
PART I
Contexts and Perspectives

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Poetry, Politics, and the Rise of Party

Christine Gerrard

Party politics and dynastic uncertainty shaped the lives of writers born in the immediate aftermath of the Civil Wars. For poets such as Alexander Pope, Anne Finch, Jonathan Swift, and Matthew Prior, a sense of the political was thus deeply ingrained. Swift, born in 1667 and dying in 1745, lived through the reigns of no fewer than six English monarchs – Charles II, James II, William III, Queen Anne, George I, and George II. On at least two occasions he had a price on his head for his interventions in English and Irish politics. Alexander Pope, born in 1688, the year in which the Dutch Protestant William of Orange’s bloodless coup ousted the Catholic James II from the English throne, suffered the direct consequences of that so-called “Glorious Revolution” – the punitive Williamite legislation against Catholics affecting rights of residence, worship, and university education. So did Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea (1661–1720), who lost her Court post serving James’s wife Mary of Modena: as non-jurors (those who refused to swear an oath of allegiance to the new regime), she and her husband went on the run, and her husband was arrested for Jacobitism. Matthew Prior (1664–1721), the most important English poet in the decade following Dryden’s death in 1700, enjoyed a distinguished diplomatic career under William and his successor Queen Anne. Yet at George I’s accession in 1714, Prior, like many of his Tory friends, faced a vendetta from the new Whig administration: refusing to implicate his friends in allegations of support for the Stuart dynasty, he was impeached and spent two years in close custody.

Yet if political events changed the lives of the poets, poets saw themselves as agents of political change. Poetry of all kinds – highbrow and lowbrow, satires, odes, panegyrics, ballads – proliferated during the restored monarchy of Charles II, especially after the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1679. The growing prominence of the poet as political commentator, satirist, propagandist, and panegyrist was both a cause and a consequence of the inexorable rise of party politics during Charles’s reign. During the 1670s a two-party political system developed from the clashes between Charles and his political supporters on the one hand and, on the other, the parliamentary pressure

group led by the first Earl of Shaftesbury, driven by opposition to the succession of Charles's Catholic brother James. During the "Exclusion Crisis" this pressure group – soon to be known as the Whigs – pushed for legislation to exclude James from the throne. Loyal supporters of the King's cause earned themselves the name of Tories. Both Whig and Tory were originally terms of abuse derived from the Celtic fringe. Like many of the other political terms prevalent in this period – Court, Country, Patriot – they were subject to constant scrutiny, debate, and redefinition. The intensity of political engagement that characterizes poetry of the period 1660–1750 testifies to the growing confidence felt by male and female poets alike in their right to voice political opinions and their ability to change the course of history: a sense of empowerment which was itself a product of the loosening of social hierarchies in the decades after the Civil Wars. Poets between Dryden in the 1660s and Pope in the 1730s – and even as late as Charles Churchill in the 1760s – helped alter the direction of politics, whether it meant (as in Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* of 1681) discrediting the nascent Whig party and affirming Stuart legitimacy, popularizing the new Hanoverian dynasty at German George I's accession in 1714, or compelling the first minister Robert Walpole to declare war against Spain in 1739. To poets of this period, the modern separation of the political and the aesthetic realms would have seemed entirely alien.

Critical Debates

Scholarship of the past three decades has enriched and complicated our understanding of eighteenth-century political history. Debates that began in the 1980s and still reverberate today have challenged traditional preconceptions of the eighteenth century as a period of stability and complacency. Linda Colley's pioneering work on Britishness, which stimulated wide-ranging discussions of national identity, examined the ways in which the 1707 Act of Union forged a sense of nationhood in which distinctive Scottish, Welsh, and Irish allegiances were subsumed under a larger sense of Britain as a Protestant nation pitted against Catholic France (Colley 1992). Britain's growing confidence as an imperial power has been the subject of some broad-ranging studies of empire [see ch. 2, "POETRY, POLITICS, AND EMPIRE"]. Revisionist historians such as J. C. D. Clark, debating the nature and impact of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, have argued controversially that England remained a static, confessional state, still dominated by the Anglican Church and not altered substantially by secularization, urbanization, or proto-democratic parliamentary change (Clark 1985). Both revisionist historians and historians of nationhood placed a renewed emphasis, for different ends, on the importance of monarchy: its rituals, its court culture, its literature. The tradition of Tory political satire centered on Dryden, Pope, Swift, and Johnson was reanimated by debates over the extent to which any or all of these writers remained secretly committed to the exiled House of Stuart. Jacobitism, once dismissed as an antiquarian idyll, was again taken seriously by some (not all) historians and literary scholars. Critics such as Howard Erskine-Hill and Murray Pittock mined the writ-

ings of all the major male poets in the canon for evidence of Jacobite innuendo and symbolism (Erskine-Hill 1981–2, 1982, 1984, 1996; Pittock 1994). Other critics compensated for the comparative neglect of the literary culture of the Whig party which dominated British political life between 1688 and 1760 (Womersley 1997, 2005; Williams 2005). Their work established the contours of a modern, forward-looking Whig cultural agenda embracing piety, politeness, and patriotism. Poets such as Richard Blackmore, Thomas Tickell, and Ambrose Philips, familiar as the butt of Pope's satire on "dull" writers, are now seen to have participated in, and even prompted, a dialectic with Tory poetry and criticism.

