617 letters written by Henry Purefoy, the last of an old Leicestershire family, and his mother, reflect both the utilitarian nature of the letter in that period and its style of informal chat. As the Purefoy letter collection consists of the copies of the letters sent by Henry and his mother, it also reflects the common contemporary practice of first drafting a letter before copying it out in fair hand to be sent: 'the most trivial letter to a tradesman, or an invitation to a social event, was first drafted in these books as faithfully as important letters of business.'<sup>77</sup> This practice may well have arisen in response to the semi-public nature of the letter in the eighteenth century. With the general consciousness of the letter as a source of news not elsewhere accessible, as a means of communication with friends or the world at large,

Augustan letter writers were always aware that 'the letter they were writing might sometimes be read aloud by the recipient to a few of his friends (even when it did not run the risk of formal publication), or might be kept to provide fresh entertainment when the first reading of it had been forgotten.'<sup>78</sup>

Possibly it was partly in disgust at the essential emptiness of the 'letter of wit', its elegant style masking a lack of content, that many seventeenth and eighteenth-century letter writers turned to writing straightforward letters of news. Donne described his notion of the proper substance of a letter in these terms: 'when Letters have a convenient handsome body of news, they are Letters; but when they are spun out of nothing, they are nothing, or but apparitions, and ghosts.'<sup>79</sup> A great number of the letters collected by Donne's son are concerned precisely with this 'body of news,' containing references both to the purely personal news of Donne's life - births, deaths, weddings and christenings - as well as reference to the world at large, to his observations on historical events. Apart from the three letters to 'Corinna' and one to Dennis published by the critic in Letters Upon Several Occasions, Dryden's correspondence, too, by and large, is 'business-like' or preoccupied with the relating of news. Charles Ward, editor of Dryden's letters, admits that 'to the casual reader who is not a specialist they will probably seem extraordinarily dull.'<sup>80</sup> Ward conjectures that Dryden 'was not at all concerned with "literary" composition when he sat down to pen a letter.'<sup>81</sup> Thus the modern reader will not find Dryden's letters prepossessing, concerned as the

majority of them seem to be, with Dryden's negotiations with his publisher, Jacob Tonson. Bosanquet's theory seems to explain Dryden's and Donne's letters; neither, like Cicero, intending his letters for publication or viewing them as literary exercises, they are naturally conversational and mainly preoccupied with news.

With the publication and distribution of newspapers and pamphlets nearly confined to London, the rest of Britain was forced to rely on letters for current news. Accordingly it is not surprising to find that the Augustan letter writer took his role as conveyor of news quite seriously. Lord Orrery, for example, carried on an extensive correspondence with William Byrd, the deputy governor of Virginia, in the early eighteenth century, keeping him minutely informed of the current political situation. He began a letter of September 1727, in which he informed Byrd of the death of George I, in these terms: 'SIR;--I have defferred answering your obliging Letter for some Time, till I could send You an exact Account of the State of Affairs, after so great an Event.'<sup>82</sup> Orrery concluded his 'Account' with this observation, 'If I have omitted Any Thing in this my poor Account of our New Sovereignty, I hope your other Correspondents will supply my Deficiencies; but the most publick News, such as Deaths and Marriages, the Papers will convey to Virginia.'<sup>83</sup> In a letter to Thomas Tickell of 1739 Orrery admitted that 'To date a Letter from London and to send no News is perhaps a little impolitick.'<sup>84</sup>

On a more extreme level, Horace Walpole chose his friend Horace Mann, the British envoy to Florence, as a 'particularly

suitable recipient for a historical chronicle in letter form, placed as he was in a foreign country and deeply interested in political developments at home.'<sup>85</sup> Walpole's correspondence with Mann lasted 'without the slightest intermission for forty-five years, during the whole of which time they never met at all.'<sup>86</sup> Walpole believed that letters must above all be informative: 'News,' he observed, 'are the soul of letters: when we give them a body of our own invention, it is as unlike to life as a statue.'<sup>87</sup> Thus at the age of sixty-five he grieved that age and illness increasingly limited his activities and, hence, his opportunity to record them: 'when one reduces one's department to such narrow limits, one's correspondence suffers by it.'<sup>88</sup> With enforced solitude and inactivity depriving him of chances to witness noteworthy events or to participate in social occasions, he warned the Earl of Strafford that 'if my letters have had any intrinsic recommendation, they must lose of it every day.'<sup>89</sup>

But Walpole's letters represent, of course, something of a special case. He intended them to be published and chose his correspondents according to his great plan to transmit to posterity a social history of his time through his letters. Thus Mann was sent political news, William Cole shared Walpole's interest in antiquarianism, Thomas Gray provided a foil for literary discussion, and George Montagu, a friend from Eton, could be depended upon for social gossip and anecdote. Walpole professedly derived the inspiration for his scheme from admiration for the letters of Madame de Sévigné, the famous letter writer of seventeenth-century France who so memorably depicted Louis XIV's court. 'Why,' Walpole wondered, 'should not the London of George II be as familiar to coming generations as the Paris of Le Roi Soleil?'<sup>90</sup>

Despite the praise heaped upon her letters by subsequent generations, Madame de Sévigné had not intended her letters for publication. Nearly twelve hundred of them have survived, with the first selection published some thirty years after her death in 1696. Madame de Sévigné's letters exerted a strong influence on Augustan letter writers, with her rise in popularity signalling the decline of the influence of Balzac's and Voiture's 'letter of wit'. As Madame de Sévigné inhabited the heart of Parisian high society, the majority of her letters, often directed to correspondents at a great distance and living in an age without newspapers, were full of news of that society, of descriptions of the great figures of the time: the King himself, Madame de Maintenon, Racine and Boileau. Yet her most brilliant letters were addressed to her daughter, Madame de Grignan, separated from her through marriage. These letters in particular resound with a deeply personal note; in style they approximate the 'talking on paper' of the letter of conversation.

Madame de Sévigné's correspondence especially appealed to those who had deplored the extravagance and artificiality of préciosité. Lord Chesterfield, for example, singled out Madame de Sévigné as one of the most appropriate epistolary models for his son: 'A propos of letter-writing; the best models that you can form yourself upon, are Cicero, Cardinal d'Ossat, Madame de Sévigné, and Comte Bussy Rabutin.'<sup>91</sup> Rabutin, Madame de Sévigné's cousin, was one of her regular correspondents their letters were given special praise by Chesterfield: 'for enjouement and badinage, there are none that equal Comte Bussy's and Madame Sévigné's. They are so natural, that they



seem to be the extempore conversations of two people of wit, rather than letters; which are commonly studied, though they ought not to be so.<sup>92</sup>

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who was introduced in the last chapter as the authoress of the 'Turkish Embassy Letters,' was also particularly fond of Madame de Sévigné's letters and, from several observations she made in her own letters to Lady Mar, it is apparent that she, like Walpole, based the idea of ultimately publishing a selection of her letters on her admiration of de Sévigné's. A letter to Lady Mar of June 1726, for example, observes that 'The last pleasure that fell in my way was Madame Sevigny's Letters; very pretty they are, but I assert without the least vanity that mine will be full as entertaining 40 years hence. I advise you therefore to put none of 'em to the use of Wast paper.'<sup>93</sup> Some thirty years later Lady Mary slightly amended her opinion of her epistolary model in criticism possibly inspired by a sense of rivalry; in a letter to Lady Bute of July 1754 she remarked:

How many readers and admirers has Madame de Sevigny, who only gives us, in a lively manner and fashionable Phrases, mean sentiments, vulgar Prejudices, and endless repetitions! Sometimes the tittle tattle of a fine Lady, sometimes that of an old Nurse, allwaies tittle tattle; yet so well gilt <sup>o</sup>ver by airy expressions and a Flowing Style.

To summarize, the letter of news, in the dearth of other means of communication, assumed a great importance and prominence in eighteenth-century life. Although its foremost function was to inform rather than to entertain, the fact that its recipient would be obliged to pay a letter's postage coupled with the rhetorical self-consciousness of Augustan letter writers arising partly from the knowledge that their letters

might be read aloud to the neighbours, family and friends of the recipient meant that these letters are usually characterised by a certain elegance. The importance of the letter in this period and its prominence in daily life is glimpsed in a comment made by Lady Orrery in 1746 in a letter to her husband: 'Of all days in the Weeke I hate Wednesday. we are obliged to write and have received no Letters. We are impatient for the Post of to-morrow, and in constant expectation of answering some weighty command, or hearing some strange peice of News, yet perhaps when Thursday comes there are no Letters...your Letters are blessings and cordials to me.'<sup>95</sup> The letter might contain no news more profound than gossip or the discussion of the writer's health or chat about his family yet even such a letter assumed dimensions of importance as a means of communication not otherwise possible. And, in the early eighteenth-century's heightened interest in epistolary art, it is perhaps not surprising that even in the humble letter of news 'ordinary men and women devoted uncommon pains and much time to their commerce with distant friends.'<sup>96</sup>

## iv

The evolution of the letter of wit to the letter of sentiment represented a very gradual if, considering the circumstances involved, an inevitable phenomenon in early eighteenth-century Britain. The letter of wit of the middle and late seventeenth century was an essentially aristocratic or elitist literary genre. The rise of a middle class, the spread of education and the development of the English postal system - factors which exerted such a profound effect

on the letter writer manual, returning it from French préciosité to practicality in featuring utilitarian model letters - doubtless affected the familiar and the literary letter in a similar way. The transformation of the French courtly letter to the bourgeois letter encompassed a number of changes in the style and content of the letter, changes which either trickled down from above, from the literary letter to the familiar letter or, expressed in the lowly epistolary manual, also affected the way in which ordinary people wrote letters. To look at the letter-writer manuals first, we see in the 1698 edition of The Secretary's Guide, or Young Man's Companion that an emphasis on practical advice in letter writing is accompanied by what Hornbeak describes as a 'strong infusion of ethics'.<sup>97</sup> The manual contains, for example, such sensible, down-to-earth exhortations to virtue and prudence as 'A Letter to a Friend (and Kinsman) to persuade him to get into some Employment,' and 'A Letter from a Father to his Son, being an Apprentice, advising him how to behave himself.' Richardson at once followed and heightened an existing trend in the matter and manner of such epistolary manuals in subtitling Familiar Letters on Important Occasions, 'Letters Written To and For Particular Friends, On the most Important Occasions, Directing not only the Requisite Style and Forms To be Observed in Writing Familiar Letters; But How to Think and Act Justly and Prudently, In The Common Concerns of Human Life.' Should the point be missed by his readers Richardson emphasized in his preface the corollary in his model letters between proper social behaviour and morality; his letters were to 'direct the forms requisite to be observed on the most important occasions,'

and, more importantly, to 'mend the heart, and improve the understanding.'<sup>98</sup>

Richardson's biographers, Eaves and Kimpel, point out that Richardson emphasized this didactic aspect 'at the expense of the formal rules of letter writing,'<sup>99</sup> which generally formed a large part of preceding epistolary manuals. The moralistic element of Familiar Letters is certainly its most distinctive characteristic: 'Of the one hundred and seventy-three letters, no less than forty-three are letters of direct advice, reproof, or admonition, giving the writer's (often unsolicited) opinion of how his correspondent should conduct himself.'<sup>100</sup> It is possible to see Richardson as an extreme manifestation of a general movement in public taste. Richardson's belief in the instructive capability, in the moral aspect of the letter, expressed itself in even his earliest letter, which he remembered sending to a widow who lived nearby who 'pretending to a Zeal for Religion, & who was a constant Frequenter of Church Ordinances, was continually fomenting Quarrels & Disturbances, by Backbiting & Scandal, among all her Acquaintance.'<sup>101</sup> The ten-year old Richardson's precocious admonitory letter to this hypocritical lady presaged his later, more general attempts to reform mankind through 'missionary' letters.

But there were notable epistolary 'missionaries' before Richardson. The Tatler and the Spectator, composed largely of letters, also aimed at the simultaneous improvement of the new middle class's morals and manners. In no. 271, the last paper of the Tatler, Steele took his leave of his readers

with this observation, 'The general purpose of the whole has been to recommend truth, innocence, honour, and virtue, as the chief ornaments of life.'<sup>102</sup> In these two periodicals Rochester's biting wit or Swift's astringent satire is replaced by compassion and gentle humour, to an appeal to their readers' better feelings, in the authors' professed desire to reform their readers. Tatler 108, for example, on the subject of literature and its relation to the dignity of man, criticizes the 'licentious sort of authors, who are for depreciating mankind,' who 'endeavour to disappoint and undo what the most refined spirits have been labouring to advance since the beginning of the world.'<sup>103</sup> In Tatler 242 Steele concluded that 'good-nature was an essential quality in a satirist,' and that 'Good-nature produces a disdain of all baseness, vice, and folly, which prompts them to express themselves with smartness against the errors of men, without bitterness towards their persons.'<sup>104</sup> The benevolent tone of this observation - moral while charitable - is a far remove from Swift's pledge to vex the world rather than divert it let alone from Rochester's complaint contained in a letter to Savile at inhabiting an island of 'Spies, Beggars and Rebels,' where 'Hypocrisie being the only Vice in decay amongst us, few Men here dissemble their being Rascals; and no Woman disowns being a Whore.'<sup>105</sup>

The Tatler and the Spectator echo what we have seen were the major complaints against the letter of wit: its amorality, its artificiality, its use of exaggerated compliment, its rakish wit. Accordingly, in Tatler 159

Cicero, as the more 'natural' letter writer, is elevated above Pliny; Cicero's letters, as compared to those of Pliny, 'are not so full of turns as those translated out of the former author, who writes very like a modern, but are full of that beautiful simplicity which is altogether natural, and is the distinguishing character of the best ancient writers.'<sup>106</sup> This Tatler paper also praises Cicero and Pliny both for their observance of 'bourgeois' virtue: Pliny 'did not think it below him to be a kind husband, and to treat his wife as a friend, companion and counsellor,' and 'Cicero...in the following passages which I have taken out of his letters, shows, that he did not think it inconsistent with the politeness of his manners, or the greatness of his wisdom, to stand upon record in his domestic character.'<sup>107</sup> Tatler 87 praises those who write a letter 'that is fit only for those to read who are concerned in it,' and Tatler 78 makes fun of the elaborate salutations and complimentary closes still fashionable in letters.<sup>108</sup>

The growth of a new reading public to which Steele and Addison directed their instructions on morals and manners, then, meant that both the style and the content of the letter changed with the beliefs and habits of the new letter writing public. This public particularly condemned the letter of wit for its licentiousness; another letter from Rochester to Savile offers a fairly representative example of the sort of letter which offended: 'I have seriously considered one thinge, that of the three buisnisses of this Age, Woemen, Polliticks & drinking, the last is the only exercise att wch. you & I have nott prouv'd our selves Errant fumlbers.'<sup>109</sup> That the tide had turned, with the letter writers of the early eighteenth century seeking to

inculcate instructive morality into their letters, is the message of the sententious preface to Original and Genuine Letters Sent to the Tatler and Spectator (1725) in which the editor commends the work of Addison and Steele in these terms: 'how laudable and beneficial a work the Tatlers and Spectators were, when they set all the writing world amongst us to work, each with a view to amend their neighbour.'<sup>110</sup> The instructive nature of these journals is, interestingly, seen to be divided between reform of manners and morals simultaneously, as though morality and social adeptness could be somehow equated; thus Addison's and Steele's letters were 'designed purposely, for exploding and correcting some vices, follies, fashions, indecorums, or irregularities then reigning.'<sup>111</sup>

This new letter-writing public also deplored the extravagancies of style of the letter of wit, as seen above. The adoption of a conversational style in letter-writing in reaction to the artifice and exaggeration characterising the letter of wit prompted a belief that a letter so written must be sincere, that a spontaneously-composed letter must reveal the inmost depths of its author. Steele echoed this belief in Spectator 284 in observing that 'It has been remarked by some nice Observers and Criticks, That there is nothing discovers the true Temper of a Person so much as his Letters...It is wonderful that a Man cannot observe upon himself when he sits down to write, but that he will gravely commit himself to Paper the same Man that he is in the Freedom of Conversation.'<sup>112</sup> A year earlier in Spectator 27 Steele had similarly observed that 'I have ever thought Men were better known, by what could be

observed of them from a Perusal of their private Letters, than any other way.'<sup>113</sup> This opinion was still held some fifty years later, as we have seen from Lord Orrery's similar remark in his Life of Swift that 'it is an acknowledged observation, that no part of an author's writings give a greater insight into his natural disposition than his letters.'<sup>114</sup>

That Richardson also held this opinion of the value of letters in mirroring their author's character and that it, in large part, influenced his choice of the epistolary form for his novels is apparent in his own letters which praise an artless style of letter writing. In a letter to Sophia Westcomb he equates such letter writing with 'pure' and 'ardent' conversation.<sup>115</sup> In a letter to Miss Sutton he describes himself as correspondent in these terms: 'I am one of the plainest and least accurate persons that ever took up a pen, and...have nothing but heart to recommend me; and, when I follow not my correspondent's lead, write whatever, at the moment, comes uppermost, trusting to that heart, and regarding not head.'<sup>116</sup> As John Carroll, editor of Richardson's letters aptly observes, what deliberation Richardson admits to in the writing of them was to be seen as 'the deliberation...of the moralist and man of feeling, not that of the man of letters intent on turning a phrase.'<sup>117</sup>

The increasing emphasis on morality and elevated sentiment in letters is not surprising when we recall that religious works were the most widely published 'category of books' in the early eighteenth century.<sup>118</sup> Ian Watt



observes that the highest figure of sales recorded for a single work in that period, that of 105,000 copies, was for Bishop Sherlock's 1750 Letter from the Lord Bishop of London to the Clergy and People of London on the Occasion of the Late Earthquake.<sup>119</sup> Religious feeling translated easily into didactic literature or even into tearful sentimentality. Thus we see Steele echoing in his bathetic comedies, The Funeral, or Grief à la Mode, The Lying Lover and The Tender Husband, the preoccupations of his essay on moral theory, The Christian Hero. Richardson occasionally lapsed into the mawkishly sentimental in Pamela and in Clarissa and, in terms of the epistolary novel at least, this tendency reached its logical, if absurd, conclusion in the exaggerated pieties of Sarah Fielding's Familiar Letters between the Principal Characters in David Simple. The middle class origins of this literary trend are apparent in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's reluctant admiration for Richardson. As a literary lady she was fascinated by his novels but, as an aristocrat, contemptuous of their author as a bourgeois printer: 'He has no Idea of the manners of high Life,' she observed in letters to her daughter. 'This Richardson is a strange Fellow. I heartily despise him and eagerly read him, nay, sob over his works in a most scandalous manner.'<sup>120</sup>

It should be noted, however, that the epistolary novel marked a profound shift in the direction of literature. From the abstract generalities approved of by the Augustans, Richardson and his successors turned to the exploration of the individual consciousness. The epistolary novel's

delicate analysis of the subjective perspective is far removed from the 'public' nature of much of Augustan literature, with its affirmation of the values of society and celebration of a communal consciousness. It was generally recognized that the familiar letter offered an opportunity for a writer to express himself, and especially his emotions, more fully and unreservedly than was possible in conversation. According to Ian Watt, the rise of the familiar letter as a means of conveying sentiment was a 'cult...which had largely arisen during Richardson's own lifetime, and which he himself both followed and fostered.'<sup>121</sup> The implications of the popularity of this new form of literature are pointed out by Madame de Staël who observed that the epistolary novel itself represented a radical departure from the classical literary perspective: "the ancients would never have thought of giving their fiction such a form" because the epistolary method "always presupposes more sentiment than action".<sup>122</sup>

To summarize, the gradual development of the letter of morality and sentiment, appearing in literary letters, epistolary manuals and familiar letters alike, can be linked to the growth of a new reading public. This bourgeois (to generalize) readership reacted against the implications underlying the letter of wit: its aristocratic tone and its amorality. The religious or moral tone of the letter of the letter of sentiment was probably heightened in direct proportion to the excesses of licentiousness perceived in the letter of wit, while the emphasis on a sincere, spontaneous style developed largely as a reaction to the

letter of wit's deliberately literary character, gaining momentum from the increasing popularity of a conversational style in letter writing. There was probably a direct relationship between adoption of a conversational style in letters and a belief that, in writing in such a style, one could express oneself in a letter with sincerity. This belief is apparent as early as John Donne's letters and obviously informs their style and content. Donne confessed in a letter to Sir Thomas Lucy that he attempted in letters to attain a kind of metaphysical union with his correspondent: 'I Make account that this writing of letters, when it is with any seriousness, is a kind of extasie, and a departure and secession and suspension of the soul, wch doth then communicate it self to two bodies.'<sup>123</sup>

The age was fond of the image, adopted from Lucian's Hermotimus, of the familiar letter representing a 'window in the bosom,' the letter as a clear, undistorted medium through which the writer's inmost thoughts and feelings were rendered visible. One of the first explicit references to this classical notion was made by Thomas Forde in his 1660 publication of Faenestra in Pectore, or Familiar Letters, who describes the title of his collection in these terms: 'The witty Lucian brings in Momus, quarreling at the Masterpieces which the gods had made; and the onely fault he found with Man, was, That he had not a window to look into his breast. For this reason, I call this Packet of Letters Fenestra in Pectore: Letters being the best Casements, whereby men disclose themselves.'<sup>124</sup> Effort and calculation were inimical to the nature of this 'letter of sentiment'.

Lord Orrery wrote in the approved manner in a letter to Thomas Southerne in 1736: 'My Letters are not worth shewing: I make no Copies beforehand, nor even take the least Pains about Them: My Heart...flows thro' my Quill.'<sup>125</sup>

The letter of sentiment achieved its greatest prominence in the middle and latter part of the eighteenth century. By 1760 Laurence Sterne was echoing the 1750 pronouncements of Richardson on the proper epistolary style. A letter, he maintained, must be natural and spontaneous, 'written in that careless irregularity of a good and an easy heart.'<sup>126</sup> Sterne, like Richardson, deplored deliberation in letter writing: 'Lord defend me,' he exclaimed in a letter to Mary Macartney, 'from all litterary commerce with those, who indite epistles as Attornys do Bonds...who in lieu of sending me what I sat expecting - a Letter - surprize me with an Essay cut & clip'd at all corners.'<sup>127</sup>

The assumption underlying Richardson's and Sterne's - and Addison's and Steele's - philosophy of letter writing is an optimistic belief in man's innate goodness; that his benevolence will naturally burst through in a spontaneous overflow of emotion should he write his letters in an unstudied, sincere way. Dr. Johnson's observations on the inherent fallacy of this philosophy confirm Leslie Stephen's famous remark, that 'When a shallow optimism is the most living creed, a man of strong nature becomes a scornful pessimist.'<sup>128</sup> Johnson ironically remarked of Pope's letters that 'It has been so long said as to be commonly believed that the true characters of men may be found in their letters, and that he who writes to his friend lays his heart open before him.'<sup>129</sup>

Exposing the faulty logic of such a premise Johnson claims that, in fact, there is 'no transaction which offers stronger temptations to fallacy and sophistication...a friendly letter is a calm and deliberate performance in the cool of leisure, in the stillness of solitude, and surely no man sits down to depreciate by design his own character.'<sup>130</sup>

The discrepancy between profession and practice is an interesting, complex phenomenon. Addison and Steele openly revised and edited the letters they received before publishing them. The editor of Sterne's letters, Lewis Perry Curtis, describes Sterne's remarks on letter writing as verging on the 'disingenuous': 'After defending to Miss Macartney his bursts of unpremeditated art, Sterne dispatched the sentiment to Mrs. Fenton. He even copied it into his Letter Book, a volume he found useful for the improving of letters he had already sent through the post.'<sup>131</sup> Carroll, the editor of Richardson's letters, believes that Richardson actually believed in his plea for unstudied letter writing although Carroll also claims that his 'letters are proof that spontaneity and openness of heart do not ensure complete self-revelation.'<sup>132</sup> The rather disappointing mediocrity of Richardson's actual letters fails to convey 'the subtle craftsmanship and the knowledge of human nature that went into the three novels.'<sup>133</sup>

Exerpts from an ironic letter Johnson sent to Hester Thrale in 1777 can serve to conclude this section, parodying, as they do, the received opinions of the proper letter of sentiment:

In a man's letters, you know, Madam, his soul lies naked, his letters are only the mirrour of his breast; whatever passes within his is shown undisguised in its

natural process; nothing is inverted, nothing distorted.....Is not my soul laid open in these veracious pages? Do not you see me reduced to my first principles? This is the pleasure of corresponding with a friend, where doubt and distrust have no place, and every thing is said as it is thought.<sup>134</sup> These are the letters by which souls are united.

## v

The eighteenth century cherished a special notion of the value of the personal letter as memoir or biography. For the newly literate bourgeoisie the published letters of famous individuals represented a window to another world; through such biography the middle class could view the thoughts and actions of individuals who may have led lives unfettered by the constraints of earning a livelihood; it could participate, if in an oblique way, in the lives of the leisured, aristocratic, learned or the adventurous. Certainly Grub Street recognized and catered to the demand. At the turn of the century, it 'suddenly discovered the eager interest awaiting the publication of the letters of the great and the famous, as a part, often a heavily weighted part, of the story of their lives.'<sup>135</sup>

In 1692 Walsh had perceived that interest in a personal letter was not likely to be confined to its recipient. Mrs. John Evelyn's objection to the practice of publishing private correspondence, that, apart from the issue of propriety, such letters could contain little to interest anyone but the individual to whom they were sent, is noted but powerfully quashed by Walsh in the preface to Letters and Poems:

It must be confess'd indeed, that a great beauty of letters does often consist in little passages of private conversation, and references to particular

matters, that can be understood by none but those to whom they are written: but to draw a general conclusion from thence, that familiar letters can please none, but those very persons, is to conclude against the common experience of all the world.<sup>136</sup>

Walsh points out the overwhelming evidence to the contrary by citing the immense contemporary popularity of the letters of Cicero and Pliny, Balzac and Voiture, attributing the success of the letter as publishable literature as due to its inherent functionality and universal relevance: 'there is no sort of writing so necessary for people to understand as this...a man can hardly live in the world, without being able to write letters.'<sup>137</sup>

The aim of the Tatler and the Spectator was as a didactic if pleasurable influence but their readers also turned to these periodicals for gossip; in Tatler 164 Steele observes that 'There is no particular in which my correspondents of all ages, conditions, sexes, and complexions, universally agree, except only in their thirst after scandal.'<sup>138</sup> A letter printed in The Scots Magazine in 1742 similarly asserted that 'the love of scandal is almost an universal passion.' Irving cites the publication in the early eighteenth century of the letters of Sir William Temple and of Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, as important 'illustrations of the current tendency to unlock the cabinets of the great.'<sup>140</sup>

The interest in the private lives of the famous can also be divined from Curll's institution of a primitive 'Who was Who' and in his practice of printing last wills and testaments.<sup>14</sup> That the Augustan fascination with the private lives of its public figures could best be satisfied in their memoirs or letters is the message contained in the introduction to a

Memorial of the Duchess of Ormonde included in the third volume of Curll's edition of Pope's Literary Correspondence:

ONE must have but little knowledge of human Nature, not to be sensible of that Curiosity which prompts Mankind to be acquainted with the History of Persons distinguished by their... Virtues and Qualifications.<sup>142</sup>

Curll goes on to claim that these stories or biographies conveyed in the medium of the letter could serve a didactic as well as a pleasurable function: 'In reading their Transactions we become agreeably intimate with the Characters which have raised our Admiration...THE Impressions we receive from personal Characters, are more lively and affecting than such as are imparted to us by moral Precepts.'<sup>143</sup> Augustan biography, then, even at the Grub Street level, was to obey the dictum of Augustan poetry: it was to instruct as well as to please.

For the 'literate,' that is, for those familiar with classical languages and literature, a similar interest in letters as didactic biography was apparent. The humanist tradition was largely responsible for the period's preoccupation with such biography. As Jeffrey Hart, biographer of Bolingbroke, observes, from Homer and Virgil, Plutarch, Xenophon, Cicero, Tacitus and Livy 'the humanists derived examples of intelligence and courage made active in the service of the State.'<sup>144</sup> The humanist tradition sought to teach morality by capturing the reader's imagination with 'lessons through lives,' thereby giving him a 'vividly conceived ideal of what he ought to be, along with certain precepts about how to approach that ideal.'<sup>145</sup> Petrarch set the characteristic tone of humanist philosophy; his 'influence did not stop with his advocacy of imitation' of



the great classical writers; he 'recommended the ancients not only as masters in the art of writing, but above all in as masters in the art of living...the ancients can show us the way to live, how to enjoy nature, how to cultivate friendship.'<sup>146</sup>

The Augustan sense of the pedagogic function of the literature of antiquity was often coupled with a recognition that this ideal of moral or historically instructive biography could be most effectively conveyed through the medium of the familiar letter. The connection was also made by seventeenth-century authors. Monsieur de la Motte Aigron's preface to Balzac's letters, for example, in commending the achievement which they represent, also contains the interesting observation that

the greatest and most important misteries of our religion have been left unto us in Letters. All the wisdom of the Pagans is contained in those of Seneca, and wee owe to those Cicero wrot to his friends, the knowledge of the secrets, and certaine inducements which caused the greatest revolutions the world hath ever known, to witt the shaking and subversion of the Romane Reipublike.<sup>147</sup>

Donne is simply echoing received opinion when he similarly enthused about the letters of antiquity in these terms:

What treasures of Morall knowledge are in Senecaes Letters to onely one Lucilius? and what of Naturall in Plinies? how much of the storie of the time, is in Ciceroes Letters?...where can we finde so perfect a Character of Phalaris, as in his own letters.<sup>148</sup>

In Tatler 108 Steele praised classical authors in analogous terms: 'The finest authors of antiquity have taken [man] on the more advantageous side.'<sup>149</sup> Unlike the irresponsible modern writer of satire who deprecates mankind, the ancients

cultivate the natural grandeur of the soul, raise in her a generous ambition, feed her with hopes of

immortality and perfection, and do all they can to widen the partition between the virtuous and the vicious, by making the difference betwixt them as great as between gods and brutes. In short, it is impossible to read a page in Plato, Tully, and a thousand other ancient moralists, <sup>150</sup> without being a greater and a better man for it.

The humanist perception of the value of the familiar letter of a famous individual as memoir or biography was, then, compounded of several elements. The letters of the ancients confirmed the premise of humanism by enhancing, in their notion of fame, for example, the dignity of man while also serving as moral and historical instruction. The humanists may well have derived their belief in the value peculiar to biography and especially to biography composed within the framework of personal letters from the classical writers. Tom Brown's edition of Select Epistles includes the famous letter in which Cicero begs his friend Luceius to write his biography in the context of a history of the times. Cicero observes that 'With Submission, I say it, the Adventures of my Life will afford a Variety that must certainly please; for nothing gives a greater Pleasure to the Reader than the diversity of Times, and the Vicissitudes of Fortune.'<sup>151</sup> Cicero then anticipates the eighteenth-century's belief that biography can be more affecting than history:

I may positively affirm, that the reading of our common Annals makes no more Impression upon us, than the reading of an Almanac; whereas the danger and uncertain Revolutions in a Great Man's Life inspire us with all sorts of Motions, give us Admiration and Desire, Joy and Grief, Hope and Fear.<sup>152</sup>

Curll's introduction to the Duchess of Ormonde's Memorial repeats these sentiments in nearly the same words but with a slightly greater emphasis on the moral aspect of biography:

those Virtues which Institutions of Philosophy might give us but a languid Invitation to imitate, are altogether irresistable, when they are set off by the Conduct of Persons of Elevation.<sup>153</sup>

The classical writers believed that personal example rather than abstract precept made a greater didactic impact. In a letter to Lucilius characteristic of their epistolary relationship, with Seneca as the wise teacher and Lucilius the eager pupil, Seneca promises to send Lucilius books with relevant instructive passages marked, advising him, however, to visit and to benefit by Seneca's 'conversation and familiarity' as it 'will have better effect than any thing written, or a formal speech...the way by precept is long and tedious; whereas that of example is short and powerful.'<sup>154</sup>

The letter, whether actual or intended for publication, offered the ancient writers, too, as we have seen, a perfect medium through which they could convey their philosophy or literary skill to posterity. The contrived efforts of Seneca and Pliny in this area apart, it is interesting that, in addition to his Lives, the immensely popular volume of biographies of famous individuals, Plutarch also wrote the less well-known Moralia, containing twenty-six essays on such topics as 'On Education,' 'On Love,' 'On Virtue and Vice,' 'On Moral Virtue,' and 'On Contentedness of Mind.' Some of these essays are simply presented as formal discussions on the given topic while others are cast in the form of letters, others in the form of dialogues. 'On Contentedness of Mind,' for example, falls under the category of essay as letter, opening with this remark: 'It was late when I received

your letter, asking me to write you something on contendedness of mind...'<sup>155</sup>

In his Life of Plutarch which prefaces his edition of Plutarch's Lives Dryden commends the worth of biography which sets 'before us what we ought to shun, or to pursue, by the examples of the most famous men.'<sup>156</sup> While Dryden believed that 'Biographia, or the history of particular men's lives,' is in dignity inferior to history and annals, in pleasure and instruction it equals or even excels both of them:

'Tis not only commended by ancient practice, to celebrate the memory of great and worthy men, as the best thanks which posterity can pay them: but also the examples of virtue are of more vigour, when they are thus contracted into individuals... the virtues and actions of one man, drawn together into a single story, strike upon our minds a stronger and more lively impression, than the scattered relations of many men, and many actions; and by the same means that<sup>157</sup> they give us pleasure, they afford us profit too.

The humanists believed that the classical writers had couched their biography almost unconsciously in the form of their letters. That this was sometimes unwittingly done seemed proven by the letters of Cicero; their naked vulnerability of emotion, occasional glimpses of cowardice or self-deception, and their inclusion of petty detail lent a very personal dimension to an otherwise eminently 'public' or 'historical' figure. It must, initially, have been difficult to reconcile the Cicero of the letters with the Cicero of the orations, and thus, as we have seen, Petrarch wept on reading Cicero's letters because they shattered his idealized picture of Cicero's character.

The early eighteenth century was fascinated by Cicero's

letters in particular for a number of reasons. Primarily they were intrigued by this fact of the letters' portrayal of their author's character. Thus Adam Smith was able to assert in 1762 that 'There is no character with which we are better acquainted than that of Cicero, which is evidently displayed in all his works, and in particular must receive great light from his epistles.'<sup>158</sup> Similarly the preface to Familiar Letters between the Principal Characters in David Simple observes that letters 'have been always esteemed as the most valuable Parts of History, as they are not only the most authentic Memorials of Fact, but as they serve greatly to illustrate the true Character of the Writer, and do in a manner introduce the Person himself to our Acquaintance.'<sup>159</sup> This was certainly the Augustan perception of Cicero's letters and even though Pliny's were generally accepted as having been contrived for publication William Melmoth noted of them in 1747 that 'PLINY may be considered in these letters as writing his own memoirs: Every epistle is a kind of historical sketch, wherein we have a view of him in some striking attitude, either of active or contemplative life.'<sup>160</sup> That the issue of whether or not publication was intended was seen as irrelevant to the value of this sort of historical or biographical memoir in the form of personal letters is implied by Melmoth's observation that, if publication was Pliny's real design in writing his letters, he 'could not, it must be confess'd, have taken a more agreeable, nor, perhaps, a more modest method of transmitting himself to posterity.'<sup>161</sup>

The early eighteenth century was also particularly interested

in Cicero as representative of an age to which it likened itself in the term 'Augustan'. Geoffrey Carnall ascribes the age's fascination with Cicero to its sense of identification with republican Rome. Thus Carnall reasons, in explaining the contemporary popularity of Middleton's Life of Cicero, published in 1741, 'The story that Middleton had to tell was not only sublime, but also central to the concerns and anxieties that preoccupied a generation constantly comparing itself with classical antiquity, feeling itself to be a free people whose heritage was threatened by factious and corrupt politicians.'<sup>162</sup> Middleton's Life, appropriately set as a biography within the framework of Cicero's letters, includes, in Middleton's preface, a justification of its format and a very Augustan affirmation of the importance of such biography. Middleton observes that he has drawn the materials for his work from their proper source, from Cicero himself, whose writings 'are the most authentic monuments that remain to us, of all the great transactions of that age.'<sup>163</sup> Middleton was, however, aware that the very openness with which Cicero wrote his letters could draw upon him the detraction of those who might expect nothing less than unvarying perfection in so great a man. Possibly to counter criticism that he had displayed Cicero in too vulnerable a way Middleton justly observed in his preface that the letters must be read in the context of the life:

to form our notions of a great man, from some slight passages of his writings, or separate points of conduct, without regarding their connection with the whole, or the figure, that they make in his general character, is like examining things in a microscope, which were made to be surveyed in the gross: every

mole rises into a mountain, and the least spot into a deformity; which vanish again into nothing, when we contemplate them through their proper medium, and in their natural light.<sup>164</sup>

Carnall's description of Middleton's Life of Cicero as a 'literary landmark as conspicuous as Richardson's Pamela,'<sup>165</sup> is of particular significance here. As Carnall points out, 'Cicero's works form an authentic body of materials as ample as the documents imagined by contemporary novelists to facilitate their explorations of morality and the passions.'<sup>166</sup> It cannot be mere coincidence that Richardson cast his novels in an epistolary form in an age which witnessed a heightened recognition of the familiar letter as a medium of historical or moral instruction as well as a perception of its value as memoir or biography. In the popularity of the epistolary novel we can observe the two sections of the eighteenth-century reading public - the newly literate and the 'literate' - converging on a single point of shared interest. The age's interest in letters was compounded of two apparently contradictory but not mutually irreconcilable elements. On the one hand, there was the newly literate bourgeois reading public's interest in gossip and scandal, in the trivial details or curious incidents comprising the lives of the famous. On the other hand, the 'literate' appreciated the didactic and historical aspects of the 'lessons through lives' offered in biography. The two elements were not incompatible, as the eighteenth century discovered, when biography is set within the framework of personal letters; in this framework the lessons could be both entertaining and instructive. The public interest in the 'History' of famous persons could be

turned to good use if the biography offered an elevating example of a life worthy of imitation; as Curll's preface to the Memorial of the Duchess of Ormonde pointed out, the precepts to be derived from such biography are more 'lively and affecting' than the abstract instructions of dry, philosophic works.

The moral biography cast in letter form continued in importance as literary genre throughout the century. In his Memoirs of Thomas Gray William Mason is quick to describe Gray as a good man foremost and as a poet secondarily: 'I will promise my reader that he shall, in the following pages, seldom behold Mr. Gray in any other light than that of a Scholar and a Poet...though I am more solicitous to shew that he was a virtuous, a friendly, and an amiable man, than either.'<sup>167</sup> Mason explains his inclusion of Gray's early letters to Richard West in these terms: 'They will give a much clearer idea both of Mr. Gray and his friend, at this early period, than any narrative of mine...In a word, Mr. Gray will become his own biographer.'<sup>168</sup> Lord Orrery conceived a similar moral responsibility in acting as Swift's biographer:

You will probably expect from me a collection of apophthegms, which the Dean may have uttered upon various occasions. But, the witty records of table-talk in my mind seem too minute and over-curious; at least I must wish to treat with you upon subjects of more importance. I mean such subjects as will teach you to follow some moral virtue, or to shun some moral evil.<sup>169</sup>



CHAPTER FOUR

POPE AS LETTER WRITER

The familiar letter was a particularly appropriate genre for Pope in both his public and his private capacities. Afflicted at the tender age of twelve by Pott's disease, the degenerative tuberculosis of the spine which led Pope, in the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, to remark on 'this long Disease, my Life' (l. 132), the familiar letter offered the fragile poet, often incapacitated by headache or fever, an invaluable means of communication with his friends just as the poetical epistle was used to maintain contact with the world at large. His poor health prevented him, for example, from visiting his closest friends, Swift and Bolingbroke, in their exiles in Ireland and France respectively, as Pope believed that sea travel would literally kill him. In a letter to Swift Pope explained his reluctance to leave England in these terms: 'I would go a thousand miles by land to see you, but the sea I dread. My ailments are such, that I really believe a sea-sickness, (considering the oppression of cholical pains, and the great weakness of my breast) would kill me.'<sup>1</sup> This concern for the danger sea travel posed to his health also prevented Pope from following Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to Europe when she accompanied her husband to his ambassadorship in Turkey; in two letters of 1716 he mentioned his impossible desire to meet her in Italy would she pass through that country en-route

to Constantinople (I, 370; 384-5). In his letter to Swift Pope described a short voyage on Southampton Water that he had taken some years earlier as an 'experiment' to test his theory that sea travel would kill him: 'I went some years agoe with Lord Peterborow about 10 leagues at Sea, purely to try if I could sail without Seasickness, and with no other view than to make yourself & Lord Bolingbroke a Visit before I dy'd. But the Experiment, tho almost all the way near the Coast, had almost ended all my Views at once' (IV 179-80).

Travel by land was little more comfortable than by sea. In his youth Pope often travelled by horseback, believing that the exercise was beneficial, but ill health increasingly oompelled him to choose to travel by coach. The discomfort of even this type of conveyance in his later years was remarked upon in a letter Pope sent to Ralph Allen in 1740 in which Pope explains that he cannot travel alone in a coach to Bath to visit him there: 'I could not travel Alone, for the tumbling, unless I could get some other to go with me thither' (IV, 273). Yet, despite the difficulties posed by his health, Pope was famous for his fondness for the extended holiday spent visiting his friends and staying at their estates. The habit of the summer ramble had begun in 1707 when Pope travelled to Aberley to visit Walsh; by 1719 Pope observed in a letter to Broome that 'I have at this present writing no less than five houses, in different counties, through which I make a tour every summer' (II, 3). From 1717 to 1733, however, with his father dead and his mother in poor health, Pope minimized his travels, believing her to be 'grown too feeble to be left long alone' (II, 112). This confinement

to home left him more than usually dependent upon the letter as a means of communication. Pope's Catholicism, too, may have contributed to this consciousness. The Catholics of the early eighteenth century were still bound by a number of penal laws. In Pope's lifetime Catholics were, in the government's fears of a Jacobite invasion, 'banished from London and forbidden to possess any arms or to own a horse worth more than £5.'<sup>2</sup> Of course these prohibitions were rarely enforced but that Pope managed to visit his friends as often as he did and to maintain close ties with most of them throughout his life despite all these obstacles is a testament to the importance he placed upon friendship.

Apart from the usefulness of the letter as a means of communication with friends at a distance, there is evidence to support the belief that Pope turned to the letter as a medium through which he could express himself with greater ease and ability than allowed for in the informality of actual conversation. In his Life of Pope Dr. Johnson observed that, like Dryden, in 'familiar or convivial conversation it does not appear that he excelled.'<sup>3</sup> Johnson's observation is borne out by Pope himself who, Spence reported, remarked in reference to his appearance to give testimony at Atterbury's trial, 'I never could speak in public, and I don't believe that if it was a set thing I could give an account of any story to twelve friends together, though I could tell it to any three of them with a great deal of pleasure.'<sup>4</sup> Lord Chesterfield noted, too, that 'Pope in conversation was below himself; he was seldom easy and natural, and seemed afraid that the man should degrade the poet, which made him always attempt wit and humour, often unsuccessfully

and too often unseasonably.'<sup>5</sup> To a man who, in Lord Orrery's opinion, was 'naturally judicious, and uncommonly attentive to maintain the dignity of his character,'<sup>6</sup> the letter, written in privacy, capable of revision and amendment, may have been preferable for the expression of his ideas to the pressures and demands of actual conversation. It may be that, ironically, the poet of the social life was, himself, as a result of a combination of factors - temperament, poor health, his Catholicism - 'born to retirement perforce.'<sup>7</sup> Johnson's Life includes the following revealing anecdote: Pope 'writes, he says, when "he has just nothing else to do"; yet Swift complains that he was never at leisure for conversation because he "had always some poetical scheme in his head".'<sup>8</sup> Johnson attributed this to a belief that Pope's work was his life: 'of what could he be proud but of his poetry?'<sup>9</sup>

The first section of this chapter is devoted to Pope's career as a writer of published letters. It will discuss Pope's consciousness of the letter as a literary genre and his familiarity with classical and continental epistolary models. The papers Pope contributed to the Spectator and to the Guardian will also be briefly looked at; as Norman Ault observes, Pope's contribution to these periodical journals was usually 'written to no one in particular, but was simply a piece of literary composition cast in the popular epistolary form expressly for publication.'<sup>10</sup> It is interesting that Spectator 406, in the form of a letter, is distinguished by its being 'the first indubitable piece of Pope's prose to be published.'<sup>11</sup> This section will also recount the circumstances of the 1726 publication of Pope's letters to

Henry Cromwell and his 1729 editorship of a second volume of Wycherley's Posthumous Works in which he included a selection of his correspondence with Wycherley. The second section of this chapter will consist of a general survey of the letters Pope published as compared to the letters to those correspondents published posthumously.

## i

Considering the prominence of the letter in the early eighteenth century, Pope could scarcely avoid a consciousness of it as a means of literary expression, as a form perhaps as distinctively Augustan as the heroic couplet. Pope's earliest friends must have contributed to this consciousness, involved as nearly all of them were in publications of letters. As we have seen, the prominent critic William Walsh who, upon reading Pope's Pastorals, adopted him as a literary protégé, was himself closely connected with the literary letter in England, publishing in 1692 Letters and Poems. The 1696 Letters Upon Several Occasions had included among its contributors Dryden, Wycherley, Dennis and Congreve while in 1700 these early friends of Pope's collaborated in a translation of Voiture's Familiar Letters to Persons of Honour and Quality. Pope remarked to Spence in 1729 that 'I saw Mr. Dryden when I was about twelve years old...I remember his face, for I looked upon him with the greatest veneration even then, and observed him very particularly.'<sup>12</sup> Pope later admitted that he had consciously modelled himself upon Dryden's example: 'I learned versification wholly from Dryden's works.'<sup>13</sup>

Congreve was one of Pope's earliest friends and supporters. Pope dedicated the Iliad translation to him in 1720 and their friendship continued until Congreve's death in 1729 when Pope grieved in a letter to Gay that 'Mr. Congreve's death touches me nearly. It is twenty years that I have known him' (III, 3). The enmity between Dennis and Pope, provoked by Pope's portrait of the critic in An Essay on Criticism and sustained by Dennis's attacks on Pope's poetry and character, did not prevent Pope from requesting, in 1721, Dennis's Original Letters, Familiar, Moral and Critical, published in that year.<sup>14</sup> Pope met Wycherley in 1704, possibly through their mutual friend Sir William Trumbull;<sup>15</sup> the early friendship between the youthful poet and the ageing Restoration dramatist may have appeared an incongruous one but, apart from a temporary estrangement in 1710, it continued until Wycherley's death in 1716.

The two times the admiring Wycherley threatened to publish his youthful correspondent's precociously clever letters to him must have brought to Pope's mind Wycherley's involvement in Letters Upon Several Occasions. According to Wycherley his letters were included in this publication by Dennis without Wycherley's knowledge or consent.<sup>16</sup> Wycherley concludes his letter to Pope of 14 June 1709 with the observation, 'Upon the word of a Plain-dealer, I never saw two such good letters, upon such bad Subjects, Mr Comwel, and myself; and for my Credit, as much as Yours, I have a good mind to use you as Dennis did me, and print your Letters' (I, 66). The letter of 11 August of that year begins where

the earlier letter had left off: 'to be a Plain-dealer, I must tell you, I will revenge the raillery of your Letters upon mine, by printing them, (as Dennis did mine) without your knowledge too' (I, 69). Cromwell, another of Pope's early friends and correspondents, also participated in one of the innumerable collections of letters of the early eighteenth century. Tom Brown's 1702 publication of Select Epistles contains a catalogue of Brown's other 'Books newly Printed,' including, as item three, 'The first Volume of Familiar and Courtly Letters, written to several Persons of Honour and Quality. By Mons. Voiture...made English by Mr. Dryden, Tho. Cheek, Esq; Mr. Dennis, Hen. Cromwel. Esq.' The list of contributors to the 'Collection of Letters of Friendship, and other occasional Letters,' which this edition also included reads like a familiar litany: Dryden, Wycherley, Congreve and Dennis.

From his own letters it is obvious that Pope was well-versed in the epistolary models, classical and continental, popular in his age. Pope was fond of quoting Seneca's Epistles, for example, in his own letters. In a letter to Robert Digby, to take one instance, he abstracted a useful philosophical gem to describe his sense of loss at the death of a neighbour: 'Nothing, says Seneca, is so melancholy a circumstance in human Life, or so soon reconciles us to the thought of our own death, as the reflection and prospect of one Friend after another dropping round us!' (II, 253) The humanist preoccupation with mortality and the consolations of philosophy is apparent, too, in a letter of 1713 to Gay in

which Pope observes, 'I have been perpetually troubled with sickness of late, which has made me so melancholy that the Immortality of the Soul has been my constant Speculation, as the Mortality of my Body my constant Plague. In good earnest, Seneca is nothing to a fit of illness' (I, 195, 147). Pliny, Voiture and Balzac are, with Cicero and Seneca, the subjects of a long-standing debate carried on in Pope's, Swift's, and Bolingbroke's letters to each other, on whether these famous letter writers had intended their letters for publication, a debate which hints at the ramifications this intention to publish might have exercised on their style (III, 92, 101-3, 505). Pope's early admiration for and familiarity with the works of Voiture is attested by his poem Epistle to Miss Blount, With the Works of Voiture, written in 1710 and published in Lintot's Miscellany in 1712. Wycherley also mentioned Voiture twice in admiring terms in two letters to Pope in 1707 and 1708 (I, 34, 53), and, in the latter letter compared Pope to Voiture: 'You and Voiture say, the Woods & Rocks reply' (I, 53). As for Erasmus, Pope's library included eleven volumes of Erasmus which 'were willed to Bolingbroke and have not been heard of since.'<sup>17</sup> Pope received from Swift in 1714 a Greek and Latin New Testament in the text of Erasmus. Mack speculates that Pope gave Swift in return a 'tiny Frankfort edition,' dated 1543 of the Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum.<sup>18</sup> That Pope owned a copy of this work and that he presented Swift with another is interesting. The Epistolae, published by Erasmus in two parts in 1516 and 1517, was an attack on the narrow-minded orthodoxy



of the monks and the Scholastic viewpoint they adhered to, masquerading, comically, as serious criticism of the heretical Erasmus's plea for open mindedness and for a reappraisal of classical learning. From Mack's catalogue of Pope's library it is also probable that Pope owned or was at least acquainted with Rochester's letters.<sup>19</sup> Although Pope observed in 1728 to Spence that 'Lord Rochester was of a very bad turn of mind, as well as debauched,'<sup>20</sup> this opinion of Rochester's character had not prevented Pope from imitation of Rochester's 'Upon Nothing' in his lines 'On Silence' nor from being influenced in his own Horatian satires by Rochester's versification of the tenth satire of Horace. Sherburn reprints a letter from Pope to Cromwell dated 27 April 1708 which, while probably spurious - devised by Pope expressly for publication in 1735 - is an interesting prose disquisition on the nature of 'nothing,' no doubt also derived from Rochester's example (I, 48). Pope also owned Gilbert Burnet's 1686 edition of Some Letters Containing an Account of What Seemed Most Remarkable in Switzerland, Italy, &c.<sup>21</sup>

Norman Ault describes the 406th paper of the Spectator, which appeared on 16 June 1712, as the first of three prose pieces indisputably by Pope to be published in that journal.<sup>22</sup> This paper on country versus city life took the form of a preface by the editor followed by two letters, the letter anonymously contributed by Pope consisting of a justification of his quiet life in rural retirement. In this letter Pope quotes Seneca and Plutarch as authority for his opinions and

observes that 'whoever has the Muses...for his Companions, can never be idle enough to be uneasy.'<sup>23</sup> The second piece which Pope definitely contributed to the Spectator, 527, also took the form of a letter which was published by Steele after an introductory preface and in the company of another anonymous letter. In his letter Pope again took himself as his subject, although without acknowledging his identity, by devoting the letter to an explanation of his own poem On a Fan. The third and last paper which Ault identifies as 'the last of the prose contributions incontestably Pope's,'<sup>24</sup> Spectator 532, was published on 10 November 1712. While Pope's contributions to 406 and 527 were anonymous, Steele openly attributed a letter contained in 532 to Pope, apparently to Pope's annoyance, as he confessed in a letter to Caryll of 29 November 1712: 'I only sent it as my private notion to Mr. Steele, which yet I doubted of (as you see by the last lines of the letter itself) not in the least dreaming that he would publish me as the author of it by name' (I, 157-8). Spectator 532 had contained Pope's thoughts on the last words of the Emperor Hadrian and an English translation of them which he later versified and published in 1730. Pope's letter contribution to 532 had concluded with this line: 'If you think me right in my Notion of the last words of Adrian, be pleased to insert this in the Spectator; if not, to suppress it.'<sup>25</sup>

Ault also describes nine other Spectator papers as being 'with much probability' written by Pope.<sup>26</sup> Spectator papers 452 and 457 have been attributed to him because of the similarity of their burlesque proposals for newspapers to the idea underlying Martinus Scriblerus, that the newspapers and

Scriblerus were to ridicule pedantry and vulgarity, to represent 'The Works of the Unlearned.' Spectator 457, published 14 August 1712, proposes a 'Design to Publish every Month, An Account of the Works of the Unlearned,'<sup>27</sup> while, in a letter tentatively dated 1713, Pope wrote Gay of his proposal to publish each month 'The Works of the Unlearned': 'in which whatever Book appears that deserves praise, shall be depreciated Ironically, and in the same manner that modern Critics take to undervalue Works of Value, and to commend the high Productions of Grubstreet' (I, 195).

The remaining seven Spectator papers which may have been written by Pope are designated the 'Z' papers, all of them being subscribed with the letter 'Z' in one or more of the first three editions of the Spectator.<sup>28</sup> Ault relies mainly on internal evidence in his attribution of these papers to Pope, on the many correspondences in content and style between these essays and Pope's acknowledged writings. He comes up with some fascinating results. In his examination of paper 404, for example, an essay on 'Affectation, the misfortune of it,' published on 13 June 1712, Ault discovers twelve or more similarities between this essay and such works as Pope's Guardian papers, the Essay on Criticism, a letter to Wycherley of 1705, and the Essay on Man.<sup>29</sup> Ault particularly links this paper with the Essay on Criticism, observing that 'not a little of this essay may be said to furnish prose illustrations and more or less close paraphrases of parts of the Essay on Criticism, and especially of those passages of which the key note is "Follow Nature".'<sup>30</sup>

That Pope was able to transfer ideas expressed two years

earlier in verse in the Essay on Criticism to prose in a generalized essay on 'affectation' is a remarkable proof of what Ault defines as Pope's unique ability to use and re-use indefinitely material in both verse and prose.<sup>31</sup> Spectator 408, published 18 June 1712, similarly shows a close affinity, in its preoccupation with reason and passion, with the ideas expressed some twenty-two years later in the Essay on Man.<sup>32</sup> Not only ideas but also particular phrases are abstracted from earlier works for inclusion in his periodical papers for a project currently on hand, whether it be a letter or a poem or an essay. Spectator paper 292, for example, contains a phrase Pope had coined two years earlier in the Essay on Criticism: '...in each/ Are nameless Graces which no Methods teach' (ll. 143-4) is transformed in this paper into 'The one is full of numberless nameless Graces.'<sup>33</sup> A letter to Cromwell of 1708 apparently furnished phrases for Spectator papers 316 and 406.<sup>34</sup>

Should Ault be correct in his supposition that these unacknowledged Spectator papers were actually written by Pope, it is interesting to take note of their topics. Spectator 316, for example, on the subject of idleness, cites classical letter writers to support a view Pope had so memorably expressed a year earlier in an Essay on Criticism, that 'True Ease in Writing comes from Art, not Chance' (l. 362). In counselling a judicious use of time the author of Spectator 316 observes:

All are acquainted with the Labour and Assiduity with which Tully acquired his Eloquence. Seneca in his Letters to Lucilius assures him, there was not a Day in which he did not either write something, or read and epitomize some good Author; and I remember Pliny in one of his Letters, where he

gives an Account of the various Methods he used to fill up every Vacancy of Time, after several Employments, which he enumerates.<sup>35</sup>

Some of the topics of these seven Spectator papers reflect concerns popular in Pope's poetry and letters: the interest in gardens and garden planning, the idea of fame, the love of praise, and the distinction between reason and passion.

