

Charles Churchill

Poet, Rake, and Rebel

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by

Wallace Cable Brown

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Preface

The writing of critical biography poses special problems, the most difficult of which is the combining of factual narrative with evaluative interpretation: the man's life and the approach to his works. Even when most of the facts are available and the literary reputation well established (as with a Milton or a Keats), the management of these two recalcitrant approaches is not easy. With a man like Charles Churchill the difficulties are greatly increased, for there are fewer facts and no established reputation. In both areas, therefore, I have been able to take little for granted. But the need for a critical life of Churchill has been acute for many years, especially during the last decade when the reëxamination of his poetry has begun to reveal his true stature as a major figure in the tradition of neo-classic satire. As recently as 1933 a new edition of his works was published, and I am informed that another is now on the way.

No full-scale life of Churchill has ever been written, and the biographical essays that have appeared since his death in 1764 are all gravely handicapped by the substitution of rumor for fact. Of both rumor and prejudice Churchill has had a larger share than any other major English poet, except perhaps his great predecessor in satire, Alexander Pope. The rumors were in part occasioned by the absence of publicly-known facts. Indeed, many months of his early life are still almost blank; and what we do know of this period, except for a scattering of official records, comes to us at second hand. The later years of his fame and fortune were, it is true, widely publicized; but again this publicity is a tissue of fact, rumor, and prejudice, for which there were ample reasons but dubious justification.

Even to his contemporaries Churchill, the poet and the man, was an enigma, and to later generations the almost

total eclipse of his reputation as a poet left the man, in Byron's words, with "The glory and the nothing of a name." Churchill was unquestionably a bundle of contradictions, which he made little attempt to explain. His paradoxical behavior arose in part from the impact of an unfortunate early environment upon a strong and unusual character. The result was for years the suppression of Churchill's powerful inclinations, with accompanying frustrations, which, when released, exploded into the kind of man that few had any inkling was the real Churchill.

Except for the authorship of his poems, Churchill consistently avoided the limelight. He ignored everything that was written about him, neither affirming nor denying anything. He was also most secretive in his private life, a habit which even John Wilkes, his last close friend, constantly complained of. Moreover, with a few exceptions, he seems to have systematically destroyed all of his writings that he did not publish —

Know all the world, no greedy heir shall find,
Die when I will, one couplet left behind.

Nor was Churchill much given to letter-writing, and it is very unlikely that he ever kept a journal or diary. Finally, he was extremely unfortunate in that, after his death, no reliable friend came forward to write about him: his contemporary reputation was left in the hands of the ignorant, the prejudiced, and the opportunistic. A respectable life of this poet is therefore long overdue.

Of all the accounts of Churchill those least open to error include the following: Alexander Kippis, *Biographia Britannica* (London, 1784: 2nd edition); Robert Southey, *The Life and Works of William Cowper* (London, 1836); William Tooke, *The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill* (London, 1804 and 1844); John Forster, *Historical and Biographical Essays* (London, 1858); Leslie Stephen, *Dictionary of Nation-*

al Biography; Joseph M. Beatty, "Charles Churchill, Satirist" (Widener Library, Harvard, 1917); Iolo Williams, *Seven XVIIIth Century Bibliographies* (London, 1924); James Laver, *Poems of Charles Churchill* (London, 1933); J. Leigh Walsh, "The Literary Career of Charles Churchill to 1763" (Yale University Library, 1935); and Arthur Waldhorn, "Charles Churchill, Conservative Rebel" (New York University Washington Square Library, 1950). Of these the most valuable to me was Mr. Walsh's unpublished dissertation. Indeed, my indebtedness to his work and to him personally could hardly be exaggerated, for he not only gave me permission to use the contents of his dissertation, but made available his photostats of the Churchill-Wilkes correspondence and his copy of "Churchilliana in the British Museum." In addition he has given me numerous useful suggestions during our own correspondence about Churchill. To him, therefore, I can truly say, "For this relief much thanks."

To Dona Worrall Brown I am also deeply indebted. As my "dearest friend and severest critic," she unerringly saved me from many stylistic and logical pitfalls, and as a fellow researcher she spent hours in the Rare Book Room of the Yale University Library, digging out the considerable array of facts about Churchill in the eighteenth-century newspapers.

Furthermore, I must thank the Librarian, the staff, and my fellow-workers at the Yale University Library for their coöperation. Mr. James T. Babb, Librarian, put the entire facilities of the Library at my disposal — particularly those of the Rare Book Room, under the direction of Professor Chauncey B. Tinker and his capable assistants, Miss Marjorie Wynne, Miss Margery Karlson, and Mrs. Winn Merritt. I also owe a debt of thanks to Professor Frederick A. Pottle and Mrs. Pottle for making available to me several important Boswell items, to the Yale Editorial Committee and the McGraw-Hill Book Company for permission to quote from *Boswell's London*

Journal 1762-63, and to Mr. W. S. Lewis and his editorial staff, headed by Mr. Warren H. Smith, for some equally important Walpole materials. For similar but less extensive assistance, I should also like to thank the Keeper of Printed Books of the British Museum, the Librarians and staffs of the Bodleian at Oxford, the Widener at Harvard, the New York City Public Library, and the Library of the New York Historical Association. Finally, to the Director of the University of North Carolina Press I am indebted for permission to use the materials of about a dozen pages from my book, *The Triumph of Form*.

— W.C.B.

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“The glory and the nothing of a name”

—BYRON.

Chapter I

"A youth to fortune and to fame unknown"

i.

ON SUNDAY, November 4, 1764, a celebrated Englishman lay dead at the age of thirty-two in the French coastal city of Boulogne. Two weeks earlier he had set out from Dover¹ to meet his friend John Wilkes for a vacation in France, leaving (so said the reports) a fateful message to his brother in London: "Dear Jack, adieu, C.C." As word of the death of Charles Churchill spread from Boulogne, it gave rise to countless rumors and brought relief to his enemies and the shock of sorrow to his friends.

From London Horace Walpole, gossiping to Sir Horace Mann in Florence, confided eleven days later: "Churchill the poet is dead, — to the great joy of the ministry and the Scotch, and to the grief of very few indeed. . . . He died of a drunken debauch at Calais [sic], on a visit to his friend Wilkes."² According to one news report, the British ships in Boulogne harbor struck their colors in memory of the famous poet;³ according to another a Peer of the Realm sent a packet boat from London with orders to stand by and bring back a true account of the death or recovery of Churchill.⁴ His friend Wilkes seemed inconsolable. On December 10 of this year he wrote from Calais: "I have not slept two hours since I have been here: I mean continued sleep. . . . Churchill is still before my eyes."⁵ Later he tells us that the poet died in his arms.⁶ Back in London Churchill's oldest friend Robert Lloyd, then ill himself and languishing in the debtors' prison, heard the tragic news, supposedly exclaimed, "I shall follow poor Charles!" took to

his bed, and died a month later.⁷ And in the coffeehouses, where Churchill's name was a byword, the crowds were silenced by the news.

Three years before, in 1761, Churchill had begun his meteoric literary career as the author of *The Rosciad*, a brilliant and devastating satire against contemporary actors and actresses: like Byron he awoke one morning to find himself famous. Then during the next two years and a half he went on to write a series of equally vitriolic attacks on some of the greatest politicians, men of letters, and artists of his day — the Earl of Bute, the Earl of Sandwich, Chief Justice Mansfield, Bishop Warburton, Dr. Johnson, Tobias Smollett, and William Hogarth. Most of these attacks arose from Churchill's alliance with Wilkes in his struggle with King George III and his ministers over the political issue of "Wilkes and Liberty," an issue which had widespread repercussions even in colonial America, then approaching its own showdown with the King.

As with many other poets, Churchill's humble beginnings in no way foreshadowed the fame and glory of his end. The son of a poor clergyman, he was born in February, 1731/2, in the city of Westminster. In his poem *Gotham* Churchill ironically refers to "Dull February, in whose leaden reign, My mother bore a bard without a brain" (I, 385-6). Although Westminster is now a part of metropolitan London, in the eighteenth century it was a sister city, the home of such famous institutions and landmarks as the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey. It was also the home of a great English public school, the Westminster School for boys, which Churchill later attended.

In other ways Westminster was then a thriving and important city. By the end of the eighteenth century its population was almost 26,000, an impressive total in those days before the Industrial Revolution and one that the inhabitants were proud of.⁸ As early as 1764 a local newspaper, *The St. James's*

Chronicle, noted with satisfaction that “from an exact Survey, taken by a Gentleman in the building Branch, of the Cities of London and Westminster, with their Suburbs, compared with a Map printed in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, the above Cities and Liberties have increased in Bulk considerably above Half since that Reign.”⁹ Furthermore, since the Middle Ages the kings and queens of England have preferred Westminster to London as the center of court life, the law, and politics. And for writers, as Sir Walter Besant says, “With the exception of a few names belonging to Fleet Street, and a few belonging to Grub Street, most of our literary history belongs to the quarter lying west of Temple Bar — in other words, to Westminster. One might go from street to street, pointing out the residence of Byron here, of Moore there, of Swift, of Pope, of Addison. . . .”¹⁰

The fortunes of the Churchill family had for years been closely associated with the city of Westminster. Churchill’s father, the Rev. Charles Churchill, was curate and lecturer in one of its churches, St. John the Evangelist, from 1733 until his death in 1758. Little is known about the family, but the Churchill name was a common one in that area.¹¹ In his *Parochial Memorials* John Edward Smith records that “at the time the parish was formed there were two families of Churchills possessing property in Vine (now Romney) street; and at the first Vestry meeting, held on 11th March, 1728, Robert and Thomas Churchill, apparently brothers of Charles Churchill, senior, were present.”¹² We know that young Charles had at least one uncle, for after his death in 1764 his uncle was appointed an executor of his estate.¹³ Another note by Smith suggests that Charles was in one respect a chip off the old block. “At a Vestry meeting held one Sunday . . . Mr. Churchill preferred a complaint against Thomas Le Gros, the parish clerk, of conduct which ‘highly reflected on the honour of the said Mr. Churchill.’ . . . As the result of the enquiry

into the accusation, Le Gros was 'by order of the Vestry reprimanded by the rector (Dr. Willes, Dean of Lincoln) and asked pardon on his knees of the Rev. Mr. Churchill in the Vestry-room.'"¹⁴ Precisely what had happened we do not know, but the senior Churchill's concern for his honor is reflected many times over in his son's later concern for his own.

Churchill's father attended the Westminster School from 1718 to 1725; during the next year he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, but did not graduate.¹⁵ He was married in 1728 or earlier, for the parish register of St. John's, Westminster, records that his first son, William, was born on November 22, 1729, and baptized on the following December 3.¹⁶ The elder Churchill seems to have been an indulgent and easy-going parent. Later, when young Charles contracted a secret and imprudent marriage, his father, although shocked and disappointed, nevertheless took the newlyweds into his own home where they lived for about a year. Nor was the Rev. Mr. Churchill the ambitious and opportunistic kind of clergyman about whom we hear so much in the eighteenth century — hence he never got very far in his profession. Of Churchill's mother we know only that her name was Ann, that she was probably Scottish, and that she survived her husband and illustrious son, dying in Westminster, October 2, 1768.¹⁷

The Churchills' eldest son died at an early age, at least before the birth of their youngest (date unknown), for he was also named William, in accordance with a practice not uncommon in the eighteenth century. Besides Charles and the two Williams, there were two other children: a son John (born June 12, 1735) and a daughter Patience or "Patty" (birth-date unknown). John became a surgeon-apothecary in Westminster and later was "the medical attendant of John Wilkes; as executor [one of the two appointed] of his brother Charles's will he published several editions of his Collected Works, the fifth of which appeared in 1774."¹⁸ William Churchill entered

the church and was for years the vicar of Orton-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire. He is described as “a person of genius and literary pursuits: amongst other publications, he left a life and comment upon his brother’s history which was incorporated into an edition of the poet’s works, published in the early part of this [the nineteenth] century.”¹⁹ Virtually nothing is known about Churchill’s sister Patty, except that he seems to have been very fond of her, that she was probably engaged to his unfortunate friend Robert Lloyd, and that she died shortly after his death in December, 1764.²⁰

Although no official records have survived, Churchill was in all likelihood born in a house on Vine Street, Westminster.²¹ His own reference to his birthplace includes the suggestion that the family were encumbered with relatives and that their house was a shabby one. In his poem *Gotham* he ironically mentions “famed Vine Street,”

Where Heaven, the utmost wish of Man to grant,
Gave me an old house, and an older aunt . . .²² (I, 145-46)

It seems certain that the Churchill family were relatively poor, at least until 1742, when the father was given the additional vicarage of Rainham in Essex, about fifteen miles from Westminster.

Young Churchill was to follow closely in the footsteps of his father, not only in his education at Westminster School and his admission to Cambridge, but also in his later career as curate of St. John’s in Westminster. This church, in which centered so much of the lives of the Churchills, father and son, “was founded in the Year 1721, and finished in the Year 1728”;²³ it was therefore a relatively new structure when Churchill’s father became its curate five years later. The building itself is an architectural monstrosity of pseudo-classicism — square and high and surmounted on the four corners of the roof by towers of equal size and design. There is a plentiful

sprinkling of Corinthian columns, and the Roman arch is everywhere in evidence. Charles Dickens has left us his impression of its ugliness. In *Our Mutual Friend* he describes it as "a very hideous church with four towers at the four corners, generally resembling some petrified monster, frightful and gigantic, on its back with its legs in the air."²⁴ In his *Parochial Memorials* Smith says that "the design has been attributed to Sir John Vanbrugh . . . and to one of his pupils, Thomas Archer."²⁵ In any case, the heavy Palladian-like architecture of the church suggests the Vanbrugh style, which, at its best in Blenheim Palace at Woodstock, elicited from one of the Augustan wits the following epitaph for its architect:

Lie heavy on him, Earth, for he
Laid many a heavy load on thee!

Fourteen years after St. John's was completed a disastrous fire broke out and destroyed most of it; the fire began just as Churchill's father was about to conduct the morning service. "Sunday morning last, about Ten of the Clock," says a contemporary account, "a terrible Fire broke out in the Vestry Room of St. John the Evangelist's Church at Millbank, Westminster, just before Divine Service, which burnt with such Fierceness that in about two Hours it entirely consumed all the inside of the said Church and the Roof thereof, and left nothing standing but the Stone Walls, though all possible Diligence was used by the Firemen; but Water was very scarce, none being to be had, but what was drawn upon Sledges from the River Thames."²⁶

St. John's was also plagued by a minor annoyance which perennially disturbed the authorities of nearby Westminster Abbey — the nuisance value of 350 boys living in the adjacent Westminster School. According to the St. John's vestry minutes for May 8, 1739, "the windows of this Church having been frequently broke and the Inhabitants put to continual Expenses

and otherwise very much annoyed by some of the Scholars belonging to Westminster School, Ordered that a Memorial be drawn up and presented to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster for redress of the said Grievances.” To this the charitable Mr. Smith conjectures, in a note, that “it is not improbable that the mischief complained of was practised as the boys returned from their ditch-jumping expeditions in the open fields.”²⁷

ii.

It was to this school that Churchill's father sent him at the age of nine in May, 1741, although at first his attendance must have been a strain on the family finances. But young Churchill deserved his parents' faith in his ability: in 1745 he became a King's Scholar in the school, which entitled him to top honors and free room, board, and tuition. Eton, said the wits, was the “House of Commons,” Westminster the “House of Lords.” Such was the reputation of this great school in the 1740's, when in its classrooms and on its playing-fields were many boys later to become famous as historians, statesmen, poets, dramatists, and peers of the realm. In addition to young Churchill, the list included such future celebrities as Warren Hastings, Higham Ferrar (later the Marquis of Rockingham), Hamilton Boyle (the Earl of Cork), William H. Cavendish-Bentick (the Duke of Portland), Edward Gibbon, William Cowper, and George Colman the Elder. Of these, Colman and two lesser lights, Bonnell Thornton and Robert Lloyd, became Churchill's lifelong friends.

Situated next to Westminster Abbey, with playing-fields along the banks of the Thames, the Westminster School has acquired an added glory not possessed by its chief rivals, Eton, Harrow, and Winchester. For centuries the religious services of the school have been held in the Abbey, and in 1730 one of its King's Scholars was inspired poetically on the subject:

We to the Abbey march, in White Array,
Thrice ev'ry Week, besides each Holiday.²⁸

A very different kind of intimacy between school and Abbey is indicated by the following more human, if less pious, record: "The Abbey Carpenter was kept busy in devising means to prevent the boys from climbing over the roofs of the School and Abbey. A Westminster boy in 1766 put his hand into an unrepaired hole in the tomb of Richard II and drew out the jawbone of the King. A Senior, who saw him do it, thrashed the boy, but kept the bone, and it was not returned until 1906."²⁹

Although rifling royal tombs was not one of them, special privileges in the Abbey and nearby Houses of Parliament were accorded Westminster boys. They took part in coronations, at which they had the traditional right to be the first to acclaim the new sovereign on his entering the church. They were also privileged to attend the debates in Parliament. One Westminster boy, the dramatist Frederick Reynolds, jotted down the fact that he stood close to William Pitt when, as Lord Chatham, he entered the House of Lords to make his last speech against the government's treatment of the American colonies.³⁰ This meant that Westminster boys had a special contact with contemporary public life, a contact that one historian of the school goes out of his way to emphasize: "The stranger, who in these days turns with a curious eye to note the cap and gown of the Queen's Scholar passing between St. Margaret's and the Abbey on his way to the House of Commons, probably has little thought of the prominent place which for more than a century and a half after the death of Elizabeth the Westminster boy held in the nation's sight. . . . In a smaller England the boys' doings could even have a political significance."³¹ Indeed Churchill's future activities had, as we shall see, a great deal of political significance.

Churchill was a student at Westminster during the benevolent and distinguished reign of Dr. John Nicoll as headmaster (1733-53). Dr. Nicoll, says the dramatist Richard Cumberland, "had the art of making his scholars gentlemen; for there is a court of honour in that school to whose unwritten laws every member of our community was amenable, and which to transgress by any act of meanness, that exposed the offender to public contempt, was a degree of punishment, compared to which the being sentenced to the rod would have been considered as an acquittal or reprieve."³² But despite the sympathy of their genial headmaster, the boys at Westminster found that life there was not without its severities. In a juvenile poem that he wrote to his cousin, then enjoying the Grand Tour of Europe, Churchill's friend Colman refers to the work and punishments that were then an integral part of public-school life. The poem was published years later in *The St. James's Chronicle*, with the prefatory note: "Written in 1747 at Westminster to the Rt. Hon. Ld. Visc. Pulteney"; it playfully and somewhat vulgarly describes Colman himself,

Who still is drudging in the College,
In slow Pursuit of further Knowledge:
With many a cruel Lash his — on,
To Make him sometime hence a Parson.

The would-be poet then goes on to say that he would like to find a "milder Means to Learning" and concludes:

Douglas and you keep gently jogging,
But I must run the Race with flogging.³³

A better poet has also left his reminiscences of these days at Westminster. William Cowper in *Table Talk* mentions the verse-making and the discipline, as well as the rewards, that were in store for the boys:

At Westminster, where little poets strive
To set a distich upon six and five,
Where discipline helps op'ning buds of sense,
And makes his pupils proud with silver pence,
I was a poet too. . . .³⁴

In addition to the traditional English public-school games like cricket, rowing, "fives," shuttlecock, marbles, and hoop-rolling, Westminster boys in the eighteenth century had accumulated a number of other customs and pastimes peculiar to their school. One was the annual Latin play, usually a comedy by Terence or Plautus, which was presented with elaborate form and ceremony. When later Churchill's friends Colman and Thornton translated Terence and Plautus into English "familiar blank verse," they were merely being Westminster boys grown up. Another more frivolous custom was that of tossing the pancake on Shrove Tuesday. The economist and philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who was at Westminster from 1755 to 1760, notes in this autobiography that "the higher school was divided from the lower by a bar, and it was one of our pastimes to get the cook to throw a pancake over it."⁸⁵

At Westminster in the 1740's there were about 350 boys, divided broadly into two groups — the King's Scholars and the Town Boys. The King's Scholars, limited to forty in number, were the intellectual aristocrats of the school, who won their eminence through competitive oral examinations. Among them were not only Churchill but his three closest friends, Lloyd, Colman, and Thornton. Until 1730 the scholars lived and worked in the Scholars' Chamber, an ancient building that before the dissolution of the monasteries in England had been the granary of the Westminster monks; after that they inhabited a new building designed by Sir Christopher Wren. The Town Boys lived in fifteen to twenty boarding houses near the school. Here in an environment steeped in tradition and controlled by great teachers and scholars young Churchill spent seven of the most formative years of his life.

About these years at Westminster we have only a few stories and a handful of facts. The *Record of Old Westminsters* provides the following terse account: "*Churchill, Charles*, eldest son of Charles Churchill. *b. Feb. 1731/2; adm. (aged 9)*

May 1741; K.S. (Capt.) 1745; *left* 1748. St. John's Coll. Camb. (adm. pensr.) July 8, 1748.”³⁶ Thus for four years he was a Town Boy and, according to William Tooke, Churchill's nineteenth-century editor, did not room or board at the school, but lived at home.³⁷ Then in 1745, at the age of thirteen, Churchill became a King's Scholar, entering “on the foundation” as Captain of his class or “election.” This means that in the competitive oral examinations of that year Churchill took first place. Such an honor demonstrated his intellectual superiority and entitled him to a number of special privileges, such as taking the lead in the school's annual Latin play and being excused from “fagging.”

One story about young Churchill at Westminster credits him with what would seem to us today to be extraordinary adolescent erudition. “Having by a puerile misdemeanour incurred the displeasure of his masters,” says Tooke, “he was enjoined to compose and recite in the school-room a poetical declamation in Latin, by way of apology. Of this task he acquitted himself in so becoming, yet spirited a manner, as to obtain the unqualified approbation of his masters, without forfeiting the esteem of his school-fellows. . . .”³⁸ This account another nineteenth-century editor embroiders as follows: “We can fancy the scene at the day of the recitation — the grave and big-wigged schoolmasters looking grimly on — their aspect, however, becoming softer and brighter, as one large hexameter rolls out after another — the strong, awkward ugly boy, unblushingly pouring forth his energetic lines — cheered by the sight of the relaxing gravity of his teachers' looks — while around, you see the bashful, tremulous figure of poor Cowper, the small, thin shape and bright eye of Warren Hastings, and the waggish countenance of Colman — all eagerly watching the reciter — and all, at last, distended and brightened with joy at his signal triumph.”³⁹ Although this is obviously a fictionalized

version and the colors are rather bright, the general picture seems true.

If this story suggests Churchill's brilliance and self-assurance as a schoolboy, another one reveals two more paradoxical qualities of his nature: his loyalty to his friends and his impulsive belligerence. This second story credits Churchill with being the stalwart defender of shy little William Cowper against the tricks and attacks of the school bullies. Probability is lent to the story by the fact that many years later, after Churchill's death, Cowper stoutly defended his Westminster friend as a poet at a time when Churchill's reputation was rapidly waning.⁴⁰

Another reference by Churchill himself to a schoolmate shows that he made enemies as well as friends at Westminster, a talent that he was to become famous for. Addressing Lloyd in his poem *Night*, Churchill refers to an occasion,

When we conspired a thankless wretch to raise,
And taught a stump to shoot with pilfer'd praise,
Who once for reverend merit famous grown,
Gratefully strove to kick his maker down. (99-102)

This "thankless wretch" was the Rev. William Sellon. At the school Churchill, Lloyd, and Thornton had assisted Sellon "to acquire more reputation there, than his native dullness would warrant; but on quitting that seminary, he forgot the obligation, and treated his open unsuspecting friends with . . . illiberality, duplicity, and ingratitude. . . ."⁴¹ Sellon was again attacked by Churchill as "Plausible" in *The Ghost*:

Who knows not smooth-lipped Plausible?
A preacher deem'd of greatest note
For preaching that which others wrote. (III, 742-44)

In a note on these lines, James Laver, another Churchill editor, tells us that "Sellon was accused of plagiarising the greater part of the sermon which he had preached at St. Andrew's, Holborn, at St. Giles's and at Clerkenwell, and which he published in 1763."⁴²

In addition to a strong emphasis on the study of the Greek and Latin classics, the Westminster tradition included a high respect for English literature as well; and the list of English poets who began their education there is a long and distinguished one, containing names like Ben Jonson, John Dryden, Abraham Cowley, and Matthew Prior, in addition to Cowper and Churchill. "Cowper, indeed," one historian of the school remarks, "is himself a sufficient example to prove that the Westminster training could in itself make a man of letters."⁴³ It is not surprising, therefore, that as schoolboys Churchill and his friends took to scribbling verses. At least one poem survives as an example of Churchill's earliest work. Tooke calls it "the best authenticated of Churchill's juvenile productions, and which was apparently written by him when at Westminster school."⁴⁴ It did not appear in print until 1771 under the following heading: "On the Monuments in Westminster Abbey. by the late Mr. C. Churchill."

In fam'd cathedral, who'd expect
 Pallas, a heathen goddess,
 To lift her shield, come to protect
 Lord Stanhope, — this most odd is!

Or to see Hercules, a son
 Of Jupiter (as fabled)
 Hov'ring like old nurse, o'er an Admiral's bust,
 As if his pupil, or by him enabled.

What could they more,
 In times of yore
 Do, heroes to defend?
 What will our stage exhibit more
 Than make the gods descend?

Verger, or Beadle, who thou art,
 That hast the supervising part,
 Fain would I mace lay thee on;
 For Dean's-Yard boys, with much surprise,
 Being thus greatly edyfy'd,
 May throw their books of Heathen Gods aside;
 And, shortly, there (I fear) see rise
 In statuary, *The whole Pantheon.*⁴⁵

This is mild satire and a youthful attempt to be clever, but such writing hardly anticipates the masterful satires of the 1760's.

Even as a schoolboy Churchill must have been, in appearance and character, strong, stubborn, and quick-witted — a hard worker and a hard player. The critic and essayist John Forster, writing in 1845, speaks of him as "a robust, manly, broad-faced little fellow," and he adds that "all who in later life remembered him, spoke of the premature growth and fullness both of his body and mind; and he was not long in assuming the place in his boys' circle, which quick-sighted lads are not slow to concede to a deserving and daring claimant. He was fond of play; but, when he turned to work, was a hard and successful worker."⁴⁶ Such was the young man who, after a steady and at times brilliant career at Westminster, at the age of sixteen entered St. John's College, Cambridge, on a Westminster scholarship.

Chapter II

"To pray, and starve, on forty pounds a year"

THERE CAN BE NO question that Churchill planned to go to Cambridge and that he was officially enrolled as a student at St. John's College in 1748. But a number of confused and misleading accounts of his abortive college career have survived down to the present day. One of them has persisted for almost two centuries since its appearance in *The London Chronicle* on December 8, 1764: that Churchill was rejected at Oxford (later accounts specify Merton College) because of impertinence before the examiners. The fact is that there were no such examinations at either of the two Universities for students entering on Westminster scholarships. Another story, also frequently reappearing, is that he was entered at Trinity College, Cambridge, and expelled when his youthful imprudent marriage became known. For this story, too, there is not a shred of reliable evidence. In referring to these stories the authoritative *Admissions to the College of St John* says flatly: "There is no corroboration of these statements, and the early age at which he entered St. John's makes them improbable."¹

It is true that at that time the richest and most coveted scholarships from Westminster were those to Christ Church, Oxford, and Trinity College, Cambridge; and Churchill, as Captain of his class at Westminster, would naturally expect an appointment to one of these. Among his closest friends, Thornton and Colman went to Christ Church and Lloyd to Trinity. We can only surmise why Churchill went to neither. He may have been passed over in these selections because "influence" was a strong determinant in awarding them, and, unlike his

friends, Churchill had no important connections. A mid-nineteenth-century Old Westminster, writing on this subject, concludes: "The selection is professedly made after examination; but while I knew anything of the school it was *selection* according to interest, and it must have been rare scholarships indeed that obtained the reward against private interest."²

There was, on the other hand, a good reason for Churchill to turn to St. John's College at Cambridge. It had long been associated with Westminster, for in Queen Elizabeth's time Mildred, Lady Burleigh, had established two scholarships there for Westminster boys. Churchill probably entered St. John's on one of these, although it is doubtful that they paid very much, if anything.³ At all events, his name is on the College books as of July 8, 1748;⁴ but soon, through poverty, disappointment, and possibly general lack of interest, he left the College abruptly and, at the age of sixteen and a half, returned home. Years later, in his poem *The Ghost*, Churchill hints at his inability to pay the fees at college:

And with his master take degrees,
Could he contrive to pay the fees. . . . (IV, 105-6)

One other explanation of Churchill's withdrawal from college deserves to be noted, if only because it correctly places him at St. John's. This account appears in an unpublished manuscript by the antiquary William Cole, who copied it from *The Cambridge Chronicle* for December 15, 1764: "Mr. Churchill was admitted of St. John's College in this university under a Tutor of great Eminence: a Day or two after his Admission he requested his Leave to go & meet some Friends at Ely: but this being refused, took the Liberty of making his Exit without Leave, & never returned again to College."⁵ The "Tutor of great Eminence" was, according to the College records, one "Dr. Rutherford." In the light of the personality that Churchill later revealed — his love of conviviality, his

impatience with restraint, his disdain for authority — this account of his break with St. John's College probably contains more than a grain of truth.

In his marriage to Martha Scott (or Scot), which in all likelihood took place in 1749,⁶ Churchill undoubtedly gave hostages to fortune and curtailed his independence. Miss Scott was a boyhood sweetheart, with whom Churchill may have been intimate before his disappointing experience at Cambridge. The marriage was secret and was performed outside the church — one of those "Fleet Street" marriages that were the scandal of eighteenth-century London. "A feature of street life peculiar to the first half of the century," says a modern historian, "was the touts, or barkers as they were called, who stood around the Fleet Market and the Fleet Prison, inviting couples to walk in and be married by one of the parsons in prison for debt. The fee was much below that of the regular church — twenty shillings, ten shillings, or a few bottles of gin. They did so well that at one time they were marrying between five and six hundred couples a month. The business at last received official notice, and in 1754 the Clandestine Marriages Act was passed, making marriage, except in an authorized church, illegal."⁷

These circumstances clearly imply at least the anticipation of parental disapproval; but when Churchill's father learned of the marriage, he apparently forgave all and took the young couple into his home, where they lived for about a year. This marriage, of course, committed Churchill to earning a living. His choice of a career was, unfortunately, severely limited and had long been subject to his father's influence. Years later, when Churchill had become rich and famous as a poet, he referred bitterly to this tragic decision:

Bred to the church, and for the gown decreed,
 Ere it was known that I should learn to read —
 Though that was nothing, for my friends, who knew

What mighty Dulness of itself could do,
 Never design'd me for a working priest,
 But hoped I should have been a Dean at least —
 Condemn'd (like many more and worthier men
 To whom I pledge the service of my pen)
 Condemn'd (whilst proud and pamper'd sons of lawn
 Cramm'd to the throat, in lazy plenty yawn)
 In pomp and reverend beggary to appear,
 To pray, and starve, on forty younds a year.

(*The Author*, 341-52)

It appears that his father's forgiveness of his imprudent marriage was conditioned upon Churchill's entering the ministry, a calling for which he had no sympathy whatsoever.

At all events, in 1751 young Churchill and his wife went to Sunderland in the north of England, where he finally settled down to preparing for his career. But even there his interest in writing verses continued, for in this year he contributed a poem to the Oxford and Cambridge magazine, *The Student*. The poem is addressed to his Westminster friend Lloyd, then a student at Cambridge, and is signed "Q. Q."; it is entitled "Rural Happiness an Ode . . . by a Country Clergyman."⁸ Although in form and subject-matter the poem is unlike most of Churchill's later writings, it may well be an early experiment; and the fact that it is addressed to Lloyd indicates (what is in itself likely) that as early as 1751 the two young men were corresponding about literary matters. Furthermore, the address to Lloyd makes the poem almost certainly Churchill's, for very few poets, and even fewer country clergymen, would thus direct a poem to an eighteen-year-old Cambridge freshman; and of Lloyd's Westminster friends only Churchill became a clergyman. The Ode begins:

Ere yet, my friend, approach the evil day,
 From the town's noise and vanity retreat;
 Seek happiness without its base ally,
 And leave ambition to the wretch of state.

The entire poem is a tribute to the virtues of country life, which Churchill was to ridicule later; but the last line above carries the overtones of the sarcastic sneer that became a hallmark of his satire of the next decade.

The activities of young Churchill at Sunderland are known only in broadest outline, and for even this account we are indebted solely to Tooke. “In the year 1751, influenced by prudential considerations, Churchill retired to Sunderland. . . . In that retirement he devoted almost the whole of his time to his favourite poetical amusements; at length, however, he saw the necessity, as he was designed for the church, of applying to more useful studies, which he now commenced with determined assiduity. This course of indefatigable application he pursued until the age of two-and-twenty, when he visited the metropolis to take possession of a small fortune, to which he became entitled in right of his wife.”⁹ According to Tooke, then, Churchill returned to London and Westminster in 1753. We may assume that he continued to pursue his studies for the ministry either at home or up north in Sunderland, for during the next year (November 22, 1764) he was ordained a deacon “by Edward Willis, Bishop of Bath and Wells.” In the Bishop’s register he is described as “Charles Churchill now, or late, of Saint John’s College, in the University of Cambridge.”¹⁰

Now, having taken his first step in holy orders, the young deacon “was licensed the next day to the Curacy of South Cadbury and Sparkford in Somerset. . . . He seems to have officiated there for the next two years, the Rev. O.T.B. Croft, Rector of South Cadbury, stating that in 1756 Charles Churchill officiated at marriages, there being three entries in the year 1756 signed by him.”¹¹ It must have been a dullish uneventful life, especially compared to the whirlwind years of 1761-64; but Churchill seems to have acquitted himself well enough to escape any criticism by his superiors in the church.

If Churchill was doing passingly well at South Cadbury and Sparkford, he was almost certainly not happy there. His friends were at the Universities, while he, already married, was committed to serious responsibilities without much hope of future preferment. It is doubtful that he was receiving even the forty pounds a year, which, as we have seen, he mentions so bitterly; for a remote and rustic "living" in Somersetshire could not have paid his superior, the rector himself, more than fifty pounds annually.¹² And, in the light of his later financial distress, his wife's "small fortune" that he collected in 1753 must indeed have been microscopic! Moreover, books and intellectual companionship were probably very meager in that out-of-the-way place. Such a situation was a severe and bitter exile to a young man like Churchill, who six years earlier had excelled in the race of talents at Westminster. Pondering these matters in his lonely exile, Churchill may well have felt some of the bitterness and frustration of his greater ancestor in satire, young Jonathan Swift, who chafed for ten years (1689-99) in the menial position of private secretary to Sir William Temple. One abiding resentment that Churchill developed during this time was a disdain of college education. "Degrees are bought," he wrote scathingly in the last poem of his life (the *Dedication* to Bishop Warburton, 38); and in *Gotham*, as if to justify his own non-college career, he elaborates on this idea:

Come, Study — painful though thy course, and slow,
 Thy real worth by thy effects we know —
 Parent of Knowledge, come — not thee I call
 Who, grave and dull, in college or in hall
 Dost sit, all solemn sad, and moping, weigh
 Things which, when found, thy labours can't repay. . . .

(III, 351-56)

In 1756 an important change occurred in the routine of the young deacon's life, a change that permitted him to return nearer home in Westminster and to his friends there. He was ordained a priest at Fulham on December 19, 1756, by the

Bishop of Rochester, acting for the Bishop of London, at which time he is again described as “late of St. John’s College, Cambridge.” In the English hierarchy a priest is one step above a deacon and one below a vicar; both deacons and priests could be curates, or “assistants” to the vicar of a parish. Churchill “was then licensed to be Curate to his father at Rainham in Essex. The Rev. T. W. Ward, Vicar of Rainham, states that the *Parish Registers* of Rainham shew that Charles Churchill signs banns from October 1756 to 17 September 1758; that he signs for baptisms in 1757 and 1758, and for several marriages in 1758. The *Register* also contains the following entry: ‘20 March 1759, Charlotte, daughter of the Rev. Charles Churchill and Martha, was baptized’.”¹³

Located about fifteen miles from London and Westminster, Rainham was a pleasant little village in the mid-eighteenth century. “This parish, on the west,” says a contemporary historian, “is bounded by the rivulet Ingreburne, which receives vessels from the Thames, and has a commodious wharf. . . . The church, dedicated to St. Helen and St. Giles, is a small neat stone building, consisting of a body and two aisles, tiled: and a chancel of one pace, also tiled. In a stone tower at the west end, are three bells. The walls of this church are remarkably thick; the pillars, square and massy: the upper part of the church door, and the arch between the church and chancel, are intenced, or curiously wreathed.”¹⁴

Although as curate at Rainham Churchill was closer to home and his friends, this change could not have greatly improved his fortunes, for his father as vicar received only £90 a year.¹⁵ But there is some evidence that he was happier at Rainham than he had ever been at South Cadbury. In a note at this time about Churchill Horace Walpole remarks, “He lived decently and quietly, and passed much of his time in angling”; but he adds that “being poor, the neighbouring gentlemen often sent him provisions.”¹⁶

The records of Churchill's work at South Cadbury and Rainham sufficiently account for the years 1754-58, so that some of the fantastic stories about him during this period may be completely discredited. One of the most persistent of these appeared in the earliest account of his life: that his first curacy was in Wales and that while there "in order to eke out his scanty finances, he entered into a branch of trade which he thought might end in riches, but which involved him in debts that pressed him for some years after; this was no other than keeping a cyder cellar, and dealing in this liquor through that part of the country."¹⁷ As with the stories about Churchill at Merton and Trinity Colleges, there is no evidence to support this one; but there are interesting reasons why the cider legend should have become attached to him. In 1763, when he and Wilkes were attacking the government in their journal, *The North Briton*, their former crony Sir Francis Dashwood, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, proposed a tax on cider, which was widely opposed in the western counties and by *The North Briton*. "There would have been, therefore, considerable humor in a story that represented Churchill as an ex-cider-merchant, and it is likely that the story sprang up during the agitation about the cider bill."¹⁸ Furthermore, even contemporary accounts derided this story as false. In a review of *The Genuine Memoirs of Mr. Charles Churchill* (1765), which includes this story, *The Critical Review* mentions its "most infamous forgeries" and adds: "Amongst the latter we may safely rank the history of Mr. Churchill's turning publican, and converting his house to a cyder tipping-house in Wales."¹⁹

Even though he was never stranded in a poor parish in Wales, Churchill was not much better off at South Cadbury, Sparkford, and Rainham. Throughout these years as a minor clergyman he was miserably paid. Indeed, the financial condition of the lower orders of the English clergy was at that time a national scandal, which the current magazines frequently

commented on. Their salaries had been fixed centuries before, when the purchasing power of money was far greater; and in the intervening time little had been done to relieve their situation. In 1760 an open letter to *The Gentleman's Magazine* vividly describes the living conditions of a typical clergyman. “I found him sitting at the head of a long square table, such as is commonly used in this country by the lower class of people, dressed in a coarse blue frock, trimmed with black horn buttons; a checked shirt, a leathern strap about his neck for a stock, a coarse apron, and a pair of great heavy wooden shoes, plated with iron to preserve them . . . with a child upon his knee eating breakfast; his wife and the remainder of his family, which consist of nine children, were some of them employed in waiting on each other, the rest in teasing and spinning wooll.” This clergyman's regular salary, the writer goes on to say, was £14 a year, to which he was able to add £6 by his own outside efforts.²⁰ His financial status, we may safely assume, was lower than that of Churchill at Rainham; but Churchill's bitterly reported “forty pounds a year” probably more than covers all that he was making there.

In 1758, however, the possibility of some relief was in sight; for on September 7 his father died, and “the parishioners of St. John's, out of respect to the father, secured the appointment of the son to the curacy and lectureship.”²¹ By this time Churchill had a wife and two sons to support, and, we remember, a daughter was born the following March. His income was probably somewhat enhanced by the move from Rainham to St. John's in Westminster, but it still could not have been adequate. The lectureship was more of an honor than a source of income and very likely added little to his regular salary, if we may judge by the following account of this office in 1774 in a “Letter to a Bishop, Concerning Lectureships.” “The Lecturer's Box generally goes about with the rest of the Parish Beggars a little after Christmas,” the author explains sarcas-

tically. "Were I to tell your Lordship how many paltry Excuses are made to evade this little annual Tribute by the Mean and Sordid, how very little is given even by the most Generous, and what an inconsiderable Sum the Whole generally amounts to, the Recital would not afford you much Entertainment."²²

Another indication of Churchill's financial distress at this time is the fact that he was forced to supplement his income by tutoring in English at Mrs. Dennis's Boarding School for Girls in nearby Queen Square, Bloomsbury. This school was then famous enough to be called the "Ladies' Eton," and it included among its students such persons of literary interest as Fanny Burney, who attended in 1761, and Boswell's daughter Veronica, who was there in 1789. After describing the school in considerable detail, George H. Cunningham in his book *London* adds that "Charles Churchill, the satirist, was tutor in English in the school in 1758."²³ All this struggling to make ends meet would make life difficult for anyone: for a man of Churchill's pride, independence, and suppressed brilliance it finally made life intolerable.