Pioneering work by critics such as Carol Barash, Kathryn King, and Sarah Prescott has enlarged the field of enquiry to include the work of women poets, once entirely absent from critical accounts of poetry and politics in this period. Barash's seminal work on late seventeenth-century women poets – Aphra Behn, Katherine Phillips, Mary Chudleigh, Jane Barker, and Anne Finch – emphasized their Tory, royalist, and Jacobite affiliations and their associations with queens and consorts such as Mary of Modena and Queen Anne (Barash 1996). More recent work has begun to reconstruct the lives and works of female poets writing in the Whig tradition. As Prescott has shown (2005b), Elizabeth Singer Rowe and Susannah Centlivre greeted the new order under William III with enthusiasm, advancing a cultural and political agenda that was essentially Protestant, militaristic, and modern. Centlivre, a firm supporter of the Hanoverian succession, subsequently produced some stringently anti-Jacobite verse. George II's intellectual and ambitious consort, Caroline of Anspach, became a muse figure for male and female Protestant Whig poets as well as the satiric butt of male Tory satirists. As King asserts, women poets participated in a wide range of different political discourses – republican, Whig, Tory, Jacobite – and a range of genres: satire, pamphlets, panegyrics, and odes (King 2003).

Many of the subsequent essays in this volume – notably those by Suvir Kaul (ch. 2, "Poetry, Politics, and Empire"), John Morillo (ch. 5, "Poetic Enthusiasm"), Brean Hammond (ch. 27, "Verse Satire"), Margaret Koehler (ch. 28, "The Ode"), Juan Pellicer (ch. 29, "The Georgic"), Abigail Williams (ch. 32, "Whig and Tory Poetics"), and Gerard Carruthers (ch. 41, "Poetry Beyond the English Borders") – show how the relationship between poetry and politics in this period informs genre and permeates, even generates, aesthetic debate. A number of essays in the "Readings" section (Part II) place individual texts or pairs of texts in their context and offer a detailed interpretation of their political implications. The present essay is designed primarily as an introduction to such debates by offering a chronological discussion of poetic responses to major political events and concerns in the period covered by this volume.

The Rage of Party under Queen Anne

Although Matthew Prior heralded the year 1700 with his optimistic panegyric *Carmen Seculare*, dynastic uncertainty underscored the advent of the new century.

Mary Chudleigh's "On the Death of his Highness the Duke of Gloucester" mourned the loss that July of eleven-year-old William, last surviving child of Princess Anne, heir to the throne. The child's death also buried Tory hopes for a continuation of a Protestant Stuart dynasty. The following year, 1701, the Act of Settlement decreed that in default of issue to either William or Anne, the crown would pass to Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and to "the heirs of her body being Protestants." Anne succeeded William in 1702 following his sudden death by a fall from his horse (an act of God, according to some Jacobites). The text from Isaiah 49: 23 delivered at her coronation – "Kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers" – threw into sharp relief the tragic facts of Anne's maternal failure (seventeen pregnancies and five births) and her increasingly poor health. Finch's "A Pindarick Poem Upon the Hurricane" (Fairer and Gerrard 2004: 26–33), written shortly after the Great Storm of 1703 caused devastation across the south of England, registers a profound sense of unease and dislocation. Unlike her better-known "Nocturnal Rêverie," "Upon the Hurricane" is a bold public poem – a Pindaric ode – which draws analogies between the natural and political spheres to meditate on the upheavals of post-Civil War England. Finch's storm-damaged landscape subverts the idealized emblematic order of traditional loco-descriptive poems such as Denham's *Cooper's Hill* and Pope's *Windsor-Forest*, "Where Order in Variety we see, / And where, tho' all things differ, all agree" (ll. 15–16). The lofty pine tree, destined for British naval service, and the oak (symbol of Stuart monarchy), "so often storm'd," both fall victim to apocalyptic violence. Finch's poem, echoing the Puritan providentialism that sees the hand of God, the "Great Disposer," at work everywhere, depicts the hurricane as the "Scourge" of the "Great Jehova" (l. 110). Yet exactly who or what is being punished? In lines 96–111 Finch cautiously ventures ("we think") that the death from a collapsing chimney of Richard Kidder, new Bishop of Bath and Wells (a recent Whig replacement for the popular non-juror Thomas Ken), may have been a divine judgment. Yet the poem refuses to advance a partisan reading. It contains teasing fragments of seventeenth-century political thought (echoes of Dryden's and Rochester's Hobbesian vision of mankind naturally drawn to "wild Confusion" and "lawless Liberty" in pursuit of their "Fellow-Brutes"), and draws parallels between the destructive forces of the storm and the destructive forces of war (the thunder resembles "The Soldier's threatening Drum," l. 141). Yet Finch's hurricane transcends the petty world of party politics, placing it in perspective: "Nor WHIG, nor TORY now the rash Contender calls" (l. 177). It is an idea that Swift was later to echo in his mock-georgic "Description of a City Shower" (1710), written soon after the Tory election victory of that year. Swift shrinks Finch's hurricane to a London downpour; in a world more urbane and less violent than Finch's, social etiquette and dry clothes dictate a political truce: "Triumphant Tories, and desponding Whigs, / Forget their feuds, and join to save their Wigs" (Fairer and Gerrard 2004: 76).