Spectator 224, published 16 November 1711, on the 'Desire of Distinction' propounds the interesting theory that 'the Desire of Distinction was doubtless implanted in our Natures as an additional Incentive to exert our selves in virtuous Excellence.'<sup>36</sup>

On 12 November 1712, some weeks prior to the demise of the Spectator, Steele apparently requested Pope's assistance in his new project, the Guardian, whose first paper was issued 12 March 1713.<sup>37</sup> In the first edition of the Guardian in volume form Steele ascribed six papers to Pope: 4, 61, 78, 91, 92 and 173. Steele hinted that Pope had, however, contributed others, amongst which we must of course include no. 40, Pope's famous ironic essay on Ambrose Philips's Pastorals. In a manner reminiscent of Erasmus in Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum, Pope included himself in this essay, presumably as the object of his criticism but in terms of praise masquerading as denigration while, conversely, his praise of Philips's Pastorals was actual condemnation.

On the basis of internal evidence Ault is inclined to attribute at least six more Guardian papers to Pope.<sup>38</sup> Of these six essays, ranging in topic from a paper on 'false critics' to one on the nature of sickness, nos. 106 and 172 are, for our purposes, the most interesting. Guardian 106

recounts the story of Momus who 'is said to have found Fault with the Make of a Man, because he had not a Window in his Breast.'<sup>39</sup> The moral of the story is delivered in these terms: 'the Heart of Man is so full of Wiles and Artifices, Treachery and Deceit, that there is no guessing at what he is from his Speeches and outward Appearance.'<sup>40</sup> Lucian's story of Momus reappears in Guardian 172, an essay on the origin and use of letters. Letters or written language itself is accorded the function of serving as this 'window in the bosom': 'The Philosopher who wish'd he had a Window to his Breast, to lay open his Heart to all the World, might as easily have reveal'd the Secrets of it this way, and as easily left them to the World, as wish'd it. This silent Art of speaking by Letters, remedies the Inconvenience arising from distance of Time, as well as place.'<sup>41</sup> Letters are, then, of particular value as they are the one means available to man of transcending the limitations of time and space, of mortality itself; they allow man to 'correspond with a Friend at a distance, or...to take the Opinion of an Honest Gentleman, who has been dead this thousand Years.'<sup>42</sup> The art of letter writing 'preserves the Works of the Immortal part of Men, so as to make the Dead still useful to the Living.'<sup>43</sup> Further to this latter point, the works of Cicero and Seneca are, among others, cited as evidence.

Whether Steele's 1712 request for Pope's assistance in a 'design which I shall open a month or two hence' (I, 152) referred to his desire for Pope to participate in contributing to the Guardian or to his Censorium, it is generally accepted that it was this request which prompted Pope a few days later

to send a letter to John Caryll asking for the return of all the letters he had sent him which he might have kept (I, 156). In Vinton Dearing's opinion, the publication of his letters in the Spectator 'may have suggested to Pope that his correspondence contained ideas and passages that would be of use to him in the part he intended to play as a regular contributor to the Guardian.'<sup>44</sup> Caryll was an obvious choice for what Pope termed this 'odd request' (I, 156). A prominent landowner, a fellow Catholic and an old friend, Caryll had been one of Pope's most faithful correspondents; some 150 letters passed between them from their first acquaintance in 1710 until Caryll's death in 1736. It is obvious that Pope planned to use these recalled letters as a sort of storehouse of ideas; this, at least, is implied in the explanation Pope offered Caryll in making his request:

I never kept any copies of such stuff as I write; but there are several thoughts which I throw out that way in the freedom of my soul, that may be of use to me in a design I am lately engaged in, which will require so constant a flux of thought and invention, that I can never supply it without some assistance and 'tis not impossible but so many notions, written at different times, may save me a good deal of trouble (I, 156).

While Pope's 'borrowings' from these recalled letters in his periodical essays are not immediately obvious, Ault's findings seem to confirm that the letters did serve Pope as a sort of treasury of re-usable ideas. To cite just one of Ault's examples, a letter to Caryll of 25 January 1711, which deprecated Caryll's habit of complimenting the young poet, had contained the observation that 'Yet, after

all, a man is certainly obliged to any one who can make him vain of himself, since at the same time he makes him satisfied with himself' (I, 114). This observation bears a fairly close resemblance to one made in Guardian 11, published 24 March 1713: 'nothing is more necessary to Mankind in general than this pleasing Delirium [caused by flattery], which renders every one satisfied with himself.'<sup>45</sup>

In a letter to Caryll of 5 December 1712 Pope thanked him for the return of his letters. Pope possibly expected his recalled letters to yield more re-usable ideas or phrases than, on reviewing them, he found they actually did, for this letter contains the observation that 'They will not be of any great service to the design I mentioned to you' (I, 161). That the returned correspondence did hold an unexpected surprise and value for Pope, however, is apparent in the remarks which open this letter. Most of Pope's early letters contained requests that his correspondents would either criticize his work or analyze his character for him. The recalled letters fulfilled this function for Pope. Pope perceived them as an intriguing, very intimate projection of himself, as he observed to Caryll: 'You have at length complied with the request I have often made to you; for you have shown me I must confess several of my faults in the light of those letters' (I, 160). Pope hints, in the description of his reaction to the returned letters, that it was as though he had managed, unwittingly, in these early letters, to write his own biography: 'Upon a review of them I find



many things that would give me shame, if I were not more desirous to be thought honest than prudent; so many things freely thrown out, such lengths of unreserved friendship, thoughts just warm from the brain without any polishing or dress, the very déshabille of the understanding' (I, 160). Pope's perusal of his old letters has been instructive as well as entertaining: 'the revisal of those letters has been a kind of examination of conscience to me; so fairly and faithfully have I set down in 'em from time to time the true and undisguised state of my mind' (I, 161). In the light of these remarks, James Winn's conjecture that Pope was 'fascinated by himself,' and saw the recalled letters as 'raw material for self-examination' seems justified.<sup>46</sup>

Matters might have progressed no further had Edmund Curll not published in 1726 an unauthorized collection of Pope's letters to Henry Cromwell. The correspondence between Pope and Cromwell, minor poet and well-known man-about-town, had begun in 1707 and continued without interruption until 1711, a correspondence 'providing a regular interchange of scandal, views and literary discussion.'<sup>47</sup> The correspondence then gradually declined, lapsing entirely by the end of 1711. In Dearing's opinion, possibly Pope 'outgrew his interest in minute criticism and in translation about this time, and as a result, found himself less drawn to Cromwell, with whom his bond had been just this mutual interest.'<sup>48</sup> Pope may well have forgotten these youthful letters until, in 1726, an impecunious former mistress of Cromwell's, a Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas, sold the letters which

Cromwell had given her long before to Curll, who published them in his Miscellanea. Cromwell was obviously embarrassed, apologizing to Pope, with whom he had not corresponded in fifteen years, in a letter of July 1727: 'I am extremely concern'd, that my former Indiscretion in putting 'em into the hands of this Pretieuse, shou'd have given you so much disturbance' (II, 440). A month later Cromwell sent Pope another letter making 'protestations of...Innocence' of the 'grievous crime' represented by the sale and publication of the letters (II, 440).

Pope was probably embarrassed too by the publication, upset at the sudden disclosure of the youthful vanities in these early letters, by their literary discussions bordering on pedantry and by the indecorous wit which characterized much of his early correspondence and especially his letters to the rakish Cromwell. In a letter to Aaron Hill of September 1726 he tries to take a generous view of the publication: 'Nor am I ashamed of those Weaknesses of mine, which they have exposed in Print (the greatest of which was my thinking too candidly of them, to whom I wrote my Letters with so much unguarded Friendliness and Freedom' (II, 405). Yet while the unexpected public exposure of these early letters must have caused Pope pain, he was probably gratified by the popularity of this publication. As Pope's Victorian editor Elwin observed, the 'letters to Cromwell had more than an ephemeral success;' in 1729 Curll gleefully noted that they were still selling well.<sup>49</sup> It is likely that the favourable reception with which the unauthorized publication was met

led Pope to thoughts of publishing more of his letters. As Sherburn observes, the Homer manuscripts, consisting of the backs of letters and envelopes which Pope had used as paper on which to translate the Iliad, 'are perfect evidence that in the days of 1713-19 Pope was not "saving" letters.'<sup>50</sup> This idea arose later, and it seems probable, as Elwin wryly surmised, that 'Mrs. Thomas did [Pope] an incalculable injury, not by revealing his secrets, but by flattering his vanity. The favourable reception of his correspondence originated the desire to give some further specimens to the world.'<sup>51</sup>

In any case Curll's publication gave Pope a convenient explanation for his requesting that his friends return any of his letters that they might have preserved. As the friendship between Caryll and Pope had cooled somewhat, Pope found it more difficult to persuade his friend to return the letters which Caryll possibly wanted to retain as a testimonial of his former intimacy with the great poet. In a letter of 5 December 1726 Pope asked for the return of 'any verses or letters' of his Caryll might have, to help Pope 'put out of Curl's power any trifling remains' (II, 419) that might one day find their way into the hands of the bookseller. Pope promised in this letter to 'review them, and return whatever can do no hurt to either of us, or our memories, or to any other particular man's character; but so much, as would serve to bear testimony of my own love for good men, or theirs for me' (II, 419). Caryll was evidently not convinced and he must have claimed in a letter which has not been preserved that Pope's old letters

were carefully filed and safe with him for, in a later undated letter Pope replied: 'For the letters, I am obliged to the care you have taken, in the endorsement and order you mention: however, I beg once more to see them' (II, 423). Caryll had still not returned them by 5 October 1727 when Pope once more requested them: 'I have greatly before my eyes the fear of a rascally bookseller who has printed some, very unfit to see the light in many regards; and I would be glad at least to prevent the like usage for the future' (II, 449). The letters were returned shortly after, although Pope was unaware that Caryll had had transcripts made of them.

In the period 1726-1736 Pope also requested the return of his letters from the widow of Edward Blount, from Hugh Bethel, Lord Digby, Fortescue, Joseph Spence, Swift, and from Broome.<sup>52</sup> He had more success with some of these applications than with others. Swift's, as we shall see in the sixth chapter, were only returned after a protracted struggle and Broome simply refused. Some of his old correspondents had become Pope's enemies or estranged from him. Pope could not, for example, request the return of his letters from Aaron Hill, the author of eccentric epic poems and tragedies who was always suspicious of Pope's motives; their correspondence was not published until 1751. By 1727 Pope's former attachment, bordering on passionate admiration, for Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, to whom he had written some of his best letters in the years 1716-1718, had turned into a bitter mutual enmity for a variety of reasons. Lady Mary's fondness for satire probably

played a large part in their eventual estrangement. She was suspected, as Swift and Pope noted in their first satire on her, the 1727 poem 'The Capon's Tale,' of imputing her own questionable satires to Pope. She was also sardonically unsympathetic to what Pope may have considered one of his best letters - the letter of 15 September 1718 describing the fate of two rural lovers killed by lightning. Her cynical response to this sentimental letter was a far cry from the tearful pity Pope had imagined his account would inspire in her: 'I must applaud your good nature in supposing that your pastoral lovers, (vulgarly called Haymakers) would have lived in everlasting joy and harmony, if the lightning had not interrupted their scheme of happiness' (I, 523). It was not likely that the bitterness which had replaced his former love would allow Pope in the late 1720's to request the return of his letters to her, although he had, apparently, preserved some rough drafts of letters which he had sent her.<sup>53</sup> It is interesting to discover, in any case, that by 1724 a collection of Lady Mary's letters was in circulation among her friends, a collection which, it transpires, was not composed of actual letters at all but which were 'in fact extracts from Lady Mary's diary, revised and cast into epistolary form.'<sup>54</sup> Barring estrangement from former friends or their simple reluctance to return his letters, Dearing observes that 'Executors must have been a prime source of letters.'<sup>55</sup> Walsh had died in 1708, Wycherley and Trumbull in 1716, Parnell in 1718, Addison in 1719, Craggs in 1721, Digby and Blount in 1726, Cromwell in 1728,

Steele and Congreve in 1729, Gay in 1732 and Arbuthnot in 1735.

By whatever means he retrieved them, by 1729 Pope had a sufficient number of returned letters to engage in that uniquely Augustan habit, a habit which, as we have seen, was also indulged in by Swift and Richardson, of intercalating his own letters with the letters of his correspondents into a kind of book. In a letter to Caryll of that year Pope observed: 'Some of my own letters have been returned to me, which I have put into order with theirs; and it makes all together an un-important, indeed, but yet an innocent, history of myself' (III, 38). The element of self-examination is an integral feature of the interest his recalled letters held for Pope: 'I thank God (above all) for finding so few parts of life that I need be ashamed of, no correspondences or intimacies with any but good, deserving people, and no opinions that I need to blush for, or actions (as I hope) that need to make my friends blush for me' (III, 38). Besides amusing himself in re-reading his correspondence, Pope was, at this time, preparing some of the letters for deposit in Lord Oxford's famous Harleian Library, a request he formally made to Oxford in a letter of 15 September 1729 and which he says he 'had at heart, for half a year & more; That you would suffer some Original papers & Letters, both of my own and some of my Friends, to lye in your Library at London' (III, 54). In a letter to Oxford of 16 October 1729 Pope acknowledges that he has already deposited Wycherley's letters in the library and that he intends to

have copies made of other sections of his letters before depositing the transcripts there as well. Oxford's amenability to this scheme is implied by the fact that he employed a number of amanuenses to assist Pope in the task of transcription and apparently painstakingly proof-read and corrected many of the transcripts himself.<sup>56</sup>

It was not a matter of mere chance that Pope had requested permission to deposit his correspondence with Wycherley in Oxford's library in 1729. 1728 had witnessed a further heightening of Pope's interest in the publication of his correspondence when Lewis Theobald, who had already provoked Pope's resentment by his scholarly disparagement of Pope's editorship of Shakespeare, further incurred the poet's wrath by publishing some of Wycherley's 'remains' in Posthumous Works of William Wycherley. Pope genuinely believed he had reason for complaint at Theobald's appropriation of the position of Wycherley's literary executor. Twenty years earlier Pope had been asked by Wycherley to revise and polish some of his pieces with a view to possible publication. What ensued, documented in detail in the correspondence, was a tragi-comedy verging on farce. As Peter Quennell observes, although as a dramatist 'Wycherley had long been mute...the vanity of a once-triumphant writer somehow never quite expires.'<sup>57</sup> Wycherley had hoped to make something of a literary come-back with his collection of Miscellany Poems suitably edited and refined by the promising young poet; unfortunately, Wycherley's failing talents and memory meant that the poems he submitted to Pope for revisal were full of

unconscious plagiarisms and clumsy verse. Pope did his job too well, his enthusiastic if rather drastic editing of Wycherley's poems resulting in an estrangement between him and the mortified dramatist. In the event, Wycherley deferred to Pope's judgment and decided not to publish after all. Theobald had come to procure these poems in manuscript through Wycherley's widow.

Knowing that Wycherley had not intended these poems to be published, that they could not enhance his friend's reputation, and, moreover, that some of the poems contained emendations or insertions supplied by Pope himself, Pope felt indignation at Theobald over and above the wounds inflicted to his vanity by Theobald's cool dismissal of his editorial abilities in Shakespeare Restored: or, a Specimen of the Many Errors...Committed...by Mr. Pope, published in 1726. As Pope possessed relevant letters written to him by Wycherley as well as drafts of the poems he felt that their publication would make it clear that Wycherley had left the poems in an unfinished form and that he had not intended them for publication, while accomplishing the incidental aim of discrediting Theobald's publication. These, anyway, are the implications of Pope's preface 'To the Reader' of the second volume of The Posthumous Works of William Wycherley, Esq;, published in 1729 by Pope. The authorship of the preface is unacknowledged, perhaps to circumvent any objections Lord Oxford might have raised to its assertion that the selection of Wycherley's and Pope's correspondence which the volume contains was contributed to the publishers by Oxford himself. The



preface begins with these remarks:

Having heard that there were, in the HARLEY Library, some Papers of the late Mr. Wycherley, beside what are published in the First Part of his Posthumous Works; and particularly several Letters, which we doubted not would be highly acceptable to the Curious: We made it our Business to apply to the Possessor of them, the Right Honourable the Earl of OXFORD. His Lordship has been pleas'd in the most Generous Manner, to comply with our Request, and to sacrifice a Private Curiosity to the Gratification of the Publick.<sup>58</sup>

By first depositing the relevant letters in Oxford's library, Pope was able in this preface to imply tacitly that they had been published with Oxford's consent. The implication is made explicit in a letter to Swift of November 1729 in which Pope accuses Oxford of giving the letters to the booksellers (III, 80), although in his letter of October 1729 to Oxford himself he explained the matter rather differently: 'I have made the Publishers say, that Your Lordship permitted them a Copy of some of the papers from the Library, where the Originals remain as Testimonies of the Truth' (III, 59). That Oxford who, in fact, had really nothing to do with the publication was not offended by the insinuation can be inferred from his continued eagerness for Pope to deposit his letters in the Harleian Library; their continuing amicable relations can be seen in a letter of 1731 in which Pope mentions that he will be sending Oxford the transcripts of his correspondence with Atterbury and recommends the manuscript to Oxford for late-night reading should he be weary of 'Herne & the author of Virgilius the Magicians Life' (III, 187).

The anonymous preface admittedly praises Pope at the expense of Theobald and even of Wycherley himself by

attributing the inferior nature of the poems to 'The known Inability of Mr. Wycherley in Versification, added to the Decay of his Memory; the Impossibility which his Friend at last found of rendring them perfect Pieces of Poetry, even tho' he should have entirely new-written them.'<sup>59</sup> This came to be the general contemporary view of Wycherley's and Pope's relationship - the young poet vainly trying to bolster the sagging talents of his ageing friend, as Joseph Spence once remarked to Pope: 'People have pitied you extremely on reading your letters to Wycherley; surely 'twas a very difficult thing for you to keep well with him?'<sup>60</sup>

In the event, the volume was suppressed anyway, Dearing surmises, on the one hand, that the bookseller Lintot may have objected to the edition as an infringement of his copyright on two poems which Pope reprinted in it.<sup>61</sup> Ault, on the other hand, follows Courthope's supposition in believing that Pope, unable to find a sufficient number of purchasers for his edition, bought it from the publisher,<sup>62</sup> while Curll surmised that Pope had bought up all the copies of the volume to use the sheets in the first edition of his correspondence, published in 1735.<sup>63</sup> That Pope had actually, as early as 1729, gone so far as to plot a strategy for the publication of these letters six years later seems unlikely, but Curll was correct in pointing out that Pope, finding himself with the printed remainder sheets from the aborted second volume of Wycherley's Posthumous Works did use the sheets again in 1735.<sup>64</sup>

By 1730, then, Pope had seen nearly thirty of his letters to Cromwell published to popular acclaim and interest despite the youthful indiscretions they revealed. Eight of his letters to Wycherley had been published with nineteen of Wycherley's to Pope in the Posthumous Works, although the edition was quickly suppressed, leaving Pope with some six hundred sheets of his published correspondence with Wycherley. It is interesting that Pope's denial of complicity in this publication of the Wycherley correspondence did not fool Swift who, possibly alerted by Pope's increasingly urgent requests that he return his letters, observed in a letter of 1730 that 'I find you have been a writer of Letters almost from your infancy, and by your own confession had Schemes even then of Epistolary fame' (III, 92). That the publication of private letters or papers was a familiar preoccupation of Pope's in these years seems apparent from his proposal to Lady Burlington in 1732 that she publish a volume of the letters of her father and grandfather, the first and second Marquesses of Halifax (III, 314). Pope had been asked by Lady Burlington to look over their papers preparatory to the possible publication of some of their Political & Moral Maxims' (III, 314). Six years earlier, discussing the personal papers of Peter the Great which had been sent to Aaron Hill to be used in the preparation of a biography, Pope had commented on the peculiar interest of the genuine documents of great men: 'there is a Pleasure in seeing the Nature and Temper of Men in the plainest Undress; but few Men are of Consequence enough to deserve,

or reward, that Curiosity' (II, 405). Hill himself had, several years earlier, published a letter to Pope in the 1720 edition of his Creation while another letter to Pope written by the Duke of Buckingham was inserted by Pope in his capacity as editor at the end of his publication of the Duke's Works in 1723.

By 1730, it seems safe to assume, the question was no longer whether Pope would publish his letters, but in what manner he could best do so and yet avoid the imputations of vanity and egotism which follow from the unusual case of an individual publishing his own letters in the early eighteenth century. Pope had found that the letters he had recalled, intercalated with the letters he had preserved, had served to form a fascinating biography of himself and his friends. He had also found a further purpose which the publication of his letters might serve. In July 1729 Dennis published, in Remarks Upon Several Passages in the Preliminaries to the Dunciad, a letter Pope had sent him on 3 May 1721, requesting two sets of Dennis's Original Letters and thanking Dennis for the 'Omissions you have been pleas'd to make in those Letters in my Favour' (II, 76). Dennis's letter of 29 April 1721, in which Dennis admits to removing from the letters the 'Footsteps' (II, 75) of their previous quarrels was then printed by Pope in the second edition of the Dunciad Variorum in November 1729. In 1729, then, Dennis and Pope both printed actual letters from each other, sent eight years earlier, to make a point about their current quarrel. Dennis had printed Pope's to reveal what he perceived as Pope's

hypocrisy in, first, seeming to agree to a cessation of hostilities between them and then, in the Dunciad, attacking the critic again, while Pope printed Dennis's letter as a slur on Dennis's critical integrity - Dennis's letter of 29 April 1721 implied that, on Dennis's receiving the subscription money, he had removed from Original Letters all passages offensive to Pope. In a letter to Oxford of 15 September 1729 Pope had asserted that the main reason he wanted to deposit his correspondence in the Harleian Library was in the hope that it could thus serve as a true history of himself and his friends: 'As the rest of the Work I told you of, (that of Collecting the papers & Letters of many other Correspondents) advances now to some bulk; I think more & more of it; as finding what a number of Facts they will settle the truth of, both relating to History, & Criticisms, & parts of private Life & Character of the eminent men of my time' (III, 54). From a preception of the recalled letters and an enjoyment of them, intercalated with those of his correspondents, as a history of himself and his friends, it was, perhaps, a natural transition to the idea that, published, they could serve as a public story or record, explaining and justifying Pope and his circle.

This section will make a general survey and comparison of the letters Pope published and those published posthumously. Of the roughly 2200 letters, some 1500 by Pope, which survive in Sherburn's edition of his Correspondence, less than 300

were published in Pope's lifetime. Exact calculation of the number of letters Pope wrote, that he actually sent, and to what recipients, is hampered, if not actually rendered an impossible task, by the fact that, in publishing the first selection of his correspondence in 1735, Pope faked some letters, conflated or spliced others, and misdirected many, including most of the letters originally sent to Caryll. That, in the 1735 edition of his letters, Pope printed as actual letters sent to Steele two of the papers he had contributed to the Spectator and one to the Guardian should give an idea of the complexity of the problem of distinguishing between Pope's actual letters, those subjected to literary revision, and those fabricated expressly for publication. The discrepancies between actual letters preserved and the changes Pope made in them for publication will be discussed in the next chapter. To simplify matters here we will loosely observe the distinctions drawn in the third chapter, looking at the 'letters of wit' written and published by Pope, the letters of conversation, news and sentiment, to chronicle his evolving epistolary tastes and to see how these are reflected in the actual and the published letters, although this survey will be rather chronological than confined to those categories.

It is important first to establish the various editions of Pope's letters which we will be discussing in this section and in the next chapter. These include the 1726 publication of Pope's letters to Cromwell in Miscellanea (confusingly post-dated 1727 by Curll), the 1729 publication of the Wycherley letters in the second volume of Wycherley's Posthumous Works,

and Pope's one acknowledged 1735 edition of his letters.<sup>65</sup> The history of Pope's involvement in the number of publications of his correspondence which appeared in 1735 is a complicated one. Pope admitted to his friend Fortescue that he had been responsible, albeit surreptitiously, for the edition and publication of at least one of these editions, Letters of Mr. Pope and Several Eminent Persons, published by T. Cooper, as a move to prevent Curll from seizing the copyright on his letters with his first volume of Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence.<sup>66</sup> And Vinton Dearing points out that Pope was responsible for at least one other 1735 publication, and that when this 'edition appeared, it was in fact titled volumes V and VI of his Works, and bore the imprint of J. Roberts.'<sup>67</sup> In this section we will mainly, however, be looking at the 1737 folio edition as it represents an edition which Pope openly authorized and pronounced genuine.

Pope's earliest letters are pre-eminently of the category of the 'letter of wit'. He addressed his first 'important' letters, that is, letters which have been preserved and subsequently published, by himself or posthumously, to Wycherley, Walsh and Cromwell. It was inevitable as well as appropriate that he should have written his letters to them in the continental tradition of préciosité and Pope's indebtedness to that style in his early letters is generally acknowledged.<sup>68</sup> As we saw in the introduction, the parallel between Pope's early correspondence and the letters of Voiture had been drawn as early as 1735 by Curll who included in the third volume of his Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence 'four

letters entitled Mr. Pope's to Miss Blount' which Curll had plagiarized from a translation of Voiture's letters to Madame Rambouillet and then, in the fourth volume, with characteristic audacity, accused Pope of plagiarizing Voiture in his 'Letters to Ladies'.<sup>69</sup> It is apparent that in his youth Pope greatly admired what he described as Voiture's ability to 'write agreeably upon Triffles' (I, 130-1), or, as he phrased it in the Epistle to Miss Blount, written in 1710, 'His easie Art may happy Nature seem/ Trifles themselves are Elegant in him' (ll. 3-4).

Although all eleven of Pope's letters to Wycherley survive only in Pope's published versions rather than in original manuscripts, Sherburn believes that the twenty-three 'letters from Wycherley can in general be trusted' (I, 1). He also argues that the authenticity of Pope's letters to Wycherley has been impugned in the past 'but without too much evidence' (I, 1). Whether or not the letters are genuine, Pope manages to capture in them Wycherley's tone and style: the elaborate flattery and hyperbole of Voiture coupled with the indecorous wit of the Restoration. He admirably echoed the ingenious aphorisms of a Restoration wit, for example, in an early letter to Wycherley: 'In a word, if a Man be a Coxcomb, Solitude is his best School; and if he be a Fool, it is his best Sanctuary' (I, 11). In another letter, written shortly before, Pope compares himself, as a young, untried poet, to a 'tender Flower' (I, 5) and Wycherley's praise to the rain which, in moderation, will nourish the flower's growth but, in excess, may overcharge and depress it. The



flower then becomes a young tree, with Wycherley likened to a wise old gardener who, in praising Pope's first poems, is taking the pleasure a 'Man naturally takes in observing the first Shoots and Buddings of a Tree which he has rais'd himself' (I, 5). Ault interestingly points out that this analogy of Pope's early poems to the 'first Shoots and Buddings of a Tree' which, as the earliest 'Fruits' of the year are 'the most insipid' (I, 5) is strikingly similar to an image in one of Pope's Spectator papers of 1712 which compares the poetry of Valerio to the 'tasteless and insipid' first fruits of the season.<sup>70</sup>

In their earliest letters to each other in particular Wycherley and Pope engage in a comic mock-battle of compliments, with Pope protesting at what he claims must be the eminent dramatist's unfounded admiration for him while Wycherley retains the pose he had adopted in Letters Upon Several Occasions, as a writer who is rather humbled than pleased by his correspondent's praise. Thus Pope, on the one hand, observes in a letter of 25 March 1705 that 'I must blame you for treating me with so much Compliment, which is at best but the Smoak of Friendship.'<sup>71</sup> Wycherley, on the other, claims in a letter of 25 January 1705:

if it were possible for a harden'd Scribbler to be vainer than he is, what you write of me would make me more conceited, than what I scribble my self; yet I must confess I ought to be more humbled by your Praise than exalted; which commends my little Sense with so much more of yours, that I am disparag'd and dishearten'd by your commendations (I, 3).

Wycherley seems to be here, probably unconsciously, repeating in similar terms the formula of praise he adopted in a letter

to Dennis printed in Letters Upon Several Occasions: 'your praise rather humbles than makes me (thô a damn'd Poet) more vain.'<sup>72</sup>

The 1737 edition included fourteen 'Letters to and from Mr. Wycherley, from the Year 1704 to 1710:' nine from Pope to Wycherley and five from Wycherley to Pope, thus reducing Wycherley's contribution to the correspondence as printed in 1729 by fourteen letters (if we consider the two fragments as letters) and increasing Pope's by one letter. The table of contents to this edition included, besides a listing of the letters to each correspondent, a brief summary or description of each letter. Thus, to take a few examples from the first section of the table, devoted to the Wycherley correspondence, the topics of the letters as identified and described by Pope range from 'Letter I: OF Mr. Dryden's Death: his Moral Character: the Poets who succeeded him: the Temper of Critics,' to, in the sixth letter, 'From Mr. Wycherley. Of the Correction of his Poem to Mr. Dryden, and other papers,' to, in the last letter, 'The last Advice about the Papers, to turn them into Select Maxims and Reflections, which Mr. Wycherley agreed to and begun before his death.' The Wycherley correspondence, then, as published by Pope in 1737, is presented rather as a story than as an exchange of informal letters between friends. The fourteen published letters chronicle the tale of Pope's first meeting with the elderly dramatist and his respect and admiration for Wycherley as a friend of Dryden's, his subsequent gratitude for Wycherley's support and encouragement, the ill-fated venture of Pope's revision of Wycherley's unpublished poems, and,

in the last letter of 2 May 1710, Pope's amicable advice that Wycherley cast some of these inferior poems 'as Single Maxims and Reflections in Prose, after the manner of your favourite Rochefoucaut' (I, 86).

Pope remarked to Spence in 1743 that at

about fifteen, I got acquainted with Mr. Walsh. He encouraged me much, and used to tell me that there was one way left of excelling, for though we had had several great poets, we never had any one great poet that was correct <sup>73</sup> and he desired me to make that my study and aim.

This remark clarifies Pope's and Walsh's relationship as revealed in their letters, which seemed to be one of pupil and teacher. As Sherburn observes, 'Pope and Walsh, if we may judge from their correspondence, habitually discussed problems in literary technique.'<sup>74</sup> The Walsh letters, unfortunately, survive only in Pope's printings; in 1735 he published six letters and reduced that number to five in 1737: three from Walsh to Pope and two from Pope to Walsh. The headings of the 1737 letters impart once again a sense that the section of Walsh correspondence represents a story rather than a selection of informal letters: the first letter is entitled, for example, 'Mr. Walsh to Mr. Pope. Concerning Pastoral and Pastoral Comedy.' The second and third letters continue the discussion on the pastoral, the fourth letter is entitled 'From Mr. Walsh. Of mechanical Criticks; of Wit and Conceit; a request concerning one of his Pastorals,' while the fifth and last letter, from Pope to Walsh, concerns 'Some Critical Observations in English Versification.'

As we have only Pope's authority for the six letters which comprise the Walsh correspondence, it is impossible

to distinguish between the letters Pope and Walsh actually sent each other and the letters as printed. That is not, fortunately, the case with the Cromwell correspondence. In view of the circumstances of its first publication in 1726, it is not surprising that Pope's letters to Cromwell have been established as 'practically all surely authentic' (I, 1). Sherburn identifies Cromwell as, with Walsh and Wycherley, Pope's third 'coffee-house friend.'<sup>75</sup> A regular correspondence between them began in the summer of 1707 and continued until the end of 1711. Sherburn's edition reprints thirty-four letters from Pope to Cromwell and eight letters from Cromwell to Pope; as we have seen, Curll printed twenty-four of Pope's letters to Cromwell in the 1726 Miscellanea, a number augmented in the 1735 edition with nine letters from Cromwell to Pope (if we include Cromwell's two letters to Pope printed in the preface, apologizing for Mrs. Thomas's sale of the letters to Curll). This number is reduced in the 1737 edition to sixteen from Pope to Cromwell and three from Cromwell to Pope. As James Winn justly points out, Pope could not have been terribly distraught by Curll's unauthorized publication of his letters to Cromwell; he reprinted nineteen of the Miscellanea letters, albeit in edited form, in 1735 and even Pope's 'official' editions, the quarto and folio of 1737, 'include sixteen of the letters to Cromwell first issued in 1726.'<sup>76</sup>

Pope presented the Cromwell correspondence in the 1737 edition as a fairly serious exchange of letters discussing such literary issues as, in letter 31, an analysis of 'Priam's Speech to Pyrrhus in the Second Aeneid,' or, in

letter 34, 'On a Passage in Lucan,' and, in letter 36, 'Observations on Crashaw's Poems.' The unedited correspondence between Cromwell, who Quennell describes as, in 1707, 'some fifty-five years old, a tough, good-humoured literary roué',<sup>77</sup> and the nineteen-year old, yet rusticated poet, is somewhat more lively. The literary discussions of the published selections of the correspondence dominated in their actual letters, with Pope relying on Cromwell's experience as a critic for his opinions of Pope's early translation from Statius and his imitations of Waller, but there is a great deal of social chat about mutual friends as well and sly sexual innuendoes and puns. The pedantry of these early letters to Cromwell is oddly blended with 'jocose remarks about their mistresses such as were to convey the impression that Pope was genuinely a man about town.'<sup>78</sup> Pope's bold talk of 'Drury-Lane Damsells,' 'Sapphos' and fair charmers sits a little incongruously upon the young poet; his talk on these matters is a mixture of rueful self-deprecation and audacity. A letter to Cromwell of 24 June 1710, for example, contains a passage, deleted in 1737, describing Pope's encounter 'in company with a Lady, who rally'd my Person so much, as to cause a total Subversion of my Countenance: some days after, to be reveng'd on her, I presented her amongst other Company the following Rondeau on that occasion, which I desire you to show Sappho.'<sup>79</sup> Pope then includes the scandalous rondeau he composed for the occasion, also deleted in the 1737 edition.

It would seem, as Sherburn suggests, that Pope, 'conscious

of his physical inferiority, put up a brave front at being a rake.'<sup>80</sup> As women were Cromwell's 'ruling passion,'<sup>81</sup> Pope pretended that they were his too and hence his letters are full of lubricious jokes on conquests and amatory triumphs. The letters to Cromwell, like those to Wycherley, are also full of much easy-going pleasantry and playful wit reminiscent of Voiture. Pope once interestingly remarked that 'I find I value no man so much, as he in whose sight I have been playing the fool' (I, 112). This letter to Cromwell also contains a remark similar to a phrase of a letter to Wycherley Dennis wrote and included in Letters Upon Several Occasions. In Dennis's words: 'I am as reasonable with my Friend, as a Russian spouse is with her Husband, and take his very Railery for a mark of Esteem, as she does a Beating for a proof of Affection.'<sup>82</sup> Pope renders this thought in these terms: 'As the fooling and toying with a mistress is a proof of fondness, not disrespect, so is railery with a friend' (I, 111). Pope later admitted to Spence that 'My letters to Cromwell were written with a design that does not generally appear. They were not written in sober sadness.'<sup>83</sup> A year after his letters to Cromwell had been published by Curll under the title Familiar Letters written to Henry Cromwell Esq; by Mr. Pope, Cromwell wrote to Pope on the subject, remarking that he 'cou'd not but laugh at the pompous title; since whatever you wrote to me was humour, and familiar Railery' (II, 439). The design to which Pope referred in his reminiscence to Spence, according to Sherburn, was that of testing his literary knowledge in the letters to Cromwell; he would seem to have

been 'practising his learning so as to see if it could pass muster.'<sup>84</sup>

The letters to Cromwell, Walsh and Wycherley can be seen as 'letters of wit' in the sense that they are artificial or self-conscious products of literary artistry designed to illustrate the writer's wit, his knowledge of the French epistolary models, and his ability to imitate them. The dependence on Voiture is especially apparent in Pope's and Wycherley's letters to each other while in the letters to Cromwell Pope seems to adopt what Winn describes as 'the diction and attitudes of the Restoration rake.'<sup>85</sup>

Pope also engaged in writing 'letters to ladies,' a type of letter which, as we have seen, was a sub-genre to the 'letter of wit'. The 'courtly' style Voiture adopted in writing letters to women and which, Winn argues, was 'altered and somewhat degraded by such writers as Rochester' was composed of several elements: 'fulsome compliments, protestations of devotion, and sexual double-entendres.'<sup>86</sup> Pope published a section of sixteen letters entitled 'Letters to Ladies' in the 1735 edition; in the 1737 edition he wisely reduced these 'letters to ladies' to eleven letters.<sup>87</sup> These youthful letters may have had Walsh's 'letters to ladies,' and, ultimately, those by Voiture as their model, but, in their curious blend of bawdiness and humorous but rueful self-mockery, they are uniquely Pope's. The sense of frustrated desire is particularly apparent in his letters to the Blount sisters and those to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Pope begins a letter to Teresa Blount of 1716, for example,

with this observation: 'Madam,--I have so much Esteem for you, and so much of the other thing, that were I a handsome fellow I should do you a vast deal of good: but as it is, all I am good for is to write a civil letter, or to make a fine Speech' (I, 349-50). The potential nastiness or prurience underlying this type of letter emerges in letters of February 1714 Pope sent to the Blount sisters and to a Miss Marriot, describing a visit Pope had made in the company of a priest and a doctor to see a hermaphrodite who is depicted by Pope as a 'monster,' 'the most reigning Curiosity in the town' (I, 277). Pope included this letter in his 1735 edition under the heading 'To a Lady from Her Brother,' thus implying that the letter had been sent to Martha and Teresa by their brother, Michael Blount, but he omitted it from the 1737 edition.<sup>88</sup>

The date of Pope's first acquaintance with the Blount sisters is not known but his friendship with them is first mentioned in Sherburn's Correspondence in a letter Pope sent to Cromwell in 1711, describing his situation in composing the letter in these terms: 'I am at this instant plac'd betwixt Two such Ladies that in good faith 'tis all I'm able to do, to keep my self in my Skin. He! Monsieur Cromvell! Entendez-vous bien?' (I, 137) The curious blend of prurience and bawdiness is present in even this earliest mention of the Blount sisters:

Let me but have the Reputation of these in my keeping, & as for my own, let the Devil, or let Dennis, take it for ever! How gladly wou'd I give all I am worth, that is to say, my Pastorals for one of their Maidenheads, & my Essay for the other? (I, 137)



Curll printed this letter entire in 1726 and in 1735 while Pope, in his editions of 1735 and 1737, excised most of the salacious or suggestive passages.<sup>89</sup> In Guardian papers 91 and 92 on 'The Club of Little Men,' Pope had transformed his physical shortcomings or debilities into assets in this two-fold essay on a 'Sett of us' who have 'formed a Society, who are sworn to Dare to be Short, and boldly bear out the Dignity of Littleness under the Noses of those Enormous Engrossers of Manhood, those Hyperbolical Monsters of the Species, the tall Fellows that overlook us.'<sup>90</sup> The tone of this essay is reminiscent of Voiture's letter to Monsieur de Gordeau, quoted in the last chapter, which asserts that smallness is a signal of divine favour, 'As we pour the most exquisite Essences into the smallest bottles.'<sup>91</sup> But the wry if tender recognition of himself as the 'little Poet' of the 'Club of Little Men:' 'A Spider is no ill Emblem of him,'<sup>92</sup> is twisted by a sense of bitterness and pain in the 'letters to ladies' into a description of himself as, he wrote in a letter to Caryll in 1711: 'that little Alexander the women laugh at' (I, 114).

Quennell theorizes that the early letters Pope sent the religious, unmarried Blount sisters, full of the fashionable indecencies of the French and Restoration epistolary models still popular in the early eighteenth century, were only permitted because 'none of the Blounts, excepting Martha, who was sensitive and soft-hearted, took his protestations very seriously; and that Pope exploited the privileges accorded him as a hopeless invalid and as a man of genius.'<sup>93</sup> Two

letters of 1715, both included by Pope in his 1737 edition, show him trying to break out of the straitjacket of the 'letter of wit'. In the first, a letter addressed to Martha alone, Pope observes 'I am not at all concern'd to think that this letter may be less entertaining than some I have sent: I know you are a friend that will think a kind letter as good as a diverting one...I wou'd cut off my own head, if it had nothing better than wit in it' (I, 280). The second letter, addressed to both sisters, begins with rather touching if philosophical reflections on Pope's keen awareness of mortality, then acknowledges that Pope knows he is not writing in the style currently approved of in 'letters to ladies': 'This is an odd way of writing to a lady, and I'm sensible would throw me under a great deal of ridicule, were you to show this letter among your acquaintance' (I, 319). The public mask of humorous or ironic detachment behind which the author of 'letters of wit' or 'letters to ladies' shelters is, in 1717, on the death of Pope's father, finally discarded in a series of moving letters Pope addressed to the sympathetic Blount sisters.<sup>94</sup> The first of these letters contains a reference to Pope's recognition that his feelings for the Blount sisters have transcended the emptiness of formal politeness; they, unlike most of his acquaintance, know the private as opposed to the poet's public self: 'You only have had, as my friends, the privilege of knowing my Unhappiness; and are therefore the only people whom my Company must necessarily make melancholy' (I, 455).

The letters Pope addressed to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,

whom he met about 1715 and for whom, for some two or three years after, he entertained an impossible if largely illusory passion, differ in style from the early letters to the Blount sisters. The ardent if playful letters to Lady Mary seem to acknowledge more openly that Pope's 'wit and fancy are disguises for genuine and serious feelings.'<sup>95</sup> The old preoccupation with his physical limitations is there, still accompanied by the recognition of the futility to which his passion is eventually condemned, as we see in a letter to Lady Mary of October 1716 in which Pope alludes in wistful terms to the legend of the 'celebrated Amours between the fair Princess and her Dwarf' (I, 365). Pope also imagines in this letter 'what I really wish from my Soul...of obtaining, thro' your means, my fair Circassian Slave' (I, 364), a concubine who must resemble Lady Mary herself.

In another letter to Lady Mary, however, the second of all those preserved, Pope has already begun to deny the essential artificiality of the pose of the author of the 'letter of wit' by first insisting that his letters are conversational and, second, by the prominence Pope accorded in this letter to discussion of his thoughts and emotions. In this letter of August 1716 Pope observes that 'The freedome I shall use in this manner of Thinking aloud (as somebody calls it) or Talking upon paper, may indeed prove me a fool, but it will prove me one of the best sort of fools, the honest ones' (I, 353). Pope's first allusion to the Augustan notion of the proper epistolary style as 'talking upon paper' was contained, rather ironically, in a letter of 1710 to Wycherley in which

Pope repeated some of his age's commonplaces on the art of letter writing in this observation: 'You see how freely and with how little care, I talk rather than write to you: this is one of the many advantages of friendship, that one can say to one's friends the things that stand in need of pardon, and at the same time be sure of it' (I, 84). In a letter to Caryll of 1713 Pope made further observations on the special value of a letter spontaneously written: 'I have often found by experience that nature and truth, tho' never so low or vulgar, is yet pleasing when openly and without artifice represented; insomuch that it would be diverting to me to read the very letters of an infant...just as it thought 'em' (I, 185). Pope then makes a claim which he will repeat often and to nearly all of his correspondents in the course of his subsequent letter-writing career: 'This makes me hope a letter from me will not be unwelcome to you, when I am conscious I write with more unreservedness than ever man wrote, or perhaps talked to another' (I, 185).

The natural corollary to the Augustan preference for a conversational style in letter writing was, as we have seen, a belief that a letter so written must be sincere or that a spontaneously-composed letter must unwittingly reveal the inmost depths of its author. This link between style and content in the letter of conversation was recognized early by Pope. A letter to Caryll of 1712 contained this interesting if typical remark: 'You see my letters are scribbled with all the carelessness and inattention imaginable: my style, like my soul, appears in its natural undress before my friend' (I, 155).

Pope then went on to dismiss, in effect, the 'letter of wit': ''Tis not here [in a letter] I regard the character of a wit. Some people are wits all over, to that degree that they are fools all over' (I, 155). Pope's consciousness of the interest inherent in personal letters as revelations of their author's character was heightened in that year by Caryll's return of his letters in which, as we have seen, Pope found 'such lengths of unreserved friendship, thoughts just warm from the brain without any polishing or dress' or, in that memorable phrase, 'the very deshabille of the understanding' (I, 160). By 1715 Pope believed that his informal epistolary style had become, for him habitual; in a letter to Congreve of that year he observed: 'Methinks when I write to you, I am making a confession, I have got...such a custom of throwing my self out upon paper without reserve' (I, 274). As this letter to Congreve is one of those which Pope may well have fabricated from letters actually sent to other correspondents, it is not surprising that this image of Pope's figuratively throwing himself upon paper in his letters had appeared as early as 1710 in a letter to Cromwell which began with a similar phrase: 'I resume my old liberty of throwing out my self upon paper to you, and making what thoughts float uppermost in my head, the subject of a letter' (I, 111). We must, in any case, generally take Pope's claims to carelessness as a letter writer with a pinch of salt; the elegance of most of Pope's letters, especially of the early ones, in both those which are actual and those revised for publication, belies, as it had in the case of Seneca, Voiture,

Rochester and Walsh, these assertions of epistolary negligence.

It is somewhat ironic, in view of his own early affected epistolary compositions, to find Pope in 1720 rebuking Lady Hervey for his own old habits, for what he perceived as affectation and artificiality in her letters to him: 'All the pleasure or use of familiar letters,' he lectured her in that year, 'is to give us the assurance of a friend's welfare; at least 'tis all I know, who am a mortal enemy and despiser of what they call fine letters' (II, 41). Voiture, Pope's old hero and epistolary model, is not spared in this letter in which poor Lady Hervey is so sharply criticized for her witty style: 'Now let me fairly tell you, I don't like your style: 'tis very pretty, therefore I don't like it; and if you writ as well as Voiture, I wou'd not give a farthing for such letters, unless I were to sell 'em to be printed' (II, 41). This letter was, in fact, printed by Pope in 1737 although its addressee is not identified.

Pope was to condemn Voiture once again ten years later when he remarked to Spence in 1730 that 'Voiture in his letters wants sentiments. He wrote only to divert parties over their tea.'<sup>96</sup> Balzac escaped censure somewhat more lightly some years later when Pope observed to Spence that 'I do not think so ill even of Balzac as you seem to do. There are certainly a great many good things in his letters, though he is too apt to run into affectation and bombast.'<sup>97</sup> In his contemptuous dismissal of the 'letter of wit' and his adoption of the 'letter of conversation' it is interesting

that Pope appropriated one of the images most associated with the conversational style and which reached its greatest prominence and significance in the 'letter of sentiment': the notion, adopted from Lucian's Hermotimus, of the familiar letter representing a kind of 'window in the bosom'. This image is first found in Pope's correspondence, if we except the essays on the subject he submitted to the Guardian in 1713, in a letter to 1716 to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu which begins in the approved convention of the letter writer protesting his spontaneity and sincerity: 'Madam,--I can say little to recommend the Letters I am beginning to write to you, but that they will be the most impartial Representations of a free heart, and the truest Copies you ever saw, tho' of a very mean Original' (I, 352-3). Pope then elaborates on his approval of Lucian's image:

If Momus his project had taken of having Windows in our breasts, I should be for carrying it further and making those windows Casements: that while a Man showd his Heart to all the world, he might do something more for his friends, e'en take it out, and trust it to their handling' (I, 353).

The image reappears in 1720 in a letter to his friend Charles Jervas, the painter: 'The old project of a Window in the bosom, to render the Soul of Man visible, is what every honest friend has manifold reason to wish for' (II, 23).

These two letters were printed by Pope in 1735 and 1737, although Pope did not identify Lady Mary as the recipient of the first letter. As we have seen, in view of their enmity, it was unlikely that Pope felt able to request his letters back from her and it is probable that the letters to her which he printed were abstracted from rough drafts of those

letters that he had preserved. Pope had mentioned his project of keeping copies of the letters he sent her on her travels through Europe and Turkey in a letter of 1718 in which he admits to fears that the letters he sends might miscarry: 'I have had thoughts of causing what I write for the future to be transcribed, & to send copies by more ways than one, that one at least might have a chance to reach You' (I, 405). Pope disingenuously adds that 'The letters themselves would be artless & natural enough to prove there could be no vanity in this practise' (I, 405).

The inaccessibility of his letters to Lady Mary, with only rough drafts of them to hand, may account for the fact that Pope only published three of them in his 1735 and 1737 editions, not identifying their recipient, while Sherburn prints seventeen letters to her. In the 1737 edition the three letters to Lady Mary or, as they are entitled there, 'To a Lady abroad,' are included in a section of letters headed 'To and from the Honourable J.C. Esq; From 1711 to 1715.' Caryll, one of Pope's oldest friends and most faithful correspondents, was one of the 'whole Catholic circle that revolved around the Englefields and Blounts;' <sup>98</sup> that is, one of the close community of Catholics who befriended Pope in his youth. He and Pope met in 1710 and began a correspondence which lasted, with only a slight break in 1716-7, until Caryll's death in 1736.

That Pope's correspondence with Caryll was one of the most extensive of his letter-writing career, with around 150 letters passing between them from 1710 to 1736, is not



proportionally represented in Pope's editions of his letters. Only four letters to the 'Hon. J.C. Esq;' and one from him were included in the 1735 edition while the 1737 edition added only an additional letter to the unidentified 'J.C.' Pope's treatment of the Caryll letters has long been a source of controversy for Pope scholars. As early as 1824 and as recently as 1977 it has been suggested that Pope attached this heading to the Caryll letters to suggest that the correspondence was actually addressed to James Craggs, a former secretary of state. In James Winn's opinion, this ambiguous heading to the letters 'led readers to infer that they were to Pope's more famous friend James Craggs, especially since the volume also includes several letters to Craggs.'<sup>99</sup> Caryll's right to be termed 'Honourable' was acceptable or recognizable only from a Jacobite perspective as Caryll's father had been made an 'Earl' by the old Pretender, who was served by Caryll's uncle in the capacity of secretary of state in his exile at St. Germain.<sup>100</sup> William Irving points out, however, that although, in fact, some of the editors of Pope's letters have been misled into believing these letters were actually to and from Craggs, Craggs himself held no right to the title 'Honourable': 'though ignorant readers might suppose he had from his high position in the government.'<sup>101</sup> The fact that the 1737 edition of the letters does contain a letter explicitly addressed to the 'Hon. James Craggs' would seem to undercut rather than to confirm the theory that letters labelled to and from the 'Hon. J.C. Esq;' in the same volume referred to the same

individual. Dearing, in his thesis on the publication of Pope's letters during his lifetime, conjectures that Pope's plan to keep his friend's name hidden 'may have been seconded by Caryll.'<sup>102</sup>

The second controversy surrounding the Caryll letters arose when C.W. Dilke chanced upon the transcripts of his letters from Pope which Caryll had secretly made before returning the originals to him. These transcripts made it apparent, as we saw in the introduction, that prior to publication Pope had 'remodelled some parts of his correspondence ...correcting, re-writing, conflating two or three letters into one, re-addressing letters to different persons, and so on.'<sup>103</sup> Sherburn's edition helpfully designates those of Pope's letters to Caryll which Pope transferred to other correspondents in his own editions or conflated: these include five letters to Addison, one to Atterbury, three to Edward Blount, two to Congreve, one to Robert Digby, one to Steele, one to Sir William Trumbull and one to Wycherley. It is interesting that, in his first request that Caryll return his letters, Pope offered as explanation his hope that these returned letters would serve as a source of re-usable ideas. While the inference Caryll probably drew from his friend's request was that Pope intended to use the letters in composing essays for the Guardian, he was at least alerted as early as 1712 that Pope planned to use the letters he had written him as literary material. As for the form the Caryll letters took in the 1735 and 1737 editions, most of these letters to the 'Hon. J.C. Esq;' deal with reactions to the publication of

the Essay on Criticism. The letter from Caryll to Pope discusses the progress of The Rape of the Lock, which Caryll had asked Pope to write and which was dedicated to him, while two letters from Pope to Caryll of 28 May and 5 December 1712 concern, respectively, 'an unfortunate Lady' and 'To the Hon. J.C. on returning his letters.'

It was appropriate that Pope should have included a letter on the plight of an 'unfortunate Lady' in this brief selection of the Caryll letters, as much of their actual correspondence was concerned with discussion of the various charities and philanthropies Caryll and Pope engaged in and on which they often collaborated. Caryll was 'much concerned with good work;' during 1711 he and Pope became 'jointly involved in the affairs of two "unfortunate ladies", both of whom were unhappily married and exposed to public spite and ridicule.'<sup>104</sup> The letter of 28 May 1712 referred to a Mrs. Weston, a mistreated wife of a Catholic neighbour, whose cause Pope warmly espoused and for whom Caryll acted as guardian. Caryll's position in the close-knit Catholic community in which Pope moved, especially in his younger years, and his kinship with the Blount sisters, meant that their actual letters were largely taken up with private news, gossip, business and messages from mutual friends. The letters to Caryll differ in this respect from the literary letters Pope sent Wycherley, Walsh and Cromwell: they are private as opposed to public or display letters. The fashionable claims to informality in letter writing are made in Pope's letters to Caryll, as they had been made in letters to Cromwell and

Wycherley but, one suspects, the assertion was earnest and sincere only in the letters to Caryll.

In the 1737 edition a section of 'Letters to and from Mr. Steele' and then a section of 'Letters to and from Mr. Addison' follows the Caryll letters. The 1735 edition includes seven letters to and from Steele, a number reduced in 1737 to five. Pope's actual correspondence with Steele does not seem to have been extensive or, at least, not much of it survives; as published by Sherburn, only two letters from Steele dated 26 July 1711 and 20 January 1712 and one from Pope dated 30 December 1711 appear to supplement the letters Pope published in 1735 and 1737. Pope's and Steele's 'business' relationship as contributor and editor for the Spectator and the Guardian began in July 1711 and ended in September 1713; too, Pope's increasing intimacy with such prominent Tories as Swift, Bolingbroke and the Earl of Oxford may account for the brevity and scarcity of his correspondence with the ardently Whiggish Steele.

As for the Addison correspondence, the 1735 and 1737 editions agree in printing five letters to Addison and two from him. Of these, with the exception of one, all the letters printed as from Pope to Addison are demonstrably fabricated letters composed of passages abstracted from letters written to Caryll around the period which the Addison letters are dated, while of the two letters from Addison, one is a suspected fabrication (the letter of 26 October 1713) while the text of the other relies solely upon Pope's authority. As for the one letter to Addison not fabricated from the

Caryll correspondence, Sherburn surmises that this sarcastic letter dated 10 October 1714, which effectively ends Pope's correspondence with Addison and their friendship simultaneously, was either preserved in draft form or composed solely for inclusion in Pope's published letters (I, 263n). On the evidence of the letters which Pope used for his Homer translations, however, Pope's correspondence with Addison seems to have continued after the date of this letter.<sup>105</sup>

The sections of Addison's and Steele's correspondence in the 1737 edition are followed by a section entitled 'Letters to and from Sir William Trumbull'. In the 1737 edition this includes two letters to Trumbull and four from him while the 1735 edition had printed two from Trumbull and two from Pope. To these letters of the Trumbull correspondence which Pope published Sherburn was only able to add two more (I, 17, 281). Sherburn notes that it is 'most regrettable that we have so few letters from [Pope's] correspondence with Sir William Trumbull and other men who were sincerely fond of the young Pope and dazzled by his abilities' (I, 1). What remains to us is at least one fabrication and a general sense of artificiality, a series of letters robbed of the feeling of warm companionship Pope evidently enjoyed in his youth with the elderly statesman. The letters substantiate Trumbull's admiration for Pope's early work rather than indicate the intimacy that must have existed between them. Pope had met Trumbull, former envoy and secretary of state, early in his youth when Trumbull was his neighbour and often accompanied Pope on the daily horse rides through Windsor Forest which

had been recommended for his health. It is interesting to find Trumbull as early as 1705 complaining of the epistolary affectations inherited from the French; in a letter of that year Trumbull admits to Pope that he wants to praise his poetry as much as it deserves but that the language of praise has become a devalued currency, that he 'dare not enlarge, for fear of engaging in a stile of Compliment, which has been so abused by fools and knaves, that it is become almost scandalous' (I, 10). In a letter of 6 March 1714 he anticipates general epistolary trends in his reason for preferring a spontaneous letter-writing style to a deliberate one: 'I think a hasty scribble shews more what flows from the heart, than a letter after Balzac's manner in studied phrases' (I, 212).