Had Churchill succeeded his father as vicar of Rainham, as well as curate and lecturer at St. John's, the story of these tragic years might have been far different. He failed to secure the vicarage through no fault of his own, but through circumstances in which his father played an ironic, if righteous, part. In his "Paris Journals, Anecdotes, 1775," Horace Walpole explains what happened. "I was told the following circumstances of Churchill the poet by a person who lived near him in Essex," Walpole begins. "The father was vicar of Rainham in that county, and Churchill was his curate. . . . His father was also curate of St. John's, Westminster; Sir John Crosse of that parish was his patron and had given him the living of Rainham. Sir John had a cousin, a mercer's daughter, who lived with him for twenty years. At last she procured an anonymous letter to be sent herself, in which she was advised to quit

Sir John's house immediately for the sake of her character. She showed Sir John the letter, and he married her. Soon after Churchill the father preached a sermon before them, and levelled at them, and the text was, 'Peace as long as the moon endureth,' insinuating that Sir John would have no more peace after being so duped. They both resented the sermon, and the father dying in a short time, Sir John would not give the living to the son."²⁴

Apart from financial considerations, there was another reason for Churchill's dissatisfaction with his curacy at St. John's. From 1742 to 1776 the Rev. Joseph Simms was the rector of this parish. During Churchill's curacy under him, Mr. Simms was also rector of the parish of East Ham, where he seems to have spent most of his time. In his *Parochial Memorials* Smith cites the following lines from Churchill's *Dedication* to Bishop Warburton:

Much did I wish, e'en whilst I kept those sheep
Which, for my curse, I was ordain'd to keep,
Ordain'd, alas! to keep through need, not choice,
Those sheep which never heard their shepherd's voice,

and says that "Mr. Simms appears to have devoted his attention principally to the parish of East Ham, the charge of the parish of St. John being entrusted to Charles Churchill, and subsequently to his talented but dissipated son, the poet."²⁵ If "Those sheep which never heard their shepherd's voice" does indeed refer to the Rev. Mr. Simms, we can see why Churchill the curate would deeply resent doing all the work at St. John's for about one-sixth of the salary of the rector, his immediate superior.

Churchill left Rainham for Westminster to take up his new duties as curate of St. John's in September, 1758, for the last entry in the Rainham Parish Register signed by him is dated September 17. But this Register also shows that his daughter Charlotte was born there on March 9, 1759, and

baptized March 20. Apparently, therefore, his wife remained at Rainham for more than five months after he had left. Since both her family and Churchill's mother were then living in Westminster, she had the strongest reason for accompanying her husband: that she did not suggests this date for the beginning of their marital difficulties, which led finally to their separation.

At all events, Churchill was alone in Westminster during the autumn of 1758, and we may be sure that his clerical duties and his financial and marital troubles did not occupy all of his time. In fact, the general unpleasantness of these matters would naturally lead him to seek compensation in the company of his Westminster friends Thornton, Colman, and especially Lloyd, all of whom were then living and working near him. Lloyd was teaching at the Westminster School, a career that he disliked as much as Churchill disliked being a clergyman. And, like Churchill, Lloyd leaves us in no doubt about his attitude; for while in the school "a paltry stipend earning,"

He sows the richest seeds of learning,
And tills their minds with proper care,
And sees them their due produce bear,
No joys, alas! his toil beguile,
His own lies fallow all the while. (Poems, pp. 6-7)

Thornton and Colman had already won considerable fame as the authors of their brilliant literary magazine, *The Connoisseur*, for which they had written about a hundred witty and satiric essays in the manner of the *Spectator* papers of Addison and Steele. And Colman was at this time planning his highly successful career as a dramatist.

There were undoubtedly many meetings of the four friends, at which the talk was of old times and their mutual literary interests. Nor is it any wonder that Churchill and Lloyd, who had not yet published successfully, were frankly envious and felt their own itch for writing increase by leaps and bounds,

especially since they were both tied down to uncongenial jobs. These hours of relaxation were, we may be sure, gay, witty, and often intemperate. Churchill himself describes them in his poem *Night* (1761), addressed to Lloyd, which begins:

When foes insult, and prudent friends dispense,
In pity's strains, the worst of insolence,
Oft with thee, Lloyd, I steal an hour from grief,
And in thy social converse find relief;

after which he mentions some of the subjects of their conversation, among them the good old days at Westminster School:

Whether those classic regions are survey'd,
Where we in earliest youth together stray'd,
Where hand in hand we trod the flowery shore,
Though now thy happier genius runs before. . . . (96-99)

Also “Then we our friends, our foes, ourselves survey, And see by *Night* what fools we are by day” (120-21). Finally, Churchill gives us an excellent self-portrait:

Foe to restraint, unpracticed in deceit,
Too resolute, from nature's active heat,
To brook affronts, and tamely pass them by,
Too proud to flatter, too sincere to lie;
Too plain to please, too honest to be great,
Give me, kind Heaven, an humbler, happier state. . . .
(179-84)

These occasions of pleasure and relaxation continued and probably increased in frequency as time went on, although, as Churchill hints above, his “griefs” were also mounting. Two unhappy events occurred in 1760-61 that together determined him to alter his career drastically, a change that loosed upon him an avalanche of bitter and prejudiced criticism. First, his rising debts overtook him and forced him into bankruptcy. Later he refers to this disastrous occurrence, “When at my doors, too strongly barr'd, Authority had placed a guard” (*The Ghost*, IV, 317-18). At this point (probably in 1760), Churchill, unlike his friend Lloyd later, was saved from the debtors’

prison by the help of Lloyd's own father, who arranged to have his creditors accept a settlement of five shillings in the pound and who lent him enough to satisfy them on this basis. Afterwards, when his poetry had made him wealthy and famous, Churchill repaid his creditors and Dr. Lloyd — the creditors in full, although he was not legally obliged to do so.²⁶ His sincere and manly gratitude for this timely assistance he expressed in his poem, *The Conference*:

Once, awed by Fortune's most oppressive frown,
 By legal rapine to the earth bow'd down,
 My credit at last gasp, my state undone,
 Trembling to meet the shock I could not shun,
 Virtue gave ground, and blank despair prevail'd;
 Sinking beneath the storm, my spirits fail'd,
 Like Peter's faith, till one, a friend indeed, —
 May all distress find such in time of need, —
 One kind, good man, in act, in word, in thought,
 By virtue guided, and by wisdom taught,
 Image of Him whom Christians should adore,
 Stretch'd forth his hand, and brought me safe to shore.

(107-18)

Tradition has it that Churchill's irregularities and dissipations, which later became so notorious, led to his bankruptcy at this time. For such an explanation there is no proof, one way or the other. But certainly the size of his family and his low income could alone account for his financial distress; nor is it likely that Dr. Lloyd would have come to his assistance if his debts had not been morally justifiable, for we know that Dr. Lloyd did not assist his own son when his extravagances landed him in the Fleet prison in 1764.

The second important event of these disastrous years was Churchill's separation from his wife, which probably took place late in 1760 or early in 1761²⁷ — before he had achieved fame and fortune as a poet. It is to his credit that as soon as he had a competence he provided well for his wife and the children. After the success of his first two poems, says the editor of

Admissions to the College of St John, “He paid off his debts, settled an allowance on his wife, from whom he was now separated, and helped his brothers and sister[s].”²⁸ And a letter from Churchill to David Garrick, written in September, 1762, shows, despite its irony, that he still held himself responsible for his wife’s expenses, even at the cost of going into debt himself! “Mrs. Churchill, that sweetest and best of women, having entertained me with some large and unexpected demands from Gloucester, I should take it as a very particular favour if you would give me leave to draw on you next week for between forty and fifty pounds.”²⁹

Of Churchill’s wife little is reliably known. In his *Biographia Britannica* Alexander Kippis, who knew Churchill, observes that “it was always understood in Westminster that Mrs. Churchill’s imprudence kept too near a pace with that of her husband.”³⁰ Walpole remarks that “his wife, whom he married for love and by whom he had two sons, being tired of each other, she went housekeeper to an officer and became his mistress.”³¹ All of this is obviously hearsay and is contradicted by other “authorities,” who picture her as more sinned against than sinning, the anonymous and unreliable author of the *Genuine Memoirs* going so far into unrestrained hyperbole as to describe her as “judicious, discreet, sincere, and affable; possessed of virtue without austerity, gaiety without levity, wit without ill nature, and prudence without conceit.”³² And the author of the equally unreliable earliest account of Churchill’s life declares that “some people have been unkind enough to say, that Mrs. Churchill gave the first just cause for separation, but nothing can be more false than this rumour; and we can assure the Public, that her conduct in private life, and among her acquaintances, was ever irreproachable.”³³

Whatever the merits or demerits of his wife, Churchill’s interests by this time were clearly neither in his home nor in his career as a clergyman. His second and far more sensational

career as a poet lay just ahead, and, consciously or not, he had been preparing for it for many years. Of the poems ascribed to him before March, 1761, when he shot to fame with *The Rosciad*, little is known with certainty. We have already noted two of those he most likely wrote. Three others are mentioned and briefly described by his editors. One of these, "The Fortune Teller," is important in the history of Churchill's later work, for he rewrote it, with additions, as Book I of *The Ghost*, published in March, 1762. Tooke says that "the greater part of the first book of this Poem was written when the author was curate of Cadbury, in Somersetshire; and was by him then intended to be published under the title of 'The Fortune Teller'."⁸⁴ It was written (as is *The Ghost*) in octosyllabic couplets as a satire on vulgar superstition. A later unpublished poem, "The Bard," was also written in this form and was "offered for sale to Mr. Waller, an eminent bookseller in Fleet Street, who without hesitation rejected it as a contemptible performance. The author seems to have coincided in this opinion, as he could never afterwards be induced to publish it."⁸⁵ A third early poem, also unpublished, was "The Conclave," written, according to Tooke, "in Alexandrine verse" and intended as a satire "levelled against the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, Dr. Zachary Pearce, Bishop of Rochester, being Dean."⁸⁶ Tooke quotes the first eight lines, which are not Alexandrine but anapestic verse:

The Conclave was met, and Longinus the Pope,
 Who leads a great number of fools in a rope,
 Who makes them get up, and who makes them sit still;
 Who makes them say yea or nay, just as he will;
 Who a critic profound does all critics defy,
 And settles the difference 'twixt Beta and Pi;
 Who forgiveness of faults preaches up to another,
 But forbids it to come near himself or his brother.⁸⁷

A fourth poem is probably by Churchill and was probably written before *The Rosciad*, although it was not published

until three months later. In *Biographia Britannica* Kippis says that some of Churchill's juvenile poems "are to be met with in a periodical work, entitled 'The Library,' which was published a little more than twenty years ago; and the poetical department of which was conducted, for several months, by our Author and his friend Lloyd."⁸⁸ At least one of these must, on style and other internal evidence, be the work of either Churchill or Lloyd. In the first place, the poem is entitled "An Epistle to R.L.L.," a fact which immediately suggests Lloyd's initials and discounts his authorship. Secondly, the poem is written in the kind of octosyllabic couplets that both Churchill and Lloyd used. Finally, in subject-matter (literary criticism and satire) the poem could have been written by either, although the satire often has more of Churchill's edge and sharpness than of Lloyd's milder tone.

The general subject of the poem is poetry, including a favorite eighteenth-century critical question: are the ancients greater than the moderns? The answer is the one given many times elsewhere by both Churchill and Lloyd:

Envy our judgment leads astray,
And prejudices bar their way;
Else why are critic herds misled
To tear the crown from *Shakespeare's* head,
Which they would only have to grow
And bloom on an Athenian brow.

This is followed by similar questions, implying a daring personal assertion:

What great enchantment's in the sound
Of *Rome* or *Athens* to be found,
That they unto themselves should claim
This grand monopoly of fame?
What is their plea, and, fairly try 'em,
Wherefore is *Homer* more than I am?

The idea in the first question above also appears in *The Rosciad*:

Where do these words of Greece and Rome excel,
That England may not please the ear as well? (201-2)

Furthermore, it is far more in character for Churchill to make this comparison of himself with Homer than it is for Lloyd, whose literary humility and admiration for the classics would have deterred him. A characteristic of Churchill's style and not of Lloyd's is the use of an extended parenthesis to interrupt the thought and more closely unite the individual couplets. Note the following passage from this poem, in which the author imagines Milton born in Homer's time and Homer in Milton's:

And ('tis a point I must maintain
Against the antiquated vein
Of supercilious critic pride,
The gain had been on Homer's side.

And compare the tone and thought of the following attack on critics to those of a similar attack in *The Rosciad*:

Then borne on wings of fire, he quits
The servile track of critick wits;
Rejects the doctrines of the schools,
And soars beyond the reach of rules;
Leaving those laws to be obey'd
By fools, which first by fools were made.³⁹

In *The Rosciad* the critics are

... a servile race,
Who, in mere want of fault all merit place;
Who blind obedience pay to ancient schools,
Bigots to Greece, and slaves to musty rules. . . .
(183-86)

With all these things considered and the further fact that the poem is addressed to "R.L.L.," I think we may safely assign it to Churchill.⁴⁰

This brings us to the end of Churchill's early career as a man, a clergyman, and an unknown poet. When we see him

next, the clergyman and the anonymous poet have been submerged. In their place is Churchill the man, soon to become the greatest living satiric poet and one of the sensational libertines of his time.⁴¹

Chapter III

The Scourge of the Players

i.

AMONG THE ATTRACTIONS of mid-eighteenth-century London that Churchill and his friends found most fascinating were the theaters, which at that time were on the threshold of an exciting revival. The great actor-producer-dramatist David Garrick, who later became one of Churchill's intimates, had in 1747 taken over the venerable Drury-Lane Theatre, which during the next thirty years he made one of the marvels of London. Garrick drew into his orbit a succession of brilliant players, such as Richard Yates, Henry Woodward, James Quin, Spranger Barry, Kitty Clive, Hannah Prichard, and Susannah Maria Cibber, and with them produced a long series of popular revivals and new plays. At the same time Daniel Rich, at the Covent-Garden Theatre, was running Garrick a close second. Somewhat later Churchill's friend Colman successfully managed the Covent-Garden for nine years, after which he took over a third London theatre, the Haymarket, and guided it to a position of theatrical eminence. Probably at no time since the days of Queen Elizabeth did playgoing have a more general appeal. By mid-century the theatre had lost most of the taint of immorality which marked Restoration drama, so that people from all classes of society flocked to the playhouses. There in the Green Room clergymen and schoolmasters rubbed elbows with pimps and fops, many of whom aspired to be playwrights.

It was partially this popular interest in the theatre that led Churchill to select actors and acting as the subject of *The Rosciad*, his first successful poem; but he must also have been strongly influenced by his Westminster friends, who had for

years been talking and writing about the theatre. As early as the 1750's during their college careers, Thornton and Colman revealed a taste for the drama, a taste that was emphatically viewed with alarm by their elders. On one occasion, according to an anonymous memoir prefixed to an 1803 edition of *The Connoisseur*, "young Thornton had formed a pleasant party, with whom he repaired to Drury-Lane Theatre to see a favourite play; as ill luck would have it, he was led to a box, the next to that in which was seated his father!" The old gentleman, "after eyeing him for some time," became extremely upset at this sign of his son's idleness. So the father "stepped from his seat" and addressed the son "in terms strongly expressive of his disapproval." In this embarrassing spot glib and quick-witted Thornton, "knowing the temper of his parent," gravely bowed to him and assured him that he was mistaken. Then, pretending to be angry, he turned to his friends and "expressed his indignation against *Old Wigsby*, for his impertinence in mistaking *him* for his son." However, the account continues, Thornton "took care to retire from the theatre, and without loss of time hired a post-chaise, and got to Oxford early enough to appear at chapel at seven the next morning." The father, knowing his son all too well, followed in hot pursuit, only to be completely deceived when he arrived next morning at Thornton's study in college: "There he found our hero on the last scene of his successful farce; in his morning gown, overwhelmed with medical books, and employed in penning a dissertation on the Cramp!"¹

Similarly in 1753 Colman's uncle and guardian, the Earl of Bath, wrote to him on the eve of vacation, broadly hinting his disapproval of Colman's fondness for the gay life of the theatre: "You shall stay with me in my house, for about three weeks," he says, "but not to be at your mama's, where you may have opportunities of strolling idly about the town, wherever your inclination may lead you; not that you shall be unreason-

ably confined at home, but have liberty now and then to visit your favourite playhouses, as well as your friends and acquaintances.”² Colman had to obey his rich uncle, for after all he was at that time looked upon by everyone as the “brisk heir to forty thousand pound.” Although he dutifully studied law at the Inns of Court, in obedience to his uncle’s wishes, Colman refused to let this career interfere with his interest in the drama. He continued to frequent the playhouses and eventually turned playwright himself. His first success was the one-act comedy, *Polly Honeycomb*, which Garrick produced in 1760. Colman followed his initial success by an even greater one — his brilliant three-act comedy *The Jealous Wife*, which appeared in February, 1761, one month before the publication of Churchill’s *Rosciad*.

It was also to the theatre that Lloyd first turned his attention when in 1760 he resigned his teaching job at Westminster and plunged into the life of a free-lance writer and man-about-town. In April of this year he published *The Actor*, the most ambitious poem he had yet written. It attracted considerable attention, although interest in it was short-lived because of the appearance of Churchill’s far better poem on the same subject a year later. But even today *The Actor* may be judged a solid, respectable, neo-classic poem of the second order. Written in heroic couplets, it deals in general terms with the subject of good and bad acting. The contemporary popularity of the theatres, of course, lent additional interest to the poem, which (addressed to Thornton) is a plea for naturalism in the art of acting and a criticism of all that is mechanical and artificial on the stage. Good acting, says Lloyd,

Lies not in trick, or attitude, or start,
Nature’s true knowledge is the only art.

(*Poems*, p. 67)

Poor actors, “like your mimic apes, Will writhe their bodies in a thousand shapes”; whereas the great ones know that

To paint the passion's force, and mark it well,
The proper action nature's self will tell. (Poems, p. 70)

Slavish imitation of other actors is criticized: "let the generous actor still forbear To copy features with a mimic's care"; and Garrick is of course praised as the great example:

Thrice-happy Genius, whose unrival'd name
Shall live forever in the voice of Fame. (Poems, p. 66)

A few of the older actors of the time are mentioned in passing (Booth, Cibber, Wilks, Genest, etc.), but they are treated very gingerly. Finally, the poet concludes with an impressive comparison between the actor and the poet-dramatist, which later became a commonplace of theatrical criticism:

Yet, hapless artist! tho' thy skill can raise
The bursting peal of universal praise,
Tho' at thy beck Applause delighted stands,
And lifts, Briareus like, her hundred hands,
Know, fame awards thee but a partial breath!
Not all thy talents brave the stroke of Death.
Poets to ages yet unborn appeal,
And latest times th' Eternal Nature feel.
Tho' blended here the praise of bard and play'r,
While more than half becomes the Actor's share,
Relentless death untwists the mingled fame,
And sinks the player in the poet's name. (Poems, p. 79)

We do not know whether the success of Lloyd's poem inspired Churchill to select the theatre as the subject of *The Rosciad* or merely strengthened a resolve already made; we do know, however, that for some time he had been haunting the Drury-Lane almost nightly. In his life of Garrick, the actor Thomas Davies tells us that "Churchill had for a long time frequented the playhouse; he bestowed incessant attention on stage representation; and, by close application, laboured to understand perfectly the subject which was the choice of his muse. His observatory was generally the first row of the pit, next to the orchestra."⁸ In this location just behind the spikes that separated the pit from the orchestra, Churchill's enormous

bulk in its dilapidated clergyman's gown must indeed have been conspicuous, his owlish face and sharp eyes intently studying every word and gesture of the players. Actually, all that Churchill did in his satiric bombshell, *The Rosciad*, was to raise to a brilliant literary level the kind of personalized criticism of the actors that was then a common occurrence in the theatre itself. At that time the interest of the audience was primarily in the individual performance of the actors rather than in the effect of the play as a whole. An actor who did not make good was met with hisses and catcalls; one who succeeded was wildly applauded after every telling speech. Churchill's poem was just such a practice on a higher and more formal level.

The Rosciad was published March 14, 1761. It went through eight editions in Churchill's lifetime, during which he expanded it from a poem of 730 to one of 1090 lines. The measure of his success with this poem is indicated by the following tribute occasioned by the appearance of the seventh edition less than two years after the first: "This is perhaps the most popular Poem that has ever been published in England since Pope's *Dunciad*, like which also, it provoked all the legions of Grub-street to take Arms against the Author, while it established his Reputation with the Generality, for the Warmth of his Fancy, and the Manliness, the terrible Severity, of his Satire."⁴

Even though it was to become an immediate success, Churchill had some difficulty getting his poem published. According to Southey in his life of Cowper, Churchill asked only five guineas for it, but found no takers;⁵ Tooke, however, says that he offered it to several publishers "at the moderate sum of twenty pounds; but meeting with a peremptory refusal to give more than five guineas, he resolved to publish it on his own account. . . ."⁶ The decision to publish on his own was, financially, the smartest move that Churchill ever made, for,

since he received all the profits, he was soon independent. The struggling clergyman who for seven years had prayed and starved "on forty pounds a year" now found himself possessed of upwards of £750 for a single poem. Two years later the pious bluestocking, Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, wrote ironically to a friend: "I have lately heard that Churchill, within two years, has got £3,500 by his ribald scribbling! Happy age of virtue and genius, in which Wilkes is a patriot, and Churchill a poet!"⁷

The success of *The Rosciad* was due not to the novelty of the poem, but to the sharp, biting, brilliant personal satire it contained. Indeed the idea behind the poem was an old and familiar one in 1761. It had been used, as we have seen, with considerable success the year before by Lloyd in *The Actor*. As a matter of fact, both *The Actor* and *The Rosciad* derive from a long line of poems and essays on actors and acting, which for twenty years had been popular in London. Two aspects of the subject particularly appealed to mid-eighteenth-century readers. One was the lively controversy over the relative merits of "ancient" and "modern" drama; the other was the conflict between the older more formal style of acting and the newer more natural method introduced by Garrick at his Drury-Lane Theatre.

Lloyd's poem had been a mild philosophical discussion of the principles of acting; *The Rosciad*, says James Laver, one of Churchill's editors, "was as personal as a smack in the face, as definite as a hiss from the pit."⁸ This powerful effect arises from its form — a series of twenty-eight penetrating portraits of the major actors and actresses of the day and a number of thumbnail sketches of smaller fry.⁹ These appeared in the first edition and were considerably changed and expanded as the poem went through its various editions in Churchill's lifetime. The portraits are linked together by the slight thread of a story: since the death of the great Roman actor Roscius in the first century, B.C., no one has been found to take his place, al-

though "each high aspiring player Push'd all his interest for the vacant chair." The poem then becomes a search for judges to choose the modern Roscius and the final selection of him. After a long search, in which a number of contemporary dramatists are considered and rejected, "Shakespeare and Jonson, with deserved applause, Joint judges were ordained to try the cause" (229-30). Next all the players are passed in review and all but one rejected. The description of that one (Garrick) concludes the poem, as Shakespeare speaks:

"If manly sense, if Nature link'd with art;
 If thorough knowledge of the human heart;
 If powers of acting vast and unconfined;
 If fewest faults with greatest beauties join'd;
 If strong expression, and strange powers which lie
 Within the magic circle of the eye;
 If feelings which few hearts, like his, can know,
 And which no face so well as his can show,
 Deserve the preference; — Garrick! take the chair,
 Nor quit it — till thou place an equal there."

Even a casual reading of *The Rosciad*, particularly in its first edition, reveals that the poem is not and was never intended to be an *indiscriminate* attack on the actors. Churchill, that is, was not merely slinging mud, as his enemies accused him of doing. *The Rosciad* is an essay in criticism, intended, on the whole, to be fair and just. It is, of course, extremely outspoken; but it is outspoken in praise as well as criticism. Churchill had nothing but praise for the actor Blakes, who was superb in the portrayal of Frenchmen:

If I forget thee, Blakes, or if I say
 Aught hurtful, may I never see thee play. (521-22)

Likewise he was unqualified in his commendation of John Moody, unsurpassed in his portrayal of Irish character parts:

Taught by thee, Moody, we now learn to raise
 Mirth from their foibles, from their virtues, praise. (537-38)

And Thomas Sheridan, although criticized for his faults of voice and expression, is warmly praised in the conclusion of his portrait:

Where he falls short, 'tis Nature's fault alone;
Where he succeeds, the merit's all his own. (1025-26)

Surley this is thoughtful and appreciative dramatic criticism.

Another indication of Churchill's intention to be unprejudiced and sincere may be seen in his treatment of John Palmer (1728-68). In the first edition of *The Rosciad*, after line 336, Churchill included an attack on the actor's private life, accusing him of unfaithfulness in love. These lines appeared only in the first edition. Moreover, in his next poem, *The Apology*, Churchill apologized for having written them:

But if the Muse, too cruel in her mirth,
With harsh reflections wounds the man of worth;
If wantonly she deviates from her plan,
And quits the actor to expose the man;
Ashamed, she marks the passage with a blot,
And hates the line where candour was forgot. (330-35)

Clearly Churchill suppressed the offending lines on Palmer because he considered them not appropriate to his intention in *The Rosciad*.

With this fair and even generous treatment of Blakes, Moody, Sheridan, and Palmer in mind, we may see how wide of the mark is the assertion by Davies in his life of Garrick that at Churchill's hands "no one man, except Mr. Garrick, escaped his satirical lash."¹⁰ Indeed, the following summary of Churchill's position with respect to the actors should be accepted as the essential truth of the matter: "On the whole, it cannot be questioned that the prevailing characteristic of the *Rosciad* was fairness. The author might be wrong in his opinions, but they were in nearly every case opinions which he no doubt honestly held. Even poor Tom Davies admitted, twenty years after the poet's death, that he was a 'generous and fair satirist'."¹¹

Many of the bitterest and most partisan lines in *The Rosciad* appeared after the first edition and were the result of Churchill's later interests apart from the actors. There is, for example, the slashing attack on Alexander Wedderburn, who became a political enemy of Wilkes in 1762. In 1763 Churchill added this passage (lines 69-104) as a defense of his friend. Another violent passage that was not added until later is the attack on Thomas Fitzpatrick (117-88), an enemy of Garrick and leader of the "Fitzgiggo riots" at the Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden theatres in January and February, 1763. It begins:

With that low cunning, which in fools supplies,
And amply too, the place of being wise,
Which Nature, kind, indulgent parent! gave
To qualify the blockhead for a knave. . . . (117-20)

Sandwiched between these two corrosive attacks is a much shorter portrait of "Dr." John Hill, a bungling jack-of-all-trades, including that of actor, which appeared in the first edition of *The Rosciad*. The humor, subtle irony, and general restraint of this passage are in sharpest contrast to the direct and violent attacks on Wedderburn and Fitzpatrick:

With sleek appearance, and with ambling pace,
And type of vacant head with vacant face,
The Proteus Hill put in his modest plea, —
"Let Favour speak for others, Worth for me." —
For who, like him, his various powers could call
Into so many shapes, and shine in all?
Who could so nobly grace the motley list,
Actor, Inspector, Doctor, Botanist?
Knows any one so well — sure no one knows —
At once to play, prescribe, compound, compose?
Who can — but Woodward came, — Hill slipp'd away,
Melting like ghosts before the rising day. (105-16)

In addition to the criticism of the actors in the first edition of *The Rosciad*, Churchill renewed his attack on the contemporary poets and critics who imitated and supported the class-

ical authors in the ancients-versus-moderns controversy. As we have seen, he had earlier taken this position in his "Epistle to R. L. L.," which appeared in *The Library*. In *The Rosciad* he calls them "Cold-blooded critics . . . a servile race,"

Who, in mere want of fault all merit place;
 Who blind obedience pay to ancient schools,
 Bigots to Greece, and slaves to musty rules;
 With solemn consequence declar'd that none
 Could judge that cause but Sophocles alone:
 Dupes to their fancied excellence, the crowd,
 Obsequious to the sacred dictate, bow'd. (179-90)

There can be little question that Churchill includes in this indictment those "Cambridge worthies" Thomas Gray and William Mason, whom both he and Lloyd never tired of satirizing and whom Lloyd and Colman had burlesqued in their two poems, *An Ode to Obscurity* and *An Ode to Oblivion*, in 1760. Also glanced at in this attack are Thomas Francklin, Professor of Greek at Cambridge, and Richard Hurd, later Bishop of Worcester. All of these men had in the past ten years translated, defended, or imitated various classical authors.¹²

Although as poetry the brilliance of *The Rosciad* was widely recognized in its own day, later evaluations, in keeping with Churchill's literary eclipse, have tended to place the poem too far below the heights of poetic satire dominated by Dryden and Pope. These, it is true, were Churchill's models; but there is a great deal more in *The Rosciad* than the mere imitation of such masterpieces as *MacFlecknoe*, *Absalom and Achitophel*, and *The Dunciad*. Indeed, the most serious weakness in Churchill's poem is not that it is inferior to the work of Dryden and Pope, but that he kept adding to it over a period of more than two years. As a result the eighth edition (the last in his lifetime) is structurally a hodgepodge, and it is this edition, reprinted as the ninth, that all readers see today.

Even so, this edition contains much that is, as poetry, sharp, penetrating, and technically excellent. In *The Rosciad* his first mature poem, Churchill revealed his own mastery of its form, the heroic couplet — a form that he was to use more originally and brilliantly later. A few lines will illustrate most of the qualities of this form and Churchill's successful management of it. Thus about Arthur Murphy:

Still in extremes, he knows no happy mean,
 Or raving mad, or stupidly serene.
 In cold-wrought scenes the lifeless actor flags;
 In passion tears the passion into rags.
 Can none remember? Yes — I know all must —
 When in the Moor he ground his teeth to dust,
 When o'er the stage he Folly's standard bore,
 Whilst Common Sense stood trembling at the door.

(577-84)

This is of course, direct satire, having none of the subtleties of irony that Churchill later employed; but it is hard-hitting and interestingly varied. There is balanced sentence-structure ("Or raving mad, or stupidly serene . . . When in the Moor . . . When o'er the stage"), but not too much balance; the major pause (the caesura) occurs after the fourth syllable in six of the eight lines, but the other two (lines 4 and 5) provide variety; the number of stressed syllables per line, although dominantly five, is also varied by the use of four stresses in lines 2, 4, and 8, and six in line 3; finally, the iambic metrical pattern is frequently replaced by other metrical feet, particularly the trochaic and the pyrrhic. In thought the intentional distortion, the implied meanings, the powerful adjectives, and the pervading tone of contempt combine to make this passage very effective satire.

In form the first edition of *The Rosciad* is not nearly so weak as the poem later became. Structurally it has five parts, mounting to an appropriate climax. In lines 1 to 60 the contemporary actors are pictured, squabbling over the honor of

occupying the vacant chair of Roscius; in lines 61 to 140 the field is canvassed for judges to select the winner, Shakespeare and Jonson being finally chosen; in lines 141 to 216 they are praised and the trial scene is described; in lines 217 to 666, the major part of the poem, all the actors and actresses except Garrick are passed in review, evaluated, and rejected; in lines 667 to 730 Garrick appears and wins the nomination, and the poem ends with a complimentary address to him by Shakespeare.

Such, in brief, are the virtues of this remarkable poem that created a sensation throughout London in the spring of 1761. It is difficult today to picture the consternation caused by the appearance of *The Rosciad*, which fell like a bombshell on the theatrical world. Churchill had studied his actors so carefully that much of what he wrote the public recognized as essentially true. In his life of Garrick Davies has left a vivid account of the general reaction to Churchill's poem: "The author soon found that he had no occasion to advertise his poem in the public prints; the players spread its fame all over the town; they ran about like so many stricken deer; they strove to extract the arrow from the wound by communicating the knowledge of it to their friends. The public, so far from being aggrieved, enjoyed the distress of the players; they thought the *Rosciad* a pleasant and reasonable retaliation for the mirth which the stage had continually excited at their expense."¹³ Churchill's lines on Davies himself, although they are relatively mild, are famous for what Boswell made of them:

With him came mighty Davies. On my life,
That Davies hath a very pretty wife: —
Statesman all over! — in plots famous grown! —
He mouths a sentence as curs mouth a bone. (319-22)

The rumor went out later that these lines had driven Davies from the stage. Boswell reported this to Dr. Johnson, who was a friend of Davies and who remarked, "What a man is he, who

is to be driven from the stage by a line!"¹⁴ Except for his conversation with Boswell, Johnson followed his own advice by ignoring Churchill's later attacks on him. In *The Rosciad* he is not severely dealt with. As a possible judge of the players, "For Johnson some; but Johnson, it was fear'd, Would be too grave" (61-2).

The fear that *The Rosciad* instilled in the actors is further illustrated by a letter which one of them (Thomas Davis, not Davies, as Tooke mistakenly assumes) wrote to Churchill. Shortly after the appearance of *The Rosciad* a report was circulated that Churchill planned to write another satire on the minor actors, of which Davis was to be the "hero." This poem was to be called "The Smithfield Rosciad." Poor Davis wrote Churchill a humiliating letter, begging to be left out of the forthcoming poem and saying, among other things, "I humbly conceive myself entitled, at least, to solicit an omission of such parts of your next intended publication, as may tend to expose some imperfections (perhaps natural ones), and thereby retard the progress I presume to hope in the esteem of the candid world, from an invariable assiduity and exertion of the poor talents with which I am invested." Churchill answered Davis curtly and ironically as follows: "From whom you have obtained your information concerning my next publication, I know not, nor indeed am solicitous to know; neither can I think you entitled, as you express it, to an exemption from any severity, as you express it, which gentlemen of your profession, as you express it, are subject to. . . . P.S. Defects (perhaps natural, as you express it) are secure from my own feelings, without application."¹⁵ *The St. James's Chronicle* published this exchange of correspondence with the following note: "A Report having prevailed that Mr. Churchill intended speedily to publish a new Theatrical Stricture, entitled *The Smithfield Rosciad*, wherein the Merits of the inferior Actors were to be considered; and Mr. Davis, of Covent-Garden Theatre, having

been informed, that he was made the Hero of this intended Publication, that Gentleman thought proper to send the following Letter to Mr. Churchill, to which the Reader will find annexed the Satyrist's Reply."¹⁶

Except for the implications of Churchill's letter, we have no evidence that he ever intended writing such a satire. We do know, however, that some readers of the newspapers thought he had such an intention, for in the *St. James's* for November 10, 1763, appeared "Lines on seeing the *Smithfield Rosciad* advertised by C. Churchill":

Hold, frightful Satyre, hold thy bloody Paw!
And cease to keep such petty Folks in Awe,
Like mighty Brobdingnag thy Will retracting,
O spare, like him, such Gullivers in Acting!¹⁷

And, for whatever it is worth, there appeared in *Lloyd's Evening Post* for December 5 the following announcement: "This Day is published, Price 2s. 6d. The *Smithfield Rosciad*. By the Author."¹⁸ A poem with this title was published, but it is so imitative and inferior in quality as to be almost certainly an anonymous Grub-Street broadside.

There were many attempts at non-literary retaliation, but little came of them. Davies says that Yates, angered by the criticism of his wife, invited Churchill to a tavern in order to challenge him. Upon hearing of this move, Garrick's brother George hastened to the tavern; he found them hotly quarrelling, "but by good fortune he reconciled the contending parties with a bottle,"¹⁹ a sound tactical gesture so far as Churchill was concerned. Even before he was known to be the author, says Tooke, "those performers who thought themselves roughly handled by him, vowed vengeance against the author, should he ever have the temerity to publish his name. Churchill hearing this, immediately ordered his bookseller to put his name at full in the next edition, which was accordingly done, and the day after Churchill went to the Bedford Coffee House where

he was sure of meeting some of his exasperated adversaries; spying a group of them at the lower end of the room, he boldly marched up, and drawing off his gloves with great composure, called for a dish of coffee and the Rosciad, in a tone of voice that by no means indicated the least spark of apprehension. This menace, however, produced no other effect for the present than their judiciously moving off, one by one, till they left the box entirely to himself."²⁰

Most of the actors, not being writers, were relatively helpless in the face of Churchill's attacks. One exception, however, was Samuel Foote, a competent playwright as well as actor. Foote was severely satirized in *The Rosciad* as a cruel mimic:

His strokes of humour, and his bursts of sport
Are all contain'd in this one word, *Distort*. (399-400)

He retaliated in an acted but unpublished revision of his comedy *Taste*. The revised play was hurriedly produced on April 6, 1761, less than a month after the appearance of *The Rosciad*. In a new opening scene and second act, which Foote added to attack not only Churchill but his friends Colman and Lloyd or Thornton as well, the three men appear respectively as Charles Manly, George Townly, and Fustian, the poet. "Manly" clearly points to Churchill, whose first name is also used; "Townly" suggests the Thornton-Colman pen name in *The Connoisseur* ("Mr. Town"), and Colman's first name was George. "Fustian" as Lloyd is more doubtful; a stronger case can, I believe, be made for Thornton as the poet. He was popularly associated with Colman as "Mr. Town" of *The Connoisseur*, and, furthermore, in his *Ode on Saint Caecilia's Day* Thornton actually used the pen name of "Fustian Sackbut."²¹

Foote's satire ridicules Churchill's lumbering bearlike appearance and his then-recent marital difficulties. On first meeting Manly, Townly exclaims, "Manly, impossible! hey, yes, faith it is; what a ridiculous transformation! why thou art as rugged and shaggy as a Beast of thy own breeding after a hard

winter." Later Manly is made to praise ironically the happiness of his marriage: "The Possession of an amiable woman instead of producing Satiety & Disgust, adds strength to your Passions and that love at first tumultuous, when cemented by Friendship, refined by Delicacy, & sanctify'd by Innocence, is the highest of Human Enjoyments." Compared to Churchill's incisive attacks, this is indeed innocuous satire, and the play itself had an indifferent reception. Churchill, of course, ignored it, as he did a second reply by Foote. On April 28, 1761, he had published a poetic broadside entitled *The Mimic*, in which he answered Churchill by so lavishly praising himself that the poem has been described as "an anonymous adulation of Foote."²²

Neither these attacks nor any others deterred Churchill in the slightest; in fact, as Davies suggests, they strengthened his sudden reputation as a satirist. With the success of *The Rosciad* Churchill was launched on an entirely new career. Gone were the frustrations, the grinding poverty, the uncongenial work of his years as a country clergyman. Through his new prosperity he could now actually live as he had only dreamed of living before. His natural inclinations, previously suppressed by stark necessity, now could be indulged to the fullest. Churchill blossomed out in expensive finery, paid off his debts, made provision for his estranged wife and children, and began to live the free life of a successful author and dashing man-about-town.

ii.

In addition to the personal response of the actors, *The Rosciad* set off a lively and acrimonious literary controversy that had been simmering privately at the Drury-Lane Theatre for several years. Historically, this "battle" was a tempest in a teapot, but it became a cause célèbre to Churchill and his friends. During the 1750's the dramatist Arthur Murphy was

Garrick's mainstay for new plays. But Garrick, who was a temperamental actor-manager, had for years been quarreling periodically with Murphy, an equally temperamental Irishman.²⁸ Garrick would clearly have been happier if Murphy had been out of the way, but until 1760 there was no other dramatist to take his place. In that year, however, the success of Colman's first play, *Polly Honeycomb*, a one-act comedy, made him a possible candidate for Murphy's position at the Drury-Lane, although this play was too slight and ephemeral to count solidly in his favor. Besides, Murphy had contracts with Garrick, and, more importantly, he was a pretty wicked satirist himself and would undoubtedly retaliate (as he did later) in the public press if any moves were made against him. Garrick, a shrewd and devious man, bided his time.

The success of Lloyd's poem, *The Actor*, had revealed the possible influence that the four Westminster friends might exert in the affairs of the theatre. But it was the performance at the Drury-Lane of two excellent comedies in 1761 that brought the campaign against Murphy into the open. These plays were, in terms of the drama and popular success, the best that had been written in the last twenty years. One was by Murphy, the other by Colman. Murphy's *The Way to Keep Him* was a five-act enlargement of his three-act version of the year before; but Colman's *The Jealous Wife* was a new, original, and brilliant performance. At this point Churchill, Lloyd, and Thornton joined Colman (aided and abetted by Garrick himself) in their literary and journalistic maneuver to make Colman top dramatist at the Drury-Lane.

The opening salvo in this theatrical warfare came from Churchill, in whose *Rosciad* Garrick, Colman, and Lloyd are highly praised — Garrick as the actor, Colman as the dramatist, and Lloyd as the critic. Murphy is briefly sneered at but not severely attacked (this was to come in Churchill's next poem, *The Apology*):

Some call'd for M — y, but that sound soon dy'd,
And Desart Island rang on ev'ry side,²⁴

“Desart Island” being a sarcastic allusion to one of Murphy’s poetic dramas. As if to highlight the Colman-Murphy rivalry Colman is praised in the second couplet after the one in which Murphy is condemned:

For Colman many, but the peevish tongue
Of prudent Age found out that he was young.²⁴

Two years later, while Churchill’s feud with Murphy was still very much alive, he inserted in the seventh edition of *The Rosciad* twenty-two more lines (554-76) of devastating satire on his old enemy. By that time Murphy had withdrawn from the Drury-Lane and Colman had become Garrick’s resident playwright. The “triumvirate,” with Garrick’s undercover assistance, had succeeded; but in 1761 much more was still to happen before their triumph was complete.