Three major factors sharpened Whig/Tory divisions under Queen Anne: religious controversy, dynastic politics, and war. The close relationship between the Tory party and the High Church was cemented by the trial in 1709 of the High Church Tory

Dr. Henry Sacheverell for preaching a sermon in St. Paul's implying that the Church was unsafe in the hands of the Whig administration. The trial rebounded on the government – support for Sacheverell was so strong that a Tory ministry was elected on its back which lasted from 1710 to Queen Anne's death in 1714. The War of the Spanish Succession, distinguished by the brilliant continental military victories of the Queen's general John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, remained a potent theme for Whig poets, who fanned the flames of patriotic fervor in panegyrics celebrating the slaughter of enemy troops amid "rivers of blood." Addison's *The Campaign* (1705), apotheosizing Marlborough in the thick of battle (he "Rides in the whirl-wind, and directs the storm," like the God of Psalm 104), represented a new mode of Whig verse – biblical rather than classical, Miltonically sublime, a self-confident affirmation of British national destiny. Yet by 1710 high taxation and national debt had left many people war-weary. Jonathan Swift's brilliant propaganda exercises for the Tories discredited the "Junto" of Whigs around Marlborough and Godolphin by accusing them of prolonging the war for their own financial gain. His famous *Examiner* essay 16 (Nov. 23, 1710), inspired by Marlborough's complaints of ingratitude for his military services, juxtaposed in account-book style "A Bill of ROMAN Gratitude" (a crown of laurels, a statue, a trophy, and so forth) with "A Bill of BRITISH Ingratitude" (Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, "Employments," "Pictures," "Jewels"). In his suggestively titled "Sid Hamet: or the Magician's Rod" (1710), a satire on the former Treasurer Sidney Godolphin, Swift gave a further spin to the "Tory myth," prevalent since Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, of the Whig leaders as duplicitous magicians deceiving an unwary public – a myth that was to reach its apogee in 1730s opposition satires on Robert Walpole.

Party politics polarized literary affiliations during the last four years of Anne's reign. Political friendships were formalized by the creation of partisan literary clubs: Addison's "Little Senate" of Whigs met at Button's coffee-house; the Tory wits, who eventually formed the Scriblerus Club, at Will's. Pope's former friendships with leading Whig writers came to an abrupt end over the so-called "pastoral controversy," which boosted sales of Ambrose Philips's assertively Whig pastorals rather than Pope's apolitical (perhaps quietly Jacobite) pastorals published in the same volume of Tonson's *Miscellanies* in 1709. The same quality also permeates Pope's *Windsor-Forest*, written to celebrate the Treaty of Utrecht concluded in April 1713. The peace itself became a site of literary partisan conflict (Williams 2005; Rogers 2005). Tory diplomacy sealed the peace, but Whig poets claimed the war's victorious conclusion as their party's unique achievement. The Whig Thomas Tickell's best-selling *The Prospect of Peace* celebrates the war itself as much as the conclusion to hostilities, whereas Pope's poem, with its emphases on the arts of peace and its displacement of real political events by mythological episodes such as the rape of Lodona and the leisure pursuit of hunting, locates the peace in a larger humanist meditation on war, peace, and man's irrepressibly violent energies. It is only the poem's stubbornly intractable assertion of a dynastic register – "And Peace and Plenty tell, a STUART reigns" (l. 42) – that gives the poem an unapologetically Tory Jacobite edge.

Hanoverians and Whigs

In the last years of Anne's reign Tories were forced to face the unpalatable prospect of a Whig-friendly German monarchy. The Whigs had jockeyed for favor with the Hanoverian family through diplomatic missions to Herrenhausen: both Ambrose Philips and his patron the Earl of Dorset belonged to the Whig "Hanover Club." Even John Gay, Pope's and Swift's impecunious friend, traveling as secretary to Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, paid court to the incoming royal family in hopes of poetic preferment. Within a few weeks of Anne's death on 1 August 1714 the die was cast. George I formed his new ministry almost entirely of Whigs. Lord Bolingbroke, who only the week before Anne's death had emerged victorious from his party leadership struggle with his rival Robert Harley, fled to the "Pretender" James's service in France – where he remained, proscribed and stripped of his title, for the next decade. Harley was sent to the Tower and Prior was impeached. Many Tory poets suffered a profound sense of loss and displacement. Swift and Parnell, two Irish members of the Scriblerus Club, returned to Ireland. Pope kept out of politics virtually altogether for another fourteen years, most of which were spent in the enterprise which was to create the foundation for his financial and hence political independence – his lucrative subscription edition of his Homer translations.

However, many other poets, of all political stripes rushed to greet the new monarchy in enthusiastic verse. There were at least fifty panegyrics published on George I's accession, for which the ground had been laid by the Act of Settlement thirteen years earlier and which proved less fraught by interpretative difficulties than William III's seizure of the throne from James II. Despite some anxieties about another "foreign" master, the accession of George I, with his ready-made Protestant dynasty (by 1714 he was already a grandfather of four) secured the future of Protestantism in Britain. If the Whigs under William and Anne celebrated a militant and militaristic patriotism, then Whig poets under the Hanoverians founded their sense of patriotism on peace, liberty, and prosperity, exemplified by Centlivre's *Poem. Humbly Presented to His most Sacred Majesty George, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland. Upon His Accession to the Throne* [see ch. 2, "POETRY, POLITICS, AND EMPIRE"].