Pope's correspondence with Edward Blount follows the Trumbull letters in the 1737 edition. Sherburn believes that 'Practically all the correspondence with Edward Blount is suspiciously doctored' (I, 424n), although a letter to Swift of 1729 had seemed to imply that Pope's letters had been, shortly before, retrieved from Blount's widow.<sup>106</sup> The tone and matter of the letters to Blount is best indicated by a comment which Pope makes in the last letter to Blount he printed, dated 13 September 1725: 'Next to God, is a good Man: Next in dignity, and next in value' (II, 320). Blount, like Caryll, was a fellow Catholic and also a friend who Pope looked up to as a virtuous, exemplary individual. He is first mentioned in Pope's correspondence in a letter to Caryll of 1714 in which Pope identifies Caryll and Blount as

two friends active in soliciting subscriptions for the Iliad. Other letters deal with what must have been a fairly inescapable preoccupation for Caryll, Pope and Blount - the difficulty of being a Catholic in the early eighteenth century with what Sherburn describes as the terrific 'pressure upon Catholics to abjure their faith' (I, 336n). A letter of 20 March 1716 which Pope printed as addressed to Blount but which he had actually sent to Caryll discusses the heavy penalties and taxation to which the Catholics were subjected after the aborted Jacobite rebellion of 1715 but it counsels forgiveness, resignation and charity: 'Methinks, in our present condition, the more heroic thing we are left capable of doing, is to endeavour to lighten each other's load, and (oppressed as we are) to succour such as are yet more oppressed' (I, 335). The Bill to 'oblige Papists to Register their Names and Estates,' a bill which, with its threat of increased taxation on Catholic estates may have prompted the Pope family's removal from Binfield to Chiswick, is the subject of a letter from Blount to Pope first published in 1775 (I, 344).

Pope's admiration for Blount was based on qualities Blount shared with Caryll: their marital happiness, their role as kind patriarchs in happy, prosperous families, their charities to others, and their generosity and tolerance. A letter from Pope to Caryll of 1717 is similar to a passage in a letter he sent Blount in 1725 in Pope's description of Caryll and Blount in these terms. The letter to Caryll comments on Caryll's 'life of resignation and innocence,' of

his 'good works' and of a scene Pope imagines enacting at Caryll's estate that Christmas, a scene compounded of 'antique charities and obsolete devotions,' of 'prayers and roast beef' (I, 457). The letter to Blount written eight years later expresses Pope's hope that Blount is 'happy in the delights of a contented Family, smiling at Storms, laughing at Greatness, and merry over a Christmas-fire, exercising all the Functions of an old Patriarch in Charity and Hospitality' (II, 319).

In the editions of the letters which he published the section of Blount's correspondence seems to mark the turning point when Pope turned conclusively from the 'letter of wit' to the 'letter of sentiment and morality,' when he 'stoop'd to Truth, and moraliz'd his song.' In Pope's actual correspondence the break with the 'letter of wit' occurred rather sooner. The early letters to Caryll in particular, with Pope addressing him as a fellow Catholic, as Martha Blount's godfather, and as a man who shared his interest in practical Christianity, mark an abrupt transition from the rakish or purely literary letters to Cromwell. The tendency towards writing moralistic or at least 'virtuous' letters was actually present from the start of Pope's letter-writing career when, even in the letters to Cromwell or Wycherley, he would drop the pose of the worldly man-about-town to revert to what was probably a more natural pose - the dutiful son conveying his parents' good wishes to his friends. Sobering reflections on mortality and what is, perhaps, its concomitant - morality - were, too, never far from Pope's mind, whose



early acquaintance with serious illness led him 'in boyhood to notify his friends of his approaching demise.'<sup>107</sup> Pope was also undoubtedly influenced by Addison and Steele. It is interesting that Steele introduced Pope's poem 'on the last words of Adrian' in Spectator 532 in these terms: 'I will make no Apology for entertaining the Reader with the following Poem, which is written by a great Genius, a Friend of mine, in the Country; who is not ashamed to employ his Wit in the Praise of his Maker.'<sup>108</sup> The Tatler-Spectator philosophy was neatly summarized by Steele in this observation: 'wit, if a man had it, unless it be directed to some useful end, is but a wanton frivolous quality; all that one should value himself upon in this kind is, that he had some honourable intention in it.'<sup>109</sup> These remarks anticipate Pope's observation of 1738 that 'No writing is good that does not tend to better mankind some way or other.'<sup>110</sup>

Pope saw no incongruity in exchanging his early fondness for ingenious conceits, elaborate metaphors, rakish wit and double-entendres for a preference for philosophical reflection delivered in a conversational tone. Pope observed in 1736 that style must accord with the content of letters: ''Tis idle,' he remarked in that year to Spence, 'to say that letters should be written in an easy familiar style: that, like most other general rules, will not hold. The style in letters, as in all other things, should be adapted to the subject. Many of Voiture's letters on gay subjects are excellent, and so are Cicero's and several of Pliny's and Seneca's on serious ones.'<sup>111</sup> Pope's remarks had been inspired by an objection that a

letter of Atterbury's on the value of time was 'too stiff:' 'The Bishop of Rochester's letter is on a grave subject and therefore should be grave.'<sup>112</sup>

The 1737 folio's section of Blount letters is followed by nine letters to Robert Digby, six from him, and one from Pope 'To the Honourable Edward Digby, on the death of his Brother.' This compares with twelve letters to Digby printed by Pope in 1735 and reprinted by Sherburn along with seven from Digby to Pope. Of the letters as printed by Pope, several are fabrications from letters actually sent to Caryll. Of the letters published by Sherburn, the texts of nine from Pope to Digby and six from Digby to Pope rest only on Pope's authority, thus making it difficult to verify the authenticity of the bulk of this correspondence. It is Dearing's opinion, however, that at least ten of the twelve letters Pope printed as if sent to Digby are genuine, and of the six letters printed as from Digby Dearing concludes 'there is no evidence that they are not genuine.'<sup>113</sup> The letters as published by Pope and those published posthumously share a generally lighthearted tone and the same topics: discussion of Pope's health, description of his 'rambles', talk of mutual friends and of their shared interest in gardens. The letter to Digby of 28 December 1724 which Pope fabricated from two letters actually sent to Caryll is, interestingly, very similar in style and content to the letters Pope apparently did send Digby. This letter, which praises Digby for his observance of 'certain antiquated Charities, and obsolete Devotions...feeding the Hungry, and giving Alms to

the Poor,' while originally sent to Caryll, echoes the admiration Pope expresses in letters he actually sent Digby, praising him for his old-fashioned adherence to a virtuous life in rural retirement at his estate near Sherborne which Pope visited in 1722 and 1724 and which he described in a letter of 1725 in these terms: 'if there be on Earth an Image of Paradise, it is in such perfect Union and Society as you all possess' (II, 280, 315).

Pope and Digby were obviously both concerned to be perceived as 'good men,' as we see in a letter Digby sent Pope in 1723 in which he remarks 'I should lose the greatest pleasure of my life if I lost your good opinion. It rejoices me very much to be reckoned by you in the class of honest men' (II, 191). The emphasis on virtue, on living a good, moral life is reflected, albeit, one suspects, quite self-consciously, in the style of these letters with their note of the happiness which arises from a clear conscience. In a letter of 31 March 1718 Pope links the sincerity of his feelings for Digby with the easy familiarity which Pope feels he can use in writing letters to him: 'I dare trust you, Sir, not only with my Folly when I write, but with my Negligence when I do not; and expect equally your Pardon for either' (I, 473). This letter also contains a remark which reflects Pope's weariness with the 'letter of wit': 'If I knew how to entertain you thro' the rest of this Paper, it should be spotted and diversified with Conceits all over; you should be put out of Breath with Laughter at each Sentence, and pause at each Period, to look back over how much Wit you had pass'd'(I, 473).

While very few of Pope's letters, either actual or revised, are concerned with 'news' per se, or with the relating of factual information, a section of 'Letters to Several Persons' which follows the Digby letters in the 1737 edition comes as close to that type of letter as Pope ever got. A letter to Lord Burlington, for example, described as 'An Account of a Journey to Oxford, with Bernard Lintot, a Bookseller,' closely resembles in style the one letter of Voiture's, his account of an outing with friends of the Hotel de Rambouillet, which nearly approximated a letter of news. In both Pope's and Voiture's letters, however, clearly the relating of news is a secondary consideration; their letters are primarily exercises in wit meant to entertain rather than to inform. For Pope the news which could be found in a news pamphlet was not, as it had not been for Voiture and Rochester, a subject which he cared to concern himself with in his letters. For Voiture and Rochester, as we have seen, news was a topic to be treated ironically, to be delivered with mock-gravity or whimsically. Pope seemed to feel that the relation of news in his letters was a duty beneath the dignity of a poet; this at least is hinted in a letter to Martha and Teresa Blount of 1715 in which he responds to the sisters' plea for gossip in these terms: 'Ladies--It is a difficult Task you have impos'd upon me, that of writing News; and if you did not think me the humblest Creature in the World, you cou'd never imagine a Poet would dwindle to a Brother of Dyer & Dawkes' (I, 307). Pope's unwillingness to be identified with these two prominent news writers or

'Epistolary historians' may have arisen in part from disgust at Grub Street's appropriation of journalism in the early eighteenth century.

It is likely, however, that those very physical and social constraints which made the letter an invaluable tool for Pope in communicating with his friends also played a large part in determining the nature of his general correspondence, which differs strikingly from that of his contemporaries in its tendency to exclude the topical and in its somewhat contemptuous relegation of news of politics, courts and governments to the realm of the newspaper. Apart from a letter of 1740 Pope was prompted to address to Lord Marchmont, urging him to enlist in Bolingbroke's 'patriotic' Opposition to Walpole's government, his correspondence is characterized by a philosophic neutrality remarkable in an age of heated political and religious controversy. Although practical reasons underlay this policy of neutrality, its expediency was also simply a fortunate circumstance for Pope who, as we have seen, particularly relished the letters returned to him by his correspondents for their unselfconscious revelation of his own character. His interest in letters was probably always more inclined towards the psychological than the factual or the historical. Denied the opportunity to travel on the continent by his fragile health, for example, it is interesting to find Pope in 1716 requesting Lady Mary to send him news of herself rather than of the countries she was passing through en-route to Turkey: 'For Gods sake Madam, when you writeto me, talk of your self, there is nothing I so much

desire to hear of...The Shrines and Reliques you tell me of, no way engage my curiosity' (I, 368). In 1735 Pope asserted that the only value of a letter lay in its ability to express friendship; he explained his opinion of the proper content of a letter to Mrs. Knight in these terms:

Madam,--I must keep my old custom of giving my friends now and then, once or twice a year, my testimony in writing that I love and esteem them ...I have never any thing else to say, and it is all that friendship and good-will can, or ought to say: the rest is only matter of curiosity, which a newspaper can better satisfy' (III, 490).

In addition to the 'psychological' letter or the 'letter of friendship' Pope was fond of composing descriptive narratives reminiscent of Pliny's letters. The tale of the two rural lovers killed by lightning while sheltering from a storm in a haystack which, as we have seen, Pope sent Lady Mary and which provoked her derision at his naïve idealism was also sent by Pope in slightly altered form to Martha Blount; in collaboration with Gay, to Lord Bathurst; and to Caryll (I, 479-82; 482-3; 497-99). It is Dearing's opinion that the 'general coincidence of expression' among these letters suggests that Pope and Gay jointly composed a draft describing the incident and that 'free variations were sent by either or both to their friends.'<sup>114</sup> Pope also sent a very similar extended description of Stanton Harcourt, which he described as a 'true picture of a genuine Ancient Country Seat' (I, 505), to Lady Mary and to the Duke of Buckingham in 1718, suggesting that quite early Pope, while not necessarily looking at his actual letters as publishable material, did at least see some of them as literary

constructs - midway between essays and real, private letters. This, anyway, is implied by his willingness to send such a carefully-wrought prose piece as the description of Stanton Harcourt to at least two correspondents. The letter describing Pope's visit to a hermaphrodite, mentioned above, was also sent to at least two recipients in 1715: to the Blount sisters and to Betty Marriot.

Certain expressions, phrases, or figures of speech, too, reappear again and again throughout both the actual and the revised letters - a phenomenon which Sherburn attributes to 'Pope's astonishing memory for phrase' (I, 140n). From 1718 until his mother's death in 1733, for example, Pope habitually likened her uncertain health to the evanescence of a dying candle. To choose a few examples: Pope explained in a letter of 1718 to Caryll that his mother's health was 'so excessively precarious that my life with her is like watching the rising and falling of a taper on its last socket' (I, 463). A letter sent to Caryll three years later repeats this image: 'My mother's uncertain state of health (which is like the last light of a Taper near going out, whose very brightest flashes but show it in more danger of expiring) obliges me to watch her' (II, 73). In a letter to Hugh Bethel of 24 June 1727 he likens his mother's unexpected recovery of health to a 'light' which 'is all I have to warm or shine upon me; and when it is out, there is nothing else that will live for me, or consume itself in my service' (II, 436). In a letter to Broome of 1730 Pope observes 'I have been almost daily employed in attending the last sparks of a dying taper,--the last days of my good old mother' (III, 117).

There are a number of other examples of Pope's astonishing memory for phrasing used in earlier letters. To take just one instance, a letter to Teresa and Martha Blount of 13 September 1717 concludes with the observation that 'I know you wish my happiness so much, that I would not have you think I have any other reason to be melancholy: And, after all, He must be a beast that is so, with two such fine women for his friends' (I, 429). In 1718 Lady Mary is the object of similar praise and gratitude: 'he must be a Beast, that can be melancholy with such a fine Woman as you to his friend' (I, 471). If Pope was not averse to repeating his own phrases in letters to different recipients - a habit which must at times have been deliberate, at others, probably unintentional - neither was he loath to extract phrases from his correspondents' letters for inclusion in his own. In 1724 Pope apparently pilfered a number of sentences from a letter he had just received from the Earl of Oxford for inclusion in a letter he was writing to Lady Newsham' (II, 278n).

The 1737 section of 'Letters to Several Persons' was followed by a selection of Pope's correspondence with 'Dr. Atterbury, Bp. of Rochester, From 1716 to 1723.' This section contained twenty letters to and from Atterbury as well as a single letter to Pope from Lord Harcourt. These letters were of particular interest to Pope's contemporaries in view of Atterbury's incarceration in the Tower in 1722 on charges of Jacobite treason, his subsequent conviction and exile to France coupled with the suspicious circumstance of Pope's



Catholicism. Fourteen of these letters survive in transcript at Longleat; in comparing the transcripts with the letters as revised by Pope for their first publication in 1737 Sherburn concludes that the changes made were mostly stylistic ones: 'There are frequent omissions, the style is improved by correction, and in one or two cases the materials are rearranged so as to make them more orderly in presentation.'<sup>115</sup> The thirteen letters from Atterbury to Pope and seven from Pope to Atterbury published in 1737 compare with twenty-eight letters from Atterbury and ten letters from Pope in Sherburn's edition. It is not surprising that Pope should have wished to conceal the fact that he wrote letters to Atterbury after 1723 when correspondence with the exiled bishop was considered a felony (III, 76n). Pope deposited transcripts of his correspondence with Atterbury in 1731 and later pointed to Curll's threats to publish these letters in justifying his proposal to publish an authentic, 'authorized' edition of his letters. In an advertisement he placed in The London Gazette for 15 July 1735 Pope claimed that

Whereas several Booksellers have printed several surreptitious and incorrect Editions of Letters as mine...particularly my Correspondence with the late Bishop of Rochester; I think myself under a Necessity to <sup>116</sup>publish such of the said Letters as are genuine.

The 1737 folio next prints a section entitled 'Letters to and from Mr. Gay, From 1712 to 1732.' While, as we have seen, Pope encountered difficulties in recalling many of his letters, those he had written to Gay were conveniently returned to him on Gay's death in 1732 by the Duke of

Queensberry. In light of this easy accessibility of the actual letters, Dearing is tempted to assume that all the letters of the Gay correspondence which Pope published are, apart from a few conflations and mis-datings, genuine.<sup>117</sup> Yet the section of Gay correspondence in the 1737 folio, consisting of twenty-one letters from Pope to Gay, one from Gay to either Fortescue or Fenton, two from Gay to Pope, and a letter of Pope's 'On the death of Mr. Gay' to Swift, is not representative of their actual correspondence. As printed by Sherburn this consists of twenty letters from Pope to Gay and a number of letters written jointly by Pope and Gay: three letters to Caryll, one to Fortescue, one to Congreve, one to Swift, and two (with Jervas and Arbuthnot collaborating as well) to Parnell, with a number of letters written solely by Gay to these and other recipients. Pope's fondness for the jointly-written letter can be seen as early as 1714 when the Scriblerians collaborated on rhymed notes of invitation to, for example, the Earl of Oxford, humorously asking him to join them at their meeting in Arbuthnot's rooms in St. James's Palace. The Scriblerians' habit of sending letters jointly written reached its culmination in the famous 1726 'Cheddar' letter to Swift composed by Pope, Gay, Bolingbroke, Mrs. Howard, Pulteney, and possibly Arbuthnot (II, 403n). Lest the allusion to the letter as a 'Cheddar' one be lost on the reader the 1742 edition of Letters Written by Jonathan Swift and Several of His Friends thoughtfully provides this explanation:

A Cheddar letter, is a letter written by the contribution of several friends, each furnishing

a paragraph. The name is borrowed from that of a large and excellent cheese made at Cheddar in Gloucestershire, where all the dairies contribute to make the cheese.<sup>118</sup>

Pope also wrote a letter with Lady Mary in 1716 and, as we shall see in the sixth chapter, he and Bolingbroke collaborated on a number of letters to Swift. Pope's collaboration with his friends in writing letters may have seemed a natural extension of the Scriblerians' collaborations in more formal if equally lighthearted projects, in the joint authorship, for example, of the Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus or Three Hours After Marriage, the farcical play which Arbuthnot, Pope and Gay 'confederated to write in Gay's name.'<sup>119</sup>

It is in Pope's letters to Gay that we see the nearest approximation of the description of the proper epistolary style adopted from Seneca and beloved by Pope and his friends of letter writing as a form of 'talking upon paper'. One senses that in the letters the young Pope addressed to Wycherley, Walsh and Cromwell he sought to impress these much older, distinguished correspondents by a dazzling imitation of their own ornate epistolary style. The relatively informal 'discourse' we witness in Pope's later letters, and especially in those addressed to fellow Scriblerians, represents, by contrast, the conversation of equals. The playful teasing, gentle raillery, and underlying seriousness characteristic of the letters to Gay in particular presupposes an intimacy in the Horatian mode of epistolary writing: 'In writing a personal letter we may expose our secret desires, but because we are speaking to a friend we protect our seriousness by

joking about it.'<sup>120</sup> Although, as we have seen, Pope employed the description of 'that Freedom and familiarity of Style, which we have taken up in our Correspondence, & which is more properly Talking upon Paper, than Writing' (I, 105) in his letters to Cromwell and Wycherley, it is obvious that the bulk of his letters to these correspondents is, while playful, more contrived and deliberately clever than those to Gay.

A section of 'Letters to Hugh Bethel' follows the Gay correspondence and concludes the 1737 folio edition of Pope's letters. The Bethel correspondence begins with a letter described in these terms, 'Praise of Humanity and Good-nature. The Benefits of Equality in Friendship,' and sees a return to the emphasis on sentiment and morality which was prominent in the sections of Blount and Digby correspondence. Bethel, like Caryll, Blount and Digby, served as one of Pope's prototypes of the 'good man'. Like them he shared Pope's chivalrous enthusiasm for coming to the assistance of 'unfortunate ladies,' from 1730 to 1735 actively involving himself in sorting out Martha Blount's muddled financial affairs<sup>121</sup> and generally joining in Pope's 'good Wishes for her' (IV, 40), while in 1736 he apparently offered Mrs. Rackett, Pope's sister, financial assistance as well (IV, 21), and in 1742 advised Pope himself about his investments (IV, 434). The earliest of Pope's surviving letters to Bethel, dated 12 July 1723 and printed by Pope in 1737, gives little indication of the history of their acquaintance; perhaps it was through Bethel's subscription to the Odyssey translation which Pope promises to send him in this letter. Yet the

letter, in its glowing commendations of Bethel's virtue, implies that their friendship is of longer date: 'I know your humanity,' Pope observes, 'and allow me to say, I love and value you for it' (II, 178).

Pope requested Bethel to return his letters to him in 1728, citing Curll's unauthorized publication as explanation: 'I am reduced to beg of all my acquaintance to secure me from the like usage for the future, by returning me any letters of mine which they may have preserved; that I may not be hurt after my death by that which was the happiness of my life, their partiality and affection for me' (II, 501). In referring to his letters here Pope draws an interesting parallel between them and his heart, implying that his correspondence, in its sincerity, represents the very emotions of his heart. A letter of 1733, too, printed in the Bethel section but without acknowledging Bethel as its recipient, contains an interesting reflection on the responsibilities which Pope had come to realize were entailed in writing a sincere letter to a true friend; Pope's mother had recently died and this letter represents in a sense Pope's apology for not writing sooner to Bethel:

You might well think me negligent or forgetful of you, if true friendship and sincere esteem were to be measured by common forms and compliments. The truth is, I could not write then, without saying something of my own condition, and my loss of so old and so deserving a parent, which really wou'd have troubled you; or I must have kept a silence upon that head, which wou'd not have suited that freedom and sincere opening of the heart which is due to you from me (III, 380-1)

CHAPTER FIVE

POPE'S EDITIONS OF HIS LETTERS

This chapter will discuss four of the editions of Pope's letters published in his lifetime - three of them published, without his acknowledging it, by Pope. This will be a descriptive look at these editions rather than a bibliographical analysis. There are several reasons why this chapter will not be adopting such an approach. The primary one is that a bibliographical survey has already been done of these four editions by Vinton Dearing in his excellent 1949 Harvard doctoral dissertation which took as its subject 'A History of the Publication of Alexander Pope's Letters During His Lifetime.' Just as Dearing acknowledged his indebtedness to the 'Many different people' who 'have contributed to the history of the printing of Pope's correspondence,'<sup>1</sup> including C.W. Dilke and Pope's Victorian editors - Elwin and Courthope, in particular - so it is intended in this chapter to draw upon some of Dearing's conclusions while approaching the editions published in Pope's lifetime in a rather different way.

The second reason why a bibliographical study of the editions of Pope's letters is neither desirable nor possible at this point is presented by Sherburn's edition of Pope's Correspondence which forestalls the usefulness of such an exercise by listing the source of each letter he prints - whether manuscript or printed book or periodical - the edition

in which the letter first appeared, if any; the variations made by Pope in reprinting a letter in a successive edition; or whether Pope dropped the letter in question from a later edition. Sherburn also notes which letters were suspected fabrications as well the letters which they were apparently composed from.

It is possible now, because of the groundwork represented by Dearing's study and Sherburn's comprehensive edition of the letters, to look beyond the dense bibliographical detail to come to a more generalized picture of what Pope was trying to accomplish in his tireless revisal of the letters for each successive edition. This will be the subject of the second section of this chapter, which will look at each section of his correspondence printed by Pope in his various editions as a kind of 'story' whose particulars or significance sometimes changes as a result of Pope's successive revisions. In the first section, however, simply to illustrate Pope's usual editorial methods, we will briefly summarize the differences between Curll's 1726 publication of the Cromwell letters in Miscellanea and the letters as revised by Pope for inclusion in his 1735 'Cooper's' edition of Letters of Mr. Pope and Several Eminent Persons. There is no question as to whether the letters printed in Miscellanea are genuine as the originals are preserved in the Bodleian Library. Curll's unauthorized publication of the Cromwell letters thus offers us an invaluable opportunity to survey Pope's methods in revising letters before publishing them himself.

Before embarking on a brief summary of the differences between the 1726 and the 1735 publications of Pope's letters to Cromwell, it is interesting to examine the first volume of Curll's Miscellanea - a rare book but one which helps to explain the significance of the familiar letter in the early eighteenth century. This volume includes, after the section of 'Familiar Letters written to Henry Cromwell Esq; by Mr. Pope,' a section of 'Occasional Poems by Mr. Pope, Mr. Cromwell, Dean Swift, &c,' and a section of 'Letters from Mr. Dryden to a Lady, in the Year 1699.' The volume begins with a letter from the editor to Cromwell, apologizing for the publication, followed by a letter of 16 June 1726 from 'Corinna' - Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas - to the editor, in which she justifies her sale of Dryden's and Pope's letters by explaining, in terms redolent of patriotic sacrifice, that

BEING informed by a Person of great Worth and Quality that you designed to publish a Collection of Original Letters, &c. from the best Hands since the Restoration, I here therefore transmit some very good ones which I am possessed of, <sup>2</sup> that I may contribute my little Mite thereto.

Although Miscellanea only contains three letters from Dryden to Elizabeth Thomas who, in the last letter he termed 'Fair Corinna,' and one letter from his son to her, <sup>3</sup> 'Corinna' singles out Dryden's as the most important of the letters she has sold Curll, describing him as 'the Honour and Ornament of his Country' whose repentance of the immorality of his youth is especially apparent in his letters to her and, concluding, 'Sir, if you think the private Thoughts of this Great Man may be useful to the Publick, and worthy a Place in



your Collection, they are freely at your Service.'<sup>4</sup>

'Corinna's' letter to the editor is replaced in the 1735 edition by one from Elizabeth Thomas in which she claims that a desperate need of money has compelled her to allow Pope's letters, which Cromwell had long ago given her, to be printed; she justifies her action by observing that she 'thought them too good to be lost in Oblivion.'<sup>5</sup>

'Corinna's' letter in Miscellanea is followed by a preface which Curll 'borrowed' from the 1696 edition of Letters Upon Several Occasions. Dennis's remarks on the history and art of letter writing are attributed to an anonymous but 'eminent Critick, more than once mentioned in the following Pages,' with his preface ending on the same patriotic note, asserting that in this art the 'English would surpass both the Antients and Moderns, if they would but cultivate it.'<sup>6</sup> Curll does not specify whether he is describing Dryden or Pope when he adds that

it will be found by every impartial Reader, that the Author of these Letters, now submitted to the publick, does not think out of Nature and good Sense, and neither forces nor neglects his Expressions; and that he has always taken Care to suit his Style to his Subject, whether Familiar, or Sublime, or Didactic; and that he has more or less varied it in every Letter.

In comparing the Cromwell letters in Miscellanea and those contained in the 1735 'Cooper's' edition of Letters of Mr. Pope we see that both editions contained twenty-four letters from Pope to Cromwell although the 1735 edition supplemented the picture of their epistolary correspondence by also printing seven letters from Cromwell to Pope.<sup>8</sup> The twenty-four letters from Pope to Cromwell which the two

printed were not, however, all the same letters and, even when they were, the later edition changed the text of the letters by a number of omissions. To look first at the most obvious omissions, the 1735 edition deleted all salutations, all but one postscript, and most of the closing lines or paragraphs of the original letters which contained Pope's requests that Cromwell write him, his expressions of pleasure in or gratitude for their friendship, and his messages for mutual friends. Pope also moved all dates which often, originally, were given at the end of the letter, to the head or added dates missing in the 1726 edition and abbreviated the elaborate complimentary closes of the original letters to a conventional 'Yours, &c.' Thus, for example, a letter of 7 May 1709 which, in the 1726 edition, closed with the observation, 'Sir, I shall be very proud of a Line or two from you sometimes during this Summer, which will be always very welcome and very obliging, to Your most humble and most obedient Servant, A. Pope' (1726, 12) closed in 1735 with the reduced formula of 'Yours, &c' (1735, 75). Specifically personal references are also, by and large, omitted in the 1735 edition; a letter of 17 July 1709, for example, deleted a reference to Wycherley while all the place names in the first part of the letter of 12 November 1711 were also omitted.

Expressions of praise also, interestingly, were often either modified or excised altogether in 1735. Thus Pope's commendation of Cromwell's verses in the letter of 17 July 1709, printed in 1726 as 'The thoughts are very just and

noble' (1726, 15) was reduced to 'The thoughts are very just' in 1735 (1735, 79). Pope's description in a letter of 19 October 1709 of Plutarch as 'the greatest of moral Philosophers' (1726, 24) is completely excised in the 1735 edition while, perhaps not surprisingly, considering his later opinion of Ambrose Philips and their enmity, the letter of 28 October 1710 which had originally included glowing praise of that poet's pastorals, as reprinted in 1735, contains only a relatively brief, critical reference to Philips's work. Pope also omitted most of the suggestive or salacious remarks, sexual innuendoes and double-entendres which played such a major role in his original letters to Cromwell when he reprinted them in 1735. An exception is the bawdy rondeau in the manner of Voiture included in Pope's letter of 24 June 1710 which he retained in 1735 but deleted in the 1737 edition.

The changes apparently implemented in the 1735 edition for stylistic reasons are less easy to generalize about. There were the changes made for the sake of clarity and concision; for example, in the first letter printed by both editions, dated 18 March 1709, the observation as published in 1726, that 'Every Day with me is literally another Tomorrow; for it is exactly the same with yesterday' (1726, 2) is reduced in 1735 to 'Every day with me is literally another yesterday; for it is exactly the same' (1735, 64). There were changes made to avoid what Pope may have seen as clumsy or inelegant phrasing or even for accuracy's sake; a letter of 7 May 1709 originally praised Malherbe's

avoidance of the hiatus in these terms: 'there is but one throughout all his Poems' (1726, 12). This observation is altered in 1735 (perhaps because Pope had found several more!) to 'there is scarce any throughout his Poems' (1735, 74). These considerations all apparently also came into play in Pope's revisal of the poems originally contained in his letters to Cromwell. Two lines of verse in the letter of 12 October 1710 and those in the letter of 10 May 1710 were probably omitted from subsequent versions of the letters because of their deliberate, parodying mediocrity - they were intended as doggerel but Pope perhaps preferred not to let his readers see that he was actually capable of writing bad poetry. It seems that he excised a line from a poem in the letter of 19 August 1709 to avoid a triplet and that he made major changes in the Ode on Solitude contained in the letter of 17 July 1709 for purely stylistic reasons. The two versions of the five stanza poem differ substantially; the first stanza in the 1726 edition, for example, is 'Happy the Man, who free from Care,/ The Business and the Noise of Towns,/ Contented breathes his native Air,/ In his own Grounds' (1726, 16). This is refined in 1735 to 'Happy the Man, whose Wish and Care,/ A few paternal Acres bound,/ Content to breathe his native Air,/ In his own Ground' (1735, 80), reflecting Pope's habit of 'improving' his poetry with each successive edition of the letters which contain his verse.

As for the deletions, Pope omitted seven letters to Cromwell printed in Miscellanea from the 1735 edition. These

include a letter of April 1708, one dated 30 November 1709, one dated 15 December 1709, one dated 10 June 1711, one dated 25 June 1711, and two undated letters on Cromwell's visit to Binfield. The letter of April 1708 was full of rather bawdy references to Cromwell's fondness for ladies. The letters of 30 November and 15 December 1709 were quite personal accounts of the poet's sense of vulnerability and isolation in his life of rural seclusion with his parents, and the letter of 10 June 1711 is also fairly personal, with Pope expressing his concern for Cromwell's health and urging him to visit. The next three letters, the first dated 25 June 1711 and the next two undated, chronicle, in the first, Pope's impatient anticipation of Cromwell's visit and, in the next two, the unexpected effects of his visit upon rusticated Binfield society. All these letters are full of references to mutual friends and allusions to Pope's hopes and fears as a fledgling poet (the letter of 25 June 1711, for example, requests Cromwell's advice on how Pope should respond to Dennis's savage attack on his Essay on Criticism) as well as of the discussions of literary and amatory matters which made up the bulk of their correspondence.

As for the additions, Pope printed seven new letters from himself to Cromwell as well as the seven new letters from Cromwell in the 1735 edition. The new letters from himself were one of 27 April and one of 10 May 1708, one of 10 June 1709, one of 20 July 1710, one of 11 November 1710, one of 17 December and one of 30 December 1710. The letter of 27 April 1708, an essay on 'nothingness' in the style

of Rochester was, as noted in the last chapter, apparently composed expressly for inclusion in the 1735 edition.<sup>9</sup>

The letter of 10 May 1708 is likewise a disquisition rather than what one might think of as a personal letter; it ponders the ultimate futility or pointlessness of a desire for 'Fame and Glory'. The letter of 10 June 1709 consists of minute literary criticism, supported by extensive classical quotation, as Pope continued an analysis of Statius and of his 'Version' of him which had served as the subject of an actual letter printed by Curll dated 22 January 1709. The letter of 20 July 1710 is obviously an answer to the first letter from Cromwell to Pope, dated 15 July 1710, printed in the 1735 edition. Sherburn conjectures that Pope may have printed this letter from Cromwell to Pope, which immediately precedes Pope's of 20 July 1710, 'so that in this letter he also could comment on Dryden's couplet which Cromwell had quoted.'<sup>10</sup> Pope's letter, in any case, consists of a painstaking literary analysis of the couplet in question. The letter of 11 November 1710 is also a reply to a letter from Cromwell which immediately precedes it in the 1735 edition. Cromwell's letter, dated 5 November, 1710, which took as its subject Rowe's translation of Lucan, is responded to in Pope's letter, purportedly written six days after Cromwell's, with Pope engaging, too, in criticism of Rowe's translation and again heavily relying on extensive classical quotation to substantiate his opinions. The letter of 17 December 1710 is an answer to the letter from Cromwell which immediately precedes it; it contains Pope's famous defence

of his profession in his distinction between 'Versifiers and witty Men' and true poets or, as Pope observed here in reference to Crashaw, 'no Man can be a true Poet, who writes for Diversion only' (1735, 113-4). The letter of 30 December 1710 is simply an essay or disquisition on the nature of laughter, with few vestiges of the personal or informal letter perceptible in its reasoned analysis of this subject.

No originals survive of the seven 'new' letters to Cromwell Pope printed in the 1735 edition, whose authenticity rests, then, only on Pope's authority. Should we assume that he devised not only the letter on 'nothingness' but all these letters expressly for publication in 1735, it is interesting to observe that these 'new' letters consist of four essays whose topics range from the one on the nature of nothingness to another on laughter, another on the vanity of ambition, and another, a defence of poetry and 'true Poets' while the remaining three letters are devoted almost exclusively to minute literary criticism with Pope not only demonstrating his skill at that type of analysis but also his extensive knowledge of classical authors, whom he quotes in defence of his opinions. Judging by the letters Pope deleted in 1735, he preferred to delete the personal and the topical in favour of the abstract generalities of the essays he included in their stead.

This section will look at the 1729 publication of the Wycherley correspondence, the 1735 'Cooper's' edition of the

letters and the 1737 'authorized' folio edition of Pope's letters. As Pope engineered all these publications, this section will look at the editions as 'stories' of Pope and his friends which passed through successive revisions and which Pope intended to present both his contemporary readers and posterity. The various purposes which Pope, arguably, hoped to accomplish in thus publishing, in his correspondence, a public image of himself and his circle will be discussed in the seventh and eighth chapters. What is important to look at here is what elements compounded this 'public image' and in what ways it changed from 1729 to 1737.

To look first at the 1729 publication of the Wycherley correspondence, as we have seen, Pope printed twenty-six letters in his second volume of the Posthumous Works of William Wycherley: eight by himself and seventeen complete letters and two extracts from letters by Wycherley. Pope's anonymous preface 'To the Reader' set the tone by which the letters which followed were to be judged. There was a contemptuous dismissal of Theobald as one of the greedy adventurers who 'finger'd' Wycherley's inferior work after his death 'without any Warrant but their own Arrogance, or motive but their own Lucre.'<sup>11</sup> This accusation is reiterated by Pope in his 1735 and 1737 editions in the following footnote which concludes the Wycherley section of letters; after describing Wycherley's design to turn his inferior poems into maxims and the little progress he made in this design before his death, the footnote goes on to deplore the unfortunate circumstance that Wycherley's 'Papers...having



the misfortune to fall into the hands of a Mercenary, were published in 1728, in Octavo, under the Title of The Posthumous Works of William Wycherley, Esq;' (1735, 49n).

Pope's desire to discredit Theobald's motives in the publication of Wycherley's 'remains' coincided with a chance first, to make public the details of Wycherley's request that he 'improve' his poems while, second, surreptitiously gratifying his vanity; in presenting Wycherley as an inferior poet with his 'known Inability...in Versification,'<sup>12</sup> the preface subtly praised Pope's own abilities as a poet in remarking upon the disparity between the unrevised poems and the poems as revised by Pope. The preface and the letters also served a third function. They testified to the genuineness and duration of the friendship between Wycherley and Pope. The anonymous author of the preface (of course, Pope himself) remarks: 'It is no unpleasing Reflection to us, that...we can thus far consult the Fame of Two Eminent Writers, remarkable for so long a Friendship at so great an Inequality of Years, for it appears to have commenc'd when the one was above Seventy, the other not Seventeen.'<sup>13</sup> The didactic function of the material Pope published, never lurking far below the surface, emerges in the preface's observation that the Wycherley correspondence thus represents 'an Example' of a model friendship.<sup>14</sup>

To generalize, the letters to and from Wycherley Pope included in the 1729 edition of his letters tended to fulfill one or more of these three functions. At least eleven of its twenty-six letters discuss Wycherley's request that Pope revise some of his poems,<sup>15</sup> with the

letters then serving as a sort of chronicle of Pope's unsuccessful attempt to transform the mediocre poetry, full of numerous repetitions, into passable literature. That Pope intended the 1729 publication both to justify his role in the unfortunate project as well as to clarify its particulars seems obvious from the preface and from his inclusion of letters which discuss this subject. Pope felt compelled to make public several facts: that Wycherley had requested his assistance in the first instance, in a letter of 5 February 1705-6; that in subsequent letters Wycherley had pressed him to continue with the project, meanwhile heaping praises on him for the corrections made thence far (as in the letter of 22 November 1707 in which Wycherley thanks his 'infallible Pope' for attempting to 'save my Rhimes from being condemn'd to the Criticks Flames to all Eternity,' (1729, 28)); and that the project failed because the revision required was simply too extensive. This latter point is stressed in the preface, which comments on 'the Impossibility which his Friend at last found of rendering them perfect Pieces of Poetry, even tho' he should have entirely new-written them.'<sup>16</sup>

The 1729 publication of Wycherley's letters to him also allowed Pope to make public Wycherley's admiration and affection. At least thirteen of Wycherley's seventeen letters praise Pope, four of these letters praising Pope's witty letters which 'at once pleas'd and instructed' (1729, 22),<sup>17</sup> another praises Pope's 'vigorous Mind' (1729, 20-1),<sup>18</sup> while the two extracts of letters and four other letters

praised Pope's pastorals which first appeared in Tonson's Miscellany of 1709, accompanied, appropriately enough, by a poem by Wycherley entitled 'To Mr. Pope on his Pastorals.'<sup>19</sup> The style of Wycherley's praise in these letters is well expressed in the extract from two of his letters of 18 May and 28 July 1708 in which he informs Pope of his intention thus publicly to commemorate his admiration of the pastorals by writing a poem on them:

I HAVE made a damn'd Compliment in Verse, upon the printing your Pastorals, which you shall see when you see me.---If you suffer my old Dowdy of a Muse to wait upon your sprightly Lass of the Plains, into the Company of the Town, 'twill be but like an old City-bawd's attending a young Country-beauty to Town, to gain her Admirers, when past the Hopes of pleasing the World herself (1735, 38).

The 1729 publication of the Wycherley correspondence served the related function of standing as a public testament of their friendship. According to the letters as published, it was a slightly unequal friendship, with the elderly dramatist frequently praising the young poet and thanking him for his friendship and Pope in at least three of his eight letters to Wycherley explicitly asking him not to treat him with 'so much Compliment'.<sup>20</sup> In a letter of 30 April 1705 which begins with Pope's observation 'You must give me leave at once to wave all your Compliments, and to collect only this in general from 'em, that your Design is to encourage me' (1729, 9), Pope comments on the unselfish and genuine nature of their friendship which, he says, some might find unusual as it has been contracted between two individuals of very different ages. A footnote included by Pope emphasizes the disparity in ages (should his reader have missed the similar note in the preface)

observing that 'Mr. Wycherley was at this time over Seventy Years old, Mr. Pope under seventeen' (1729, 10). Most friendships, Pope declares in this letter, are self-seeking or self-serving, while theirs 'is the more likely to be true, and unmix'd with too much Self-regard' (1729, 10). A number of Wycherley's letters to Pope are openly and, one suspects, genuinely affectionate; a letter of 19 February 1706-7, for example, counsels Pope to cherish his 'crazy Habitation...I yet hope, your great, vigorous, and active Mind, will not be able to destroy your little, tender, and crazy Carcas' (1729, 21).

In his 1735 edition of the Wycherley correspondence Pope added two letters from himself to Wycherley, dated 26 December 1704 and 23 June 1705. These slight additions do not substantially alter the picture of the epistolary friendship that Pope presented in the 1729 edition. The letter of 26 December 1704 which, in the 1735 edition, now opens the section of the Wycherley correspondence, appears to serve as a formal introduction to Wycherley; it identifies him as a friend of Pope's mentor, Dryden, and places him within the circle of Pope's early friends, Congreve and Trumbull. It concludes with an observation strikingly similar to an image found in the Essay on Criticism: 'True Wit is Nature to Advantage drest, / What oft was Thought, but ne'er so well Exprest' (ll. 296-7) is translated into prose here in Pope's remark: 'True Wit I believe, may be defined a Justness of Thought, and a Facility of Expression; or (in the Midwives phrase) a perfect Conception, with an easy Delivery' (1735, 10-11).

The letter of 23 June 1705 is full of Pope's complaints that Wycherley praises rather than criticizes him: 'I Should believe myself happy in your good Opinion, but that you treat me so much in a Stile of Compliment' (1735, 18).<sup>21</sup>

Pope somewhat distorted the true picture of the correspondence in his 1737 'authorized' folio edition by neglecting to show how very two-sided and self-conscious a literary game he and Wycherley played in their early 'letters of wit'. This edition prints only fourteen letters of the Wycherley correspondence and substantially reduces Wycherley's contribution by including nine by Pope and only five by Wycherley. Six of Pope's nine letters (letters I, II, III, IV, VIII and X) object to Wycherley's excessive compliments. The letters from Wycherley which Pope included certainly convey the impression that Wycherley admired Pope, dealing as they almost all do with the dramatist's request that Pope correct his papers preparatory to their publication. Wycherley's letters, while thanking Pope for his friendship and assistance, do not reply in kind with witty reproofs at the flattery contained in Pope's actual letters to him.<sup>22</sup> But, to be fair to Pope, it should be noted that he probably omitted many of Wycherley's letters in his 1737 edition simply for reasons of editorial discretion. Wycherley's letters, like the poetry which Pope advised him against publishing, are rather wearisomely full of repetitions, particularly of images used again and again, and, one suspects, unconsciously or unintentionally, as witnessed in the

many letters in which Wycherley variously describes himself as either a 'harden'd old gamester' or a 'Plain-dealer' (see, for example, 1735: 16, 29, 42, 45).

Wycherley did not exactly live in the past although, in his wish to publish his poetry, he was obviously prompted by a desire to recover past glory, but his letters rarely move beyond the elaborate analogies, teasing conceits and constant undercurrent of sexual innuendo of a Restoration comedy or of a 'letter of wit'. Wycherley, for example, was fond of the notion that Pope, in revising his poems, by making them 'less' (by excising repetitions), made them 'more' (better written). In a letter of 5 February 1705 he thanks Pope for his revision of a poem honouring Dryden by declaring: 'I own you have made more of it by making it less, as the Dutch are said to burn half the Spices they bring home to inhance the Price of the Remainder, so as to be greater Gainers by their Loss' (1735, 23). Never one to leave well enough alone and obviously loath to relinquish the pursuit of his conceit Wycherley continues: 'Well; you have prun'd my fading Laurels of some superfluous, sapless, and dead Branches, to make the Remainder live the longer' (1735, 23). The conceit reappears several years later in a letter from Wycherley to Pope of 1 April 1710 in which he pleads: 'Be most kindly unmerciful to my poetical Faults, and do with my Papers, as you Country-Gentlemen do with your Trees, slash, cut, and lop-off the Excrescencies and dead Parts of my wither'd Bays, that the little Remainder my live the longer, and encrease the Value of them, by diminishing the Number' (1735, 44-5). Wycherley also makes full play

of the notion of a poetical 'muse' in his letters to Pope (see, for example, 1735: 16, 36-8, 40).<sup>23</sup> In view of this habit of inveterate repetition Pope may simply have felt compelled to select carefully what he considered representative or relevant passages from Wycherley's actual letters to him - repetitious, even garrulous but genuinely affectionate letters - and to print these passages with his replies in the 1737 edition to present, as we have seen in the last chapter, rather a 'story' or chronicle of their relationship than a real exchange of informal, personal letters.

The Walsh correspondence, which follows the letters to and from Wycherley in the 1735 and the 1737 editions, consists, respectively, of six and five letters whose texts rest only on Pope's authority. As we saw in the last chapter, this section of letters, like the Wycherley section, represents rather a 'story' than an exchange of familiar letters. If Pope was proud of his intimacy with Wycherley, who was considered one of his age's greatest writers by Congreve, Dryden, Dennis and the Duke of Buckingham,<sup>24</sup> he was apparently equally glad of a chance to publicise his friendship with Walsh. This, anyway, seems the implication of a footnote Pope attached to the 1735 and the 1737 editions of his letters. Should his readers be unaware of Walsh's significance this footnote enlightens them by describing Walsh as 'Author of several beautiful pieces in Prose and Verse, and in the Opinion of Mr. Dryden (in his Postscript to Virgil,) the Best Critic of our Nation in his time' (1735, 50n).

If we surmise that Pope selected those letters to and from Wycherley for inclusion in his editions which would vindicate both his own and the dramatist's reputation (although he cast aspersions on Wycherley's poetical abilities in doing so) the selection of the Walsh letters seems to have followed similar guidelines of both self-justification and praise of his correspondent. A major topic of the Walsh letters is the sensitive issue - as it proved for Pope, anyway - of literary 'borrowing'. In the first letter of the Walsh correspondence in the 1735 edition, a letter dropped in 1737 - a letter from Walsh to Wycherley dated 20 April 1705 - Walsh highly recommends the unknown sixteen-year old poet's pastorals, claiming 'Virgil had written nothing so good at his Age' (1735, 51). Walsh comments to Wycherley on Pope's 'borrowing' in these terms: 'He has taken very freely from the Ancients, but what he has mixt of his own with theirs, is no way inferior to what he has taken from them' (1735, 50-1).

Possibly Pope, an indefatigable imitator from his earliest attempts at verse, as he later admitted to Spence,<sup>25</sup> mentioned his fear of the accusation of 'borrowing' or of trespassing upon territory already covered by poetical precedents quite early on in his acquaintance with Walsh, for in the next letter, one to Pope of 24 June 1706, Walsh suggests that Pope try his hand at composing a 'Pastoral Comedy' for 'I am sure there is nothing of this kind in English worth mentioning, and therefore you have that Field open to yourself' (1735, 51-2). Walsh, of course, is famous for his advice to



Pope to be a 'correct' poet as that represented 'one way left of excelling.'<sup>26</sup> In Pope's reply to Walsh's suggestion that he write pastoral comedy, declining the suggestion because he thinks 'the Taste of our Age will not relish a Poem of that sort' (1735, 53), the subject of literary 'borrowing' arises again, with Pope declaring (perhaps unconsciously affected by Wycherley's predilection for tree imagery!) that 'Writers in the Case of borrowing from others, are like Trees which of themselves would produce only one sort of Fruit, but by being grafted upon others, may yield variety' (1735, 54). Belying the confident tone of this analogy, Pope shortly after, in the same letter, betrays anxiety on this point again by remarking: 'I desire you to tell me sincerely, if I have not stretch'd this License too far in these Pastorals' (1735, 54). Walsh responded in true neo-classical spirit in a letter of 20 July 1706 which anticipates for poetry what Addison pronounced for the province of criticism, that: 'in all the common Subjects of Poetry, the Thoughts are so obvious (at least if they are natural) that whoever writes last, must write things like what have been said before...it being evident in all such Cases, that whoever live first, must first find them out' (1735, 55-6).<sup>27</sup>

An unusually long section of 63 pages of the Cromwell correspondence follows the section of Walsh correspondence in the 1735 edition. Its length and the preponderance of letters by Pope are probably at least partly attributable to the fact that most of these letters from Pope to Cromwell had already been published in 1726, thus somewhat

forestalling Pope's usual practice of careful selection and editing of the letters to each of his correspondents before publishing. Pope, in any case, apologized in the 1737 edition for these early letters to Cromwell, agreeing that 'they have too much juvenile Ambition of Wit, and affectation of Gayety.'<sup>28</sup> The process of revision of the Cromwell correspondence for the 1735 edition which we looked at in the first section of this chapter was continued in Pope's selection of letters to and from Cromwell for inclusion in the 1737 edition. As we have seen, Curll printed twenty-four letters from Pope to Cromwell in 1726. In 1735 Pope deleted seven of these letters and added seven more from himself to Cromwell, while also including seven letters from Cromwell. In the 1737 edition he printed nineteen letters in his section of Cromwell correspondence: three written by Cromwell and sixteen by himself. Pope did not reinstate any of the letters he had dropped from the 1735 edition while he retained five of the new letters from himself to Cromwell.<sup>29</sup> In the selection of letters for inclusion in the 1737 edition Pope seems to have followed the same guidelines as those adhered to in the process of choosing letters for the 1735 edition. He tended to omit the purely personal detail and the occasional salacious or impious remark.

In both the 1735 and the 1737 editions of this and most other sections of correspondence Pope often added footnotes identifying poems which his friends mention in their letters, sometimes even giving the details of their publication or, if it was an 'occasional' verse, telling

in which volume of his Miscellanies it had been printed. Pope's letter to Cromwell of 7 May 1709, for example, mentioned not only Pope's intention to send Cromwell a 'Miscellany' but also included a footnote which identified the publication.<sup>30</sup> In addition to giving information or clarifying passages of the letters, these footnotes also tended to emphasize Pope's precocity as a poet. Pope's letter to Cromwell of 22 January 1708-9, for example, also mentions 'Papers' which Pope is sending Cromwell; the 'Papers' are identified by a footnote as 'a Translation of the first Book of Statius, done when the Author was but 14 Years old' (1735, 69n). In 1737 Pope added a footnote to a letter to Cromwell of 17 May 1710 identifying a poem Pope had apparently sent him two weeks earlier as 'Verses on Silence, in imitation of the Earl of Rochester's Poem on Nothing, done at 14 years old' (1737, 53n).<sup>31</sup>

The effect of Pope's revisions of the Cromwell correspondence for the 1735 and the 1737 editions of his letters, then, was an emphasis on Pope as a 'true poet'; the letters show that early inclination, even amazing precocity, led him to this vocation and that dedication to it confirmed his early promise of genius. The portrait of Pope as a poet in these letters, however, is very much a generalized, even emblematic, one. In his letters to Cromwell as revised for publication, less refined expressions are deleted, or 'softened', or rendered innocuous, purely personal detail is excised, and one is left with an occasionally playful but generally serious or philosophic correspondent who, in his letters to Cromwell,

engages in extensive discussion of literary theory and in minute literary analysis. The 'new' letters which Pope added to the Cromwell correspondence in 1735 - five of which he retained in 1737 - tended to be rather essays than letters, either taking some abstract topic as their subject, or consisting of contributions to discussions of literary subjects contained either in letters Cromwell had sent him or in earlier letters sent to Cromwell. The impression that the 1737 edition was meant to present a 'story' rather than to represent an actual exchange of letters is strengthened by the titles Pope attached to each letter in the table of contents. As with the Walsh and Wycherley sections of correspondence as presented in 1737, these titles or headings make one think rather of essays than of letters; to take a few examples from the Cromwell correspondence, the headings range from 'On Sickness and Disappointment,' to a letter 'Concerning Laughter,' to one on 'The use of Poetical Studies; a Panegyric Upon Dogs.'

The section of letters 'to and from the Honourable J.C. Esq;' follows the section of Cromwell correspondence in the 1737 folio, while the 1735 edition, containing the same 'J.C.' letters - five from Pope and one from Caryll - places these letters in a section entitled 'Letters of Sir William Trumbull, Mr. Steele, Mr. Addison, and Mr. Pope.' It was, perhaps, most appropriate that in 1735 Pope should have included the letters to Caryll, albeit without identifying their recipient other than by his initials, in a section of letters purportedly to Trumbull, Addison and Steele for, as we have seen, Pope fabricated five letters to and

one from Addison, one to Steele, and one to Trumbull from the recalled letters he had originally sent to Caryll. Yet his 1737 edition's transferral of the Caryll letters to their own section, including also a letter to 'an unfortunate Lady', a Mrs. Weston, as well as three letters to an unidentified Lady Mary Wortley Montagu is also appropriate considering the importance of the actual Caryll correspondence.

The first four letters to the 'Honourable J.C.' concern Pope's first encounter with what was to become a major problem for him - the virulent attacks of critics on both his poetry and his character. These letters deal specifically, as the 1737 heading to the first letter tells us, with 'Dennis's Reflections on the Essay on Criticism.' As Pope observed in this letter of 15 June 1711: 'You will see by this, that whoever sets up for a Wit in these Days ought to have the Constancy of a Primitive Christian, and be prepared to suffer Martyrdom in the Cause of it' (1735, 165). On this occasion Pope was to endure 'Martyrdom' at the hands of his fellow Catholics as well, as this letter and the next two to Caryll, of 18 June and 19 July 1711, reveal, with Pope vainly trying to placate Caryll's fears that the poem might arouse the wrath of Pope's co-religionists in its praise of Erasmus and its condemnation of dogmatic intolerance or superstition. Perhaps to signify the popularity of the poem in the midst of the attacks by Dennis and Catholics, in the 1735 edition Pope included a letter to 'General...upon his having translated into French Verse the Essay on Criticism'; this letter does not

appear in the 1737 folio.<sup>32</sup>

The personal side to the poet is shown in the only letter of Caryll's which Pope prints, dated 23 May 1712, which discusses, besides the progress of the project of The Rape of the Lock (inspired by Caryll's suggestion), a mutual friend of Caryll's and Pope's, a 'Mrs. W.' Pope identifies this 'Mrs. W.' in the 1737 edition's heading to his response to Caryll's letter, as 'an unfortunate Lady,' perhaps wishing his readers to connect her plight with his Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady.<sup>33</sup> In the 1737 edition, this response, a letter dated 28 May 1712, is followed by an undated letter to the anonymous lady herself, thus presenting her story as a unified whole. The connection is not made in the 1735 edition, however, which prints this letter as Letter XIV of a section of 'Letters to Several Ladies'. Robbed of its proximity to Caryll's letter to Pope about her and Pope's response, it appears as somewhat an anomaly in the 1735 section of 'letters to ladies,' concerned as the majority of them are with lighthearted teasing and social pleasantry and the occasional lapse into Restoration bawdiness or innuendo. In both editions, however, the letter reveals Pope in a chivalric role, coming to the aid of a distressed, neglected lady while Pope presents 'Mrs. W.' as an 'Example' of merit worthy of such assistance (see 1735, 149-51). Pope's letter to Caryll of 28 May 1712 about this 'unfortunate lady' is typical of their actual correspondence; in it he claims that Caryll's kindness to this unhappy lady has 'cemented'

Pope's admiration and affection for Caryll more than 'all the Favours and kind Offices you have shown towards Me' (1735, 178).