The reaction to Churchill’s praise of his friends in *The Rosciad* publicly identified the Garrick adherents and led to the tagging of three of them (Churchill, Colman, and Lloyd) as “the triumvirate,” Thornton being an alternate. We know that Thornton was a member of the Garrick inner circle, for during this year Garrick wrote to Colman, referring directly to him and “our Friend Churchill.” “I have this Moment seen our Friend Churchill,” he says, “& told him a fine Scheme of Vaughn’s in conjunction with the Gang of Pottinger — they are going to publish a Set of Papers call’d the *Genius*, in order to forestall yrs. and deceive the Public. It is a most infamous design, & I desir’d Churchill would let Thornton know of it, which he will do immediately, & prevent their Scoundrility by some humourous Paragraph.”²⁵

Except for Churchill, these men were also recognized as a group in the public mind after the appearance of *The Critical Review*’s disastrously mistaken review of *The Rosciad* in March, 1761. Since the poem was first published anonymously,

The Critical Review suggested that "by their stile" Thornton and Colman ("these Connoisseurs") and Lloyd were the authors. "Little do these Connoisseurs in writing conceive how easily they are discovered by a veteran in the service"; to which the reviewer adds: "We will not pretend, however, to assert that Mr. L — wrote this poem; but we may venture to affirm, that it is the production, jointly or separately, of the new triumvirate of wits, who never let an opportunity slip of singing their own praises."²⁶

In April of this year Churchill returned to the attack on Murphy in his second satire, *The Apology*, "addressed to the Critical Reviewers." By then he had, or thought he had, a second reason for assailing Murphy. He suspected him of having written the unfavorable review of *The Rosciad* in *The Critical Review*. The article, which incidentally Murphy probably did not write, had repeated the suggestion that Churchill's friends, Colman and Lloyd, were in league to discredit everyone but Garrick and themselves. "The whole drift of the performance seems to be plainly and indisputably this: first to throw all the players, like so many faggots, into a pile, and set fire to them by way of sacrifice to the modern Roscius [Garrick]; and secondly, to do the same by all the wits and poets of the age, in compliment to Messieurs Lloyd and Colman, the heroes of the piece."²⁷

Churchill's attack on Murphy in *The Apology* satirizes him as a playwright, not as a critic, thus indicating that Churchill intended to discredit him with Garrick in favor of Colman. It accuses Murphy of plagiarizing from foreign plays and ridicules Sylvia, the heroine of his romantic comedy, *The Desert Island*. Finally, it refers sarcastically to a coarse counter-satire by Murphy, *An Ode to the Naiads of Fleet-Ditch*, which, however, had not yet been published! Undoubtedly Churchill had secured private information about this poem, probably from Colman, who was still outwardly friendly with Murphy.

Murphy's first retaliation to Churchill's attacks was the scurrilous *Ode* mentioned above. Even in a day when satiric mud-slinging was common, this poem was deplored on all sides for its bad language and worse taste. *The Monthly Review*, for example, said, "We are sorry to see this Gentleman's Muse descend so low as the above-mentioned sink of the city, where she has grievously bedaubed herself, in attempting to fling a great deal of the filth upon Mr. Churchill."²⁸ The opening lines of the poem indicate the vulgar level to which it descends:

Ye nut-brown Naiads of that sable Flood,
To which auxiliar Sewers their Homage pay,
And little Rills, meandering o'er the Mud,
Wind from a thousand Urinals their way.²⁹

Among the many replies to the *Naiads of Fleet-Ditch* was that of an unknown supporter of Churchill, who responded with an equally obscene poem entitled *The Murphiad*, which even Lloyd, reviewing it in *The Monthly Review*, could not bring himself to approve. "Dull and insipid," he says, "meant, indeed, as abuse upon a certain Gentleman; but in that personal manner, which no man of honour would write, nor any Reader of sence and decency wish to read."³⁰

Lloyd himself answered Murphy's *Naiads of Fleet-Ditch* in two poems, *Genius, Envy, and Time* and *An Epistle to C. Churchill*, both published in July, 1761. These satires repeat the line of attack taken by Churchill in *The Apology*, defend the Triumvirate as "the real Sons of Taste," and prophesy the downfall of Murphy. *Genius, Envy, and Time* answers the critical attacks on Colman's play and Churchill's satires:

The Jealous Wife, tho' chastely writ,
With no parade of frippery wit,
Shall set a scribbling, all at once,
Both giant wit, and pigmy dunce;
While Critical Reviewers write
Who shew their teeth before they bite,
And sacrifice each reputation,
From wanton false imagination.

In contrast to these critics is "Genius, a bustling lad of parts,"

Who hated all pedantic schools,
And scorn'd the gloss of knowing fools,

and who, all his life, has been a "downright worshipper of truth." In the poem Envy of course sets out to discredit this young man; among other things, she has been the inspiration for Murphy's attack on Churchill:

"Envy shall sink, and be no more
Than what her Naiads were before;
Mere excremental maggots, bred
In poet's topsy-turvy head,
Born like a momentary fly,
To flutter, buzz about, and die." (Poems, pp. 200-5)

Lloyd's second reply to the critics of Churchill, his *Epistle*, is even more effective as satire. Indeed this poem in heroic couplets compares not unfavorably with Churchill's own *Apology*, and in the two poems the similarity of ideas and even of language testifies to the closeness of their friendship. Churchill's couplets are stronger and more firm in texture than Lloyd's, a fact that he recognized in his praise of his friend:

No toothless spleen, no venom'd critic's aim,
Shall rob thee, Churchill, of thy proper fame;
While hitch'd for ever in thy nervous rhyme,
Fool lives, and shines out fool to latest time.

(Poems, p. 185)

Lloyd's satire in this poem is made more effective by his occasional use of irony. Thus alluding to *The Critical Review's* self-compliment as a "veteran critic," Lloyd writes:

Firm in thyself with calm indifference smile,
When the wise vet'ran knows you by your stile,
With critic scales weighs out the partial wit,
What I, or You, or He, or no one writ. . . . (Poems, p. 187)

In his Preface to this poem Lloyd uses irony more extensively than in the poem itself. Referring to Murphy's savage

attack in the *Naiads of Fleet-Ditch* and to the "veteran critic" of *The Critical Review*, he says: "As in Parts of the following there is an Allusion to a late *delicate* Production, it may not be improper to let the Reader into some Secrets concerning its Origin, that He may know the Progress of Wit, and how dangerous it is for young Adventurers to attack Veterans in the Service," after which Lloyd accuses Murphy of originally writing the *Naiads* to satirize an unnamed enemy (probably William Shirley) and then altering it to an attack on Churchill. "Happy is the Man," Lloyd continues sarcastically, "that is always prepared for his Enemy, and has 'his Naiads by him ready made'." The last reference is to Churchill's couplet in *The Apology*:

Rude and unskilful in the poet's trade,
I kept no Naiads by me ready made, (170-71)

which shows that Churchill believed Lloyd's story that Murphy had altered his poem into an attack on him. Earlier in his Preface, still with his tongue in his cheek, Lloyd describes Murphy as "An Author possessed of those happy Qualities which appear so notoriously in that Publication, viz. *Modesty, Decency, and Good Nature*."³¹ Such satire is only slightly less effective than that of the complete triumph of irony in Churchill's best work.

Near the end of his *Epistle* to Churchill, Lloyd at least pretends to be tiring of this controversy, for he advises Churchill to quit the unrewarding career of writing:

Oh! then with me forsake the thorny road,
Lest we should flounder in some Fleet-Ditch ode,
And sunk forever in the lazy flood,
Weep with the Naiads heavy drops of Mud. (*Poems*, p. 190)

In *The Library* for July, 1761, a reviewer observes that "the poetical war excited by Mr. Churchill, is not yet ended; and even Mr. Lloyd has been provoked to appear in favour of his friend against Mr. Murphy; who, we suppose, by this time

heartily repents of his Address to the Naiads of Fleetditch,"³² a comment that suggests who was then winning this literary "battle."

At the same time that Lloyd was defending Churchill and their friends (June, 1761) there was published anonymously *The Churchiliad*, attacking him. This trivial prose pamphlet is of some value for its sarcastic reference to his appearance and to some of the details of his life. "But if I know you rightly," says the author, addressing Churchill, "you have unjustly called Providence to an account; for I must candidly own, I have often look'd upon those shoulders, and the pedestals you wear for legs, with an eye of envy." And about Churchill's money difficulties: "If you know any friend of yours, they call the Clumsy Curate, they say he was obliged to raise a speedy sum of money to discharge a good-natured creditor, who had agreed to take about a fifth for the whole debt." Finally, the often-repeated story that Churchill neglected his clerical duties in order to attend the theatre: "The scene is truly laudable; for who shall dare to blame him, tho' he did let two bodies wait in the church some few hours for him to read the burial service? — was he not more materially employed in the orchestra of Drury-Lane theatre?"³³

Another more general attack on the whole theatrical warfare appeared during this same month: *The Scrubs of Parnassus . . . in Hudibrastic Verse . . . by Whackum Smackum, Esq.* Referring to *The Rosciad*, the writer says in his Preface that "if an Author can be said to acquire fame in depreciating, or exposing the imperfections of a set of people, whose bread intirely depends on the good opinion of the town, Mr. Churchill has, indeed, an indubitable right to a very considerable share." The poem itself ends with a plea to both sides to stop the quarrel:

Leave then, Ah! leave these filthy streams,
And launch into the purer Thames;
There try, my friends, if not in vain,
To wash your muses clean again.³⁴

As further evidence of the anti-Murphy coalition there appeared in *The St. James's Chronicle* in August, 1761, an allegorical story called "Dulness Banished." According to a recent biographer of Murphy, the real meaning of this tale is as follows: "Dulness (Murphy) is opposed by Churchill's 'Faction,' who support Roscius (Garrick) and reason. Dulness is banished, and Genius, Candor, and Truth (Colman, Churchill, and Lloyd?) prevail."³⁵ The likelihood of this interpretation is strengthened by the fact that Thornton, Colman, and Garrick were stockholders in *The St. James's Chronicle* and were at this time directing its policies.

By October, 1761, Lloyd had become sufficiently weary of this literary warfare to urge a cessation of hostilities. In a review of a poem, *The Triumvirate*, which attacked Churchill, Colman, and himself, he wrote: "We are sorry to find that the literary heats which so much interested the attention of the public last winter, are likely to be revived in this. . . . We should have perused the humourous piece now before us with much greater pleasure, could we have considered it in any other light than as a signal for the parties to take the field, and renew those hostilities which every sensible and moderate man would wish entirely to cease."³⁶ Lloyd's anticipation of a renewal of this controversy was justified, if we may judge from the attack on him and his friends in Cuthbert Shaw's satire, *The Four Farthing-Candles*, published in 1762. Calling him "The pedant L — d, with learning big," Shaw continues more violently:

And lo! an Author, last in Sight,
Another Rosciad drags to Light;
Supremely dull, his sickly Song
In lazy Numbers crawls along;
And conscious, that his paltry Muse
Can ne'er escape the two Reviews,
Trembling at critical Dissection,
He creeps to Ch—h—l for Protection.³⁷

In fact, as late as 1765 there appeared a Grub-Street poem entitled *The Race*, in which the Churchill-Murphy feud, reopened in the political warfare of 1762-63, is elaborately described. The "race" is for top poetical honors, near the climax of which Murphy appears, with "the Giant Churchill thundering by his Side." Murphy trips and falls into a "cursed Bog," an allusion to the unsavory character of his own retaliations upon Churchill, particularly the *Naiads of Fleet-Ditch*.³⁸

The last of these appeared in November, 1761, less than a month before Murphy severed all connections with Garrick and the Drury-Lane. It is another poetic satire called *The Examiner*, much higher in quality than the *Naiads*, but still violent in its attack. In it Churchill, Colman, and Lloyd are roundly abused, Colman as a plagiarizing dramatist, Churchill and Lloyd as villains of deepest dye. Murphy is especially bitter against Churchill:

Still on my head shall furious Churchill's rage,
Come inexhausted foaming o'er his page?

* * * * *

His rage announc'd him first; as bugs by night,
To warn ye of their being, sting and bite.
And thus attack'd, shall I not ward the blow?
Not bid defiance to th' insulting foe?
Shall I not tell the scurrilous divine,
The *Naiads of Fleetditch* inspire his line?
Not tell his pious leer and double chin,
That arrogance and venom dwell within?

At the conclusion of the poem Murphy offers a truce, which, however, did not end his feud with Churchill:

Sooth 'em with flatt'ry — to oppose is vain;
With all my heart — I'll sing another strain;
Bob Lloyd in fable equals *La Fontain*.
Colman, the comic Muse is yours entire,
And *Juvenal* must yield to *Churchill's* fire.³⁹

The magazines noted *The Examiner* with approval, *The Critical Review* calling it one of the finest satires in English,⁴⁰ and

The Monthly Review remarking that the poem "relates to the present personal paper-war among the Poets; and is too good for the occasion. Mr. Churchill, Mr. Colman, Mr. Lloyd, and others of that party, are severely but not scurrilously handled in it."⁴¹

The bitterness and notoriety of this writers' quarrel brought forth dozens of charges and counter-charges by others than Murphy or the Triumvirate.⁴² Most of these are beneath notice except that they indicate how widely the controversy was known and participated in. Even Goldsmith, in his *Citizen of the World* papers, took note of it in a humorous vein, including obvious allusions to Churchill, Lloyd, the actors, and the critics. "An important literary debate at present engrosses the attention of the town," he begins. "It is carried on with sharpness and a proper share of this epigrammatic fury. An author, it seems, has taken an aversion to the faces of several players, and has written verses to prove his dislike; the players fall upon the author, and assure the town he must be dull, and their faces must be good because he wants a dinner; the critic comes to the poet's assistance, asserting that the verses were perfectly original and so smart that he could never have written them without the assistance of friends; the friends upon hearing this arraign the critics, and plainly prove the verses to be all the author's own. So at it they are, all four together by the ears, the friends at the critic, the critic at the players, the players at the author, and the author at the players again."⁴³

Except for a great deal of unfavorable publicity, Churchill gained little from this theatrical warfare but the friendship of Garrick, which in itself, however, was of considerable importance to him. In *The Rosciad*, we remember, Churchill had praised Garrick highly. Garrick, in Churchill's opinion, had taken these compliments too cavalierly and he had also allowed Foote's play satirizing Churchill to be presented at the Drury-Lane;⁴⁴ so in *The Apology* he too comes in for attack:

Let the vain tyrant sit among his guards,
 His puny green-room wits and venal bards,
 Who meanly tremble at the puppet's frown,
 And for a play-house freedom lose their own. . . .

(266-69)

Garrick, who did not then know Churchill, immediately became alarmed. In a tactful letter to Lloyd he assured him of his admiration for Churchill's genius and asked Lloyd to arrange a meeting.⁴⁵ Lloyd prevailed upon Churchill to see Garrick, and the two became good friends.

This friendship continued for the remainder of Churchill's life and is recorded in many of Garrick's letters, in a few of Churchill's, and in many places elsewhere. Thus in 1761 Garrick wrote to Colman, concluding, "My love to Churchill, his being sick of Richard [King, the actor] was perceived about the house."⁴⁶ In an undated, though typical, letter to Garrick, Churchill writes, "Half drunk — half mad — and quite stripped of all my money, I should be much obliged if you would enclose and send by the bearer five pieces, by way of adding to favours already received by Yours sincerely, Charles Churchill."⁴⁷ And in a later undated note, the contents of which show it was written on September 14, 1763, he says cordially, "I am this moment come to town, or would have sent to you sooner. — Poor Garnier! I much lament that such men should die. Remember me in Italy, and know me, with the greatest sincerity, Ever yours."⁴⁸ In June, 1761, Garrick published *The Fribbleriad*, a satire attacking his enemy Thomas Fitzpatrick, in which appear the following lines in praise of Churchill:

With colours flying, beat of drum,
 Unlike to his, see Churchill come!
 And now like Hercules he stands,
 Unmask'd his face, but arm'd his hands;
 Alike prepar'd to write or drub!
 This holds a pen, and that a club!

And so on for a dozen more lines.⁴⁹

Two years later Garrick and Colman concocted their poetic squib, "The Cobler of Cripplegate's Letter to Robert Lloyd," in which they describe Churchill playfully:

Churchill! who ever loves to raise,
On Slander's dung his mushroom bayes;
The Priest, I grant, has something clever,
A something that will last forever.
Let him, in part, be made your pattern,
Whose Muse, now queen, and now a slattern,
Trick'd out in Rosciad rules the roast,
Turns trapes and trollops in the Ghost,
By turns, both tickles us, and warms,
And drunk or sober, has her charms.⁵⁰

Finally, Garrick's contemporary biographer, Thomas Davies, tells us that "Churchill was frequently entertained by Mr. Garrick at Hampton, and at his home in town; but he would never accept of any playhouse freedom, or other favour from him. He was steady in his friendships."⁵¹ The remark about "other" favors is obviously inaccurate, for the Churchill-Garrick correspondence shows that Churchill often borrowed money from his friend.

The Triumvirate of Westminster friends publicly admitted their alliance with Garrick and claimed a victory when in December, 1761, they declared in *The St. James's Chronicle* that "the Triple Alliance are resolved to retain the Conquests they have already made and to extend them still further; while one of the Potentates seems inclined to insist, that the whole Province of *Dramatica* should be ceded to him, having gotten Possession of Part of it by the Assistance of the French,"⁵² an allusion to Murphy's dependence on French plots for his plays. Although Garrick was the immediate cause of Murphy's withdrawal from the Drury-Lane, the activities of the old Westminsters, with Churchill at their head, were influential in seeing that Colman took his place.

By this time, nine months after the publication of *The Rosciad*, Churchill's name had become a byword for literary

success, and he and his friends were by then the talk of the town. These activities were indeed a far cry from those of the country curate who had come to London just four years ago. But a man's formative years are never completely forgotten; the bitterness engendered by the hardships and deprivations of Churchill's early life must account in part for the excesses into which he was now plunging and they certainly go far to explain the angry intensity of his satire.

Chapter IV

The Rise of a Libertine

CHURCHILL'S SUDDEN rise to fame and fortune not only precipitated him into the hectic theatrical warfare we have just described: it also accelerated the round of pleasures with his friends, new and old, which he had begun as soon as he returned to Westminster. Unfortunately we have no rich contemporary accounts of the private life of Churchill himself or of the social life of the Churchill group comparable, for instance, to those which have survived about Johnson and his circle. So at best the story must be pieced together from a handful of letters, a few unreliable memoirs, newspaper gossip, the little that Churchill says about himself in his poetry, and the reports of his appearances at taverns, coffeehouses, and the various dining-and-drinking clubs for which eighteenth-century London is famous.

The formation of intimate dinner-and-drinking clubs was then (and still is) a favorite activity among lively and socially-minded young men. In 1755, three years before Churchill returned to London to live, his Westminster schoolmates, under the leadership of Thornton, formed their Nonsense Club. Other members included Colman, Lloyd, Cowper, and James Bensley. It is not certain whether Churchill became a member on his return to London, but he undoubtedly took some part in their activities, which reflected their mutual literary and lighter interests. Colman's biographer, Eugene R. Page, describes the club as "a rather mixed group held together for six or seven years by the common bond of school friendship, college experiences, ambitions for literary success, and delight in the nonsensical schemes of their busiest member, Thornton."¹ As the busiest member of the Nonsense Club,

Thornton has left us records of his brilliance that impressed even the artist Hogarth.

The most popular project that Thornton devised for the Club was his Exhibition of Sign-Paintings, a take-off on the annual exhibition of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce. Thornton and his friends scoured the city and countryside, collecting all the samples of inappropriate and ridiculous outdoor advertising they could find. Then on the same day on which that Society opened its exhibition, April 20, 1762, Thornton solemnly announced his in *The St. James's Chronicle*. The grand opening took place in Thornton's house in Bow-Street, Covent Garden. It was presented complete with a printed catalogue, wittily and satirically describing the various items. Thus No. 9, a pair of fat legs encased in white stockings with black garters, is described as "The Irishman's Arms, by Patrick O'Blaney. N.B. Captain Terence O'Cutter stood for them" — Terence O'Cutter being the ridiculous Irishman in Colman's play, *The Jealous Wife*, produced the year before. No. 27, called "The Spirit of Contradiction," showed two brewers carrying a cask, the men walking in opposite directions. No. 71, entitled "Shave for a Penny, let Blood for Nothing," revealed a "Man under the Hands of a Barber-Surgeon, who shaves and lets Blood at the same Time by cutting at every Stroke of his Razor." And No. 73, picturing a man with a woman, a magpie, and a monkey on his back, is inscribed, "A Man loaded with Mischief."² With such publicity and such a finished performance, the show was a great success. Southey, in his life of Cowper, says that Hogarth "entered into the humour of the adventure, and gave a few touches in chalk where effect could be added by it: thus in the portraits of the King of Prussia and the Empress Maria T[h]eresa, he changed the cast of their eyes so as to make them leer significantly at each other."³

Even in far-off Edinburgh the idea and activities of this Club may have influenced young James Boswell, who highly admired Thornton and Colman's journal, *The Connoisseur*, to form a similar club with his friend Andrew Erskine and others. "Indeed," says Professor Frederick A. Pottle, "the Soaping Club may have been an echo of the Nonsense Club of Thornton, Cowper, Colman, and Lloyd."⁴

Although Churchill may not have been very active in the Nonsense Club, we know from many sources that he was making the rounds of the taverns and coffeehouses, especially the Shakespeare and the Bedford, and shining among the celebrities at the weekly meetings of the Sublime Society of Beefsteaks. This famous Society met "every Saturday in a noble room at the top of Covent Garden Theatre to dine on beefsteaks. George Lambert, Hogarth, Churchill, Wilkes, Garrick, Colman, Linley, the brother of Mrs. Sheridan, Arthur Murphy, Bonnell Thornton, Tickell, Lord Sandwich (expelled for his treatment of Wilkes), Kemble, Charles Morris . . . were among the members of the club."⁵ Judging from this list, Churchill and Murphy could associate convivially while they were professionally knifing each other in the backs. In addition to having this galaxy of wits as members, the Society had a rich and elaborate clubroom and furnishings. "The Society's badge was a gridiron, which was engraved upon the rings, glass, and the forks and spoons. At the end of the dining-room was an enormous grating in the form of a gridiron, through which the fire was seen and the steaks handed from the kitchen. Over this were the lines:

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly."⁶

No doubt in this context the grim humor of these lines from *Macbeth*⁷ was not lost on the members of the Society of Beefsteaks.

Churchill and his friend Wilkes frequently mention the good times they had at the meetings of the Society; and as a member Churchill was not forgotten a half century after his death, for (as Charles Knight reports) "pre-eminent among them was the poet Churchill, whose wit in many a dazzling attack or repartee still lives in the memory of the members." On one occasion, when another member, a descendant of the official who sentenced King Charles I to execution, was boasting of this connection, Churchill silenced him with the retort, "Ah, Bradshaw, don't crow! The Stuarts have been amply avenged for the loss of Charles's head, for you have not had a head in your whole family ever since!"⁸ And according to John Timbs, "Charles Price was allowed to be one of the most witty of the Society, and it is related that he and Churchill kept the table in a roar."⁹

Precisely when Churchill joined the Society of Beefsteaks is not known. Timbs says, without indicating his authority, that "Churchill was introduced to the Steaks by his friend Wilkes," who, we know, was a member as early as January, 1754.¹⁰ In all probability Churchill did not know Wilkes well until the winter of 1761. Timbs adds a doubtful impeachment of Churchill's connection with the Society, that "his desertion of his wife brought a hornets' swarm about him, so that he soon resigned, to avoid the disgrace of expulsion."¹¹ But the facts are otherwise. Churchill was separated from his wife early in 1761; his correspondence with Wilkes shows that on November 22, 1762, almost a year later, he and Wilkes were still members in good standing; for on that date Wilkes wrote, "I have much to say to you, and about yourself from Mr. Beard, which you ought to have heard last Saturday at the Beef Stakes."¹² And in his *London Journal* for November 27 Boswell elaborately records a meeting of the Society, at which he first saw Churchill and Wilkes: "The President sits in a chair under a canopy, above which you have in golden letters, *Beef*

and Liberty. We were entertained by the Club. Lord Sandwich was in the chair, a jolly, hearty, lively man. It was a very mixed society: Lord Eglinton, Mr. Beard, Colonel West of the Guards, Mr. Havard the actor, Mr. Churchill the poet, Mr. Wilkes the author of *The North Briton*, and many more."¹³

Clubs like the Society of Beefsteaks — and there were many of them — represent the gregarious love of high thinking as well as high living in mid-eighteenth-century England. At that time, too, certain impulses, partly irrational in nature, began to ferment beneath the calm surface of the "age of Reason" — impulses that later flowered in the "romantic revolt." In the 1760's the Byronic quality of these impulses manifested itself in the first of the sensational "rakes' clubs," of which Churchill and Lloyd were for a short time peripheral members. This club, known to the initiated as the Monks of St. Francis of Wycombe and to the outside world as the Hell-Fire Club, was led by the notorious rakes, Sir Francis Dashwood (later Baron Le Despencer), the Earl of Sandwich, and George Bubb-Doddington (later Lord Melcombe).¹⁴

Of these Dashwood was the most important, for not only was he the originator of the Club about 1755, but he rented and rebuilt Medmenham Abbey in West Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, where during the summer the orgies of the "monks" were held. Sir Francis, who gave his name, ironically altered, to the Club, was a fabulous character. Wealthy and dissipated, he had swaggered his way through Europe on the Grand Tour in the 1720's, going as far as Turkey and being especially impressed by the religious atmosphere and ruins of Italy. In 1732 he was one of the founders of the Dilettanti Society, a group of hard-drinking aristocrats. These men, however, were seriously interested in classical art: their money and influence later produced the first important study of classical ruins, *The Antiquities of Athens*, by James Stuart and Nicholas Revett.

In 1744 Dashwood founded an exotic club called the Divan, at which "the Harem" was a standing toast. The members assumed oriental names, Sir Francis's being "El Faquir Dashwood Pacha." All this mumbo-jumbo suggests an inverted (or perverted) love of ceremony, which at the Medmenham Abbey orgies became an amateur celebration of the Black Mass. Modeled on the twelve apostles, twelve "monks," with "St. Francis" at their head, formed the inner circle of the Club, and a number of others were usually present as guests. Churchill and Lloyd were apparently among the guests, for their names are nowhere officially recorded; but Arthur H. Plaisted (in *The Manor and Parish Records of Medmenham*) lists thirteen "principal members," including Churchill, Lloyd, and Wilkes.¹⁵ Wilkes was certainly a member of the inner circle and was known to the "Monks" as "the Bishop of Aylesbury" (his home); and it was he who brought Churchill and Lloyd to the last meeting of the group in June, 1762. On June 15 Wilkes wrote to Churchill: "Pray remember the ghost for me to-night, and next Monday we meet at Medmenham."¹⁶

We do not know what Lloyd thought of the festivities at the Abbey, but Churchill was disgusted, not so much by the debauchery as by the obscenity and ceremonious blasphemy. Among other things the "monks" imported London prostitutes dressed as "nuns" to take part in their services. Churchill, who later had political as well as personal reasons for doing so, never tired of attacking the activities of most of the Hell-Fire Club members, as in the following lines from *The Candidate*:

Whilst Womanhood, in habit of a nun,
 At Mednam lies, by backward monks undone;
 A nation's reckoning, like an alehouse score,
 Whilst Paul, the aged, chalks behind the door,
 Compell'd to hire a foe to cast it up,
 Dashwood shall pour, from a communion cup,
 Libations to the goddess without eyes,
 And hob or nob in cyder and excise.

(695-702)

The reference to "Paul, the aged" is to Paul Whitehead, a minor poet and henchman of Dashwood's; the goddess without eyes is Angerona, the Egyptian goddess of silence, over whose statue at Medmenham was inscribed the motto of the Club: "Fay ce que voudras" ("Do what you please"); and the last line is a political sneer at Dashwood's proposal, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, to place an excise on cider.

Churchill seems to have belonged to still another social group that met more or less regularly at the Shakespeare Tavern. On December 5, 1762, Wilkes wrote to him, saying "Tomorrow night is the Shakespeare meeting, and I hope our certain meeting";¹⁷ and about the same time Lloyd wrote to Wilkes, mentioning the meeting and Churchill's absence from London: "I wish you would let me know whether you intend being at the Shakespeare meeting to night. For as Churchill is out of Town, unless I am assured of your being there, I shall be a home keeper."¹⁸

Because of its clientele and its location in the Piazza of Covent Garden, the Shakespeare was at that time the social center for actors and actresses, another reason for its appeal to men like Churchill, Wilkes, Thornton, Colman, Lloyd, and of course Garrick. Furthermore, it was the first tavern in London to provide separate rooms for private parties (according to Timbs); and we may be sure that the meeting mentioned by Wilkes and Lloyd was to be held in one of these. As a sample of the kind of elaborate dinners available there, one for five men "consisted of the following dishes: — a turbot, of 40 lb., a Thames salmon, a haunch of venison, French beans and cucumbers, a green goose, an apricot tart, and green peas. The dinner was dressed by Twigg, and it came to about seven guineas a head."¹⁹

The Bedford Coffee-House, which was located near the entrance of the Covent-Garden Theatre, apparently was also one of the headquarters of the Churchill group. In the second

(1763) edition of the anonymous gossipy *Memoirs of the Bedford Coffee-House* Thornton and Colman are insultingly described as "Errato" and "Mr. Town," the pen name that he and Thornton had used in *The Connoisseur*. "Errato," says the author, "was born and bred an apothecary" and, fancying himself a wit, had "hopped up and down the Bedford for some years, without being noticed for any thing but the size of his periwig, and the width of his mouth." Finally an incident occurred that brought Errato "into some repute." He got into a quarrel with a fantastic humbug, "Dr." John Hill, whom Churchill had satirized in *The Rosciad*. "Upon an egregious pun that Errato made in the Doctor's hearing, he applied to him Dennis's axiom that 'he who would pun, would pick a pocket'; which excited Errato to call for the Inspector to go backwards with him [that is, fight a duel]. This nettled the Doctor; and he took his revenge by publishing . . . a letter that came to his hands, written by Errato to Mr. L — the singer, all in puns, to beg an order. This immortalized Errato; and he was, from this moment, universally stiled the *punning apothecary*."²⁰ As "Mr. Town" Colman is berated for being too dictatorial in dramatic circles: "This person, from a strong impulse of being acquainted with actors, and a desire of being thought judicious in theatrical performances . . . has usurped to himself the power and authority of deciding the merit of all theatrical productions and all new actors."²¹

In *The Connoisseur* Thornton and Colman themselves had written that the Bedford "is every night crowded with men of parts. Almost every one you meet is a polite scholar and a wit. Jokes and *bon-mots* are echo'd from box to box: every branch of literature is critically examined, and the merit of every production of the press, or performance of the theatres, weighed and determined."²² Apparently card-playing was also a favorite social activity there, for Timbs reports that Churchill's quarrel with Hogarth "began at the shilling rubber club,

in the parlour of the Bedford; when Hogarth used some very insulting language towards Churchill, who resented it in the *Epistle* [to William Hogarth]."²³ And Churchill, we remember, marched over to the Bedford as if to a challenge, when he heard that some of the actors planned to retaliate for his attacks on them in *The Rosciad*.

By July, 1762, Churchill's most constant companion at the taverns and coffeehouses was the notorious John Wilkes, who, as we have seen, had been instrumental in enrolling him in the Society of Beefsteaks and introducing him to the Hell-Fire Club. Although Churchill probably did not know Wilkes well until this year, the two men may have met casually as early as June, 1758; for in that month Wilkes was elected a vestryman of St. Margaret's church, Westminster, and in May, 1759, he "was chosen Churchwarden, with Mr. Samuel Pierston as his colleague."²⁴ At that time Churchill was of course curate of St. John's in Westminster. It is not unlikely therefore that the young curate and the churchwarden of these sister churches met in the course of their respective duties; but, if they did, nothing is known to have come of their meeting. We do know, however, that when Wilkes began publication of his political journal, *The North Briton*, on June 5, 1762, he persuaded Churchill to join him as a kind of unofficial associate editor. It was these two men, different in many ways and yet strongly attracted to each other, who now formed the closest friendship that either of them ever knew and who created a political alliance that successfully challenged the whole British government and sent the ringing cry of "Wilkes and Liberty" across the Atlantic to hearten the American colonials, then girding themselves for their final reckoning with George III.

Among the dozens of books and essays about "that Devil Wilkes" the emphasis is everywhere upon his demagoguery, his political opportunism, and his licentiousness. The better sides of his nature have therefore tended to be overlooked. Actually,

Wilkes was a strange combination of rake and rebel, demagogue and democrat. He was both an ambitious opportunist and a man of principle. The deep and genuine friendship that sprang up between him and Churchill was founded on two equally deep qualities of their natures: they loved the pleasures of the senses and they hated tyranny in any form. Churchill was the more sincere of the two, Wilkes the more versatile. Their differences were also remarkable and lent support to the axiom that politics makes strange bedfellows.

In appearance Wilkes was tall, thin, and angular, with a lantern jaw and eyes that squinted hideously. Yet, ugly as he was, he could charm the savageness out of a bear. As he himself put it, he could in a half an hour "talk away his face." Wilkes was particularly successful with women, and his letters to Churchill are sprinkled with sardonic accounts of his feminine conquests. After his duel with Lord Talbot in October, 1762, he wrote: "A sweet girl, whom I have sighed for unsuccessfully these four months, now tells me she will trust her honour to a man who takes so much care of his own. Is not that prettily said? Pray look me out *honour* in the dictionary, as I have none here, that I may understand the dear creature — but, by God, I will not wait your answer. Adieu."²⁵ This remark also illustrates in miniature another quality of the man, for which he was especially famous in his own day: the brilliance of his wit. Well known is his retort to the Earl of Sandwich, who predicted that he would be hanged or die of the "pox": "That depends, my lord, on whether I embrace your principles or your mistress." Less familiar, perhaps, is the account of his verbal exchange with a voter at the hustings. Wilkes had made a fine speech; as he stood by to shake hands afterwards, one man answered his routine question, "Will you vote for me?" by snarling, "I'd sooner vote for the devil!" Wilkes calmly replied, "But if your friend doesn't run, may I count on your support?" Although Wilkes could be sharp and deadly with

his enemies, he was basically a generous and good-natured man. His deep and unselfish affection for his daughter Polly is everywhere admitted, and his letters to Churchill reveal, many times over, an equally fine and constant friendship for him.

From the pictures and descriptions of Churchill at this time of his life, we know that he was in appearance almost the exact opposite of his friend. He was a huge man — lumbering, thick-set, and heavy-featured. His full sensual lips and owlish face made him no more attractive than Wilkes, but like Wilkes he made a virtue of his ugliness. Churchill often describes himself, with some intentional distortion, in his poetry. In *The Rosciad* he digresses to comment on his own appearance:

E'en I, whom Nature cast in hideous mould,
Whom, having made, she trembled to behold,
Beneath the load of mimicry may groan,
And find that Nature's errors are my own. (405-8)

But, unlike Wilkes, Churchill was indolent by nature. He always placed love-making above ambition, so that in their collaboration on *The North Briton* Wilkes was often obliged to prod his colleague in order to get him back to work. On July 13, 1762, Churchill wrote to his friend: "I wish it was in my power to send You the next Saturday's N.B. according to your desire, but tho' I expected that You would depend on me I have not as yet wrote a letter of it, according to my usual maxim of putting every thing off till the last." He then answers Wilkes's earlier question about the progress of his poem, *The Ghost*: "Where is the Ghost? Faith I cannot tell — the Flesh has engross'd so much of my care that I have never once thought of the Spirit."²⁶ But if Churchill was inclined to be lazy, he was capable of great speed and concentration when aroused, as he frequently was, by the activities of his personal and political enemies.²⁷

For the biographer the two most important consequences of Churchill's friendship with Wilkes were the poems that he

wrote in his friend's behalf and the series of letters that passed between them. These letters, of which about sixty have survived, largely unpublished, are the most extensive authentic record that we have of Churchill's personal life. They show, for one thing, that he had not only flouted the clerical standards of his time by hobnobbing with dissipated writers, haunting the theatres, and frequenting the clubs and coffee-houses, but that he had also begun a series of love-affairs which were hardly in keeping with the life of a man of the cloth. His first letter to Wilkes, dated July 13, 1762, describes one of these in lively detail. "I am very sorry I cannot meet you at Aylesbury, or come to you at Winchester," he says, "but that which I at first considered merely as the amusement of a trifling hour, is become the serious attention and delight of my days, it has already been so of three weeks, and is likely to continue as much longer." Aylesbury was Wilkes's home town, which he represented in Parliament from 1757 to 1761; Winchester was the headquarters of the Buckinghamshire militia, of which Wilkes was then colonel, an appointment which he had received from Sir Francis Dashwood and which "gave him the red coat so long his favorite attire."²⁸ "When we meet, which I flatter myself will be soon," Churchill continues, "you will be amazed to see how I am alter'd. Breakfast at nine — two dishes of tea and one thin slice of bread and butter — dine at three — eat moderately — drink a sober pint — tumble the bed till four — tea at six — walk till nine — eat some cooling fruit and to bed. There is regularity for you."

Next Churchill launches into an ironic defense of his questionable way of life, which at this time was marked by such pious moderation and regularity. "And will Ye not," he begins, "Ye old Scripture pumping Divines, Ye mercenary precept-mongers — Ye Retailers of Revelation — will Ye not allow me the indulgence of sense in that interval, or will Ye declare me unworthy of Absolution? Keep it to Yourselves Ye

worthy descendants of the Scribes and Pharisees — Could You see her with her eyes half shut or the whites of them turn'd up, Ye would yourselves follow the example if You could. . . .” Later in this letter, one of the longest and best that Churchill wrote, he jokingly refers to Wilkes’s own preceding letter to him. “In your’s you tell me you are engaged with —. I could not understand it, my Lindamira says it must be with Old Scratch, with whom, judging You by Me, she supposes us both to be on good terms. I rather think You meant it a hint for me to fill up a blank, and she seems to like the interpretation, and looks towards the bed. I beg you will draw me into no more such scrapes.” Churchill concludes with a more serious, if somewhat libertine, assertion of his deep friendship for Wilkes: “Notwithstanding my boasted sobriety you shall see when you come to Town that my reformation is not universal, and tho’ I will not get drunk with ev’ry Fool, I am above being thoroughly sober with an honest fellow like you.”²⁹

To this detailed account Wilkes replied immediately (July 15, 1762), humorously commenting on his friend’s reformation and having in mind, of course, that Churchill was still a clergyman. “Now you are so reform’d, how I shou’d have relish’d you? Perhaps it might have caught, and I might have been converted by you: the first fruits of your ministry. How wou’d you have exulted? We have never yet had a *Saint Charles*. Already I honour you more than St. Andrew, St. David, or St. Denis, or any saint but St. George, whose memory from a certain discovery of his I honour beyond all the rabble that people even the third heaven. I beg you to come to Winchester, and try your hand on my regiment. We shall have no fighting, and therefore let us *wrestle* with the Lord, and you. . . . How well it will appear to my Regiment, when I open a letter, and shew them a *form of prayer* in it, and from you?”³⁰ The delicious irony of imagining Churchill as a saint was not, we may be sure, lost upon him.

Churchill's next letter, which is only dated "Thursday" but the contents of which connect it with the preceding two, reveals more about his rather shadowy activities at this time. "I am this moment come to Vaux Hall from Rumford, and am but now possessed of your Letter," he begins. "The Papers you require are in London; and Madam requiring to be rubb'd down after her journey I cannot well go for them. Be my Irregularity my excuse even to you who are strictly regular. . . . In my right hand is the Pen — What is in my left? She says — by Christ she can't stay." This is followed by a concluding inquiry about Wilkes's daughter Polly, to whom he was devoted: "Is Miss Wilkes well? She must be so, for I will have all my wishes of to day succeed."³¹

During the autumn of this year (1762) Churchill's numerous affairs had affected his health, and we find Wilkes frequently expressing concern about it. Even six months earlier there had been hints in the public press about his being ill. On successive weeks in February, 1762, *The St. James's Chronicle* published two poems that refer to his enforced retirement for this reason. The first, "On the long Delay of a promised Poem, called The Author," begins:

But when is this Author, was promis'd so long
From Ch — I, that Giant so stout and so strong?
He's sick, Sir, says one. — He's burnt out, cries another,
And the high Flame of Genius sinks down into Smother.

The Author, incidentally, did not appear until December, 1763. The other poem, by "An Old Westminster" (probably Lloyd) is entitled "The Splenetic Lion. A Fable." It too begins by mentioning the poet's illness:

Churchill was sick, and hung his Head;
The Play'rs and Critics thought him dead:
They thought him, but were sorely bit,
Not dead in Law, but dead in Wit;
A Bankrupt, who, on such a Day,
Had promis'd much, but would not pay.

Dullness, his Foe, a potent Queen,
 Sent forth a Daemon call'd the Spleen;
 On which his Muse, a metal'd Nag,
 Slacken'd her Speed, and seem'd to flag; . . .

But, says the author, this slackening will be only temporary, and he ends with a warning to Churchill's enemies:

Be wise, ye Asses, Wolves, and Sheep!
 Sneak off! and let the Lion sleep!³²

By September Churchill was definitely ill, and in December, as we shall see, he knew that he had contracted syphilis. On September 9 Wilkes wrote anxiously, "I have suffer'd not a little from my fears for your health — I have wrote you three letters, and was to-day at your house, where I had an encouraging account of you — Let me beg you to relieve my anxiety by a line. . . . If you wou'd send to me here [Wilkes's town house in Great George Street, Westminster] by the bearer, to know your destination, I wou'd come to you to-morrow afternoon, or very early on Saturday morning, as I am oblig'd on Saturday noon to hurry back to Winchester."³³ We do not know whether Wilkes saw Churchill before he left London, but on September 23 he wrote again from Winchester, asking plaintively, "Why are you not so friendly as to give me one line to satisfie me about your health, which I am ten times more anxious for than you are yourself? I am just going to the Isle of Wight on business you have lately had too much in hand."³⁴ The last reference, of course, is to Churchill's chief preoccupation at this time — wine and women.