The Rise of Patriotism

The accession of the Hanoverians effectively marked the start of a half-century of Whig rule in which a succession of Whig ministers (most famously Robert Walpole) consolidated Whig oligarchy through measures such as the Septennial Act of 1716, which stipulated a seven-year interval between elections. Yet the Whigs did not enjoy power unopposed. It is from the seeds of resistance and opposition to Whig rule – by 1739, an overwhelming clamor – that some of the liveliest and most imaginative political poetry of the eighteenth century emerged. As early as 1720, the year in which

mass popular financial speculation through investment in the South Sea Company and other schemes had ended with what was widely perceived to be national ruin, opponents of the Whig administration were developing a political critique founded on a sense of civic virtue. "Cato's Letters," published in the *London Journal* of 1720–1, looked back to seventeenth-century political theorists such as James Harrington for their critique of modern Britain. This tradition emphasized the fragility of Britain's balanced constitution of monarch, lords, and commons: corruption, once it had gained entrance, would – if unchecked – eventually lead to national ruin. From this civic-humanist critique evolved an ideology familiarly known as "patriotism." Patriotism entailed constant vigilance, a suspicion of anything that threatened the independence of the Commons, particularly corruption. It came to embrace a deep suspicion of the institutional consequences of the late seventeenth-century financial revolution: the credit systems established to fund William III's costly Nine Years War, the Bank of England, the National Debt, and large City finance houses such as the South Sea Company. Patriotism as a political credo and an ideology designed to unite disparate opponents of the Whig hegemony came to its full maturity from 1725 onwards, when it received a succinct and potent formulation in pamphlets and newspapers such as *The Craftsman* (edited by Bolingbroke and the opposition Whig William Pulteney). It is ironic that the widespread political usage of the terms "patriotism" and "Patriot," evoking a sense of national unity, emerges from the growth of faction and party, and the concomitant disagreement about who truly represents the nation's interests. Patriotism in its political sense is the child of party politics. In 1681 Dryden, as Tory propagandist for Charles II, vilified the ambitious Whig leader Shaftesbury as a Patriot in the "modern" sense – one who cloaks his political ambition as love of his country. In 1700, by now a disempowered opponent of William III, Dryden used the term "Patriot" in an oppositional sense to praise his moderate backbench MP cousin John Driden.

The Collapse of the Bubble

In 1721 Pope's friend Bishop Berkeley berated the South Sea Bubble with his apocalyptically entitled *An Essay Toward Preventing the Ruin of Great Britain*. Britons, once "enemies to luxury" and "lovers of their country," had become "degenerated, servile flatterers of men in power, venal, corrupt, injurious." The Englishman's habit of thinking in providential patterns, a legacy from the Civil Wars, interpreted the collapse of the South Sea Company and the concomitant loss of personal fortunes as God's punishment for national greed, just as Puritans in the 1660s interpreted the Plague and the Great Fire as punishments for the Restoration of Charles II.

The South Sea Bubble derived its name from the runaway fashion for purchase of shares in the South Sea Company, a company which in fact had no genuine capital. The "stockjobber" – the trader in stocks and shares, a familiar fixture in Exchange Alley – collected subscriptions for many other increasingly implausible get-rich-quick

investment schemes. Among the subscribers to South Sea stock were Pope, Swift, and Gay, seeking financial stability amid the uncertainties of the writer's life. When a sudden loss of public confidence led to a collapse in South Sea stock and a run on the banks in September 1720, London suffered its first ever stock market crash. Although poets participated in the general vilification of the South Sea directors which followed, many exploited the rich metaphoric and imaginative potential of the Bubble. Swift's Bubble poems conflate the worlds of financial speculation and poetic fantasy, both worlds potentially derived from the irrational impulse that intrigued him. Anne Finch's unpublished "A Ballad [upon the South Sea affair]" (MS Harleian 7316, fos. 54^r-55^v) reflects interestingly on the gender implications of the Bubble. Women formed a substantial percentage of those investing in South Sea stock, a form of "labor" or "ownership" immune to the usual restrictions imposed upon female ownership of property or land. In Finch's ballad, female stockjobbers make an unusual appearance: they defy gender expectations of social propriety and the niceties of dress by setting up stall in 'Change Alley, "Without staying for prayers or their Patches [beauty spots] put on." In this jaunty, impromptu ballad Finch hints:

There's a Bubble set up of Copper & Brass
Of which at the Head was his Highness late was
But some have no need on't they have so much on their face
Which nobody can deny &c.

The lines allude to Prince George (later George II)'s directorship of another "bubble," the Welsh Copper Company. But the veiled allusion to those who have "so much on their face" is, of course, a reference to Robert Walpole, early nicknamed the "screen of brass" for his cool ability to cover up scandal by deflecting criticism of the South Sea Bubble away from the royal family and restoring confidence in the government.

Walpole and His Opponents

Walpole's opportunistic rise to power followed the respective death and resignation in 1721 of his rivals Stanhope and Sunderland. Over the next twenty years he forged a de facto prime ministerial role from his combined offices of Chancellor of the Exchequer, Leader of the Commons, and King's adviser. Walpole enjoyed the confidence and trust first of the German-speaking George I and then, after 1727, of his son George II and his powerful wife Queen Caroline. Walpole's steady hand enabled British trade to flourish and the country's commercial prosperity to increase without the crippling expense of the wars that had drained the national economy between 1690 and 1714. Historical hindsight makes it difficult to sympathize excessively with the large number of his opponents – both politicians and poets – who called for his resignation during the course of his long period in office. Samuel Johnson, a hot-headed "Patriot" in his youth, whose *London* of 1738 blasted the corruption of the times, rapidly back-

pedaled from his former opposition stance soon after Walpole's fall from power in 1742. Like Henry Fielding, another erstwhile opponent of Walpole who went on to describe him as "one of the best of men and of ministers," Johnson came to think better of Walpole and far worse of the so-called "Patriots" as Britain became embroiled in an expensive and unsuccessful war against Spain. However, Walpole's very personal style of government, autocratic and opaque in its operations (he was often satirized as "screening" all kinds of political corruption and acting as puppet-master for state affairs), inevitably provoked calls for greater transparency amid accusations that he was yet another "royal favorite," a power-hungry commoner who filled his own coffers at the public expense. The scale of Walpole's impressive stately residence in his home county of Norfolk, Houghton, stuffed with art treasures from across the world, did little to dispel such accusations.