A section of letters to and from Steele and then one of letters to and from Addison follow the Caryll letters in the 1737 folio. The letter from Steele which opens the section, dated 1 June 1712, rests only on Pope's authority but it is possibly genuine.<sup>34</sup> It is appropriately Spectator-ish in tone and subject, 'ruminating upon the employments in which men of wit exercise themselves' (1737, 91). Of the following four letters by Pope, two first appeared in the Spectator and one in the Guardian,<sup>35</sup> while, in the fourth, a letter of 29 November 1712, Pope complains that Steele had identified him as the author of the second Spectator letter, dated 7 November 1712, containing his version of the 'Emperor Adrian's verses on his death-bed.' The 1735 edition had contained these four letters from Pope and one from Steele as well as an additional letter from Steele of 12 November 1712 and one from Pope of 16 November 1712. The 1735 edition also prints Pope's poetic version of Adriani Morientis while the original Spectator paper had not nor was it retained in the 1737 edition's text of this letter.<sup>36</sup> The 'new' letter from Steele continued Steele's praise of Pope; in the first letter, also included in the 1737 edition, Steele had described Pope's Messiah as 'already better than the Pollio' (1735, 180) while the 'new' letter of 12 November 1712 begins with his reaction to another of Pope's poems: 'I HAVE read over your Temple of Fame twice,

and cannot find any thing amiss of Weight enough to call a Fault, but see in it a Thousand Thousand Beauties' (1735, 186). This letter also contains Steele's request that Pope join him in an unspecified 'design' which, as we have seen, must have referred to either the Guardian or the Censorium. Pope's response, the 'new' letter of 16 November 1712, begins with what was a habitual remark Pope made in his early letters, requesting his correspondents to criticize rather than compliment his works: 'YOU oblige me by the Indulgence you have shewn to the Poem I sent you, but will oblige me much more by the kind Severity I hope for from you' (1735, 187). The 1735 edition also attaches a typical footnote to this letter; it hints at Pope's precocity by observing that The Temple of Fame 'was writ before the Author was 22 Years old' (1735, 188n). Apart from the 1737 edition's deletion of these two letters and the Adriani Morientis poem the two editions differ only in very minor ways. In the letter of 18 June 1712, for example, Pope added an 'r' in the 1737 edition to the 'noble' in the phrase 'water which may be forc'd into fountains and exalted to a great height, may make a noble figure and a louder noise' (1735, 181), presumably to agree with the comparative form of 'louder'.

A section of letters to and from Addison follows the Steele letters in the 1737 folio; this section consists of five letters from Pope to Addison, two from Addison to Pope, one from Jervas to Pope and his reply, one to the Earl of Halifax, four to the 'Honourable---' and one to the 'Hon. James Craggs'. Taken as a whole these letters



present a picture of the rise, growth and then the betrayal of Pope's and Addison's friendship. Since, as we have seen, most of the Addison letters are demonstrably fabricated from the Caryll correspondence, it seems most profitable here to regard them in the light of a 'story' and to try to discern what ideas Pope wanted his readers to derive from this publicized epistolary relationship. Pope's early letters to Addison are full of expressions of eager affection and admiration, with the section beginning, for example, with a letter from Pope which lightheartedly exclaims 'I AM more joy'd at your Return than I should be at that of the Sun' (1735, 196). This is partly the cant of the early eighteenth-century letter's exaggerated politesse but also, one senses, even though this letter is a fabrication from a letter to Caryll,<sup>37</sup> Pope was not exaggerating his early enthusiasm and respect for Addison. Always a fierce partisan where his early friends were concerned, it was apparently his esteem for Addison which prompted Pope's authorship of his hilarious satire on Dennis entitled the Narrative of Dr. Robert Norris, a paper which is the subject of this first letter, now addressed to Addison rather than Caryll, and which a footnote in the 1735 and the 1737 editions describes as 'occasion'd by Dennis's Remarks upon Cato' (1735, 197). In the event, Addison was dismayed at Pope's loyal defence of his play; though Steele he expressed his disapproval of this pamphlet to its publisher, Lintot, who passed the letter on to Dennis, who printed it in 1729.<sup>38</sup> This unfortunate beginning of

their friendship, with Pope's enthusiastic loyalty obliquely rebuffed by Addison, presaged the course of their relationship as chronicled in Pope's editions of their letters. The second letter of this section is from Addison, containing his encouragement of Pope's projected translation of the Iliad: 'I question not but your Translation will enrich our Tongue, and do Honour to our Country' (1735, 198). Of course this translation was to prove the rock upon which Pope's and Addison's friendship was to split when Addison apparently sponsored and possibly even wrote or co-authored his protege, Tickell's, rival translation, inspiring Pope to his famous portrait of Addison as 'Atticus' in the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot. Sherburn admits that this letter from Addison is a suspected fabrication but observes that Pope always claimed that he did receive such an encouraging letter from Addison; in the preface to the Iliad, for example, Pope remarked that 'Mr. Addison was the first whose Advice determin'd me to undertake this Task, who was pleas'd to write to me upon that Occasion in such terms as I cannot repeat without Vanity.'<sup>39</sup>

The quarrel which evolves between Pope and Addison in the published letters, however, seems more concerned with Pope's growing friendship with such prominent Tories as Swift and Bolingbroke, thus apparently offending Addison's Whiggish sympathy, who advises Pope to steer clear of party loyalties. Yet these letters present Pope as a disinterested neutral who detests the narrowness and animosity of the spirit of party which was so prominent in

his age. As he observed in the letter responding to Addison's advice not to 'content yourself with one Half of the Nation for your Admirers when you might command 'em all' (1735, 199): 'I confess I scorn narrow Souls of all Parties, and if I renounce my Reason in religious Matters, I'll hardly do it in any other' (1735, 200-1).<sup>40</sup> In a later letter Pope bemoans the spirit of controversy and faction which, he believed, characterized his politically-minded, often intolerant age: 'This miserable Age is so sunk between Animosities of Party, and those of Religion, that I begin to fear, most Men have Politics enough to make (through Violence) the best Scheme of Government a bad one; and Faith enough to hinder their own Salvation' (1735, 206).<sup>41</sup> His conclusion to this letter seems to encapsulate neatly the philosophy he publicly adopted in such matters: 'I am ambitious of nothing but the good Opinion of good Men, on both Sides' (1735, 207).

The remaining letters in the 1737 edition of this section concern, directly or indirectly, Pope's quarrel with Addison. In his letter of 20 August 1714 to Pope, Jervas recounts his efforts to reconcile the two friends, relating Addison's confession to Jervas that he believed Swift had carried Pope 'too far among the enemy during the heat of the animosity' (1737, 106). Pope's reply is haughtily indignant. First Pope implies that he, unlike Addison, is above 'maligning or envying another's reputation as a Poet' (1737, 108) and then, he claims that he would be unwilling to accept friendship from someone capable of believing that Pope would stoop to the

divisive spirit of party or to engage in party politics, implying in this second charge as well that it might be more appropriately levelled at Addison himself. This letter is followed by a sarcastic one to Addison which repeats the accusations of Addison's envy and narrow political bias. This letter of 10 October 1714, whose authenticity Sherburn believes it impossible to verify,<sup>42</sup> also includes an implicit accusation that Addison was capable of hypocrisy; the charge is lent heightened dramatic effect by Pope's observation that he is reluctant to believe that Addison fails to put his professed principles into practice: 'As to what you have said of me, I shall never believe that the author of *Cato* can speak one thing, and think another' (1737, 109). In the letter to Halifax which follows Pope thanks him for his assistance and friendship, interestingly, however, dropping the first two lines of the actual letter in his printed editions of it, lines which specify that Pope's thanks were directed to Halifax's assistance with the Iliad translation. The next four letters, all presumably to an unidentified 'Hon---', although only the first is thus titled, indirectly refer to the quarrel with Addison in Pope's descriptions of Ambrose Philips's activities: his spreading malicious gossip about Pope's suspected alliance with the Tories and his refusing to relay to Pope subscription money for the Iliad which had been temporarily entrusted to him. The last letter of the section, to Craggs, continues on these themes of the unfortunate divisive effect of party spirit, the controversy over the

rival Iliad translations, and the hostility toward him of Addison's circle at Button's coffee house; this letter contains a version of the famous description of Addison as a 'great Turk in poetry, who can never bear a brother on the Throne' (1737, 118).

One is left with two impressions upon reading this section of letters in the 1737 edition. The general purpose of the section seems to be to serve as an object lesson on the profoundly disruptive effect party politics or the spirit of faction generally exerts upon personal relationships. A related theme concerns the sense of bitterness often expressed in Pope's letters at the disadvantages attached to his success as a poet. He finds envy, malice, slander and even isolation as old friends turn away in jealousy or spite. In these 'Addison' letters Pope seems to recognize it as an unpleasant truth that fame inevitably leads to misconstructions or misinterpretations on the public's part. In one letter Pope claims that he is considering giving up poetry and in another, admits to despair at the apparent impossibility of neutrality or even, simply, of an individuality unattached to 'sides': 'there are some Tories who will take you for a Whig, some Whigs who will take you for a Tory, some Protestants who will esteem you a rank Papist, and some Papists who will account you a Heretick' (1737, 114).

The 1735 edition's printing of the 'Addison' letters in a section which also includes letters to and from Steele, Sir William Trumbull, the 'Hon. J.C.,' an unidentified General and an unidentified 'Honourable,' Dean Berkeley,

Jervas, Edward Blount, Halifax, Craggs, Congreve, Parnell, Gay, an 'Earl of B.' and Arbuthnot means, not surprisingly, that the Addison letters do not, as they do in the 1737 edition, form a coherent, separate 'story'. The Addison section of the 1737 edition, while containing letters to Jervas, Halifax, Craggs and the unidentified 'Honourable' had been united by subject, by Pope's discussion of his quarrel with Addison and the circle at Button's and his general detestation of religious and political controversy. In the 1735 edition the section of letters in which the Addison letters appear is arranged chronologically rather than by correspondent or subject, beginning with a letter from Trumbull of 9 April 1708 and concluding with a letter from Pope to an unidentified correspondent dated 12 December 1718.

As presented in the 1735 edition these letters comprise an interesting sketch of Pope and his meteoric rise to poetical fame. In the first letter of the section Trumbull is enthusiastic over Pope's precocious talent, praising first some translations of Homer Pope had sent him and then urging him to publish the Essay on Criticism; the praise of the translations is delivered in peculiarly Augustan terms with Trumbull, in counselling Pope to continue translating Homer, observing that he would expect him to 'make him speak good English, to dress his admirable Characters in your proper, significant, and expressive Conceptions, and to make his Works as useful and instructive to this degenerate Age, as he was to our friend Horace' (1735, 162). Pope's four letters to Caryll or the 'Hon. J.C.' and

Caryll's letter to Pope as well as the letter to the General who translated the Essay into French follow, succeeded by Pope's Spectator and Guardian letters to Steele and Steele's two letters expressing, in the first, praise of Pope's Messiah and, in the second, of his Temple of Fame. A letter to an anonymous correspondent, dated 5 December 1712, is printed next; in it Pope thanks his unidentified recipient for returning his letters. A letter from Trumbull of 6 March 1713 praising Pope's Rape of the Lock follows, succeeded by two letters in reply from Pope, the first witnessing the poet becomingly modest in the midst of all this admiration and the second, by discussing the reception of Addison's Cato, leading into the two letters from Addison and four from Pope to Addison which are printed next. These chronicle, as we have seen, Addison's encouragement of Pope's proposal to translate the Iliad and the first stages of this lengthy undertaking, with Pope admitting in a letter of 30 January 1713-4: 'Tis no comfortable Prospect to be reflecting, that so long a Siege as that of Troy lies upon my Hands' (1735, 205).

A letter to Pope from Dean Berkeley of May 1714 interrupts the discussion of the Iliad translation, with Berkeley praising the Rape of the Lock which he had chanced to encounter in Italy and urging Pope to visit that country: 'What might we not expect from a Muse that sings so well in the bleak Climate of England, if she felt the same warm Sun, and breath'd the same Air with Virgil and Horace?' (1735, 208) Three letters to the 'Honourable--' follow, retailing Pope's quarrel with Philips and with the

rest of Addison's circle at Button's, with Pope admitting in the last letter 'I find by dear Experience, we live in an Age, where it is criminal to be moderate; and where no one Man can be allowed to be just to all Men' (1735, 213). Two letters from Pope to Jervas follow, recounting Pope's absorption in the Iliad translation; the tone is lighthearted but one certainly senses a profound underlying seriousness, as in the second letter, in which Pope reflects on the penalties of genius: 'To follow Poetry as one ought, one must forget Father and Mother, and cleave to it alone' (1735, 221). The Iliad translation is also the subject of the next letter, to Edward Blount; the tone of carefree pleasantries of the first half of the letter, with Pope describing his attempts to find or to order a map of 'Old Greece' (1735, 222) is dropped in the second half, where Pope adopts his more habitual tone and topic in his letters to Blount by philosophizing on the death of Queen Anne and reflecting on the meaning this event holds for him: 'I thank God, that as for myself, I am below all the Accidents of State-Changes by my Circumstances, and above them by my Philosophy. Common Charity of Man to Man, and universal Good-will to all, are the Points I have most at heart' (1735, 224).

A letter from Jervas to Pope of 20 August 1714 returns us to Pope's quarrel with Addison and to the controversy over the rival translations. This is followed by Pope's reply, declining Jervas's offer to reconcile him to Addison, and by Pope's last letter to Addison in which he obliquely condemns the author of Cato for apparently being false to



his professed principles. The letter to Halifax follows, succeeded by three letters to Congreve. The letters to Congreve are all 'personal' letters in the sense rarely observed by Pope in either his actual or revised letters; they are full of social chat, discussion of mutual friends or of current projects, and retail gossip or news. Pope's famous letter to the 'Earl of B.' follows; it is an obviously composed set-piece recounting Pope's hilarious journey to Oxford with the enterprising bookseller Lintot who, Pope claims, had hoped the poet might turn out a few items for a miscellany or even a translation of a Horatian ode as they trotted along. This charming epistolary narrative is even complete with dialogue, with Pope reporting Lintot's hopes in such phrases as 'Oldsworth in a Ramble round Wimbleton Hill, would translate a whole Ode in half this Time' (1735, 239). A letter from Parnell to Pope follows, in which Parnell expatiates on the superiority of Pope's to Tickell's translation: 'I have here seen the First Book of Homer, which came out at a Time when it cou'd not but appear as a kind of setting up against you. My opinion is, that you may, if you please, give them Thanks who writ it' (1735, 243). This is also the subject of the next four letters; the first is an extract from a letter from Berkeley to Pope which seconds Parnell's assessment of the rival translations, that Pope's was 'without Comparison more easy, more poetical, and more sublime' (1735, 245). An extract from a letter from Gay follows, describing the general consensus that Pope's was the superior translation and concluding with an account

of Addison's hostility and even treachery: 'I am inform'd that at Button's your Character is made very free with, as Morals, &c. and Mr. A-- says, that your Translation and Tickell's are both very well done, but that the latter has more of Homer' (1735, 246). The extract from a letter from Arbuthnot which is printed next concurs with an observation made by Parnell in his letter, that Tickell's translation was neither 'careful' nor 'exact' (1735, 246). Pope's letter to Craggs containing the description of Addison as a jealous 'great Turk in Poetry' (1735, 247) follows, describing Tickell as the 'humblest Slave' (1735, 247) the Turk possesses.

The eight remaining letters in this section nearly resemble an actual exchange of informal letters; they are bound by no common theme or topic. Pope writes to Trumbull a letter of the sort <sup>of</sup> minute literary criticism he usually sent to Cromwell, with Trumbull responding with an admission that he had sent Pope's 'Imitation of Martial's Epigram on Antonius Primus' (1735, 251) to a friend as a birthday present and playfully asking Pope whether he will extend his permission for Trumbull to acknowledge its real author: 'But now being a little tender, as young Beginners often are, I offer to you ( for I have conceal'd the true Author) whether you will give me Orders to declare who is the Father of this fine Child, or not?' (1735, 251) Three letters to Jervas, then in Ireland, follow; these letters cheerfully discuss such mutual friends as Swift, Gay, Fortescue, Parnell and Burlington and express Pope's hopes for a reunion. A letter from Craggs and then one from

Berkeley follow. Both are in the nature of the epistolary travelogues beloved by the early eighteenth century, with the first consisting of an extended description of Paris and the second of Italy. The last letter, to an unidentified correspondent, begins with Pope's desire that friends were more intelligible or comprehensible to each other, perhaps indirectly referring to what he undoubtedly perceived as Addison's duplicity and hypocrisy: 'THE old Project of a Window in the Bosom to render the Soul of Man visible, is what every honest Friend has manifold reason to wish for' (1735, 261).

By dividing these letters into separate sections addressed to such correspondents as Steele and Addison and Trumbull the 1737 edition subtly changes the emphasis of this selection of letters. The chronological arrangement of the 1735 edition had offered a portrait of Pope through his own and his friends' letters. This arrangement is transformed in the 1737 edition to sections which serve a variety of functions. Some highlight specific periods, incidents or aspects of the poet's career. The section of 'Addison' letters, for example, offers Pope's side of a famous quarrel. The section of letters to and from Steele show us Pope's involvement in the popular periodical journals of the early eighteenth century while, incidentally, hinting at the versatility of Pope's literary talents as he easily adopts the gently philosophical or moralizing tone of the journals in his letters to Steele - letters which were, as we have seen, actually printed in the Spectator and the Guardian. Some sections, too, seemed intended to

commemorate friends as special individuals in their own right and for their friendship with Pope. Thus while the Trumbull section shows, first, the flowering of Pope's precocious promise of genius and the admiration he inspired in the great and famous from his earliest poetical attempts, it also eulogizes the kindly learned Trumbull, whose importance is signified in a footnote attached to the 1735 and the 1737 editions which identifies him as 'Secretary of State to King William the Third' (1735, 161n). As we have seen, Pope attached similar footnotes to the Wycherley and Walsh sections of correspondence while his printing letters from Cromwell to himself in his 1735 and 1737 editions of his correspondence made public that critic's not inconsiderable powers of literary analysis.

The 1737 edition's printing of the Trumbull letters augments the two letters from Trumbull to Pope and two from Pope to Trumbull included by the 1735 edition with two additional letters from Trumbull. This section in the 1737 edition also includes a letter from Pope to 'Mrs. B.,' five to unidentified ladies, one to 'Mrs. Arabella Fermor on her Marriage,' one to Congreve and one to Arbuthnot. As for the letters from Trumbull, their common theme is praise, with the first 'new' letter comparing Pope to Milton, the second urging him, as we have seen, to a translation of Homer for the honour, pleasure and instruction of the age, the third asserting that The Rape of the Lock has confirmed Trumbull's earlier estimation of what he termed Pope's 'comprehensive genius,' and the fourth containing Trumbull's admission that he has sent

some of Pope's verses as his own to a friend: 'This has been applauded so much, that I am in danger of commencing Poet, perhaps Laureat' (1737, 126-7). One of Pope's letters reflects his detestation of the divisiveness of controversy in its concluding observation: 'I think to be a lover of one's country is a glorious elogy, but I do not think it so great an one as to be a lover of mankind' (1737, 125).

As for the other letters in this section, the letters to 'Mrs. B.' and to several unidentified ladies are a mixture of that coy wit, paradox, and amused condescension which, as we have seen, comprised the proper epistolary style for 'letters to ladies' in the early eighteenth century. As we saw in the last chapter Pope reduced the sixteen 'Letters to Several Ladies' which he printed in 1735 to eleven in the 1737 folio edition. Rather than, as in 1735, printing the 'letters to ladies' as a separate section, he also, in 1737, scattered them throughout the edition, printing seven in the Trumbull section and four in the Caryll section and dropping the more questionable letters such as the one containing the description of a visit to a hermaphrodite. The 1737 edition's 'letters to ladies' lack much of the sexual innuendo of the 1735 edition's printing of them; they are more discreet, verging on blandness, or as in the case of the letters to or about the unfortunate 'Mrs. W.,' included in the Caryll section in the 1737 edition, downright sentimental.

In the letter to Arabella Fermor Pope demonstrates his ability to translate the delicate raillery of the 'fair sex' with its underlying seriousness of The Rape of the Lock

into his letters in such observations as 'YOU are by this time satisfy'd how much the tenderness of one man of merit is to be preferr'd to the addresses of a thousand' (1737, 134). The letter to 'Mrs. B.,' however, sees Pope re-enacting the more popular shallow whimsicality of the age's 'letters to ladies' as Pope, adopting the perspective of a woman, describes the circumstance, delightful, of course, to all ladies, of an army encampment at Hyde Park: 'You may soon have your wish, to enjoy the gallant fights of armies, incampments, standards waving over your brother's cornfields, and the pretty windings of the Thames stained with the blood of men' (1737, 128).

The letter to Congreve was first printed in the 1735 edition but the Arbuthnot letter printed in this section is new. Dated 7 September 1714, this letter exudes what his contemporaries admiringly identified as Arbuthnot's essential kindness, a friendliness conveyed in this letter in the Augustan tones of gentle irony and wit. The letter was apparently written in response to one from Pope, for Arbuthnot opens his with satiric gratitude that the death of Queen Anne and hence his own deposition from the privileged position of royal physician has not altered Pope's affection: 'I am extreemly oblig'd to you for taking notice of a poor old distressed courtier, commonly the most despiseable thing in the world' (1737, 137-8). Arbuthnot observes that the blow to his hopes and those of their closest friends, Swift and Bolingbroke, represented by the Queen's death 'has so rous'd Scriblerus that he has recover'd his senses' (1737, 138), thereby implying that the old project

of the memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus was to be revived. Arbuthnot claims in this letter that his main regret at this turn of events, with the Tories ousted from power, was that the papers relating to the Scriblerus project were not discovered among Bolingbroke's papers by his Whig successors -- an event which might have led to the ludicrous but hilarious circumstance of the papers being considered an allegory for a plot against the Hanoverian succession.

The 1737 edition includes a section of 'Letters to Several Persons' which reprints several of the letters which appeared in the sections of 'Letters' to Trumbull, Steele and Addison in the 1735 edition: Berkeley's description of the Italian island of Inarime, for example; the letter to the 'Earl of B.' with Burlington now openly identified as its recipient, describing the humorous trip to Oxford with Lintot; and the letter of 12 December 1718 to an unidentified correspondent which reflects on the desirability of a 'window in the bosom' which would reveal the hearts of our friends to us. But this 1737 section also includes a number of new letters to such correspondents as Fenton; one to a 'Friend on the Circuit,' evidently Fortescue; a fabricated letter to Arbuthnot;<sup>43</sup> two to the Duke of Buckingham and one in reply; and one to the Earl of Oxford with his answer. The only common theme to these letters - at least it appears in three of them - is discussion of Homer. A letter of 1718 from the Duke of Buckingham and Pope's reply both discuss a current controversy raging then in France between two eminent critics, Madame Dacier and

Houdart de la Motte, on their rival interpretations of Homer. Pope was, of course, to experience the full weight of Madame Dacier's critical authority on himself a year later when she published her 'reflections' on parts of Pope's preface to the Iliad in 1719, published in London in 1724. Pope's Odyssey was not as well received as the Iliad by his contemporaries, possibly because they had been influenced by the numerous rumours that he had engaged collaborators, and his letter to Arbuthnot talks of 'the railing papers about the Odyssey' (1737, 192). As for the remaining letters in this section, the other letter to Buckingham is one of the extended prose descriptions of Stanton Harcourt Pope was fond of sending a number of correspondents in 1718, the letter to Fenton discusses Pope's recommendation of him to his friend Craggs to serve as a secretary, and the letter to Fortescue lightheartedly discusses the extensiveness of Fortescue's 'rambles', declaring that, should Fortescue continue to describe his travels and his court cases in his letters, a collection of these letters, published, 'could not fail to please the sex, better than half the novels they read; there wou'd be in them what they love above all things, a most happy union of Truth and Scandal' (1737, 192). The letter to the Earl of Oxford and Oxford's reply concern Pope's request to dedicate the volume of Parnell's 'remains', which he had been entrusted to edit, to Oxford, a request that Oxford readily acceded to in memory of 'those evenings I have usefully and pleasantly spent, with Mr. Pope, Mr. Parnel, Dean Swift, the Doctor, &c,' adding that 'I



should be glad the world knew You admitted me to your friendship' (1737, 203).

The 1735 and the 1737 editions' printing of sections of letters to and from Robert Digby and another of letters to and from Edward Blount are sufficiently similar to be considered in conjunction with each other. The 1737 edition of the Digby letters reprints nine letters from Pope to Digby first printed in 1735, substitutes a 'new' letter for a letter to Digby it drops, while expanding the section with six letters from Digby to Pope and one letter from Pope to Digby's brother on his correspondent's death.<sup>44</sup> The 1737 edition of the Blount letters reprints ten letters from Pope to Blount first printed in 1735 (while dropping a 1735 letter dated 3 October 1721) as well as adding an additional letter from Pope to Blount and two from Blount to Pope.<sup>45</sup>

Both the 1735 and the 1737 editions print, in the letters to Blount, Pope's famous description of Wycherley's death-bed marriage. This letter, dated 21 January 1715-6, is a vivacious composition reminiscent of Pope's earliest 'letters of wit', full of the same amusing paradoxes and sly observations. Pope, for example, describes the newly-wedded Wycherley in the following terms: 'I saw our Friend twice after this was done, less peevish in his Sickness than he used to be in his Health; neither much afraid of dying, nor (which in him had been more likely) much ashamed of marrying' (1735, 285). The style, tone and content of this celebrated letter contrast sharply with the other letters of the Blount correspondence printed

in either edition which are, by and large, full of stoical reflections on the vanity of ambition, the value of friendship, the difficulty of being a Catholic in the early eighteenth century or, a related theme, dismal observations on the current political and religious controversies. Perhaps the most striking characteristic of these letters to Blount is the way in which Pope seems to move invariably to the general from the particular, from the relation of a certain concrete detail or piece of news or topical reference to philosophical abstraction, thus always moving from the tangible present to an overview of any situation, judging it by what he apparently perceived as timeless standards. As we have seen, Pope obviously identified Blount, Digby, Caryll and Hugh Bethel as almost archetypal 'good men'. One of the two letters from Blount to Pope included in the 1737 edition hints that for eighteenth-century Catholics no other option apart from the cultivation of virtue remained: 'Ambition is a vice that is timely mortify'd in us poor Papists; we ought in recompence to cultivate as many virtues in our selves as we can, that we may be truly great' (1737, 142-3). This letter also contains an interesting echo of Oxford's observation that he would be proud that posterity should know of his friendship with Pope; in Blount's words, 'Among my Ambitions, that of being a sincere friend is one of the chief; yet I will confess that I have a secret pleasure to have some of my descendents know, that their Ancestor was great with Mr. Pope' (1737, 143).

Most of Digby's letters to and from Pope, too, contain

the requisite reflections on the immorality of the age, the corrupting effects of its tendency to materialism (not surprisingly, these observations grow in intensity and frequency around the time of the collapse of the South Sea Bubble venture in 1721; see in particular 1737, 168 and 171), and gloomy prognostications on the disastrous effects to be anticipated from the religious and political controversies. Pope engages in a peculiarly Swiftian 'list' of targets of ridicule in a letter to Digby of 20 July 1720 when he condemns 'jews, jobbers, bubblers, subscribers, projectors, directors, governors, treasurers, &c. &c. &c.' (1737, 169) advising Digby to 'Turn your eyes and attention from this miserable mercenary period; and turn your self, in a just contempt of these sons of Mammon, to the contemplation of books, gardens, and marriage' (1737, 169). Domestic happiness or a close family circle was apparently an ideal for both Digby and Pope, with nearly every letter passing between them containing references either to Pope's mother or to Digby's sister, brothers, father or his cousin Miss Scudamore. The traditional virtues of the family or close personal relationships in general are seen to contrast starkly with the empty, transitory values of social ostentation. The message of this section of correspondence seems most aptly summed up in its concluding letter, in which Pope commiserates with Digby's brother on his correspondent's recent death: 'The friendship and society of good men does not only make us happier, but it makes us better' (1737, 183).

The 1735 and the 1737 editions also agree in printing

a section of letters to Gay. In the 1735 edition this section consists of twenty letters from Pope to Gay, one from Parnell to Gay, one from Pope to the Earl of Burlington, one from Arbuthnot to Pope and one from Atterbury to Pope. The 1737 edition transfers Pope's letter to Burlington and Arbuthnot's to Pope to the concluding section which consists of a selection of letters to and from Hugh Bethel (see 1737, 285-6 and 292); it transfers Atterbury's 'new' letter to the Atterbury section; it omits Parnell's letter to Gay as well as three of Pope's letters to Gay (one, undated, which follows Parnell's letter of 4 May 1714 in the 1735 edition, the succeeding letter, dated 23 October 1713 and one dated 16 December 1731). The 1737 edition adds a letter of 9 August 1718 from Gay to either Fortescue or Fenton as well as two from Gay to Pope of 2 August 1728 and 7 October 1732 and augments the correspondence by including four later letters from Pope to Gay, from 1730 up to Gay's death, with the final, undated letter to Swift (who is not, however, identified as its recipient) on Gay's sudden death. The 1737 edition, then, follows its usual practice in supplementing the letters from Pope to his friends printed in the 1735 edition with letters from these correspondents to Pope or to mutual friends.

As for the omissions, the first three letters deleted by the 1737 edition are, above all, quite personal letters. They might almost be classified as interdepartmental memoranda circulated by the Scriblerians among themselves; they are full of references to Scriblerian projects currently on hand, of greetings to be conveyed to fellow Scriblerians, and of hints of their joint judgments on or advice to Gay on his work, with the first, from Parnell, discussing

Gay's Trivia, the second referring to some 'ludicrous trifling Burlesque' (1735, 312) which Pope and Parnell advise Gay not to publish, and the third letter referring to the 'Poem of the Fan' which Pope says he intends to take with him to the Country 'to consider it at full Leisure' (1735, 313). As for the letter to Gay of 16 December 1731, printed in 1735 and omitted in 1737, it was first printed on 22 December 1731 in The Daily Post-Boy and reprinted on 23 December in The Daily Journal, without its author <sup>being</sup> acknowledged in either paper.<sup>46</sup> The letter consists of a defence of Pope's Epistle to Burlington with its controversial portrait of Timon, believed by many to refer to Pope's friend, the Duke of Chandos. This letter exasperatedly wonders 'Why, in God's Name, must a Portrait, apparently collected from twenty different Men, be applied to only one?' (1735, 336) While this letter does not appear in the folio of 1737, Pope printed it in the octavos of 1737-43 with the heading 'Mr. Cleland to Mr. Gay,' thus leading one to agree with the conclusion reached in 1751 by Warburton, Pope's first editor, that while the letter was attributed to Cleland, it was obviously written by Pope,<sup>47</sup> who chose not to acknowledge it after 1735.

As for the additions, as we saw in the last chapter, the letter of 9 August 1718, here attributed to Gay as sent to either Fenton or Fortescue, was also sent by Pope to several other correspondents. The letter from Gay printed in the 1737 edition refers to the controversy over the Odyssey, concluding with the observation that Gay and, it

is implied, such discerning readers as the Duchess of Queensberry, can find nothing to criticize in the translation: also 'Mr. Congreve admires with me your fortitude; and loves, not envies your performances, for we are not Dunces' (1737, 255). The second and last letter from Gay printed in this edition witnesses to, as Sherburn observes, 'a sterling integrity' in Gay's character;<sup>48</sup> the letter contains Gay's explanation of his refusal to follow fashion and to curry favour with the rich or famous by 'writing Panegyrick': 'There are flatterers good enough to be found, and I wou'd not interfere in any Gentleman's profession' (1737, 264).

The four letters from Pope to Gay added in the 1737 edition do not really add anything new to the 'story' the published correspondence can be seen to represent other than a fuller description of the last years of Gay's life - his occasional fits of depression at his situation of dependency with Pope urging him to write or at least to visit him and with constant reference made to the feelings of strength, security and happiness both Pope and Gay apparently derived from their friendships. Pope's letter of October 1730 includes an interesting insight into the value Pope placed upon his relationships with 'good, deserving individuals': 'Nature, temper, and habit, from my youth made me have but one strong desire; all other Ambitions, my person, education, constitution, religion, &c. conspir'd to remove far from me: That desire was to fix and preserve a few lasting, dependable friendships' (1737, 260).

As presented in either edition the section of Gay

letters provides, above all, the portrait of a friendship. This impression is heightened in the 1737 edition by its inclusion of letters from Gay to Pope, thus dispelling the one-sided perspective of the 1735 edition while, with its headings to the letters, retailing a chronological narrative of their relationship, with the first letters concerned with Pope's first favourable impressions of Gay, his 'merit and modesty'; Pope's 'desire to do him service and advice as to the study of Poetry'; Gay's first successes; his unsuccessful attempts to find patronage; Gay's 'abduction' by the Duchess of Queensberry and Pope's subsequent 'Complaints of his Absence'; and, finally, Pope's melancholy letter to Swift on Gay's death.

It is interesting that, while retaining the major features of this 'character' of Gay and the story of his friendship with Pope, the 1737 edition generally deletes the more specifically personal or topical references contained in letters printed in 1735. The 1737 edition's printing of Pope's letter to Gay of 11 September 1722, for example, deletes references to the 'Mrs. Blounts' and to 'Mrs. Pulteney' and omits altogether a story about Arbuthnot and his family which begins with the observation that 'Dr. Arbuthnot is a strange Creature; he goes out of Town, and leaves his Bastards at other Folks Doors' (1735, 319). Pope's letter to Gay of 18 August 1730 has its last paragraph deleted in the 1737 edition, a paragraph which contains references to such mutual friends as Fortescue, Arbuthnot, Swift and Cleland (see 1735, 329-30). The effect is rather one of generalization than of distortion, with any simply personal

or not immediately comprehensible allusions or references deleted in 1737.

The correspondence which follows the section of 'Letters to Several Persons' in the 1737 edition represented an almost wholly new addition to Pope's letters (one letter from Atterbury to Pope had been included in the 1735 edition) and its publication was undoubtedly of great interest to Pope's contemporaries. As a Catholic living in an age which morbidly dreaded Jacobite invasions (and which witnessed two in Pope's own lifetime), Pope, not surprisingly, was careful to dissociate himself from any activity or association which smacked of Jacobite sympathies. Sherburn surmises that it was this cautiousness, his wish to appear a political neutral, which led Pope to dissociate himself temporarily from the publication of the Duke of Buckingham's posthumous Works (a publication in which Atterbury himself was involved) as he was obviously aware of 'the Jacobite tendencies of some pieces included in the two volumes'.<sup>49</sup> In the event his prudence was justified. The publication was suppressed shortly after its appearance in January 1723 on the grounds that the Works contained slighting allusions to the Glorious Revolution. Atterbury's conviction on charges of treasonable conspiracy in a Jacobite plot must have intensified Pope's anxiety during this period. Atterbury had been one of Pope's most intimate friends for several years and Pope was naturally called as a witness at Atterbury's trial in May 1723. Although Atterbury's guilt has, in the past century, been established, from his references to Atterbury in his letters it is apparent that Pope never doubted his innocence.<sup>50</sup>



Spence's anecdotes and Pope's letters also make it clear that Pope highly respected Atterbury's opinion - sufficiently so, in fact, for the inveterate reviser of his own works, composed at however early an age, to burn his first epic poem, Alcander, on Atterbury's advice.<sup>51</sup> Despite their differing opinions on versification, with Atterbury a firm advocate of blank verse, the letters printed by Pope in 1737 deal largely with literary criticism, both of Pope's and others' work, with their topics ranging from Milton to the Arabian Nights. Atterbury was apparently not blindly partial to Pope's work; he could be a stern critic, as we see in a letter in which he observes: ' 'tis your misfortune now to write without a rival, and you may be tempted by that means to be more careless, than you would otherwise be in your composures' (1737, 214). These letters between Pope and Atterbury, unlike many of the correspondences as printed by Pope in 1735 and 1737, give the impression of an actual exchange of letters; a topic referred to in one letter is responded to in the following letter by its recipient or it reappears subsequently in the course of the correspondence. One such common topic in these letters was epitaphs (see 1737: 211, 215, 217, 228-9).

The correspondence also contains the themes which seem central to much of Pope's correspondence and especially to his later letters; these include, on the one hand, detestation of faction and controversy, reflections on the degeneracy of the age and philosophic musings on the vanity of ambition and, on the other, praise of the values of friendship and innocence, of a life of 'Good air, solitary

groves, and sparing diet' (1737, 223). Some of the headings of the letters of this correspondence read like the topics of humanist essays. Letter CXXXV, for example, is entitled 'From the Bishop of Rochester. His desire of Quiet, and Love of Books'. The reply to this letter, Letter CXXXVI, is headed 'An Invitation to Twickenham: the Vanity and Emptiness of the World'. The letters contain no references to Jacobitism or, indeed, any political references at all. They are the epistolary portrait of two learned, famous individuals intent on leading a good life. The three letters with which the section conclude represent the exception, with the first written on 10 April 1723 by Atterbury, incarcerated in the Tower, and the last two, full of Pope's fond expressions of farewell and of his conviction of Atterbury's innocence.

The correspondence does, however, also touch upon two controversial issues in Pope's life and career. Atterbury's letter of 26 February 1721-2 contains his request that Pope send him 'a compleat copy of those verses on Mr. Addison' (1737, 220) with Atterbury's observation that the delineation of such satirical portraits is obviously where Pope's 'real strength lies' and his suggestion that Pope 'will not suffer that talent to lye unemploy'd' (1737, 220). This passage is marked by a footnote which absolves Pope from responsibility for the publication of the 'Atticus' portrait: 'An imperfect Copy was got out, very much to the Author's surprize, who never would give any' (1737, 220n). Letters CXXV and CXXVI, the first from Atterbury, dated 8 November 1717 and the second, Pope's response, dated

20 November 1717, discuss the thorny issue of Pope's persecuted religion. Atterbury suggests in his letter that the recent death of Pope's father could represent the removal of an impediment to Pope's changing his religion. It was well known that Pope was not a devout, practising Catholic, and Atterbury's suggestion rather partakes of the nature of worldly advice than an evangelistic plea for Pope to convert. In Pope's response he readily acknowledges the material advantages he would gain from such a conversion but rejects the suggestion for two reasons: first, his belief that his mother would suffer from such a decision and, second that Pope believes that, by temperament as well as by inclination, he is neither ambitious in the worldly sense or, in the philosophical, a believer in a party, whether political or religious: 'I am a Catholick, in the strictest sense of the word...In a word, the things I have always wished to see, are not a Roman Catholick, or a French Catholick, or a Spanish Catholick, but a true Catholick: and not a King of Whigs, or a King of Tories, but a King of England' (1737, 208).

The 1737 edition concludes with another 'new' section entitled 'Letters to Hugh Bethel, Esq:'. As the major features of the five letters to Bethel which this section contains have been discussed at length in the last chapter (and as they are sufficiently similar to the moralistic, philosophical letters to Digby and Blount not to merit a separate discussion) it suffices to look here at the fourteen letters to and from other correspondents included in this section. The eight letters which follow the Bethel

letters - consisting of two from Pope to the 'Earl of Peterborow', four from Peterborough to Pope, one from Swift to Peterborough, and one from Pope to an unidentified correspondent - are basically letters of conversation, lighthearted chat, and references to mutual friends, with the last letter an extended comic essay on what Pope perceived as the dogmatic extravagancies of some schools of landscape gardening.

The subsequent letter, addressed to the Earl of Burlington and dated 1731, returns us to the poet's life as a 'warfare upon earth'. This letter was also printed in the 1735 edition, following Pope's letter to Gay of 16 December 1731 - the letter later attributed to Cleland - defending the Epistle to Burlington. In that letter, as we have seen, Pope wondered why 'must a Portrait, apparently collected from twenty different Men, be applied to only one?' (1735, 336) In this subsequent letter he has seemingly answered his own question, for in berating the fact that his poetical portrait of Timon has been generally applied to the Duke of Chandos he observes 'Yet I had no great cause to wonder, that a Character belonging to twenty shou'd be applied to one; since by that means, nineteen wou'd escape the Ridicule' (1735, 337).

The letter to a 'Mr. C.' dated 2 September 1731 which follows in the 1737 edition hints at a cooling of Pope's friendship with Caryll on the grounds that Caryll had failed to live up to Pope's chivalric ideal of him: 'I could not esteem your conduct, to an object of misery so near you as Mrs. \_\_\_' (1737, 287). This letter also contains

Pope's explanation of his negligence as a correspondent; he pleads lack of time, poor health, and the fact that 'there are Curlls in the world' (1737, 287). Pope makes, too, his old plea that he does not like to send news in his letters 'as I live altogether out of town, and have abstracted my mind (I hope) to better things than common news' (1737, 287). The next two letters discuss the recent death of Pope's mother and the subsequent, third letter, Pope's mourning at Gay's death and at Swift's 'living death'. The 1735 edition concludes with a letter from Arbuthnot to Pope of 17 July 1734; this is the penultimate letter in the 1737 edition, which was originally intended to conclude with Pope's reply. Arbuthnot's letter is in the nature of a farewell, with Arbuthnot conscious that he had but a short while left to live. The letter includes a 'Last Request' enjoining Pope to continue his satirical works, instructing as well as entertaining his age, but to satirize 'with a due regard to your own Safety; and study more to reform than chastise' (1737, 292). Pope's reply is, in Sherburn's words, 'most probably a "forgery", but it is certainly Pope's best defence in prose of his satire, and as such is invaluable.'<sup>52</sup> For our purposes, Pope's explanation of his use of the names of actual individuals in his satires is of particular importance. In terms reminiscent of the Augustans' praise of didactic biography he observes that

General propositions are obscure, misty, and uncertain, compar'd with plain, full, and home examples: Precepts only apply to our Reason, which in most men is but weak; Examples are pictures, and strike the Senses, nay raise the Passions, and call in those (the strongest

and most general of all motives) to the aid of reformation (1737, 293).

Pope also here acknowledges a belief in the humanist notion of the poet as instructor or moral guide, a role a poet had ususally assumed in past ages, as Pope observes: 'under the greatest Princes and best Ministers...moral Satyrists were most encouraged...Poets exercised the same jurisdiction over the Follies, as Historians did over the Vices of men' (1737, 295).

To summarize, as we saw in the first section of this chapter, the changes Pope made in his letters to Cromwell before publishing them were mainly minor ones. This assessment of Pope's editorial practices extends, according to Dearing and Sherburn, to most of the letters Pope revised for publication. Sherburn sums up the changes Pope made neatly; the

improved official texts illustrate Pope's principles of revision. Trivialities concerning daily life or finances are omitted; so also are small indecorous remarks, either slightly salacious or profane. Personal names also are frequently excised. Perhaps the most common changes are purely stylistic: the letters are made more concise, the sentences more straightforward, the diction more elegant.<sup>53</sup>

Most importantly, there is generally little change in the sense of any letter revised for publication except such as is due to omissions.<sup>54</sup> While these observations apply to the actual letters Pope revised before publication and which he then printed as if addressed to the recipients to whom the original letters had been sent, they do not completely cover, of course, the correspondences which Pope fabricated from, say, the Caryll letters, or the letters which he transposed to other correspondents. Pope's reasons

for either wholly fabricating a number of letters or transposing actual letters to other correspondents will be discussed at length in the seventh chapter.

It is interesting to note here that the effect of Pope's organization of letters in each successive edition was to make each correspondence represent a 'story'. As we have seen, it was a 'story' too whose emphasis was slightly altered in Pope's reorganization of the 1735 edition for republication in 1737. A fairly straightforward biographical glimpse of the poet through his own and his friends' letters was altered, especially in the case of the Addison letters - when all letters relating to his famous quarrel with Addison were placed in one section - to highlight certain aspects of Pope's character or periods of his career. The 1737 inclusion of the Atterbury letters seemed to fulfill a similar function; Pope's wish to explain his actions through the publication of relevant letters was, as we have seen, the main reason which apparently prompted his first publication of his own letters, the 1729 publication of a second volume of Wycherley's Posthumous Works.

Perhaps these three correspondences can be roughly included, in the 1737 edition at least, under the heading of vindication of Pope's character and, in the case of Wycherley and Atterbury, of his friends' characters while such correspondences as the Blount, Digby and Bethel letters, at the other extreme, represent Pope's glowing tribute to friends whom he perceived as archetypal 'good men'. Somewhere in the middle, between vindication and

eulogy, are the Cromwell, Gay, Congreve, Arbuthnot and Jervas letters which testify to Pope's genuine friendships and the lighthearted gaiety he engaged in with fellow Scriblerians, while the letters to Walsh, Steele, Trumbull, the Earl of Burlington and various 'Hons.' witness Pope's ability to inspire the admiration and affection of great literary or political figures of his age. Of course these 'headings' or categories are only provisional, intended to clarify rather than to define rigidly the nature of the guidelines Pope may have followed in his selection of letters to publish in 1735 and 1737. Several of the correspondences can be seen to fall under more than one of these headings; the Walsh letters, for example, not only testify to Walsh's and Pope's friendship but also go some way towards vindicating Pope's practice of literary 'borrowing'.

The editions of his letters Pope published reveal, through the medium of his diverse correspondences, the full spectrum of his activities and a comprehensive view of his character. They also serve the incidental but, as we shall see, undoubtedly deliberate purpose of serving as a portrait of his friends or as a memorial to them. Pope's habit of supplementing the letters in each successive edition with letters sent to him by his friends has the effect of offering the reader a glimpse at the characters of Pope's correspondents. Thus on the one hand we see Pope's facility for literary criticism and his knowledge of the Greek and Latin classics in the letters to Walsh and Cromwell; his facile adoption of the popular epistolary genre of the



'letter of wit' in his letters to Wycherley and of its sub-genre, 'letters to ladies' in his letters to a number of unidentified feminine correspondents; his equally accomplished adoption of the style and content of the popular periodical journal in the letters to Steele; the Senecan reflections on morality and mortality in the letters to Blount, Digby and Bethel; and, in the letters to Gay, Pope's capacity for close personal friendships. On the other hand, we are treated to a glimpse of Wycherley's wit, to Walsh's and Cromwell's erudition and critical skills, to Steele's kindness in encouraging the young contributor to his periodical journals, to the ethical philosophy of such individuals as Atterbury, Bethel, Digby and Blount, and to a very brief glimpse of the engaging personality of John Gay. Running through the woof of this narrative of benevolence and friendship are, as we have seen, several common threads: Pope's detestation of sectarianism of any kind and his sadness at the divisive effects of ambition, envy and spite and the ideals he propounded in his poetry as well - the ideal of a life of innocence and love, of books, friends and contemplation enjoyed in the peace of a garden.

CHAPTER SIX

THE LETTERS BETWEEN POPE, SWIFT AND BOLINGBROKE

In 1781 Samuel Johnson neatly summarized the response of many of his contemporaries to the selection of letters between Pope, Swift and Bolingbroke first published in 1741, in the following remarks, contained in his Life of Pope:

In the letters both of Swift and Pope there appears such narrowness of mind as makes them insensible of any excellence that has not some affinity with their own, and confines their esteem and approbation to so small a number, that whoever should form his opinion of the age from their representation would suppose them to have lived amidst ignorance and barbarity, unable to find among their contemporaries either virtue or intelligence, and persecuted by those that could not understand them.

While Johnson singled out Pope's and Swift's letters to each other for this condemnation, observing not only that Pope seemed always to write with 'his reputation in his head' but also that Swift wrote 'like a man who remembered that he was writing to Pope,'<sup>2</sup> other eighteenth-century critics of the letters usually included Bolingbroke in denunciations of these letters which resembled Johnson's. In 1755, for example, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was similarly exasperated by the air of superiority which Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke seemed to assume in their dealings with each other: Bolingbroke's 'confedracy with Swift and Pope puts me in mind of that of Bessus and his sword men...who endeavor to support themselves by giving certificates of each other's merit.'<sup>3</sup> In 1756 in An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope Joseph Warton

identified Pope's, Swift's and Bolingbroke's epistolary relationship as one constituting a 'kind of haughty triumvirate, in order to issue forth proscriptions, against all who would not adopt their sentiments and opinions.'<sup>4</sup> Warton, like Lady Mary and Dr. Johnson, was particularly infuriated by the condescension, sometimes amused, often contemptuous, they believed Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke adopted towards their contemporaries in their letters: 'by their own account of themselves, they would have the reader believe that they had engrossed and monopolized all the genius, and all the honesty of the age, in which, according to their opinion, they had the misfortune to live.'<sup>5</sup>

Thirty-five years later, in his 1797 edition of The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq., Warton amended his opinion of Swift's letters, describing them as 'written from the heart, and in an easy, familiar style.'<sup>6</sup> Pope's and Bolingbroke's letters, however, laboured under the old dispensation, with Bolingbroke's letters condemned as 'dissertations' and those of Pope's as too 'elegant and studied': 'All of them are over-crowded with professions of integrity and disinterestedness, with trite reflections on contentment and retirement; a disdain of greatness and courts; a contempt of fame; and an affected strain of commonplace morality.'<sup>7</sup>

The rehabilitation of Swift's, Pope's and Bolingbroke's letters to each other was not effected until the nineteenth century by the praise of such individuals as William Roscoe, Thackeray and Leslie Stephen. In his 1824 edition of Pope's Works Roscoe accorded the correspondence particular approval

as an 'example of a literary and friendly intercourse, carried on for nearly thirty years between the most distinguished characters of the age.'<sup>8</sup> It is the sense of Pope's letters presenting his friendship with the extraordinary individuals of his age which, rather than alienating Thackeray, as it had Warton, Lady Mary and Dr. Johnson, inspires him, no admirer of Pope's in general, to this praise of Pope's correspondence in 1851:

You live in them in the finest company in the world. A little stately, perhaps; a little apprêté and conscious that they are speaking to whole generations who are listening; but in the tone of their voices - pitched, as no doubt they are, beyond the mere conversation key - in the expression of their thoughts, their various views and natures, there is something generous, and cheering, and ennobling ...He who reads these noble records of a past age, salutes and reverences the great spirits who adorn it.

Perhaps it was the comforting distance of time, allowing the reader of these letters to detach himself from the criticisms of eighteenth-century society they contained, which enabled Stephen, too, in 1880 to express his 'conviction that there is scarcely a more interesting volume in the language than that which contains the correspondence of Swift, Bolingbroke, and Pope.'<sup>10</sup>

The chapter will consider this controversial selection of Pope's correspondence, with the first section devoted to a history of Pope's, Swift's and Bolingbroke's friendship and a general survey of the letters they wrote to each other. The second section will consist of a look at this correspondence as edited by Pope for publication in 1741. That Pope intended this section of his correspondence to be

considered separately from the general collection of letters to and from his friends he published in 1737 seems apparent both from the form in which Pope published these letters - separately and in a volume also containing the Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus - as well as from the fact that the letters to and from Swift and Bolingbroke that Pope published have tended to elicit special responses, that they have often been singled out by critics of Pope's letters for especial praise or blame. It is the contention of this thesis, as we shall see in the next chapter, that Pope did intend the Swift and Bolingbroke correspondence he published to be considered separately, that these published letters were to fulfill a variety of functions: to serve as a humanist document, to transmit to posterity the epistolary record of the friendship which subsisted between these three remarkable individuals, and to substantiate Pope's 'credentials as a didactic poet.'<sup>11</sup>

## i

But this is to anticipate. It is important, first, to outline the history of this correspondence and the significance it came to assume for Pope, Swift and Bolingbroke. From their first acquaintance these three friends were convinced of each other's remarkable talents and probable destiny as great political, literary or historical figures. An entry of 1711 in the Journal to Stella records the highly favourable impression Henry St. John, shortly to be elevated to the rank of Viscount Bolingbroke, made on Swift:

I think Mr. St. John the greatest young man I ever knew; wit, capacity, beauty, quickness of apprehension, good learning, and an excellent taste; the best orator in the house of commons, admirable conversation, good nature, and good manners; generous, and a despiser of money.<sup>12</sup>

Swift's contemporaries generally shared his enthusiasm - most unusual for cynical Swift - for Bolingbroke's genius and abilities, in recognition of a brilliant political precocity which had brought Bolingbroke in 1704 to the position of Secretary of War at the age of twenty-six and, after a brief fall from power, to the position of Secretary of State before the age of thirty.

According to Leslie Stephen, Pope first met Swift in 1713 when the Irish clergyman, transformed into highly influential political propagandist, 'at the height of his power, was pleased by his Windsor Forest, recommended it to Stella, and soon made the author's acquaintance.'<sup>13</sup> Swift soon afterwards introduced the promising young poet to his mighty friends and thus Pope became acquainted with Oxford, Bolingbroke and Atterbury.<sup>14</sup> In Walter Sichel's opinion, 'Bolingbroke had been deeply and frankly attached to Pope ever since Swift brought the young poet to the patron of his "Iliad".'<sup>15</sup>

Mutual assistance as well as admiration was an important element of the early friendship between Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke subscribed for a set of the Iliad while Swift was instrumental in securing not only Bolingbroke's but a great number of other friends' subscriptions for Pope's projected translation. According to Sherburn, 'Swift became

in the autumn of 1713 about the most active promoter of the subscription to Pope's Iliad.<sup>16</sup> A famous anecdote of the period related by Bishop Kennet pictures Swift

in all his glory...bustling about the royal ante-chamber, swelling with conscious importance, distributing advice, promising patronage, whispering to ministers, and filling the whole room with his presence. He finally "instructed a young nobleman that the best poet in England was Mr. Pope, a Papist, who had begun a translation of Homer into English verse, for which he must have them all subscribe; 'for,' says he, 'the author shall not begin to print till I have a thousand guineas for him!'"<sup>17</sup>

Pope, who was always acutely conscious of favours conferred or denied, never, on the one hand, failed to remember gratefully Swift's assistance at this crucial juncture in his career. On the other hand, he equally never forgot that Addison, who had at first encouraged Pope in the project of the translation, 'did absolutely no soliciting of subscribers'<sup>18</sup> and, in backing the rival Tickell translation, actually tried to obstruct Pope's success. In a particularly telling remark in a letter to Caryll of June 1714 Pope observes that the affair of the subscriptions has revealed to him both his friends and his enemies: 'May I venture too, without being thought [guilty] of affectation, to say it was not the least of my designs in proposing this subscription, to make some trial of my friends on all sides?' (I, 233) Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, the head of the Tory ministry and Bolingbroke's chief rival for power, and Arbuthnot were among the early subscribers to the Iliad whom Pope seems to identify as his 'friends' in this letter.