Wilkes's impatience at Churchill's neglect of him continued, but during the next month, in spite of Churchill's illness, he finally managed to arrange a meeting at Winchester. Both Churchill and Lloyd were to pay him a visit. Wilkes was further placated by the fact that Churchill was then planning to dedicate his Scottish "Eclogue" (*The Prophecy of Famine*) to him. On October 10 Wilkes wrote to Churchill, saying, "I

am in my way to Winchester. I was one day at Stowe [Earl Temple's home], where we crown'd the bowl to you. I burn with impatience for to-morrow sevensnight. I hope you will contrive to stay with me as long as you can. I have 10,000 things to tell you. I am beyond imagination proud that the Eclogue is to be inscrib'd to me — I desire all mankind m[ay] know that I am honour'd by your friendship — I live to merit it! . . . My humble service to Mr. Lloyd; I wish you both a good journey. . . .”³⁵

Wilkes was thus expecting to see Churchill and Lloyd “to-morrow sevensnight,” that is, October 18. Having no word from Churchill, confirming their plans, he wrote again on the 14th, chiding his friend for his silence: “If you have a grain of goodness in you, and are not all lewdness, you will give me a line by saturday night, and then I shall wait with more patience for monday. Shall I order dinner at five for you? How far do you intend to come on sunday?” To which Wilkes adds a witticism about his own irreligious way of life and Churchill's still being a clergyman: “Do not forget to put your longest sermon in your pocket for my benefit . . . a good journey to you both.”³⁶ Then on the night before they were to arrive Wilkes received a letter from Churchill canceling everything. That letter has not survived, but Wilkes's reply on October 18 reveals his deep disappointment. “I had your letter last night,” he begins, “and ever since have been cursing like a very drab. You and Lloyd are the most faithless of men, and more fickle than any women.”

This letter also continues the theme of Churchill's illness, for in a postscript Wilkes advises his friend: “You must go to Br. he can effectually serve you in the Physic Line.” “Br.” is Richard Brocklesby, another friend of Wilkes's and one of the best-known physicians of the day. Earlier in the letter he appears in a different light — that of one who could do another kind of favor for Churchill: helping his brother John get on in

his career as an apothecary. Wilkes says, "I write by this messenger in the warmest terms to Dr. Brocklesby, and if he does not succeed in that, he shall in a better thing soon." Wilkes was very much annoyed not only by Churchill's and Lloyd's letting him down, but also by Churchill's not asking him to help his brother sooner: "God damn you too, that you never mention'd your Brother to me before — 3 months ago I wou'd have given him a thing of honour with me of 10 sh. a day."³⁷ This episode reflects not only the generous nature of Wilkes, but Churchill's own feelings of responsibility for his relatives.

Wilkes again asks about "the Scottish Eclogue," and, in a letter dated October 23, Churchill explains in detail the status of his poem. "It is split into two Poems," he says, "the Scottish Eclogue which will be inscrib'd to you in the Pastoral Way — and another Poem — which I think will be a strong one — immediately address'd by way of Epistle to you." He adds, "The Pastoral will begin thus — and I believe it will be out soon — But nothing comes out till I begin to be pleased with it myself." Before he was finally "pleased with it" Churchill had rejected the two-poem plan and produced a brilliant amalgamation of both. Also three months were to elapse before he published the poem in January, 1763. All of this indicates that Churchill was a more careful and self-critical writer than is generally assumed. In the same letter he thanks Wilkes "on my Brother's account" and says that "Dr. Brocklesby has behaved in the affair with the warmest Friendship."³⁸

Wilkes immediately answered from Winchester on October 25, thanking Churchill in the most cordial terms and praising him excessively for his work on *The North Briton*. "A thousand thanks for all your verse and prose of saturday," he begins. "You have manag'd the North Briton incomparably; you ride that fierce steed with the truest spirit and judgment." The letter closes with another expression of deep affection and a third reference to the dedication of Churchill's forth-

coming poem to Wilkes: "I am impatient to see our names together in print and wou'd have the world know I have the happiness of being lov'd by Mr Churchill."³⁹ Nor did Wilkes stop there, for a week later (November 2), writing from Reading, he exclaims, "I have read your verses over 50 times with rapture, and am so proud that I shall be unbearable by every creature but yourself, who have made a modest man a conceited one — Vale, et ama tui amantissimum. . . . On Sunday I come to London for the winter, and to the joys of Miss Wilkes and Mr. Churchill, with a very few others."⁴⁰

Meanwhile, whatever the state of his health, Churchill was at this time continuing his dissipations. In a letter of October 30 he explains the poor quality of No. 22 of *The North Briton*, for which he was responsible, by admitting he had been on a party "which took me up the whole day and kept me in bed till Eleven the next morning."⁴¹ The subject of this issue of *The North Briton* is literary criticism. It consists of a short introduction, written by Churchill, followed by about a hundred lines of poetry, called "The Poetry Professors," by Lloyd. Although not much of a number, it elicited the highest compliments from Wilkes in his letter of November 2: "As I find that the North Briton has deviated into the prim-rose paths of down-right poetry, I shall leave him to pursue that sweet track till Saturday sevensnight, when I shall bring him back to the dull, hobbling road of insipid prose — The conducting of the N B thro' that sweet poetical country, belongs to you, the Sovereign of it." Clearly Churchill, as Wilkes's friend, could do no wrong.

As the weeks passed, Churchill became less and less accessible to his friend, much to Wilkes's acute annoyance. On November 22 we find him complaining about the matter and offering temptations to attract Churchill to him. "You are very cruel to me that you will not let me see you," he begins; "I wish you cou'd come here to-morrow by nine, or at three, if

you are disengag'd, and go with me to Lady Vane's house, where you wou'd spend the evening. . . . Let me have the honour of introducing you."⁴² The lure here was the opportunity of enjoying an evening at the home of Frances Anne, Viscountess Vane, a lady notorious for gambling and profligacy. This letter seems to have got results, for on the next day Wilkes adds a postscript to a note to Churchill, saying, "Tomorrow at 12 I expect you here, but wish to see you at any hour of to-day."⁴³ If Churchill was not seeing enough of Wilkes to suit him at this time, we know that he was appearing elsewhere in public; for on November 1 Boswell, in his *London Journal*, tells of going "to a play of Terence's (*The Eunuch*) performed by the King's Scholars of Westminster School. There was a very numerous audience, not one of whom I knew, except Churchill, and him only by sight."⁴⁴

During early December Wilkes wrote at least three times to Churchill, continuing to plan meetings and to urge his friend to visit and to write him oftener. On December 5 he says, "I was very sorry to miss you yesterday — I wish you cou'd come here [Great George Street, Westminster] any day in the middle of the week. . . ."⁴⁵ And shortly after this: "Why will you not let me see you, or hear from you? I had rather you wou'd come and abuse me for hobbling prose, than stay away and give me immortality in the poem I long to see."⁴⁶ A third letter of about this time reveals another (and perhaps stronger) temptation: "I am just summon'd about my house and my girl — I shall return in less than an hour — if you will wait, you shall kiss the *lips* — if you will dine, you shall suck the sweetest *bubbies* of this hemisphere."⁴⁷

Finally during December (exact date unknown) Churchill wrote to Wilkes, explaining his absence and his silence. "My not writing you sooner . . . arises from my flattering myself that I should have been recover'd from a damn'd damn'd Indisposition and I shall keep my bed — when I shall get out

of it the little Creeping Jesus knows — many things have I to say but my head rambles too much for recollection.”⁴⁸ In a second letter, undated but, judging by Wilkes’s reply on December 13, probably written a few days earlier, Churchill announces that he has contracted syphilis: “What I imagin’d to be St. Anthony’s fire turns out to be St. Cytherea’s. I am better as to acuteness of pain. . . .” And he adds that “this day I come to Town in order to settle what is necessary for your purpose, and will call on you about Three in George Street.”⁴⁹ A third letter, also undated, reveals even more about Churchill’s illness, despite which he is in the midst of an affair. “I must intreat you to provide for next Saturday [*The North Briton*]”; then the reason: “The Spitting comes on me so fast that I have not one moment to set pen to paper — My Body is weak but my heart is good . . . tho’ faith I was . . . low spirited last Night — I shall now write to you what when present I will say, that I would not forego the pleasure arising from that dear handful of delight, tho’ sure to be salivated once a Quarter. . . . To you I cannot come — when I am fit to see Company, you shall be the first Man of whom I will intreat that favour.”⁵⁰

Churchill’s physical symptoms here are made perfectly clear by one of Dr. Johnson’s definitions of the word “salivation,” which Churchill uses above: “A method of cure much practiced in venereal, scrophulous, and other obstinate causes, by promoting a secretion of spittle,” to which the *Oxford English Dictionary* adds: “esp. the production of an excessive flow of saliva by administering mercury.” One more undated note to Wilkes, probably written about this time, shows Churchill’s courage and spirits unflagging, despite his illness: “To-morrow depend on me — I will see you soon — But not so soon as I could wish — my teeth begin to loosen but yet I think they could bite the proud Scot,”⁵¹ meaning Wilkes’s foremost political enemy, the Earl of Bute.

Wilkes immediately answered Churchill's second letter above, humorously rallying his friend about his illness. "I am sorry that the Lord has visited you in David's way, or if you are more classical than divinal, in Dido's way. . . . I did not know till your letter of yesterday that you had implor'd the aid of the quick silver god, I hop'd that you had only retir'd to some gentle purgations and purifications."⁵² Thus ends what has survived of the Churchill-Wilkes correspondence for 1762. No further letters exist until March, 1763. Meanwhile Churchill recovered sufficiently from his indisposition to complete the final version of one of his best poems, *The Prophecy of Famine*, which was published in January of that year.

January, 1763, was crucial in Churchill's life for another reason: he finally resigned as curate and lecturer of St. John's, Westminster. Churchill had thus remained a clergyman for almost two years after he had become a successful poet. During this time he was in the anomalous position of being at once a priest and a pagan, a combination which, although not unusual in his day, exposed him to severe and widespread censure. His new way of life, bad as it was, was exaggerated into a fall from grace of horrible proportions. He was pictured as a monster of hypocrisy and immorality. In part, of course, this reaction stemmed from the popular traditional idea of the unfrocked priest who becomes a devil in disguise. But it was also in a large measure trumped up by Churchill's personal and political enemies, who were out to "get" him. Thus the minor actor Thomas Vaughan in a poem called *The Retort*:

The Parson quits his pulpit for the stage,
And lives licentious, in virtuous age;
Whose soul ne'er felt religion's sacred call;
But acts in strict conjunction with Breval;
Observes each actress, and each actor's walk,
Can tell with whom they lye, with whom but talk;
And strange Reversion from his seat in Pews,
Is seen with minors, visiting the st — ws.⁵³

And thus Arthur Murphy in *The Examiner*:

Then *Tartuff*-like a pulpit he attain'd,
 With real malice, and devotion feign'd;
 There pious leers, a satyr in disguise!
 And talks of virtue with lascivious eyes.
 For scanty hire the morning lecture gives,
 And still a needy *Bacchanalian* lives.⁵⁴

Even a century-later account of Churchill strongly disapproves of his conduct at this time. "His return to Westminster revived his former temptations, so that he soon found himself in the midst of embarrassment, with his pride humbled, his credit gone, and the support of good counsellors withdrawn. In this extremity he forsook his wife and abandoned his profession, the latter step being hastened, in all probability, by remonstrances from his parishioners upon his having exchanged the distinctive clerical attire for a blue coat with metal buttons, a gold-laced waistcoat, and a gold-laced hat, with ruffles."⁵⁵

The known facts about Churchill's life and character prove that much of all this is gross exaggeration or simply untrue. The charges that "he forsook his wife and abandoned his profession" are, as we have seen, very wide of the mark. Even more false is Murphy's accusation of hypocrisy, the one evil to which Churchill's whole nature was least susceptible. We should remember that he had never wanted to enter the ministry in the first place and that he never concealed the fact that his heart was not in it. An unfortunate combination of circumstances (his being too poor to continue at college, his early marriage, his father's wishes, etc.) forced him into an uncongenial career. He describes this situation frankly in his *Dedication to Warburton* (73-75) as "those sheep Which, for my curse, I was ordain'd to keep, Ordain'd alas! to keep through need, not choice. . . ."

It was usually assumed by his contemporaries and later critics that the dissipations into which Churchill plunged in

1761 led to his resignation from St. John's — that is, that he was forcibly “unfrocked.” This assumption now seems most unlikely in view of the actual date of his resignation and the tone of his letters to the vestry of St. John's. There are two of them, dated January 4 and January 10, 1763. The first announces his resignation; the second expresses his appreciation for the treatment he has received from the parish. The tone of the second is particularly cordial. “Your unanimous appointment of me to the Lectureship of St. John's on the death of my Father, and the continuance of your favours since that time, demand my warmest acknowledgments and sincerest thanks. These I should have been happy to have made in person had I not been unexpectedly prevented, but I shall take this opportunity of declaring with what a grateful sense I recognize the favours of the whole parish in general, and of the gentlemen of the Vestry in particular, and how much, although removed from them, I shall ever esteem their favours, and remain their much obliged and very humble servant.”⁵⁶ Judging by Churchill's independent and fiery nature, it is hardly possible that he would have written thus had he been discharged by the vestry of St. John's.

There is some indication, however, that Churchill may have been reprimanded by one of his superiors in the church because of his libertinism. In his poem, *The Prophecy of Famine*, occurs a reference to the Scottish playwright John Home:

Thence, Home, disbanded from the sons of prayer
For loving plays, though no dull dean was there. . . .

(127-28)

The “dull dean” is Dr. Zachary Pearce, then Dean of Westminster and Bishop of Rochester; and in Lloyd's *St. James's Magazine* for February, 1763, appeared the following “Epigram,” probably by Lloyd himself:

To Churchill the bard, cries the W — r Dean,
 Leathern breeches, white stockings! pray what do you mean!
 'Tis shameful, irrev'rent — you must keep to Church rules,
 — If wise ones I will — and if not, they're for fools;
 If reason don't bind me, I'll shake off all fetters,
 To be *black and all black* I shall leave to my betters.⁵⁷

After Churchill's resignation from St. John's, he continued the new pattern of his life, including an even closer association with his friend Wilkes. In a letter on March 14, 1763, Wilkes writes that he has attended to the publishing profits owed to Churchill for his part in their journal, *The North Briton*. "I have ordered in all the stragling [sic] parties of General Churchill," he says facetiously. "The contributions they have levied on the Public will amount to above £120 — Let me beg you Not to draw on Flexney [Churchill's publisher], but draw on me for any sum whatever. . . ." In the same letter Wilkes unfolds his plan to take Churchill to France with him, where he was going with his daughter Polly. "I am settling my affairs, that we may neither of us want money in the other kingdom — of France — not of heaven."⁵⁸ Perhaps because money was involved and he was hard pressed at the time, Churchill replied to this letter with surprising alacrity (on the same day), saying, "I have drawn on you for the hundred and twenty Pounds, payable in ten days, and when I have farther need shall without scruple shew you what dependence I have on your Friendship."⁵⁹

In a longer undated letter somewhat later Churchill tactfully declined Wilkes's invitation to go to France at that time — the reason: he was ill again, in the midst of another affair, and couldn't be bothered! He also describes a poetic satire that he has begun, attacking the artist Hogarth, who had become a political enemy of Wilkes. The letter, unusually detailed for Churchill, is interesting for its account of his reasons for writing. "I am now at Kingston," he begins. "My head is full of Hogarth, and as I like not his Company I believe



CHARLES CHURCHILL
*from Schaak's Picture in the National Portrait
Gallery, London*



CHURCHILL'S GRAVE IN DOVER

I shall get him on Paper, not so much to please the Public, not so much for the sake of Justice, as for my own ease — a motive ever powerful with indolent minds. I have begun already and seem to like the Subject — I have been so long out of Verse, that it appears like a new world And has acquired fresh charms from disuse. I have laid in a great stock of gall and do not intend to spare it on this occasion — he shall be welcome to every drop of it, tho' I thought, which I can scarce think, that it would never be renew'd." Then follows a frank personal confession, characteristic of Churchill: "I hope it will not go off in an obliging Gonorrhœa, which (from which Communicated I know not) is at present ravaging the Constitution of Mrs. J. and playing the Devil with your humble. . . ." Finally, Churchill concludes with the kind of compliment he knew Wilkes would appreciate: "Mrs. J. to whom I am going at Richmond says, if she thought I had not wrote in the N. B. as well as you, She would discharge me, & take you in her service."⁶⁰

Churchill's refusal to accompany Wilkes to France was a severe disappointment to him, as we learn from his letter of March 25: "Your letter has vex'd me more than I can tell you: for I had built on the happiness of passing 3 weeks with you."⁶¹ Two days later Wilkes was still upset, for he wrote from Dover that "I am just recovering my good humour, which I had lost at the disappointment of your not being with us on this tour." This avowal is followed by a comment that supports the contemporary view of Churchill as a good provider for his children, whatever else he may have been: "The heavens, and my little girl (you, who are a fond father, can forgive the frailties of a father) both smile upon me." After which Wilkes rallies his friend for not trusting himself to him on the trip: "You were damnably afraid of trusting to me, who intended to have stinted you in viands, wine &c, &c, &c. In a week I had made you as tame as Will Whitehead [the mediocre poet lau-

reate], tho' not quite so decent."⁶² This reference is certainly to one of Churchill's excuses for not going to France — that he would eat and drink too much for his then indisposed constitution to stand. It is deeply ironic that in 1764, when Churchill did act upon another invitation to France to see Wilkes, it led to his death in Boulogne.

Although it is evident that Churchill was spending much of his time and energy in dissipations during the two years after the publication of *The Rosciad*, he had by no means completely abandoned himself to wine and women. As we have noted in passing, the letters to and from Wilkes often mention *The North Briton*. The part that Churchill publicly played in the political warfare which centered around this journal undoubtedly represents his "finest hour" and the source and inspiration of his greatest poems.

Chapter V

The Scourge of the Politicians

i.

CHURCHILL'S PART in this political struggle may be compared in miniature to Jonathan Swift's position in the Oxford-Bolingbroke government under Queen Anne (1711-14), the main difference being the reversal of party labels. Swift supported a Tory regime, Churchill opposed one. Indeed, the analogy between these two political situations was shrewdly pointed out by Wilkes himself in No. 39 of *The North Briton*.¹ Swift was the literary propagandist for the government; Churchill and Wilkes were independent pamphleteers in prose, and, in addition, Churchill supplied powerful poetic attacks on many of the opponents of Wilkes and their adherents, including such great men of art and letters as Hogarth, Smollett, and Dr. Johnson. In fact, the unexpected antipathy between Churchill and Johnson (both ardent neo-classicists) is in part explained by this Wilkes-Churchill political axis.

Churchill threw himself with alacrity into the political fray. Such was his natural inclination, unqualified loyalty, and deep personal affection for his friend that Wilkes's principles became his principles, Wilkes's enemies his enemies. We should not forget, however, that long before Churchill joined forces with Wilkes he had expressed his sharp disapproval of the Scottish influence ("strangers") in British politics under the Earl of Bute; for in the first edition of *The Rosciad* appears the couplet:

In states, let strangers blindly be preferr'd;
In state of letters, merit should be heard. (205-6)

And in *Night* Churchill is even more specific in his political

preference for the Whig party, of which William Pitt was then the leader:

Though Scandal would our patriot's name impeach,
And rail at virtues which she cannot reach,
What honest man but would with joy submit
To bleed with Cato, and retire with Pitt. (367-70)

Pitt resigned as George III's first minister on October 5, 1761, and Earl Temple, Wilkes's patron, followed him out of office. Naturally Wilkes must have been impressed to read the above lines from the pen of the most powerful poet of the day, but there is no evidence that he sought Churchill out immediately.

These early political statements in Churchill's poetry should not be overlooked in evaluating him as an independent thinker. They show that he had developed his own political philosophy before he met Wilkes and that he was no mere satellite of the great champion of liberty. Churchill's political interests were at first perfunctory, it is true; and it took the influence of Wilkes to deepen them; but, once aroused, Churchill gave the subject everything he had. His letters to his friend often reveal the depth and seriousness of his concern for politics. Writing to Wilkes on August 14, 1763, he concludes: "I am on fire for Politics, if things continue as they are, nor do I perceive one jot of discouragement arise from the thoughts of the King's Bench," an allusion to Chief Justice Mansfield and the possible danger of arrest. In another, two weeks later, he tells Wilkes that political "changes are much talk'd of and must soon take place," after which he goes into considerable detail: "Ld. Bute was with Mr. Pitt on Friday — Mr. Pitt was with the King three hours on Saturday — Every thing was prob'd to the bottom — the utmost confidence seem'd to prevail — arrangements were talk'd of — Ld. Temple mention'd for the Treasury, and the great Outline of Administration seemingly settled."^{1a} In the growth of democracy in eighteenth-century England Wilkes must divide honors with

Churchill. In fact, as between them, Churchill was the more sincerely devoted to the principle of "Wilkes and Liberty" than Wilkes himself and was, as George Nobbe says, "a democrat in a sense that Wilkes could only approximate."²

The issues out of which grew *l'affaire Wilkes* — his sensational arrest and prosecution — were legal and political: the legality of general warrants of arrest, in which only the offence and not the offender is named; and the political question of the "privilege" of a Member of Parliament, which, according to custom, protected him from arrest except for treason, felony, and breach of the peace, none of which Wilkes was guilty of. Behind these issues were the larger principles of freedom of the press and the democratic right of a constituency to send whomever it pleased to parliament.

The struggle between Wilkes and the government centered on George III's chief minister, a Scotsman, Lord Bute, who had taken office with the avowed purpose of restoring the King to autocratic power. Wilkes, supported by Lord Temple and at first by the elder Pitt, launched a powerful attack on this ministry in *The North Briton*. The climax of the struggle occurred in April, 1763, with the publication of No. 45 of this journal and the subsequent arrest of Wilkes on charges of sedition and blasphemy, the first because of No. 45, the second because of an indecent poem, *An Essay on Woman*, that Wilkes had had privately printed. The case dragged on for years, with several anti-democratic ministries under the King blundering at every turn. In one instance the government-controlled House of Commons four times rejected Wilkes as a member for Middlesex, in the face of which arbitrary action his constituents promptly reelected him each time. The final triumph of "Wilkes and Liberty" came in 1774-75, when he was elected Lord Mayor of London and returned successfully to parliament.³

Not only was this political contest a sensational and popular affair in England: in the American colonies too it attracted wide attention from Massachusetts to Georgia. Wilkes's name is memorialized in the city of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and in Wilkes county, North Carolina, with Wilkesboro its county seat. But stronger (if not more permanent) proof of sympathy with the cause of "Wilkes and Liberty" appeared in other ways. When Wilkes was finally sentenced to prison in 1769 so high was the general indignation that presents of all kinds flowed in from America as well as from all over England. The state of Maryland sent him forty-five hogsheads of tobacco, Boston sent a present of turtles, and the South Carolina assembly voted him £1500 to pay his debts!

But the strongest ties that Wilkes had in America were with the famous "Sons of Liberty" in Boston, among whom were many of the greatest American revolutionary patriots, including John Hancock, Josiah Quincy, and John Adams. On June 6, 1768, this group sent a letter to Wilkes, congratulating him on his return from political exile and on his selection to parliament for the county of Middlesex. "Illustrious Patriot," the letter begins, "the friends of Liberty, Wilkes, Peace and good order to the number of Forty-five assembled at the Whig tavern, Boston, New England, take this opportunity to congratulate your country, the British Colonies and yourself on your happy return to the land alone worthy such an Inhabitant." It continues by identifying Wilkes's "generous and inflexible principles" with those of the American opponents of George III and his government: "'Tis from your endeavours we hope for a Royal 'Pascite ut ante boves'; and from our attachment to 'peace and good order' we wait for a constitutional redress: being determined that the King of Great Britain shall have Subjects but not Slaves in these remote parts of his Dominions." ^{8a}

It was, however, at the very beginning of this historic struggle that Churchill joined his friend in the writing and editing of *The North Briton*. There never has been any question about Churchill's assisting Wilkes in this project, but until the publication of Nobbe's study in 1939 Churchill's part in the venture was considered much smaller than it actually was.⁴ Although *The North Briton* was published anonymously, it was an open secret at the time that Wilkes had started it and that Churchill had joined him from the beginning. Thus in *The Political Controversy or Weekly Magazine* the editor remarks on a point made in *The Briton*, Wilkes's chief opponent, saying that "we are at some loss to know whether the Briton means the head of the celebrated *political Senator* [Wilkes], or the head of the reverend author of the *Rosciad*, as it remains no secret with us that they are co-adjutors in the paper of the North-Briton."⁵ And of course the Churchill-Wilkes correspondence establishes beyond a doubt the extent of their collaboration.

In *The North Briton* Churchill probably wrote, revised, or edited at least a fourth of the forty-five issues. We know from his letters to Wilkes, from Wilkes's to him, and from other sources that he wrote Nos. 8, 10, 18, 27, and 42 in their entirety; that he wrote the prose introductions for the two issues containing Lloyd's poetry (Nos. 22 and 26); that he extensively revised Wilkes's No. 21 and No. 44; and that he wrote the original No. 45, which was never published. From these materials we may evaluate Churchill as a satirist in prose, an aspect of his work that has been almost totally neglected.

On July 27, 1762, Wilkes wrote from Winchester to Churchill in London, asking him to proofread No. 9 of *The North Briton* and to write No. 10 himself: "Will you undertake for saturday sevensnight?"⁶ This number, published August 7, continues the attack on the Scottish people by ironically recommending that their Presbyterians take over the Church

of England!—a subject doubly appropriate for Churchill because it allowed him also to ridicule his own calling. The essay is well constructed, having an introduction in the form of an open letter written by “Presbyter,” five central paragraphs of ironic commentary, and a conclusion of extended quotation from Swift’s “Letter Concerning the Sacramental Test.”

Churchill’s commentary begins cautiously: “Though I cannot but commend the zeal and approve the sentiments of my correspondent, yet I must think his vehemence gets the better of his judgment, and hurries him on at such a rate, as would retard, if not overthrow, the designs he is so forward to promote. Every true Scot is undoubtedly of his opinion . . . but discretion steps in, and teaches us to consider this event as placed at a great distance, surrounded with difficulties, and to be brought to pass by slow degrees. Our great patron himself [Bute], whose thoughts are always at work for our good, hath, I will not doubt, had this important object often in his view. . . .” Then the attack mounts: “Much greater caution is requisite to bring about changes in a church than in a state. The ecclesiastics are an artful, subtle, and powerful body in all countries: their eyes, however dim to other things, are remarkably quick to every thing which concerns their own interests: they are generally proud, revengeful, and implacable: and yet most of them have the art to throw a veil over their evil qualities, and establish an interest in the opinions of the people.”

Perhaps having in mind his own ecclesiastical superior, Dr. Zachary Pearce, Bishop of Rochester, how Churchill must have gloated as he wrote the following sentences: “Besides, will they tell us that the dignities and lucrative preferments of the church are mere forms? These surely are not insubstantial phantoms; these certainly have an essence. Nor can we suppose that what hath been obtained at the expence of every free and manly sentiment, shall afterwards be given up by the possessors tamely, and without opposition. *Talk against religion, decry*

morality, openly attack Scripture, corrupt the practice, unsettle the faith of mankind, naturalize Jews, confound marriages — still every thing is well, all is safe and quiet. — But if you would destroy, or lessen the rights of churchmen, if you would controvert their claims, supplant them in their preferments, and make encroachments on their power, then must you expect a general cry, the whole spiritual body will be up in arms, the thunders of the church will be levelled against you, and the populace must be taught that religion is struck at, and the church in danger. Safer indeed will our nation always find it to attack a Saviour than a surplice, to raze out the four evangelists, than to shew an inclination for plucking one spiritual ear of English corn."

In advising moderation, Churchill goes on to recommend to his "countrymen" that they "enter immediately into the church of England, and take orders"; they will, he adds dryly, "be sure of all the best preferments; and when the change we so much desire is effected, they may be good and true Presbyterians again." And finally, "As to the charge of dissimulation or hypocrisy, which may maliciously be brought against them, they will stand excused by the cause for which they acted. If this was not the case, and if the good of the country and countrymen was not a sufficient excuse for flattery, lying, perjury, perfidy, treason, and rebellion, what must become of every true Scot?" Such writing surely proves that Churchill could excel not only in poetry, but also in "the other harmony of prose." To this we should add Wilkes's graceful compliment on the appearance of Churchill's *North Briton* No. 8 (July 24, 1762): "Are you determin'd to have the palm of prose, as well as of poetry?"⁸

Churchill's revisions of some of Wilkes's first drafts of his *North Briton* papers were excellent improvements in the prose. Nobbe remarks about his revision of No. 44, published April 2, 1763: "In general, the changes made can be said to be im-

provements; they not only sharpen and give authority to many passages in the original, but they also tend to tighten the structure and strengthen the writing of what was a fairly loose first draft.”⁹

In No. 27 of *The North Briton* (December 4, 1762), when things were becoming hot and dangerous for the editors, Churchill shows his awareness of the danger and his courage in the face of it. “Almost every man I meet looks strangely on me,” he begins; “some industriously avoid me — others pass me silent — stare — and shake their heads. Those few, those very few, who are not afraid to take a lover of his country by the hand, congratulate me on my being alive and at liberty. They advise circumspection. . . .” Then follows his ringing answer to those who recommend caution: “Let them point out, if they can, and if they dare, from whom, and on what account, I am in danger. . . . The laws, I am certain, are of no party; nor will I harbour one moment’s doubt of those who are appointed to put them in force. Fear is the proper companion of guilt only; and I have not yet learned to call a sincere and uniform love of my king and my country, by that name.”¹⁰

Churchill’s prose in *The North Briton* strongly supported the political position of his friend; but it was his poetic satire that united politics and literature and that most powerfully defended the cause of “Wilkes and Liberty.” Like Dryden, one of his great models, Churchill is primarily a social and political poet. The vital public issues of the day were seemingly needed to release in him his own greatest efforts. Although he wrote on many other subjects, fully half of his work was socially or politically inspired. It is therefore to the “Wilkes and Liberty” situation that we must turn to find the heart of Churchill’s work.

In two general but related ways Churchill supported his friend in his poetry. First, scattered through the poems are brilliant satiric portraits of about two dozen of Wilkes’s ene-

mies. Second, three of Churchill's best poems are savage attacks on major opponents of Wilkes, and a fourth attacks the whole Scottish nation, some of whose leaders dominated the Tory government that prosecuted and persecuted him. The men whom Churchill lashed with the weapon of satire ranged in importance from the highest to the lowest in politics, art, and letters — from Bute, Sandwich, Hogarth, Warburton, Johnson, and Smollett down to hacks and henchmen like the Rev. John Kidgell and the mediocre poet Paul Whitehead.

From June, 1762, until he abruptly resigned on April 8, 1763, the Earl of Bute, as George III's first minister, was the prime target of Wilkes in *The North Briton*. As such he naturally became one of Churchill's principal objects of satire. Because of his great influence on the King, in addition to his enormous political power, Bute was viewed by Wilkes and Churchill as not only evil in himself, but as the cause of evil in others; and Churchill never tired of linking him with his distant relatives, the royal Stuart pretenders. In *The Ghost*, for example, he pictures "Fancy" as

Driving before an idol band
Of drivelling Stuarts, hand in hand,
Some who, to curse mankind, had wore
A crown they ne'er must think of more;
Others, whose baby brows were graced
With paper crowns, and toys of paste;
She jigg'd, and playing on the flute,
Spread raptures o'er the soul of Bute. (IV, 651-58)

Another direct attack on Bute occurs in *The Duellist*, where the direful event of the duel is described as one which "Might tear up Freedom by the root, Destroy a Wilkes, and fix a Bute" (I, 151-52).

Churchill considered Bute less dangerous as an individual, however, than as a symbol of a national evil, threatening not only destruction to freedom, as he asserts above, but disaster to the very English way of life. In the *Epistle to Hogarth* this

national danger is painted vividly in a passage beginning, “. . . let thy virtue tell How Bute prevail’d, how Pitt and Temple fell!” and concluding:

In colours, dull and heavy as the tale,
Let a state-chaos through the whole prevail. (517-30)

But the climactic presentation of Bute as a national danger appears in *The Prophecy of Famine*, where he is identified with the whole of Scotland, home of the dreaded Stuarts and of all that is low, mean, base, and brutish. He is “the mighty Thane,” whom the poet-laureate William Whitehead mentions in his ironic advice to Churchill’s Muse: “Can her weak strain Expect indulgence from the mighty Thane?” (241-42) Later the goddess Famine prophesies the conquest of England by the Scotch through the power of Bute, their “darling son”:

Already is this game of fate begun,
Under the sanction of my darling son;
That son, of nature royal as his name,
Is destined to redeem our race from shame:
His boundless power, beyond example great,
Shall make the rough way smooth, the crooked straight;
Shall for our ease the raging floods restrain,
And sink the mountain level to the plain. (531-38)

The intimacy of the Churchill-Wilkes collaboration appears in the frequent parallels between Churchill’s poetic attacks and Wilkes’s prose satire in *The North Briton*. In No. 4 Wilkes ridicules the Scottish people in the guise of a Scotsman defending his native land: “In our disputes with the English there hath always been one subject, our poverty, with which they have so *illiberally* and falsely reproached us. If truth and reason can be attended to . . . we might produce numberless instances how improperly we are charged in this respect.” Then follow two ridiculous examples, after which Wilkes thus warns his own countrymen: “If these instances are not thought sufficient to remove the objection, we will at least promise our good friends the English to remove it at their

cost; and we hope in a short time to give them more reason to complain of our being rich than ever they had to reproach us with our being poor."¹¹

There is probably no clearer instance of the influence of Wilkes's principles and friendship on Churchill than the poet's treatment of the Earl of Mansfield, the famous barrister and Chief Justice in Bute's ministry. In 1761, before Churchill knew Wilkes intimately, Mansfield appears in *The Rosciad* as the epitome of judicial wisdom:

Each judge was true, and steady to his trust,
As Mansfield wise, and as old Foster just. (257-58)

But by September, 1762, three months after Wilkes had begun *The North Briton*, Churchill's attitude had radically changed. In *The Ghost* he calls for "some new laws,"

Which juries must indeed retain,
But their effect should render vain,
Making all real power to rest
In one corrupted, rotten breast,
By whose false gloss the very Bible
Might be interpreted a libel. (III, 723-28)

The "one corrupted rotten breast" is that of Lord Mansfield. About a year later, and six months after Wilkes had been arrested, Book IV of *The Ghost* appeared, containing Churchill's most violent attack on Mansfield. It was motivated mainly by the anticipation that Wilkes would be tried before him in the court of the King's Bench, which actually took place, in Wilkes's absence, during the following February, 1764. In mock-heroic style, Mansfield is introduced with a broad hint about his severity against libellers. Then follow 134 lines of bitter satire, of which these are typical:

Jealous and mean, he with a frown
Would awe, and keep all merit down;
Nor would to truth and justice bend,
Unless out-bullied by his friend. (IV, 1851-54)

The "friend" is Sir Fletcher Norton, the government's Solicitor-General, another enemy of Wilkes and Churchill.

After this outright attack on Mansfield, a typical Churchillian subtlety occurs — the device of pretending that he has not satirized Mansfield at all! It takes the form, at the conclusion of the attack, of ironically introducing Mansfield by name as the one who will outface the evil jurist through his own virtues:

Abash'd, the monster hung his head,
And like an empty vision fled.

* * * *

Loyalty, Liberty, and Law,
Impatient of the galling chain,
And yoke of power, resumed their reign;
And, burning with the glorious flame
Of public virtue, Mansfield came. (IV, 1923-34)

Mansfield, along with Bute, had been the target of Wilkes's ironic attack on the Scottish leaders in No. 4 of *The North Briton*: "The Earl of Bute, John Stuart, a name ever dear to us, whose abilities, we think, are no more to be doubted than his affection to us, possesses the first post in the state; another of his worthy countrymen, remarkable for his impartial and intrepid administration of justice, holds a conspicuous station in the law." (p. 10)

Mansfield's friend the Solicitor-General, Sir Fletcher Norton, was, as part of the duties of his office, one of those directly concerned with the prosecution of Wilkes for his alleged "infamous and seditious libel" in No. 45 of *The North Briton*. In *The Ghost* Churchill accuses him of tampering with witnesses at trials (III, 1144-50); and in the *Epistle to Hogarth* he links him with Mansfield, attacking them both for their anti-democratic prejudice against the common man:

Doth not the voice of Norton strike thy ear,
And the pale Mansfield chill thy soul with fear?
Dost thou, fond man, believe thyself secure,
Because thou'rt honest, and because thou'rt poor? (75-78)

The longest and most bitter attack on Norton appears in *The Duellist*, where he is grouped with Warburton and Sandwich in a stinging three-part portrait. Following are the highlights on Norton:

Bred to the law, he from the first
Of all bad lawyers was the worst.

* * * *

He, for a prodigy designed
To spread amazement o'er mankind,
Started full ripened all at once
A perfect knave, and perfect dunce.

* * * *

Bid Liberty stretch out her hands,
Religion plead her stronger bands;
Bid parents, children, wife, and friends;
If they come thwart his private ends,
Unmoved he hears the general call,
And bravely tramples on them all.

(III, 281-336)

Along with Norton, Philip Carteret Webb, Solicitor to the Treasury, was also directly concerned with the prosecution of Wilkes. Webb was in charge of the seizure of Wilkes's private papers. Churchill's jibes at him are relatively infrequent. The first occurs in the *Epistle to Hogarth* in a couplet linking him with Samuel Martin, one of Wilkes's duelling opponents:

Whilst Martin flatters only to betray,
And Webb gives up his dirty soul for pay. . . . (199-200)

Churchill's last fling at Webb in his poem, *Independence*, involves some uncertainties, for, although he names him once, he leaves blanks in two other places where it is likely that Webb was meant (lines 543-54).

As the two Secretaries of State in the Bute ministry, the Earls of Egremont and Halifax were in charge of the prosecution of the Wilkes case in 1763. Both of them signed the notorious general warrant against Wilkes, thus incurring the hostility of Churchill. Of the two Halifax is treated more

severely than Egremont, who first appears as Charles Wyndham in *The Ghost*:

Thrice happy [Warwick] Lane, where, uncontroll'd
 In power and lethargy grown old,
 Most fit to take, in this bless'd land,
 The reigns that fell from Wyndham's hand. (IV, 61-64)

Later in this poem Churchill asks, should the Ghost "The minds of groundlings to inflame, A Dashwood, Bute, and Wyndham name?" (IV, 883-84) Finally Egremont is bracketed with Sandwich in a passage of deepest irony in *The Candidate*:

Cured of her splenetic and sullen fits,
 To such a peer my willing soul submits,
 And to such virtue is more proud to yield
 Than 'gainst ten titled rogues to keep the field.
 Such, (for that truth e'en envy shall allow)
 Such Wyndham was, and such is Sandwich now. (427-32)

Under the name of "Faber" Halifax appears in *The Times*, where, as President of the Board of Trade, he is castigated for his treatment of English merchants:

Why — be it so — we in that point accord;
 But what are trade and tradesmen to a lord?
 Faber, from day to day, from year to year,
 Hath had the cries of tradesmen in his ear,
 Of tradesmen by his villainy betray'd,
 And, vainly seeking justice, bankrupts made.
 What is 't to Faber? Lordly, as before,
 He sits at ease, and lives to ruin more. . . . (53-60)

Another politician lashed by Churchill was Henry Fox, Baron Holland, one of the most corrupt members of the Bute ministry. In 1762 Wilkes wrote to Churchill that "Fox is now declar'd a general director and chief minister. Let me beg a scorpion lash or two on him next saturday."¹² Wilkes's own scorpion lash appeared in No. 23 of *The North Briton* (p. 73); Holland appears in Churchill's *Epistle to Hogarth*, where he is coupled with another dissolute minister:



ENGRAVING BY HOGARTH

*"The Bruiser C. Churchill (once the Reverend!)
in the Character of a Russian Hercules . . ."*



JOHN WILKES
a caricature by Hogarth, "drawn from life"
in 1763

And, in one general, comprehensive line
 To group, which volumes scarcely could define,
 Whate'er of sin and dulness can be said,
 Join to a Fox's heart a Dashwood's head. . . . (19-22)

Later in the same poem he reappears, this time in the company of Bute himself: "Whilst Bute remains in power, whilst Holland lives, Can Satire want a subject . . ." (208-9); and in *Independence*:

A lord, (nor let the honest and the brave,
 The true old noble, with the fool and knave
 Here mix his fame; cursed be that thought of mine
 Which with a Bute and Fox should Grafton join). . . .
 (57-60)

The severest attack on Holland occurs in *The Duellist*, where, after being called other evil names, he is thus addressed:

Thou Hypocrite! who dost profane
 And take the patriot's name in vain;
 Then most thy country's foe when most
 Of love and loyalty you boast;
 Who for the filthy love of gold
 Thy friend, thy king, thy God, hast sold,
 And, mocking the just claim of Hell,
 Were bidders found, thyself wouldst sell. (I, 111-18)

Churchill was also involved with Holland over the affair of "Ayliffe's Ghost." At the time John Ayliffe was hanged (November, 1759), Holland was widely suspected of hypocritically allowing his protégé to die because Ayliffe knew too much. This view was shared by Churchill, who in the *Epistle to Hogarth* refers to "injured Ayliffe's shade" (140), and who in *The Duellist* addresses Holland as one who would stoop to "hanging friends to save thyself" (I, 66). Later Churchill advertised a projected poem to be entitled "Ayliffe's Ghost," which subsequently did not appear, thus giving rise to the rumor that Churchill had been bought off. Wilkes gives the last word on this matter. Writing a note on lines 25-26 of Churchill's *Dedication to Warburton* ("In spirit I'm right

proud, nor can endure The mention of a bribe”), he says: “The reverend emissary [Phillip Francis] of Lord Holland, who waited on the poet soon after the advertisement of ‘Ayliffe’s Ghost by C. Churchill’, can best explain this passage. The untimely death of the author deprived us of that elegy; but his lordship was convinced, at last, that every man has not his price.”¹³ Such a poem, however, did appear, entitled “Ayliffe’s Ghost, or the Fox Stinks Worse than Ever.” Tooke reprints it with the implication that it is not Churchill’s.¹⁴ The evidence is inconclusive either way, although the poem has not been accepted by any of Churchill’s editors, and, on internal evidence, it is not likely his.