Walpole's habit of quashing opposition to his parliamentary measures by dismissing renegade Whigs from their political offices earned him a new set of opponents: former colleagues who, during the 1720s and 1730s, came to swell the ranks of the Patriot opposition. Some were pushed, and others jumped. Lord Cobham, one of the powerful Whig aristocrats, resigned in 1732 in protest at Walpole's refusal to countenance a further inquiry into the South Sea Company. Walpole's decision to strip the military hero of his regimental honors caused a wave of hostility, and Cobham used his extensive family connections to bolster support: a circle of nephews, nicknamed "Cobham's Cubs" or the "Boy Patriots," joined the ranks of the opposition as soon as they entered Parliament, forming a flying squad to harangue Walpole. This circle, which cohered around Frederick, Prince of Wales, formed a magnet for opposition poets such as James Thomson, David Mallet, Mark Akenside, even Pope.

The question remains as to why so many leading poets came out in opposition – some of it vitriolic – to Walpole's administration. All the leading male writers of the day – Pope, Gay, Swift, Thomson, Akenside, Fielding, Johnson, and lesser-known figures such as Richard Glover, David Mallet, and Aaron Hill – joined the swelling criticism of Walpole. Thomson, a staunch Whig and previously a loyal follower of Walpole, turned his hostility on the ministry in 1729 with his *Britannia*, which attacked Walpole's reluctance to stop Spanish ships from intercepting British trade – just a year after the ministry had rewarded the poet with a £50 gift for his elegy on Newton, giving him every chance of becoming one of "Sir Robert Walpole's Poets." For poets of the 1730s, the distinction between "Whig" and "Tory" now seemed less relevant than a broader sense of cultural politics. Many writers, whatever their political persuasion, associated Walpole with the deliberate downgrading of the cultural marketplace: when the "money" culture came to dominate the arts and all that mattered was the quick "bob" to be turned, then poets turned to defend the status of their own art. Correspondence of the 1730s between the Whig literary entrepreneur Aaron Hill, himself a former theater impresario, and the Tory Catholic Alexander Pope shows that they shared a common idiom of cultural degeneration. They both agreed that the appointment as Poet Laureate in 1730 of the comic actor and playwright Colley Cibber, and the widespread pandering to the popular taste with garish

and showy pantomimes which had displaced the market for decent theater, pointed to a serious decline in cultural standards. Walpole's own combination of an apparent indifference to poets with a readiness to pay for useful ministerial propaganda ("A Pamphlet in Sir *Bob's* Defence / Will never fail to bring in Pence," as Swift remarked in 1733) differed in extent and kind from the network of political patronage which had flourished under William III and continued into Anne's reign, distributed by such patrons as Dorset, Montague, and Halifax. Whereas under previous Whig regimes poets had had a stake in imagining and creating a forward-looking vision of modern British greatness, Walpole's writers were at best paid to defend narrow ministerial policies and to attack his critics. Public panegyric, which had distinguished the previous Whig ministries, now became the butt of opposition satire as the kind of poetry that (as Swift goes on to instruct in his "On Poetry: A Rapsody") can be turned out according to set formulae for flattery.

Thus it was that Walpole's critics – even his Whiggish critics – participated in reviving and perpetuating a myth of cultural "dullness" around Walpole's Britain which was enshrined most powerfully in Pope's *The Dunciad*. Although opposition poetry of the 1720s and 1730s came in a variety of forms, and Whiggish Patriot writers preferred to rouse patriotic feeling through the loftier precepts of epic and heroic verse (Glover's *Leonidas* or Thomson's *Liberty*), satire remained the dominant mode. Under Walpole, satire reached an apogee never to be achieved again after 1742. Walpole's long spell in power, his distinctive and personalized style of government, and a set of readily parodiable physical features made him a perfect target for political satire: there is a point at which anti-Walpole satire acquires an aesthetic life of its own, created from a network of correspondences, allusions, and innuendo. In a still unrivaled study of Pope, Maynard Mack described it as "an argot whose variations were inexhaustible . . . it had . . . an interior coherence which made it possible in touching one string to strike another too, or even to set them all vibrating without, apparently, touching any" (Mack 1969: 134). This argot was shared by other forms of visual culture, especially theater and popular prints. The Finch ballad on the Bubble hinting at the "brass" face is an instance of this – as is Pope's account in *The Dunciad* of the "wizard old" casting a spell over the nation which makes it fall into a profound sleep:

With that, a WIZARD OLD his *Cup* extends;
Which whoso tastes, forgets his former friends,
Sir, Ancestors, Himself.

(iv. 517–19)

There are echoes here of high culture – Spenser's wizard Archimago, his seductive Acrasia in the Bower of Bliss, herself modeled on Homer's Circe, who turns men into swine with her magic potion – as well as a whole history of anti-Whig writing which casts Whigs as wizards. These images are mirrored in low or popular visual culture, such as the notorious (obscene) print *The Festival of the Golden Rump*, published in

1737, which shows a large-bellied wizard (Walpole) officiating at a pseudo-religious ceremony around the naked buttocks of George II. The richly allusive nature of political satire directed against Walpole was made possible by the length of his time in office. This tradition of visual and verbal satire emerged again briefly in the Wilkesite satire of the 1760s, targeted at Lord Bute; but the monotonously phallic emphasis of the Bute prints and squibs is a poor substitute for the imaginative wit and irony of Walpolean satire.