The notion of mutual assistance also played a large part

in Bolingbroke's founding of the Brothers Club in 1711, from which the Scriblerus Club evolved. Conscious of the power of the pen in the early eighteenth-century wars of propaganda, Bolingbroke was anxious to enlist the support of able writers to the Tory cause, establishing the Brothers Club as a rival to the Whig Kit-Kat Club.<sup>19</sup> The mainly political basis of the Brothers Club, however, bored Swift and his closest literary friends, who broke away to form the Scriblerus Club, with Swift, Pope, Parnell, Arbuthnot and Gay as its principal members. As Bolingbroke somewhat misleadingly observed of the Brothers Club, 'improvement of friendship, and the encouragement of letters' were to be the 'two great ends' of that society.<sup>20</sup> These were the actual as well as the professed aims of the Scriblerus Club, aims blended in the remarkably similar philosophic outlook maintained by the fellow Scriblerians. The Club's emphasis on what Rachel Trickett identifies as the 'learned traditions of humanist satire',<sup>21</sup> had been adopted by its individual members before the Club was even formed or its members acquainted - satire of pedantry, for example, as Sherburn observes, played a part in Swift's Tale of a Tub and in Pope's Essay on Criticism.<sup>22</sup> Pope's proposal in Spectator 457 for a burlesque journal entitled An Account of the Works of the Unlearned, a proposal which developed into the Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, proved particularly congenial to this club and gave it coherence of purpose and a pattern for its subsequent satire.

In Emrys Jones's opinion, the Scriblerus Club has



a markedly retrospective, even somewhat archaic, character for the reign of Queen Anne. In an age much given to club activity this one stands out for certain qualities which recall nothing so much as the circle of More and Erasmus: not only literary cultivation and critical stringency but an<sup>23</sup> almost conspiratorial intimacy and high spirits.

Jones points out some of the obvious parallels, that Gulliver's Travels is 'of course, an example of Utopian fiction' while the Dunciad 'recalls The Praise of Folly.'<sup>24</sup>

It is quite possible that Swift and Pope consciously identified themselves with the early humanists in their own advocacy of the ethical and aesthetical value of classical learning. Swift once remarked that 'More was the person of the greatest virtue these islands ever produced,'<sup>25</sup> and he perhaps linked the religious convictions which prompted his defection to the Tories to the religious integrity More died for. On the evidence of Pope's references to Erasmus in his poetry and letters, it is apparent that he venerated and even, possibly, modelled himself upon what he perceived as Erasmus's defiance of the narrow dogmatism of medieval scholasticism; Pope admired Erasmus's defence of moderation and tolerance and saw him as largely responsible for the Renaissance revival of interest in the hitherto generally inaccessible works of classical authors. Erasmus, of course, assisted More in a translation of Lucian and in his Greek translation of the New Testament made that text, too, more generally accessible while threatening the ascendancy of the 'Latin Vulgate which had been the Church's official text of scripture since Jerome in the fourth century.'<sup>26</sup> It is interesting that the identification of Swift with Erasmus and

More was made by William King in a letter to Swift of 24 June 1737 in which he urges Swift to visit England once more and to stay at 'St. Mary-Hall' which could then boast of having lodged 'a triumvirate, that is not to be matched in any part of the learned world, Sir Thomas More, Erasmus, and the Drapier.'<sup>27</sup>

There is also the fact that, in an age which witnessed the founding of the Bank of England, the proliferation of stockjobbers, the growth of huge moneyed and trading companies such as the East India Company and those associated with the South Sea Bubble, and a dramatically rising national debt, Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke increasingly felt themselves to constitute a beleaguered minority of individuals believing, like Erasmus, in 'classical studies as the panacea of civilization, provided they were made serviceable to pure Christianity.'<sup>28</sup> While Erasmus and More were largely responsible for rescuing classical studies from oblivion or neglect, Swift and Pope may have felt responsible for maintaining the cultural standards bequeathed by the Renaissance humanists, seeing themselves as a defensive alliance of humanists in a Britain increasingly absorbed in matters of material rather than moral progress.

This, of course, was especially true after 1714 when the death of Queen Anne signalled the collapse of the Oxford-Bolingbroke ministry and the beginning of Walpole's twenty years of Whig dominance. Yet even before this catastrophe the prospect of the humanist nightmare of cultural collapse occupied Swift's, Pope's and Bolingbroke's imagination. It

has often been remarked that the golden days when Swift, Prior, Pope and Gay were the intimates of Lord Treasurer Oxford and Secretary of State Bolingbroke represented the closest English parallel to the Augustan Age of Rome, when Augustus and Maecenas had similarly favoured the best writers of their age - Virgil, Horace and Livy - with their patronage and friendship. But this very approximation of early eighteenth-century England with Augustan Rome meant that, before the proudly 'Augustan' Englishman loomed always the model of Rome and its decline. For Pope, Swift and Bolingbroke the decline of Rome was ominously paralleled by what they perceived as the corruption attendant upon the new moneyed interest, ignorant of the moral heritage of classical literature and precept, which was usurping power from the landed gentry, the traditional rulers of society. They believed that the old social hierarchy had at least guaranteed virtuous, disinterested government: 'The function of governing the commonwealth rested with the nobility and the gentry, those who were high born, whose virtue put them on a pedestal, and whose wealth put them above private and domestic cares.'<sup>29</sup> The bitterness and disillusionment expressed in their letters after 1714 must have sprung in part, and especially for Swift and Bolingbroke, from disappointment at their sudden exclusion from politics, but it also represented the obvious humanist response: the humanist assumption positing that a 'principled, educated ruling class' is a key to the 'good society' was completely ignored by Walpole, whose 'aversion to excellence was almost pathological' and who 'systematically alienated

every talented man who attempted to ally himself with the Government.'<sup>30</sup>

In their identification of cultural with political collapse, the Scriblerians finding politics empty and then, in any case, being denied participation in England's political life, turned naturally to satire on abuses of learning. The works which were produced as a result of the stimulus provided by this club, including Peri Bathous, the Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, Gulliver's Travels and the Dunciad, are linked by a serious purpose in the guise of humour: the ridicule of wrong as opposed to right reason, of false or specialized versus true, general learning, and of futile pedantry or abstract speculation as contrasted to art which is the expression and affirmation of cultural values. Its method was anticipated by Erasmus who argued for the usefulness of learned wit in his letter to Thomas More which prefaces Praise of Folly and dedicates the work to him: 'How unjust it is to allow every other walk of life its relaxations but none at all to learning, especially when trifling may lead to something more serious!'<sup>31</sup> Erasmus also anticipated the justification the Scriblerians apparently tacitly accepted in relentlessly parodying or satirizing such of their contemporaries as Ambrose Philips, Sir Richard Blackmore, Theobald and Bentley: 'Now for the charge of biting sarcasm. My answer is that the intelligent have always enjoyed freedom to exercise their wit on the common life of man, and with impunity, provided that they kept their liberty within reasonable limits.'<sup>32</sup>

As for Swift's, Pope's and Bolingbroke's correspondence, it is at once ironic and appropriate that they should have written some of their best letters to each other. The irony and appropriateness both arise from the fact that the three friends actually spent very little time together after their first acquaintance and year of intimacy, at least for Pope and Swift, as fellow Scriblerians. After 1714 Swift was exiled to a 'living death' as the Dean of St. Patrick's in Dublin, Oxford was sent to the Tower under impeachment, Bolingbroke fled to France, and in 1715 even Pope suffered from the general political turmoil in the form of a proclamation issued in expectation of an invasion by the Pretender which forbade Catholics to come within ten miles of London.

Bolingbroke was not pardoned until 1723 but his 'estates, his title and his seat in the Lords were still forfeited.'<sup>33</sup> He visited England briefly on receiving news of his pardon but did not return again until 1725 when his right to own and inherit property was restored; Walpole's hatred and fear of him as a potential rival prevented the restoration of Bolingbroke's political power and privileges.<sup>34</sup> Swift made two short visits to Pope and other friends near London in the summers of 1726 and 1727, but the second visit was cut short by his recurring giddiness and deafness - complaints he blamed for his failure to visit England again. Bolingbroke's own residence in England and personal leadership of the Opposition against Walpole ended in 1735 following Walpole's fierce denunciation of him in Parliament: 'Bolingbroke himself

began to fear that Walpole might be ready to impeach him once more.<sup>35</sup> Apart from an occasional visit, Bolingbroke, established in France, did not return to England until his father's death in 1742.

Thus Pope's correspondence with Swift lasted around twenty-seven years, during which time they only met in the summers of 1726 and 1727. His correspondence with Bolingbroke spanned about twenty years, with most of those years spent apart. Until Bolingbroke obtained his pardon in 1723, correspondence with him was a treasonable offence, explaining the fact that the first letter to him from Pope that has survived is dated 9 April 1724. The three friends had few forms of communication alternative to the letter. It linked these three 'exiles', separated by circumstance but bound by the ties of a deep friendship or sympathy founded on an experience of shared fortune and adversity as well as by a common outlook on what they perceived as the degeneration of England under Walpole.

In the first letter preserved of the ninety or so letters between Swift and Pope which have survived, a letter dated 8 December 1713, Pope responds to Swift's ironic offer of twenty guineas to change his religion. Like most of the letters Pope wrote at this time, it is a 'letter of wit'. Yet Pope, revealing that 'imitative faculty which so often goes with literary genius,'<sup>36</sup> does not engage here in the préciosité of the early letters to Wycherley and Cromwell but adopts the idiosyncratic wit which sharply distinguished Swift's political propaganda from that of his contemporaries.

Pope adopts, for example, Swift's habit of expressing his gratitude indirectly in the opening of this letter in which he obliquely thanks Swift for his assistance in procuring subscriptions for the Iliad: 'I believe it will be better worth my while to propose a Change of my Faith by Subscription, than a Translation of Homer' (I, 199).

The commendation of a friend's virtues is, in Swiftian fashion, also expressed indirectly; Pope next praises Swift by including, in his list of stipulations which must be fulfilled before he will change his faith, the case of one 'Dr. Swift, a dignified Clergyman, but One who, by his own Confession, has composed more Libels than Sermons' (I, 201). Pope continues in ironic vein, disguising his praise with a veil of sanctimoniousness: 'If it be true, what I have heard often affirmed by innocent People, that too much Wit is dangerous to Salvation, this unfortunate Gentleman must certainly be damned to all Eternity.' Pope's hopes for Swift's 'Salvation' involve a comic reversal of normal expectation: 'But I hope his long Experience in the World, and frequent Conversation with Great Men, will cause him (as it has some others) to have less and less Wit every Day' (I, 201). Pope can thus express his gratitude and admiration for Swift through the impersonal medium of the discussion of the case of this 'Dr. Swift'; Pope claims

I should not think my own Soul deserved to be saved, if I did not endeavour to save his, for I have all the Obligations in Nature to him. He has brought me into better Company than I cared for, made me merrier, when I was sick, than I had a Mind to be, put me upon making Poems on Purpose that he might alter them, &c (I, 201).

Pope's earliest letter to Swift also includes several examples of that habit of referring the present to the past or of allusion to classical literature, history or philosophy which is a feature of much eighteenth-century correspondence and especially of the letters of Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke. William Irving characterizes this phenomenon in his observation that their letters are remarkable not only for the 'Literary imagination and fine phrasing' they display but also for Swift's, Pope's and Bolingbroke's 'curious refusal to approach an idea directly and simply.'<sup>37</sup> Irving's description of this 'metaphysical' epistolary<sup>style</sup> acknowledges Pope's, Swift's and Bolingbroke's indebtedness to the literature of the past; the style

required a skill born of wide reading in the tradition, eternally careful practice, but most of all the type of mind that was stored with vast accumulations of knowledge, so that the interrelations of various levels of thought, the occult resemblances, the innuendoes, the sardonic humor of things as they are, along with a vast and curiously decorative allusiveness might be brought into play.<sup>38</sup>

In his letter to Swift Pope draws an ironic parallel between Swift's offer of twenty guineas for Pope's religious conversion to Judas's betrayal of Christ:

Sure no Clergyman ever offered so much, out of his own Purse, for the Sake of any Religion. 'Tis almost as many Pieces of Gold, as an Apostle could get of Silver from the Priests of old, on a much more valuable Consideration (I, 199).

In the manner of Swift's favourite, La Rochefoucauld, Pope then engages in a few ironic maxims, acknowledging, for example, 'I am afraid there is no being at once a Poet, and a good Christian' (I, 199). He plays with ironic, imaginative parallels between his duties as a Catholic and the duties he



expects to assume as a courtier and a Protestant when, in both capacities, he will acknowledge the supreme authority of Queen Anne as both head of the church and of the state. The letter concludes upon just the sort of neat paradox in which Swift delighted in his political pamphlets and in his letters of raillery to his friends, as Pope confides, after enumerating his many obligations to a certain Dr. Swift that 'I once thought I could never have discharged my Debt to his Kindness, but have lately been informed, to my unspeakable Comfort, that I have more than paid it all' (I, 201). Pope is referring here to the maxim from Montaigne's Essays which affirms that 'the Person, who receives a Benefit, obliges the Giver; for since the chief Endeavour of one Friend is to do Good to the other, He, who administers both the Matter, and Occasion, is the Man that is Liberal' (I, 201).

Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke relied heavily in their letters upon a common acquaintance with classical and continental literature for a variety of reasons. Although literary allusion was probably partly habitual for them, it also allowed Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke, suspected of Jacobitism by Walpole's government, which apparently made a regular practice of opening their letters to each other, to adopt a sort of shorthand or coded form of expression; in disparaging description of events of the age of Augustus, for example, the three were able to voice obliquely their criticism of the age of Walpole. A dependence on each other's ability to recognize and to interpret properly classical anecdote or allusion enabled Swift, Pope and

Bolingbroke, even from the extremes of their geographical exile, to constitute a closed, intimate social circle. Reference to classical literature may have served, too, as a kind of rebuke to Walpole's anti-intellectual ministry, with Pope, Swift and Bolingbroke seeing themselves as guardians of the dying humanist culture.

We may also see in their habit of drawing parallels between the past and the present their humanist perception of a stable psychology of human nature which would allow the comprehension of the present in terms of the past. It is this belief which prompts Bolingbroke to assert, for example, in his formal letter to Lord Bathurst, Of the True Use of Retirement and Study:

On many subjects, such as the general laws of natural religion, and the general rules of society and good policy, men of all countries and languages, who cultivate their reason, judge alike. The same premises have led them to the same conclusions.<sup>39</sup>

Thus the philosophy of the ancients was seen to be perfectly applicable to the events of the present, as we see in two of the earliest letters preserved of Swift's correspondence with Bolingbroke. The letters, written in 1714, were sent to and from Letcombe, a village fifty miles north of London, where Swift had retired in disgust and in apprehension at what he predicted as the imminent, accrimonious collapse of the Oxford-Bolingbroke ministry. His fears were justified, in the event, as we see by the letter of Bolingbroke's of 3 August to which Swift's of 7 August is in response; the two letters seem to represent an almost archetypal humanist dialogue. Bolingbroke writes: 'The Earl of Oxford was remov'd on Tuesday, the Queen dyed on Sunday...what a world

is this, & how does fortune banter us?'<sup>40</sup> Swift's response was immediate and characteristic: 'It is true, my Lord, the events of five days last week might furnish morals for another volume of Seneca.'<sup>41</sup>

The flow of the early witty, lighthearted letters between Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke was, inevitably, interrupted by the events of the summer of 1714, and the tone of the correspondence came to assume a slightly more sober, philosophic air. The change in both manner and matter can be observed in comparing letters between Swift and Pope before and after the Queen's death and the subsequent fall of the Tories. The last letter from Pope to Swift before these disastrous events exhibits the sheer playfulness characteristic of the early correspondence as Pope comically lists the various uses to which Swift may put his letter:

I know by experience a letter is a very useful, as well as amusing thing: If you are too busied in State-affairs to read it, yet you may find entertainment in folding it into divers figures, either doubling it into a pyramidical, or twisting it into a Serpentine form to light a pipe: or if your disposition should not be so mathematical, in taking it with you to that place where men of studious minds are apt to sit longer than ordinary; where after an abrupt division of the paper, it may not be unpleasant to try to fit and rejoyne the broken lines together (I, 230-1; 1741).

Pope's perception of the letter itself as a physical object is reminiscent of Swift's playing upon that perception in the Journal to Stella, in which he exaggeratedly suffered over every ink blot, stain and misspelling, reminding his two correspondents that a letter consists of paper to be written upon and of the ink and pen which form words.

By 1715, however, Swift was not in the mood for that sort of humour. In the letter he sent to Pope in June of that year, the first letter preserved between the two of the period following the death of the Queen, Swift reproaches Pope for a casual, witty letter, now lost, to which his own is a reply:

you must give me leave to add one thing, that you talk at your ease, being wholly unconcerned in publick events: for, if your friends the Whigs continue, you may hope for some favour; if the Torys return, you are at least sure of quiet. You know how well I lov'd both Lord Oxford and Bolingbroke, and how dear the Duke of Ormond is to me: do you imagine I can be easy while their enemies are endeavouring to take off their heads? (I, 301; 1741)

In a letter written in 1723 Swift attributes Pope's political neutrality to his profession: 'Your happiness is greater than your Merit in chusing your Favorites so Indifferently among either party, this you owe partly to your Education and partly to your Genius, employing you in an Art where Faction has nothing to do' (II, 199; 1741). The remark which follows these observations is typical: 'I suppose Virgil and Horace are equally read by Whigs and Toryes' (II, 199).

Swift was just in pointing out to Pope his fortunate avoidance of partisanship. His relationship with Walpole in 1724 was sufficiently friendly for the minister to subscribe for ten sets of the Odyssey (II, 276), and in 1725 Walpole served Pope by 'securing an abbey' for his 'early benefactor, Father Southcote' (II, 294n). Despite Walpole's patronage of Pope's close friend Fortescue, however, their relations apparently deteriorated, probably as a result of Pope's proudly advertised intimacy with Bolingbroke. The period

1733 to 1740 also saw Pope, under Bolingbroke's influence, engaged in politics to the extent that his Ethic Epistles, or Moral Essays, and the Imitations of Horace might be seen as an 'attack on the Government.'<sup>42</sup> But, as John Butt points out, this attack was 'if not absolutely disinterested, at any rate the nearest thing we are likely to find to an attack based purely on moral principles.'<sup>43</sup>

Pope's correspondence with Swift was continued sporadically, at infrequent intervals, until Bolingbroke's pardon and his return to England inspired fresh hopes that the three friends might, once again, be reunited. In August 1723 Pope confides to Swift that 'Lord Bolingbroke is now return'd (as I hope) to take me, with all his other Hereditary Rights' (II, 184; 1741). In the early, frequent letters of the resumed correspondence between the three, Pope and Bolingbroke often jointly composing letters to Swift, attest to a contempt of the world, to a philosophic indifference to both its cares and joys - remarks which Swift disdains as affectation. 'I have no very strong Faith in you pretenders to retirement,' he observed in a letter of September 1723, 'you are not of an age for it, nor have you gone through either good or bad Fortune enough to go into a Corner and form Conclusions de contemptu mundi (II, 199; 1741). As a correspondent Swift always exercised a tonic influence over Pope and Bolingbroke in his refusal to accept cant in their letters to him or in his challenging their philosophic assumptions.

With Bolingbroke's purchase of Dawley, an estate near Pope's house at Twickenham, in 1725, the letters between

Bolingbroke and Pope in particular assume the air of an intimate conversation which is interrupted by Bolingbroke's occasional trips to France. Bolingbroke began to exert a considerable influence on Pope. We see in a letter from Pope to him in 1724 that Bolingbroke had urged the poet to turn from translation to original composition in 'hopes of the Improvement of the English Language, and the glory of its Poetry' (II, 226). In response to Bolingbroke's ambition that his poetry and the English language should pass, together, to posterity, Pope observes that Walpole's government is ruinous to both aims: 'A State constantly divided into various Factions and Interests Occasions an eternal swarm of bad Writers' (II, 227-8). This concern with stabilizing the English language was, of course, also shared by Swift who published in 1712 a pamphlet cast into the form of a letter to the Earl of Oxford entitled A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue.

The notion that cultural collapse is attendant upon the dissolution of social order is a favourite preoccupation of the letters between Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke. The humanist mentality abstracting the general from the particular divined in the breakdown of England's traditional hierarchy the signs of a corresponding collapse in culture and morality. In a letter to Pope of 1721 Swift confesses that 'It is true, I have been much concerned for several years past, upon account of the publick as well as of myself, to see how ill a taste for wit and sense prevails in the world, which politicks and South-sea, and Party, and Opera's and

Masquerades have introduced' (II, 66-7).

Petrarch had believed that eloquence is 'not only the proper expression' but also the 'proper guerdon of virtus.'<sup>44</sup> Accordingly in the Dunciad we see that good writing is portrayed as a register of moral virtue; the satiric point of the poem rests on this belief as Pope, in his Scriblerian detestation of hack writing and pedantry, reflects the humanist precept which identifies ethics with expression. The same belief enables Swift, in a letter to Pope, to describe one Richard Daniel as a 'damnable poet, and consequently a public enemy to mankind' (III, 21). The appointment of Eusden and then Colley Cibber to the poet laureateship and the popularity of 'the thresher poet', Stephen Duck, at court only confirmed Swift's, Pope's and Bolingbroke's pessimism. In a letter to Gay in 1730 Pope gloomily observes:

I can tell you of no one thing worth reading, or seeing; the whole age seems resolv'd to justify the Dunciad...There may indeed be a Wooden image or two of Poetry set up, to preserve the memory that there once were bards in Britain...At present the poet Laureat and Stephen Duck serve for this purpose; a drunken sot of a Parson...and an honest industrious Thresher (III, 142-3; 1737).

Bolingbroke's letter to Pope urging him to compose original poetry in English both to stabilize and to glorify the language is characteristic of Bolingbroke's epistolary style. The wide reading and vast store of knowledge which Irving observes Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke extensively to draw upon in their letters is manifest here in Bolingbroke's apparent inability to make a direct statement without

reference to classical precept or authority, often embellished with quotations. Bolingbroke pleads his case by citing the improvements wrought in Latin by Virgil: 'Claudian, nay Lucan who was so much elder, had not certainly the Diction of Virgil; but if Virgil had not Writ, both these, and Silius Italicus and several others, who came between them, or after them, would have writ worse; and we should find the Latin tongue degenerate' (II, 219).

Bolingbroke then addresses himself to one of his favourite preoccupations - the notion of posterity - in comparing Pope's situation as a poet in England with that of Homer who 'wrote for a parcel of little States who compos'd in his days a Nation much inferior every way to what our Nation is in yours...your Theatre is vastly more considerable than that of Hesiod and Homer, and you will conceive much more reasonable hopes than they could entertain of immortality' (II, 219).

While the letters between Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke were infrequent in the early years of their 'exiles' and separation, the correspondence of all the Scriblerians increased dramatically when Swift's visit to England in 1726 seemed a likelihood and continued until the late 1730's, when Swift's ill health increasingly incapacitated him. In the period 1714-1720 only one letter from Swift to Pope survives whereas for the period 1720-1736 a rough count of traceable letters, either preserved or mentioned, yields forty-four letters from Swift to Pope, twelve from Swift to Bolingbroke, two from Swift to both, fifteen to Gay and four to Arbuthnot. One reason for this dramatic increase in the



frequency of their correspondence lies in the interest Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke found in each other's work. After Swift's visits in 1726 and 1727 the three friends increasingly worked together on projects or depended on each other's opinion or advice on works in progress. Their intention to form a literary alliance reminiscent of the Scriblerus Club is apparent in a letter of 1725 from Pope to Swift. Writing in a spirit of optimism possibly generated by Bolingbroke's settling shortly before at neighbouring Dawley Pope observes 'After so many dispersions, and so many divisions, two or three of us may yet be gather'd together; not to plot, not to contrive silly schemes of ambition...but to divert ourselves, and the world too if it pleases; or at worst, to laugh at others as innocently and as unhurtfully as at ourselves' (II, 321; 1741).

The Scriblerian spirit of mutual assistance was quickly revived. Pope helped Swift to publish surreptitiously Gulliver's Travels in 1726 and, as Archibald Elias observes, 'collaborating with him in the Miscellanies beginning 1727, Pope acquired the reputation of being Swift's prime agent, friend, and collaborator.'<sup>46</sup> Pope depended equally on Swift. That Pope saw Swift as an ally in his war against the dunces is the message of his dedication of the Dunciad to him, a work which, like Erasmus's Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum, ironically reverses the humanist notion of fame in its mock celebration of dull writers. As Jones points out, too, Pope's dedication of his 'Praise of Dulness, the Dunciad'

to Swift recalls Erasmus's dedication of the Praise of Folly to More, a dedication in which Erasmus similarly begged More to protect the work dedicated to him.<sup>47</sup> Pope relied heavily on Swift's advice and, in his absence, increasingly on Bolingbroke's. Spence recalls that in 1734 Pope described his reliance on Bolingbroke for the ideas which appeared in the Essay on Man in these terms: 'He mentioned then, and at several other times, how much (or rather how wholly) he himself was obliged to [Bolingbroke] for the thoughts and reasonings in his moral work.'<sup>48</sup> In 1732 Pope suggested in a letter to Swift that, in Swift's absence, Bolingbroke had come to assume the role of his 'chief Critick'.<sup>49</sup>

Swift's visits also revived the camaraderie of the former Scriblerians. Shortly after his first visit he was sent the famous 'Cheddar' letter written by at least five of his friends and including a recipe for stewing veal, in doggerel verse, as well as maps and picture. Discussion of the immensely popular Gulliver's Travels, which Swift refused to acknowledge, dominates the letters of 1726 and is indicative of this revival. Swift must have enjoyed the responses to his Travels recorded in the letters of his friends. Dr. Arbuthnot, for example, informed him that

some Folks that I know went immediately to their Maps to look for Lillypott, & reckond it a fault in their Maps not to have sett down. Lord Scarborough Mett with a Sea Captain that Knew Guliver but he said the bookseller was mistaken in placing his habitation at Rothereth for he was sure he livd at Wapping (II, 411).

Swift wrote to Pope of a bishop in Dublin who said 'that book

was full of improbable lies, and for his part, he hardly believed a word of it' (II, 417; 1741). A number of remarkable coincidences surrounding Swift's hero are also recorded in the letters. In a letter to Swift of March 1728 Pope encloses 'a very odd thing, a paper printed in Boston in New England, wherein you'll find a real person, a member of their Parliament, of the name of Jonathan Gulliver' (II, 479-80; 1741). In his reply Swift records the case related to him by a judge of one Lemuel Gulliver who had a cause in the assizes and 'lost it on his ill reputation of being a liar' (II, 492; 1741). The spirit of the Scriblerus Club survived not only in their interest in the book but in the readiness of Swift's friends to join in spoofs and playful imitations of Gulliver. Mrs. Howard sent Swift a letter written in the language of Lilliputians, Brobdingnagians and Yahoos.<sup>50</sup> She and the Prince and Princess of Wales composed a letter from 'The Prince of Lilliput' to 'Stella',<sup>51</sup> while a letter from Pope of February 1726 enquires whether Swift has yet received 'some commendatory verses from a Horse and a Lilliputian, to Gulliver; and an heroic Epistle of Mrs. Gulliver' (II, 426; 1741) which he had written.

The Scriblerian spirit was compounded of two elements. There was the sheer playfulness of the Scriblerians' love of learned wit in the service of unmasking man's hypocrisies and deceptions. Beneath the froth of delicate sarcasm and a humanist philosophy which may now strike us as little more than the indulgence of nostalgic conservatism lay profound

if gloomy convictions on the nature of man and society. It was in a letter to Pope dated 29 September 1725 that Swift drew his famous distinction between man as an 'animal rationale' and man as only 'rationis capax,' describing this distinction as the 'great foundation of Misanthropy' upon which the 'whole building of my Travells is erected' (II, 325; 1741). Swift's pessimism was not to Pope's liking who, in the letter he wrote in reply, described his hopes that one day he, Swift and Bolingbroke might 'meet like the Righteous in the Millennium, quite in peace, divested of all our former passions, smiling at all our own designs, and content to enjoy the Kingdome of the Just in Tranquillity' (II, 332; 1741). He admits that he is dismayed to find that Swift would 'rather be employ'd as an Avenging Angel of wrath, to break your Vial of Indignation over the wretched pityful creatures of this World; nay would make them Eat your Book, which you have made as bitter a pill for them as possible' (II, 332-3; 1741).

Bolingbroke joined Pope in condemning Swift's pessimism as we see in a letter from Gay to Swift describing his reaction to Gulliver: 'Your Lord \_\_\_\_\_ is the person who least approves it, blaming it as a design of evil consequence to depreciate human nature' (II, 413; 1741). Yet in his response to Pope's letter Swift observes:

I tell you after all that I do not hate Mankind, it is vous autres who hate them because you would have them reasonable Animals, and are Angry for being disappointed. I have always rejected that Definition and made another of my own. I am no more angry with \_\_\_\_\_ Then I was with the Kite that last week flew away with one of my Chickins and yet I was pleas'd when one of my Servants Shot him two days after (II, 343; 1741).

It was characteristic of Swift to choose to dwell upon the gloomier implication of the physicotheology of the Great Chain of Being. While Pope and Soame Jenyns were blithely asserting their optimism in man's important position in a universal scheme ensuring the 'best of all possible worlds,' Swift bitterly reversed the practice of self-laudation by focusing on man as risen ape rather than the more popular Augustan vision of him as fallen angel. By likening man to animals, in this case, to birds, he shakes the foundations of early eighteenth-century optimism in man's inherent goodness and capacity for reason. The cited passage is also characteristic of Swift's prose style: its use of concrete detail to render vividly what, in Pope's or Bolingbroke's writings, might remain abstract ideas.

The letters of the late 1720's and the early 1730's consist largely of schemes for yet another reunion which, in the event, never happened. Swift often urged Pope to venture on a crossing of the Channel, promising comfortable lodgings at the deanery, lower taxes, and the services of his housekeeper to act as his nurse. But Pope declined a favourable opportunity to travel comfortably to Dublin by coach, explaining to the somewhat irate Swift his belief that sea travel would, literally, kill him. In 1729 Swift contemplated a trip to Aix-la-Chapelle with Lady Bolingbroke but abandoned the plan because of his increasing difficulties with his hearing; as he explained to Pope, 'a foreign language is mortal to a deaf man' (III, 21). Swift's deafness coupled with the giddiness which had afflicted him since his youth were, in addition to the bother of a law suit to recover the

greater part of his fortune, the major obstacles preventing Swift's return to England. Gay's hopes for Swift's imminent arrival were, however, sufficiently sanguine in 1732 for him to 'expect a summons one day or other to come to Bristol, in order to be your Guide to Amesbury' (III, 290). But an unlucky fall lamed Swift, who explained that 'To talk of riding and walking is insulting me, for, I can as soon fly as do ether' (III, 285; 1741). Gay's sudden death in December 1732 effectively put an end to the hopes the friends entertained of a reunion; in his letter informing Swift of Gay's death Pope noted, 'I shall never see you now I believe; one of your principal Calls to England is at an end' (III, 335; 1741).

With the hopes of ever meeting again faint, Pope, Swift and Bolingbroke turned increasingly in their letters of the 1730's to discussions of the importance they attached to their writings as humanist 'teaching'. In 1732, in a letter written jointly with Bolingbroke to Swift, Pope remarks:

I know nothing that moves strongly but Satire, and those who are asham'd of nothing else, are so of being ridiculous. I fancy if we three were together but for three years, some good might be done even upon this Age; or at least some punishment made effectual, toward the Example of posterity, between History, Philosophy, and Poetry, or the Devil's in it' (III, 276; 1741).

This was the period of Pope's composition of his Ethic Epistles, or Moral Essays, and Imitations of Horace; he observed in a letter to Arbuthnot of 1734 that 'those who have no shame, and no fear, of anything else, have appear'd touch'd by my Satires'

(III, 419; 1737). Pope's detestation of the 'new' England governed by a moneyed interest and the influence of Bolingbroke led him, as we have seen, to his brief flirtation with politics at this time. Bolingbroke's 'patriotic Opposition' to Walpole's government was probably largely a matter of self interest; he could not regain power until Walpole had fallen. But for Pope, as Butt has pointed out, the political side of Pope's opposition to Walpole's government was only incidental.<sup>52</sup> He had nothing to gain personally from a change in governments. Apparently he thought, for a time, that Bolingbroke's 'Boy Patriots' - men such as Carteret, Pulteney and Cornbury - might reinstate old-fashioned virtue and principle into England's political life. The naïveté soon passed or, at least, it had by 1740 when Pope composed a disillusioned poem on the prospects of the Opposition.

Despite the topical nature of the Ethic Epistles, or Moral Essays, and the Imitations of Horace, one senses that Pope was always addressing wider issues than those immediately at hand. Perhaps Pope believed that Swift had presented a valuable 'Example' for posterity in the philosophical basis of his Gulliver's Travels, a work which is also at once topical and generally relevant, while he was providing instruction for his own and for future generations in his poetry. He and Swift also hoped that Bolingbroke would write a history which would reveal to posterity the true state of affairs in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In 1733 Pope urged Swift to spur Bolingbroke on

to this task which, in the event, was never accomplished:

My Neighbour's writings have been metaphysical, and will next be historical. It is certainly from him only, that a valuable History of Europe in these latter times can be expected. Come, and quicken him; for age, indolence, and contempt of the world, grow upon men apace, and may often make the wisest indifferent whether posterity be any wiser than we (III, 372-3; 1741).

Swift's, Pope's and Bolingbroke's belief that their own abilities lay them under an obligation to posterity may have arisen naturally from the spirit of mutual admiration which marked their first acquaintance. From the very beginning, as we have seen, there was an acute awareness of each other as remarkable individuals destined for fame in one form or another. We have already noted Swift's enthusiastic appraisal of Bolingbroke on their first acquaintance; Pope's opinion did not lag far behind Swift's: 'Lord Bolingbroke is something superior to any thing I have seen in human nature,' he observed to Spence. 'You know I don't deal much in hyperboles: I quite think him what I say.'<sup>53</sup> In 1723, on the resumption of his correspondence with the recently-pardoned Bolingbroke, Swift reflected on the power adhering to associations of individuals of superior abilities: 'I have often endeavoured to establish a Friendship among all Men of Genius, and would fain have it done. they are seldom above three or four Cotemporaries and if they could be united would drive the world before them' (II, 199; 1741).

The notion of genius, with its attendant responsibilities, was attached by them to each other's works. In a letter of 1725 Swift warned Pope against making scribblers or critics



immortal in his works (II, 343; 1741). Pope was certain that Bolingbroke would be 'more known to posterity as a writer and philosopher than as a statesman.'<sup>54</sup> It was a certainty shared by Bolingbroke, although he may have felt that he would be mainly remembered as a historian; in 1729 he observed of the projected history he intended to write that in it he 'should be able to convey several great Truths to Posterity, so clearly and so Authentically, that the Burnets and the Oldmixons of another Age, might rail, but should not be able to deceive' (III, 71; 1741). In 1726 Pope remarked of Gulliver's Travels that 'I prophecy [it] will be in future the admiration of all men' (II, 412; 1741). Swift repaid the compliment in a letter to Pope of 1728 by describing his friendship with Pope and Bolingbroke as representing a special alliance between men of genius: 'I look upon my Lord Bolingbroke and us two, as a peculiar Triumvirate, who have nothing to expect, or to fear; and so far fittest to converse with one another' (II, 497; 1741). Their responsibility as men of genius - and, as they perceived it, men of genius living in an immoral age - was defined by Pope in a letter of 1726 to Swift: 'let us write for truth, for honour, and for posterity' (II, 413; 1741). That Swift came to regard his friendship for Pope and Bolingbroke as signifying a common alliance is implied by the fact that, after 1734, he wanted his letters to either of them to be considered as addressed to both. Swift's request that they consider his letters in this way is also indicative of his awareness of Bolingbroke's influence over Pope, as he

admitted in a letter to Pope of 1 November 1734: 'I desire that you will allow, that I write to you both at present, & so I shall while I live: It saves you mony, & my time; And he being your Genius, no matter to which it is addressed' (III, 440; 1741).

This 'triumvirate' as Swift termed it was a defensive alliance as well as one which self-consciously directed its didactic writings towards posterity. A certain paranoia as well as a preoccupation with fame characterized Swift's, Pope's and Bolingbroke's friendship from their first acquaintance. The Scriblerians had adopted a defensive stance in their self-appointed mission of 'scourging the follies from mankind' and in their 'offensive against the corruptions of the new England.'<sup>55</sup> The sense of purpose and the paranoia were both strengthened after 1714 with the Tory fall from power. The confidential, intimate nature of their relationship grew increasingly potent with Pope's, Swift's and Bolingbroke's sense of themselves as representing a persecuted minority. This was especially true for Swift and Bolingbroke, whose suspicions that their mail was being opened by postal clerks and monitored by the government were not, as we have seen, unjustified.<sup>56</sup> Swift in particular often complained that his letters were opened by officers of the post who then either carelessly resealed them or failed to send them on. In 1715 at least it is apparent that his mail was routinely intercepted and examined.<sup>57</sup> Swift's, Pope's and Bolingbroke's belief that 'no secret can cross your Irish Sea, and every clerk in the post-office had known it' (III, 432-3; 1741)

placed their friendship and their correspondence in a special context.

For one thing, they saw their intimacy as a rebuke to the government which had so completely rejected their services, isolated and then persecuted them, as Swift observed in a letter to Gay of 1730, congratulating him on his decision to patronize the court no longer in hopes of preferment:

you will be able to pass the rest of your wineless life in ease & plenty...with the additional triumphal comfort of never having received a penny from a tasteless ungratefull court, from which you deserved so much, and which deserves no better Genius's than those by whom it is celebrated, --so let the Post rascal open this letter, and let Walpole read it (III, 148-9; 1741).

Their friendship itself came to assume an emblematic quality, to represent for Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke the humanist ideals which the new order of society represented by Walpole's government ignored, subverted or misunderstood. In a letter to Swift of 1734 Bolingbroke imagines the letter being opened by the 'diligent Inspectors of private mens correspondence':

if they expect to find anything which may do us hurt, or them good, their disappoint<sup>ment</sup> will give me pleasure in the proportion I shall imagine it gives them pain (III, 411).

Bolingbroke then imagines

another pleasure of higher Relish, if our Epistles were to be perused by Persons of higher Rank; and who knows, considering the mighty importance we are of, whether that may not happen? how would these Persons stare, to see such a thing as sincere, cordial friendship subsist inviolate, & grow and strengthen, from year to year, in spite of distance, absence, & mutual Inutility (III, 411).

The correspondence between Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke followed, in somewhat accelerated form, the pattern of the gradual evolution of epistolary tastes in mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century Britain. From their own letters it is apparent that Swift and Bolingbroke as well as Pope had been entertained by the 'letters of wit' of Voiture and Balzac (III, 92; III: 102, 505; 1741). Irvin Ehrenpreis conjectures that Swift learned the art of integrating 'complicated ironic flatteries' in his letters from the example offered by Voiture's letters, an opinion borne out by Oliver Ferguson who believes that 'if Voiture did not teach Swift the art of raillery, he did afford a striking example of its effectiveness in the familiar letter.'<sup>58</sup>

Although they avoided the excessive compliments and flattery bordering on sycophancy which sometimes characterized the 'letter of wit', it is possible to see in the early productions of the Scriblerians, the witty letters of Pope to Swift, and those exchanged between Swift and Bolingbroke up to 1714, some of the themes popular in the 'letters of wit' of Dennis, Dryden and Wycherley. There is the same detestation of the extremes of behaviour represented by 'blockheadism' and pedantry, for example, as well as the same negligent displays of their learning in the form of quotations or reliance, in their discussions, on the authority of classical writers. There is also the same sense of an exclusive coterie united by a common perception of the world.

Like many of their contemporaries, Swift and Bolingbroke had ambivalent feelings about the propriety of the publication

of familiar letters. In letters to Pope Swift described Pliny and Balzac as writers whose letters were apparently written with a view to publication and whose epistolary style was hence characterized by a certain artificiality (III, 92, 505). Swift claimed that as his own letters did not contain 'any Turns of Wit, or Fancy, or Politicks, or Satire, but mere innocent friendship' they were not fit to be made public: 'I believe my letters have escap'd being publish'd, because I writ nothing but Nature and Friendship, and particular incidents which could make no figure in writing' (III, 492, 505; 1741). In his Life of Swift Lord Orrery confirmed Swift's claim in observing that 'I have often heard SWIFT say, "When I sit down to write a letter, I never lean upon my elbow, till I have finished it!".'<sup>59</sup> Orrery explains this remark in these terms: 'By which expression he meant, that he never studied for particular phrases, or polished paragraphs: his letters therefore are the truest representations of his mind.'<sup>60</sup> Yet the fact that Swift made a similar disclaimer of epistolary premeditation, and in nearly the same words, to a number of correspondents over a number of years may lead one to wonder whether Swift actually was as careless a letter writer as he claimed to be.<sup>61</sup>

As we have seen, such a remark, whether made by a Seneca or a Walsh, whether in Republican Rome or Augustan England, has always tended to represent a disingenuous claim. As The Courtier's Calling recognized in 1675, a letter professing to represent spontaneous 'conversation' might,

paradoxically, be the hardest to write. Pope was being even more disingenuous than Swift when, in a letter to him of 1729, he claimed that he had dropped deliberate wittiness in his correspondence: 'This letter (like all mine) will be a Rhapsody; it is many years ago since I wrote as a Wit. How many occurrences or informations must one omit, if one determin'd to say nothing that one could not say prettily? (III, 79; 1741) Pope concludes these remarks on the adoption of a conversational style in his letters with this observation:

Now as I love you better than most I have ever met with in the world, and esteem you too the more the longer I have compar'd you with the rest of the world; so inevitably I write to you more negligently, that is more openly, and what all but such as love one another will call writing worse (III, 79),

thus echoing the Augustan commonplace which held that a 'conversational' letter is sincere and that a spontaneously composed letter will involuntarily reveal the inmost depths of its author. Yet at the very time Pope was professing his negligence as a writer in this letter to Swift, it is probable that Swift was already aware of his intention to publish a selection of their correspondence.<sup>62</sup> Pope closes this letter of 1729 to Swift with a reflection which oddly anticipates the 'pleasure' Bolingbroke imagined in his letter of 1734 to Swift in their correspondence being opened and read and, in its expressions of innocent friendship, disappointing those who might expect schemes of political conspiracy: 'I smile to think how Curl would be bit, were our Epistles to fall into his hands, and how gloriously they would fall short of ev'ry ingenious reader's expectations' (III, 79; 1741).

Deprived after 1714 of the opportunity to participate in the life of the court or of the government - the life recorded with such fascinating detail in Swift's Journal to Stella - Swift and Bolingbroke turned from political news in their letters to philosophic discussions on, for example, the nature of friendship, the significance of fame, or the necessity of cultivating a stoical response to the vicissitudes of fortune. Bolingbroke in particular was fond of this sort of letter: the informal essay delivered in epistolary form, on the model of Seneca,<sup>63</sup> full of quotations from classical authors or allusions to or parallels with their writings. There is evidence to support the belief that he was particularly adept at this kind of writing.<sup>64</sup> By 1734 he had written six and a half letters on philosophy or, as Bolingbroke described it, 'my Metaphysicks', to Pope for his incorporation of the ideas in his poetry, with Bolingbroke yet proposing 'a letter and an half more which would swell the whole up to a considerable volume' (III, 433; 1741).

Despite his pose of a Senecan indifference to the world and immersion in philosophy, Pope and especially Swift were sceptical whether Bolingbroke would ever be capable of relinquishing his worldly and political ambitions to form 'Conclusions de contemptu mundi' (II, 199, 342; 1741) or, as Pope observed in a letter of 1726 to Swift: 'Another of our friends labours to be unambitious, but he labours in an unwilling soil' (II, 395; 1741). A description of Seneca Bolingbroke included as a postscript in a letter Pope sent Swift in 1725 seems, ironically, to apply equally to himself; Bolingbroke

depicts Seneca as a 'Slave to the worst part of the world, to the Court, and all his big words were the Language of a Slighted Lover who desired nothing so much as a reconciliation, and fear'd nothing so much as a rupture' (II, 351; 1737, 1741). Bolingbroke's claim in 1723 that 'Reflection and Habit have rendred the World so indifferent to me, that I am neither afflicted nor rejoiced, angry nor pleased at what happens in it, any farther than personal Friendships interest me in the Affairs of it' (II, 188; 1737, 1741) was proven as hollow as he believed Seneca's similar pose of philosophic indifference to be when Bolingbroke assumed the leadership of the Opposition party in the 1730's in his editorship of the Opposition newspaper, The Craftsman.

As for Pope and Swift, the 'news' of their letters to each other consisted mainly of discussion of works in progress, philosophic descriptions of their manner of life and, especially around the period 1726-7, when Swift made his two visits to England, of news of mutual friends. For all their original genius, Swift and Bolingbroke did not totally escape the cant which generally accompanied the epistolary style of the 'letter of sentiment and morality' with its imagery of sentiments flowing into a spontaneously written letter from the heart of its author. In a letter of 23 July 1720 to his beloved sister Henrietta Bolingbroke observes, for example, 'I am too just, my dear Girl, not to be persuaded of your sincerity, and therefore I take all the expressions which flow from your pen to flow from your heart.'<sup>65</sup> In a letter to Pope of 26 November 1725 Swift



writes of their imminent reunion in England after the separation of over eleven years in these terms: 'if you do not know me when we meet you need only keep one of my Letters, and compare it with my Face, for my Face and Letters are Counterparts of my heart.' This type of fashionable observation came naturally to Pope but not to Swift as he immediately, humo\_rously, recognized: 'I fear I have not expressed that right, but I mean well, and I hate blotts; I look in your Letter, and in my Conscience you say the same thing, but in a better manner'. (II, 342; 1741).

## ii

Before looking at the selection of his letters to and from Swift and Bolingbroke which Pope published in 1741 we need to look rather more closely at Swift's and Bolingbroke's ambivalent and even contradictory attitudes towards the sensitive issue of the propriety of the publication of personal letters. It is obvious although somewhat ironic that Pope's consciousness of his own correspondence as potentially publishable material was not shared by either Swift or Bolingbroke. Although Swift and Bolingbroke were acutely aware of the historical and humanist heritage represented by the letters of Cicero, Seneca and Pliny, they shied away from the prospect of viewing their own letters in a similar light. Swift was probably aware as early as 1728 that Pope hoped to publish some of their letters, but he was obviously not pleased with the idea. In a letter of 26 February 1730 he teasingly suggested, as we have seen, that Pope had been a

'writer of Letters almost from...Infancy' and had 'Schemes even then of Epistolary fame' (III, 92). Swift then observed that, although the tradition of the published familiar letter was an ancient and an honourable one, it was not one which conduced to epistolary 'naturalness':

Montaigne says that if he could have excelled in any kind of writing, it would have been in Letters; but I doubt they would not have been naturally, for it is plain that all Pliny's Letters were written with a view of publishing, and I accuse Voiture himself of the same crime, although he be an Author I am fond of (III, 92).

Perhaps Swift's main objection to this tradition may be summed up in his final remark in this letter on the subject: 'They cease to be Letters when they become a jeu d'esprit' (III, 92).

Pope and Bolingbroke took up the subject of 'Epistolary fame' in a letter they jointly composed, sent to Swift 9 April 1730, in which Bolingbroke observes: 'I seek no Epistolary fame, but am a good deal pleased to think that it will be known hereafter that you and I lived in the most friendly intimacy together.--Pliny writ his letters for the Publick, so did Seneca, so did Balzac, Voiture &c' (III, 102; 1741). Bolingbroke exempts Cicero from having self-consciously participated in the tradition of the published familiar letter and thus distinguishes him as the most interesting participant in it: 'Tully did not, and therefore these [letters] give us more pleasure than any which have come down to us from Antiquity. when we read them, we pry into a Secret which was intended to be kept from us...We see Cato, and Brutus, and Pompey and others, such as they really were' (III, 102-3; 1741). For Bolingbroke the history

represented by Cicero's correspondence is, then, all the more convincing and invaluable in its apparent sincerity and in the lack of premeditation in its transmittal to posterity. The fresh immediacy of Cicero's letters offers a personal, even intimate perspective on Republican Rome. Bolingbroke describes the unique pleasure of reading these letters as deriving from their private as opposed to their public nature: 'when we read them, we pry into a Secret which is intended to be kept from us.' While Swift later expressed his disagreement with the notion that Cicero had not intended his letters to be published, he conceded that at least Cicero had managed the deception so artfully that his letters at least appeared natural' (III, 505; 1741). This letter of 9 April 1730 from Bolingbroke and Pope, by the way, could scarcely have reassured Swift as to Pope's intentions. In Pope's discussion of the subject of 'Epistolary fame' Pope observes that he plans to put together a 'Volume' of Swift's and other friends' letters 'for my own secret satisfaction, in reviewing a Life, past in Innocent amusements & Studies, not without the good will of worthy and ingenious Men.'<sup>66</sup>

Swift's opposition to Pope's unvoiced yet apparent wish to publish some of their letters took the form of simple obstructiveness. He was probably forced to this course of action through his awareness that Pope did not intend to heed the hints, such as the teasing of his letter of 26 February 1730, that Swift preferred their correspondence to consist of true familiar letters rather than publishable jeux

d'esprit. The fact that, to a modern reader, it appears that Swift's letters are full of the same literary devices, 'self-dramatization, impersonation, parody, mimicry, and scenic methods,'<sup>67</sup> which distinguish his formal prose writings reveals nothing more than that Swift's most unpremeditated expression represented the instinctive response of a literary artist. The knowledge, too, that his letters were commonly circulated among his friends in England - a letter to Gay, for example, being read aloud or quoted to Pope, Bolingbroke, Arbuthnot, Mrs. Howard or the Duchess of Queensberry - meant, too, that Swift was not likely to be ever completely casual or careless in these letters. As Oliver Ferguson observes, although Swift 'almost certainly wrote no personal letters that were really intended for publication,' character and habit meant that 'for Swift, writing a letter was a literary activity.'<sup>68</sup>

That Pope had, in 1729, contrived the publication of his correspondence with Wycherley must have alerted Swift to the fact (in the remote possibility that he was not already aware of it) that in the midst of protestations of innocence and denials of complicity Pope intended, similarly, to continue with his plan to issue a selection of their letters. By 1730, in fact, Pope was compiling Swift's letters into a manuscript volume which he subsequently deposited in Oxford's Harleian library, thus following the procedure for publication he had laid down for the Wycherley letters.<sup>69</sup> That Swift was unwilling to comply with Pope's tacit proposal to publish their letters took the form of refusals to return Pope's

letters to him, to ironic assertions that, as their letters contained only 'mere innocent friendship,' they were not fit for publication, to teasing claims that he had left instructions to his executors to burn all the letters after his death (III, 492; 1741 and V, 16; 1741). Pope must have been dismayed to find, in 1735, that his usual pretext for requesting his correspondents to return his letters simply would not work with Swift; in that year Swift observed in a letter to him: 'You need not apprehend any Curll's meddling with your letters to me; I will not destroy them, but have ordered my Executors to do that office' (III, 505; 1741). In the event, Swift eventually relented and sent the letters via Lord Orrery but, it is obvious, with considerable reluctance. Bolingbroke's unwillingness to have their letters published can be inferred from the fact that he apparently burned all these letters after Pope's death.<sup>70</sup>

On the one hand we may see in Pope's refusal to heed his friends' wishes in this matter, in his determined perseverance to publish some of their letters, a certain callous indifference to his friends' wishes. On the other hand, there is a certain irony in Swift's and Bolingbroke's unwillingness to see their letters as publishable material. Both shared the age's consciousness of the letter as a genre capable of or suitable to all sorts of experimentation, and both shared this consciousness to an unusually developed degree. Swift, for example, used the letter form for some of his most famous pamphlets: A Letter to a Young Lady on her Marriage, a Letter to a Young Gentleman, Lately enter'd into

Holy Orders and The Drapier's Letters which represent, as Ferguson notes, respectively, a 'public letter to a real person,' a 'public letter to a fictitious person,' and a 'series of pseudonymous public letters variously addressed to Irish individuals and classes.'<sup>71</sup> Ferguson's claim that all these epistolary pamphlets are 'public performances and thus have little relevance to a study of Swift's personal letters,'<sup>72</sup> is somewhat contradictory. If, as Ferguson elsewhere contends, letter writing represented a literary activity for Swift, the distinction between his public and his private writings is an arbitrary or even irrelevant one. Thus we find that Swift's Journal to Stella, with its childish prattle or 'little language', while patently not intended for publication, is among his most treasured works, valued now by historians and literary critics alike. Intended only for 'Stella' and Mrs. Dingley, the Journal's composition yet manifests what one critic identifies as the 'stock-in-trade' of Swift's 'published satires.'<sup>73</sup> Irvin Ehrenpreis describes himself as a 'reader who prefers Swift's letters to the bulk of his other works.'<sup>74</sup> In Ehrenpreis's opinion, the 'six volumes of his general correspondence and the two volumes of the letters to Esther Johnson contain a higher achievement than all but the best-known of his essays and poems'; in letter writing 'Swift may have an equal; he has no superior.'<sup>75</sup>

Bolingbroke, too, recognized the letter as a form suitable for all sorts of expression - whether for informal communication between friends, the exposition of political philosophy, or for loosely organized essays or dissertations. When he began the tour of the Continent at the age of nineteen

that was then de rigueur for young men of fashion, Bolingbroke embarked on a remarkable series of letters to Sir William Trumbull, the diplomat and statesman who similarly befriended the young Pope. Even these early letters of Bolingbroke's, containing extensive reference to his study of civil law and the Latin classics, cannot be considered simply 'private' letters. They hearken back, rather, to epistolary relationships such as Seneca's with Lucilius, in which letters of instruction and advice are exchanged; in Jeffrey Hart's opinion, in this correspondence Trumbull is allotted the humanist role of Bolingbroke's 'guide, philosopher, and friend.'<sup>76</sup>

In the letters contained in Gilbert Parke's 1798 edition of Letters and Correspondence, Public and Private, of the Right Honourable Henry St. John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke we are granted, despite Parke's misleading title, only a glimpse of Bolingbroke in his private capacity; rather, the letters concern his public role as Secretary of State to Queen Anne. But it is a fascinating perspective, nevertheless, and, in its tale of the diplomatic battle fought between France and Britain over the details of the Treaty of Utrecht, witnesses the persuasive power of the letter per se and the important uses to which it was put in the eighteenth century. Thus we see Bolingbroke, in his letters to the Marquis de Torcy, the French Foreign Minister, engaged in a strategy of wits: 'Each statesman knew the magnitude of the other's need for peace, and Torcy skilfully used St. John's need as a lever, but St. John was at least his equal as a negotiator.'<sup>77</sup>

Paradoxically, Bolingbroke seemed to assert himself with greater simplicity and directness in these 'public' letters than in the somewhat self-conscious correspondence he maintained with Swift and Pope. His description of Harley's elevation to the rank of the Earl of Oxford, contained in a letter to Lord Orrery in 1711, seems almost Swiftian in vivid imagery reminiscent of Gulliver's Travels:

This great advancement is, what the labour he has gone through, the danger he has run, and the services he has performed, seem to deserve. But he stands on slippery ground, and envy is always near the great, to fling up their heels on the least trip which they make.

Bolingbroke later cast many of his most important 'public' pieces into the letter form: the famous Letter to Sir William Windham, of 1717, which helped to secure his pardon from George I; On the Spirit of Patriotism, an essay cast into the form of a letter addressed to Lord Cornbury; the formal letter dedicated to Lord Bathurst entitled Of the True Use of Retirement and Study; and Letters on the Study and Use of History. Bolingbroke probably derived inspiration for these dissertations in letter form from such popular contemporary epistolary publications as Trenchard's Cato's Letters, Locke's Letters on Toleration and Montesquieu's Persian Letters. The distinction between public and private letters is blurred with Bolingbroke too, who, as we have seen, was in the habit of sending letters on moral philosophy to Pope and who, in many of his letters to Swift, engages in essay-like speculation on the nature of fame or on morality or on the importance of friendship.