Two other politicians were sensationally involved with Wilkes as his duelling opponents: Lord Talbot, High Steward to the King, and Samuel Martin, M.P. Both duels arose out of the severe *North Briton* criticisms of these supporters of the Bute ministry. In the second duel Wilkes was painfully wounded, but he elaborately recorded the satisfaction of his honor in both episodes. Churchill’s attacks on Talbot and Martin appear most extensively in *The Ghost* and *The Duellist*. In the first poem Talbot enters thinly disguised as “The hero who . . . might about the country go High Steward of a puppet-show” (I, 201-10). The direct and ironic satire continues for ninety more lines, in which the “hero” is ridiculed as a braggadocio, spinning out rationalizations of his cowardice:

Could he not, from the mystic school
Of art, produce some sacred rule,
By which a knowledge might be got
Whether men valiant were, or not;
So he that challenges, might write
Only to those who would not fight? (I, 293-98)

The Duellist was based primarily upon the Martin-Wilkes affair of honor. Martin himself is most bitterly satirized in the first and third books of the poem. After carefully creating an

atmosphere of evil, Churchill introduces Martin at the conclusion of Book I:

But should some villain, in support
 And zeal for a despairing court,
 Placing in craft his confidence,
 And making honour a pretense
 To do a deed of deepest shame,
 Whilst filthy lucre is his aim;

* * * *

May he — O for a noble curse
 Which might his very marrow pierce —
 The general contempt engage,
 And be the Martin of his age.

(I, 229-48)

The climax of Book III presents, as the sons of "Fraud," Bishop Warburton, the Earl of Sandwich, and Sir Fletcher Norton, all three being pictured as plotting at midnight against Wilkes and Liberty. At this point Fraud appears to announce that her youngest and most evil son will carry out their plot:

When straight the portals open flew,
 And, clad in armour, to their view
 Martin, the Duellist, came forth;
 All knew, and all confessed his worth;
 All justified, with smiles arrayed,
 The happy choice their dam had made.

(III, 469-74)

Clearly Churchill considered Martin's wounding of Wilkes to have been one of the most dangerous of all attacks on his friend and the principles for which they were fighting.

Along with the Earl of Sandwich, Sir Francis Dashwood has the dubious honor of becoming an enemy of Wilkes and Churchill after having been their companion in the orgies of the Hell-Fire Club. In fact, the lives of Sandwich and Dashwood raise doubts whether, in the eighteenth century, it was politics or dissipation that made the stranger bedfellows. At any rate, the spendthrift Dashwood was made Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Bute ministry. Wilkes treated the new minister with good-humored irony in No. 37 (p. 122) of *The North*

Briton: "Examine well the present administration; is it not composed chiefly of the choicest patriots, men of long experience in business, and of unshaken loyalty? Have we not at the head of our finances the *experienced*, the *eloquent*, the *able Sir Francis Dashwood*?" Although Dashwood took no active part against Wilkes, Churchill could not forgive his joining the enemy. His first attack is the ironic reference to his country estate, with its "pious" Medmenham Abbey, where the meetings of the Hell-Fire Club had taken place. In *The Ghost "Fancy"* is portrayed as making

. . . lordly temples rise
 Before the pious Dashwood's eyes,
 Temples which, built aloft in air,
 May serve for show, if not for prayer;
 In solemn form herself, before,
 Array'd like Faith, the Bible bore. . . . (IV, 627-32)

Then there is the outright thrust already mentioned in connection with Lord Holland: "Whate'er of sin and dulness can be said, Join to a Fox's heart a Dashwood's head." Finally, Dashwood is introduced as "old Wingate" in *Independence* — an incompetent Chancellor of the Exchequer:

Methinks I see old Wingate frowning here,
 (Wingate may in the season be a peer,
 Though now, against his will, of figures sick,
 He's forced to diet on arithmetic,
 E'en whilst he envies every Jew he meets,
 Who cries old clothes to sell about the streets). . . .
 (305-10)

Two minor poets, Paul and William Whitehead (not related), also came in for stinging attacks by Churchill because of their connections with the enemies of Wilkes. Dashwood's literary and political henchman was Paul Whitehead, whom Churchill considered a turncoat, for he writes in *The Conference*:

May I (can worse disgrace on manhood fall?)
 Be born a Whitehead, and baptized a Paul. (271-72)

In No. 44 of *The North Briton* Wilkes attacked "the notorious Paul Whitehead" as one of "the advocates of despotism" (p. 147). William Whitehead was the rather dull poet-laureate, whom, for this reason alone, Churchill could be expected to hold in contempt. In *Gotham* he mentions the laurel as highly significant in the past, "but destined now In grief to wither on a Whitehead's brow" (I, 289-90). That Wilkes shared this opinion we know from the following comment in No. 20 of *The North Briton*: "Cibber and Whitehead were as legally appointed laureates as Johnson [sic] and Dryden. The legality never came into question, but the absurdity of the choice was the object of just ridicule with the public" (p. 62). And in one of his letters to Churchill he jokingly remarks: "In a week I had made you as tame as Will Whitehead, tho' not quite so decent."¹⁵ In the same vein, but with the added implication of his being a political trimmer, Churchill sneers at Whitehead in *The Prophecy of Famine*:

Thus spake a form, by silken smile, and tone
Dull and unvaried, for the Laureate known,
Folly's chief friend, Decorum's eldest son,
In every party found, and yet of none. (255-58)

Two of the three minor clergymen whom Churchill satirized were related indirectly to the Wilkes controversy: the Rev. John Calcraft and the Rev. Philip Francis. The first of these was an adherent (contemporary gossip said the natural son) of Lord Holland, who secured for him the lucrative government job of Deputy Commissary-General of Musters. In No. 42 of *The North Briton* (probably written by Churchill) Calcraft is listed among those who made outrageous profits in "inside" subscriptions to a public war loan; and in the *Epistle to Hogarth* Churchill links him with Judas Iscariot for selling out to Caesar:

Whilst C —, false to God and man, for gold,
Like the old traitor who a Saviour sold,

To shame his master, friend, and father, gives;
 Whilst Bute remains in power, whilst Holland lives,
 Can Satire want a subject. . . . (205-9)

Philip Francis also owed his fortunes to Lord Holland, being his chaplain and confidant and the tutor of his children. Francis had more literary pretensions than Calcraft: he published a translation of Horace that was approved by Dr. Johnson, and then turned pamphleteer in attacks on Pitt and later on Wilkes. In *The Author* Churchill's most severe blast at Francis takes a form similar to that against Calcraft — the betrayal of religion by selfish greed:

Dost thou contrive, for some base private end,
 Some selfish view, to hang a trusting friend,
 To lure him on, e'en to his parting breath,
 And promise life to work him surer death?
 Grown old in villainy, and dead to grace,
 Hell in his heart, and Tyburn in his face,
 Behold, a parson at thy elbow stands,
 Lowering damnation, and with open hands
 Ripe to betray his Saviour for reward,
 The Atheist chaplain of an Atheist lord. . . . (331-40)

The hanging of a trusting friend mentioned above is, in all likelihood, another allusion to the "Ayliffe's Ghost" affair; and we remember that Wilkes named Francis as the agent of Holland who visited Churchill in an attempt to bribe him.

The last member of this religious trio, the Rev. John Kidgell, was more directly involved in the Wilkes controversy. He was chaplain to the unprincipled and dissolute Earl of March, who joined Wilkes's enemies in their persecution of him through defamation of his character. March ordered Kidgell to help bribe Wilkes's printers in order to obtain a copy of *An Essay on Woman*, alleged to have been written by him. Kidgell succeeded in obtaining excerpts of the poem, which were then used by Sandwich in the House of Lords to defame Wilkes's character. For this service to his master Kidgell was rewarded in two ways: he was allowed by March to starve in

exile, and he was placed by Churchill high among the infamous in his gallery of satiric portraits, as, for example, in *The Author*, where he is assailed with deepest irony:

Are these the arts which policy supplies?
 Are these the steps by which grave churchmen rise?
 Forbid it, Heaven; or, should it turn out so,
 Let me and mine continue mean and low.
 Such be their arts whom interest controls;
 Kidgell and I have free and modest souls:
 We scorn preferment which is gain'd by sin,
 And will, though poor without, have peace within.

(391-98)

Nor did Kidgell go unnoticed by Wilkes, who, in his *Letter to the electors of Aylesbury*, commented acidly on the theft of his papers, including the excerpts from the *Essay on Woman*: "The neat, prim, smirking *Chaplain* of that babe of grace, that *gude cheeld* of the prudish *kirk* of Scotland, the *Earl of March*, was highly offended at my having made an *Essay on Woman*. . . . In great wrath he drew his grey goose quill against me. . . . The most vile blasphemies were forged, and published as part of a work, which in reality contained nothing but . . . a few portraits drawn from warm life, with the too high colouring of a youthful fancy, and two or three descriptions, perhaps too luscious, which though *Nature* and *Woman* might pardon, a *Kidgell* and a *Mansfield* could not fail to condemn" (p. xlii).

Of all the politicians ranged against Wilkes, the Earl of Sandwich was accorded a place apart in Churchill's gallery of evil geniuses. He is the "hero" of *The Candidate*, one of the most corrosive satires in English poetry. Sandwich became notorious as the "Jemmy Twitcher" of contemporary politics, so his turning against Wilkes was probably mere political opportunism. In 1764 he offered himself as a candidate for the office of High Steward of Cambridge University, a move which was not successful but which called forth Churchill's satire.

The attack on Sandwich is bitter in the extreme, but what makes it doubly effective is the brilliance of its irony. Sand-

wich is damned not by faint praise but by flattery so fulsome that it utterly condemns him and his supporters at Cambridge. Thus near the middle of the poem Sandwich is addressed as "gentle Montagu":

O gentle Montagu, in blessed hour
 Didst thou start up, and climb the stairs of power;
 England of all her fears at once was eased,
 Nor, 'mongst her many foes was one displeased. . . .

(433-36)

The key to the irony appears, of course, in the paradox of the last couplet above. There are also in this elaborate portrait of Sandwich passages of direct satire, as in the couplet:

When, like another Machiavel, we saw
 Thy fingers twisting, and untwisting law. . . .

(287-88)

But the ironic approach predominates.

The most important men of art and letters whom Churchill assailed for their political opposition to Wilkes were the dramatist-pamphleteer Murphy, the editor-novelist Smollett, the pensioner Dr. Johnson, the artist-cartoonist Hogarth, and Bishop Warburton, the Tory editor of *Pope*. Not all of these were active enemies of Wilkes, but they all were at least adherents of the opposition. Murphy was also of course a personal enemy of Churchill before he knew Wilkes. Later, as editor of *The Auditor*, Murphy turned political writer for the Bute ministry.

Churchill's attacks on Murphy take the form of ridiculing his pretensions as a playwright and poet and his principles as a political writer. In *Independence* his literary abilities are severely dealt with:

The bard (nor think too lightly that I mean
 Those little, piddling witlings, who o'erween
 Of their small parts, the Murphys of the stage,
 The Masons and the Whiteheads of the age,
 Who all in raptures their own works rehearse,
 And draw out measured prose, which they call verse). . . .

(291-96)

It is as a political writer, however, that Murphy is most powerfully blasted for his weakness of character and lack of principle. In *The Author Churchill* asks,

Dost thou sage Murphy for a blockhead take,
 Who wages war with vice for virtue's sake?
 No, no, like other worldlings, you will find
 He shifts his sails, and catches every wind:
 His soul the shock of interest can't endure:
 Give him a pension, then, and sin secure. (257-62)

Wilkes by no means ignored Murphy in *The North Briton*; in No. 11 he sarcastically answers his charge that the King's opposition writers lack invention. "But is indeed *invention* the great talent of a political writer?" he asks; "I have always thought otherwise, and, knowing where my strength lay, have ever stated *facts* and *dates* in all historical occurrences, and have constantly left the glory of *invention* to the Auditor and the Briton" (p. 32).

Churchill turned on Smollett after he had become a Tory pamphleteer in charge of *The Briton*. Indeed, the name of the Wilkes-Churchill journal was intended as a parody of Smollett's. The attack on Smollett is most effective in *The Author*, a defense of poetry and satire, where he first appears as "Publius," ironically giving Churchill critical advice, the advice being a backward glance to Smollett's editorship of *The Critical Review* in 1761:

How do I laugh, when Publius, hoary grown
 In zeal for Scotland's welfare, and his own,
 By slow degrees, and course of office, drawn
 In mood and figure at the helm to yawn,
 Too mean (the worst of curses Heaven can send)
 To have a foe; too proud to have a friend;
 Erring by form, which blockheads sacred hold,
 Ne'er making new faults, and ne'er mending old,
 Rebukes my spirit, bids the daring Muse
 Subjects more equal to her weakness choose. . . . (107-16)

Finally, in a stinging climactic passage, Smollett is assailed for

becoming one of the "vile pensioners of state," in company with Johnson, who had accepted a pension in 1762:

Ah! what are poets now? as slavish those
 Who deal in verse, as those who deal in prose.
 Is there an Author, search the kingdom round,
 In whom true worth and real spirit's found?
 The slaves of booksellers, or (doom'd by Fate
 To baser chains) vile pensioners of state,
 Some, dead to shame, and of those shackles proud
 Which Honour scorns, for slavery roar aloud;
 Others, half-palsied only, mutes become,
 And what makes Smollett write makes Johnson dumb.

(245-54)

Churchill's most famous attack on Johnson in Book II of *The Ghost* ("Pomposo — insolent and loud, Vain idol of the scribbling crowd," 653-88) appeared shortly before Churchill joined Wilkes on *The North Briton* and before Johnson accepted a pension from Bute. The satire is therefore directed at Johnson as a self-appointed literary dictator: dictatorship in any form Churchill could not abide. Six months later, however, after both *The North Briton* and the pension had come into being, Churchill returned to the attack in Book III of *The Ghost*. Here Johnson is severely dealt with for his failure to produce his edition of Shakespeare after being paid for it by his subscribers and for becoming "a slave to interest":

Horrid, unwieldy, without form,
 Savage as ocean in a storm,
 Of size prodigious, in the rear,
 That post of honour, should appear
 Pomposo; Fame around should tell
 How he a slave to interest fell;
 How for integrity renown'd,
 Which booksellers have often found,
 He for subscribers baits his hook,
 And takes their cash — but where's the book?

(III, 793-802)

Incidentally, Boswell credits Churchill's satire with being instrumental in getting Johnson back to work on this project:

"His throes in bringing it forth had been severe and remittent, and at last we may almost conclude that the Caesarian operation was performed by the knife of Churchill, whose upbraiding satire, I dare say, made Johnson's friends urge him to dispatch."¹⁶

The final thrust at Johnson we have already noted — the one in which he is linked with Smollett as a pensioner, so that "what makes Smollett write makes Johnson dumb." This view Wilkes had himself expressed in No. 12 of *The North Briton*, where with wit and sarcasm, he comments on Johnson's famous definition of "pension" in his *Dictionary*: "The word pension . . . has of late much puzzled our politicians. I do not recollect that any one of them has ventured at a definition of it. Mr. Johnson, as he is now a pensioner, one should naturally have recourse to, for the truest literary information on this subject. His definition then of a pension is, an allowance made to any one without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country" (p. 35).

The two remaining figures, one a great artist and the other a famous editor, are remarkable in that, like Sandwich, each was made the subject of an entire poem. William Hogarth received this contemporary notoriety because, as a pensioner ("serjeant-painter to the King"), he first published a dull cartoon called "The Times," attacking Temple and Pitt; later, after Wilkes had retaliated in No. 17 of *The North Briton*, Hogarth printed the famous "John Wilkes, Esq., Drawn from Life" (May, 1763), a monstrous distortion of Wilkes's well-known ugly personal appearance. Wilkes considered his and Churchill's attacks on Hogarth as teamwork, for he wrote to Churchill that "Hogarth has begun the attack today — I shall attack him in hobbling prose, you will I hope in smooth-pac'd verse."¹⁷ Wilkes concluded his own reply to Hogarth by remarking dryly on his post as serjeant-painter: "I think the

term means the same as what is vulgarly called *house-painter*." Churchill was much less restrained in his *Epistle to William Hogarth*.

Structurally almost half of this powerful satire is an elaborate build-up for the introduction of Hogarth's name — a favorite device of Churchill's. For 308 lines "Candour" speaks to the poet, upbraiding him for his numerous indictments of human nature. Churchill's reply is to name Hogarth as his grand example of human baseness, particularly because he had so much genius to start with. The description of Hogarth drawing Wilkes from life in the courtroom, where he appeared to answer the charges against him, is especially strong and vivid:

Virtue, with due contempt, saw Hogarth stand,
 The murderous pencil in his palsied hand.
 What was the cause of Liberty to him,
 Or what was Honour? let them sink or swim,
 So may he gratify, without control,
 The mean resentments of his selfish soul.
 Let Freedom perish; if to Freedom true,
 In the same ruin Wilkes may perish too. (411-18)

Here then in general eighteenth-century terms are the principles for which Churchill and, as he believed, Wilkes stood, and for the lack of which Hogarth must be condemned: Virtue, Liberty, Honour, Freedom. Thus stated, they may seem rather vague abstractions, but in the context of the "Wilkes and Liberty" controversy they acquire a deep significance for the history of the 1760's in England.

Hogarth, visibly shaken by this satire, immediately launched his own counterattack in the form of a nasty cartoon, depicting "The Bruiser C. Churchill (once the Reverend!) in the Character of a Russian Hercules, regaling himself after having kill'd the Monster *Caricatura* that so sorely galled his virtuous friend, the Heaven-sent Wilkes." Churchill is pictured, in an unseemly pose, as a Russian bear. His only rejoinder to this

attack was the comment in a letter to Wilkes: "I take it for granted you have seen Hogarth's Print—was ever any thing so contemptible."¹⁸

At this time William Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, was still renowned as the literary executor and editor of Pope. But Churchill, although he wrote almost exclusively in the tradition of heroic satire, had even less in common with Warburton than he had with Johnson, and for the same reason: both were staunch Tories and therefore politically opposed to him and Wilkes. The climax of Warburton's opposition to Wilkes occurred in the House of Lords, when he seconded Sandwich's condemnation of the *Essay on Woman* as a poem by Wilkes. Warburton was understandably bitter about the whole issue because of the implication that he had written the Pope-like notes to the poem. In his speech in Parliament he protested that "the hardiest inhabitants of Hell" could not listen unmoved by such blasphemies.

In *The Conference* Churchill directs a jibe at "meek divines" who "wield persecution's rod" (258), and in *The Candidate*, thinking of his own posthumous reputation, he says,

. . . let no false, sneaking peer
 (Some such there are) to win the public ear,
 Hand me to shame with some vile anecdote,
 Nor soul-galled bishop damn me with a note. (141-44)

Book III of *The Duellist* contains an elaborate satiric portrait that accuses Warburton of everything from pedantry as a critic to hypocrisy as a divine; among other things, he

Wrote Dedications which must make
 The heart of every Christian quake;
 Made one man equal to, or more
 Than God, then left him, as before
 His God he left, and, drawn by pride,
 Shifted about to t' other side. . . . (141-46)

To crown all in declining age,
 Inflamed with church and party rage,
 Behold him, full and perfect quite,
 A false saint, and true hypocrite. (265-68)

But the most devastating blast is the *Fragment of a Dedication to Dr. W. Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester*. Probably Warburton's serious writing of dedications, which, as we have seen, Churchill had scoffed at, suggested to him his own mock dedication. On the surface most of the 180 lines of this unfinished poem are eulogy, but throughout it there appear broad hints that the praise is wholly ironic:

His judgment teach me, from the critic school,
How not to err, and how to err by rule. (91-92)

But you, my lord, renounced attorneyship
With better purpose, and more noble aim,
And wisely play'd a more substantial game. (158-60)

. . . despise not one
For want of smooth hypocrisy undone. . . . (167-68)

Until, at the conclusion of the poem, all pretense is dropped, and the satire becomes a direct attack:

Let Glo'ster well remember how he rose,
Nor turn his back on men who made him great;
Let him not, gorged with power and drunk with state,
Forget what once he was, though now so high;
How low, how mean, and full as poor as I.

The personal comparison provides an intricate intermingling of methods: the epithets "low," "mean," and "poor" apply directly to Warburton but ironically to Churchill.

This rogues' gallery of anti-Wilkesites is nothing if not critical. In the drama of Churchill's entire work, they are the blackest villains of the piece; and everywhere their diabolical portraits remind us of Churchill's loyalty to Wilkes and his dedication to the principles of democracy.

ii.

These numerous attacks on politicians and Churchill's association with Wilkes on *The North Briton* gave him a considerable reputation as a political figure in addition to his

fame as a poet. In August, 1762, less than two months after *The North Briton* was started, a poem appeared in *The St. James's Chronicle*, praising him as a poet and deploring his addiction to "Party, Politicks, and Prose." It is entitled "The Poet turn'd Politician," and it begins:

What, Churchill, wilt thou leave the Flow'r-strewn Tracks,
 The Muses to their Sons disclose,
 To toil through miry Roads with Hireling Hacks,
 In Party, Politicks, and Prose?
 Unprejudic'd and free, thy nobler Mind
 Should look with Scorn on meaner Things:
 Leave to the Dull, the Selfish, and the Blind,
 To guide our Ministers and Kings!¹⁹

In June of the next year the same journal printed a longer piece "To Mr. William Hogarth on some late Political Productions," which is an attack on Hogarth for his own satiric prints against Wilkes, Temple, and Pitt and a tribute to Churchill as a political poet. The author of these verses clearly knew that Churchill was at that time writing his devastating *Epistle to William Hogarth*, which was published in July, 1763. After admonishing Hogarth not "to play the Fool with Politics — that cutting Tool," the *St. James's* contributor further warns him:

But soon shall Churchill's nervous Rhymes
 Expose the Folly of the TIMES:
 In full-fraught Humour every line
 Shall descant on thy quick Decline:
 In lively Colours shall be shown,
 (Colours, more lasting than thy own). . . .

In a humorous note the editors declare solemnly that "the Effect of the above Poem has been wonderful; it has already . . . lowered the Price of Hogarth's Prints above Half."²⁰

The public reactions to the Churchill-Hogarth controversy, which was basically political, continued after Churchill published his own attack on Hogarth; and these were anything

but impartial. Thus in *The St. James's Chronicle* appeared another poetic squib "To Mr. C. Churchill on the Motto of his Epistle to Hogarth — Ut Pictura Poesis":

Churchill, your Motto surely is untrue,
Not as the Picture have we Verse from you:
Just to the Measures of the Scottish Clan,
To abuse and falsify, was Hogarth's Plan;

Your honest Lines at Truth's Command are writ,
And Judgement owns the Triumph of your Wit.²¹

A week later this newspaper printed a much longer and more scurrilous diatribe in verse, "To the Rev. Mr. Churchill, Non ut Pictura Poesis," which attacks Churchill and Wilkes, saying of Hogarth,

His Fancy has already hit on,
A Frontispiece for the North Briton;
Where in full View, the virtuous Pair,
Shall their united Merits share.

And then to Churchill, with reference to his leaving the Church:

Thy Rose — thy Bible thrown a-side,
And the long Cassock's tatter'd Pride;
His liberal Hand shall in their Stead,
Place Nettles circling round thy head,
Entwin'd with Thistles fully Blown,
To wear these Honours for thy own. . . .²²

The "Thistles" here are a double allusion to the crucifixion and to the national flower of Scotland.

Public response to Churchill's political activities took another turn as the result of an attack on him by an academic enemy of Wilkes. In the summer of 1762 there was an attempt to blacken Wilkes's public character by publishing in *The Auditor*, a ministerial weekly edited by Churchill's old enemy Murphy, a story of some alleged insults that Wilkes had heaped upon the Earl of Bute's son, who was then a schoolboy at Winchester.²³ Wilkes tried to get Dr. John Burton, the head-

master, to refute the story, but he refused, thus incurring the hostility of both Wilkes and Churchill.²⁴ Later Churchill struck back at Burton with a sharp couplet in *The Candidate*:

Though Dulness there unrival'd state doth keep,
Would she at Winchester with Burton sleep. (601-2)

A further indication of the public awareness of Churchill's part in the Wilkes controversy is the report in the *St. James's* that Churchill was implicated in the publication of the *Essay on Woman*, for which Wilkes was convicted of blasphemy: "It is said that a celebrated Poetical Genius will be tryed as one of the Publishers of the *Essay on Woman*."²⁵

Actually, Churchill was never molested by the government, although he could have been apprehended under the general warrant, aimed primarily at Wilkes. One well-known story credits Wilkes with having saved his friend from arrest. While the officers were at his house, according to Wilkes, "Mr. Churchill came into the room. I had heard that their orders were likewise to apprehend him, but I suspected they did not know his person. . . . As soon as Mr. Churchill entered the room, I accosted him, 'good morrow, Mr. Thomson. How does Mrs. Thomson do to-day? Does she dine in the country?' Mr. Churchill thanked me . . . and almost directly took his leave. He went home immediately, secured all his papers, and retired into the country. The messengers could never get intelligence where he was."²⁶

Late in 1763 or early the next year there appeared an anonymous pamphlet attacking Churchill's private life and ridiculing his political sagacity. Since the last meeting of Parliament Churchill has, says the author, "thrown together the Hints of an elaborate scheme, whereby all future Contention for Power, Places, and Prerogative, will be entirely prevented." Then ironically he goes on to exclaim, "Happy Period, when this fortunate Project will take Place!" after which he continues coyly, "As the Reader's curiosity may, perhaps, be so greatly raised,

as to render him impatient for the publication of Mr. C—ll's Project. . . . I shall keep the Reader no longer in suspence, but lay it before him in the Words of the Manuscript now before me." The nature of this plan is sufficiently indicated in its first clause: "That a Bill be brought in to render it Felony, without Benefit of Clergy, for any Scotsman, either in or out of Place, either Priest or Layman, to be found on the South Side of the Tweed, after the 25th of March, 1764." After describing in elaborate detail how this fantastic project is to be carried out, the author concludes with a deeply ironic appeal to Churchill to return from his "late Excursion" with a mistress in order to put his plan into operation. "We should with one Voice pray for his immediate return to the Capital, endeavour to wipe off every slur or imputation thrown upon his Character by the Scotch Partizans and their Adherents, rescue his Reputation from Scandal and false Imputations, and re-instate him in the good Opinion of Mr. W — es, and every honest Englishman, he being one of the greatest Champions of our Civil and religious Liberties."²⁷

Early in 1764 *The St. James's Chronicle* published a verse "Dialogue between Churchill and his Friend," which contains a double allusion to "the Fox," who is both the animal and the politician Henry Fox, Lord Holland:

- F. When, Churchill, when wilt thou lay down thy Pen?
 Ch. When Fools grow wise, when Knaves turn honest Men.
 F. No little Time you take t' indulge your Muse;
 Ch. While the Fox lives, the Hunter still pursues. . . .²⁸

In May of this year a long article appeared in *The London Chronicle* on the general subject of England's difficulties with the American colonies. In the article the author looks into the future and includes a tribute to Churchill as the great defender of political freedom, "America in your hands," he says, "may perhaps become a cluster of happy Christian republics . . . republics where every human virtue shall govern, where every

human science shall enlighten, where Ham[p]dens shall harangue, where Newtons shall unlock the secrets of the universe, and where other Churchills shall resound the name of the British Churchill, who now pleads the cause of their forefathers.”²⁹

When the news of Churchill’s fatal illness in November, 1764, reached London, among the numerous comments in the public press was one in this same journal which credits him with being a key political figure among the Whigs, then the minority party: “It is reported as a real fact, that one of the chiefs of the Minority said upon hearing of the danger in which Mr. Churchill was thought to be, Z — ds we are not only losing our best heads, but also our best instruments.”³⁰ Privately Churchill was accorded this political significance after his death by none other than Sir Horace Mann, the British Resident at Florence. In an unpublished letter to Horace Walpole, dated January 5, 1765, Mann says, “The death of Churchill, the poet, was thought of such importance that the Court of France sent an account of it in their ministerial gazette, with their reflections on the importance which they thought it would be at this crisis to the ministry in England.”³¹ In the previous month there appeared in the papers many items on Churchill, some of which emphasized his political character. Thus in *The St. James’s Chronicle* is an “Epigram on the Death of Mr. Churchill”:

Great Churchill gone! Ye Ministers rejoice,
Who conscious blush’d, or trembled at his Voice.
But then, once warn’d, repent ere ’tis too late,
Nor dare the Stroke of an avenging Fate.³²

A few days later there appeared in the same paper a less sympathetic poetic squib, making a mildly witty point of Churchill’s political connections:

If Churchill’s Muse from Heaven came,
As factious Whigs maintain,
To part such Friends, Death’s much to blame,
Who ne’er can meet again.³³

An amusing sidelight on the political notoriety which Churchill attained derives from Wilkes's unsuccessful attempt to secure appointment as Governor-General of Canada.³⁴ His enemies never tired of twitting him about this failure, and often Churchill, as a dissipated former priest, is ironically brought into the picture. Thus in *The St. James's Chronicle* appears an "Extract of a Letter from a French Gentleman at Paris to his Friend in London," which says about Wilkes that "it is confidently reported, that for his great Services done our Nation, he is to have the Government of Canada," and about Churchill: "It is said also, that considerable Benefices in our Church will be conferred on a Friend of his, one *Churchill*, provided he will embrace the True Catholic Religion, and take the Habit of our Church, which they say he will be easily persuaded to do, as he has already thrown off that of his own."³⁵ Five months later, in the same journal, a similar account emanates from one of the London coffeehouses: "Another of the company told us, that, odd as it might be thought, he had heard . . . the celebrated C. C. mentioned for the Canadian Mitre; for that the aforesaid renowned Bard having, like his Friend [Wilkes], been rather unfortunate in a late Essay on Women, wherein he had strongly mistaken a — for a Vestal, he was likely to turn Christian out of mere Vexation; and then, as it was well known that a Compromise of Parties was coming on, and the present Scottish Governor of Canada was no more than a *Locum Tenens* for Mr. W . . . nothing certainly could tend more to facilitate the Conversion of the Indians to the Faith than the benign and cordial Co-operation of his Excellency the Governor with my Lord the Bishop."³⁶ Imagining Churchill as a Bishop would of course perfectly match the sardonic humor of the coffeehouse wits.³⁷

All of these outpourings from the press tended to extremes: Churchill's detractors pictured him as a party hack, his proponents as an apostle of "Liberty." For the most part he ig-

nored these partisan pieces; his general attitude was summed up in an epigram that appeared after his death, "On seeing a Poem called Churchill Defended":

Churchill Defended! by a Grub-street Poet?
 'Twould make him die again, were he to know it.³⁸

It was indeed the Grub-Street poets especially who had a field day at Churchill's expense, even when they "defended" him.

The above-mentioned poem, *Churchill Defended*, is attributed to Percival Stockdale, an obscure writer of the time. Its subtitle, "Addressed to the Minority," shows that the author was thinking of Churchill as a spokesman for the Whig "minority" party. The poem was begun before Churchill's death and completed after it, for in the "Advertisement" Stockdale hopes his readers "will excuse him for not altering his Method on account of that Catastrophe."³⁹ In the poem itself Churchill is addressed as "the Patriot Poet" and severe counterattacks on him are anticipated:

Churchill's my Subject — generous *Churchill* hail!
 Critics may snarl, Ecclesiastics rail:
 Scotchmen appall'd, will certainly abuse
 The manly efforts of thy nervous Muse.
 Deathless, however, will be thy Renown,
 Thine is the Poet's, thine the Patriot's crown. (p. 4)

At the news of his death, the author fears that England's very future is placed in jeopardy:

I'm told this moment — *Churchill* is no more!
 Whither is *England's* Guardian Angel fled?
 Her *Wilkes* is outlaw'd, and her *Churchill* dead! (pp. 17-18)

In another defense of the poet, rather clumsily entitled *The Jumble*, "Addressed to the Revd. Mr. C. C-rch-ll," he is credited with having driven Hogarth out of politics and exposed Bute's iniquitous policies:

Does a false, venal Scottish statesman dare
 Abuse with lies his R-y-l S-v'r-gn's ear?
 Hide a base heart beneath a glitt'ring star?
 Patch up a peace more dang'rous than a war?⁴⁰

In a third, simply called *Churchill, an Elegy*, his is the satiric art,

That dar'd to point out Vice, tho' robed in State,
And goad with poignant Verse the guilty Great;
Designing Statesmen, with his Satire stung,
With Fear and Trembling heard, while Churchill sung.⁴¹

Stockdale's fear that there would be broadside counter-attacks on Churchill was amply justified, and, of the dozens that appeared, most of them emphasize his political alliance with Wilkes. One, ironically called *The Patriot Poet*, ridicules the two men as poet and patriot:

While W*** and Ch*** bear away the fame,
This of a poet's, that a patriot's flame;
While honest giddy multitudes misled,
Miscall one Hampden, tho' to virtue dead,
In th' other, rolling turbulent along,
Mistake the foam of spleen for strength of song.⁴²

A second, *Churchill Dissected*, is, as the title suggests, a vicious attack that accuses the poet of political sedition:

A Subject to his Sov'reign most disloyal,
A Foe to each Prerogative that's Royal.
Touch but a Libeller, or seize his Book,
Howe'er licentious, an Alarm is took;
The Trumpet of Sedition sounds on high,
And Wilkes and Liberty is all the Cry.⁴³

Another goes to even greater lengths in political and moral abuse: *An Epistle to the Irreverend Mr. C — s C — l*, "In his Own Style and Manner." A remark in the "Advertisement" prefixed to the poem tells us what to expect. "Who but W—s," asks the author rhetorically, "under the most justifiable imputation of having committed the most flagrant acts of Immorality, of Disloyalty and of Blasphemy, has at any time pretended to be the Friend of Liberty and the Laws, and the Lover of his Country? and what Poet, C — l excepted, has presumed to adopt the cause of Religion and Virtue, and to

satirize others for the violation of them, after a formal renunciation of both?"⁴⁴ The poem is a scurrilous attack on Churchill and Wilkes, in the interests of which the author pictures their enemies as paragons of virtue. Thus, addressing Churchill, he brazenly "whitewashes" three of Wilkes's political opponents:

Grenville and Halifax, tho' Faction's breath
Should shake with Tempests this ungrateful Earth,
Sustain'd by Wisdom, and thro' Virtue brave,
With steady steps shall King and Kingdom save:
And Sandwich, ardent in that Cause to vie,
Gives to thy Infamy the daily lye. . . . (p. 20)

What unconscious irony! — to compliment the opportunistic and even hypocritical Earl of Sandwich in this manner.

Even outside of England Churchill's great reputation as a political satirist was recognized. Within a month after his death the French *Gazette Littéraire* printed an essay on the subject, which was immediately translated in *Lloyd's Evening Post* for December 5, 1764. "English Literature," it begins, "has just sustained a very considerable loss by the death of Mr. Charles Churchill, whom his Satires have rendered so eminent. He came over from London to Boulogne on a visit to Mr. Wilkes, who by his Satires in prose is become still more celebrated than his poetical friend." After describing the nature of Churchill's illness, the account adds that "Mr. Wilkes and Mr. Churchill were united in sentiment, taste, and party; they fought under the same banners with different arms, and talents equally uncommon."⁴⁵

Churchill asked nothing for his services to the cause of liberty, and, except for personal notoriety and a certain box-office success, he gained nothing. But his powerful support of "Wilkes and Liberty" is a notable example of that alliance between politics and literature for which the eighteenth century is justifiably famous. Such support was noted and appreciated by Churchill's countrymen, even after his death. In *The St. James's Chronicle* for June 2, 1768, one Wilkes supporter

thus addresses the editor: "I think, Sir, Mr. Wilkes is almost indemnified for all his Sufferings by the Words *Wilkes* and *Liberty* becoming synonymous in English; but he has met with a still nobler Consolation. . . . I mean the Applause and Affection of all the real Friends of this Country, and the Tribute which the Muses have paid to his Merit. . . . I shall select for my Countrymen and the Public and bring into one Point of View all that has been said of him by the first Poet of this Age, whom he loved and admired, by Mr. Churchill."⁴⁶ Then follow lengthy quotations from *The Prophecy of Famine*, the *Epistle to William Hogarth*, *The Conference*, *The Duellist*, *The Candidate*, and *Gotham*.

Although Churchill's public continued to associate him with politics to the end of his life, his own active concern with the political scene declined after the publication of No. 45 of *The North Briton* in April, 1763, a year and a half before his death. Like other neo-classic satirists (Dryden, Pope, Swift), Churchill's most powerful inspiration came from social and political conflicts: his greatest poems arose out of his passionate interest in "Wilkes and Liberty." We should therefore do justice to Churchill the poet before going on to the terminal months of his career.

Chapter VI

The Heights of Parnassus

i.

WILKES'S DESCRIPTION of Lloyd as a poet is a happy instance of shrewd and accurate insight. Lloyd, he says, "was an excellent scholar, and an easy, natural poet. His peculiar excellence was the dressing up an old thought in a new, neat, trim manner. He was content to scamper round the foot of Parnassus on his little Welsh pony, which seems never to have tired."¹ By contrast, Churchill's poetic steed was at times Pegasus himself. Nor was he content, like Lloyd, "to scamper round the foot of Parnassus": at his best he rode to within seeing distance of the top. The nature of Churchill's poetry places him in the great English tradition of neo-classic satire, and in that tradition, dominated by Dryden and Pope, Churchill is one of the major figures.

Churchill himself asserted his affinity for Dryden, and, although he depreciated Pope, his indebtedness to both masters of neo-classic satire is everywhere manifest.² Such characteristics of style as the Latinate polysyllabic vocabulary, the words in unexpected contexts, the series of scornful epithets, the rhetorical argumentative flourish, the monosyllabic rhyme words (often a verb or a noun), the number and arrangement of stressed syllables within the line, the intricate effects of sound echoing the sense (onomatopoeia, alliteration, etc.), and the balance and contrast of thought and syntax within lines, couplets, and whole verse paragraphs — in all of these Churchill is indebted either to Dryden, to Pope, or to both. But Churchill was no mere imitator: he impressed his own genius upon the heroic couplet, thus achieving original effects

as a satirist; and the relation of the man to his art is apparent in all that he wrote.

The creation of great art is not of necessity dependent directly upon the personal experience of the artist. He can "know" in more ways than one, and in what we gropingly call "talent" or "genius" there is something deeper and more vicarious than any mere sense response or process of cognition. There is, in other words, a difference between life and art. But this difference is never absolute; it varies in degree with the artist, but with this vital provision: there must always exist a bridge, however tenuous or substantial, between "the man who suffers and the mind which creates." The bridge between Churchill and his poetry is relatively massive and short; in him, therefore, "the man who suffers" is closer to "the mind which creates" than in most poets. There is in his work a personal drive which, however, is never truly subjective: it is a kind of crossing of the bridge (to continue the metaphor) substantially and quickly but leaving behind all matters of no concern to the public. This is why Churchill reveals his character and personality in his poetry in the manner of Dryden and Pope and not, for example, in the more "romantic" manner of Byron. Churchill and especially Dryden allied themselves with social and political causes and were inspired to do their best work in behalf of them: Dryden in *MacFlecknoe*, *Absalom and Achitophel*, and *The Medal*; Churchill in *The Prophecy of Famine*, *An Epistle to William Hogarth*, *The Candidate*, and *Fragment of a Dedication to Dr. W. Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester*.

In spite of the topical and impersonal nature of his subject matter, Churchill the man is always at the heart of his work. The most important single characteristic of his best satire is the use of elaborate and sustained irony, which reflects the depth and subtlety of his intellect. Other things being equal, satire is more interesting and effective when the satirist

“by indirections finds directions out.” The caustic irony of the following passage is, of course, revealed in the last line:

From themes too lofty for a bard so mean,
 Discretion beckons to an humbler scene;
 The restless fever of ambition laid,
 Calm I retire, and seek the sylvan shade.
 Now be the Muse disrobed of all her pride,
 Be all the glare of verse by truth supplied,
 And if plain nature pours a simple strain,
 Which Bute may praise, and Ossian not disdain,
 Ossian, sublimest, simplest bard of all,
 Whom English infidels, Macpherson call,
 Then round my head shall Honour's ensigns wave,
 And pensions mark me for a willing slave.

(*Prophecy of Famine*, 261-72)

Wilkes, to whom this poem was inscribed, and Churchill as well, must have thoroughly enjoyed the complex tongue-in-cheek quality of this attack on Bute's British ministry, on the Earl himself, and on the minor Scottish poet James Macpherson.

Churchill clearly realized from the start that irony was to be his forte, although in *The Rosciad* it plays a very minor role. But his second poem, *The Apology*, ridicules the assumed infallibility of his critics by comparing them to the Catholic Church (“Like Church of Rome, they're grown infallible,” 98). The attack is, however, rather mechanical and obvious, deriving its effectiveness from the vigor of the idea rather than from the subtlety of the technique. Considerably more subtle and effective is the mock-heroic description of Dr. Johnson (“Pomposo”) and his friends visiting the tomb of Fannie (“the Cock-Lane Ghost”) in Book II, 727-808, of *The Ghost*, published nearly a year later. These ironic portraits are far more ludicrous and devastating than anything in *The Apology*. In the subsequent mature poems, of course, the ironic portrait attains its full Churchillian flavor and effects.