Few women poets participated in the literary opposition to Walpole. Satire, with its connotations of obscenity and malice, was still deemed an inappropriate mode for women poets [see ch. 27, "VERSE SATIRE"]. Yet the issues are more complex. Arguably, there was very little in the Patriot agenda to appeal to women. Glover's *Leonidas*, with its model of Spartan self-abnegation and its emphasis on male bonding, reflects at one level the nature of the friendships among Bolingbroke, Pope, and their circle. Pope's admiring letters to the youthful Earl of Marchmont and other young "Boy Patriots" hint at an almost homoerotic infatuation. The Patriots' political cliquiness and assertive masculinity would have excluded female participation. Kathryn King, noting the decline in female public writing from the 1720s onwards, speculates that the complex of cultural shifts transforming Britain into a commercial empire during this period had transformed women into consumers – beneficiaries rather than critics of the new-found prosperity of Walpolean Britain (King 2003: 218). Female poets who did write public verse tended to be loyalist in their sympathies, often addressing their works to Queen Caroline. Caroline, who had wide-ranging cultural interests, including theology, art, and poetry, was one of the few monarchs to offer patronage to poets such as Richard Savage and Stephen Duck. The Welsh poet Jane Brereton, under her *nom de plume* "Melissa," celebrated Queen Caroline's erection of "Merlin's Cave," her garden building in Richmond Park, linking herself as Welsh poet with the Hanoverians' attempts to graft themselves onto British and even Celtic roots (Prescott 2005a). Caroline, as fertile mother of nine children and a female intellectual of Enlightenment tastes, gave the traditional courtly focus for female poetic aspiration a distinctively modern twist. It was Caroline in this incarnation who fueled the Tory Pope's reactionary and nightmarish vision of the monstrous Queen Dulness / Caroline in Book IV of *The Dunciad*, first published in 1742, swallowing authors and culture in a parody of inverse reproduction.

It is perhaps instructive that the only female poet who could rival Pope and Swift in satirical edginess, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, was a Court Whig. The only political satire she published at the time, "Verses Address'd to the Imitator of . . . Horace" (co-authored with the waspish Lord Hervey), undermined Pope's claims to moral integrity as the basis for his satires. Less well known are her unpublished "P[ope] to Bolingbroke" and "The Reasons that Induc'd Dr S[wift] to write a Poem call'd the Lady's Dressing room" – two poems on Pope and Swift respectively which hit well below the belt with their intuitively female understanding of the weak points of each man: Swift's meanness and misogyny, and the middle-class Pope's yearning for aristocratic élan, exposed in her parody of his obsequious reverence for the High

Tory Viscount Bolingbroke. Her untitled fragment “Her palace plac’d beneath a muddy road,” co-authored with Henry Fielding, reworks the fantasy landscape of Pope’s *Dunciad*, inverting its political values: the poem reattributes “Dulness” not to modern Whigs, but to the aptly named Catholic Alexander Pope and his literary cronies, bemired in centuries of “monkish” superstition. For Montagu, it is Whiggish writers such as Milton and Addison who have refined English taste and led the nation toward intellectual enlightenment, political liberty, and politeness.

The Decline of Patriotism

Opposition writing reached the peak of its intensity in 1738 with a flood of poems published that year – notably Samuel Johnson’s *London*, Paul Whitehead’s *Manners*, Akenside’s *The Voice of Liberty: A British Philippic*, and Pope’s two dialogues of the *Epilogue to the Satires*, in which he depicts himself as defending his country single-handedly and heroically against the tide of corruption and indifference: his quirkiness is “so odd, my Country’s Ruin makes me grave.” In 1739 Walpole was finally forced to declare war against Spain, a war which afforded a brief moment of triumph with Admiral Vernon’s victories in 1740 at Porto Bello (inspiration for Thomson’s famous opposition lyric “Rule, Britannia!”), but then saw British losses following Admiral Vernon’s disastrous siege of Cartagena in 1741 that finally led to Walpole’s resignation in 1742. This long-awaited event, however, did not usher in some glorious Patriot administration drawn impartially from the best men of both parties, but instead offered a less distinguished version of Whig politics as usual. The former Patriots William Pulteney and John, Lord Carteret, were widely castigated for “selling out,” one for a peerage and one for the key role in the new Whig administration. As Pope sardonically remarked in his unpublished “One Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty,” written as rumors circulated about Pulteney’s promised reward for renouncing his patriotism, he who “foams a Patriot” will soon “subside a Peer.” Patriotism as a public and political idiom became downgraded to the secondary definition of the epithet added by the former Patriot Johnson to his *Dictionary*: “a factious disturber of the government.”