As for the letters Pope published, Swift only complied with Pope's wish to publish to the extent that he added one 'public' letter to the batch of letters Pope sent him for approval and revision prior to publication. This letter was apparently composed by Swift expressly for inclusion in Pope's publication of their letters - Swift thus made a virtue of necessity; unable to prevent Pope from the project, he included this letter, dated 10 January 1721, which vindicated his conduct as a friend of the Oxford-Bolingbroke ministry and explained his political principles. Apart from this single addition, the choice of the letters in the volume was Pope's who, to deflect responsibility for the publication from himself on to Swift, had sent on the manuscript to Swift for slight editorial revisions preparatory to publication. Swift added the letter and entrusted the manuscript to his Irish printer, Faulkner, complying by now with what he knew were Pope's tacit wishes. As Dearing observes, Pope's sending the manuscript to Swift for corrections, with the understanding that Swift was then to give the letters to Faulkner for publication in Dublin, meant that Pope could then proceed 'with his own editions, in quarto, and large and small folio, entitled Mr. Alexander Pope's Works in Prose, Vol. II, which he could now advertise as "copied" from an Impression sent from Dublin".<sup>79</sup>

From Swift's decision to add a letter explaining his conduct and writings as a political pamphleteer for the Oxford-Bolingbroke ministry we might infer that his interest in the personal letter as publishable material might have

resembled Pope's wish for his published correspondence to vindicate the actions of himself and his friends. Swift may also have seen his letter of 10 January 1721 as an important historical document. He certainly shared his age's consciousness of the private letters of important individuals as representing an invaluable history of the period in which they lived. It was a consciousness which must have been heightened by his years of editing Sir William Temple's letters, which he issued in three volumes: the first two in 1700 and the third in 1703. In his 1700 preface to the first volume of Letters Written by Sir William Temple Swift echoed his age's recognition of the value peculiar to the familiar letter, and with the old patriotic note struck:

It has been justly complained of, as a defect among us, that the English Tongue, has produced no Letters of any value...Yet among many Advantages, which might recommend this sort of Writing, it is certain, that nothing is so capable, of giving a true Account of Story, as Letters are; which describe Actions, while they are alive and breathing; whereas <sup>80</sup> other Relations are of Actions past and dead.

In his 1720 preface to The Works of Sir William Temple he observed, in terms which anticipated Bolingbroke's praise of Cicero's and Atticus's letters, that the correspondence of great historical figures was particularly valuable for it 'laid open, not only the secret Springs of many actions which were generally unknown before, but all the subtle Arts and Projections of Ministers of State.'<sup>81</sup>

Yet Swift's library contained a number of sufficiently diverse collections of letters to suggest that his interest in the familiar letter as publishable material extended beyond the purely historical. He possessed the collected

works of the Greek writers Isocrates, Plato, Demosthenes and Philostratus as well as Pliny's Epistolae and the collected writings of Cicero, Horace and Ovid. He conducted his discussions on the Roman and French letter writers with Pope and Bolingbroke on good authority, possessing copies also of Balzac's and Voiture's letters as well as the Lettres of Pierre Costar, correspondent of Voiture's and those of Gui Patin and Pierre-Cesar Richelet.<sup>82</sup> Ehrenpreis suggests, too, that Swift's interest in Temple's writings was not confined to the historical but that it is probable that he learned some of his own epistolary techniques from the distinguished example set by Temple's correspondence, as Swift shared the belief of many of his contemporaries that Temple was one of the finest prose writers of the age.<sup>83</sup>

Turning now to Swift's and Bolingbroke's letters, despite Swift's claims in 1735 that his letters were safe from Curll, it was Curll who was apparently responsible for the first publication of Swift's and Bolingbroke's correspondence a year later. On 11 November 1736 he advertised the sale of a pamphlet entitled New Letters of Mr. Pope, a pamphlet which included a letter written jointly by Pope and Bolingbroke to Swift, printed by Curll as two letters (II, 183-9). I say Curll was 'apparently' responsible for the publication of this letter. There is some confusion as to Swift's motives and actions at this point. Although he, in general, seemed simply opposed to Pope's publication of his personal letters, Sherburn points out that Swift may have actually intended to publish some of his letters himself.

In a signed statement dated 25 March 1767 Faulkner testified that 'Above thirty years ago' Swift had 'offered him a chance to publish his letters,' an opportunity Faulkner declined because of the ruling of the House of Lords forbidding the publication of letters written by peers (III, 492n). There is some controversy as to how Curll obtained the letter he published in 1736. One hypothesis holds that Swift himself surreptitiously sent it to Curll;<sup>84</sup> another, having perhaps more probability, that Pope supplied Curll with a copy 'hoping to use the resulting publication to encourage Swift to return his letters'; while yet another theory contends that the letter was actually stolen from Swift.<sup>85</sup> That, on the one hand, as Swift's housekeeper, Mrs. Whiteway, reported in a letter to Lord Orrery, Swift did possess a 'book of letters Stiched together by the Dean, wherein there are a number of them from the greatest men in England both for Genius Learning and Power; Such as Lord Bollinbrook,' a book he was in the habit of circulating among his friends (IV, 321), lends support to the latter theory. On the other hand, Pope acted with suspicious speed after Curll's publication, cancelling a section of 'Thoughts on Various Subjects' which was originally to conclude the first volume of his Works in Prose and reprinting not only Curll's letters but also another letter from Swift and one from himself to Swift. He explained the inclusion of these letters in a postscript: 'Since the foregoing Sheets were printed off, the following Letters having been published without the Consent of their Writers, we have added them,

tho' not in the order of time.'<sup>86</sup> It is interesting that he failed to point out that two of the letters he thus printed in 1737 had not been printed by Curll or anyone else before.

Whoever was responsible for it, Curll's publication fortuitously gave Pope the justification he needed for his increasingly urgent and frequent requests that Swift return his letters. Pope's transcripts deposited in the Harleian library consisted of forty-three letters: thirty written by Swift to Pope or Gay or Bolingbroke; six either by Pope alone or written jointly with Bolingbroke; and seven by Bolingbroke or Oxford.<sup>87</sup> On Gay's death, Gay's letters were entrusted to Pope who then, apparently, made copies of Swift's letters to Gay before sending them on to Swift. In 1737 his requests that Swift return his letters finally succeeded, with the assistance of Lord Orrery's persuasion, with Swift sending Pope some twenty-five letters via Orrery. Sherburn speculates that Pope's admiration for Bolingbroke led him to the practice of making copies of the letters they jointly composed before sending the originals on to Swift.<sup>88</sup> This collection of letters, thus assiduously amassed over at least ten years, served as the basis of Letters Between Dr. Swift, Mr. Pope, &c., which has been identified as the earliest printed version of these letters and which Pope then reprinted, with minor alterations, in the second volume of his Works in Prose. The claim Pope made on the title pages of Letters Between Dr. Swift, Mr. Pope, &c. and on that of the second volume of his Works in Prose,

that the text had been 'Published from a Copy Transmitted from Dublin' and that this 'Impression' was 'said to be printed by the Dean's Direction' was generally believed until the mid-nineteenth century, with Dilke's realization that only Pope himself could conceivably have possessed copies of all the letters printed in these editions.<sup>89</sup> The actual manoeuvres Pope engaged in to make it appear that Swift was responsible for this publication have been recounted too many times to make it necessary that they be repeated here.<sup>90</sup> The important fact of this affair - that Pope forced through the publication of his correspondence with Swift and Bolingbroke and then blamed the publication on Swift - will be looked at in the next chapter.

None of the letters Pope printed in 1741 survives in the original. In a letter to Lord Orrery dated 25 October 1740 Pope admitted that he had burned all Swift's letters 'long ago & particularly those your Lordship brought over' (IV, 286). Transcripts had, however, been made of some of these twenty-five letters and deposited in the Harleian library (IV 286n). There were also the forty-three transcripts of letters deposited there in the early 1730's in the form of a manuscript volume. Of these forty-three copies 'Pope in 1741 or earlier printed in whole or in part 27.'<sup>91</sup> Sherburn speculates that these transcripts had been carefully proofread against the original letters and probably by Lord Orrery himself.<sup>92</sup> They thus, as he observes, provide an invaluable opportunity to examine Pope's editorial methods - and Swift's, for, having made his own editorial changes in the letters Pope, as we have

seen, submitted them to Swift before publication, with the result being that the first Dublin editions differ slightly from the London editions.<sup>93</sup> As this thesis does not represent a bibliographical study of the letters Pope published but, rather, an examination of the circumstances surrounding his publications, we will be drawing upon some of the conclusions reached by Shérburn, Archibald Elias and Vinton Dearing on Pope's editions of his correspondence with Swift and Bolingbroke.

As Dearing points out, in a sense Pope's 1741 editions of this correspondence represent 'Swift's correspondence rather than Pope's' for they contain letters from Swift to Bolingbroke and Gay and letters from them to him as well as his letters to and from Pope, while all Pope's letters are directed solely to Swift.<sup>94</sup> A number of Pope's letters to Swift were, too, written jointly with Bolingbroke or Gay. Swift is represented by his authorship of forty-two letters, Pope by thirty, Gay by three and Bolingbroke by seven in Letters Between Dr. Swift, Mr. Pope, &c.<sup>95</sup> This is augmented by seven 'new' letters in the second volume of Pope's Works in Prose. There is a 'new' letter from Lord Orrery to Pope which deflects the responsibility for the publication from Pope with Orrery's confession that Swift seemed to have delivered a number of letters to an unidentified individual who might be considering their publication. There are also six 'new' letters written by Swift, dated 12 June 1732; Dublin 1732-3; 1 May 1733; 21 October 1735; 23 July 1737; and 8 August 1738.

Works in Prose, Volume II retains the format observed

in Letters Between Dr. Swift, Mr. Pope, &c. whereby the letters are divided into two sections: the first entitled 'Letters to and from Dr. Jonathan Swift' and the second 'Letters of Dr. Swift to Mr. Gay'. The headings of these two sections are somewhat misleading for the distinction between the sections is rather chronological than concerned with the recipient or author of the letters. The first section contains the letters from June 1714 to March 1731, including two letters from Swift to Gay alone and one jointly written with Pope to Swift while the second section, containing the letters from March 1729 to October 1738 (in Works in Prose) includes letters from Swift to Gay only in the first half of the section - Gay's death in 1732 meant that Swift directed the rest of the letters in this section mainly to Pope. Thus of the forty letters in the second section, the first twelve letters consist of eleven letters Swift wrote to Gay and one letter written by Gay in reply, with the remaining twenty-eight letters either written by Swift to Pope or by Pope, sometimes jointly with Arbuthnot and Bolingbroke, to Swift.

As for the letters as edited by Pope for publication in 1741, it is easier to surmise the changes Pope generally made in Swift's letters before publication than to assess the changes he made in his own. The transcripts of Swift's letters at the Harleian Library mean that it is possible to examine a good half of Swift's letters, presumably as they were originally written, and then to compare these with the letters as published by Pope, while only three of Pope's letters to Swift are preserved in any form other



than as printed in 1741.<sup>96</sup> Pope made numerous changes in the letters apparently for stylistic reasons: minor excisions, the removal of repetitions, the re-ordering of sentences for greater clarity, the addition of punctuation, the polishing of phrases. He altered Swift's letters for inclusion in the second volume of his Works in Prose by following the guidelines observed in editing letters for inclusion in the first volume of Works in Prose; that is, in addition to the stylistic changes, he brought Swift's letters to a uniform appearance, generally removing salutations and postscripts and complimentary closes and adding dates when necessary, thus utilizing in the second volume, the format devised for the first. He also continued his practice of identifying each of the letters by a heading or description of the contents of the letter in the table of contents. It was a practice which, as we have seen in relation to the first volume, contributes to the sense of the correspondence constituting a kind of 'story'. This practice also brings many of the letters to an essay-like appearance. Thus, to take a few examples, in the table of contents of the second volume 'Letter 45' is described as 'Of Mr. Westley's Dissertations on Job---Postscript by Lord Bol. on the pleasure we take in reading Letters' while 'Letter 56' is described as 'Mr. Gay to Dr. Swift. His account of himself: his last Fables: his Oeconomy---Postscript by Mr. Pope, of their common Ailments and Oeconomy; and against Party-spirit in writing.' From this table of contents it would appear to a reader that the letters mainly concern a small, intimate group of friends,

news of their ways of life or 'oeconomy', their works in progress, and their views on such topics of mutual interest as the dislike of 'Party-spirit' and political corruption, concern with the notion of 'Fame' and of how to live a 'good life'.

The editorial changes Pope made in Swift's letters apart from purely stylistic ones appear to fall into several categories. One category consists of the excisions Pope often made of references to contemporary politics. He omitted, for example, a passage in a letter to him from Swift dated 20 September 1723 in which Swift described the sense of paranoia or insecurity he often expressed as a former prominent Tory partisan living under Walpole's Whig government; after congratulating Pope on his neutrality Swift observed 'But I who am sunk under the prejudices of another Education, and am every day perswading my self that a Dagger is at my Throat, a halter about my Neck, or Chains at my Feet, all prepared by those in Power, can never arrive at the Security of Mind you possess' (II, 199).

There were also the omissions of Swift's messages to friends or gossip about them or references to them which would not be generally comprehensible. Pope omitted, for example, the following message contained in Swift's letter to him of 26 November 1725: 'I had a very kind Letter from Dr. Arbuthnot; but I will not trouble him with an Answer. this is no Excuse for I would rather write than not. I will answer him when I see him; in the mean time you shall do it for me. Tis enough that I know he is in health and loves me' (II, 342). A similar category of omissions concerns

the excisions Pope made of Swift's criticisms of mutual friends. Swift believed that Mrs. Howard, in her capacity as the Prince of Wales's mistress, both could and should have procured a preferment for Gay at Court and, in his fierce loyalty to Gay, he was often quite violent in his denunciations of her. Pope and Gay did not share Swift's dislike of Mrs. Howard nor his opinion that she could have done more than she did for Gay's career, and Pope seems to have been especially careful to remove all such references to her as the following, contained in Swift's letter to Gay of 29 June 1731: '[Mrs. Howard] has Cheated us all, and may go hang her Self, and so may her \_\_\_' (III, 203; see also III, 219-20, 251). Swift was also at odds with Lord Burlington over payment of the repairs required by the Boyle monument in St. Patrick's Cathedral. Pope deleted a reference Swift made to Burlington's miserliness in a letter of 10 November 1730 in which he complained that 'Lord Burlington never remembers the request made him in a Solemn manner about his ancestor's tomb' and another such remark made in a letter to Gay of 4 May 1732 (III, 149, 287).

Elias believes that Pope followed rather different guidelines in editing Swift's letters to Gay for publication. In Elias's opinion: 'Generally, Pope deleted less.'<sup>97</sup> Pope did delete some amusing references to himself in these letters which perhaps did not conform to the public image he wished to present. He omitted, for example, Swift's references to his deficiencies as a host. That Pope was not as generous with his wine as his guests could have wished was one of Swift's favourite anecdotes, related in

a letter to Gay of 10 July 1732 - an anecdote Pope deleted: 'You have not forgot; Gentlemen I'll leave you to your wine, which was but the remainder of a pint when four glasses were drank...I tell that story to every body, in commendation of Mr. Pope's abstemiousness' (III, 297-8). Pope also omitted references to Gay's precarious financial situation and consequent dependence on the patronage of the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry (III, 204, for example), as well as some of Swift's playful depictions of Gay's life with them at Amesbury, as in his letter to Gay of 28 August 1731 in which Swift imagines that Gay '& the Dutchess absolutely govern the family, for I have not heard one syllable of my Lord Duke, who I take for granted, submits to all your decrees' (III, 219). It is important to bear in mind, however, as Elias observes of Pope's deletions, that 'Most of the time Pope merely lessens the incidence of such passages, instead of expunging every one of them.'<sup>98</sup> Thus Pope does not fundamentally alter the sense of the letters. From the changes we have observed, he seemed more concerned to offer a general, somewhat idealized, universally relevant or comprehensible, picture of a group of remarkable individuals. By omitting topical references he made the letters more generally significant; by deleting Swift's criticism of mutual friends, the benevolence and virtue of the circle was enhanced; and by removing passages which referred to his own or to his friends' idiosyncrasies or shortcomings, he presented them as types rather than very unique individuals. While Pope did not seem to alter the facts fundamentally, he certainly, on occasion, stretched the

truth to conform with the epistolary portrait of himself and his friends which he wished to present. For example, as Elias observes, one result of Pope's editing of Swift's letters to Gay is to 'strengthen Pope's central theme of the great friendship between Swift and Pope,' a result achieved, he argues, by Pope's deletion of Swift's messages for Gay to convey to Pope - 'a situation which presents Gay as the central figure and transmitter, and Pope as only one of Swift's other friends.'<sup>99</sup> In concluding their bibliographical analyses of the editorial changes made by Pope before publishing, Sherburn, Elias and Dearing are all agreed in a belief that, in general, Pope's major concern as an editor of his own correspondence was to present the letters as 'informal, philosophical essay[s].'<sup>100</sup>

Before concluding this section on Pope's editorship of a selection of mainly Swift's and a few of Bolingbroke's letters, a few more facts must be noted here. Joseph Spence has recorded Pope's highly favourable opinion of Swift's and Bolingbroke's epistolary abilities. In 1730 Pope described Swift's 'familiar letters' as 'very good: full of sentiments, and those often of the strongest friendship and honour.'<sup>101</sup> Pope's and Swift's great admiration for Bolingbroke, which Rachel Trickett attributes to the superficial dazzle of Bolingbroke's personality - that Pope and Swift, for all their apparent scepticism, were easy victims of charm'<sup>102</sup> - extended, not surprisingly, to admiration of his letters. In 1744 Pope compared Bolingbroke as letter-writer with Lord 'Peterborow':

Lord Peterborow was not near so great a genius as Lord Bolingbroke. They were quite unlike. Lord Peterborow... would say pretty and lively things in his letters, but they would be rather too gay and wandering. Whereas was Lord Bolingbroke to write to the Emperor or to the statesman, he would fix on that point which was the most material, would set it in the strongest and finest light, and manage it so as to make it the most serviceable to his purpose.<sup>103</sup>

It should not be assumed that Pope casually and carelessly set himself against his friends' wishes in the matter of the publication of some of their letters. The importance the issue signified for Pope can be inferred from the fact that he apparently staked losing the literary executorship of Swift's works on this matter. In a letter from Swift to Pope of 12 June 1732 Swift observes 'I have order'd by my Will, that all my Papers of any kind shall be deliver'd you to dispose of as you please' (III, 291). Incurring Swift's displeasure over the publication of the letters may have represented a prime reason why Pope lost this bequest. In 1740 Swift wrote a new will which left Pope only a miniature painting of the first Lord Oxford.<sup>104</sup>

Yet Pope's publication of Swift's letters was not the simply selfish act it has often been represented as. In Sherburn's opinion Pope's editing of the letters contained 'more and better letters by Swift than by Pope' (IV, 337n). Considering the fact that Pope apparently kept copies of the letters written jointly with Bolingbroke to Swift, it is probable that he would have preferred to include a greater number of letters by Bolingbroke in the editions of his correspondence. Perhaps, having bequeathed his papers to Bolingbroke, he hoped that Bolingbroke would publish

their correspondence, unaware that, perhaps prompted by his fury at Pope's surreptitious printing of some 1500 copies of his Idea of a Patriot King, Bolingbroke would apparently burn all their letters shortly after Pope's death.

CHAPTER SEVENTHE QUESTION OF PROPRIETY AND MORAL PURPOSE

This chapter will detail the variety of reasons which apparently led Pope to the project of a publication of a selection of his correspondence. Having taken, in the preceding three chapters, a general overview of Pope's correspondence and the letters as then edited for publication in the 1729, 1735, 1737 and 1741 editions, it is important here to discuss what we may term the 'propriety and moral purpose' of these publications. The first section of this chapter will look at the ways in which the 1735 edition of Pope's letters in particular represents a kind of 'answer' to the many pamphlets in the form of essays, poems and letters directed against Pope throughout his life. The second section will look at Pope's 1741 publication of his correspondence with Swift and Bolingbroke and a number of fellow Scriblerians, including in this discussion reference to some of Pope's poetical works which have a bearing on Pope's intentions as a publisher of his own letters in this and in the earlier editions. The third section will examine the 'propriety' of Pope's active but surreptitious involvement in the 1735 and the 1741 publications.

Geoffrey Tillotson suggests that the first edition of the letters published by Pope himself, in 1735, appeared at



a crucial time in the poet's career: 'his war with the dunces had left him sorer and shabbier than was comfortable.'<sup>1</sup> The implications of this apt observation have never been sufficiently assessed. While it is a commonplace that a knowledge of the pamphlet attacks on Pope's character and writing leads to a greater appreciation of his mature poetry, and especially of the Dunciad, the Moral Essays and the Horatian Imitations, the observation applies with equal justice to the letters Pope chose for inclusion in his 1735 edition. Failure to recognize this represents a surprising omission, considering the general recognition that Pope was acutely affected by the literally hundreds of poems and essays attacking him. Samuel Johnson records one of the most famous anecdotes indicative of the effect on Pope of these pamphlets in his Life of Pope:

I have heard Mr. Richardson relate that he attended his father the painter on a visit, when one of Cibber's pamphlets came into the hands of Pope, who said, 'These things are my diversion.' They sat by him while he perused it, and saw his features writhen with anguish; and young Richardson said to his father, when they returned, that he hoped to be preserved from such diversion as had been that day the lot of Pope.<sup>2</sup>

The anecdote reflects Pope's curiously ambivalent attitude toward the hundreds of pamphlet attacks: he was at once fascinated and anguished by them. It was impossible for him simply to ignore them; as J.V. Guerinot, author of an excellent bibliography of this area of 'Popiana' observes: 'although such attacks constituted part of the Augustan literary scene, it is almost certain that no other literary figure was attacked with anything like the frequency that Pope was; it is, indeed, hard to think of any other figure

in English literature who was so frequently attacked in his lifetime.'<sup>3</sup> The pamphlet attacks which attached themselves to anything Pope published or any public action in which he was involved were inaugurated by John Dennis in his withering 1711 Reflections Critical and Satyrical, Upon a Late Rhapsody Call'd, An Essay Upon Criticism. Attacks following Dennis's model - that is, vitriolic denunciations of Pope's person, family, character and writings - continued right up to Pope's death, increasing in frequency, of course, on Pope's publication in 1728 of the Dunciad which denounced in turn the Grub Street writers who had sought to destroy his public reputation. Pope's fascination with such personal satire is most strikingly illustrated by the fact that he collected a great number of the pamphlet attacks on himself, bound them in four volumes and stored them in his library.<sup>4</sup> The fact that his library also contained a copy of satires, lampoons and epigrams entitled A New Collection of Poems Relating to State Affairs, from Oliver Cromwel To this present Time: By the Greatest Wits of the Age, a book published in 1705, suggests that his interest in satirical ephemera was not a purely personal one or confined to attacks on himself. As Benjamin Boyce notes, Pope's interest in the volume obviously extended beyond a detached curiosity; that he actually relished this sort of literature is apparent in the fact that 'Pope seems to have gone through the volume from the beginning to the end, reading satire after satire acrid with abuse and nastiness and using his pen to fill in the gutted names and blanks or identifying people

in marginal notes altogether about four hundred times in the 591 pages.'<sup>5</sup>

On the one hand, then, Pope was simply intrigued by the Grub Street industry specializing in pamphlets of poems and essays abusing him and his poetical success. On the other hand, he was obviously deeply pained by the scurrilous nature of the generality of these pamphlets. Dennis's pamphlet on the Essay on Criticism, the Remarks, which marked the commencement of the hostilities between Grub Street and Pope may serve as an unfortunate but fairly representative example of the hundreds of such attacks published in Pope's lifetime. It is possible here to list some of the categories of abuse contained in Dennis's Remarks as representative because of a remarkable characteristic of this Popiana: an attack on Pope or accusation, once made, gained the plausibility of truth and was repeated ad infinitum in subsequent pamphlets.

Remarks is, first, typical of many subsequent pamphlet attacks on Pope in a sense of injury or resentment out of all proportion to the offence it addressed. In this case, Dennis's thirty pages of bitter invective were prompted by Pope's unwise but scarcely malicious three lines of reference to the literary critic in the Essay on Criticism, describing him as an irascible 'Appius' (ll. 585-7). As Guerinot observes, Dennis's sensitivity bordered on a morbid paranoia which sensed injury when none was intended.<sup>6</sup> His sensitivity unluckily did not extend to sympathy for a twenty-three year old fledgling poet already suffering from the limitations of a crippling disease and from belonging to

a persecuted religion. Rather, besides the disproportionate sense of grievance in Dennis's pamphlet, there are the numerous remarks on Pope's deformity, humiliating references to his physical shortcomings which reduce the generality of the pamphlet attacks on Pope like Dennis's Remarks to crude personal libels. Dennis observes in his Remarks, for example, 'As there is no Creature in Nature so venomous, there is nothing so stupid and so impotent as a hunch-back'd Toad.'<sup>7</sup> The young would-be rake and man-about-town who composed the gay, witty if somewhat bawdy letters to Cromwell on the model of Voiture is then devastated by Dennis's mocking caricature of his attractiveness to women in these terms: 'a young, squab, short Gentleman... an eternal Writer of Amorous Pastoral Madrigals, and the very Bow of the God of Love.'<sup>8</sup>

The third typical element of Dennis's Remarks lies in its implicit derogation of Pope's doting parents; he extends his ruthless exposure of Pope's physical defects to an insinuation that Pope's family would have preferred that such a 'monster' could have been aborted: Pope 'has reason to thank the good Gods that he was born a Modern. For had he been born of Graecian Parents, and his Father by consequence had by Law had the absolute Disposal of him, his Life had been no longer than that of one of his Poems, the Life of half a day.'<sup>9</sup> Pope's religion offered Dennis a fourth avenue of attack. Pope's surname and Catholicism were unfortunate circumstances in an age with a morbid dread of a Jacobite invasion. In his Remarks Dennis was only the first of many to accuse Pope of treason; complaining

that Pope has obliquely libelled King Charles and William of Orange in the Essay Dennis concludes:

he who Libels our Confederates, must be by Politics a Jacobite; and he who Libels all the Protestant Kings that we have had in this Island these three-score Years...must, I humbly conceive, derive his Religion from St. Omer's...and is, I suppose, politickly setting up for Poet-Laureat against the coming over of the Pretender, which by his Insolence he seems to believe approaching.<sup>10</sup>

A fifth category of abuse concerned Pope's relationships with his friends. Dennis's Remarks again represented the first of many pamphlets containing accusations that Pope's friendships with such figures as Addison, Wycherley and Walsh were compounded, on the poet's part, of opportunism and ingratitude. In his Remarks, for example, Dennis charges Pope with having himself composed for inclusion in the Pastorals a poem praising Pope's poetry which he had then attributed to Wycherley. Dennis then adds insult to injury by observing that the attribution of such inferior work to Wycherley had damaged Wycherley's reputation as a poet: 'by this wise Proceeding [Pope] had the Benefit of the Encomium, and Mr. W--- had the Scandal of the Poetry; which it brought upon him to such a degree, that 'tis ten to one if ever he recovers the Reputation of a good Versifyer.'<sup>11</sup> Dennis concludes his description of Pope's friendship with Wycherley by picturing Pope as a parasitical arriviste clinging to the great Wycherley to himself gain entrée to the great: 'It has been observ'd that of late Years a certain Spectre exactly in the shape of that little Gentleman, has haunted a certain ancient Wit, and has been by the People of Covent-Garden styl'd his evil genius.'<sup>12</sup>

Wycherley's generosity in granting the miserable dwarf his company and protection is paralleled less selflessly by Walsh who, Dennis imagines, lets Pope accompany him as a sort of hilarious conversation piece: 'I remember a little young Gentleman, with all the Qualifications which we have found to be in this Author, whom Mr. Walsh us'd sometimes to take into his Company as a double Foil to his Person, and his Capacity.'<sup>13</sup>

Time and malice honed these five categories of pamphlet abuse to a finer cutting edge while adding a few more charges to the list. From crude taunting of Pope's physical defects in Remarks in 1711, by 1716 Dennis had evolved the theory that Pope's crippling disease of the spine must be interpreted as a signal of divine disapproval; he pronounced in A True Character of Pope, with an air of solemn, Biblical injunction, that: 'the Deformity of this Libeller, is Visible, Present, Lasting, Unalterable, and Peculiar to Himself. 'Tis the mark of God and Nature upon him, to give us warning that we should hold no Society with him, as a Creature not of our Original, nor of our Species.'<sup>14</sup> By 1733 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's sense of enmity was strong enough for her to agree with Dennis's verdict and in Verses Address'd to the Imitator Of The First Satire Of The Second Book of Horace she advised Pope to follow the model of his Biblical ancestor: 'And with the Emblem of thy crooked Mind,/ Mark'd on thy Back, like Cain, by God's own Hand,/ Wander like him, accursed through the Land.'<sup>15</sup>

Ironically, Pope was damned if he appeared to believe

in his despised religion and damned if he appeared not to. The famous anecdote related in Maty's Memoirs of the Earl of Chesterfield is but one of many examples of Pope's scepticism about the articles of his faith;<sup>16</sup> but even allowing for his doubts, what Sherburn describes as the early eighteenth-century's 'furious hatred of Catholics expressed in journals and pamphlets'<sup>17</sup> must have deeply pained Pope, brought up in a devout family, friendly with a great number of Catholics, and commiserating with them, as we have seen in the letters, over the heavy penalties and restrictions placed on Catholics at that time. On the one hand, such pamphlets as the 1716 pamphlet entitled The Catholick Poet condemned Pope as a treasonable Jacobite and a 'hunch-back'd Papist'. On the other hand, Pope was equally condemned for his one public lapse of faith - the parody he composed on the first psalm - obtained somehow by Curll and published to great public outrage although, as Ault argues, it is apparent that Pope was parodying rather the sixteenth-century Sternhold's pedestrian versification of the psalm than the psalm itself.<sup>18</sup>

The level to which Pope's detractors would stoop is well illustrated by Charles Gildon's 1718 Memoirs Of the Life Of William Wycherley in which Gildon sneered at the recent 'Dec ease of [Pope's] Rustick Parent.'<sup>19</sup> This pamphlet, typical in its inclusion of this third type of pamphlet abuse in slandering Pope's family also includes abuse of the fifth type - that is, insinuations that Pope was a false, conniving friend. Gildon describes Pope here as an opportunistic country bumpkin, a flatterer who had

attached himself to Wycherley and repeats Dennis's claim that Walsh suffered Pope's company only as a form of ludicrous diversion, 'For a Man of Wit may find an agreeable Diversion in the Company of a pretending Fool sometimes, provided that the Interviews are short and seldome.'<sup>20</sup> Pope's famous quarrel with Addison offered fresh opportunity, even justification his detractors believed, to assert their old claims that Pope was an ungrateful and false friend. This was especially true after December 1722 when Pope's 'Atticus' portrait was printed in St. James's Journal. As Sherburn observes, the fact that the verses were 'first printed in 1722 naturally gave the Dunces a chance to spread the scandal that they were written after Addison's death.'<sup>21</sup> The charge that Pope had in a cowardly way libelled Addison after his death with his 'Atticus' portrait is coupled with the accusation that he also libelled such former friends as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in a pamphlet issued in 1731 entitled One Epistle to Mr. A. Pope. The related assertion that Pope had been ungrateful to the great Addison who 'rais'd from Dust th'ungrateful Miscreant's Head'<sup>22</sup> was repeated as late as 1743 in Mr. Pope's Picture in Miniature, a claim that through the years had acquired the ring of conviction along with the rest of the scandal linking Addison and Pope assiduously published by the Grub Street pamphleteers.

As for the 'new' charges appearing in pamphlets after Dennis's 1711 Remarks, Guerinot observes that a 'charge that is omnipresent in the pamphlets, made overtly over and over, and implied even when not explicit, is that Pope had



become a rich man.'<sup>23</sup> This and the charge that Pope was a satirist - neither accusation, interestingly enough, a moral indictment in itself but only as the Grub Street writers applied it to Pope - appear, from Guerinot's bibliography, to represent the two most popular 'new' pamphlet accusations. It has often been observed that what Pope's dunces really found unforgivable about him was his financial success and consequent literary independence, free of the professional writer's old bondage to patronage. As Bonamy Dobrée notes, Pope was 'the first Englishman living by his pen to be rid of humiliating scheming' and while Pope's 'concern may have been selfish, he revolutionized the position of the writer in society.'<sup>24</sup> As we shall see, Pope's unprecedented independence as a writer, purportedly free of political allegiances or patronage, was used by him to reinforce the ethos of his satire. What is important to remember here, though, is the radical departure from the past which Pope's position, so jealously attacked by the impoverished, struggling hacks, represented; as Alexandre Beljame remarks, in Pope's dedication of the Iliad to Congreve, for example, 'Pope shattered at a blow the long tradition of self-seeking dedications, whether political or personal.'<sup>25</sup>

Pope was profoundly affected by the pamphlet attacks; he seems to speak from rather bitter experience in the preface to the 1717 Collected Works in observing that 'The life of a Wit, is a warfare upon earth.' By 1731, weary of the outcry that his portrait of Timon in the Epistle to Burlington was intended as a satirical caricature of

his friend, the Duke of Chandos, Pope claimed in a letter to Burlington that such deliberate or willful misrepresentations of his actions 'half incline me to write no more' (III, 266). His original intention was apparently to preserve a stoical silence amidst the abuse hurled at his character, parentage and morals and, as we see in his letter to Caryll of 25 June 1711, he was actually willing to distinguish between the scurrility predominating in Dennis's Remarks and the few passages of constructive criticism it contained and to revise his Essay accordingly (I, 120-3). Pope observed in a subsequent letter to Caryll that he would not make 'the least reply to [Dennis], not only because you advise me, but because I've ever been of opinion that if a book can't answer for its self to the public, 'tis no sort of purpose to do it' (II, 185-6). In a letter to Pope of 23 September 1723 and one dated 26 November 1725 Swift warned Pope against immortalizing his enemies in his poetry: 'Take care the bad poets do not outwit you, as they have served the good ones in every Age, whom they have provoked to transmit their Names to posterity Maeuius is as well known as Virgil, and Gildon will be as well known as you if his name gets into your Verses; and as to the difference between good and bad Fame is a perfect Trifle' (II, 343-4). Pope had thence far rarely answered his detractors but he apparently, naively, believed that his 1728 Dunciad, a work reminiscent, as we have seen, of Erasmus's Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum in ironically reversing the humanist notion of fame in its mock celebration of bad and dull

writers, would 'rid [him] of these insects' (II, 481).

Pope's composition of the Dunciad, with its appendix of A List of Books, Papers and Verses, in which our Author was abused, including thirty-four items of pamphlet attacks from Dennis's Remarks up to the most recent attack on himself and Swift, obviously represented, on one level, a direct answer to his attackers. This thesis argues that the letters Pope published in 1735 equally represents, on one level, such an answer. The pamphlet attacks played a decisive role both in prompting Pope to the project of publishing a selection of his correspondence and in dictating the form the edited letters were to take. As we saw in the fourth chapter, Pope had learned from Dennis, appropriately enough, that personal letters might be used to combat attacks upon his character and actions when, in July 1729, Dennis published a letter Pope had sent him eight years earlier; Pope learned his lesson quickly, retaliating by printing a letter Dennis had sent him eight years earlier, a letter which cast a slur on Dennis's integrity as a critic and which rebutted the letter of Pope's Dennis had printed.<sup>26</sup>

Vindication of Wycherley's reputation and of his friendship with him also prompted Pope, as we have seen, to the publication of his correspondence with Wycherley in 1729 in the second volume of The Posthumous Works. That his relationship with Wycherley was impugned by so many pamphlets probably accounts for Pope's anonymous preface to this work which not only discredits Theobald by implication but also dwells at some length on the nature of Pope's and

Wycherley's friendship, describing it as remarkable for its duration and for its being contracted between 'Two Eminent Writers...when the one was above Seventy, the other not Seventeen,' and identifying the relationship as an 'Example' of a model friendship.<sup>27</sup> In the face of pamphlet attackers who had depicted Pope as a parasitical monkey clinging to the great Wycherley's skirts the preface also admittedly praised Pope's abilities as a poet somewhat at the expense of Wycherley's by elaborating on the impossibility Pope found of ridding the ageing dramatist's verses of their unwitting repetitions and plagiarisms. The relationship between the Wycherley letters as published by Pope in 1729, 1735 and 1737 and the pamphlet attacks is made explicit in a footnote attached to Wycherley's letter to Pope of 13 May 1728, included in all editions, which denies the persistent rumour that Pope had himself composed the commendatory verses on his Pastorals attributed there to Wycherley: 'This, and the following Extract, are a full Confutation of the Lying Spirit of John Dennis and others, who impudently assert'd that Mr. Pope wrote these Verses on himself.'<sup>28</sup> Although Pope distorted their epistolary relationship by suppressing his own flattery of Wycherley and only printing Wycherley's of him, this is attributable at least in part to his wish to balance the picture of their relationship as presented by the pamphlets.

Vindication of himself and his friends was also the reason Pope specifically offered to Lord Oxford in describing his acquisition of his letters, recalling them from friends, and in requesting permission to deposit this correspondence

in the Harleian Library. He observed in the letter to Oxford of 15 September 1729 that he hoped the letters, thus preserved, might serve as a true history of himself and his circle: 'As the Work I told you of, (that of Collecting the papers & Letters of many other Correspondents) advances now to some bulk; I think more & more of it; as finding what a number of Facts they will settle the truth of, both relating to History, & Criticisme, & parts of private Life & Character of the eminent men of my time' (III, 54). The publication of the Dunciad in 1728 and then of the Epistle to Burlington in 1732 were factors which contributed to bring the ephemera warfare on the subject of Pope to a climax in 1733, a year which Guerinot describes as 'a year which produced more pamphlets for or against Pope than any other.'<sup>29</sup> It is interesting that in 1733 Pope, having amassed a number of letters, initiated his struggle to manipulate Curll into a publication of his letters. In that year he responded to Curll's advertisement for facts and documents for a life of Pope in the person of an anonymous 'P.T.'. On being unable to arrange a meeting with the mysterious P.T., Curll refused, and Pope's design to force Curll into accepting the responsibility for the first publication of his general correspondence engineered secretly by Pope himself had to be held in abeyance for another sixteen months, when Curll finally overcame his suspicious scruples in 1735 and fell into Pope's elaborate trap.

The first publication of Pope's letters in 1735 reflected both the context of the pamphlet warfare from

which it emerged and Pope's avowed intention to vindicate himself and his friends through his and their letters. While not substantially altering their actual correspondence, through the selection of the letters he included Pope, as we have seen, slightly distorted the Wycherley correspondence in his wish to present it as an 'answer' publicly redressing the false picture of his relationship with Wycherley circulated for many years in the pamphlets. The 'story' the Walsh correspondence tells in both the 1735 and the 1737 editions is one which equally rehabilitates the public picture of Pope's friendship with Walsh. Just as the Wycherley letters as printed by Pope emphasize those elements of their relationship satirized by the pamphlets, destroying the pamphlet depiction of it by substituting a Pope who was Wycherley's dear friend and literary colleague, so the Walsh letters as printed by Pope destroy the pamphlets' portrayal of a Walsh who retained Pope as he would a pet monkey, for his diversion and condescension. These letters not only reveal that Pope was respected by Walsh as an astute literary critic, admired by him as an amazingly precocious poet, and loved by him as a friend, but also quash the rumour of Pope's ingratitude to his early great friends by Pope's including a generous footnote describing Walsh as 'Author of several beautiful pieces in Prose and Verse, and in the opinion of Mr. Dryden...the Best Critic of our Nation in his time' (1735, 50n).

Continuing with this 'fifth' category of pamphlet abuse, the chance to publish his letters was also probably

perceived by Pope as an invaluable opportunity to rectify the public image of his troubled relationship with Addison. Pope was anxious to correct the Grub Street depiction of their friendship in two particulars. The first involved the charge of ingratitude. The mythology generated by the pamphlets written on the Pope-Addison quarrel was contributed to by Dennis and Duckett in their 1729 pamphlet Pope Alexander's Supremacy which asserts that while Addison had been one of the most active supporters of Pope's Iliad translation and active in procuring subscriptions for it, Pope, seeing which way the winds of favour blew, on the Tory rise to power, 'listed openly in the Tory Service, and every Week publish'd scandalous Invectives on those very Whigs, who had been his amplest Subscribers.'<sup>30</sup>

Yet Addison encouraged Pope in his project of the Iliad translation and then obstructed it to the extent of encouraging his circle at Button's to their denials of Pope's suitability for the task, aspersing, for example, his knowledge of Greek in such pamphlets as Burnet and Duckett's Homerides. A letter from Burnet to Duckett reveals Addison's complicity in these pamphlet attacks; referring apparently to the Homerides Burnet observes, 'As to our Specimen, I shewed great part of it to Mr. Addison, who advised me in two things.'<sup>31</sup> The quarrel between Pope and Addison was undoubtedly contributed to by both of them, but it must have appeared rather hard to Pope that only Addison's side of it had been told.<sup>32</sup> An opportunity for public redress was offered in the prospect of the

published letters.

The 1735 edition includes a letter from Addison containing his encouragement of Pope's translation, a letter which, in the event of Addison's subsequent guidance of the wits at Button's in pamphlets attacking Pope's project and in his own encouragement of and possible collaboration on Tickell's rival translation represents, as Sherburn observes, a 'clear indictment of Addison's sincerity.'<sup>33</sup> Dennis's claim that Addison had helped procure subscriptions for Pope's translation added insult to injury; labouring under an unjust charge that he had been flagrantly ungrateful to Addison, Pope must have keenly resented this charge, too, in his knowledge that, in marked contrast to Swift's invaluable assistance, Addison had not procured a single subscription and that Ambrose Philips, a Button's confederate, had even refused to relay to Pope subscription money for the Iliad which had been entrusted to him. Pope included a letter to this effect in the 1737 edition, the letter containing the famous description of Addison as a 'great Turk in Poetry, who can never bear a brother on the Throne' (1737, 18) which he later incorporated into the 'Atticus' portrait. This description of Addison seems to represent another instance of Pope's remarkable facility for learning from his enemies. Just as it seems that he learned from Dennis that the publication of a personal letter might serve to answer an attack on him, so he apparently abstracted this famous analogy from Addison himself. Addison's review of Pope's Essay on Criticism in the Spectator paper of



20 December 1711 described a phenomenon which, Addison implied, applied to Pope and which Pope would apply to Addison in the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot: 'In our own Country a Man seldom sets up for a Poet, without attacking the Reputation of all his Brothers in the Art.'<sup>34</sup> Addison then proceeded to quote Denham's verse, 'Nor needs thy juster Title the foul Guilt/ Of Eastern Kings, who to secure their Reign/ Must have their Brothers, Sons, and Kindred Slain.'<sup>35</sup>

The second charge, after ingratitude, Pope was particularly anxious to counter in his published letters was the accusation concerning the 'Atticus' portrait. Pope's 'Atticus' was described by a contemporary as accurate; Dr. Lockier observed to Spence in 1730 that 'Pope's character of Addison is one of the truest, as well as one of the best things he ever wrote. Addison deserved that character the most of any man.'<sup>36</sup> Yet, as Pope claimed in a footnote to a letter from Atterbury he published in 1737, he had not intended to make the verses public: 'An imperfect Copy was got out, very much to the Author's surprize, who never would give any' (1737, 222n). Pope's assertion that he had composed the poem long before Addison's death and had in fact sent it to Addison to restrain that individual's hostility towards him has, fortunately, been proven conclusively.<sup>37</sup> But in Pope's lifetime and up through the nineteenth century the ugly rumour of Pope's duplicity and treachery in this matter persisted although even Pope's bitter enemy, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, had testified that 'Yes, that satire was

written in Addison's life time.'<sup>38</sup>

As for the remaining pamphlet accusations, Pope countered the popular charge that he was a 'rank Papist' and hence a treasonable Jacobite by the epistolary image of a political neutral with a detestation of religious and political controversy. Reflections on the difficulty of being a Catholic in the early eighteenth century and on the futility of political and religious faction predominate in the section of letters to Pope's co-religionist, Edward Blount, for example. Thus, Pope also included in his 1737 edition the interesting letter from Blount in which this friend observes that for eighteenth-century Catholics no option apart from the cultivation of virtue remained: 'Ambition is a vice that is timely mortify'd in us poor Papists; we ought in recompence to cultivate as many virtues in our selves, as we can, that we may be truly great' (1737, 142-3). Blount's observation throws an interesting light on some marginalia Maynard Mack discovered in Pope's copy of Montaigne; next to the passage in which Montaigne quotes

the response of the Lacedaemonians to their conqueror Antipater: 'You may impose as heavy and ruinous Taxes upon us as you please, but to command us to do shameful and dishonest things, you will lose your Time, for for it is to no purpose'...Pope has jotted: 'The case of those who pay double taxes.'

As we saw in the fifth chapter, it is interesting that Pope apparently changed the focus of the Addison quarrel as represented in the 1735 edition in the 1737 edition: from the fascinating story of friendship and betrayal in 1735, in 1737 we are presented with a series of letters presenting us rather an object lesson on the profoundly

disruptive effect party politics or the spirit of faction in generally exerts upon personal relationships. From the details of a purely personal account of jealousy between two poets in 1735, in 1737 the fact that Addison was a Whig and Pope a Tory is given much greater prominence and presented as a fact largely responsible for their quarrel. Similarly in the Blount correspondence Pope habitually moved from the particular to the general, from the problems he and Blount faced as fellow Catholics to reflections on the futility of topical conflict and the importance of the cultivation of virtue in a time of present adversity that 'we may be truly great'.

This movement to the general from the particular, from direct response to attacks on himself to Pope's presentation of generalized truths seems the basic difference between the 1735 and the 1737 editions. An exception to this rule is presented by the Atterbury correspondence, not included in the 1735 edition. The project of the publication of relevant letters offered Pope in this case an opportunity to avow publicly a belief he treasured throughout his life: his conviction of Atterbury's innocence. The Atterbury letters as published by Pope in 1737 reveal a friendship compounded of such mutual interests as a fondness for literary analysis and a predilection for the composition of epitaphs. Pope's farewell letter to Atterbury, exiled for life on charges of conspiracy and treason, is indicative of Pope's hope that the published letters - as a memorial of his friendship

with Atterbury and a proof of Pope's belief in his innocence - would present a more accurate history of himself and his friends to posterity:

I know perfectly well what a share of credit it will be, for [me] to have appeared on your side, or being called your Friend. I am far prouder of that word you publickly spoke of me, than of any thing I have yet heard of my self in my whole life (II, 169).

A propos Pope's correspondence with Atterbury, as we have seen, Pope included in his 1737 edition of his letters Atterbury's suggestion, following the death of Pope's father, that, for expediency's sake, Pope should change his religion. This letter is followed in that edition by Pope's letter gracefully declining the proposition. Geoffrey Carnall justly points to these two letters as typifying one of the more remarkable aspects of letter-writing in the early eighteenth century as an art practised by such individuals as Pope and Atterbury. While the Hanoverian government was frantically issuing edicts against Catholics in its fear of a Jacobite invasion and while Pope's pamphlet attackers were shrilly inveighing against Pope's dangerous Papism, the correspondence of the period, like these two elegant letters, is remarkable for its civilized, polite tone. Even on such a controversial issue as Pope's religion then represented, the epistolary dialogue maintained the accents of the well-bred discourse of gentlemen.<sup>40</sup>

As for the more insidious - because less easy to refute - pervasive insinuations throughout the pamphlets attacking Pope which hint that his physical defects were the visible manifestations of a crippled mind, Pope's published letters

served as a kind of answer even to the irrational belief that mens curva in corpore curvo. In a letter to Caryll sent shortly after Curll's unauthorized 1726 publication of his letters to Henry Cromwell, Pope expressed his belief that his correspondence with 'good men' could serve as a valuable witness of his own good character and thus rehabilitate his own reputation. In this letter to Caryll Pope first requests him to return any of his own letters that he might have preserved and then observes

I will review them, and return whatever can do no hurt to any of us, or our memories, or to any other particular man's character; but so much, as would serve to bear testimony of my own love for good men, or theirs for me, I would not but keep on all accounts, and shall think this very article more to my reputation than all my works put together (II, 419).

In another letter to Caryll, sent in 1729, Pope is struck again by the virtuous nature of his correspondence: 'I have been these 3 weeks in full employment and amusement in reviewing the correspondence I have had with 2 or 3 of my most select friends...I thank God (above all) for finding so few parts of life that I need be ashamed of, no correspondence or intimacies with any but good, deserving people' (III, 38). Pope's belief that his friendships with virtuous men would enhance his reputations is also reflected in his opinion that in the Moral Essays, addressed to men Pope idealized as good individuals as well as commemorated in these verses as his friends, 'it is here that I shall be seen to most advantage.'<sup>41</sup>

As we saw in the fourth chapter, all but Pope's earliest or most deliberately witty correspondence is often moral or philosophical or both at once, reflecting an author well

versed in the humanist tradition, acutely aware of his own mortality, imbued with a deep filial affection, interested in a practical Christianity, and convinced of the moral basis underlying true friendships. On Caryl's returning the first batch of his letters to him in 1712 Pope was particularly fascinated by their representing an unselfconscious autobiography. His remarks on the impression the letters had made on him reveal that his interest was primarily a psychological one; the recalled letters served as an 'innocent history' of himself. James Winn believes that Pope, as a faithful and knowledgeable adherent to the humanist tradition of the published letter, made a significant break with that tradition in a 'revolutionary' or innovative 'awareness of and interest in individuals, his insight into the personalities of his correspondents, the people he discussed, and himself.'<sup>42</sup> Winn argues that 'few letters of Cicero, Seneca, Pliny, Erasmus, Balzac, or Voiture show such attention to human personality.'<sup>43</sup> I would argue with his including Cicero in this list but as regards Pope, it is important to emphasize here once again that Pope made little distinction between his public and his private life. With his own early recognition of his genius and the accompanying realization that, in view of his physical and social constraints, his life would largely be confined to the imaginative projection of himself as a poet, Pope never developed a personality totally apart from or unaffected by his career. Thus if, as Winn suggests, Pope broke with epistolary tradition in an emphasis on the psychological

aspect of the letter, paradoxically, for Pope the psychological or the purely individual or the private were usually indistinguishable from his public life as England's foremost poet. This explains the fact that, as we have seen, even in his earliest writings Pope failed to distinguish between public and private writing. He sent essays purporting to be private letters and letters in the form of essays, for example, to Steele for inclusion in the Spectator and the Guardian. He also abstracted phrases or ideas from his private letters for inclusion in his essays and poetry and vice versa.

Thus, returning to Tillotson's remark, when, in 1733, Pope found the pamphlet war at its fiercest, it did not appear incongruous to him to devise a plan whereby the 'innocent history' which he had found his recalled letters to represent would be put to good use, vindicating his own conduct and, as we shall see in the next section, serving the function of didactic literature. He may have thought it appropriate, too, to answer his attackers with letters, considering the fact that a large number of the pamphlet attacks against him and his friends had assumed the form of personal letters to Pope. The four volumes of bound pamphlets in his library included, for example, Homerides: Or, a Letter to Mr. Pope; A Letter to Mr. John Gay; The Mirrour: Or, Letters Satyrical, Panegyricall, Serious and Humorous; and A Letter from a Clergyman to his Friend.<sup>44</sup>

It is interesting that as early as 1712 Pope remarked in a letter to Caryll that he wanted to enlist his pen in the service of Caryll's uncle who had been aspersed by

the Flying Post: 'I beg you to offer him my utmost service, if he can think me capable of any, with the only weapon I have, my pen, in reply to, or raillery upon that scoundrel' (I, 152). Pope's awareness of his peculiar vulnerability was achieved early and lasted throughout his life, accompanied by the recognition of his pen as the only weapon he could employ in his own and others' defence.

## ii

On one level Pope's 1741 publication of his correspondence with Bolingbroke, Swift and fellow Scriblerians also represents a response to pamphlet attacks. Attacks on Bolingbroke and Swift in particular had often been included in pamphlets concerned mainly with Pope, with Bolingbroke and Swift either accused of acting as Pope's friends or, just so his detractors could have it both ways, as his enemies. Bolingbroke, for example, was not only charged with treasonable behaviour, questionable morals verging on atheism, and an attitude of insolence toward his contemporaries, but also, as in the 1735 An Epistle to Alexander Pope, with acting as Pope's evil genius, as a man who unscrupulously misled his naïve friend.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, a 1739 pamphlet entitled Characters: An Epistle to Alexander Pope, Esq; which Guerinot describes as an attempt by a 'Walpole hack' to discredit Pope's anti-government satires charges Bolingbroke with treason and Pope with being 'influenced by the traitor Bolingbroke'.<sup>46</sup>

As for Swift and other former Scriblerians, a pamphlet of 1727 entitled Gulliver Decypher'd was mainly devoted to



'proofs' that Swift could not possibly have written Gulliver's Travels but deviated from this task to attack Pope's friendship with Arbuthnot and Gay and his Homer translations. This pamphlet, as Guerinot observes, is 'marked by Pope with X's and several underscorings.'<sup>47</sup> It satirizes Gay's position of dependence in living on the patronage of the Duchess of Queensberry and reviles Pope, Arbuthnot and Gay for combining, in the composition of such works as Three Hours After Marriage, to form an 'Alliance offensive and defensive between each other.'<sup>48</sup> A pamphlet of 1728, The Twickenham Hotch-Potch, similarly denigrated Pope's circle of friends by describing it as consisting of 'an impertinent Scotch-Quack, A Profligate Irish-Dean, The Lacquey of a Superannuated Dutchess, and a little virulent Papist.'<sup>49</sup> In the 1728 The Metamorphosis, a pamphlet in verse form which Guerinot justly describes as a 'thoroughly unpleasant production', Swift and Pope are accused of spitefulness and a love of dirt; they are transformed in this pamphlet to dogs, a 'Spaniel P--p-e; a Mastiff Sw--t' who indiscriminately 'teize and bite whate'er came next 'em,/ But of pure Spite, tho' nothing vext 'em;'. Pope's and Swift's literary collaboration is defined as a canine raving and an animal love of dirt: 'To bark, to insult, to run stark wild,/ And foam at Woman, Man, and Child;/ To foul and dirt each Place they came in,/ And play some Pranks, unfit for naming.'<sup>50</sup>

Pope did delete from the 1735 and the 1737 editions of his letters references to Gay's dependence on the patronage of the Duchess of Queensberry, thus perhaps responding

directly to such pamphlets as Gulliver Decypher'd and The Twickenham Hotch-Potch. Pope removed from the 1741 edition Swift's criticisms of such mutual friends as Mrs. Howard and the Earl of Burlington, perhaps wanting the letters to present his circle as a loyally united group, while in editing Gay's letters to Swift and Swift's to Gay he removed trivialities and passages not generally comprehensible and any slighting references to himself, enhancing the 'story' the correspondence thus presented as one of a coterie of close friends, respecting and loving each other, in constant communication with each other and, in marked contrast to the betrayals and confusions of Walpole's England, constituting an intimate but civilized world in themselves.

On the simplest level, then, Pope's editorial changes can be seen to constitute a kind of response to the pamphlet charges while the letters he included in the 1741 edition represent an answer as well. There is no talk of politics let alone of treason but, rather, reflections on the friends' aversion to faction and a philosophic indifference to any ambition but that of living a 'good life'. Thus one 'story' these letters tell is of Bolingbroke's and Swift's and Pope's detachment from the petty controversies of the day to devote themselves to the composition of works to reform their own age and to enlighten future generations: Letter 48, from Bolingbroke to Swift, for example, is described in the Table of Contents as 'From [Bolingbroke]. Of his studies, particularly a Metaphysical work. Of Retirement and Exercise---Postscript by Mr. P. His wish that their

studies were united in some work useful to Manners, and his distaste of all Party-writings.' The pamphlets' image of Pope and Swift as two misanthropic dabblers in dirt and scandal is, similarly, destroyed in the 1741 edition of letters, whose theme might be described as one of friendship and virtue.