Churchill the man and Churchill the ironist are also revealed in the frequently used device of self-distortion. *The Apology* opens with a comparison between Jove's crushing a fly and the critics' attacking "a bard just bursting from the shell," thus achieving the double effects of Churchill's pretended modesty and the absurdity of the critics' efforts. Similarly in *Night*, having ridiculed aristocratic sycophants, Churchill over-modestly asks nothing for himself: "Peace to such triflers, be our happier plan To pass through life as easy as we can" (255-56). The contrast arouses not only contempt for the "triflers," but also sympathy for the poet. The most famous of Churchill's self-distortions appears throughout Book I of *Gotham* — a series of ten stanzaic refrains that mockingly assert and reassert his perfection as the king of this utopia.

In keeping with his paradoxical nature, Churchill was also a master of the forthright, non-ironic, bludgeoning style of satire, a style that is more characteristic of his earlier work. In one of his attacks on Smollett the satire is direct and bitter in the extreme:

Is there a man, in vice and folly bred,
 To sense of honour as to virtue dead,
 Whom ties nor human nor divine can bind,
 Alien from God, and foe to all mankind;
 Who spares no character; whose every word,
 Bitter as gall, and sharper than the sword,
 Cuts to the quick; whose thoughts with rancour swell;
 Whose tongue on earth performs the work of Hell?
 If there be such a monster. . . . (The Apology, 298-306)

The declamatory flourish and the very syntax of this passage reinforce the tone of hard-hitting contempt. The sentence is a rhetorical question, and the carefully paralleled "whom," "who," and "whose" constructions (there are five of them) drive home the thought in the manner of an orator. It was not for nothing that Churchill was widely known as "the Bruiser" and was so styled by Hogarth, who pictured him as a Russian bear.

The nature of Churchill's heroic couplet, in which most of his poems were written, is another index to the involved complexity of his mind. Pope had established an epigrammatic basis for his couplet, and the dozens of famous quotations from his work are testimony to his success ("A little learning is a dangerous thing," "To err is human, to forgive divine," "The proper study of mankind is Man," etc.). But Churchill's genius did not lie in that direction: his mature style makes every possible use of qualifications, interruptions, and elaborations of the main thought. In the following sentence of eight lines (a short one for him) the simple statement, "How do I laugh when . . . he [a Lord] talks of Conscience," is embedded in sixty-five words!

How do I laugh, when, with affected air,
 (Scarce able through despite to keep his chair,
 Whilst on his trembling lip pale anger speaks,
 And the chafed blood flies mounting to his cheeks,)
 He talks of Conscience, which good men secures
 From all those evil moments guilt endures,
 And seems to laugh at those who pay regard
 To the wild ravings of a frantic bard. (*The Author*, 189-96)

Such a style expresses the outpouring of a full mind, one that is impatient of both restraint and revision. Churchill seems to have sensed this reflection of his own turbulent nature in the verve and dash of his poetry, for in *The Apology* he exclaims:

Perish my Muse! . . .
 If e'er her labours weaken, to refine,
 The generous roughness of a nervous line. (352-55)

Although Churchill's character and feelings are, as we have seen, everywhere embedded in his poetry, that poetry at its best (like all great art) has an independent life of its own, a life that may be evaluated apart from the man who created it. His poetic genius, we know, responded most brilliantly to the social and political ideals of the "Wilkes and Liberty" controversy. All four of his finest poems arose from this con-

troversy, and all four were written within the last year and a half of his life. The first of these, *The Prophecy of Famine*, appeared in January, 1763; it was begun and probably finished during the preceding four months while Churchill was ill and in a mysterious retirement that ended with his invoking "the aid of the quick silver god." In this poem he struck the notes that characterize his maturest work and his own contributions to heroic satire. In it irony becomes dominant, and through the device of ironic eulogy strong lyrical overtones emerge. The heroic couplet becomes more relaxed, and the sentence structure increases in complexity, a change that vitally affects the versification. In extent and emphasis these are fresh and original achievements.

The Prophecy of Famine is divisible into three parts: an attack on the "simple" and the "erudite" pastoral poem, an attack on the Scottish people in mock-heroic style, and an ironic pastoral about Scotland, which concludes with the prophecy by Famine. First a simple pastoral scene is presented with mock seriousness:

Clad, as your nymphs were always clad of yore,
 In rustic weeds — a cook-maid now no more —
 Beneath an aged oak Lardella lies,
 Green moss her couch; her canopy the skies.
 From aromatic shrubs the roguish gale
 Steals young perfumes, and wafts them through the vale.
 The youth, turn'd swain, and skill'd in rustic lays,
 Fast by her side his amorous descant plays.
 Herds low, flocks bleat, pies chatter, ravens scream,
 And the full chorus dies a-down the stream. (15-24)

The intentional archaisms ("rustic weeds," "swain," "rustic lays," "a-down," etc.), the suggestion of "lard" in Lardella, and the heaped-up collection of pastoral trappings make the irony rather heavy-handed and obvious. Next the more presumptuous classical pastoral is ridiculed:

But when maturer Judgment takes the lead,
 These childish toys on Reason's altar bleed.

* * * *

Then the rude Theocrite is ransack'd o'er,
 And courtly Maro call'd from Mincio's shore;
 Sicilian Muses on our mountains roam,
 Easy and free as if they were at home;
 Nymphs, Naiads, Nereids, Dryads, Satyrs, Fauns,
 Sport in our floods, and trip it o'er our lawns. . . . (29-52)

After a mock depreciation of his own powers, which make it impossible for him to write pastorals, the poet turns to Nature ("Thou, Nature, art my goddess . . .") for the purpose of writing an heroic poem about Scotland:

Of false refinements sick, and labour'd ease,
 Which art, too thinly veil'd, forbids to please,
 By Nature's charms (inglorious truth!) subdued,
 However plain her dress, and 'haviour rude,
 To northern climes my happier course I steer,
 Climes where the goddess reigns throughout the year,
 Where, undisturb'd by Art's rebellious plan,
 She rules the loyal laird, and faithful clan. (103-10)

Although no clue to the irony is necessary, we are given one in the phrase "inglorious truth!" in the third line. A more complicated pattern of satire appears in the uses of "art" in the second and seventh lines. The meaning of the first one is directly satiric — "art, too thinly veil'd": the artificial claptrap of the pastoral conventions. The meaning of the second is ironic: "Art's rebellious plan" imposed upon Nature in Scotland would really help by bringing order and beauty out of a chaos.

This introduction to Scotland leads to mock-heroic praise of that country: "To that rare soil, where virtues clust'ring grow, What mighty blessings doth not England owe!"—

Thence came the Ramsays, names of worthy note,
 Of whom one paints as well as t'other wrote;
 Thence Home, disbanded from the sons of prayer
 For loving plays, though no dull dean was there;
 Thence issued forth, at great Macpherson's call,
 That old, new, epic pastoral, Fingal;
 Thence Malloch, friend alike to church and state,

Of Christ and Liberty, by grateful Fate
 Raised to rewards, which in a pious reign,
 All daring infidels should seek in vain;
 Thence simple bards, by simple prudence taught,
 To this wise town by simple patrons brought,
 In simple manner utter simple lays,
 And take, with simple pensions, simple praise. (125-38)

The fivefold repetition of the "thence" construction illustrates a device of syntax that became one of the hallmarks of Churchill's mature style. By means of this parallel series he was able to enlarge the limits of the heroic couplet without resorting to full enjambment. The essential unity of the closed couplet is retained, but it is subordinated to and made a part of the larger verse paragraph. The last four lines of the passage illustrate another typical characteristic: the repetition of single words with an intricate variation of meaning in context. Here the sevenfold repetition of "simple" conveys numerous meanings and shades of meanings, including those suggested by shifts from direct satire to irony and back again.

Because this ironic attitude towards Scotland takes the form of eulogy, it enriches the satire by adding a strong lyrical note. The conspicuous example is the mock duet chanted by the two Scottish shepherds Jockey and Sawney (343-402), but even in the following short passage the lyrical quality is marked:

Waft me, some muse, to Tweed's inspiring stream,
 Where all the little Loves and Graces dream;
 Where, slowly winding, the dull waters creep,
 And seem themselves to own the power of sleep. . . .
 (139-42)

The music of the long e sounds reinforces the lyrical "waft me . . . where" thought and syntax. In a later passage, where the goddess Famine addresses the two shepherds, promising them England's riches (455-76), the refrain-like "For us" construction induces a recurring lyricism.

The ironic praise of Scotland in the second part of the poem is interrupted by the voice of William Whitehead, the poet-laureate:

Presumptuous wretch! and shall a Muse like thine,
 An English Muse, the meanest of the nine,
 Attempt a theme like this? (239-41)

to which the poet ironically submits ("Abash'd I heard, and with respect obey'd"). He then returns to the pastoral —

From themes too lofty for a bard so mean,
 Discretion beckons to an humbler scene — (261-62)

and launches into the elaborate mock-heroics which constitute the concluding section of the poem (261-562). The two Scottish shepherds are pictured living in complete squalor under the aegis of their goddess Famine. They bewail their woes in a mock-pastoral lament, after which the goddess appears and in a long peroration prophesies the exploitation of England for their benefit.³

The *Epistle to William Hogarth*, Churchill's second poem of high excellence, appeared in July, 1763. Approximately the first half of it is a dialogue between the poet and "Candour" on the subject of his satiric attacks. "Canst thou," Candour asks,

Delight to torture truth ten thousand ways,
 To spin detraction forth from themes of praise,
 To make Vice sit, for purposes of strife,
 And draw the hag much larger than the life;
 To make the good seem bad, the bad seem worse,
 And represent our nature as our curse? (59-68)

Churchill's reply describes his principles in using satire. "Peace, Candour," he begins:

. . . wisely hadst thou said, and well,
 Could Interest in this breast one moment dwell;
 Could she, with prospect of success, oppose
 The firm resolves which from conviction rose.
 I cannot truckle to a fool of state,
 Nor take one favour from the man I hate. . . . (117-22)

Finally, Candour challenges the poet to name one human being who deserves the severity of his satire. This challenge

provides the reason for introducing the name of Hogarth, who in the remainder of the poem is the sole object of Churchill's invective.

Although irony is not so powerful or dominant in this poem as it is in *The Prophecy of Famine*, the involved sentence structure continues, and the device of a series in parallel is even more effectively employed. The ten lines preceding the description of Hogarth drawing his satiric cartoon of Wilkes are built upon four heavily stressed "when" constructions:

When that Great Charter, which our fathers bought
 With their best blood, was into question brought;
 When, big with ruin, o'er each English head
 Vile Slavery hung suspended by a thread;
 When Liberty, all trembling and aghast,
 Fear'd for the future, knowing what was past;
 When every breast was chill'd with deep despair,
 Till Reason pointed out that Pratt was there;
 Lurking most ruffian-like, behind a screen,
 So placed all things to see, himself unseen,
 Virtue, with due contempt, saw Hogarth stand. . . . (401-11)

As the above lines suggest, the attack on Hogarth is extremely severe, concluding with the following blast:

Thou wretched being, whom, on reason's plan,
 So changed, so lost, I cannot call a man,
 What could persuade thee, at this time of life,
 To launch afresh into the sea of strife?
 Better for thee, scarce crawling on the earth,
 Almost as much a child as at thy birth,
 To have resign'd in peace thy parting breath,
 And sunk unnoticed in the arms of Death. (615-22)

The two sentences that comprise this passage possess that highly involved structure that knits the couplets more tightly together. The main thought of the first two couplets is begun in the first and concluded in the second: "Thou wretched being . . . What could persuade thee. . . ." And in the last two similarly: "Better for thee . . . To have resign'd. . . ."

It is in *The Candidate* (published in June, 1764) that the full flavor and maturity of Churchill's heroic satire appears, although there are still signs of carelessness in style and structure. In fact, Churchill, who died at thirty-two and all of whose poems were written in the last four years of his life, never lived to fulfill his promise — in a very real sense he is the Chatterton of neo-classic literature. But in *The Candidate* the lines of future development are clear: what he retained of the tradition and what he added may be evaluated from this poem.

Structurally *The Candidate* falls into two equal parts. The first half is introductory and a general attack on the Earl of Sandwich; the second half deals with his candidacy for the High Stewardship of Cambridge University. Within the first half there is a fourfold division: the poet's rejection of his former themes, his ironic appeal to "Panegyric," the ironic apostrophe to Sandwich, and the satiric portrait of Lothario, the perfect rake, who is a glorified Sandwich. The second half of the poem is a self-contained unit, in which first Sandwich and then his henchmen at Cambridge are openly pilloried.

The first 178 lines show a remarkable use of that series in parallel so characteristic of Churchill. There are nine groups of couplets, each introducing a former theme of the poet's, which is considered and then rejected. The themes, including, ironically, satire itself, are as follows: "Enough of Actors," "Enough of Authors," "Enough of Critics," "Enough of Scotland," "Enough of States," "Enough of Patriots," "Enough of Wilkes," "Enough of Self," and "Enough of Satire." By pretending to reject Satire, Churchill prepares the way for the ironic eulogy to which he turns next. First the eulogy is general — an ironic appeal to Panegyric in the thrice-repeated construction, "Come, Panegyric." Then in answer to the question, "What patron shall I choose?" the selection is made in a threefold exclamation, "Hail, Sandwich!" and the eulogy to him begins. As it progresses, the method of attack shifts

from irony to direct satire, back to irony, and again to direct satire — another characteristic of Churchill's style. The Lothario portrait is direct satire, at the conclusion of which the poet ingeniously prepares for the return to an ironic attack on Sandwich. Having created Lothario,

. . . Nature, full of grace,
Not meaning birth and titles to be base,
Made only one, and having made him, swore,
In mercy to mankind, to make no more:
Nor stopp'd she there, but, like a generous friend,
The ills which error caused, she strove to mend,
And having brought Lothario forth to view,
To save her credit, brought forth Sandwich too. (407-14)

Throughout *The Candidate* the syntax, thought, and versification develop qualities which are pure Churchill. Of these the most remarkable is the extreme complexity of the relationship between sentence structure and versification. Within the "Enough of Critics" passage occur the following lines, which, controlled by the "though" constructions, represent a parallel series within a larger series:

What though they lay the realms of Genius waste,
Fetter the fancy and debauch the taste;
Though they, like doctors, to approve their skill,
Consult not how to cure, but how to kill;
Though by whim, envy, or resentment led,
They damn those authors whom they never read;
Though, other rules unknown, one rule they hold,
To deal out so much praise for so much gold:
Though Scot with Scot, in damned close intrigues,
Against the commonwealth of letters leagues,
Uncensured let them pilot at the helm,
And rule in letters, as they ruled the realm. . . . (53-64)

Another kind of complexity, complication through parenthetical interruptions, also appears frequently. The following proportion of four parentheses in eight lines is not an extreme instance:

For me (nor dare I lie) my leading aim
 (Conscience first satisfied) is love of fame;
 Some little fame derived from some brave few,
 Who prizing Honour, prize her votaries too.
 Let all (nor shall resentment flush my cheek)
 Who know me well, what they know, freely speak,
 So those (the greatest curse I meet below)
 Who know me not, may not pretend to know.

(123-30)

Here too are repetitions of words and phrases which suggest hesitations and after-thoughts: "love of fame; Some little fame . . . Who know me well, what they know . . . Who know me not, may not pretend to know," etc.

One of the last poems that Churchill wrote (he left it unfinished) probably contains, all things considered, his best poetry. It is the *Fragment of a Dedication to Dr. W. Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester*. The device of a formal dedication was perfectly suited to Churchill's talent for "profound and bitter innuendo." He had employed ironic eulogy before, especially in *The Prophecy of Famine* and *The Candidate*; but the formula of a dedication is the medium for eulogy *par excellence*. When it is used as the vehicle for subtle and sustained irony, the effect is comparable to that of the mock-heroic at its best.

Although it is unfinished, the *Dedication* forms a complete structural unit which may be divided into three parts. The first seventy-two lines introduce the subject and give the reasons why the poet admires Warburton, ending with the summary:

Thy virtue, not thy rank, demands my lays;
 'Tis not the Bishop, but the Saint, I praise:
 Raised by that theme, I soar on wings more strong,
 And burst forth into praise withheld too long.

The next forty lines describe the assistance that Churchill had hoped to get from him:

Much did I wish, though little could I hope,
 A friend in him who was the friend of Pope,

and the last sixty-eight lines deal with the futility of that hope, because Warburton had more important things to do than "waste his precious time, On which so much depended, for a rhyme."

All the qualities of Churchill's mature style appear fully developed in the *Dedication*. The poem opens with a thrice-repeated "Health to great Glo'ster," which gives unity to the first twenty-eight lines. Then there follow two passages describing what it is not and what it is that the poet admires in Warburton (33-72). The highly involved sentence structure and thought-complications continue throughout the poem, as, for example, in the following:

Much did I wish, e'en whilst I kept those sheep
Which, for my curse, I was ordain'd to keep,
Ordain'd, alas! to keep through need, not choice,
Those sheep which never heard their shepherd's voice;
Which did not know, yet would not learn their way;
Which stray'd themselves, yet grieved that I should stray;
Those sheep which my good father (on his bier
Let filial duty drop the pious tear)
Kept well, yet starved himself; e'en at that time
Whilst I was pure and innocent of rhyme;
Whilst, sacred dulness ever in my view,
Sleep at my bidding crept from pew to pew,
Much did I wish, though little could I hope,
A friend in him who was the friend of Pope. (73-86)

In the above sentence of 122 words, only the last couplet of nineteen words expresses the main idea: the rest is dependent, contributory, and digressive. Yet the entire passage is unified by devices typical of Churchill: the "Much did I wish" clause of the first line repeated in the next to the last; the repetition of the "which," the "whilst," and the "those sheep which" clauses; and the single enjambed couplet (7-8) carefully embedded in the center of the passage.

Lyrical qualities are more marked than ever in the *Dedication*. They arise chiefly out of four characteristics of the poem:

syntactic repetition with the effect of a refrain, the constant intrusion of the personal note, the rhetorical device of exclamations, and the Churchillian non-epigrammatic norm for the heroic couplet, which creates larger rhythms and a more lyrical swing. Often the lyrical quality is implicit in the music and meaning:

Raised by that theme, I soar on wings more strong,
And burst forth into praise withheld too long. (71-72)

O glorious man! thy zeal I must commend,
Though it deprived me of my dearest friend. . . . (145-46)

One of the most striking effects of the *Dedication* comes from the poet's unusual preoccupation with himself throughout the poem. This personal note induces a lyrical atmosphere, the effect of which is comparable to John Donne's achievements in the satirical lyric. The result is an enormous increase in richness and complexity. There is, for instance, a remarkable fusion of opposites in which the poet himself is treated sympathetically and Warburton is seemingly treated likewise, but is actually being bitterly attacked. This juxtaposition of author and subject appears from the beginning:

Health to great Glo'ster — nor, through love of ease,
Which all priests love, let this address displease. (11-12)

The hint of satire here is complicated by the fact that, two lines above, Churchill had written:

Truth best becomes an orthodox divine,
And, spite of hell, that character is mine. . . .

Thus the "love of ease, Which all priests love" doubles back and includes the poet as well as his victim, for both are or were priests. The reader then must see that the satiric thrust aimed at Warburton is direct and the one at the author ironic.

In the poem as a whole the tensions set up between the contrasting attitudes of irony and eulogy create "a number of feelings belonging neither to irony nor to eulogy, but capable

of joining with both."⁴ Out of full context, the subtlety and complexity of these interplays of thought and feeling can only be suggested. They appear most clearly in the succession of hints at the ironic nature of the eulogy. These vary from the most subtle early in the poem to the outright attack on Warburton at the end. About bishops' mitres Churchill writes:

. . . mitres, which shine
So bright in other eyes, are dull in mine,
Unless set off by virtue. . . . (39-41)

The qualification may apply to Warburton: the hint is there, but that is all. Again about the man himself:

. . . and through thy skin
Peeps out that courtesy which dwells within. . . . (53-54)

"Peeps out" — a sly dig? The next is more certain:

But what is birth, when, to delight mankind,
Heralds can make those arms they cannot find;
When thou art to thyself, thy sire unknown,
A whole Welsh genealogy alone? (57-60)

In method of attack, the *Dedication* is closest to that of Pope in his epistle "To Augustus." Pope's use of ironic eulogy at the beginning and end of his satire is directly comparable to Churchill's, whose ironic explanation of Warburton's neglect of his poetry:

. . . could I believe
That he, the servant of his Maker sworn,
The servant of his Saviour, would be torn
From their embrace, and leave that dear employ,
The cure of souls, his duty and his joy,
For toys like mine, and waste his precious time,
On which so much depended, for a rhyme? (114-20)

parallels Pope's similar idea about King George II:

How shall the Muse, from such a monarch steal
An hour, and not defraud the Public Weal? (5-6)

But, unlike the *Dedication*, Pope's epistle "To Augustus" is not predominantly ironic, so that the total effect is quite different, a part of the difference being Churchill's continued use of a non-epigrammatic heroic couplet:

I ask no favour; not one note I crave;
And when this busy brain rests in the grave,
(For till that time it never can have rest)
I will not trouble you with one bequest. (13-16)

Here Churchill uses a couplet that permits the fusing of the four lines into a unit; yet the first couplet, although syntactically divided, is unified by the life-death contrast and is at the same time united to the second by the repetition of the idea of "rest" in lines two and three. More importantly, the first couplet retains a rhythmic identity because of the parenthetical interruption that follows it: the parenthesis stops the tendency of the thought to run on, thereby increasing our awareness of the couplet unity. As in his other major poems, Churchill in this one often employs other kinds of hesitations, repetitions, and afterthoughts as safeguards against the collapse of the couplet into run-on verse paragraphs — for example:

Far, far be that from thee — yes, far from thee
Be such revolt from grace, and far from me
The will to think it — guilt is in the thought.
Not so, not so hath Warburton been taught,
Not so learn'd Christ — recall that day, well known,
When (to maintain God's honour — and his own)
He call'd blasphemers forth: methinks I now
See stern rebuke enthroned on his brow,
And arm'd with tenfold terrors. . . . (127-35)

This couplet style, though different from Pope's, is, however, just as different from the more loosely constructed enjambed couplet of the later Romantic poets.

Churchill's couplets retain their identity within the larger unit, of which they are the basis. They retain the pattern which is never obliterated, no matter how far the variations may

digress. The norm of this kind of verse is the non-epigrammatic heroic couplet; the norm of Churchill's satire is irony. For powerful and sustained irony the *Dedication to Dr. W. Warburton* is unequalled in English poetic satire. Its only peer is in prose: *A Modest Proposal* by Jonathan Swift. The *Dedication* is also, as we have seen, Churchill's finest neo-classic poem. At his best — in this poem, in *The Prophecy of Famine*, the *Epistle to Hogarth*, and *The Candidate* — Churchill is one of the masters of the heroic couplet and the last great neo-classic satirist.

ii.

With the exception of *The Ghost* and *The Duellist*, the remaining poems in the Churchill canon are, broadly speaking, the expression of Churchill's ideas and interests apart from the incentives of politics and his friendship for Wilkes. Compared with his masterpieces, these poems are more uneven in quality as they are more varied in content. Chronologically they encompass his entire literary career, from *The Apology* at its beginning to *The Journey* which was left unfinished at his death. In them may be found many self-commentaries, for here Churchill is more personal about himself (though not more personal about others) than he is in such publicly inspired poems as *The Prophecy of Famine* and *The Candidate*. These autobiographical details we may accept as authentic provided they are not contradicted elsewhere.

Beyond question *The Ghost* and *The Duellist* are Churchill's weakest performances. *The Ghost*, as we know, was begun as a rehash of an earlier unpublished poem; it was continued (Books II, III, and IV) mainly because Churchill needed money, and at that time (1762-63) his reputation would sell anything. In addition to his popularity, Churchill shrewdly took advantage of the ridiculous but sensational event of the Cock-Lane ghost in the winter of 1762.⁵ Despite its detailed

topical interest and occasional flashes of poetry, *The Ghost* as a poetic whole must be pronounced a potboiler, and it is regrettable that selections from it are so often included in anthologies as representative of Churchill's work. Nor is *The Duellist* much better. In it Churchill took advantage of another sensational event of the time, Wilkes's duel with Samuel Martin on November 16, 1762, in which Wilkes was seriously wounded. Finally, both of these poems are written in a verse form, the octosyllabic couplet, which was not congenial to Churchill, whose fiery temper and nervous energy required the longer unit of the heroic couplet.

Churchill's remaining acknowledged poems (nine in number) are all in this form. As a group they represent an impressive poetic achievement, although varying in quality from the mediocre to the brilliant. Generally speaking, these poems fall into three categories, depending on their content and the poet's treatment of it. Two of them, *Gotham* and *The Farewell*, are concerned with ideals of various kinds. Two of the others, *The Times* and *Independence*, deal mainly with public affairs in England — public virtues and public evils, in which the latter predominate. The five remaining poems are more personal: in them Churchill explains and defends his own principles and attacks those who differ with him. They are: *The Apology*, *Night*, *The Conference*, *The Author*, and *The Journey*.

Gotham, one of Churchill's longest, is a poem of 1842 lines in three books, each book being published separately, in February, March, and August of 1764. Of all of his poems in heroic couplets, *Gotham* is the least "heroic"; that is, its couplets are less like those of Dryden and Pope and more like those of Keats, Tom Moore, and Shelley in the early nineteenth century. Technically, therefore, *Gotham* is a transition poem which anticipates the breakdown of the neo-classic couplet fifty years later.⁶

In structure *Gotham* is weak because its three books are held together by only the thinnest of threads, namely, that throughout the poem Churchill imagines himself as the "Patriot King" of the ideal land of Gotham. Book I is highly lyrical in tone, a quality that is enhanced by the interspersing of a six-line refrain throughout it:

Rejoice, ye happy Gothamites! rejoice;
Lift up your voice on high, a mighty voice,
The voice of gladness; and on every tongue,
In strains of gratitude, be praises hung,
The praises of so great and good a king,
Shall Churchill reign, and shall not Gotham sing?

This device, interesting in itself, disappears after the first book. Books II and III do not maintain the lyricism of Book I, at the end of which Churchill promises more seriousness and more and deeper satire:

Thus far in sport. . . .
High is our theme, and worthy are the men
To feel the sharpest stroke of Satire's pen;
But when kind Time a proper season brings,
In serious mood to treat of serious things,
Then shall they [critics] find, disdainingly play,
That I can be as grave and dull as they. (I, 479-88)

This promise and threat materialize in Books II and III, which are, however, too weakly structured — a hodgepodge of satiric attacks on bad poets, bad critics, bad statesmen, and bad kings.

The Farewell (July, 1764), another idealizing poem, is written in the form of a dialogue between the Poet and a Friend, a device that Churchill manages too mechanically. The Poet begins by announcing his intention to quit England for India, to which the Friend replies, "Are there not knaves and fools enough at home?" This question leads into a rambling discussion of the obligations one owes his native land, which in turn introduces the ideal of patriotism ("be England

what she will, With all her faults she is my country still”), an ideal that is then generalized into:

... he, with liberal and enlarged mind,
Who loves his country, cannot hate mankind. (300-1)

This assertion occurs shortly after the middle of the poem, where it might well have ended, but after which it meanders on for almost two hundred lines, coming in the end to no very specific or satisfactory conclusion.

The Times (September, 1764) is Churchill's severest exposure of the public evils of his day, particularly those involving sex and intemperance. He begins:

Time was, ere Temperance had fled the realm,
Ere Luxury sat guttling at the helm. (13-14)

Turning from evils at home, the poet goes on to list the evils England has imported from abroad, mentioning in particular those from Holland, France, Spain, Italy, and even "the soft luxurious East." Because of the popularity of Italian opera and the castrated male sopranos who came with it, Italy is represented as exporting to England the worst of these evils. Then follows a lengthy blast against the evils of homosexuality and sodomy, which are stigmatized in an elaborate portrait of "Apicius" (349-70), who was probably a well-known nobleman of the time, for Tooke speaks of "the nobleman so severely stigmatized under the name of Apicius. His excesses of all kinds rendering it inconvenient if not unsafe to continue to reside in this country, he exchanged the neighbourhood of Epping for the more congenial air of Italy."⁷

Churchill introduces this attack with a contrasting lament that "Woman is out of date" —

Woman, the pride and happiness of man,
Without whose soft endearments Nature's plan
Had been a blank, and life not worth a thought;
Woman, by all the Loves and Graces taught
With softest arts, and sure, though hidden skill,
To humanize, and mould us to her will. . . . (301-6)

The poem concludes with the poet's threat to continue attacking these evils until their perpetrators will

Pardon of women with repentance buy,
And learn to honour them as much as I.

Although Churchill was himself sexually promiscuous, he was genuinely outraged by these sexual abnormalities: we remember his disgust at the treatment of women in the orgies of the Hell-Fire Club.

Independence (September, 1764) deals with the problem of aristocratic patronage of the arts, a problem then being widely discussed and one which was most brilliantly expressed in Dr. Johnson's famous letter to the Earl of Chesterfield. "Is not a Patron, my lord," Johnson had asked icily, "one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help?"⁸ Churchill's poem on the subject, though longer and more extreme, is less effective than Johnson's letter. He first singles out for attack "those minions of the quill" who

Have stoop'd to prostitute their venal pen
For the support of great, but guilty men;
Have made the bard, of their own vile accord,
Inferior to that thing we call a lord. (23-26)

The poem then becomes an elaborate trial to determine which is superior, a lord or a poet, the poet of course being Churchill himself.

His own portrait in this poem is particularly interesting for its frankness and accuracy (Churchill had not a drop of hypocrisy in his nature). There is, for example, his candid admission of his putting off the clerical gown for the "covering of blue and gold":

O'er a brown cassock, which had once been black,
Which hung in tatters on his brawny back,
A sight most strange and awkward to behold,
He threw a covering of blue and gold.

Just at that time of life, when man by rule,
 The fop laid down, takes up the graver fool,
 He started up a fop, and, fond of show,
 Look'd like another Hercules turn'd beau. . . . (167-74)

Churchill often laughed at others, but in turn he never spared himself. At his appearance, described above, "a laugh prevail'd around; E'en Jove was seen to simper," and the poet "join'd their mirth; nor shall the gods condemn If whilst they laugh'd at him, he laugh'd at them." The outcome of this trial is, of course, a victory for the poet: "Judge Reason . . . Look'd through his soul, and quite forgot his face," while "Pronouncing for the Bards a full decree." The rest of the poem wanders off into the virtues of the old, in contrast to the new, aristocracy, the virtues of independence and the dangers of subservience in law and politics, and concludes with an appeal for more independence everywhere.

Churchill's remaining five poems are more personal in content, more unified in structure, and more brilliant within that structure. Of these *The Apology* and *The Author* are the most successful, *Night* and *The Journey* the most personally revealing, *The Conference* being a not too successful dialogue poem like *The Farewell*.

The Apology, an early salvo in the theatrical warfare of 1761, is also highly successful as poetry. It is not so long (421 lines) that Churchill was tempted into irrelevancies after completing his main theme, nor so short that he could not do justice to that theme. It is an outright satire, characterized by less irony than Churchill used in his greatest poems, but it is only slightly less effective for that reason.

The subject is literary criticism and literary critics, who had, we remember, condemned his first poem. The opening is striking in its use of contrast:

Laughs not the heart when giants, big with pride,
 Assume the pompous port, the martial stride;

O'er arm Herculean heave the enormous shield,
 Vast as a weaver's beam the javelin wield;
 With the loud voice of thundering Jove defy
 And dare to single combat — What? — A fly.

There is of course intentional distortion and a certain amount of irony here (as there is in the title, an "Apology"). Propriety of thought and word is also remarkable in this beginning: the idea of giants is enhanced by the sounds and slow movement of the words used to describe them. They are "big with pride," they "Assume the pompous port, the martial stride," etc. The poem then moves on to attack these giants, one of its methods being to contrast them, to their discredit, with earlier critics: "A critic was of old a glorious name. . . ."

But now, O, strange reverse! our critics bawl
 In praise of candour with a heart of gall. . . . (55-56)

The main part of the poem is an elaborate explanation and defense of Churchill's choice of subject for *The Rosciad*: "The stage I chose — a subject fair and free. . . . Actors, as actors, are a lawful game." This central section of the poem includes an interesting description of the acting profession in the eighteenth century, particularly the strolling players, who lived a gypsy-like life and were looked down upon by everyone. When, however, Churchill goes on to say, one of them is lucky enough to rise to the top of his profession,

Forgetful of himself he rears the head,
 And scorns the dunghill where he first was bred. (249-50)

The conclusion of *The Apology* discusses the function of poetic satire ("To please, improve, instruct, reform mankind") and the nature of poetry in general, including the famous criticism of Pope ("E'en excellence, unvaried, tedious grows") and praise of Dryden:

The powers of genius and of judgment join,
 And the whole Art of Poetry is thine. (386-87)

And the last lines reassert Churchill's neo-classic belief in the sovereignty of Reason in all things:

By her absolv'd, my course I'll still pursue:
If Reason's for me, God is for me too.

This poem, written when the author was just turned thirty, is a remarkably mature and finished performance — a sure earnest of greater things to come.

The Author, a considerably later poem (December, 1763) of similar length, is an even more finished and interestingly varied performance. Dealing, as the title tells us, with Churchill's own profession, it has great value for its ideas as well as for the skillful form in which they are expressed. Why write at all? Churchill first asks, echoing Pope's more famous question in his *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*:

Why did I write? what sin to me unknown,
Dipp'd me in ink, my parents', or my own?

Churchill's reason for asking his question is that now "Genius is vile, and learning out of date." This assertion is followed by an impressive passage, lyric in tone, on the good old Elizabethan days, when poets were held in high esteem:

Is this — O death to think! is this the land,
Where merit and reward went hand in hand?
Where heroes, parent-like, the poet view'd,
By whom they saw their glorious deeds renew'd?
Where poets, true to honour, tuned their lays,
And by their patrons sanctified their praise?
Is this the land, where, on our Spenser's tongue,
Enamour'd of his voice, Description hung?
Where Jonson rigid Gravity beguiled,
Whilst Reason through her critic fences smiled?
Where Nature listening stood whilst Shakespeare play'd,
And wonder'd at the work herself had made? (51-62)

Next we have the sharply contrasting description of present conditions, both in poetry and politics, which in turn leads to a series of bitter portraits of individuals, beginning with Smol-

lett, including Sandwich, Murphy, and Dr. Johnson, and ending with the blast at the Rev. John Kidgell, to which we have already referred.

Night, *The Conference*, and *The Journey* are poetically the least successful of this group of Churchill's poems, but they remain interesting and important for their occasional flashes of fine poetry and for the light they throw on the poet's life and ideas. *Night* is particularly revealing in that Churchill wrote it to defend his way of life, which, as we know, was under attack from the beginning of his literary career. Published in October, 1761, and addressed to Lloyd, it proposes the thesis that hypocrisy is the only real social evil and that a life of dissipation, if admitted frankly, may be just as virtuous as a life of total restraint. This poem is the only public statement that Churchill ever made about his personal principles and private life.

Early in the poem Churchill explains its title. "Let slaves to business," he says, monopolize the day: "We Night prefer, which heals or hides our care." Later he gives another reason for preferring night; for,

Then in oblivion's grateful cup I drown
The galling sneer, the supercilious frown,
The strange reserve, the proud, affected state
Of upstart knaves grown rich, and fools grown great. (85-88)

It is clear that Churchill possessed a hypersensitive nature, arising from a background of insecurity and (like Jonathan Swift) a proud awareness of his own superior genius. After insisting that "Inglorious ease, like ours" provides the only basis for the good life, Churchill goes on to picture its opposite in the lives around him.

The attack on hypocrisy in *Night* takes the form of ridiculing the supposed virtue of Prudence, by which Churchill means the idea of "Keep up appearances. . . . Vice is no longer vice, unless 'tis known." He satirizes this kind of pretense very bitterly:

Should raging passion drive thee to a whore,
 Let Prudence lead thee to a postern door;
 Stay out all night, but take especial care
 That Prudence bring thee back to early prayer.
 As one with watching and with study faint,
 Reel in a drunkard, and reel out a saint. (319-24)

The intentional impropriety of a saint's "reeling" has of course the effect of cancelling him out completely. As the poem draws to a close, Churchill returns to his larger theme that regardless of pretense and appearances "Vice must be vice, virtue be virtue still"; popularity or having the majority on your side makes no difference:

In spite of dulness, and in spite of wit,
 If to thyself thou canst thyself acquit,
 Rather stand up, assured with conscious pride,
 Alone, than err with millions on thy side.

Like *The Farewell*, *The Conference* (November, 1763) is a debate in dialogue form, this time between Churchill and a Lord, who tempts the poet to forego his principles and place his powerful pen at the services of "the stronger side." The poet first asks:

But shall the partial rage of selfish men
 From stubborn justice wrench the righteous pen?
 Or shall I not my settled course pursue,
 Because my foes are foes to virtue too? (23-26)

Here the Lord begins his shrewd argument with an answering question: "What is this boasted Virtue. . . . What is her use?" He then urges Churchill to quit this beacon "whose delusive ray From wealth and honour leads thee far astray." True virtue, he adds, means "interest with the wise." Later the Lord shows his hand by directly appealing to Churchill — "Let self maintain her state and empire still":

Let her, no longer to weak faction tied,
 Wisely revolt, and join our stronger side. (211-12)

Alternating with the Lord's arguments, Churchill, in a series of seven speeches, opposes and rejects these rationalized temptations. "Do you reflect what men you make your foes?" the Lord asks; Churchill replies:

I do, and that's the reason I oppose.
 Friends I have made, whom Envy must commend,
 But not one foe whom I would wish a friend.
 What if ten thousand Butes and Hollands bawl?
 One Wilkes hath made a large amends for all. (296-300)

Finally, the Lord implies the threat of legal danger if Churchill persists in his opposition to the government: "What sanction hast thou. . . Thy life, thy freedom to secure?" The answer is a resounding challenge:

Let me, as hitherto, still draw my breath
 In love with life, but not in fear of death;
 And if Oppression brings me to the grave,
 And marks me dead, she ne'er shall mark a slave.

* * * * *

Full ripe he falls, on nature's noblest plan,
 Who lives to reason, and who dies a man.

One of the last two poems that Churchill wrote is *The Journey*, an unfinished fragment of 166 lines that was published in 1765. It is interesting for the light it throws on his method of composition and his awareness of the dangers of writing too hastily. "Some of my friends," he begins, "hint . . . that I shall run my stock of genius out." So he promises to stop writing poetry for a while, with the following result:

It cannot be — whether I will, or no,
 Such as they are, my thoughts in measure flow.
 Convinced, determined, I in prose begin,
 But ere I write one sentence, verse creeps in,
 And taints me through and through; by this good light
 In verse I talk by day, I dream by night! (47-50)

This great facility at writing verse Churchill has not here exaggerated. In an earlier letter (March 14, 1763) to Wilkes, he

says, "The plan of next N.B. I have chang'd, and for this reason, On pursuing it I find it the best Subject for a Poem I ever had in my life. The Prophecy of Famine you may remember took its rise from a similar circumstance"⁹ —that is, he began a prose essay that ended up as a poem. In another letter to Wilkes Churchill notes proudly: "Gotham goes on swimmingly — I made forty lines today."¹⁰ *The Journey* ends on a note of mingled irony and serious foreboding for the poet himself:

Thus, or in any better way they please,
With these great men, or with great men like these,
Let them their appetite for laughter feed;
I on my journey all alone proceed.

A number of shorter incidental poems and epigrams were attributed to Churchill, both during his lifetime and after his death. For the most part, these have not been included in the standard editions of his works; nor is there much external evidence for his authorship. But a few of them we may be sure he wrote, and several others are probably his. One appeared in *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit* with this comment: "The following six lines are not inserted in Mr. Churchill's works, though well known to be written by him":

Proud Buckingham, for law too mighty grown,
A patriot dagger prob'd, and from the throne
Sever'd its minion. In succeeding times,
May all those Fav'rites who adopt his crimes,
Partake his fate, and every Villiers feel
The keen deep searchings of a Felton's steel!¹¹

Not only are the tone and subject-matter of these lines plainly characteristic of Churchill, but they appear in his handwriting at the bottom of page viii of his satiric *Dedication* to Bishop Warburton (in the British Museum copy). Another somewhat longer fragment in the same collection is entitled, "Verses Written in Windsor Park. In the Year 1762. By the Same."

Because it is on the subject of Pope as a satirist, whom Churchill pretended to dislike but actually was greatly indebted to, this little poem deserves to be quoted in full:

When Pope to Satire gave its lawful way,
 And made the Nimrods of mankind his prey,
 When haughty Windsor heard thro' ev'ry wood,
 Their shame, who durst be great yet not be good;
 Who drunk with pow'r, and with ambition blind,
 Slaves to themselves, and monsters to mankind;
 Sinking the man to magnify the prince,
 Were heretofore what Stuarts have been since:
 Could he have looked into the womb of time,
 How might his spirit in prophetic rhyme,
 Inspir'd by virtue, and for freedom bold,
 Matters of diff'rent import have foretold!
 How might his muse, if any muse's tongue
 Could equal such an argument, have sung
 One William who makes all mankind his care,
 And shines the saviour of his country there;
 One William who to ev'ry heart gives law;
 The son of George, the image of Nassau!¹²

The "William" above is the Duke of Cumberland (1721-65), who was at this time ranger and keeper of Windsor Great Park; he was also a Whig leader and opponent of Bute¹³ — hence Churchill's admiration for him. More importantly, the last three couplets refer to the famous battle of Culloden in April, 1746, in which the Duke of Cumberland led the English forces to victory over a Scottish army, backed by the dethroned Stuarts. The evidence that this is Churchill's poem is strong, not only because of its thought and attitude, but, more conclusively, because he used the last couplet, considerably altered, to end Book II of *Gotham*. Referring to England's misery under the hated Stuart Kings, Churchill concludes that

Whilst she, secured in liberty and law,
 Found what she sought, a saviour in Nassau.