In the shifting political sands of the post-Walpole era, it became increasingly difficult for poets to make assertive public gestures. Although, as Dustin Griffin has shown, none of the mid-eighteenth-century poets – Gray, Collins, Akenside, Goldsmith – could be described as “apolitical,” all expressed an ambivalence about conventional expressions of patriotic emotion, epitomized by Goldsmith’s definition of himself as “half a patriot” (Griffin 2002: 206). The major political event of the 1740s – the so-called Forty-Five, the Jacobite uprising whose bloody defeat at Culloden effectively ended all hopes for a Stuart restoration – proved, at least for poets, more problematic than any previous military conflict of the first half of the century. Henry Fielding’s journal the *True Patriot*, written at the height of the Highland army’s attempted invasion of the north, chronicles the creeping Catholicization of Protestant England and the real threat to national security. Staunch Whig poets such as Mark

Akenside and Edward Young shared Fielding's detestation of the "Pope-bred Princeling" who aspired "To cut his Passage to the *British Throne*" (*The Complaint . . . Night the Eighth*, p. 127). Yet poets such as Collins and Johnson, writing in the aftermath of the Jacobite defeat, with its brutal retributions against Bonny Prince Charlie's followers, found it hard to celebrate an untroubled patriotism. William "the Butcher," the Duke of Cumberland, was no Marlborough. Collins's "Ode to Liberty," ostensibly about the War of Austrian Succession but written shortly after the Jacobite defeat, shows a "ravaged" Britain which welcomes Liberty in feminized rather than martial form. Johnson's great philosophical poem *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749) delicately places allusions to recent political events within a larger pattern of flawed human ambition and political aspiration.

The Seven Years War of 1756–63 enhanced Britain's self-perception as an imperial world power. An ignominious early phase – the loss of Minorca to the French – was followed by victories that saw the British taking Canada and India from France and capturing Manila and Havana from Spain. Yet although patriotic georgics such as Dyer's *The Fleece* (1756) and Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane* (1764) captured the national mood of imperialist expectation, it is surprising that not more poets produced ambitious "anthems of empire." Thomas Gray, though a supporter of Pitt, a grandson of a wealthy East India merchant, and born into a Whig elite, remained reticent about "trade." In this he shared the ambivalence, even hostility, of Oliver Goldsmith, for whom "Trade's unfeeling train" was the source of national ruin. *The Deserted Village* (1770) draws on the civic-humanist tradition familiar to opposition poets of the 1720s and 1730s in linking commercial prosperity with national corruption and the insidious growth of "luxury." Yet unlike Thomson's *Liberty* (1735–6), Goldsmith's attack on luxury emanates from a sense of personal loss, real or imagined: the loss of his childhood community, a place where he enjoyed an assured social standing and a clearly defined audience. In this *The Deserted Village* serves to dramatize a recurrent dilemma for post-Walpole era poets: the quest to define both an audience and a meaningful public role. In his letter to James Beattie, author of *The Minstrel*, the first part of which appeared in 1771, a year after *The Deserted Village*, Gray suggested that Beattie's aspiring poet-hero should be made to perform "some singular deed for the service of his country (what service I must leave to your invention)." Yet Gray himself, offered the opportunity of becoming Poet Laureate, declined. Although his odes, particularly "The Bard," evoke a heroic age in which poets sought an elevated public role, the anonymously published satires on corrupt and widely discredited public figures which Gray produced in his later years – "The Candidate" (1764) and "On Lord Holland's Seat" (1769) – did not aspire to this model.

Wilkes, Churchill, and the Nonsense Club

Gray's "The Candidate" was one of numerous squibs on the sexually decadent Earl of Sandwich, the government candidate for the High Stewardship of Cambridge. Charles Churchill, ardent supporter of the radical MP John Wilkes, also attacked

Sandwich in an identically titled poem of the same year, provoked by Sandwich's blatant hypocrisy in denouncing Wilkes in the House of Lords for his obscene *Essay on Women*.

Charles Churchill's emergence on the political scene of the 1760s as an outspoken, confident, and successful public satirist influenced by Pope skews the critical narrative which depicts eighteenth-century poetry as a movement from public to private, satire to lyric, urban to provincial. Like poets of a century earlier, Churchill participated in a vigorous paper war – this time, the campaign against John Stuart, Earl of Bute, who had succeeded the elder Pitt as first minister after the latter's resignation in 1761 on failing to win parliamentary support for declaring war on Spain. Bute's closeness to the new monarch, George III, and his suspected over-familiarity with the dowager Princess Augusta, gave rise to anti-Bute and anti-Scottish satire, much of which hinged on what lay under Scotsmen's kilts. The phallic jokes about Bute's monstrous sexual organs and Augusta's feigned coyness sexualized monarchical politics in a manner not witnessed since the reign of Charles II. Indeed, Churchill could have belonged to the century before his own. His scandalous reputation as a libertine, hard-drinking frequenter of the Hellfire Club, his early death (perhaps from venereal disease), and his visceral satires, unsparing of physical illness, recall the 1660s rather than the 1760s. The literary coterie to which he belonged – the "Nonsense Club," a group of Old Westminster schoolfriends including Bonnell Thornton, George Colman, William Cowper, and Robert Lloyd – recalls the dynamics of earlier urban literary coterie such as the Scriblerus Club of Pope, Swift, and Gay. Yet the Scriblerians – a conservative, witty elite pitted against the forces of low culture – were a far cry from Churchill's deliberate self-presentation as a poet of a demotic lower order, appealing to a "gen'rous PUBLIC." In the extraordinary body of work which he produced in the years 1763–4 – "The Prophecy of Famine," the "Epistle to Hogarth," "The Duellist," "Gotham," and "The Candidate" – the presence of Pope is everywhere felt in verbal echoes. Both satirists are bent on self-promotion, and both explore in their political satires the construction of a public self. Yet whereas Pope insists on defending his moral character, presenting his "best side" to the public, Churchill, with an almost louche frankness, exposes his own personal shortcomings, thereby authenticating his sincerity and lack of hypocrisy. In their length and digressiveness, Churchill's satires express a spontaneity at odds with Pope's concern with precision, revision, and "correctness." Whereas Pope feared anarchy, Churchill embraced the challenges anarchy posed to hypocrisy and political complacency. Yet to depict Churchill as Pope's polar opposite would be too simple: such oppositional distinctions do not fit his verse. Churchill's ironic satires are the product of a very different political climate from that which produced the satiric certainties of the Walpole years. Even "The Candidate" established two opposed poetic portraits of its satirical target – one of Sandwich's "virtuous" self, the other of the corruptly decadent "Lothario" – thereby introducing a complexity and relativism alien to satire. In poems such as "The Prophecy of Famine," Churchill has apparently a clear enough target – Bute in particular and Scots in general – yet even here his satiric mode is ill-suited to the