It should also be noted that the 1741 edition answered the attackers by representing an exuberant commemoration of the Scriblerus Club and a re-affirmation of its values. It was a defiant response to the public blackening of the reputation of Pope's circle in such pamphlets as The Twickenham Hotch-Potch and Gulliver Decypher'd. While Gulliver Decypher'd, for example, had criticized Pope's friends for their habit of collaborating on literary works, for joining in 'offensive and defensive' alliances, the 1741 edition shows that humanist principles and virtuous motives as well as practical reasons underlay these collaborations. As we saw in the last chapter, Pope, Swift and Bolingbroke had perceived their friendship as arising from and gaining strength from their detestation of the degeneracy of the times. They saw themselves as a kind of 'triumvirate' of genius in a corrupt Britain, a position which they felt placed an obligation upon them to uphold humanist standards, to transmit the civilization of the past as well as to warn and instruct their contemporaries by re-defining classical learning for the use of their own age. While the last chapter looked at Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke in this context, it is obvious that such former Scriblerians as Gay and Arbuthnot must be included in this

discussion as well. Their sense of unity derived in part from the Scriblerians' isolation from and hostility towards Walpole's government. In part, it was a habit of thought derived from the Scriblerian philosophy.

The link between the 1741 edition and the Scriblerus Club is made explicit by that edition's inclusion of The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus and by the style and content of the letters themselves, in which Swift, Pope and Bolingbroke and occasionally Gay and Arbuthnot join in good-natured mockery of abuses of taste and learning. The learned wit characteristic of the correspondence included by Pope in the 1741 edition links the letters not only to the Scriblerian spirit embodied in The Memoirs but also points to a wider context. The letters of the Scriblerians are reminiscent, for example, of the gentle raillery and playful teasing of Horatian epistles. In the Scriblerians' love of the bagatelle, too, their letters recall those of Erasmus and More and particularly Erasmus's preface to The Praise of Folly. Pope's observation that even their trifling might have useful results directly echoes Erasmus's argument for the utility of learned wit in his letter to Thomas More.

James Winn suggests that Pope's prime motive in seeking to publish his letters with Swift 'was pride...not simply vanity about his own prose but a touching pride in the fact that he was valued by a man as great as Swift.'<sup>51</sup> This is a serious misrepresentation of Swift's and Pope's own feelings in the matter of fame - or, at least, what they professed their feelings to be. Swift seemed to believe, for example,

that the appeal of his own writings to posterity would be seriously diminished by his tendency to dwell on the topical, on the particular abuses of his age, while Pope had transcended these to produce generalized and hence universally comprehensible literature. Swift observed in a letter to Pope of 1737 that he believed his name would be transmitted to posterity through his friendship with Pope: 'My happiness is that...the ages to come will celebrate me, and know you were a friend who loved and esteemed me, although I dyed the object of Court and Party-hatred' (IV, 72). Austin Warren's assessment of Pope's and Swift's relationship seems a far more accurate one than Winn's. Warren observes of Pope's collaboration with Swift in the Miscellanies they jointly issued from 1727 onwards that 'by collaborating with him in the several Miscellanies, Pope paid him the high honor of equality with the greatest poet of the age and promised him that honor in perpetuity.'<sup>52</sup>

The observation applies with equal justice to the 1741 letters which would show the intimate relations on which Swift's and Pope's friendship was based. A letter from Pope to Swift dated 16 February 1732/3 seems to link Pope's intention in publishing the joint Miscellanies with his thinly veiled intention to publish Swift's, Gay's and other friends' letters: 'There is nothing of late which I think of more than mortality, and what you mention of collecting the best monuments we can of our friends, their own images in their writings' (III, 347). Gay had died two months before and Pope was probably having his letters transcribed before sending them on to Swift at the time of sending this

letter. Pope here described the 'monuments' to Swift and Gay he was contemplating as intended to 'shew the silly world that Men of Wit, or even Poets, may be the most moral of mankind' (III, 347). Pope observes that a 'few loose things sometimes fall from' men of wit, 'Jeux d'Esprit' not intended for publication and that it behoved him and Swift to 'teach the publick (as we have done in the preface to the four volumes of miscellanies) to distinguish betwixt our studies and our idlenesses, our works and our weaknesses' (III, 347). As we shall see, Pope's main concern in this preface was to justify his and Swift's publication of the Miscellanies by explaining that they knew that such booksellers as Curll would, otherwise, attribute any number of spurious 'occasional' pieces to them; they forestalled a Curll by publishing themselves. What is important to stress here is that by presenting in his 1741 edition the letters of the Scriblerians, suitably edited and revised to conform with the Augustan expectation of polished phrases and moral sentiments in published letters, Pope was, in effect, according the letters the same treatment he had extended to their 'occasional' pieces in the Miscellanies. By publishing the letters himself, revised beforehand, he thus precluded the possibility that the letters in their original form might fall into the hands of a Curll and, with their occasional references to divisions within the circle of his friends, damage the public image of loyalty, learning and virtue they presented in their more formal literary works.

As Gloria DeSole suggests in her thesis on Swift's and

Pope's letters, Pope obviously intended the 1741 edition especially to commemorate his friendship with Swift.<sup>53</sup> She justly points out parallels between Pope's and Swift's epistolary relationship as presented by Pope and the principles of friendship espoused in Cicero's De Amicitia. In her opinion, Pope intended the published letters to serve as didactic literature, re-stating humanist principles in terms of present circumstances. The letters thus were to represent 'an important addition to the clear and continuous restatement which civilization requires of the nature of a true friendship between good men.'<sup>54</sup> That Pope was indebted to the principles of friendship set forth in De Amicitia can, however, be set within a wider context. Cicero's belief that 'Friendship cannot exist except among good men'<sup>55</sup> represented a humanist maxim. Aristotle similarly affirmed that 'Friendship...of the best men is that which arises from virtue' and that 'The perfect form of friendship is that between the good, and those who resemble each other in virtue.'<sup>56</sup> Plato asserted that 'Fate which has ordained that there shall be no friendship among the evil has also ordained that there shall ever be friendship among the good.'<sup>57</sup> These ideas were 'Englished' by Sir Thomas Elyot in that seminal sixteenth-century humanist manual, The Book named The Governor, which observes: 'Aristotle saith that friendship is a virtue, or joineth with virtue; which is affirmed by Tully, saying that friendship cannot be without virtue, but in good men only.'<sup>58</sup> The parallel between Pope's friendship with Swift and this humanist dictum was recognized by Lord

Orrery in 1752 in his Life of Swift: 'It must be owned, that we as seldom see a mutual attachment between poets, as between statesmen. "True friendship," as TULLY observes, "proceeds from a reciprocal esteem, and a virtuous resemblance of manners."' <sup>59</sup>

A particular ideal of friendship to which Pope could aspire or to which he could mould his epistolary relationships prior to their publication was also offered by Addison, as DeSole points out. <sup>60</sup> In his Spectator paper of December 20, 1711 which discussed Pope's Essay on Criticism in such an ambiguous mixture of praise and blame, Addison contrasted the 'envy and detraction' common among such modern poets as, by implication, Pope, to the classical example presented posterity by Virgil and Horace who, as

The greatest Wits that ever were produced in one Age, lived together in so good an Understanding, and celebrated one another with so much Generosity, that each of them receives an additional Lustre from his Contemporaries, and is more famous for having lived with Men of so extraordinary a Genius, than if he had himself been the sole Wonder of the Age. <sup>61</sup>

This parallel between classical example and Pope's and Swift's friendship - a relationship whose public image was assiduously cultivated by Pope in the Miscellanies and in the 1741 edition - was also recognized by Lord Orrery in his Life of Swift: 'Each poet was the delight of the principal persons of his age...HORACE had his VIRGIL, SWIFT had his POPE.' <sup>62</sup>

Addison's portrait of the friendship between the geniuses of the 'reign of Augustus' interestingly anticipates another parallel between that age and the Augustan age of Pope. In



addition to Addison's belief that 'neither Virgil nor Horace would have gained so great a Reputation in the World, had they not been the Friends and Admirers of each other' is a corresponding belief that while Virgil was celebrated by all the good writers of his age, all the bad writers were his enemies, and thus 'at the same time that Virgil was celebrated by Gallus, Propertius, Horace, Varius, Tucca and Ovid, we know that Bavius and Maeivius were his declared Foes and Calumniators.'<sup>63</sup> Pope, Swift and Bolingbroke, similarly, seemed to consider it a point of honour that the friends of one were the friends of all and that the same enemies reviled all of them. In 1729 Pope wrote to Swift explaining the purpose of the Dunciad in these terms: 'It was my principal aim in the entire work to perpetuate the friendship between us, and to shew that the friends or the enemies of one, were the friends or enemies of the other.'<sup>64</sup> The implication of the humanist notion that true friendship must be based on virtue was divined by Pope in his motto 'To virtue only, and her friends, a friend' (III, 350), a claim which must have been particularly infuriating to his enemies who were thus labelled, by the fact of their enmity, friends of vice and faithless friends to each other. A letter to Swift of 1728 had also contained an explanation of Pope's composition of the Dunciad:

As the obtaining the love of valuable men is the happiest end I know of this life so the next felicity is to get rid of fools and scoundrels; which I can't but own to you was one part of my design in falling upon these Authors, whose incapacity is not greater than their insincerity,

and of whom I have always found...That each bad Author is as bad a Friend (II, 481).

With their view of themselves as geniuses, attacks were to be expected, as Pope observed in a letter to the Earl of Burlington, in terms reminiscent of Addison's Spectator paper: 'All Great Genius's have, & do suffer...Calumniators & afflictions' (III, 154).

A number of recent studies have contended that Pope intended his published letters to provide additional testimony to the sincerity of his motives and beliefs as a didactic poet. As Maynard Mack has observed, 'To be a great satirist, a man must have, literally and figuratively, a place to stand, an angle of vision.'<sup>65</sup> Mack argues that Pope's garden at Twickenham with its obelisk memorializing Pope's mother and the grotto represented for Pope 'a rallying point for his personal values and a focus for his conception of himself.'<sup>66</sup> Theses presented by Alice Coyle Lunn and Gloria DeSole in, respectively, 1967 and 1969, contend that Mack's thesis should be extended to the letters Pope published, that they, equally, represented for Pope 'an angle of vision' and a 'place to stand'. In Lunn's opinion, Pope discovered that his correspondence 'could be an invaluable aid in establishing the vir bonus image necessary to support the vir iratus of his satires and epistles.'<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Gloria DeSole has argued that Pope's published letters were to serve as a substantiation of his ethos, 'reinforcing his credentials as a didactic poet and broadening the base from which he might attack as a satirist.'<sup>68</sup>

These contentions return us again to the context of Tillotson's observation that Pope first published his letters at a critical time, when his reputation was 'sorer and shabbier than was comfortable'. There was, first, the fact that the pamphlet warfare was at its height in 1733, prompting the impulse to make some reply to its scurrilous charges. There was also the fact that by the early 1730's Pope had 'stoop'd to Truth, and moraliz'd his song'. That period witnessed not only the publication of the Moral Essays and the Imitations of Horace but also the publication of the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, described by Guerinot as constituting, with the Dunciad, 'Pope's great answer to the pamphlets.'<sup>69</sup> There is a strong autobiographical flavour to this poetry which has led Tillotson to conclude that if 'we were to lose all external materials for a biography of Pope, materials that exist in prose, whether in Pope's letters or elsewhere, we should still be well informed simply by drawing on his verse.'<sup>70</sup> Tillotson believes that the autobiographical material contained in Pope's poetry was offered in a 'course of personal attack and defence.'<sup>71</sup> Lawrence Davidow has observed that 'Pope's verse epistles and his most interesting letters have many themes in common, particularly virtue and friendship.'<sup>72</sup> Davidow further believes that Pope made an explicit connection between the personal letters as publishable material and his verse epistles, seeing both as 'literary forms, providing semiautobiographical, semifictive "masks" through which to address his readers.'<sup>73</sup>

Certainly the author of the Imitations of Horace and the

Moral Essays required a well-defined image of himself both as poet and as man. What jars the modern sensibility is Pope's willingness to use his actual correspondence for this purpose. Yet the poetical epistles too, as Tillotson and Davidow point out, are characterized by this same blurring of Pope in his public and private capacities in their self-dramatizations of Pope as poet, Pope as the friend of various specifically named individuals, and Pope as the devoted son who confides to us in the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot: 'Me, let the tender Office long engage,/ To rock the Cradle of reposing Age,/ With lenient Arts extend a Mother's breath,/ Make Languour smile, and smooth the Bed of Death' (ll. 408-11). This same willingness to bare the private emotions and personal details of his life in the letters is only an extension of the psychological projection of the poet in the Moral Essays and especially in the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot: although in all these writings Pope offers us a more generalized than a specifically personal portrait of himself. His feelings are best described by Pope in the letter he included in the 1735 and the 1737 editions of his letters in response to a 'Last Request' from Arbuthnot he printed. Arbuthnot's letter had hoped Pope would continue his mission as a didactic poet but advised him to do so with a regard to his own safety and to 'study more to reform than chastise'. In his original reply to this letter Pope observed that 'General Satire in Times of General Vice has no force, & is no Punishment: People have ceas'd to be ashamed of it when so many are joind with them; and tis only by hunting

One or two from the Herd that any Examples can be made' (III, 423). In the reply as revised for publication Pope explained his use of the names of actual individuals in his satires rather than general types in these words: 'General propositions are obscure, misty, and uncertain, compar'd with plain, full and home examples' (1737, 293).

As we saw in the third chapter, the Augustans accorded moral biography a special importance as superior even to history as didactic literature, believing that the depictions of actual individuals were not only much more entertaining but also more interesting and affecting than virtuous principles couched in abstract philosophy. The concept of moral biography was derived from the humanist tradition which sought to teach morality by capturing the reader's imagination with 'lessons though lives,' thereby giving him, in the style of Plutarch, the example of a worthy life which, in Dryden's words, sets 'before us what we ought to shun, or to pursue, by the examples of the most famous men.'<sup>74</sup> Pope obviously meant his published letters to appeal directly to this Augustan fascination with biography, although he modified the specifically personal detail to present a biography of himself and his friends which might be generally comprehensible.

While the 1735 edition might be seen on one level to represent a direct answer to the pamphlet attacks, it, like the 1737 edition, is also the record of Pope's friendships with worthy individuals, his correspondence with such archetypally 'good men' as Hugh Bethel, Robert Digby and

Edward Blount reflecting his humanist belief that personal attachments should be formed only with 'good, deserving people' (III, 38). For those who might condemn the poet of the Dunciad as a vitriolic satirist - Lytton Strachey's image of him as a 'fiendish monkey' pouring oil on his hapless victims serves as a good example<sup>75</sup> - the letters show Pope in his other capacity, with the public poet of the Dunciad condemning vice revealed in his letters as the private individual who loves virtue. Just as the Dunciad dramatically displayed a world of bad writers and bad friends in a world on the verge of cultural collapse, so the 1735, 1737 and 1741 editions of Pope's letters dramatically display a private world which restates the humanist values in contemporary terms in a circle of close, loving friends dedicated to the maintenance of cultural standards. Just, too, as the Dunciad employed Pope's philosophy of the efficacy of satire based on the example of actual individuals, the 1735, 1737 and 1741 editions operated on the converse principle by commemorating individuals worthy of imitation. Pope named his friends in his letters and in his Moral Essays observing of the latter work in a letter to Swift of February 1733 that 'The Chief pleasure this work can give me is, that I can in it, with propriety, decency, and justice, insert the name and character of every friend I have, and every man that deserves to be lov'd or adorn'd' (III, 348-9). In the Dunciad, the Moral Essays and the published letters Pope was at once serving himself and a higher cause. In the Dunciad he was able to turn, finally, upon his attackers,

but his attack transcends the purely personal in its evocation of a corrupt Grub Street which represented Britain's moral and cultural collapse. Similarly, in the Moral Essays and the letters Pope substantiated his satiric ethos of the good man and the good poet while accomplishing also the aims of the commemoration of his friends and the presentation of a moral biography which taught, by example, what Emrys Jones identifies as the 'great Augustan theme' and a 'lasting pre-occupation of humanism': 'the use of knowledge: how to make knowledge live by making it useful to the real business of learning.'<sup>76</sup>

iii

As we saw in the introduction, Victorian and modern assessments of the letters Pope published have generally limited themselves to condemnation of his active but surreptitious involvement in the 1735 and the 1741 editions, with Pope blaming the first publication on Curll and the second on Swift. Our focus in this section will be rather speculation on Pope's motives in the manner in which he secretly engineered these two 'unauthorized' editions than yet another recounting of the details of the transactions culminating in the publications; the bare outlines of Pope's manoeuvres in the 1735 publication have, in any case, already been drawn in the introduction.

In Lady Bolingbroke's opinion, Pope 'plaid the politician about cabbages and turnips.'<sup>77</sup> Dr. Johnson similarly repeats the adage in his Life of Pope that he 'hardly drank tea

without a stratagem.'<sup>78</sup> These remarks are indicative of what Pope's contemporaries identified as his obsessive love of mystification and love of accomplishing several purposes in one action. An impulse to accomplish several aims in one ambiguous move might explain Pope's behaviour in the publication of the Dunciad, for example. Pope observed to Swift in a letter of March 1728 that he intended the Dunciad, like the Miscellanies, to commemorate their friendship and that this end would be achieved by his dedicating the work to him (II, 480). That Swift had encouraged Pope to write the poem during his visit in the summer of 1727 is indicated by Pope in a letter he sent to Dr. Sheridan in October 1728 in which he described Swift as 'properly the Author of the Dunciad' (II, 523). Yet Swift may well have wished that Pope had not been quite so eager to proclaim the Dunciad 'his' when the original edition of the poem misleadingly described itself as the 'second edition,' reprinted in London from the Dublin edition. Thomas Lounsbury observes that Pope originally suppressed the dedication to Swift to strengthen the impression that 'the work had first been published in Ireland' and that 'presumably Swift' was its author or that he 'had at least some share in its production.'<sup>79</sup>

Apart from the reluctance immediately to acknowledge a work as his, a reluctance reflected in his habit of issuing works anonymously, Pope possibly wanted both to gauge reaction to the Dunciad, as in the similarly unacknowledged Essay on Man, before claiming it, as well as to assert once again the 'offensive and defensive' alliance represented by



his friendship with Swift. Considering the nature of the Dunciad, too, consisting on one level of a rebuttal of many of the pamphlet attacks on himself, it is possible, too, that Pope may have thought it preferable to appear to have been seconded in the project.

As we saw in the last two sections, Pope accomplished a number of aims in the 1735 publication of his letters. J. McLaverty, author of a recent study on the first printing and publication of Pope's letters, argues the case for yet another motive behind the 1735 edition. In his opinion, Pope designed his elaborate entrapment of Curll resulting in Curll's 'unauthorized' edition to highlight the pressing need for reform in the publishing trade. According to McLaverty, 'Pope has been portrayed as motivated purely by vanity (with regard to his letters) and by vindictiveness (toward Curll), but a little further bibliographical investigation and a re-examination of contemporary accounts presents us with a different picture.'<sup>80</sup>

The chronology of events apparently confirms McLaverty's contention. Pope requested the manuscript transcriptions of his letters from Lord Oxford on 3 May 1735, the day that a booksellers' bill to protect booksellers' rights came before the Commons, while on 12 May, the day before the bill was to be presented to the House of Lords for its second reading, Curll and his books were seized by the officers of the Black Rod. McLaverty surmises that Pope was attempting to secure a letter-writer's right to his own letters as publishable material. In 1741 Pope was to succeed in establishing the

author's copyright in personal letters, and to do so through an action against Curll, but on this occasion no more was accomplished than, as Pope's Narrative informs us 'BY THIS INCIDENT THE BOOKSELLERS' BILL WAS THROWN OUT' (III, 464).

The validity of McLaverty's theory also seems borne out by a cryptic reference made by Curll in his jeering address to the poet in the second volume of his Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence: 'But you have met a Second Defeat before the most August Assembly, as you did in the first Attack, relating to the Duke of Buckingham's Works.'<sup>81</sup> In 1722 Curll had advertised the imminent publication of the 'Works of the late Right Honourable John Sheffield Duke of Buckinghamshire, In Prose and Verse.' Curll came to believe that Pope was at least partly responsible for the intervention of the House of Lords which, shortly after the appearance of Curll's advertisement, summoned the bookseller. Finding Curll naturally had no one's permission to issue such a publication of a peer's works, the House forbade the publication as a 'breach of privilege'. By altering his original design and publishing only works of the duke's which had already been issued in his lifetime, Curll was able to circumvent the Lords' decision and to put on sale an octavo of the duke's Works. Sherburn believes that it is to this minor victory over Pope's apparent hindrance of Curll's publishing the duke's works that Curll was referring, with the second of Pope's 'defeats' in the House of Lords referring to the release of Curll and his one hundred and ninety volumes of Pope's letters

on finding that the books contained no letters from peers.<sup>82</sup>

As for the case of the 1735 publication, Pope apparently wanted to emphasize, by offering the public the dramatic tale of Curll's supposedly pirated publication of his letters, the need of laws to protect authors as well as booksellers. He also seems to have wished not only to trick Curll into publishing the letters but to make some profit from their publication himself. As we have seen, in publishing the first volume of his Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence, 'Curll attempted to seize the copyright, and was stopped; and about the same time Cooper's name began to appear in the imprint as a publisher of the letters, with Pope's connivance, and, presumably, as part of his counter-stroke.'<sup>83</sup> That the bookseller T. Cooper did, in fact, enter Pope's Letters in Stationer's Hall on behalf of Pope is confirmed by a letter from Pope to Fortescue of June 1735 in which Pope remarks 'Since I left you, I am informed Curl has servd a Process upon Cooper, (the Publisher of the Letters which I told you I connived at, who Enterd them in the Hall-book)' (III, 469). It is typical of Pope's peculiar talent in such matters that in the case of the 1735 edition he was able to trick his old enemy Curll into publishing them, to be apparently forced to issue an 'authentic' edition himself, to demonstrate dramatically the need for copyright reform, and to foil Curll's bid for undisputed ownership of the letters. We need see nothing more sinister in Pope's hope to profit both from Cooper's 1735 edition and his own 1737 edition than a natural desire to profit from his own

writings: a not surprising desire for an author who never distinguished between his private and his public writings. As with so many of Pope's actions, his desire to help himself co-existed here with the capacity to accomplish wider aims. By asserting his own rights as a letter writer and, in 1741, securing an author's copyright in personal letters, he benefited successive writers such as Richardson and Sterne and Walpole who similarly considered their letters as publishable material.

In this affair Pope was also asserting the dignity of the professional writer and airing a pet grievance - that the vulnerable position of the author unprotected by suitable laws meant that either imperfect copies of his works were often pirated or that spurious pieces could be attributed to him with impunity. Pope had deplored this situation in his preface to the 1729 second volume of Wycherley's Posthumous Works, describing Theobald's first volume as including some of Wycherley's inferior works and thus damaging his posthumous reputation for no other reason than greed. Pope had also complained of the vulnerability of the Augustan author in the preface to the Miscellanies of 1727, describing this vulnerability as responsible for that publication: 'Having both of us been extreamly ill treated by some Booksellers, (especially one Edmund Curll), it was our Opinion that the best Method we could take for justifying ourselves, would be to publish whatever loose Papers in Prose and Verse, we have formerly written.'<sup>84</sup> Pope commented here on the irony that 'the greater Fame a Writer is in Possession of, the more of

such Trash he may bear to have tack'd to him. Thus it is apparently the Editor's Interest to insert, what the Author's Judgment had rejected.'<sup>85</sup> The latter point appears to represent the crucial issue in this matter for Pope. Considering his famous preoccupation with correcting his works, often laying a piece aside for many years and then revising it again for publication, Pope was horrified at the prospect that work he considered inferior might be stolen or copied and published in his name. As he observed in the preface to the quarto edition of his letters in 1737, unprotected by legislation,

As an Author, you are depriv'd of that Power which above all others constitutes a good one, the power of rejecting, and the right of judging for your self, what pieces it may be most useful, entertaining, or reputable to publish, at the time and in the manner you think best.<sup>86</sup>

This desire to present his works in a 'correct' form also explains Pope's actions in the 1741 edition. As we have seen, there is little doubt that Swift wanted Pope to immortalize their intimacy in another way. He was not content with the fact that Pope had dedicated the Dunciad to him. As Sherburn observes, 'This was a persistent vanity with Swift' (III, 203n). As early as 1709 Swift begged Ambrose Philips to mention him in a poem: 'When you write any more Poetry do me honor, mention me in it: tis the common Request of Tully and Pliny to the great Authors of their Age; and I will contrive it so, that Pr. Posterity shall know I was favored by the Men of Witt in my Time.'<sup>87</sup> In 1731, similarly, Swift reproached Gay for not including him in his works: 'If I am your friend it is for my own reputation, and

from a principle of Self-love, and I do sometimes reproach you for not honoring me by letting the world know we are friends' (III, 203).

Swift's hope that Pope would recognize him in his poetry is reflected in his many requests that Pope 'Orna me', a plea confessedly derived from Cicero (III, 348-9, 492; V, 15, 16-7). In 1729 he observed in a letter to Pope and Bolingbroke that 'To be remembred for ever on the account of our friendship, is what would exceedingly please me' (III, 30). In a letter to Pope of 1735 he admitted that it was his special wish 'to have one Epistle inscribed to me' (III, 492). The wish probably arose directly from Pope's confession, contained in a letter to Swift of 1733, that his main intention in the Ethic Epistles or Moral Essays as they are more commonly known, had been to celebrate his closest friends. Pope did promise to dedicate an epistle in verse to Swift in a letter of 25 March 1736 (V, 15). By the end of April of that year Swift was somewhat indignant at Pope's failure to fulfill this promise: 'I have been a little repined at my being hitherto slipped by you in some Epistle' (IV, 12). A few months later he claimed that his sense of growing indignation was shared by his Irish friends: 'I had reason to expect from some of your Letters that we were to hope for more Epistles of Morality, and I assure you, my Acquaintance resent that they have not Seen my name at the head of one' (IV, 45). This letter of 2 December 1736 also contains an observation on the practical morality Swift believed the Moral Essays represented: 'The Subjects of Such

Epistles are more usefull to the Publick, by your manner of handling them than any of all your Writings' (IV, 45). This observation interestingly anticipates Swift's opinion of Pope's published correspondence, an opinion voiced in a letter sent six months later, that 'there might be collected from them the best System that ever was wrote for the Conduct of human life' (IV, 177). While Swift was undoubtedly pleased that Pope had mentioned him in his Imitation of the First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace (ll. 221-4), his dream of an 'Epistle' dedicated to him was to be fulfilled in an unexpected and undesired way: in Pope's publication of their letters in 1741.

It must be remembered that as early as the early 1730's Swift was alarming Pope by exaggerated accounts of mental lapses and illness caused, as we now know, by his affliction, Ménière's disease. In 1736 he received a letter from Lord Orrery which heightened Pope's fears both as to Swift's health and his 'fear for his letters - at the moment (when he was preparing his edition of 1737) a major preoccupation' (IV, 8n). Orrery also relayed reports of troublesome or careless servants in Swift's household and what he saw as Swift's great negligence with his personal papers. A letter Pope sent Swift shortly afterwards is instructive as to Pope's state of mind at this time. In this letter of 17 August 1736 Pope first testifies to his belief that his friendship with Swift and Bolingbroke will constitute a greater honour attached to his name through posterity than all his works together. Pope then observes, 'You are a very

ignorant man; you don't know the figure his name and yours will make hereafter; I do, and will preserve all the memorials I can, that I was of your intimacy' (IV, 28).

Pope also notes here:

I will not quarrel with the present Age; it has done enough for me, in making and keeping you two my Friends...it has done and can do neither of you any manner of harm, as long as it has not and cannot burn your works: while those subsist, you'll both appear the greatest men of the time, in spite of Princes, and Ministers; and the wisest, in spite of all the little Errors you may please to commit (IV, 28).

Pope's obsessive concern with his public image and the 'correctness' of the works he committed to posterity was not, he knew, shared by Swift. Swift's patronage of such shiftless individuals as Matthew Pilkington, Orrery's reports of his careless housekeeping, as well as Swift's own accounts of the mediocre company he surrounded himself with in Dublin and the number of instances when imperfect copies of Swift's works were stolen or copied and printed without his permission were all factors which must have led Pope to despair of Swift's intention or capacity to transmit a similarly worthy image of himself to posterity. As we have seen, Pope believed that he was to act as Swift's literary executor. With his old concern to retrieve as many of his letters as possible, Swift's failing mental competence probably prompted or contributed to Pope's concern to preserve in their suitable edited correspondence a memorial of their friendship.

Pope's and Swift's fascination with 'Prince Posterity' should be seen as a preoccupation derived from such classical models as Cicero and from the 'characteristic Renaissance



concern with true fame.'<sup>88</sup> Swift's apparent indifference to the fate of his own works was inconsistent with his concern with fame and, I think, only to be explained by his belief that his writings' significance was too topical and that they could not long survive his own age. While he was apathetic as to his own works, his concern for Gay's posthumous reputation resembles Pope's desire to transmit a 'more perfect image of himself' (I, x) and his circle to posterity. In a letter to Pope of March 1733 Swift strongly denounced the Duke of Queensberry's project of staging Gay's posthumous play Achilles as a benefit for Gay's surviving sisters: 'I heartily wish His Grace had entirely stifled that Comedy if it were possible, than do an injury to our friend's reputation only to get a hundred or two pounds to a couple of (perhaps) insignificant women' (III, 361). A letter sent to Pope two months later continues on this theme: 'I am sorry for the scituation of Mr. Gay's papers. You do not exert your self as much as I could wish in this affair; I had rather the two Sisters were hanged than see his works swelled by any loss of credit to his memory' (V, 12).

Similarly, Pope apparently believed that he was to act as Bolingbroke's literary executor as well as Swift's.<sup>89</sup> It was possibly this belief which led him to the fatal step of printing 1500 copies of Bolingbroke's 'The Idea of a Patriot King' without Bolingbroke's knowledge or consent. Pope seemed to chafe at what he perceived as Bolingbroke's reluctance to publish his writings. Returning to that telling letter Pope sent Swift 16 August 1736, it is clear that Pope

included Bolingbroke with Swift in his description of them as individuals who might not be appreciated by their contemporaries but who would receive their just desserts from posterity. According to a biographer, Bolingbroke 'wrote rather for posterity than for his contemporaries. Many of his works were printed at a private press, and copies were given to a few of his particular friends, with the express understanding that these copies were to be considered as manuscripts.'<sup>90</sup> This, of course, was the understanding on which Pope was entrusted with a copy of 'The Patriot King': 'Pope had frequently importuned him to allow this work to be published; but Bolingbroke always replied, that it had been written in too much heat and hurry for the public eye, though it might be trusted to a few particular friends.'<sup>91</sup> Spence records Pope's observation of 1744, probably referring to 'The Patriot King', that Bolingbroke 'if in power, would have made the best of ministers. These things will be proved one of these days. The proofs are ready, and the world will see them.'<sup>92</sup> Similarly in 1749 Martha Blount remembered: 'I have heard [Pope] speak of some work of Lord Bolingbroke's which that Lord designed to suppress. He spoke of it as too valuable to the world to be so used, and said he would not suffer it to be lost to it.'<sup>93</sup>

Bolingbroke's fury at learning of what he perceived as Pope's treachery in regard to 'The Patriot King' may have derived in part from Pope's corrections and revisions to it before publishing the 1500 copies as well as from his obvious

intent to make the work public contrary to Bolingbroke's wishes. It was a care Pope extended, as we have seen, to Swift's works as well as to his letters before publishing them. As an imitator of Donne and Horace and Quintilian and as the editor of Shakespeare and of the Duke of Buckingham's works Pope similarly had made changes in the original works to conform to his own style.<sup>94</sup> In this respect Pope's motive in publishing Swift's letters resembles one motive behind the 1735 edition; in 1735 Pope's transactions with Curll highlighted the need for copyright reform while in 1741 he again addressed the issue of the practices of unscrupulous booksellers in printing imperfect or pirated copies of works by rescuing Swift's letters from what he must have seen as their certain fate - printed in unrevised and often incorrect form. And, as we will see in the next chapter, Pope accomplished yet another aim with regards to the 1741 edition.

As for Pope's implication that Swift was responsible for the 1741 publication, it must be seen as an act of duplicity. But I think we must first relate it to his belief that Swift's senility was much further advanced than was actually the case and thus Swift's publication of their correspondence could be extenuated by the claim of diminished responsibility. It is also important to relate this indirect course of action to its context, to the habit of a lifetime of issuing works which he either wholly failed to acknowledge or claimed some time after their first publication. Ault's New Light on Pope proceeds directly from the fact that 'the

greater part of [Pope's] work, both in prose and verse, was first published without his name,'<sup>95</sup> with Ault assigning this predilection for anonymous publication to Pope's 'life-long ideal of poetical craftsmanship...to refuse his name to every poem that in any way fell short of that ideal.'<sup>96</sup> This oblique manner of proceeding puzzles us today. It extended to letters as well as formal verse, as Sherburn notes: 'More than once Pope persuaded a friend to sign a letter that he either dictated or at least shaped' (III, 352n). As we saw in the fifth chapter, Pope included in the 1735 edition, for example, a letter ostensibly written by Mr. Cleland to Gay, defending the Epistle to Burlington - a letter he acknowledged in the 1737 edition as written by himself.

A fascinating anecdote recorded by D'Israeli suggests that the oblique paths Pope followed in publishing his own works were entered on at a very early age. According to D'Israeli Pope was a master of intrigue whose genius, wasted on literary strategem, 'might have been perhaps sufficient to have organised rebellion':

To keep his name alive before the public, was one of his early plans. When he published his 'Essay on Criticism,' anonymously, the young and impatient poet was mortified with the inertness of public curiosity: he was almost in despair. Twice, perhaps oftener, Pope attacked Pope; and he frequently concealed himself under<sup>97</sup> the names of others, for some particular design.

Pope's attitude toward his pamphlet attacks was, indeed, a curious, ambivalent one, considering the fact that he himself, on occasion, was his own attacker. It seems

apparent that the imbroglio with Curll over the 1735 edition was, in part, motivated by a desire to publicize the need for copyright reform. But the controversy involving England's foremost poet, an infamous bookseller, and the dramatic intervention of the officers of the Black Rod in the affair also guaranteed free publicity for the publication. Similarly, by attributing the responsibility for the 1741 edition to Swift, Pope may have awakened a poignant interest in readers curious not only about the letters of two of the age's greatest writers but at the circumstances of their friendship also, culminating in this strange act of Swift's apparent betrayal of Pope.

CHAPTER EIGHTCONCLUSION

We will primarily discuss here the contemporary context of Pope's adoption of the role as editor of his own letters as the most persistent and damaging charges associated with Pope's letters have concerned the manner in which he revised and secretly published them, a fact which remains true to the present day, with speculation on Pope's motives in this affair consistently taking the least charitable interpretation.

George Sherburn considers it a 'major catastrophe' that 'neither Spence nor Dilke should have written a life of Pope.'<sup>1</sup> Spence based the idea of a publication of Anecdotes of Pope's conversation on a desire to vindicate Pope's character, which he found strangely libelled by those unacquainted with the poet, and while Dilke shared his contemporaries' suspicions that Pope had 'cooked' his correspondence to put himself in a 'good light' he did not then immediately jump to Elwin's conclusion that Pope's motives in the publication could be summarized as the 'treachery, vanity, and fraud, perpetrated by a spiteful and congenitally dishonest man.'<sup>2</sup> Simplistic views of Pope's motives continue, probably often unconsciously, to influence critical reaction to the letters. Certainly the Victorian editors' obsession with the manner in which Pope

published his letters rather than with their matter continues to dominate critical response to the letters - to the extent, in fact, that other issues which the letters might raise are rarely addressed. The insidious nature of this obsession can be adduced from the fact that recent studies of Pope's letters usually fail to distinguish, in their general pronouncements, between the letters Pope edited for publication and the letters collected and published posthumously although Sherburn's edition makes it clear that only about ten per cent of the letters printed therein were 'doctored' by Pope.<sup>3</sup>

On one level Pope's letters offer us an instructive example of the way in which intentions can be misconstrued, especially when motives are viewed through the distorting mediums of time and distance. Pope could never have foreseen the disastrous results of his decision to recall his letters, revise and edit them, and then to engage in an attempt to ensure their publication apparently without his knowledge or consent. As we have seen, Pope believed the published letters would mean more to his reputation than all his poetry together. Instead, ironically, the letters have usually provided Pope's critics with the most damning material they have employed <sup>against</sup> him. In Elwin's memorable words, the modern critic has to 'decide whether [Pope's] letters are not many of them fraudulent, and the circumstances attending their publication a series of ignominious plots, infamous false accusations, and impudent lies.'<sup>4</sup>

The implication of Elwin's injunction is that Pope,

motivated by insatiable vanity, unscrupulously broke a tacit understanding that no individual shall publish his own letters, let alone revise them for publication. Pope's actions violated the Victorian concept of the familiar letter as a personal communication intended only for its recipient. Yet, by placing Pope's actions in the context of the humanist tradition of the published letter as literature we see that Elwin spoke from the context of his own contemporary prejudices concerning private letters, setting a precedent in critical assessments of Pope's letters which, unfortunately, has been loyally followed. This thesis has adopted, rather, the approach advocated by Dr. Johnson, who once observed that 'to make a true estimate of the abilities and merit of a writer, it is always necessary to examine the genius of his age, and the opinions of his contemporaries.'<sup>5</sup>

The humanist tradition of the letter as literature was paradoxically initiated by Cicero whose habit of making copies of his correspondence and keeping them for reference happened to result in a valuable literary and historical heritage. The contradictory nature of the letter as literature was apparent from the very beginning of this tradition; Cicero, its unwitting founder, did not intend his letters to be published. Perhaps a truly natural epistolary style was possible only for Cicero, who had no precedents to guide him or to lead him to thoughts of publishing suitably edited selections of his correspondence. On the one hand, then, the tradition of the published letter as literature professedly rests upon Cicero's example of truly



conversational letters. On the other hand, the very fact that Cicero was there to serve as a predecessor or model for subsequent letter writers has meant that, while Cicero's unstudied style has been praised and claimed by these later writers, they have been unable to match practice with precept.

Thus Seneca rather than Cicero set the pattern for subsequent letter writers. While Pliny, Petrarch, Erasmus and Balzac paid lip-service to the model of Cicero, they followed Seneca in their self-conscious composition of letters revised and polished for publication. The pretence to epistolary naturalness was more or less obviously an affectation in the case of Seneca, Pliny and Petrarch. Erasmus, however, directly anticipated Pope in his manoeuvres to ensure a seemingly disinterested publication of apparently actual letters. While Erasmus, like Pope, protested that his letters were trivial or careless trifles, he, like Pope, tirelessly edited the letters and secretly plotted their publication, feeling, like Pope, the necessity for concealing his involvement in making the letters public. Pope's pretence that Swift was responsible for the 1741 edition of their letters is reminiscent of the ploy Erasmus engaged in over two centuries earlier, deflecting his responsibility for the publication of his letters by printing a letter from a friend who claims that he has stolen Erasmus's letters. Pope's justification for his 'authorized' editions of his letters, that he was forced to them by piratical booksellers like Curll who published his letters without his permission,

may have been derived from Erasmus's example, who similarly claimed in a letter of 27 May 1520 that he was forced to publish his letters 'partly by the importunity of friends, and partly by absolute necessity, when I saw there were persons prepared to publish the epistles they had of mine, whether I like it or not, and who plainly threatened to do so in letters they wrote me.'<sup>6</sup>

It is important, too, to remember the early eighteenth-century interest in publications of letters which, no doubt, encouraged Pope in his project of publishing a selection of his own. A brief look at the Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature gives one some idea of the Augustan propensity for epistolary publications. Pope's self-confessed model, Dryden, for example, saw a selection of his letters published in no fewer than five editions in his lifetime. Rochester's letters went through five editions from 1697 to 1705. Defoe's letter publications rarely included samples of his own personal correspondence but, rather, Defoe adopted the common Augustan practice of casting essays, travel accounts, political pamphlets and adventure stories in the popular letter form in publications ranging from 'A letter from some Protestant dissenting laymen...concerning their treatment under the present administration' (1718) to 'Letters written by a Turkish spy at Paris' (1718) to 'The complete English tradesman in familiar letters' (1726). The number of publications by Defoe which include the word 'letter' specifically in their title is, at a rough count, forty-nine, and this does not

take into account the great number of 'Answers', 'Replies' and 'Reproofs' to various individuals probably also cast into the letter form.

Richmond Bond distinguishes three types of eighteenth-century letters: first, the intimate message intended only for its recipient; second, the more formal 'public' letter designed for a wider audience; and, third, the fictitious letter used as a literary device.<sup>7</sup> But the usefulness of these three distinctions in describing the amazing diversity of eighteenth-century letters is questionable. As we have seen, in the age's heightened interest in experimentations with the letter as a literary genre, the issue of the publication of letters grew increasingly complicated and the distinction between actual personal letters intended only for their recipient and fictitious or revised letters intended for the public was blurred. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's 'Turkish Embassy Letters', for example, purportedly actual letters published after her death, were not actual letters at all but a 'compilation of pseudo-letters'. Her technique in preparing these letters for publication was reminiscent of Pope's but Pope worked from actual letters and intended his to be published in his lifetime while Lady Mary drew inspiration from a journal and wanted the letters published posthumously.

The issue of Pope's publication of his own letters is a broad category which subsumes a number of subordinate issues; the Victorians' outrage at Pope's actions in this matter was compounded of a number of elements. There was the fact

that Pope had acted surreptitiously, professing innocence in the unauthorized publications and proving flagrantly guilty of complicity. They were also upset by the fact that Pope intended to profit from the publication of his letters and, too, the Victorian notion of the sanctity of the text of original letters was flouted by Pope's conflations.

As for the charge of greed, as we have seen, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Colley Cibber were the first to accuse Pope of avarice in his decision to publish an 'authorized' edition of his letters, a charge echoed by Elwin who believed Pope had used Curll unfairly.<sup>8</sup> Pope's desire to profit from the publication of his letters, however, served an important function. He saw that it was unsatisfactory that while the letter was recognized once again as an expression of art in Augustan Britain, the letter still occupied its old uneasy position as a form of literature whose composition was permissible only when the writer entertained no apparent intention of ultimate publication. Bitter experience had taught him that this ambivalent position of the letter as literature played into the booksellers' hands. Before charging Pope with avarice we must remember that there is no evidence that he ever made any profit on Curll's publication of his letters to Cromwell, purchased by Curll from Mrs. Thomas for ten guineas and which, according to Curll, sold very well.<sup>9</sup>

In Pope's securing, in the 1741 case of Pope versus Curl, the author's copyright in the personal letter, Pope

clarified the important issue of an author's rights with regard to publications of his letters and ensured that such writers as Sterne and Richardson could speculate on posthumous publications of their correspondence in terms of a financial legacy for their descendants while also publicly affirming the value of letter writing as a literary art. It was appropriate that Pope should have wrested this victory in a battle with Curll who had provoked Pope's going to law by pirating the quarto edition of Pope's correspondence with Swift in his Dean Swift's Literary Correspondence.<sup>10</sup> Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, on deciding in Pope's favour in this case, first acknowledged the literary value of the letter: 'I think it would be extremely mischievous to make a distinction between a book of letters which comes out into the world, either by permission of the writer or the receiver of them, and any other learned work.' This consideration did not, however, prevent him from taking an ambiguous stance on letters written deliberately for publication:

It is certain that no works have done more service to mankind than those which have appeared in this shape upon familiar subjects, and which, perhaps, were never intended to be published; and it is this makes them so valuable; for I must confess, for my own part, that letters which are very elaborately written, and originally intended for the press, are generally the most insignificant, and very little worth any person's reading.<sup>11</sup>

The contradiction at the heart of publications of familiar letters persisted, then, but at least after 1741 an author might claim his letters as his personal property, thanks to Pope's efforts. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu might

disdain Pope's desire to profit from his writings, but hers was the aristocrat's contempt for the artisan. She haughtily observed in a letter that 'the most distinguishing prerogative of Mankind, writeing, when duly executed' did honour to human nature while it was contemptible when done for the purpose of financial gain.<sup>12</sup> From this point of view she condemned the literary works of Swift and Pope who 'by their Birth and hereditary Fortune' deserved to be only 'a couple of Link Boys.'<sup>13</sup> In the case of Pope versus Curl Pope once again affirmed the dignity of the professional writer in an age which despised the notion of such professionalism, clinging to the old belief that literary talent was the exclusive property of the nobility. Beljame, describing the insecure position of the professional writer in seventeenth and early eighteenth-century Britain, observes that 'The plebs had to sue for permission to be witty.'<sup>14</sup> Pope maintained the polite fiction that he wrote only for diversion although, in being the first writer to live on his earnings, in his friendships with the great and powerful, and in the importance he accorded literature, he was largely responsible for the improved status of the writer in society.

As for the second of the Victorians' complaints, it is important to recognize that the idea of the sanctity of the original text is a comparatively recent concept; at least in Pope's age it was not accorded the universal assent it has achieved in this. This was true in translation as well as in editing in the early eighteenth century. As William Irving observes, saleability was the prime concern

of the translator or the editor who then 'doctored' his works 'in one way or another to make them more attractive to the current buyer' or adapted them to the 'humour' of his age.<sup>15</sup> Something of this interest in adapting literature to the taste of his contemporaries can be seen in the imitations and translations and paraphrases of such writers as Chaucer and Donne made by Pope while in his revisions of Shakespeare in his capacity as editor he was, according to Thomas Lounsbury

simply conforming to the reprehensible practice which prevailed during his time and long afterward in the editing or reprinting of English classics. There was little thought of preserving the original text in its integrity. It was deemed the duty of the reviser to improve it so as to adapt it to the taste of the more refined age to which he had the happiness to belong.<sup>16</sup>

That Pope, who considered his letters as literature, should have had the temerity to alter the original letters he had sent before publishing them is not, then, surprising. It is consistent with his habit of tireless revisal and with the fact that he never distinguished between his public and private writings. The fact that he revised his letters preparatory to their publication should not have surprised Elwin, who recognized that 'Pope was not a master of ready prose.'<sup>17</sup> The irony is that, as Sherburn observes, 'Without warning the reader, Warburton, Bowles, Elwin, and Courthope all made intentional as well as unintentional changes in Pope's phrasing, and they at least should hesitate to blame Pope for doing likewise.'<sup>18</sup>

As the first editor of Pope's Works Warburton devised the plan of conflating a number of his letters before publishing

them.<sup>19</sup> Although Bowles had excised a number of passages he found offensive, Elwin criticized Bowles, Warburton and Warton for the 'blots' which they had 'felt bound to preserve'; Elwin defended his own deletions in these terms:

Language was current in Pope's day which would be considered grossly indelicate in ours, and though he abounds in refined and elevated strains, he was yet among the worst offenders of his time...I have exercised the discretion very sparingly, and have not excluded every coarse word, phrase, or idea, when it was characteristic of the age, the man, and the writings, and when, though an offence against taste, it could not be injurious to morals.<sup>20</sup>

In a sense, however, Pope's revisions were motivated by the same criterion as Elwin's: adaptation to the 'humour' of his age. Archibald Elias concluded, in comparing Pope's editorial practices with those engaged in by the contemporary editor of Shaftesbury's Several Letters Written by a Noble Lord to a Young Man at the University, that their revisions were very similar ones: both made a 'few minor stylistic changes' including confluations of letters and a number of deletions of passages and both removed 'the personal portions of the letters and retain[ed] the more preachy, philosophical parts.'<sup>21</sup> Both, in other words, like Elwin, brought their material to conform to contemporary expectations. Elias believes that this editorial philosophy also accounted for many of the revisions Pope made in Swift's letters before publishing them; the revisions, rendering the letters into essays with a 'moral and thematic emphasis' made 'allowance for the expectations of the readers Pope could count on reading the volume.'<sup>22</sup>

The modern critical view held by Dilke and Elwin, that



Pope altered his correspondence to put himself into a 'good light' can be partly accounted for by the fact that Pope felt constrained to meet his readers' expectations by maintaining a moralistic emphasis in his revisals of his and his correspondents' letters for publication. As we have seen, Pope's age made a specific connection between the letter and moral instruction; the 'didactic nature of the letter is so strong in the eighteenth century that a relation to conduct books may be drawn.'<sup>23</sup> There was, too, of course, the human impulse to appear at his best in these letters; as Dr. Johnson wryly observed, 'surely no man sits down to depreciate by design his own character.'<sup>24</sup>

The other side of the coin to the Victorian belief that Pope had manipulated the texts of his letters to put himself in a good light was that he intended to put his 'foes in a bad light.'<sup>25</sup> Specifically Elwin charged him with falsifying his relations with Addison in devising his fictitious correspondence with him and with maligning Wycherley: 'under the plea of justifying a man who was in his grave, [Pope] took advantage of his death to libel him in safety.'<sup>26</sup> As regards Wycherley, the accusation is sufficiently simplistic to be, if not false, at least misleading. Certainly Pope's 1729 edition of Wycherley's Posthumous Works is not completely flattering to Wycherley; Pope justifies himself rather at the expense of his friend. But Elwin ignores the context of the pamphlet attacks while also painting too bleak a portrait of the epistolary relationship depicted by Pope in his editions of the letters.

In the Victorians' opinion Addison simply could do no wrong and, not surprisingly, they resented Pope's insinuation in the published letters that Addison had acted as a false friend in the matter of the rival Iliad translations. Even the reasonable Dilke observed that he was unable to believe that Addison was aware that Pope had 'come chivalrously to his defence' in writing 'The Narrative of the Frenzy of J.D.', a pamphlet Addison denounced, as 'We believe such conduct would have been impossible in Addison.'<sup>27</sup> The interest generated by the famous Addison-Pope quarrel, and the opinion generally taken on it, can be adduced from the number of pamphlets attacking Pope which included this quarrel among their accusations. Interestingly, in 1778 the famous jurist Blackstone gave opinion the conviction of truth when he 'summarized the case on the facts as then known, and adjudicated in favour of Addison.'<sup>28</sup> Time and research have vindicated the account of their disagreement offered by Pope in the 1735 edition and shown that, in the important particulars, it was more or less a faithful representation.<sup>29</sup> What has been ignored by Elwin and many subsequent critics of Pope's letters is that in his successive revisions of them the element of personal vindication or self-seeking glorification tended to disappear, along with details or incidents Pope felt might not be of general interest or of general comprehensibility. Thus the 1735 edition's fairly straightforward account of Pope's disagreement with Addison evolved, in the 1737 edition, to a sort of object

lesson on the divisive effect faction exerts on personal relationships, whether it derives from religious differences, opposing political views, or professional rivalry. This softening of Pope's picture of his quarrel with Addison is not generally recognized by many critics who repeat instead the old unfounded rumours of Pope's pamphlet detractors, nor is the fact that he publicly repented of his own part in the estrangement. His preface to the 1727 Miscellanies, for example, describes Addison as one 'whose Name deserves all Respect from every Lover of Learning,' with Pope confessing that, with respect to Addison, 'we wish our Raillery, though ever so tender, or Resentment, though ever so just, had not been indulged.'<sup>30</sup>

Discussion of the controversial subject of Pope's fabrication of a correspondence with Addison brings us to a related issue, to the oft-repeated belief that Pope was 'less proud of his long friendship with the obscure Caryll than of his more fleeting relationship with, say, the famous Addison.'<sup>31</sup> This issue, too, subsumes a number of subordinate ones. We must start from the fact that Pope used his extensive correspondence with Caryll, on recalling it from his old friend, as a storehouse of ideas, thoughts and phrases, devising letters spuriously addressed to Addison in particular from the Caryll letters as well as letters to Atterbury, Edward Blount, Congreve, Robert Digby, Steele, Sir William Trumbull and Wycherley. Was Pope then less proud of his intimacy with Caryll than with the friends to whom he readdressed the letters; did

he not feel it wrong to use letters actually sent to one friend in composing letters spuriously sent to others; are these the only issues involved in this action? Elwin and, recently, James Winn, have answered these questions in one way, believing that the unscrupulous Pope was willing to sacrifice one of his oldest, dearest friends on the altar of his great vanity and that that is the sum and total of the matter.

I think, however, that a number of other issues are involved and that Pope's action may be interpreted in a rather different way. The fact that Pope regarded his letters as literature, which has been demonstrated in the course of this thesis, must, first, alter our interpretation of this action. As we saw in the fourth chapter, Pope had a unique ability to use and re-use material indefinitely in both prose and verse; not only ideas but also particular thoughts, expressions or phrases were abstracted from earlier works for inclusion in his periodical essays or were later extracted from the periodical essays for a project currently on hand, whether it be a personal letter or a poem or another essay. There was a certain hint of an attitude of noblesse oblige in this habit. Pope seemed to feel that his genius entailed upon him the responsibility of disseminating his genius for expression in whatever form was at hand, just as he felt no scruples at lifting material from other authors for his own use. Spence records a fascinating anecdote of Young's on this point: 'Pope was so superior to all the poets his contemporaries

in versification that if he met with a good line (even in a much inferior [poet]) he would take it (like a lord of the manor) for his own.'<sup>32</sup>

When he arrived at the decision to publish his letters he apparently had no copies of his letters to Addison or Steele although it is likely that he had corresponded with both. In Sherburn's opinion, 'His public would have considerable interest in letters to Addison, and if none appeared they would wonder why.'<sup>33</sup> From the recalled letters to Caryll Pope might devise letters written to Addison at roughly the same time, possibly discussing similar topics as the original letters to Addison.<sup>34</sup>

Vinton Dearing, who has made an extensive bibliographical analysis of Pope's letters - the surviving originals, contemporary transcripts, and the revisions made by Pope for his various editions - has concluded that 'we cannot prove that Pope had any reason to believe that phrases written to his old and intimate friend, Caryll, were misleading in letters to Addison.'<sup>35</sup> While Pope's consideration of his letters as literature offends our modern concept of the letter as a communication directed specifically to one individual, it was far from abnormal in the early eighteenth century.

There is also the fact that it was not likely that Pope wanted to advertise his intimacy with Caryll so publicly as including a representative sample of their correspondence in his Letters would have entailed. Thus his failure to acknowledge his extensive correspondence

with Caryll may be partly explained by the fact that Caryll was closely - notoriously, even - associated with the Jacobite cause. Caryll's uncle had fled to France in 1689 to serve as secretary of state for James II. In Erskine-Hill's opinion, Pope was 'clearly aware of the Caryll family's association with the Jacobite movement, and it is a fair inference that political caution was a further reason why Pope did not frequently visit Caryll at Ladyholt after the early years.'<sup>36</sup> If Pope was unwilling even to visit Caryll's estate as too conspicuous a token of their intimacy, it is unlikely that he would resign these scruples on editing his letters for publication. We must remember that Pope suffered all his life from his Catholicism - not only in material ways, and these were unpleasant enough, but also from the suspicions of Jacobite leanings which almost automatically attached themselves to Catholics at that time. Any illusory sense of security Pope may have experienced as a famous poet living in the seclusion of Twickenham must have been dispelled by the shock and anxiety occasioned him by the arrest of his close friend Atterbury in 1722 on charges of Jacobite conspiracy.