This allusion is of course to King William III, who succeeded the Stuart James II in 1688.

A third poem in this collection may be less certainly ascribed to Churchill. It was written, say the editors, "Upon Reading the Life of the Jesuit Preber. By the late Mr. C. Churchill."¹⁴ It is a speculation upon the downfall of Oriental civilizations because their "arbitrary sway Thro' one dread tenor keeps its ruthless way" and a warning to English kings to profit by this example. We have only internal evidence that this is Churchill's, but obviously that evidence (theme and treatment) is fairly strong. Finally, in this collection appears an epigram "On seeing Mr. Lloyd's Opera inscribed to Mr. Colman," which is attributed to Churchill:

Ah! what a dearth of patrons in this age,
To cherish authors, and protect the stage.
The wits all rivalships of genius smother,
And dedicate their works to one another.¹⁵

In another similar collection of miscellaneous poems at this time, *The Muse's Mirrour*, several squibs and epigrams are said to be Churchill's, among them one "On Hogarth's Print of Bathos, or the Art of Sinking in Painting. Written by Mr. C. Churchill when at Mr. Dell's, in Kewfoot Lane, April 18, 1764":

All must old Hogarth's gratitude declare,
Since he has nam'd old Chaos for his heir:
And while his works hang round that anarch's throne,
The connoisseurs will take them for his own.¹⁶

Next "A Prophetic Epigram. By Charles Churchill, in 1765 [sic]":

Strive to what end, dear Thompson, that you please,
You shall escape the bullet and the seas:
Wilkes and yourself shall share one common lot,
And owe at last — your ruin to a Scot.¹⁷

Greater and more interesting details are provided in another "Epigram by Charles Churchill. Capt. Thompson lived in Kewlane, where a weeping willow was planted before his

house. It was a custom with Churchill to walk early, and compose verses. He was then about the 2nd book of *Gotham*, and passing the window of Thompson's house, who was set reading therein — he thus addressed him”:

Here lives an half-pay poet run to rust,
With all his willows weeping in the dust.¹⁸

Book II of *Gotham* was published in March, 1764, which, if Churchill did write this epigram, would date it early in that year.

One more fact and a conjecture about the Churchill canon remain to be noted. As early as August 14, 1763, he informs Wilkes that he is planning to write an epic poem. “I have resolv'd,” he says, “to write an Epic Poem in four Books.”¹⁹ Its title? — “Culloden,” the name of the crucial battle between the English and the Scots in 1746, a subject that clearly would be excellent grist for Churchill's poetic mill. This poem was apparently to have been his *magnum opus*, but, so far as we know, none of it has survived.

There is, however, a 390-line *Fragment of an Epic Poem*. Book IV, which a modern critic has confidently ascribed to Churchill. Ninety lines of this fragment first appeared in John Hall-Stevenson's *Essay upon the King's Friends* in 1776. In this essay, which is a satirical reply to Dr. Johnson's *Taxation No Tyranny*, a defense of the British treatment of the American colonials, Hall-Stevenson names Churchill as the author of the fragment: “The poniard of that assassin, Churchill, luckily gone to his own place, before he could put his malice in execution, was raised to strike the whole party in a mock-heroic poem. By the specimen I give you, no matter how I came by it, you will see the irreparable loss they have suffered by his removal to a cure of souls in another kingdom.”²⁰ He then quotes the ninety lines. The entire fragment, with no ascription to Churchill, was printed in the *Works of John Hall-Stevenson* in 1795 after his death. Thus, until 1933, “A *Fragment of an*

Epic Poem, a characteristic and nearly complete mock heroic poem by the most eminent satirist of the time, has ever since lain buried in the writings of an obscure contemporary."²¹

In that year L. H. Butterfield, the author of the above conclusion, published his essay, "Charles Churchill and A Fragment of an *Epic Poem*," in which he argues for Churchill's authorship. Mr. Butterfield demonstrates that Hall-Stevenson and Churchill were on the same side politically and that they probably knew each other socially. Then because the fragment attacks many of the political enemies that Churchill satirized in poems known to be his and because "the whole poem, in manner as well as in matter, attests Churchill's authorship," he concludes "beyond reasonable doubt" that it is Churchill's.²²

We must admit that this might be true, but there are other considerations that should give us pause. First, of course, is the fact that this poem has never been associated with Churchill in any way by anyone except Mr. Butterfield and Hall-Stevenson. This in itself is a negative point, but it does seem rather strange that in the years immediately following Churchill's death, when dozens of other poems were being ascribed to the then famous poet, only one reference was ever made to this poem. Second, in the letters that have survived, particularly the Wilkes-Churchill correspondence, no mention of such a poem appears. We remember the frequency of reference, by both Wilkes and Churchill, to numerous poems that Churchill had published or was writing, including the epic to be called "Culloden," to which the newspapers also refer. Incidentally, the subject-matter of this fragment (the Earl of Mansfield's visit to the underworld) makes it unlikely that it is a part of the projected "Culloden."

In the light of these considerations, it is difficult, short of absolute proof, to accept the fragment as Churchill's. Mr. Butterfield's strongest proof is Hall-Stevenson's statement, which he takes to be the truth of the matter. "There is no

good reason," he says, "to impugn Hall-Stevenson's attribution of the piece to Churchill. There is no motive for his concealing his own authorship. . . . I think we may dismiss the possibility of its being by any other author, for there could have been no conceivable reason for Hall-Stevenson's wishing to mystify Dr. Johnson or anyone else by declaring another satirist's work to be Churchill's."²³ These assertions, it seems to me, too drastically oversimplify the problem. In the light of Churchill's towering reputation as a political satirist in the 1760's, there would be strong reasons for Hall-Stevenson to ascribe this poem to him if he assumed that any of that reputation still survived in 1776. If, on the other hand, Churchill had become a forgotten poet by then, why should Hall-Stevenson hesitate to claim the poem as his own? — for Mr. Butterfield says that he would have done so "if he had not been certain that it could not pass as his."²⁴ Another strange fact about Hall-Stevenson's quoting from the poem and ascribing it to Churchill is that the reviews of the time completely ignored this point. *The Monthly Review* even quoted some of the lines with approval but with no reference whatsoever to Churchill as the author.²⁵

The style and content of this *Fragment of an Epic Poem* are such that any number of reasonably talented contemporaries could have written it. The men who appear in it and whom Churchill attacked (Mansfield, Johnson, Paul Whitehead, Dashwood, Dodington, Talbot, Shebbeare, the Stuart Kings, and others) were all public figures who had many enemies. And some of the men satirized in this poem — such as Pelham, Northington, Hans Stanly, Hardwicke — were not among those attacked in Churchill's known poems at all! Indeed Hardwicke was Sandwich's opponent in the election of the High Steward of Cambridge University, so that Churchill actually defends him in *The Candidate*. Furthermore, the

idea of a trip to the underworld (based on Virgil) was also the common property of all educated men of that time.

Nor is the style of this fragment in any way peculiarly Churchill's. In general it is written in traditional heroic couplets, but it lacks the brilliance of wit and satire that, as we have seen, characterizes Churchill's best work. Furthermore, the poem also lacks the complexity of thought of his later poems (Butterfield dates it early in 1764), particularly that complexity achieved by the use of elaborate parenthetical structures, not one of which appears in this poem. Other characteristics which do appear are not typical of Churchill. One of these is the use of feminine rhymes: "ready-steady," "delight us-Cocytus," "asserting-diverting." For all these reasons and in the light of the conditions surrounding its appearance in print, we must question very seriously the ascription of this poem to Churchill.

With this account of Churchill's poems, including those he wrote, those he planned, and those ascribed to him, we end our consideration of what he had to say publicly. There remains to tell what he *did*, both publicly and privately, during the last year and a half of his life.

Chapter VII

"Life to the last enjoy'd . . ."

AFTER THE SENSATIONAL and dangerous months of April and May, 1763, during which Wilkes and forty-eight others were arrested for their parts in publishing *The North Briton*, both he and Churchill (Wilkes was soon released) speeded up their round of pleasures. An interesting view of them and their friends at this time is provided by Boswell, then making his literary debut in London. He and Andrew Erskine had just published a collection of their letters and Boswell had met Dr. Johnson for the first time when the following social event took place, as described by Boswell in his *London Journal* for May 24, 1763.

"I received a very polite letter from Mr. Thornton," he begins, "informing me that he had written the criticism on Erskine's and Boswell's *Letters* in *The Public Advertiser*, to which I had in return for their civility sent a little essay begging to know who had spoken so favourably of us. Mr. Thornton said he should be happy in our acquaintance. I wrote him my thanks and said I would call upon him at eleven o'clock, which I did, and found him a well-bred, agreeable man, lively and odd. He had about £15,000 left him by his father, was bred to physic, but was fond of writing. . . . In a little, Mr. Wilkes came in, to whom I was introduced, as I also was to Mr. Churchill. Wilkes is a lively, facetious man, Churchill a rough, blunt fellow, very clever. Lloyd too was there, so that I was just got into the middle of the London Geniuses. They were high-spirited and boisterous, but were very civil to me, and Wilkes said he would be glad to see me in George Street. From this chorus, which was rather too outrageous and profane, I went and waited upon Mr. Samuel Johnson, who received me

very courteously."¹ It is indeed ironic that "the London Geniuses," to whom Boswell refers, were in their day better known and more highly regarded as men of letters than the Johnson circle, whose reputation since then has completely eclipsed them.

During the next month Wilkes frequently reports on his social activities with Churchill. Although he had been unsuccessful in enticing Churchill to his Aylesbury estate in the previous autumn, Wilkes finally managed to get his friend to visit him there in June of this year. On June 5 he wrote to Earl Temple, saying, "I have most successfully got through the fine list of patriotic toasts, and the nasty wine of this borough. I have only a little headache, but poor Churchill is half dead."² This comment amusingly contradicts Churchill's earlier boast in *Night* (78-79):

What reason this which me to bed must call,
Whose head, thank Heaven, never aches at all —

another indication that his health was not what it had been when he first came to London.

Two days later Wilkes, back in London, sent Churchill a playful note: "You will receive by to-morrow's Coach directed to you (but save some for saturday) 3 dozen Rhenish, of which you are unworthy."³ The note is addressed to "Mr Churchill at Mr Wilkes's in Aylesbury, Bucks"; so we know that although Wilkes had to return to work, Churchill stayed on at his friend's home. Nor was he alone there, for on June 9 we learn more about his vacation in Aylesbury. "I hope you found the Rhenish excellent," Wilkes writes, adding that "there is a reinforcement of claret &c sent off for 3 thirsty parsons on this very day — My compliments to the two others."⁴ Just who the two others were we are not told, but they may have been Thornton and Lloyd, here ironically referred to as "parsons." At all events, early in this month Wilkes had provided an elaborate party for his friends at Aylesbury.

Boswell soon came to know Churchill fairly well, judging by the frequency of references to him in the *London Journal* and in Boswell's letters at this time. On June 20 he records that "at night I went to the opening of Mr. Foote's Little Theatre in the Haymarket. . . . I sat by Churchill just at the spikes. I was vain to be seen talking with that great bard."⁵ On June 25 he wrote to Sir David Dalrymple that "Churchill's *Epistle to Hogarth* is not come out. He told me it was *in nubibus*. I said I hoped it would not be *rapidis ludibria ventis*."⁶ To the same correspondent Boswell wrote again about Churchill and *The North Briton* on July 23: "No. 51 of the *North Briton* is not written by Mr. Wilkes. Churchill told me that Wilkes has had nothing to do with it since No. 44. 'The 45, Sir,' said he, 'is a spurious paper, you know'."⁷ In this same month Boswell has left us two rather mysterious jottings which pertain to Churchill. One, dated July 2, says, "Don't go down, 'twill ruin you . . . you have Johnson and Wilkes and Churchill, etc. to be well with." The other, dated July 9, involves Boswell's well-known practice of making and breaking resolutions: "At 2 call Johnson and resolve no more taverns but 1 wt. Johnson and 1 wt. Churchill."⁸

During July Wilkes was accompanied to Aylesbury by both Churchill and Thornton, for on the 15th he wrote again to Earl Temple that "Mr. Churchill, Mr. Thornton, and I came to this renowned borough Wednesday noon. Yesterday we assisted at the solemnity of the Quarter Sessions," after which he mentions the next "Saturday noon, when Mr. Churchill and Mr. Thornton go into Hampshire."⁹ From July 20 to September 26 of this year Wilkes was in Paris, visiting his daughter Polly. He had continued to urge Churchill to accompany him, but as usual to no avail.

While Wilkes was planning his trip to Paris, Churchill did take a shorter jaunt to Oxford with his friends Thornton and Colman, where they participated in the Commencement

exercises. As a part of these exercises it was then the custom for an alumnus of the University to write a series of witty satirical essays aimed at those present and entitled *Terrae-Filius*. In *The St. James’s Chronicle* a contributor explains that “*Terrae Filius* is a Student, who writes a satyr upon the Members of the University during the Festival, and taxes them with any Faux Pas, or Irregularities they may have committed.”¹⁰ On this occasion Colman wrote four of these essays, and, since it was widely known that Churchill was with him at Oxford, the rumor went around that the great satirist would have a hand in the writing of *Terrae-Filius*. As the above-mentioned contributor to the *St. James’s* put it, “It is confidently reported, the celebrated Mr. C. C — ll is gone down to assist therein.” Later, however, Colman denied this rumor, saying that neither Thornton nor Churchill “took any part in that publication, though Thornton on our return frankly owned his regret at not having joined his old Co-adjutor.”¹¹

In these essays Colman wittily pretends that no one knows the author — he may be “Rattle the Student,” a reference to Thornton, “Dapperwit the Genius,” a reference to himself, or “the Reverend Gentleman,” a reference to Churchill, who is thus described: “Others . . . whose ideas of Wit and Humour are almost entirely absorbed in Port and Politics, will have it that I am one or other of the supposed Authors of the *North-Briton*; since it is generally reported that the Reverend Gentleman, having snapped the last cord of poor Hogarth’s heart-strings, will come down in his laced hat, like General Churchill, or Tiddy-Doll, and being a member of the University of Cambridge, it is taken for granted that the Convocation will take this publick opportunity of admitting him *ad eundum*.”¹² The reference to Churchill as a member of Cambridge University shows that his friends thought of him as a college man, even though, strictly speaking, he was not.

In his *Terrae-Filius* portrait of Churchill Colman mentions "one or other of the supposed Authors of the *North-Briton*," which is a direct reference to Wilkes as well. A humorous picture of him then follows that of Churchill, clearly indicating Wilkes's intimacy with this whole Westminster group. "At the same time," Colman begins, "the News-papers having informed us that *the Member of Parliament for Aylesbury* will be here in his way to Stowe, the Squire is hourly expected with a grand retinue of Compositors, Pressmen, Devils, and his own extempore travelling Press from Great George Street, Westminster."¹³

Although Wilkes was "hourly expected" at Oxford, we do not know whether he arrived there in time to hear the attack on him in a public oration by Dr. John Burton, Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford (not to be confused with his namesake, the headmaster of Winchester School, with whom, we remember, Wilkes had had a political quarrel the year before). But Churchill heard the oration and heard himself roundly abused along with Wilkes. One repercussion from this episode was a long, bitter, and ironic letter that on July 16, 1763, appeared in *The London Chronicle*, attacking both Churchill and Wilkes. It was written from Oxford and signed "J. B. — n," which makes almost unquestionable this Burton's authorship. "Who do you think did us the honour of a visit last week?" the letter begins. "No less a person, I assure you, than the renowned C — ll. And (can you believe it?) this infatuated university appeared altogether insensible of the favour! Instead of receiving him with open arms, and paying him the honours due to his exalted character, neither the Vice-chancellor, or any of the heads of houses waited on him, (a compliment usually paid upon the arrival of any great personage) nay, they did not so much as invite him to dinner; (a compliment expected by the meanest son of Apollo) but there was this poetical champion seen to walk destitute and forlorn,

and no other notice taken of him than, 'That's the Reverend Mr. C — ll in the broad gold laced hat.' Oh! what an indelible blot will this conduct fix upon this once celebrated seat of learning!"

After saying ironically that Oxford should at least have conferred an honorary degree upon Churchill, the writer turns to the subject of the oration and suggests it as the reason for Churchill's coming to Oxford in the first place. "There was an oration publicly spoken in the Theatre, in which his bosom friend, the *Champion of Liberty*, was most shamefully, most inhumanly treated. And what adds to the indignity is this: C — ll's presence did not in the least intimidate the orator, though it was well known that this infamous speech, of which he had received some private information, was the very reason of his coming to Oxford. But in spite of common sense, and in defiance of this formidable satyrist, such a speech was not only spoken, but received with uncommon shouts of applause. Oh, Sir, it would have grieved your very heart to have seen in what manner this worthy man was affected on his friend's account."

Continuing his ironic tone, the author next describes Churchill's reaction to the oration: "The effects of his vengeful ire appeared the very next day, when he gave us to understand, that he would make us smart for this *illiberal* treatment in a poetical Epistle, entitled *Encaenia*. I am informed, upon good authority, that two of his Cronies [Colman and Thornton], who had left the severe studies of *Law* and *Physic* to join in the festivities of their *Alma Mater*, did, out of pure compassion for the place of their education, use all the rhetoric they were masters of to dissuade him from his purpose; but all in vain:

He parted frowning from them, as if ruin
Leap'd from his eyes. So looks the chafed lion
Upon the daring huntsman who has gall'd him."

Then follows an ironical picture of the resulting consternation at Oxford: "And now, you sons of pity, shed a mournful

tear over this antient University, devoted, I fear, to inevitable destruction! For who can expect to survive the lash of his pen, when the *mighty* H — th has fallen a sacrifice to it? Alas, then, which way shall we turn ourselves! To think of entering the lists with such a *tremendous* hero would be the height of presumptuous arrogance. No, no: Prudence demands our utmost endeavours to assuage, rather than to oppose, his indignation."

The climax of the letter occurs in the assertion that "a petition is already drawn up, penned in the most submissive terms, and signed by the Right Hon. the Chancellor and Heads of Houses, & & humbly shewing, that the petitioners are under the most terrible apprehensions from his indignant muse . . . that if out of his abundant kindness he shall condescend to spare them, the petitioners will freely, and without any previous application, confer on his friend Mr. W. a Doctor's Degree by diploma; that moreover, one of the subjects for Dr. Wilson's prize speeches at the next Commemoration shall be W. and Liberty." The letter ends, as it began, on the fantastically ludicrous: "Oh! that this may be deemed a sufficient equivalent for the offence committed, and induce the angry bard to look down upon us with an eye of pity!"¹⁴ In the light of all this, it is, so to speak, doubly ironic that, although someone did advertise a forthcoming poem to be called "Encaenia," so far as we know Churchill never wrote such a poem. The violence and fear of retaliation in an attack like this reveal all too clearly the power of Churchill's pen and the awe in which he was held by his actual and potential enemies.

As usual with these attacks on Churchill, he had his defender, for on August 24 another letter, signed "Oxoniensis" was published in *The St. James's Chronicle*, deploring Burton's oratorical blast at the poet. The writer first laments the great increase in "would-be Politicians" and adds that even Divines are joining their ranks, "sowing the Seeds of Discord and

Animosity.” Apparently not sensing the significance of Churchill’s relationship to Wilkes, he then asks, “What Reason, pray, has Doctor Burton to attack Churchill? . . . O, Mr. Baldwin [the publisher], that odious Speech of his that was spoken in our Theatre, at the late Encoenia, *alieno are* [sic] still sticks in my Stomach. . . . Wherein has Mr. Churchill injured the Doctor, I should be glad to know.”^{14a}

Although Churchill did not write the satiric broadside, “Encaenia,” he did retaliate savagely against this Burton almost a year later in *The Candidate*. Addressing the Earl of Sandwich and using his characteristically parenthetical style, Churchill begins:

Burton (whilst awkward affectation’s hung
 In quaint and labour’d accents on his tongue;
 Who ’gainst their will makes junior blockheads speak,
 Ignorant of both, new Latin and new Greek,
 Not such as was in Greece and Latium known,
 But of a modern cut, and all his own;
 Who threads, like beads, loose thoughts on such a string,
 They’re praise and censure; nothing, every thing;
 Pantomime thoughts, and style so full of trick,
 They even make a Merry Andrew sick;
 Thoughts all so dull, so pliant in their growth,
 They’re verse, they’re prose, they’re neither, and they’re both)
 Shall (though by nature ever loath to praise)
 Thy curious worth set forth in curious phrase. . . . (717-30)

Churchill’s amorous adventures and high living continued during this summer of 1763, although, with few exceptions, less is known about them than about his earlier activities in the *North Briton* days. We do know, however, that he was not above being seen publicly in the company of the courtesans of London; for at this time the actor Tate Wilkinson mentioned one of them, Lucy Cooper, in his *Memoirs*: “My imitation of Holland [in *The Rehearsal*] . . . had such an effect, that Mr. Churchill, who sat in a balcony with the late Lucy Cooper . . . most vociferously encored the speech.”¹⁵

While Wilkes was in Paris his letters to Churchill become longer and more frequent, and even Churchill's are occasionally lengthy and self-revealing. One of his, dated August 14, 1763, begins: "That I am a lazy dog need I say? If Wilkes knows anything he knows that. That I am a drunken dog, all men know, and that I am an honest dog few but you will believe. So much for not writing sooner." Then about himself at that time: "I am full of work and flatter myself my spirits are pretty good — I live soberly — enjoy health. . . ." Later Churchill mentions Hogarth's reply to his satiric attack, an equally satiric print—"Was ever any thing so contemptible—" He then adds that "I intend an Elegy on him, supposing him dead, but my Dear C[harlotte] . . . who is this instant at my elbow, and towards whom I feel Spirits stir, and my bowels yearn, tells me he will be really dead before it comes out; Nay, she this instant tells me with a kiss that I have kill'd him, and begs I will never be her enemy. How sweet is Flattery from the woman we Love. . . ." The letter concludes, "The Post Chaise waits, and Charlotte cries away."¹⁶ That Churchill was living happily with "Charlotte" in August, 1763, makes the earlier date (the spring of this year) for the beginning of his more sensational affair with Elizabeth Carr very unlikely; but more of this shortly.

On August 29 Wilkes replied in great detail to Churchill's letter, ending with another appeal to him to come to Paris and including the following temptations: "If you will come over in a week I will bring you back in my post-chaise in September—I long to introduce you here to the prettiest bobbies, and most pouting xxxx I ever kiss'd or made a libation to."¹⁷ Even these inducements, however, did not stir the indolent Churchill from his own fireside. The last extant letter from Wilkes in France this year is dated September 21 and is interesting mainly for its statement of the principles of the two friends. "I have seen one of the most charming of our country

women at Lille,” he says, “who has made me amends for leaving Paris — I hasten back to her, if honour permits me — love calls — those stars have been for us the two polar thro’ life, and I am sure will continue so.”¹⁸ The reference to “honour” is to a duel that Wilkes thought he might have to fight with a fantastic Scotsman, Captain Forbes, who had challenged him in Paris.

By the end of September Wilkes was back in London, and we know from the newspapers that he and Churchill were again together in their social rounds. On October 4 *The St. James’s Chronicle* noted that “Yesterday Mr. Wilkes, accompanied by Mr. Churchill, set out for Aylesbury; after which they are to wait on Lord Temple at Stowe.”¹⁹ And on October 6 both the *St. James’s* and *The London Chronicle* printed the following news item: “Saturday last, the Right Hon. the Marquis of Granby, John Wilkes, Esq; and the Rev. Mr. C. Churchill, seated themselves in the same Box at Drury-Lane Theatre, and received on the Occasion such loud Shouts of Applause from the Spectators, as for some Time interrupted the Performance.”²⁰

This report subsequently had two interesting repercussions. One was a sneer at Churchill from a reader of *The St. James’s Chronicle*, who wrote a letter containing two querulous questions: “The Acclamations said to be paid in one of our Theatres upon seeing the Marquis of Granby in the same Box with Mr. W — and Mr. C —, were they not paid to the brave General independent of the *Par Nobile Patrum*, whose lustre could not be eclipsed even by such Company? What essential service has the Prize-Fighter [Churchill] done his King or Country?”²¹ The other item, which appeared in *The London Chronicle*, is a flat denial of the story in the first place. “That paragraph is false,” the writer declares, after which he goes on to explain: “it is true the Right Hon. the Marquis of Granby did that night, on his coming into the Play house,

receive a general clap from the audience; but Messrs. Wilkes and Churchill were not so much as in the house at that time; they indeed afterwards came in, and seated themselves in the next box but one to the Marquis of Granby; but were not in the least applauded by the spectators."²² Such were the vagaries of fame, even in those days.

In another letter, undated but probably written during 1763, Churchill reveals the depths of his affection for Wilkes and laments having had to leave him at Aylesbury. "You see how unwilling I am to leave Aylesbury," he begins, "when my thoughts return to it even before I reach London." Then follows a lively and amusing, if irritable, description of the trip to London. "If ever I travel in a Stage Coach again I wish [I] may be banished for life in the most northern and highest mountain in Scotland. . . . Such damn'd Company. One old Woman, who having [never] seen London, expects me to give her an account of the pleasures of it, and another full as old who never designing to see it entertains me with the superior pleasures of the Country. I wish my Lord Bute was betwixt them both. A Frenchman just now joined us, who tells me how much the Country of England is indebted to France, and desires I would return the obligation in part by paying for his Breakfast. I will pay for his dinner too if he will hold his tongue." The conclusion of the letter explains the reason for this diatribe on travelling: "to leave you was Hell — but to leave you for such Company is a Hell which none but a Scotchman can deserve, and is a penance too great for Yours most sincerely. . . ." ²³

But for Churchill the most important event of 1763 was his affair with Elizabeth Carr, which, because she was a home-town girl and Churchill a famous poet, scandalized the pious in Westminster and set the gossips' tongues to wagging throughout London. Elizabeth, the fifteen-year-old daughter of a Westminster stonemason, eloped with Churchill in the

autumn of 1763. The affair shocked Elizabeth’s family into threats of physical violence and legal action against her seducer.

On November 3 Wilkes wrote from Westminster to Churchill at Aylesbury, in reply to his letter about the affair. Wilkes shows deep concern and adds that Churchill may be in danger of arrest: “I fear much a warrant sign’d by the *pale Mansfield*, beginning the *King against Charles Churchill Clerk*, then the picture of the said Charles handing into Court his Betsy, who will be order’d back to an *oblig’d Papa*, lock’d up, &c, and this you can’t prevent.” Wilkes then half-humorously describes the consternation in Westminster caused by the scandal: “The family are in the greatest distress, and you are universally condemn’d for having made a worthy family unhappy. I except Cotes, your brother, and myself, who are only angry at the mode of Excise, by which you have smuggled and I suppose, without permit enter’d a fair commodity — It is known that you are at Aylesbury, therefore I submit to your prudence if you choose to continue there.” Later in the letter Wilkes refers again to the danger of arrest and adds a report that the girl’s father and brother have taken matters into their own hands. “I dread Mansfield’s warrant. . . . I fear not for your person, tho’ I hear many schemes against your life, if you persevere — The father, brother, and a servant, went with pistols charg’d, to Kensington Gardens, in consequence of an anonymous letter, to have assassinated you.” Wilkes also chides his friend for thus putting in his time: “When you can so nobly assist us in our great parts, ought you to run away to sport in dalliance?” But he could never be severe with Churchill, so the letter ends on a cordial note: “After all, my best compliments to Betsy.” In a postscript Wilkes again reveals his concern for Churchill’s safety: “The *direction* of your letters ought not to be in your own hand.”²⁴

Churchill’s undated reply to this letter is extremely interesting for what it shows of his character and deportment in the

face of these dangers. It is addressed from "Mrs. Kier's Vaux Hall," which tells us that by then he had returned from Aylesbury to London. "Your advice And the illness of Mrs. Carr," he writes, "more than the fears of Assassination brought me to Town. Assassination — a pretty word fit for boys to use and men to laugh at — I never yet play'd for so deep a stake, But if call'd on think I dare set my life on a cast, as that rash Young Man her Brother shall find if he puts me to the proof. My Life I hold for purposes of pleasure; those forbid, it is not worth my care. Mansfield I laugh at and despise. I long to see You, and assure You that to deserve the name of Friend, which You honour me with, I will rather seek danger than shun it."²⁵ In such a manner did this young man of thirty-one face one of the crises of his life, the issue of which was to lead to the happiest months of his turbulent career. As he realized himself, he was playing for deep stakes; but from all the evidence that we have the dangers were well worth risking.

Nevertheless the affair attracted wide public attention, most of it unfavorable to Churchill. In *The St. James's Chronicle* for November 10 appeared a veiled but spicy comment: "A young Lady of 15 Years of age, mentioned in the Papers to have been the Daughter of a Gentleman of Distinction in the City, is the Daughter of an eminent Stone-mason in Westminster; and the Person she is gone off with is a Gentleman of great Eminence in the Republic of Letters, and a married Man."²⁶ And on November 18 Horace Walpole, who is usually antagonistic to Churchill, wrote to the Earl of Hertford about him and Wilkes: "I forgot to tell you, and you may wonder at hearing nothing of the Reverend Mr. Charles Pylades, while Mr. John Orestes is making such a figure: but Dr. Pylades, the poet, has forsaken his consort and the Muses, and is gone off with a stone-cutter's daughter."²⁷

But the most interesting of these public accounts is the anonymous pamphlet, *A Modest Apology for the Conduct of*

a certain Reverend Gentleman in a late Excursion, which we have already exploited for its political significance. The title and the entire essay are cleverly and tellingly ironic, for the author pretends to be defending and approving Churchill’s conduct. He begins by making an appeal “in behalf of an injured Gentleman, whose Conduct has been uniformly Moral and Religious. . . .” He then pictures an extraordinary situation at the home of Elizabeth Carr before she ran off with Churchill. “Let us,” he says, “image to our fancy, a young Lady in the Bloom of Youth, beautiful in her Person, and endowed with many personal Accomplishments, whose unnatural Father would force to marry a Person she had an utter aversion to, and because she would not consent to such an Injunction, had been for some Time confined to her Room, without being allowed the common necessaries of Life.” This proposed husband, we are told, is wealthy, but he is “near Seventy Years of Age, deformed both in Body and Mind, diseased, avaricious, and avowedly Jealous. . . .” Now the author asks, with his tongue in his cheek, “who could blame her for making her escape from Prison and Famine? Or where could she fly, with greater propriety for Protection, than to a Clergyman! His Function, his Character, were safeguards to her Virtue, or even the Suspicion of Criminality; and his being already married, and a Father, were additional Securities to her. . . .”

Next occurs another startling development. The author suggests that the above story is a fiction concocted by Churchill and his friends to excuse him. “But perhaps it may be asked, is it strictly true, that the young Lady’s Relations endeavoured to force a Match upon her so disagreeable and disproportionate? . . . Every one knows it is a Poet’s particular License to exag[g]erate, and that even in this celebrated *Writer’s Prophecy of Famine*, which has been so much admired, that necessary Figure Hyperbole, is upon many Occasions both

useful and beautiful." Finally, we come to the outright assertion that this story "is what might be suggested by an inventive imagination, and what it is reasonable to suppose his Friends would say upon such an Occasion."

The author, however, refuses to commit himself completely, as his ironic attack on Churchill mounts. "Now, whether the young Lady was really half starved into Compliance to marry an old Dotard, or whether she in the vigour of Youth, her warm blood running high, and full of Love (we will not say Lust) enraptured with the Poet's Muse, his flowing Numbers, his harmonious Style, his charming Diction, his amazing Parts, his black Gown, his ruddy cheeks, his broad Shoulders, his *je ne sçai quoi, tout ensemble*, she had a mind to Taste the delicious Fruit of Cytherea's Grove; it is a matter of no great Consequence to us Englishmen. . . ." No! the author's main concern "as a Lover of Justice and a Friend to Society in general" is "to disabuse the Publick, in regard to the Reports that have been propagated upon this Occasion, to the Prejudice of the Reverend Gentleman, and the virtuous young Lady the Companion of his present Retirement."

This anonymous writer also mentions what we know to be true from Wilkes's letter — that Miss Carr's relatives threatened Churchill "with corporeal Chastisement" and "a legal Prosecution." And the young lady herself is directly attacked in the remark that "after all, as it must be plain from this Excursion . . . she is no backward Lass and knows what's what as well as any Girl of her Teens."²⁸ Although this *Modest Apology* is not dated, we know from internal evidence that it was written in November or December of 1763 and probably published then or early in the next year.

Precisely how much of this remarkable document is fact and how much fiction we shall probably never know, but, as we have seen, it was undoubtedly a combination of both. The story of the repulsive marriage of convenience for Elizabeth

Carr, the prospective husband being “an old Dotard,” may be partly substantiated by Churchill’s own more bitter and generalized attack on the same evil in his satire, *The Times*, nine months later, in which,

The mother trains the daughter which she bore
 In her own paths, the father aids the plan,
 And, when the innocent is ripe for man,
 Sells her to some old lecher for a wife,
 And makes her an adulteress for life. . . .

(142-46)

Tradition has placed the date of the Churchill-Elizabeth Carr affair “early in 1763,” a date that most of the primary evidence flatly contradicts. The hint about the seduction of Miss Carr is contained in the earliest accounts of his life and by the time Tooke investigated the matter for his edition of Churchill in 1804 the affair had accumulated numerous details. “Early in 1763,” Tooke begins, “he formed an intimacy with Miss Carr, the daughter of a highly respectable sculptor in Westminster. . . . Accompanied by Miss Carr he, in the summer of 1763, made an excursion into Wales [Wales again!], and resided a few weeks at Monmouth.”²⁹ In Wilkes’s and Churchill’s letters on the subject, however, the affair in November, 1763, had just recently caused consternation in Westminster, including violent family action and the threat of legal prosecution. In the comment by Walpole and the more public report in *The St. James’s Chronicle*, dated respectively November 18 and 10, the affair is referred to in the present tense (“Dr. Pylades . . . is gone off with a stone-cutter’s daughter”; “she is gone off with . . . a Gentleman of Great Eminence”). We can be sure that neither Walpole nor *The St. James’s Chronicle* was here retailing stale gossip. And another contemporary, the antiquary William Cole, records in his manuscript notes that “about the Beginning of 1764, he ran away with a young Lady into France [sic]. . . .”³⁰ For all of these reasons, we must conclude that the most talked-of and

written-about of Churchill's affairs has been, for almost two centuries, mistakenly antedated by at least six months.

The identity of Elizabeth Carr's family remains obscure. William Cole hesitantly identifies her by adding, "I think the *Lady* was *Dauter* to the celebrated *Statuary*, *Mr. Chere*, who was *knighted* by the *King* a few years before." This is obviously hearsay, but it is supported by two sentences from a letter of the bluestocking Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu to her fellow bluestocking Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, dated December 4, 1763. These "learned" ladies, like Horace Walpole, were not above indulging in slanderous gossip when their Tory principles were involved. "The disgrace Wilkes will incur for his blasphemy," writes Mrs. Montagu, "and this last instance of Churchill's wickedness in running away with the daughter of his benefactor, who has kept him from starving, will discountenance the ribald freedom of writing and conversation for a time. Churchill is a married man, the poor girl is under 15 years of age whom he debauch'd; she is sent home to her unhappy father Sr Henry Cheere."⁸¹

Sir Henry was a well-known sculptor in marble, bronze, and lead, whom the King had knighted in 1760. He may have been the father of Elizabeth, although the above evidence, which is all we have at present, is insufficient to make the identification certain. Furthermore, the *Dictionary of National Biography* does not mention any daughters of Sir Henry, but it does describe in considerable detail the names and lives of his two sons. And both Wilkes and Churchill consistently spell Elizabeth's last name as "Carr," as do all of Churchill's editors. Nor is there any mention of an "Elizabeth Cheere" in Sir Henry's will. This is all negative evidence, to be sure; but it should be accounted for before we conclude that Elizabeth's father was *this* prominent "statuary" of Westminster.

Some time ago, in an article entitled "Mrs. Montagu, Churchill, and Miss Cheere," Joseph M. Beatty not only ac-

cepted Mrs. Montagu’s identification of Elizabeth Carr’s father as Sir Henry, but further discredited Churchill by asserting that he was living at the Cheere home at the time of the seduction. We know, as Mr. Beatty points out, that Churchill was living with a family having a name similar to Elizabeth’s. On November 5 a detective’s report on Wilkes’s activities says, “Mr. Wilkes went out this morning at half an hour after ten o’clock, to one Mr. Karr’s, at Vaux hall, where Mr. Churchill lodges. . . .”^{31a} But what Mr. Beatty does not say, or did not know, is that Churchill himself spelled the name “Kier”: his reply to Wilkes’s letter of November 3, warning him of the dangers ahead, is addressed from “Mrs. Kier’s Vaux Hall.” In this same letter he mentions Elizabeth and spells her name “Carr.” If Churchill’s landlady had actually been her mother, this is a most unlikely distinction. Furthermore, it is highly improbable that Churchill would have returned from his hide-out in Aylesbury to the very family he had betrayed and who were then seeking his arrest. Perhaps, then, this episode was not so discreditable to Churchill as Mr. Beatty’s article implies.³²

At all events, Churchill soon repented his actions; for not only did he move back to town, but, according to Kippis, Tooke, Laver, and others (whom we have no reason to disbelieve), Miss Carr returned home and was forgiven. But her prudish sister, so the story goes,³³ taunted Elizabeth so bitterly that she once more fled to Churchill’s protection. He accepted the situation, and the couple settled down in a house in Richmond, outside London; later he took a house in the more rural surroundings of Acton Common, where he seems to have enjoyed the happiest time of his life. Here, Tooke says, he had hopes of “sitting down in the quiet enjoyment of that competence which the patronage of the public had bestowed. Here, in the society of the friends he loved, he proposed to pass his days in lettered ease, removed from the seat of business,

but sufficiently near to observe the progress of the grand machine of literature and politics, and occasionally to employ his active mind in animadverting on its prime agents."³⁴

A less reliable but contemporary picture of Churchill's life at this time appears in the glowing pages of the anonymous *Genuine Memoirs*. "Our poet now lived very comfortably and very happily," the author begins. "He wanted not for money, nor for friends. He had taken a very genteel, well-built house on Acton Common, which he furnished extremely elegant; kept his post chaise, saddle-horses, and his pointers; fished, fowled, hunted, coursed, and took all the diversions of the season he approved, at those hours he retired from study; and lived in an independent, easy manner every man of genius ought to do."³⁵ Considering its source, this picture is undoubtedly colored; but if we remember the report of Churchill's activities earlier in the 1750's, as given by Horace Walpole, who had no reason to exaggerate (that "He lived decently and quietly, and passed much of his time in angling"), we may conclude that the above account is not too wide of the mark to be essentially true.

Churchill unquestionably became deeply attached to Elizabeth Carr, and the sincerity of his repentance at having caused her and her family so much distress may be judged by the generalized reference to the whole affair in his poem, *The Conference*, published in November, 1763, at the very time of its climax;

No — 'tis the tale which angry conscience tells,
 When she with more than tragic horror swells
 Each circumstance of guilt; when stern, but true,
 She brings bad actions forth into review,
 And like the dread hand-writing on the wall,
 Bids late remorse arise at reason's call. . . . (227-32)

We know from Wilkes's report of his and Churchill's plans a year later (October, 1764) that he and Miss Carr were still

happy together. In his *Unfinished Autobiography* Wilkes says that “Mr. Churchill was at that time on the happiest terms with Miss Carr, and she had consented to a tour in the South of France and Italy, which Mr. Wilkes had projected with his friend. They had fix’d their imaginations with the ideas of the fine blue skies of Italy, the luxuriant elegance of nature in that charming climate, and the peculiar felicity of partaking those raptures with two females, so dear to them. All these enchanting views were destroy’d at once by the most dreadful event of Mr. Churchill’s death, a loss never to be repair’d to Mr. Wilkes, who had always found him the sincerest friend, the warmest advocate, the most pleasing companion. . . .”³⁶

In his will, after providing for his wife and children, Churchill left Elizabeth an annuity of £50.³⁷ A final indication of his generous nature and of his affection for her appears in a report in *The London Chronicle* after his death. “And we are told,” says the story, “at the taking an inventory of the estate, there were found in the house, two and twenty silk gowns, most of them new, made up for the use of Miss — to whom the administrator generously gave them up.”³⁸

During the month after Churchill’s affair with Elizabeth Carr became public gossip Wilkes left London for Paris in political exile, which, except for two hurried and secret visits home, was to last for four years. His escape to France on December 24, 1763, was sensational news in London, where rumors about his plans had been buzzing for months. During this time the government-dominated House of Commons had been debating the expulsion of Wilkes as a Member of Parliament because of his arrest on charges of sedition and blasphemy during the previous May, since when he had been at liberty on a writ of *habeas corpus*. Fearing that the House would expel him and that, without the protection of parliamentary “privilege,” he would be tried and convicted of these charges, Wilkes decided to flee the country. Later his fears proved well

founded indeed, for he was expelled on January 20, 1764, and ordered arrested by Chief Justice Mansfield a month later.