kind of head-on bipartisan conflict that characterized anti-Walpole satire. Instead, the poem plays with the multiple ironies attached to political slogans and labels such as "Patriot" and "Briton," with the Scottish Bute promoting himself in his newspaper *The Briton* and the English Wilkes producing a journal called *The North Briton*. As Lance Bertelsen observes, "Churchill captures rhetorically the essential ambiguity of reference and confusion of meaning that characterised the political and social theatre of the 1760s" (Bertelsen 1986: 179). Although Churchill represents a resurgence of political satire twenty years after its supposed "death," the relativistic, skeptical voice of his satires represents either a new direction for satire or possibly the implosion of the genre. Of such generic melting points are new directions forged: to catch echoes of Churchillian irony in Byron and Churchillian demotic urban anti-authoritarianism in Blake would not compromise his legacy.

See also chs. 2, "POETRY, POLITICS, AND EMPIRE"; 13, "LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU, *SIX TOWN ECLOGUES AND OTHER POEMS*"; 14, "JAMES THOMSON, *THE SEASONS*"; 18, "SAMUEL JOHNSON, *LONDON AND THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES*"; 22, "OLIVER GOLDSMITH, *THE DESERTED VILLAGE*, AND GEORGE CRABBE, *THE VILLAGE*"; 27, "VERSE SATIRE"; 28, "THE ODE"; 29, "THE GEORGIC"; 32, "WHIG AND TORY POETICS"; 33, "THE CLASSICAL INHERITANCE"; 41, "POETRY BEYOND THE ENGLISH BORDERS."

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Barash, Carol (1996). *English Women's Poetry, 1649–1714: Politics, Community, and Linguistic Authority*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Bertelsen, Lance (1986). *The Nonsense Club: Literature and Popular Culture, 1749–1764*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clark, J. C. D. (1985). *English Society, 1688–1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Régime*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Colley, Linda (1982). In *Defiance of Oligarchy: The Tory Party, 1714–60*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Colley, Linda (1992). *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Erskine-Hill, Howard (1981–2). "Alexander Pope: The Political Poet in His Time." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 15, 123–48.
- Erskine-Hill, Howard (1982). "Literature and the Jacobite Cause: Was There a Rhetoric of Jacobitism?" In Eveline Cruickshanks (ed.), *Ideology and Conspiracy: Aspects of Jacobitism, 1689–1759*. Edinburgh: John Donald.
- Erskine-Hill, Howard (1984). "The Political Character of Samuel Johnson," In Isobel Grundy (ed.), *Samuel Johnson: New Critical Essays*. London: Vision.
- Erskine-Hill, Howard (1996). *The Poetry of Opposition and Revolution: Dryden to Wordsworth*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Fairer, David, and Gerrard, Christine, eds. (2004). *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gerrard, Christine (1994). *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725–1742*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goldgar, Bertrand (1976). *Walpole and the Wits: The Relation of Politics to Literature, 1722–1742*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Griffin, Dustin (2002). *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- King, Kathryn R. (2003). "Political Verse and Satire: Monarchy, Party and Female Political Agency." In Sarah Prescott and David E. Shuttleton (eds.), *Women and Poetry 1660–1750*, 203–22. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mack, Maynard (1969). *The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope, 1731–1743*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley (1993). *Essays and Poems, with Simplicity, A Comedy*, rev. edn., ed. Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Nicholson, Colin (1994). *Writing and the Rise of Finance: Capital Satires of the Early Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Orr, Clarissa Campbell, ed. (2002). *Queenship in Britain 1660–1837: Royal Patronage, Court Culture and Dynastic Politics*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Pittock, Murray (1994). *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Prescott, Sarah (2005a). "The Cambrian Muse': Welsh Identity and Hanoverian Loyalty in the Poems of Jane Brereton (1685–1740)." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38: 4, 587–603.
- Prescott, Sarah (2005b). "Elizabeth Singer Rowe: Gender, Dissent, and Whig Poetics." In D. Womersley (ed.), "*Cultures of Whiggism*": *New Essays on English Literature and Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century*, 173–99. Newark: University of Delaware Press.
- Rogers, Pat (2005). *Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts: History, Politics, and Mythology in the Age of Queen Anne*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Urstadt, ToneSundt (1999). *Sir Robert Walpole's Poets: The Use of Literature as Pro-Government Propaganda 1721–1742*. Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses.
- Williams, Abigail (2005). *Poetry and the Creation of a Whig Literary Culture, 1681–1714*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Womersley, David, ed. (1997). *Augustan Critical Writing*. London: Penguin.
- Womersley, David, ed. (2005). "*Cultures of Whiggism*": *New Essays on English Literature and Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century*. Newark: University of Delaware Press.
- Young, Edward (1745). *The Complaint . . . Night the Eighth*, including "Thoughts, Occasioned by the Present Juncture." London.