Thus we see Pope in the published letters portraying himself as a political neutral in favour of religious tolerance. Pope's consciousness of the necessity of appearing moderate and impartial in the controversies raging in his time apparently accorded with his personal convictions in these matters but he knew that it was a necessity nonetheless. Dilke's description of Pope's treatment of the epitaph Pope composed on the death of

Caryll's uncle takes into account Pope's consciousness of the necessity of appearing a moderate while discussing without condemnation Pope's amazing habit of re-using material:

as it was the policy of his life never to appear publicly as deeply sympathizing in the concerns of a Pariah caste, he subsequently made use of this same epitaph - made the first six lines serve to introduce his Whig friend Trumbull; and the remainder was re-cast, and appears as a flourish about Bridgewater in 'The Epistle to Jervas'.<sup>37</sup>

It should also be remembered that Pope must have felt that he had, in effect, already 'immortalized' Caryll and their friendship by dedicating The Rape of the Lock to him. Too, misunderstandings between Caryll and Pope in the 1720's had resulted in an estrangement between them. It was during this period, as Erskine-Hall observes, that Pope found Caryll unable 'to sustain the idealized patriarchal role in which Pope had portrayed him in earlier and more enthusiastic letters.'<sup>38</sup> Pope transferred this role to Blount, Digby and Bethel in his published letters and thus, perhaps, struck another blow for Bolingbroke's Opposition by portraying them as opposed to Walpole's corrupt government and to its evil effects on society. The irony in the suggestions that Pope manipulated his letters to put himself 'in a good light' is that Pope suppressed many of his letters to Caryll, with the discussion of charities and kindnesses which occupied so large a part in their actual correspondence.

Elwin's and, latterly, Winn's suggestion that Pope's desire to advertise his intimacy with such famous figures

as Addison and Steele prompted his readdressing to them letters originally sent to Caryll does not explain his also readdressing some of these letters originally sent to Caryll to such comparatively obscure figures as Edward Blount and Robert Digby, nor does it account for the fact that he featured his intimacy with these friends so prominently in the 1735 and the 1737 editions. This latter point was noticed by Roscoe in his 1824 edition of Pope's Works, who observed that Pope's correspondence with Blount, for example, was rather 'of a friendly than of a literary nature, and:

like that with Mr. Bethell and others, shews that Pope was not led to form his connexions by the rank, talents, or celebrity of the parties; but that his nearest intimacies were chosen amongst those, whose chief qualifications were probity, good sense, and sincerity, whose tastes and opinions coincided with his own, and who to the endowments<sup>39</sup> of the mind united the better qualities of the heart.

Roscoe aptly pointed out that 'notwithstanding the acknowledged anxiety of Pope for the establishment of his literary fame,' the importance he accorded his friendship with such individuals as Bethel, Blount and Digby in the Letters 'may perhaps incline us to give credit to the asseveration he so frequently makes, that he was still more desirous of being esteemed a good man, than a great poet.'<sup>40</sup>

As we have seen in Pope's publishing a vindication of himself as a virtuous individual it is important to see that he was not only fulfilling purely personal motives but also obeying the Augustan dictum which accorded moral biography such importance as a kind of 'teaching by



example'. Pope's age preferred its didactic instruction to be delivered in the form of the lives of actual individuals. By 1780, despite the popularity of Pamela and Clarissa, the Augustan distrust of the romantic or the imaginary survived strongly enough for Johnson, in his Life of Addison, to observe that 'The rejection and contempt of fiction is rational and manly.'<sup>41</sup> His belief in the instructive potential of the biography of actual individuals can be divined from Johnson's letter on the death of Peregrine Langton, in which he remarked: 'His art of life certainly deserves to be known and studied. He lived in plenty and elegance upon an income which, to many would appear indigent, and to most, scanty. How he lived, therefore, every man has an interest in knowing.'<sup>42</sup>

We must place Pope's publication of his letters in the context of this eighteenth-century interest in the 'History' of actual individuals. It is probable that Pope hoped that his published letters, like Seneca's letters to Lucilius, would furnish his own and subsequent ages with, in Roger L'Estrange's words, 'that which of all things in the World we want the most: That is to say, A perfect and a lively Image of HUMANE NATURE.'<sup>43</sup> However, Pope badly miscalculated the evolving patterns of literary taste. As we have seen, the popularity of the epistolary novel depended on its constituting a single point of shared interest for the two sections of the eighteenth-century reading public: the newly literate and the 'literate', acquainted with classical literature. On the one hand,

there was the newly literate bourgeois reading public's interest in gossip and scandal, in the private lives of its public figures. On the other hand, the 'literate' appreciated the didactic aspect of the 'lessons through lives' offered in biography. The two elements were not incompatible, as the eighteenth century discovered, when biography is set within the framework of personal letters or memoirs. Pope's published letters, then, and Richardson's Pamela might be seen as appealing equally to this Augustan interest in didactic biography in letter form. Richardson's experimentation with the form, however, with his delicate exploration of the subjective consciousness, presaged the course of the future of literature and, specifically, the novel, while Pope's letters, rooted in antiquity, based in particular on the model of Seneca's moral essays cast into the letter form, were doomed to obscurity for all but scholars of Pope. Yet Richardson's and Pope's motives in publishing a moralistic 'lesson through a life' in Pamela and in Pope's Letters were probably not dissimilar. A letter from Pope's physician and friend Dr. Cheyne to Richardson in 1741 contains the following remark:

Mr. Pope here charg'd me to make his warm Compliments to you as an honest good Man, and to tell you that he had read Pamela with great Approbation and Pleasure, and wanted a Night's Rest in finishing it, and says it will do more good than a great many of the new Sermons.<sup>44</sup>

Ironically, Pope's editorial scruples ensured the failure of his Letters. As we have seen, Pope tended to transcend the purely personal in his publication of his

letters by tirelessly revising them. Thus the Cromwell correspondence as published by Curll in 1726, a series of witty if somewhat bawdy actual letters, was transformed in Pope's 1735 edition into a series of fairly impersonal essays on literary criticism or philosophical monologues on such topics as the nature of laughter and the futility of an ambition for fame. While moral instruction was probably Pope's major intent in his revisions, he made a few errors. His 'letters to ladies' which were to disgust Carruthers, Bowles and Elwin were possibly retained in Pope's pride at emulating a popular contemporary type of published letter. He little suspected that the fashionable indecencies of his own age might shock subsequent generations of readers. In general, however, his care was to remove just this type of culturally specific reference from his correspondence, deleting the topical and the specific and replacing them with generalities. This habit of revision ensured his ultimate unpopularity both as letter writer and as poet when changing literary tastes relegated him to the second class of poets because of his failure to write purely from and of himself.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, edited by George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: 1905), III, p. 157.
3. For a concise chronology of Pope's actions see James A. Winn's A Window in the Bosom (Hamden, Connecticut: 1977) which includes as an Appendix 'A Timetable of the 1735 Publication,' pp. 203-221.
4. For further bibliographical details of the 1735 and 1737 publications see especially Vinton Dearing's excellent unpublished Harvard doctoral dissertation 'A History of the Publication of Alexander Pope's Letters during his Lifetime,' (1949) and J. McLaverty, 'The first printing and publication of Pope's letters,' The Library, sixth ser., II (1980), pp. 264-280.
5. See McLaverty, p. 266 and R.H. Griffith, Alexander Pope: A Bibliography (Austin: 1927), II, pp. 292-306.
6. Norman Ault, New Light on Pope (London: 1949), p. 18.
7. Sherburn prints the Narrative in Vol. III, pp. 458-467 of The Correspondence of Alexander Pope (Oxford: 1956). (Hereafter cited as Correspondence.)
8. For comparison of the two see Edmund Curll's edition of Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence, Volume the Second (London: 1735) or Appendix A, pp. 1-23, Dearing's thesis.
9. Sherburn's Introduction, Correspondence, I, p. xiii.
10. P.T. to Curll, 11 October 1733, Correspondence, III, p. 388.
11. P.T. to Curll, 15 November 1733, Correspondence, III, p. 395.
12. A Narrative, III, p. 460.
13. Curll, Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence, Volume the Second, pp. xiii-xiv.
14. Ibid., Volume the Third, p. iii.
15. See the anonymous extracts from Sawney and Colley (1742) reprinted in Pope: The Critical Heritage, edited by John Barnard (London: 1973), which include an interesting contemporary footnote to the poem, pp. 260-1.
16. J.V. Guerinot in Pamphlet Attacks on Alexander Pope, 1711-1714 (London: 1969) includes, pp. 309-310, extracts from The Egotist.

17. The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, edited by Robert Halsband (Oxford: 1968), III, p. 58. I would like to stress here that, as orthography in the early eighteenth century had not yet been regularized, please consider the minor irregularities in spelling, punctuation and capitalization as taken from the original text as the instances are too numerous to cite individually.
18. Correspondence, III, p. 512.
19. Correspondence, IV, p. 77.
20. The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq; edited by Owen Ruffhead (London: 1769), V, pp. 313-14n.
21. Lord Orrery, Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift (London: 1752), p. 224.
22. Ruffhead, p. 313.
23. The Correspondence of Thomas Gray, edited by Paget Toynbee and Leonard Whibley (Oxford: 1935), I, p. 230.
24. The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence, edited by W.S. Lewis (London: 1937-83), 28, p. 292.
25. Joseph Warton, An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope, 2nd ed. (London: 1762), I, p. iv.
26. The Works of Alexander Pope, edited by Joseph Warton (London: 1797), I, p. lix.
27. Ibid., pp. lix-lx.
28. Johnson, III, p. 156.
29. Ibid., p. 157.
30. Ibid., p. 160.
31. Ibid., p. 208.
32. Sherburn cites this quotation in The Early Career of Alexander Pope (Oxford: 1934), p. 22.
33. This extract from Bowles's Principles is cited in The Works of Lord Byron, edited by Rowland E. Prothero (London: 1901), in Vol. 5 which recounts, Appendix III, pp. 522-592, the 'Controversy Between Byron and Bowles as to the Poetry and Character of Pope'; for quote see p. 532.
34. The Works of Alexander Pope, edited by the Rev. Whitwell Elwin and William John Courthope (London: 1871-89) cites, as an introduction to Vol. VI, some opinions of former editors of Pope's letters; for quote see p. xxv.

35. The Works of Lord Byron, V, p. 540.
36. Ibid., p. 574.
37. This quotation is cited in Agnes Marie Sibley's Alexander Pope's Prestige in America, 1725-1835 (New York: 1949), p. 100.
38. The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq; edited by William Roscoe (London: 1824), I, p. 464.
39. The Works of Alexander Pope, With a Memoir of the Author, edited by the Rev. G. Croly (London: 1835), I, p. lxxiii.
40. The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope, edited by Robert Carruthers (London: 1853), I, p. 227.
41. Ibid., p. 238.
42. The Rev. Alexander Dyce, for example, editor of the 1866 Aldine Edition of The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope (London: 1866) in his 'Memoir of Pope' concludes that 'Considering the turbulent and shameless character of Curll evinced in his publications it is not impossible but he may have been the sole perpetrator of the 1735 publication), I, p. cx. Adolphus William Ward, editor of the 1869 Globe edition of The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope (reprinted in London: 1956), also had his doubts; see I, pp. xl-xli.
43. Charles W. Dilke, The Papers of a Critic (London: 1875), I, p. 106.
44. Ault, New Light on Pope, p. 14.
45. Elwin-Courthope, Introduction, I, p. xxvii.
46. Sherburn, Early Career, p. 20.
47. Ibid., p. 22.
48. Ward, p. xli, p. li.
49. The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope, edited by William Michael Rossetti (London: 1874), p. xxx.
50. Leslie Stephen, Alexander Pope (London: 1880), p. 146.
51. Ibid., p. 156.
52. Ibid.
53. John Dennis, The Age of Pope (London: 1894), p. 46.
54. Edith Sitwell, Alexander Pope (London: 1930), p. 17.

55. Sherburn, Early Career, pp. 20-1.
56. Ault, New Light on Pope, p. 15.
57. Sherburn, Introduction, Correspondence, I, p. ix.
58. According to Elwin in his Introduction to Volume I, p. cxliv: 'In Pope's own, and every succeeding edition, the letters are divided into groups. The arrangement of the entire collection in one consecutive chronological series is, in his case, neither desirable nor possible. It is not desirable because a unity of subject often runs through his intercourse with particular persons, and the interposition of the topics upon which he touched with other friends, far from presenting a connected view of his thoughts and actions, would reduce the whole to a medley of disjointed fragments.' Elwin's theory is denied by the improved arrangement of Sherburn's edition who himself observed in his introduction, I, p. xxv, that the 'arrangement of the letters in a single chronological order' was an improvement: 'Placed thus, even small letters fill out the picture, and we see Pope moving among his friends and his publishers more vividly than has been possible before.'
59. Sherburn, Introduction, Correspondence, I, p. xxviii.
60. Maynard Mack, untitled review of Sherburn's edition of Pope's letters, Philological Quarterly, 36 (July, 1957), p. 394, p. 390.
61. Ibid.
62. John Butt, "Pope Seen Through His Letters," Eighteenth Century English Literature, edited by James L. Clifford (New York: 1959), p. 63.
63. "Pope: The Man and the Poet," Of Books and Humankind, edited by John Butt (London: 1964), p. 76.
64. Archibald C. Elias's review of James Winn's A Window in the Bosom in The Scriblerian, 10 (Autumn, 1977), p. 40.
65. Winn, pp. 90-1.
66. Ibid., p. 90.
67. Ibid., p. 91.

1. C.E. Vulliamy, English Letter Writers (London: 1945), p. 9.
2. Rosemary Cowler, "Shadow and Substance: A Discussion of Pope's Correspondence," The Familiar Letter in the Eighteenth Century (Lawrence, Kansas: 1966), p. 34.
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4. Ibid., p. 222.
5. L.P. Wilkinson, Letters of Cicero (London: 1959), p. 11.
6. See R.G.C. Levens, A Book of Latin Letters (London: 1930), pp. xii-xiv.
7. Ibid., p. xivn.
8. Select Epistles or Letters out of M. Tullius Cicero, 'Adapted to the Humour of the Present Age' by Tom Brown (London: 1702). Hereafter cited as Select Epistles; see p. 28.
9. Ibid., pp. 28-9.
10. Levens, p. 80n.
11. Wilkinson observes on p. 12 that 'It is abundantly clear that Cicero wrote most of the letters with no thought of publication at all.' In his book on Pope's letters, A Window in the Bosom, James Winn contends on p. 50 that Cicero did intend publication. The quotation he offers as proof is, however, misleading. In a letter to Atticus Cicero observed, 'There is no collection of my letters, but Tiro has about seventy, and some can be got from you. These I ought to see and correct, and then they may be published.' Yet the selection of his letters to which Cicero refers was only tentatively planned and never actually carried out; see Wilkinson, p. 12, on this point, who contends that 'the proposed selection seems never to have come to anything.'
12. Tully's Offices, 'Turned out of Latin into English' by Sir Roger L'Estrange (London, 1688), 4th ed., p. 2.
13. Ibid.
14. Levens, p. 80n.
15. Winn, p. 45.
16. Elbert N.S. Thompson, Literary Bypaths of the Renaissance (New Haven, Connecticut: 1924), p. 96.
17. The Letters of Marcus Tullius Cicero to Several Of His Friends, 'With Remarks by William Melmoth (London: 1753), II, p. 191.



18. Levens, p. xvii.
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70. Irving, p. 47.
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8. Johnson, III, pp. 208-9.
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14. See Pope's letter to Dennis of 3 May 1721, Correspondence, II, pp. 75-6.
15. This is Peter Quennell's theory, expressed in Alexander Pope (London: 1968), p. 9.
16. According to Dennis, however, the publication was consented to by its contributors; as he observes in the 'Dedication to Charles Montague' which prefaces the edition, 'As soon as I had resolv'd to make this Address to you, that the Present might not be altogether unworthy of you, I took care to obtain the Consent of my Friends to publish some Letters, which they had writ as Answers to mine'; see The Select Works of Mr. John Dennis (London: 1718), II, p. 480.
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18. Ibid., p. 215.
19. Ibid., pp. 290-1. Mack lists as item 144 of his provisional catalogue of Pope's books 'Rochester, John Wilmot, Earl of. Poems, (&c.) On Several Occasions: With Valentinian: A Tragedy. London: Jacob Tonson, 1696.' 'On the final flyleaf in Pope's hand: There ought to be added to this/ Edition of my Ld. Rochester's/ Works, his Letters to Henry Saville, wch are printed else-/ where.'
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21. Mack, item 31, p. 241.
22. Ault, p. xxxiv.
23. The Spectator, edited by Donald F. Bond in 5 volumes (Oxford: 1965), III, p. 518. See Correspondence, I, p. 42 pp. 146-7 for examples of the way in which Pope's 'formal' writing, composed for an essay to the Spectator, translated into purportedly actual letters; the process obviously worked vice versa as well, with actual letters used as the source for essays.
24. Ault, p. xxxv.
25. Spectator, IV, p. 397.
26. Ault, p. xxxv.
27. Spectator, IV, p. 114.
28. Ault, p. xxxviii. These 7 Spectator papers which Ault attributes to Pope are nos. 224, 292, 316, 404, 408, 425, and 467. See Ault, pp. xliv-liv.
29. See Ault, pp. xliv-xlv.
30. See Ault, p. xlv.
31. See Ault, pp. xli-xlii.
32. See Ault, pp. xlv-xlvi.
33. Spectator, III, p. 41.
34. See Ault, pp. xlii-xlviii.
35. Spectator, III, p. 150.
36. Ibid, II, p. 370.
37. Sherburn observes in a footnote to this letter from Steele to Pope, 12 November 1712, Correspondence, I, p. 152, that 'Formerly this "design" was thought to be The Guardian, No. 1 of which appeared on 12 Mar. 1712/3. Recently it has been urged by Professor Blanchard...and Professor John

37. (Continued) Loftis...that the "design" is more probably Steele's Censorium.' Sherburn concludes that the 'design' Steele mentions 'might be either'.
38. These Guardian papers which Ault attributes to Pope are nos. 11, 12, 15, 106, 169, and 172; see Ault, pp. lix-lxxii.
39. The Guardian, no. 160, Monday, July 13, 1713, reprinted in The Prose Works, I, p. 130.
40. Ibid.
41. The Guardian, No. 172, Monday, September 28, 1713, reprinted in The Prose Works, I, p. 143.
42. Ibid., p. 142.
43. Ibid., pp. 143-4.
44. This chapter and the next two will draw upon some of the conclusions reached by Vinton Dearing in his excellent bibliographical study, 'A History of the Publication of Alexander Pope's Letters During His Lifetime,' an unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Harvard: 1949); see p. 2 for quote.
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50. George Sherburn, The Early Career of Alexander Pope (Oxford: 1934), p. 21.
51. Elwin and Courthope, Works, I, p. xxviii.
52. See Correspondence, II, p. 423, p. 501, III, p. 79n, p. 478, p. 498, p. 505n., p. 510.
53. According to Dearing, p. 128A: 'All the evidence afforded by the letters themselves seems to point to the supposition that Pope made, kept and printed from rough draughts rather than copies of the letters.'
54. Ibid., p. 128.
55. Ibid., p. 40.
56. See George Sherburn, 'Pope's Letters and the Harleian Library,' ELH, 7 (1940), p. 179.
57. Quennell, p. 10.

58. The Posthumous Works of William Wycherley, Esq; In Prose and Verse, Vol. II (London: 1729), 'To the Reader'.
59. Ibid.
60. Spence's Observations, I, p. 38.
61. Vinton Dearing, 'Pope, Theobald, and Wycherley's Posthumous Works,' PMLA, LXVIII (1953), p. 236.
62. See Elwin and Courthope, Works, V, p. 283 and Ault's New Light on Pope (London: 1949), p. 17.
63. Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence, Volume the Second (London: 1735), p. xiv.
64. Dearing, 'Pope, Theobald, and Wycherley's Posthumous Works,' p. 223.
65. For the variety of 1735 editions see New Light on Pope, p. 18.
66. See Ault's New Light on Pope, p. 18. See also Elwin and Courthope's Works, I, p. lxxiii on which page the editors deplore the discrepancy between Pope's public denunciation of Curll's edition of his letters while being secretly responsible for Cooper's edition: 'Thus while the poet pretended that he could not own the P.T. collection, with its mutilated, interpolated, and forged letters, he had secretly authorised a reprint which was identical with the collection he denounced.'
67. Vinton Dearing, 'A History of the Publication of Alexander Pope's Letters During His Lifetime,' p. 2.
68. See, for example, Elwin and Courthope's Works, V, pp. 136-9; William Irving's The Providence of Wit in the English Letter Writers (Durham, North Carolina: 1955), pp. 76-77; The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, edited by George Sherburn, I, p. 1; Winn's A Window in the Bosom, pp. 58-63.
69. See introduction, footnote 15.
70. See Ault's introduction to The Prose Works of Alexander Pope, I, p. xliv.
71. Correspondence I, p. 5. See also I, p. 8, p. 9, p. 33.
72. Letters Upon Several Occasions: Written by and between Mr. Dryden, Mr. Congreve, Mr. Wycherley and Mr. Dennis. (London: 1696), p. 14.
73. Spence's Observations, I, p. 32.

74. George Sherburn, The Early Career of Alexander Pope (Oxford: 1934), p. 56.
75. Ibid., p. 59.
76. Winn, p. 23.
77. Quennell, p. 25.
78. Sherburn, p. 59.
79. Correspondence, I, pp. 89-90. The rondeau Pope deleted depends on innuendo; copying the first stanza from the 1735 edition, for example: 'You know where you did despise/ (T'other Day) my little Eyes,/ Little Legs, and little Thighs,/ And some Things of little Size,/ You know where' (1735 'Cooper's' edition, p. 94).
80. Sherburn, p. 157.
81. Quennell, p. 25.
82. Letters Upon Several Occasions, (1696), p. 19.
83. Spence's Observations, I, p. 111.
84. Sherburn, p. 60.
85. James A. Winn, 'Pope Plays the Rake: His Letters to Ladies and the Making of the Eloisa,' The Art of Alexander Pope, edited by Howard Erskine-Hill and Anne Smith (London: 1979), p. 92.
86. Winn, A Window in the Bosom, p. 101.
87. This footnote is to be found on p. 117 of The Letters of Alexander Pope, Esq; The Second Edition, Corrected (London: Printed for T. Cooper, 1737).
88. See Elwin and Courthope's Works, I, p. lxxvi; Elwin conjectures that Pope withdrew the letter describing the visit to the hermaphrodite from the 1737 edition for the following reason: 'The fancied humour appeared to the public revolting coarseness, and he cast out the letter because it excited disgust and contempt.'
89. See Correspondence, I, pp. 137-9. Sherburn notes the excisions made by Pope in his various editions.
90. The Guardian, No. 91, Thursday, June 25, 1713, reprinted in The Prose Works, I, p. 121.
91. See pp. 41-2, second chapter.
92. The Guardian, No. 92, Friday, June 26, 1713, reprinted in The Prose Works, I, p. 125.

93. Quennell, p. 105.
94. See Correspondence, I, p. 455, p. 456, p. 458, p. 459, p. 460 and p. 468.
95. Winn, A Window in the Bosom, p. 111.
96. Spence's Observations, I, p. 219.
97. Ibid., I, p. 177.
98. Quennell, p. 44.
99. Winn, A Window in the Bosom, p. 90. See also Elwin and Courthope's Works, I, p. cxxi on which page it is noted that as early as 1824 Roscoe believed that Pope had intended the 'Hon. J.C. Esq' to refer to Craggs; suitable condemnation follows.
100. See Irving, p. 196 and Elwin and Courthope's Works, I, p. cxxi.
101. Irving, p. 196.
102. Dearing, p. 145.
103. See introduction, p. 14.
104. Quennell, p. 46.
105. See Sherburn, The Early Career, pp. 146-7.
106. See Correspondence, I, p. 246, p. 320n, p. 329 and 337; III, 79.
107. Sherburn, The Early Career, p. 298.
108. The Spectator, III, 419.
109. The Tatler, I, p. 5.
110. Spence's Observations, I, p. 96.
111. Ibid., p. 177.
112. Ibid.
113. Dearing, p. 186 and p. 248.
114. Dearing, pp. 255-6.
115. Sherburn, 'Pope's Letters and the Harleian Library,' p. 181.
116. Cited in Correspondence, III, p. 473n.

117. Dearing, p. 194.
118. Letters Written by the Late Jonathan Swift and Several of His Friends (London: 1766-8), I, p. 344n.
119. Sherburn, The Early Career, p. 81.
120. Reuben Brower offers this description of Horace's epistles in Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion (Oxford: 1959), p. 178.
121. See Correspondence, III, pages 139, 197, 210, 227, 271, 283, 355 and 453.

1. Vinton Dearing, 'A History of the Publication of Alexander Pope's Letters During his Lifetime,' unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Harvard: 1949), p. 1.
2. Miscellanea (London: 1727), I, 'Letter to the Editor.'
3. These three letters from Dryden to Elizabeth Thomas are reprinted in The Letters of John Dryden, edited by Charles E. Ward (Durham, North Carolina: 1942), pp. 125-8, p. 132.
4. Miscellanea, I, 'Letter to the Editor.'
5. Letters of Mr. Pope and Several Eminent Persons (London: Printed for T. Cooper, 1735), p. iv. Page references and the edition from which they are drawn will, henceforth, for reasons of both clarity and concision, be cited within the text. For simplicity's sake, when a quotation is included in a number of editions, I will cite the earlier text unless otherwise specified.
6. Miscellanea, I, Preface.
7. Ibid.
8. For the specific bibliographical differences between the texts see Dearing who helpfully includes as Appendix B of his thesis 'Selected Collations of Letters Printed in Letters of Mr. Pope (First Edition) with the Originals, Contemporary Transcripts or Earlier Printings'; pp. 25-37 note 'variant readings in the Cromwell letters as reprinted by Pope from Miscellanea' while pp. 38-52 note variant readings in other letters as reprinted by Pope from the original letters or contemporary transcripts.
9. The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, edited by George Sherburn (Oxford: 1956), I, p. 48n.
10. Ibid., I, p. 92n.
11. The Posthumous Works of William Wycherley, Esq; (London: 1729), II, 'To the Reader'.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. These letters are dated: Feb. 5, 1705/6; March 22, 1705/6; April 10, 1705/6; Nov. 11, 1707; Nov. 20, 1707, Nov. 22, 1707; Nov. 29, 1707; April 1, 1710; April 11, 1710; April 27, 1718; and May 2, 1710.

16. The Posthumous Works of William Wycherley, Esq;, II, 'To the Reader'.
17. These letters are dated Jan. 25, 1704/5; March 29, 1705; Nov. 11, 1707; and Aug. 11, 1709.
18. This letter is dated Feb. 19, 1706/7.
19. These letters are dated Feb. 28, 1707/8; May 13, 1708, extracts from letters of May 18 and July 28, 1708; May 17, 1709; and May 26, 1709.
20. These letters are dated March 25, 1705; April 30, 1705; and Nov. 29, 1707.
21. This letter is a patent fabrication from two letters to Caryll; see Correspondence, I, p. 9n.
22. Dearing observes that the 'discovery of the (Wycherley) transcripts has served to correct Pope's story in important details...The discovery that Wycherley told Pope his compliments were too broad does not reverse the fact, though it may cast some doubt on it, that Pope told Wycherley the same'; see Dearing pp. 29-31. See also Correspondence, I, p. 1n.
23. Dearing believes that 'while Pope made many cuts in the letters, his alterations were without exception unimportant. Granted that the style of the transcripts is not that of the printed letters, still there is no inconsistency in style among the latter, and the style of at least six of them is almost entirely the result simply of Pope's omitting the redundancies of Wycherley's exuberant wit, the very process he found so necessary in correcting his verses'; see Dearing pp. 16-32.
24. See James Sutherland's English Literature of the Late Seventeenth Century (Oxford: 1969), p. 114.
25. See Joseph Spence, Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men, edited by James M. Osborn (Oxford: 1966), I, p. 18 and p. 20.
26. Ibid., p. 32.
27. Addison had similarly asserted that 'It is impossible, for us who live in the later Ages of the World, to make Observations in Criticism, Morality, or in any Art or Science, which have not been touched upon by others'; see The Spectator, edited by Donald F. Bond (Oxford: 1965), II, pp. 483-4.
28. That is, this footnote appeared on p. 117 of the 1737 edition, 'corrected' and published by T. Cooper of The Letters of Alexander Pope, Esq;.



29. Pope retained the 'new' letters of 10 June 1709; 20 July 1710; 11 November 1710; 17 December 1710; and 30 December 1710.
30. See also 1737 p. 16n, p. 17n, p. 21n, p. 41n, p. 139n and 263n.
31. See also 1737 p. 9n, p. 11n, p. 13n, and p. 59n.
32. See 1735, pp. 174-5.
33. Dearing makes this conjecture on p. 135.
34. Of this letter Dearing concludes that 'although the manuscript is lost, the letter gives every evidence of being genuine. It is a neatly-turned compliment on 'Messiah' quite in the genial moralizing vein of Mr. Spectator, and there are clear parallels with two contemporary numbers of that periodical'; see p. 136.
35. The letter dated, in 1737, 18 June 1712, first appeared 16 June 1712 in the Spectator; the letter dated 15 July 1712 first appeared in the Guardian of 12 August 1713; and the letter dated 7 November 1712 first appeared on 10 November 1712 in the Spectator.
36. Sherburn notes that 'The verses were first printed in the miscellany of David Lewis in 1730,' Correspondence, I, p. 149n.
37. See Correspondence, I, p. 183n.
38. Ibid., p. 184.
39. Ibid., p. 196n.
40. The letter in which this remark appears is abstracted from three originally sent to Caryll in 1713; see Correspondence, I, p. 197n.
41. This letter was also originally sent to Caryll with, in Sherburn's words, 'surprisingly few changes except for improvements in style,' Correspondence, I, p. 208n.
42. Ibid., p. 263n.
43. Ibid., II, p. 318n.
44. The 1735 edition also prints a letter from Pope to Digby of 10 September 1724 which he later printed in subsequent editions as to Dr. Arbuthnot. The 'new' letters from Digby to Pope are dated 17 April 1718; 21 May 1720; 9 July 1720; 30 July 1720; 12 November 1720; and 14 August 1723. Pope's 'new' letter to Digby is dated 29 April 1726.

45. The 'new' letter from Pope to Blount is dated 27 August 1714 while the two 'new' letters from Blount to Pope are Letter LXXXVI (undated) and the succeeding letter, dated 11 November 1715.
46. See Correspondence, III, pp. 254-7 and 254n.
47. Ibid. Pope also, as Sherburn notes, attributed to Cleland the Letter to the Publisher prefixed to the Dunciad which Pope had himself written.
48. See Correspondence, III, p. 322n; as Sherburn observes here too 'one must envy [Gay] this final dignified bow as he leaves the stage.'
49. Sherburn, The Early Career, p. 224.
50. Ibid., p. 229 and see, for example, Correspondence, II, pp. 166-170.
51. See Correspondence, I, p. 467 and Spence's Observations, I, p. 17.
52. See Correspondence, III, p. 419n.
53. See Correspondence, I, p. xv.
54. Ibid. Dearing concurred with these conclusions; he observed on pp. 116-7 of his thesis that 'Like any editor, Pope regularized the form of, corrected the errata in, and supplied footnotes to, the letters. He omitted many references to his and his friends' non-literary activities, evidently more because he thought them uninteresting to the general reader than because he disliked to make public his private life.' Dearing also, interestingly, observes that Pope 'did not omit his private opinions, but he altered them so that an account of his mind in 1735 is found in letters written twenty-five years before. From understandable motives, he suppressed many youthful enthusiasms and indecorums. And finally he gave a polish to the letters themselves and the poems included in them.' See also Dearing pp. 6-7, p. 18, pp. 110-7, pp. 143-4, p. 159, p. 207 and p. 275.

1. Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, edited by George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: 1905), III, p. 212.
2. Ibid., p. 160.
3. The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, edited by Robert Halsband (Oxford: 1965-7), III, p. 63; Halsband identifies in a footnote on this page 'Bessus' as 'The braggart Bessus in Beaumont and Fletcher's A King and No King, 1619, Act IV, Scene ii.'
4. Joseph Warton, An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope (London: 1762), 2nd ed., II, p. 477.
5. Ibid., p. 477.
6. The Works of Alexander Pope, edited by Joseph Warton (London: 1797), I, p. lix.
7. Ibid., pp. lix-lx.
8. The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq., edited by William Roscoe (London: 1824), X, p. 4.
9. W.M. Thackeray, The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century in Henry Esmond, The English Humourists, The Four Georges (Oxford: 1908), pp. 597-603.
10. Leslie Stephen, Alexander Pope (London: 1880), p. 156.
11. Gloria Meyer DeSole, "'What Friends Two Wits Could Be": A Consideration of Alexander Pope's Friendship and Correspondence with Jonathan Swift,' unpublished Ph.D. thesis (State University of New York at Albany: 1969), p. 182.
12. Jonathan Swift, Journal to Stella, edited by Harold Williams (Oxford: 1948), II, p. 401.
13. Stephen, p. 61.
14. Ibid.
15. Walter Sichel, Bolingbroke and His Times: The Sequel (London: 1902), p. 384.
16. George Sherburn, The Early Career of Alexander Pope (Oxford: 1934), p. 72.
17. Quoted in Stephen, p. 61, this anecdote is also related in Vol. V of The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, edited by Harold Williams (Oxford: 1963-5), pp. 228-9.
18. The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, edited by George Sherburn (Oxford: 1956), I, p. 220n. (Hereafter extracts from the letters cited within the text; the date 1737 or

18. (Continued) 1741 will follow the page reference if the letter quoted appeared in either edition. For the minor differences in text as published by Pope and by Sherburn, see Sherburn's edition which notes variations.
19. Sherburn, Early Career, p. 73.
20. Letters and Correspondence...of The Right Honourable Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke, edited by Gilbert Parke (London: 1798), I, p. 150.
21. Rachel Trickett, The Honest Muse (Oxford: 1967), p. 174.
22. Sherburn, Early Career, p. 74.
23. Emrys Jones, Pope and Dulness, Chatterton Lecture on an English Poet, from Proceedings of the British Academy (London: 1968), p. 234.
24. Ibid.
25. Quoted in E.E. Reynold's Thomas More and Erasmus (London: 1965), p. 253.
26. A.H.T. Levi's introduction to Erasmus's Praise of Folly and Letter to Martin Dorp (London: 1980), p. 44.
27. Swift's Correspondence, V, p. 54.
28. Johan Huizinga, Erasmus of Rotterdam (London: 1952), p. 170.
29. Isaac Kramnick, Bolingbroke and His Circle (London: 1968), p. 240.
30. Jeffrey Hart, Viscount Bolingbroke: Tory Humanist (London: 1965), p. 2, p. 58.
31. Erasmus, Praise of Folly, p. 59.
32. Ibid., p. 60.
33. H.T. Dickinson, Bolingbroke (London: 1970), p. 174.
34. Ibid., p. 177.
35. Ibid., p. 244.
36. Trickett, p. 156.
37. William Irving, The Providence of Wit in the English Letter Writers (Durham, North Carolina: 1955), p. 198.
38. Ibid.
39. The Works of the Right Honorable Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke, edited by David Mallet (London: 1754), II, p. 511.

40. Swift's Correspondence, II, p. 101.
41. Ibid., p. 109.
42. John Butt, 'Pope and the Opposition to Walpole's Government,' Pope, Dickens and Others (Edinburgh: 1969), p. 111.
43. Ibid.
44. R.R. Bolgar, The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries (Cambridge: 1954), p. 248.
45. In a letter to Pope of 20 April 1731 Swift complained of the dismal situation of the poet laureateship, observing that 'favor is got by two very contrary qualitys, one is by fear, the other by ill taste,' see Pope's Correspondence, III, p. 192.
46. Archibald C. Elias, 'Jonathan Swift and Letter Writing: The Natural and the Playful in his Personal Correspondence,' an unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Yale University: 1973), p. 128.
47. Jones, p. 234.
48. Joseph Spence, Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men, edited by James M. Osborn (Oxford: 1966), I, p. 138.
49. Pope's Correspondence, III, p. 349, 1741; Sherburn draws this inference.
50. Swift's Correspondence, III, pp. 184-6.
51. Ibid., pp. 203-4.
52. See Butt's article on 'Pope and the Opposition to Walpole's Government,' pp. 111-126.
53. Spence's Observations, I, p. 121. See also Pope's Correspondence, III, p. 326; IV, p. 6, p. 153, p. 261, pp. 395-6, p. 505.
54. Spence's Observations, I, p. 127.
55. Kramnick, p. 12.
56. For examples see Pope's Correspondence, I, p. 36, p. 58; II, p. 369, p. 371, p. 409; III, p. 149, p. 411, pp. 432-2, IV, p. 115, p. 176, p. 187, p. 363.
57. See Swift's Correspondence, Appendix XI, V, pp. 230-33.
58. Irvin Ehrenpreis, Swift: The Man, His Works and the Age (London: 1962), I, p. 180 and Oliver Ferguson, '"Nature and Friendship": The Personal Letters of Jonathan Swift,' The Familiar Letter in the Eighteenth Century, edited by Anderson, Daghlian and Ehrenpreis (Lawrence, Kansas: 1966), p. 25.

59. Lord Orrery, Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift (London: 1752), p. 251.
60. Ibid.
61. See, for example, Swift's Correspondence, III, pp. 170-1, p. 410, p. 499.
62. Elias, p. 15, who believes that 'After 1728, if not a year or two sooner, Swift knew that his friend intended to publish the letters they were writing each other.'
63. For Bolingbroke's identification of himself with Seneca see George Wingrove Cooke's Memoirs of Lord Bolingbroke (London: 1785), II, pp. 43-9.
64. In 1744 Pope observed to Spence that 'There is one thing in Lord Bolingbroke which seems peculiar to himself. He has so great a memory as well as judgement that if he is alone and without books he can sit down by himself (as another man would in his study) and refer to the books, or such a particular subject in them, in his own mind, and write as fully on it as another man would with all his books about him. He sits like an Intelligence and recollects all the question within himself,' see Spence's Observations, I, p. 120.
65. British Library MS 34,196 (no. 11).
66. Pope's Correspondence, III, p. 101; interestingly Pope deleted his own portion of this joint letter from himself and Bolingbroke to Swift, thus excising not only his disclaimers to 'Schemes' of 'Epistolary Fame' but also this indication that he had begun to assemble a volume of Swift's letters.
67. Frederik N. Smith, 'Dramatic Elements in Swift's Journal to Stella,' Eighteenth Century Studies, I (1967-8), I, p. 352 makes this point in relation to Swift's Journal.
68. Ferguson, p. 16.
69. George Sherburn, 'Pope's Letters and the Harleian Library,' ELH, 7 (1940), p. 178.
70. Pope's Correspondence, IV, p. 271n. H.T. Dickinson observed in the course of a conversation with me that the scarcity of letters surviving between Pope and Bolingbroke might be attributable to Bolingbroke's requesting Pope to destroy the letters he sent him, not wishing them to fall into the government's hands.
71. Ferguson, p. 20.
72. Ibid., p. 22.

73. Smith, p. 352.
74. Irvin Ehrenpreis, 'Swift's Letters,' Focus on Swift, edited by C.J. Rawson (London: 1971), p. 197.
75. Ehrenpreis, Swift: The Man, His Works and the Age, I, p. 177
76. Hart, p. 24.
77. Ibid., p. 36.
78. The Letters of Lord Bolingbroke, I, p. 149.
79. Vinton Dearing, 'A History of the Publication of Alexander Pope's Letters During His Lifetime,' an unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Harvard: 1949), pp. 289-90. The story of Pope's manoeuvres with regard to the 1741 edition has been recounted often enough for it to be unnecessary here. See, for a few relevant examples, Maynard Mack's account in The Library 4th ser. XIX (1939), pp. 465-85 and Dearing's up-date in The Library, 4th ser. XXIV (1943), pp. 74-80; Sherburn's 'Pope's Letters and the Harleian Library,' op. cit. and Elias's thesis, op. cit. which includes, as Appendix B, 'Negotiations over the Irish Printing of the Pope-Swift Letters, 1740', pp. 260-3.
80. Letters Written by Sir William Temple, Bart. (London: 1700), I, Preface by Jonathan Swift.
81. The Works of Sir William Temple, Bart. (London: 1720), I, 'An Account of the Life and Writings of the Author.'
82. See the facsimile of the 1745 sale catalogue of Swift's library printed in Harold Williams's Dean Swift's Library (Cambridge: 1932).
83. Ehrenpreis, I, pp. 92-112. Ehrenpreis quotes Swift on p. 111 in his opinion that "I never read his writings," Swift said at twenty-five, "but I prefer him to all others at present in England." Eight years later, he could still declare that Temple had "advanced our English tongue, to as great a perfection as it can well bear." Pope included Temple as well as Swift, Addison, Atterbury and Bolingbroke in the list of the eighteen best prose writers recorded by Spence in 1744; see Observations, I, p. 170.
84. Winn, p. 187.
85. Ibid.
86. Letters of Mr. Alexander Pope And Several of His Friends (subtitled The Works of Mr. Alexander Pope, In Prose) (London: 1737), I, p. 297.
87. Sherburn, 'Pope's Letters and the Harleian Library,' p. 184.
88. Ibid.

89. C.W. Dilke, The Papers of a Critic (London: 1875), I, pp. 312-31.
90. See footnote 79.
91. Sherburn, 'Pope's Letters and the Harleian Library,' p. 184.
92. Ibid., p. 179.
93. According to Sherburn, pp. 184-5: 'Swift edited so as to expunge Irish personalities; he restored English personal names that Pope had suppressed. The Irish editions prefer hath and doth, in cases where London preferred the more modern forms.'
94. Dearing, p. 319.
95. This division of attribution is on the main authorship of letters. Pope's letter to Swift of 14 April 1730, for example, includes a long postscript by Bolingbroke but it is here attributed to Pope alone. Also, a number of letters from Gay to Swift include postscripts or additions written by the Duchess of Queensberry which are not here acknowledged.
96. Elias, p. 153.
97. Elias, p. 147.
98. Elias, p. 142n; Elias also notes here of Pope's revision, 'The method is subtle and honorable, given what Pope could have done.'
99. Ibid., pp. 147-9.
100. Sherburn, p. 186; Elias, p. 153; Dearing, p. 335.
101. Spence's Observations, I, p. 55.
102. Trickett, pp. 180-1.
103. Spence's Observations, I, p. 113.
104. See Herbert Davis, The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift (Oxford: 1939-68), XIII, p. 154. Elias argues that the issue of the publication of the letters obviously was one of the main reasons Swift withdrew his bequest of his works from Pope; he justly points out that Swift may also have conceived doubts over the way in which Pope would handle the position of literary executor, doubts enhanced by Pope's treatment of his History of the Four Last Years of the Queen and Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift and the Libel on Dr. Delany as, when Swift entrusted them to Pope for inspection or publication, Pope, with his habit of tireless revision, had excised parts of the latter two works preparatory to publication or simply changed or re-wrote sections of them; see Elias, pp. 169-71 and pp. 201-4.



1. Geoffrey Tillotson, Pope and Human Nature (Oxford: 1958), p. 153.
2. Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, edited by George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: 1905), III, p. 188; another enlightening anecdote on Pope's 'pretended insensibility' to the pamphlet attacks is included as a footnote on this page.
3. J.V. Guerinot, Pamphlet Attacks on Alexander Pope, 1711-1744 (London: 1969), p. xxviii.
4. Ibid. These four volumes are preserved in the British Library, pressmark C.116.b.1-4. Guerinot notes in his text some of the significant instances of Pope's annotation of these volumes; I have also consulted them and found, as Guerinot observes on p. lii, that 'Pope's jottings are less helpful than the mention of them suggests.' For Pope's directions to his printer, Tonson, on this curious binding job, see The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, edited by George Sherburn (Oxford: 1956), III, p. 399, quotations from this text henceforth are cited within the text.
5. Benjamin Boyce, The Character-Sketches in Pope's Poems (Durham, North Carolina: 1962), p. 22.
6. Guerinot, pp. xlvi-xlvii.
7. John Dennis, Reflections Critical and Satyrical upon a Late Rhapsody Call'd An Essay Upon Criticism (London: 1711), p. 26.
8. Ibid., p. 29.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 27.
11. Ibid., p. 30.
12. Ibid., p. 28. In Pope's copy of Dennis's Remarks, preserved in the first of the four volumes of attacks he had bound, Pope underlined 'ancient Wit' and identified him as 'Wycherley' in the margin.
13. Ibid.
14. John Dennis, A True Character of Mr. Pope And His Writings (London: 1716), p. 10. In Pope's copy of this pamphlet, again in the first volume of the four, he has marked these remarks with a line down the margin and with two X's.
15. Guerinot reprints extracts from Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Lord Hervey's Verses Address'd to the Imitator Of The First Satire Of The Second Book of Horace (London: 1733); see pp. 224-6.

16. This anecdote is cited in The Letters of Pope to Atterbury When in the Tower of London, edited by John Gough Nichols, included in the fourth book of The Camden Miscellany (London: 1859), p. 16: "'I went (said his Lordship) to Mr. Pope one morning at Twickenham, and found a large folio Bible, with gilt clasps, lying before him upon his table; and, as I knew his way of thinking upon that book, I asked him, jocosely, if he was going to write an Answer to it?'"
17. George Sherburn, 'Notes on the Canon of Pope's Works, 1714-1720,' The Manly Anniversary Studies in Language and Literature (Chicago: 1923), p. 170.
18. Norman Ault argues in New Light on Pope (London: 1949), p. 160, that Pope 'did not write in parody of the Psalm itself, but wholly and solely in mockery of Sternhold's pedestrian verses.'
19. This quote is included in George Sherburn's The Early Career of Alexander Pope (Oxford: 1934), p. 214.
20. Guerinot prints this extract from Gildon's pamphlet, p. 71.
21. Sherburn, Early Career, p. 146.
22. See Guerinot, pp. 311-4.
23. Guerinot, p. xxxi.
24. Bonamy Dobrée, Alexander Pope (London: 1951), p. 51.
25. Alexandre Beljame, Men of Letters and the English Public in the Eighteenth Century, edited by Bonamy Dobrée (London: 1948), p. 372.
26. See the fourth chapter, pp. 150-1.
27. The Posthumous Works of William Wycherley, Esq; (London: 1729), II, 'To the Reader.'
28. Sherburn includes this footnote in his edition, I, p. 50n.
29. Guerinot, p. xxiv.
30. This quote is included by Sherburn in his Early Career, pp. 151-2.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
32. Sherburn observes in his Early Career, p. 123, that Pope had occasionally 'lampooned Addison...it is certain that in 1713 Addison had better reasons for being critical of Pope's conduct than Pope had for being critical of Addison's - unless, of course, the latter encouraged, or too freely permitted, his followers to gibe at Pope.' See also Ault's New Light on Pope, pp. 101-127.

33. Sherburn, Correspondence, I, 196n. Spence in his Observations records (I, p. 67), that in 1730 Pope observed: '[Addison] was very kind to me at first but my bitter enemy afterwards.'
34. The Spectator, edited by Donald F. Bond (Oxford: 1965), II, p. 482.
35. Ibid.
36. Spence's Observations, I, p. 72.
37. See Ault, p. 112.
38. Cited in Ault, p. 112.
39. Maynard Mack, 'Pope's Books: A Biographical Survey,' English Literature in the Age of Disguise, edited by Maximillian Novak (London: 1977), p. 225.
40. Geoffrey Carnall made these observations in the course of my supervised research under him.
41. The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope, edited by John Butt (London: 1951), III, Introduction by F.W. Bateson, p. ix: 'The four poems in this volume that have come to be known as Pope's "Moral Essays", though Pope himself always called them his "Epistles."'
42. James Winn, A Window in the Bosom (Hamden, Connecticut: 1977), p. 66.
43. Ibid.
44. Guerinot, p. li.
45. See Guerinot, pp. 249-51.
46. Ibid., pp. 276-7.
47. Ibid., p. 100. Pope also identifies allusions to his friends by writing their names next to the relevant passages; see Pope's copy in the second volume of his bound pamphlet attacks, pp. 2-3.
48. Gulliver Decypher'd (London: 1727), p. 4.
49. Guerinot, p. 110.
50. See Guerinot, pp. 133-4.
51. Winn, pp. 195-6.
52. Austin Warren, Alexander Pope as Critic and Humanist (Princeton: 1929), p. 261.

53. Gloria Meyer DeSole, "'What Friends Two Wits Could Be": A Consideration of Alexander Pope's Friendship and Correspondence with Jonathan Swift,' an unpublished Ph.D. thesis (State University of New York at Albany: 1969), pp. 183-191.
54. Ibid., p. 238.
55. This quotation from Cicero's De Amicitia is contained in Charles G. Smith's Spenser's Theory of Friendship (Baltimore, Maryland: 1935), see pp. 27-30.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Sir Thomas Elyot, The Book named The Governor (1531), edited by S.E. Lehmborg (London: 1962), II, Section XI, p. 132.
59. Lord Orrery, p. 231.
60. DeSole, p. 40.
61. The Spectator, II, p. 482.
62. Lord Orrery, p. 67.
63. The Spectator, II, p. 482.
64. Similarly in 1725 Pope had observed in a letter to Swift 'My name is as bad an one as yours, and hated by all Poets from Hopkins and Sternhold to Gildon and Cibber,' (II, p. 334).
65. Maynard Mack, The Garden and the City (London: 1969), p. 232.
66. Ibid.
67. Alice Coyle Lunn, 'Alexander Pope's Letters: The Image of a Good Man,' an unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Western Reserve University: 1967), p. 38.
68. DeSole, p. 182.
69. Guerinot, p. 1.
70. Tillotson, p. 148.
71. Ibid.
72. Lawrence Lee Davidow, 'Pope's Verse Epistles: Friendship and the Private Sphere of Life,' Huntington Library Quarterly XL (1976-7), p. 151.
73. Ibid., p. 159.

74. Plutarch's Lives, 'To which is prefixed The Life of Plutarch, written by Mr. Dryden' (Edinburgh: 1757-8), I, p. 1.
75. Lytton Strachey, Pope. The Leslie Stephen Lecture for 1925 (Cambridge: 1925), p. 2.
76. Emrys Jones, Pope and Dulness. Chatterton Lecture on an English Poet, From the Proceedings of the British Academy (London: 1968), p. 250.
77. Johnson, III, p. 200.
78. Ibid.
79. Thomas R. Lounsbury, The First Editors of Shakespeare (London: 1906), p. 230.
80. J. McLaverty, 'The first printing and publication of Pope's letters,' The Library, 6th ser. II (1980), p. 264.
81. Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence, Volume the Second (London: 1735), p. x.
82. Sherburn, The Early Career, pp. 222-3.
83. Ault, p. 18.
84. Miscellanies in Prose and Verse (London: 1727-35), I, Preface, pp. 3-4.
85. Ibid., p. 11.
86. Sherburn reprints this preface in Correspondence, I, pp. xxxvi-xl.
87. Swift's Correspondence, I, p. 154.
88. Jones, p. 235.
89. William Warburton, 'A Letter to the Editor of the Letters,' included as Appendix II in The Life of Alexander Pope by Owen Ruffhead, fifth volume of Ruffhead's edition of Pope's Works, p. 451.
90. George Wingrove Cooke, Memoirs of Lord Bolingbroke (London: 1835), II, p. 214.
91. Ibid.
92. Spence's Observations, I, p. 124.
93. Ibid., p. 125.
94. See Boyce, p. 26, pp. 39-40, p. 43.
95. Ault, p. 2.
96. Ibid., p. 5.
97. Isaac D'Israeli, Miscellanies of Literature (London: 1840), p. 186, pp. 180-1. (First published in 1796.)

1. George Sherburn, The Early Career of Alexander Pope (Oxford: 1934), p. 20.
2. James Winn, unconsciously I think, subscribes to this view in A Window in the Bosom (Hamden, Connecticut: 1977), p. 40.
3. See Archibald C. Elias's review of Winn's A Window in the Bosom in The Scriblerian, X (Autumn, 1977) in which Elias points to this deficiency in Winn's critical study of Pope's letters; see p. 39.
4. The Works of Alexander Pope, edited by the Reverend Whitwell Elwin and William John Courthope (London: 1871-89), Introduction, I, p. xxvii.
5. See this quotation in the context of John Butt's discussion in The Augustan Age (London: 1950), p. 122.
6. This quotation is cited in William Irving's The Providence of Wit in the English Letter Writers (Durham, North Carolina: 1955), p. 39.
7. Richmond Bond, 'Eighteenth-Century Correspondence: A Survey,' Studies in Philology, 33 (1936), p. 572.
8. See Elwin and Courthope, Works, I, p. lx.
9. Frank Arthur Mumby, Publishing and Bookselling (London: 1930), p. 194.
10. See Henry Ransom, 'The personal letter as literary property,' Studies in English, 30 (1951), pp. 116-31 and Pat Rogers, 'The Case of Pope v. Curll,' The Library, 5th ser. XXVIII (1972), pp. 326-31.
11. This quotation from Lord Chancellor Hardwicke's summation of the case is included in George Harris's The Life of Lord Chancellor Hardwicke (London: 1847), I, p. 540.
12. The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, edited by Robert Halsband (Oxford: 1965-7), III, p. 68.
13. Ibid., p. 57.
14. Alexandre Beljame, Men of Letters and the English Public in the Eighteenth Century, edited by Bonamy Dobrée (London: 1948), p. 71.
15. Irving, p. 29.
16. Thomas R. Lounsbury, The First Editors of Shakespeare (London: 1906), p. 93.
17. Elwin-Courthope, Works, VI, p. xxxiv.

18. Sherburn, The Early Career, p. 21.
19. See, for example, Sherburn's edition of Pope's Correspondence IV, p. 144n, p. 351n, p. 434n.
20. Elwin-Courthope, Works, I, p. cxlvi.
21. Archibald C. Elias, 'Jonathan Swift and Letter Writing: The Natural and the Playful in his Personal Correspondence,' an unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Yale University: 1973), p. 144n.
22. Ibid., p. 163.
23. Alice Coyle Lunn, 'Alexander Pope's Letters: The Image of a Good Man,' unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Western Reserve University: 1967), p. 33.
24. Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, edited by George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: 1905), III, p. 207.
25. Sherburn, 'Pope's Letters and the Harleian Library,' ELH, 7 (1940), p. 186.
26. Elwin-Courthope, Works, I, p. cxxvi, p. cxxxvi.
27. C.W. Dilke, The Papers of a Critic (London: 1875), I, p. 101
28. Ault includes this fascinating anecdote in New Light on Pope, p. 111.
29. See Ault, pp. 101-127.
30. Miscellanies in Prose and Verse (London: 1727-35), I, Preface, p. 9.
31. Winn, p. 91.
32. Joseph Spence, Observations, Anecdotes and Characters of Books and Men, edited by James M. Osborn (Oxford: 1966), I, p. 83.
33. Sherburn, The Early Career, p. 21.
34. Ault, New Light on Pope, p. 16.
35. Vinton Dearing, 'A History of the Publication of Alexander Pope's Letters During His Lifetime,' unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Harvard University: 1949), p. 159.
36. Howard Erskine-Hill, The Social Milieu of Alexander Pope (London: 1975), p. 97.
37. Dilke, I, p. 126.
38. Erskine-Hill, p. 77.

39. The Works of Alexander Pope, edited by William Roscoe (London: 1824), VIII, p. 344.
40. Ibid., IX, p. 255.
41. See this quotation in the context of a discussion on this Augustan distrust of the fanciful in Emrys Jones's Pope and Dulness, Chatterton Lecture on an English Poet (London: 1968), p. 239.
42. See John Butt's discussion on the importance to the Augustans of biography in The Augustan Age, pp. 133-4, in which he cites this quotation.
43. Seneca's Morals by Way of Abstract, edited by Sir Roger L'Estrange (London: 1702), 10th ed., afterword.
44. Manuscript LA III.356, Special Collections Department, University of Edinburgh Library, p. 92.



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