In the public mind the countless rumors about Wilkes naturally implicated his celebrated friend Churchill, who gave grounds for them by his habit of keeping his own whereabouts at this time as secret as possible. On December 7 *The St. James's Chronicle* reported that "on Tuesday last the celebrated Mr. Charles Churchill set out from his House in Parliament-street, on his way to Paris."³⁹ On the next day the same story appeared in *The London Chronicle*.⁴⁰ This is the earliest of the rumors; later when it became known that Wilkes had actually left London, they increased in frequency and detail. On December 24 in the *St. James's* is the following whimsical item labeled "Intelligence Extraordinary": "Calais. Arrived here Samuel Martin, Esq; — L — wc — p, Esq; and the Rev. Charles Churchill; who all wait impatiently for the Arrival of John Wilkes, Esq; to make up their Party at Whist."⁴¹ Martin is of course the Member of Parliament with whom Wilkes fought a duel on November 16 of this year.

A more private description of these rumors is contained in a letter from the Earl of Hertford, then British ambassador to France, who on December 28 wrote to Horace Walpole from Paris, saying, "Churchill is said to be here after having sworn that he was the author of the infamous paper ascribed to Wilkes [No. 45 of *The North Briton*], but as I have not seen him nor do not imagine such a trick would save the latter, I do not believe it."⁴² Finally, during the next month *The St. James's Chronicle*, some of whose editors were Churchill's friends, was impelled to make the following comment upon all this: "Notwithstanding what has been lately asserted in some of the daily Papers, that Mr. Churchill was not out of England, there is no Certainty of the Fact; for neither his Friends nor Relations know any thing of it: All the Information his Brother, Mr. John Churchill, had of his absenting

himself, was, by a Letter containing only these Words, ‘Dear Jack adieu, C.C.’ ”⁴³ The Elizabeth Carr affair was traditionally pre-dated by about six months: this three-word message that Churchill left for his brother in January, 1764, has in a like manner been post-dated, for up to now it was universally associated with his fatal trip to Boulogne nine months later.

We cannot be absolutely certain that Churchill did not go to France at this time, but in all probability he did not. Wilkes’s extant letters for this year, the earliest of which is dated March 4, 1764, continue to urge Churchill to join him and give no hint that he had already done so. Furthermore, Churchill may have gone somewhere else during these weeks. In *Lloyd’s Evening Post* for January 30 appears the following news item: “We are informed, that the late Rev. Mr. Charles Churchill, in order to take the benefit of *privilege*, is gone to the Isle of Man.”⁴⁴ And in *The St. James’s Chronicle* for February 7 there is the following squib that mentions his visiting the same place:

What’s Ch — l’s Business in the Isle of Man?
An Essay upon Woman — that’s his Plan.⁴⁵

The last line is of course an allusion to the then famous indecent poem, *An Essay on Woman*, which Wilkes had had a hand in writing. It seems very likely that Churchill’s mysterious disappearance took him to the Isle of Man, accompanied, no doubt, by Elizabeth Carr. Incidentally, the persistent rumor that he spent the summer of 1763 touring in Wales with Miss Carr might well have arisen from this later expedition, for a trip to the Isle of Man from London could have taken them through Wales.

The suggestion in the above squib about Churchill’s “Business,” that he was continuing his amorous adventures, is reinforced by Wilkes’s letter of March 4. “I beg you to take care of yourself,” he writes, “especially your health, which you are too neglectful of, and I ought to chide you that you have so

little heeded my wise admonitions, who love the rose, but hate the pins and needles of the prickly thorn." Wilkes continues to complain of Churchill's not writing and of his keeping his whereabouts in the dark. "I wrote once before at you, where to write to you, I know not. If you can give me a safe description, I wou'd open my whole heart to the best judge of it."⁴⁶ The next surviving letter, April 10, 1764, repeats these complaints, with the additional information that Churchill has been in danger of libel suits arising from his attacks on many of Wilkes's political enemies in *The Duellist*, published in January of this year. "I have suffer'd much from the reports spread here about the *Duellist*, and the anger of Lords, Bishops, &c. I only mean from the vexatious circumstance of forcing you to herd with solicitors, attornies, &c. Any other resentment you despise; and as to my Lord of Gloucester, his will always be as impotent as his lust." We have seen how severely Churchill treated Bishop Warburton not only in *The Duellist* but in the far more effective *Fragment of a Dedication* to him. The last six months had clearly been strenuous and even dangerous for Churchill. As early as November, 1763, his personal enemies had threatened him over his affair with Elizabeth Carr; in the following February and March, after the publication of *The Duellist*, his political enemies were publicly talking of libel suits, and in addition, as Wilkes intimates, his health was again deteriorating.

In the midst of all these troubles, however, Churchill continued to reveal the better side of his nature. In the above letter of April 10 Wilkes remembers to enquire about the other three Westminster friends, saying, "Pray give me news of poor Lloyd, of Thornton's marriage, of Colman, &c."⁴⁷ "Poor Lloyd" was by this time in prison for debt, and Churchill was assisting him as much as he could. There is no finer instance of his capacity for loyalty and friendship than his treatment of Lloyd during the last months of Lloyd's life

when he was in the Fleet prison. Although he was unable to free his friend, Churchill arranged to pay him a guinea a week for his personal expenses and hired a servant to attend him.⁴⁸ In thus aiding him Churchill was in part repaying the favor that Lloyd’s father had done him earlier when he too was overwhelmed by debts. One other consolation that Lloyd had while in prison was the visits of Churchill’s sister Patty, whom he had known for years and to whom he seems to have been vaguely engaged. Incidentally, a touching, if somewhat ambiguous, reminder of their relationship reposes in the Bodleian Library at Oxford in the copy of Lloyd’s poems containing Patty Churchill’s signature on the flyleaf. A bitter reference to the treatment of Lloyd and his poetry appeared in September, 1764, in Churchill’s poem *Independence*:

Though Virgil, was he living, in the street,
Might rot for them, or perish in the Fleet.
See how they redden, and the charge disclaim —
“Virgil, and in the Fleet — forbid it, Shame!”
Hence, ye vain boasters, to the Fleet repair,
And ask, with blushes ask, if Lloyd is there. (375-80)

Churchill’s generosity to his friend stands out sharply in contrast to the neglect of Lloyd by his father and his other friends. Why his father did nothing for him we do not know. Thornton was wealthy enough to have relieved Lloyd; precisely why he did not do so also remains a mystery. At any rate, several letters between Colman and Wilkes and from Lloyd to Wilkes hint broadly at a falling-out with Thornton over his treatment of Lloyd.⁴⁹ William Kenrick, Lloyd’s editor, although not very reliable, is outspoken in his criticism of Thornton, calling him Lloyd’s “most inexorable creditor.”⁵⁰ And, according to Tooke, Churchill left among his posthumous papers “the commencement of a satire against two of his most intimate friends, Colman and Thornton,”⁵¹ which Wilkes destroyed and which may have represented Churchill’s reaction to their treatment of Lloyd. Certainly his nature would

incline him, under pressure, to support the underdog in opposition to his wealthier and luckier friends. We should add, finally, that about the time Lloyd was committed to prison Thornton was getting married, which, in view of his notoriously careless nature, might be considered an extenuation of his conduct.

Another paragraph in Wilkes's letter of April 10 reveals more about Churchill's character — his integrity in contrast to Wilkes's opportunism and occasional lack of principle. Wilkes proposes that Churchill "wangle" some indiscreet letters from his friend Sir Charles Hanbury-Williams, which, he suggests, could then be printed in France and used to blackmail Sir Charles and his correspondents. "I know," he adds, "there is a single letter of Fox's [Lord Holland] about the Princess Dowager worth £10,000."⁵² But in this instance Wilkes misjudged his man, and the insidious proposal came to nothing.

Early in June of this year (1764) Churchill wrote to Wilkes, saying that this was his eighth letter, to which Wilkes jokingly replied on June 21: "I thank you warmly for the eighth letter. . . . I give you credit for the other seven." He adds that "Colman has been here some weeks. . . . Your observation about him after your Oxford tour is exactly verified here, and he is indeed very engaging," after which he continues to offer plans for a visit to France, which Churchill was now thinking more seriously about. Apparently the indolent poet was reluctant to go farther than Boulogne, for Wilkes urges him "to proceed on from Boulogne to Paris." He then makes a witty reference to Churchill and "constancy," probably alluding to his having been so faithful to Elizabeth Carr. "Your eye — and another noble part," says Wilkes, "wou'd be highly feasted, unless constancy has chang'd her name to *Churchill*."⁵³

No other letters important for further light on Churchill exist until August 27, 1764, when Wilkes again writes to him from Paris to say first that he has seen Henry Woodward, one

of the prominent actors whom Churchill attacked in *The Rosciad* and with whom, the letter makes clear, he is now on friendly terms. Woodward, says Wilkes, "talks in the highest terms of your skill in his business, and of the infinite desire he has to amend by the useful hints you are capable of giving him. I leave him therefore to you as the great Rosciadist to make him more than a master in the science of grimace," an allusion to Churchill's ironic couplet:

Woodward, endow'd with various tricks of face,
Great master in the science of grimace. . . .

The thought and tone of these remarks suggest that Churchill not only considered himself an authority on the theatre, but on occasion was not averse to coaching actors!

A later paragraph in this letter gives Churchill advice about increasing the popularity of his poetry, showing of course the continued deep concern that Wilkes felt for his friend's welfare. "I believe you wou'd give double pleasure to the public," he says, "if after any new piece, you wou'd take the trouble of a few short explanatory notes, and let the names be printed at length, like the key to the Dispensary, Dunciad, &c. I can do this for you here, at no expense to you." The advice continues in greater detail: "The notes might be in the form of a letter from Martinus Scriblerus, guessing at names, telling little anecdotes, heightening passages." Clearly Wilkes wants Churchill more widely read and more profitably sold. "I suppose," he adds, "the next winter you will only give us another handsome 4^{to}; but I am impatient to have you in pocket volumes. Then the great sale will begin."⁵⁴ It is no doubt a coincidence that on the very day Wilkes was writing thus elaborately to his friend in England, a London newspaper (*The Public Advertiser*) felt impelled to quash a rumor that Churchill had gone to France. "Mr. Churchill is not gone to Boulogne," the paper asserts, "neither has Mr. Wilkes left Paris."⁵⁵

The next letter from Wilkes is dated September 9, 1764, and is of interest mainly because in it he effusively introduces to Churchill his Parisian friend, Monsieur de Beaumont, who is coming to London. "I am sure," Wilkes writes, "you will thank me for the acceptable service I do you by the introduction of a gentleman of genius and merit, and a foreigner of so much worth ought to have the honour of being known to Mr. Churchill." This is followed by the inevitable reference to Churchill's still hoped-for visit: "I still more long to meet you at Boulogne, or here."⁵⁶ Wilkes's next letter, dated September 14, praises Churchill in the highest terms for his recently published satire, *The Times*, "which I admire almost beyond any even of your pieces. You have greatly excell'd *Juvenal* in his own manner."⁵⁷

The last surviving letter of this series is a long one by Churchill, dated October 11. A note in Wilkes's hand says it was "Receiv'd at Boulogne Oct. 24, 1764." Churchill left London for Boulogne on October 22, so he and his letter must have arrived almost simultaneously,⁵⁸ a double pleasure for Wilkes, we may be sure. Curiously enough, this letter makes no reference to Churchill's plans to cross the Channel, perhaps because his decision to do so was made impulsively ten days later. The letter is devoted almost exclusively to giving serious advice to Wilkes about his returning to England to face the sentence of outlawry for his failure to appear at the court of King's Bench. This sentence was passed in his absence on the following November 1. "Shall you come over in November?" Churchill asks, after which he proceeds into a long argumentative answer, the essence of which is that "if you stay in France, you will undoubtedly be outlaw'd. . . . you will not be able to go on ag'st Halifax, the Cause cannot be tried, nor the damages recover'd. Yet, if I may advise, stay in France." Typically enough, however, Churchill spoiled the effectiveness of this advice by a postscript that reveals his true feelings and the

depth of his desire to see his friend. “Lend us Miss Wilkes — I long to see her,” he writes; “ev’ry true Englishman will be happy in seeing her, and consider her (which I hope it will prove) as a forerunner of him to whom every true Englishman is most essentially indebted.”⁵⁹ Wilkes, however, did not come over: Churchill, in a fateful moment, went to see him.

Churchill’s last days in England provide one more episode, compounded of the comic and the serious, which may have sped him to Boulogne for reasons stronger than any of Wilkes’s entreaties. On October 30 a poetic quib was printed in *The St. James’s Chronicle*, entitled “On a late Rencounter,” which begins:

You’ll own the great Churchill possesses, I hope,
More Fancy than Cowley, more Numbers than Pope;
More Strength too than Dryden; for think on what’s past,
He has not only rivall’d, but beat him at last.⁶⁰

The reference to “Dryden” in the last two lines is a pun on that name and refers to John Dryden, the great poet, and Dryden Leach, a contemporary publisher. Leach was one of the printers of *The North Briton*, who after Churchill’s death published an edition of his poems, authorized by his brother John. But at this point Churchill clearly had had a falling-out with Leach: he “beat him at last.”

For a number of years Churchill had had a reputation of being pugnacious and extremely sensitive to personal affronts. At the outset of his political activities with Wilkes (June, 1762) he was described in an unsympathetic journal as a man “of robust and athletic make and constitution; some of his enemies . . . have favoured him with the appellation of a *Bully*; and sometimes declared their opinion of his readiness to pull the cassock off in case of an affront.”⁶¹ And we recall Hogarth’s famous print of Churchill as a Russian bear, entitled “The Bruiser.”

The quarrel with Leach produced a number of other witty squibs in the newspapers during the next few months. In fact, it became a minor *cause célèbre*, in which Churchill was always reported as the victor. Ten days later there appeared a spirited answer to the above epigram in the *St. James's*:

If Churchill beats Pope in smoothness of Speech,
 'Tis the hoarse Cobler, Pope, in the fam'd Robinhood;
 If Dryden in strength, then by all that is good,
 That Dryden's no other than old Dryden L — h.⁶²

Here, because of the adjective "old," is the added suggestion that perhaps the two were not fairly matched. Even the report that Churchill was ill in Boulogne "and attended by four Physicians" called forth a "Recipe" for his illness, which continues to rib the poet:

Great Churchill sick! O cruel Fate!
 When Britons want his Pen,
 To Keep in Awe the Tools of State,
 And make 'em better Men.
 Ye Sons of *Galen*, leave this Strife,
 Your Brains no longer rack,
 But clasp (would you preserve his Life)
 A Leach upon his Back.⁶³

As late as January 29, 1765, the allusions to this quarrel were still being published, for by that time a poem, entitled *The Race*, had appeared, which contains the following couplet:

But Leach, when Churchill came, still cautious fled,
 Skulk'd through the Croud, and trembled for his Head.⁶⁴

The source of all these hints and allusions was a fist-fight between Churchill and Leach, which was reported in *Lloyd's Evening Post* for Friday, October 26. "We are informed that the rencounter between a certain great Genius and his Printer, was as follows," the story begins. "On Sunday evening last the latter waited on a Gentleman of distinguished worth in the Parish of St. Martin's in the Fields, where the former happened to be present: and as some disputes had formerly been

between them, the Poet took no other notice of his quondam friend the Printer, than testifying, by the sternness of his countenance, that his presence was not agreeable to him. . . .” In this embarrassing situation the host asked Churchill if he did not know Leach; Churchill answered “No,” “which so incensed the Typographer, that he told him he was a *rude fellow*.” Not wanting to start a quarrel in his friend’s house Churchill thereupon left and, when he was out in the street, “sent for the Printer . . . who accordingly came to him.” Churchill then demanded that Leach go back and apologize for insulting him, which Leach refused to do. “The Genius then took the Printer by the nose, who returned the compliment by striking his antagonist a blow on the face; which so enraged the Herculean Hero, that he gave the poor Printer a terrible blow between his eyes, the marks of which he will carry about him for some time. It is said this affair will hereafter be litigated in Westminster-Hall.”⁶⁵

The poor writing of this account is partially compensated for by the amusing attempts of the author to be witty and ironical. At all events, the date of the “rencontre” places it a day or two before Churchill left for Boulogne to meet Wilkes, and the last sentence makes possible the conjecture: was one of Churchill’s reasons for leaving England at this time the fear of being “litigated” against in Westminster Hall? The anonymous author of the *Genuine Memoirs* mentions the affair as one of the minor sensations of the day. “Our poet had also some disputes with D^{xxx}n L^{xxx}h, his quondam printer; but, as that affair is so recent in every one’s memory, I shall not give an account of it here.”⁶⁶

In thus rounding out the last years of Churchill’s private life, so far as his activities are recorded in letters, newspapers, and allusions in his poems, we come to a pause in our account of his affairs. What remains is to consider, in some detail, the extraordinary status of his contemporary and later reputation and the tragedy of his premature death.

Chapter VIII

Untimely End

i.

DESPITE THE *Sturm und Drang* of the last year and a half of his life, Churchill continued to write rapidly and well. Three of his four best poems (the *Epistle to Hogarth*, *The Candidate*, and the *Dedication to Warburton*) were written during these crowded months, when he seems himself to have sensed that his time was running out. In fourteen months (July, 1763, to September, 1764) Churchill wrote and published nine successful poems, and two more (*The Journey* and the *Dedication*) appeared after his death. In quantity this was a tremendous output, and Churchill was aware that, as a result, his inspiration was likely to flag. In his unfinished poem, *The Journey*, he tells us that,

Recover'd from the vanity of youth,
I feel, alas! the melancholy truth,
Thanks to each cordial, each advising friend,
And am, if not too late, resolved to mend;
Resolved to give some respite to my pen,
Apply myself once more to books and men,
View what is present, what is past review,
And, my old stock exhausted, lay in new. (31-38)

Also in this poem the refrain-like line, "I on my journey all alone proceed," seems with its melancholy overtones to anticipate the journey to Boulogne, from which Churchill did not return alive.

About Churchill's death at the early age of thirty-two the only fact upon which all contemporary accounts agree is the date — November 4, 1764. The report of *The St. James's Chronicle*, which was essentially repeated in several other news-

papers, appears as an "Extract of a Letter from Dover, Nov. 11": "Yesterday Humphry Cotes, Esq; landed at this Place from France, and brought with him the Corpse of the late celebrated Mr. Churchill, lately so famous for his poetical and satyrical Works. Mr. Cotes, after seeing the Body landed, and giving proper Directions about it, set out Post for London: — He died of a Malignant Scarlet Fever at Boulogne, Sunday se'ennight."¹ The earliest account of Churchill's death that I have been able to find is the one in *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* for November 12; but five days earlier *Lloyd's Evening Post* reported his illness: "By a letter received from Boulogne, from Mr. Wilkes to a Gentleman in town, there is an account that Mr. Charles Churchill lays there dangerously ill of a violent fever, attended by four physicians, and that there are very little hopes of his recovery."²

From a note appended to the story in *The St. James's Chronicle* we know that within ten days after Churchill's death rumors of all kinds were flying around London. After saying that its account "seems most Authentick," the *St. James's* adds that "other Reports prevail," one being "that Mr. Churchill's Brother does not believe the Advices first received of this Matter, and which were said to have come from a certain Gentleman abroad, to be genuine"; another being that "immediately on the Report of Mr. Churchill's Illness, a Right Hon. Peer ordered a Cutter instantly to sail for Boulogne, and to wait there till it should become known whether he died, or was likely to recover, and that the News of his decease was first brought to the said Nobleman by this Cutter"; and finally, "that the Poet's Corpse was actually burried [sic] at Boulogne, and that the Messenger who brought the News of his Death, saw it interred there."

In *The Public Advertiser* for November 16 we find that "Mr. Churchill's Illness (which was occasioned by a Cold) began on Monday the 29th of October and he died on the

Sunday following, viz. Nov. 4, about two o'Clock at Noon; as soon as his Death was known, all the English Ships at Boulogne struck their Colours."³ Three days earlier, however, the same newspaper reprinted the *St. James's* story, attributing Churchill's death to "a Malignant Scarlet Fever." On the 15th *The London Chronicle* offered a compromise — that Churchill "was seized with a violent cold and fever."⁴ *Lloyd's Evening Post* also reprinted the *St. James's* story on November 13, but about three weeks later it published a translation of an account of Churchill's death in the *Paris Gazette Littéraire*, saying that at Boulogne "Mr. Churchill was attacked by a miliary fever, which carried him off in a few days."⁵ A fourth cause for his death, mentioned by Wilkes and assumed by some later writers,⁶ is that he contracted the "military fever," which today we know as typhus.

Of all these speculations about the cause of Churchill's death, that of malignant scarlet fever appears most often in the newspapers, probably because the account in *The St. James's Chronicle* was the most widely copied of them all. There may have been a confusion between this disease and the "miliary fever," for the latter is defined by Dr. Johnson in his *Dictionary* as one "that produces small eruptions"; and the *Oxford English Dictionary* more specifically describes it as a "disease characterized by the presence of a rash resembling measles, the spots of which exhibit in their centres minute vesicles of the form of millet-seed." In his *Unfinished Autobiography* Wilkes gives us the report of an eyewitness: "A putrid fever seiz'd Mr. Churchill the beginning of November, which in five days put a period to his life. Mr. Wilkes never left him, and he expir'd in the arms of his friend."⁷ The "putrid fever" was another eighteenth-century name for typhus. Wilkes, however, also left another and conflicting account in his annotations to Churchill's poems, where he says that the poet "died of a miliary fever, at Boulogne, on the 4th of No-

vember, 1764.”⁸ We are thus left with alternatives: Churchill died either of typhus or of some kind of “miliary” fever.

There was also disagreement about the more minor matters of the time of his death and the time of his burial. *The Public Advertiser* puts the time of Churchill’s death at “about two o’Clock at noon.” On the other hand, Wilkes, in a note to his friend’s last letter, says that “Mr Churchill died at that place [Boulogne] on sunday morning Nov. 4, 1764.”⁹ *The Public Advertiser* reports that “Humphrey Cotes, Esq; landed with the Body at Dover . . . and on Monday the 15th it was interred at that Place.”¹⁰ But *The St. James’s Chronicle* says that on “Tuesday Night the Remains of the late celebrated Mr. Churchill, are said to have been decently interred at Dover, and that several of the principal Inhabitants of the Place attended the Corpse to the Grave.”¹¹

Tooke’s account of Churchill’s death is the traditional one: “On the 22nd of October, 1764, he accompanied his friends Goy and Cotes to France, and met Wilkes at Boulogne, where, on the 29th, soon after his arrival, he was seized with a miliary fever, which baffled the skill of the two eminent physicians by whom he was attended.”¹² Whatever his illness, Churchill did not come down with it until three days before he died (despite Tooke’s assertion and Wilkes’s too, which I have quoted earlier), for on November 1, Wilkes wrote from Boulogne to Earl Temple about his own affairs, adding, “I have talked the whole over with my two friends here,”¹³ meaning Cotes and Churchill, who obviously was not ill then or Wilkes would certainly have mentioned the fact. What happened to Churchill was therefore relatively sudden, barely giving him time to meet the event courageously, make his will, and request that his body be returned to English soil.¹⁴

This was done, and today he lies in that “humblest of all sepulchres” (according to Byron) in the churchyard of St. Mary the Virgin at Dover. The yard fronts on Prince’s Street

in the more elevated part of the town and commands a fine view of the English Channel. Churchill's grave is in the back near the wall of the church. The headstone boldly proclaims the following inscription: "1764 Here lie the Remains of the celebrated C. Churchill. Life to the last enjoy'd Here Churchill lies [from *The*] Candidate." Inside the church, on the wall of the nave, is a large plaque of stone or plaster memorializing Churchill. It was erected in 1769 "At ye sole Expence of ye above T. Underwood" and thus commemorates the poet: "In Memory of ye late celebrated Poet Mr Charles Churchill who died at Boulogne in France Aetatis 32 & was buried in ys Town Novr 1764":

The Rich and Great no sooner gone
 But strait a monumental Stone,
 Inscrib'd with panegyric Lays,
 Such fulsome, — undeserved praise,
 The Living blush, — the conscious Dead,
 Themselves appal'd, that Truth is fled,
 And can it be, — that worth like thine,
 Thou Great — High — Priest of all ye Nine,
 Shou'd moulder, — undistinguished sleep,
 At very Thought, the Muses weep,
 Forbid it Gratitude, and Love,
 O for a flow like his to prove,
 How much regretted, — HONEST BARD,
 Accept this shadow — of Regard.

This public lament, sincere if rather crude, was nothing compared to Wilkes's grief at Churchill's death. His letters for the next year repeatedly describe his feelings of sorrow and loss, and later in his *Unfinished Autobiography* he wrote, "No event had ever struck Mr. Wilkes so deep to the heart. He had never before suffer'd the loss of any friend, to whom he had been greatly attach'd. He was long in the deepest melancholy. On his return to Paris he pass'd the day and night alone in tears and agonies of despair."¹⁵

Churchill had named his friend Humphrey Cotes and his brother John as executors of his will, but Cotes apparently

withdrew, and, according to *The London Chronicle*, "Humphry Cotes, Esq; Executor to the late Mr. Churchill, having declined administ[e]ring to the effects of the deceased, Letters of Administration have been granted to Mr. Churchill's uncle."¹⁶ Just who this uncle was is not known, but there were a Robert and a Thomas Churchill living in Westminster in the 1730's, both of whom may have been uncles. The same newspaper also reports "that the whole copy right of Mr. Churchill's *published* works, with the proposed two volumes of *unpublished* sermons, are valued at three thousand pounds,"¹⁷ a considerable fortune in the eighteenth century.

As early as November 10, before Churchill's death was generally known, *The London Chronicle* printed a vivid description of the public response to the report of his illness. The account pictures the reaction in the taverns and coffeehouses: "the first spreading of the news of that gentleman's perilous situation occasioned much gravity of appearance, as well as silence, in the frequenters of Coffee-houses; some of the serious looks of whom, however, discovered great serious satisfaction; and of others as great a mortification and concern; so that their several thoughts were plainly enough discovered, though their tongues continued mute." Then follows a tribute to Churchill's great name and success as a poet: "Many votaries of the muses are exerting their talents for succeeding Mr. Churchill . . . in the favour of his friends, and what may be more important, his lucrative reputation with the public at large."¹⁸

In the years immediately preceding and following Churchill's death there appeared hundreds of poems and articles inspired (if that is the right word) by "his lucrative reputation." More than a hundred of these are listed and many are discussed by Joseph M. Beatty in his essay, "Churchill's Influence on Minor Eighteenth Century Satirists."¹⁹ These commentaries on his life and work range from the one extreme of

attack, as in James Beattie's poem on the death of Churchill, calling him,

The hireling slave of Faction and of Spite,
His country's nuisance, and a Wilkes' delight,

to the other extreme of sentimental tribute, as in the jingle by "Christopher Crabtree":

That Churchill had errors we know,
But then he was frank and sincere;
And never was told of a woe,
But he gave it his purse or his tear.

During the last years of Churchill's life, the newspapers opened their columns to numerous contributors who paid him the tribute of a long series of epigrams, epistles, and poetic squibs. The editors of *The St. James's Chronicle*, which was partly owned by Churchill's friends Thornton, Colman, and Garrick, were particularly aware of the publicity value of his name. On February 12, 1763, this journal printed an anonymous poem "To Mr. Churchill," in which the poet is compared, most favorably, to John Churchill, the military genius, better known as the Duke of Marlborough, the famous ancestor of Winston Churchill:

Great Churchill's Sword to vanquish'd France gave Law,
His mighty Deeds astonish'd Europe saw;
Great Churchill's Pen, unequal'd shines in Story,
Fresh Laurels gaining, never fading Glory;
Old Rome, in vain, her Satirists may boast,
Whose Fame in his superior Merit's lost.

* * * * *

Such Honour to the Name belongs, how fit!
The first supreme in Arms, the last in Wit.²⁰

About five months later, in the same newspaper, the same idea occurred to another contributor, who entitled his piece "The Comparison between John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, and Charles Churchill, Anticaledonian" and who ranks the poet above the General:

In Anna's Wars immortal Churchill rose,
 And, great in Arms, subdued Britannia's Foes;
 A greater Churchill now commands our Praise,
 And the Palm yields her Empire to the Bayes.
 Though John fought nobly at his Army's Head,
 And slew his Thousands with his Balls of Lead,
 Yet must the Hero to the Bard submit,
 Who hurls unmatch'd the Thunderbolts of Wit.²¹

Early in the next year another tribute to Churchill appeared in *The St. James's Chronicle*, this time relating him to "freedom" and comparing him favorably with Dryden:

Few are the Bards, whatever Age we trace,
 Who with true Genius have possess'd such Grace,
 That as their Breasts with Freedom's Influence glow'd,
 They ne'er a Wreath on wicked Power bestow'd.
 Dryden, as Times revolv'd, for Cromwell strung
 His Lyre, or now of Tyrant Stuarts sung;
 Not thus o'er aw'd, O Churchill, wilt thou pay
 To titled Guilt one prostituted Lay!
 Free as young Love, thy honest Praise o'erflows,
 But Knaves and Tyrants all are mark'd thy Foes:
 Hence Dryden's Glory must to thine submit,
 Who fail'd as Patriot, nor excell'd in Wit.²²

This association of Churchill the patriot and Churchill the poet underscores the public awareness of these two complementary aspects of his genius. A week later a different kind of tribute to Churchill appeared in *The London Chronicle*, in which the writer remarks "as to poetry, since that giant Churchill stalked forth, there's not a shrub to be seen of it."²³ In June, 1764, an Oxford contributor sent to *The St. James's Chronicle* another poem, some of the details of which are interesting for the picture they give of Churchill. The poem is addressed "To Mr. Hogarth on his Print of Mr. Churchill in the Character of a Russian Hercules." The author first asks, "Why dost thou compare My Friend Charles Churchill to a Bear?" after which he roundly addresses Hogarth:

Now here you are entirely wrong,
 Churchill's as active as he's strong,
 And to your Cost, Good Sir, may find
 Not more in Body than in Mind.
 As to his Shape, I hope you'll own,
 If 'tis a Fault, 'tis not his own.
 I wonder greatly how you can,
 Who know so little of the Man,
 Pronounce him such a churlish Elf,
 And quite forget your snarling Self.
 I ask you next to make appear
 The Humor of the Pot of Beer;
 Think you it can create a Laugh
 To see a jolly Parson quaff. . . .²⁴

And so on for twenty-two more lines.

Naturally with the death of Churchill the number, if not the quality, of newspaper verses about him increased greatly. Within a week after the news reached England the following poem "On Mr. Churchill's Death" appeared in the *St. James's*:

Prose-driving Dunces, waddling Fools in Rhyme,
 Scoundrels of every Kind, by Vengeance led;
 Spit forth your Venom, poison all our Clime,
 Churchill, who scourg'd you to your Holes is dead!²⁵

Ten days later in the same paper, under a similar heading, we find another stanza:

He's gone! great Churchill's gone, 'tis true;
 Yet cease the Fates to blame;
 Years they allow'd him but a few,
 But gave eternal Fame.

This is followed in the same issue by an "Epitaph":

Churchill no more! O cruel Death 'twas hard,
 So soon to rob us of our fav'rite Bard!
 We should not thus bewail the fatal Doom,
 Hadst thou but plac'd an Equal in his Room.²⁶

It is curious that this same Epitaph appeared ten days earlier in *The London Chronicle* and was followed in that journal on December 4 by an anti-Churchill parody, entitled "Counter-Epitaph to the Memory of the late Mr. Charles Churchill":

Scurrility, no more! O Death 'twas hard
 To rob a Party of its fav'rite Bard!
 But we'll submit to wail the fatal doom;
 He could not place an equal in his room.²⁷

Similarly in this newspaper for November 20 and December 4 appeared two poems, the second an anti-Churchill parody of the first, which, called "An Attempt," begins:

What, Churchill dead! — and silent ev'ry Bard,
 No Muse invok'd — to Merit no Regard!
 O Lloyd and Woty, tune the vocal lays,
 Let Emulation strive to chaunt his praise.²⁸

This was followed by a line-by-line take-off, "A Counter-Attempt," beginning:

What, Churchill dead! — and silent ev'ry bard,
 No Muse invok'd — to Scandal no regard;
 Tune not, O Lloyd, nor Woty your chaste lays,
 Nor emulating strive to chaunt its praise.²⁹

Obviously here we have Tories as well as Whigs in action, with Churchill's reputation the bone of contention between them.

The contemporary reviews of the separately published stream of pro-and-con Churchilliana reveal not only Churchill's towering reputation but the utter inferiority of his imitators. In *The Monthly Review*, for example, *The Powers of the Pen* is thus noticed: "The Author of the poem is one of those numerous maggots that bred in the remains of Churchill; who, from the vain hope of acquiring some consequence by it, have entered into his quarrels without his provocations, and inherited his spirit of abuse without his capacity."³⁰ And about a poem entitled *Thespis*, the author "has all the scurrility of his predecessor, without his fire and force: his virulence, without his poetry," after which follows a high tribute to Churchill: "we have not here the concise, nervous expression; the bold, energetic thought; the elevated, manly genius; the

natural, and even the becoming complexion for satire, from whence the late celebrated bard has been justly stiled the Juvenal of the present times."³¹ This is hardly speaking ill of the dead!

Another kind of tribute to Churchill appears in *The St. James's Chronicle* for December 6, in which the editors write a note to a correspondent, saying, "A.B.'s Proposal for raising a Monument to the Memory of Mr. Churchill, may not be as necessary as he imagines." They then explain why: "The Patriotic Bard, we make no Doubt, will always survive, at least as long as Patriotism and Poetry are held in any Account." And finally, their comment on his principles and his talents: "The Poet's Warmth proceeded from an inward Conviction of the Justness of his own Tenets: and as in his Life Time we had a very great Opinion of his Abilities, so any Reflection upon him now dead, would be particularly inexcusable in us."³² Incidentally, this proposal, which was to erect a monument to Churchill in Westminster Abbey, came to nothing.

The flowering of the verse testimonials continued for several months, and when the news of Lloyd's death on December 15 became known, he was linked with Churchill as a double loss. On December 20 "H.S." contributed an "Epitaph" to the *St. James's* beginning, "Ah! what avail the verdant Bays" and including the following couplet:

Poets, like other Men, must die,
For see where Lloyd and Churchill lie!³³

Five days later there appeared an answer, which concludes:

That Satire, manly Sense, with Wit allied,
Expir'd, alas! when you, our Favourites died!³⁴

As late as March 21 we find another set of couplets "On the Death of the Late Mr. Churchill," which say nothing new, but reassert that "the British Juvenal will never die."³⁵ This "poetry," like all newspaper verse, has of course little merit

in itself; but it is indicative of what Churchill's own contemporaries thought of him.

The association in the public mind of Lloyd's and Churchill's deaths raises a curious problem in the traditional accounts of Churchill: the effect upon Lloyd, himself in prison and in poor health, of Churchill's death. The story, which goes back to the eighteenth century, is that the death of Churchill literally killed Lloyd.³⁶ When Churchill became ill at Boulogne Wilkes immediately wrote to Lloyd and Churchill's brother John. In his letter to Lloyd he withheld the more serious details out of concern for Lloyd's own precarious health. Early in November Lloyd replied to Wilkes, expressing uneasiness over Churchill's condition: "Indeed we are all much alarm'd, for tho the seeming spirit of your letter to me gave us hopes it might not be so bad with him, that which Jack has receiv'd, entirely quashes them."³⁷ Thus Lloyd was in a measure prepared for his friend's death.

About two weeks after that event, on November 20, we find Lloyd writing again to Wilkes about the publication of Churchill's works.³⁸ Both he and Wilkes had grandiose plans for their edition of Churchill, though nothing came of them. Lloyd soon died, and Wilkes went on to pastures new. Wilkes added a postscript to the letter from Lloyd: "Mr. Lloyd soon after died in the Fleet prison, absolutely of a broken heart. *Blush, grandeur, blush!*"³⁹ The widespread story, implied in this sentimental reference to a broken heart, that Lloyd, on hearing of Churchill's death, said, "I shall follow poor Charles," took to his bed, and never got up again — that story is almost pure fabrication. Undoubtedly Lloyd was profoundly shocked by his friend's death, and, with Churchill gone, he would for a while, at least, feel utterly hopeless. But during the last three weeks of November Lloyd had recovered sufficiently to write (of all things!) a comic opera, which was successfully produced by Garrick. On November 29 *The London Chronicle*

reported that "the piece was received by a numerous and polite audience with universal applause and approbation."⁴⁰ It is a pleasure, therefore, to record that before he died Lloyd attained a larger measure of success than he had known for years. Not since the appearance of his first important poem, *The Actor*, in 1760 had he received such favorable response from critics and the public alike. Even though it came too late to release him from the Fleet prison, we may assume that this last success made more bearable the almost incredibly unlucky career of Churchill's oldest and closest friend.

Another curiosity in the annals of the Churchill legend, which may serve to round out our picture of his contemporary personal reputation, is the identification of him with one of the heroes of Charles Johnstone's picaresque novel, *Chrysal, or the Adventures of a Guinea*, first published in 1760 and expanded in 1765. The earliest account of this identification appeared in 1779 in John Bell's edition of *The Poets of Great Britain Complete from Chaucer to Churchill*. The brief biography attached to Churchill's poems is a reprint of the 1764 article in *The London Chronicle* and other journals; but to this Bell adds that "we shall close this life of Churchill with an anecdote frequently told of him, which is to be found in *Chrysal*, Vol. I, Chap. 21."⁴¹ He then quotes the lengthy passage from the novel. Tooke says that "the pathetic incident related so well, accords with the character of our author, by which he was always enthusiastically impelled to follow the first impulses of his heart, that we see no reason for doubting of his being the real hero of this affecting tale."⁴²

The anecdote constitutes one of the guinea's adventures. "The company to which my new master was in such haste to go," says the guinea, "consisted of a few persons, whom a similarity of temper had linked in the closest intimacy." The ensuing party is then described, "the spirited wit, and liveliness of their conversation gilding the grossest debaucheries." Early

in the morning, as the guinea's master "staggered home," he "was accosted by a female, who had something in her air and manner so different from those outcasts of humanity who offer themselves to casual prostitution in the streets, that his curiosity was struck, and he stopped to take more particular notice of her." The girl was so pure and attractive in her wretched condition that "the sigh of distress, which never struck his ear without affecting his heart, came with double force from such an object. He viewed her with silent compassion for some moments, and reaching her a piece of gold, bade her go home, and shelter herself from the inclemencies of the night."

The girl is so overcome by this unexpected generosity that she drops to her knees "in the wet dirt of the street," calls him her deliverer, and beseeches him to aid her desperate family. The good man immediately secures provisions for the family and goes with the girl to their wretched lodgings, where, despite the parents' suspicions, he convinces them of his virtuous intentions, moves them to better quarters, and thus literally saves the lives of the girl's two sick younger brothers. In doing all this, he felt "the sublimest pleasure the human heart is capable of, in considering how he had relieved, and should further relieve the sufferings of objects so worthy of relief."⁴⁸

If this sentimentalized and highly colored piece of fiction was modeled on Churchill's life and character (and nothing is known that contradicts it), it throws into sharper light an aspect of his nature that has been given little or no consideration for more than a century. We remember, of course, Churchill's generous treatment of Lloyd; and we may add here the following lines from a poem, *The Contrast*, attributed to James Ridley. It is subtitled "a Familiar Epistle to Mr. C. Churchill on Reading his Poem called Independence." First the author asks "who can blame the man, Who, by his hand or head, gets what he can," for then, among other things, he is in a position,

. . . to have the power of doing good,
 To clothe the naked, bring the hungry food,
 Relieve the prisoner in his dire distress; —
 This is thy self, as well as friend, to bless.⁴⁴

The allusion to Churchill's assistance to Lloyd in the last two lines is unmistakable: may not the preceding line be a generalized reference to an actual episode that was also the basis for the story in *Chrysal*? Since the charitable ideas of clothing the naked, bringing the hungry food, and relieving the prisoner are direct references to the New Testament (Matthew, 25: 35, 36), may we not also suggest that Ridley is here attributing to Churchill qualities of the Christian character? There is probably a great deal of truth in the remark of a contemporary who knew Churchill: "He lashed as a satyrist, but forgave as a man."

ii.

Just as dozens of anonymous poetasters felt impelled to versify their thoughts about "the celebrated Mr. Churchill," so a number of genuine men of letters have left their evaluations of him and his work. Two of the best-known commentaries are those of Dr. Johnson and Boswell. In the *Life of Johnson* Boswell reports that "he talked very contemptuously of Churchill's poetry, observing that 'it had a temporary currency, only from its audacity of abuse, and being filled with living names, and that it would sink into oblivion'." Boswell, who loved to draw Johnson out, then "ventured to hint that he was not quite a fair judge, as Churchill had attacked him violently." This hint succeeded, for Johnson answered roundly, "Nay, Sir, I am a very fair judge. He did not attack me violently till he found I did not like his poetry; and his attack on me shall not prevent me from continuing to say what I think of him. . . . No, Sir, I called the fellow a blockhead at first, and I will call him a blockhead still. However, I will acknowledge that I have a better opinion now, than I once had; for he has

shewn more fertility than I expected. To be sure, he is a tree that cannot produce good fruit: he only bears crabs. But, Sir, a tree that produces a great many crabs is better than a tree which produces only a few."⁴⁵

The problem of Johnson's antagonism to Churchill has never been explored in any great detail. On literary grounds, one would expect them to have much in common,⁴⁶ for they both praised and practiced the mastery of the heroic couplet, and both were strongly opposed to the "Ode and elegy and sonnet" school of Mason and Gray. Yet Johnson could barely bring himself to admit that Churchill was a real poet at all. Johnson's assumption that his low opinion of Churchill's poetry caused Churchill to attack him violently is surely not the whole story, if only because Churchill's disdain of *all* criticism would certainly incline him to ignore even Johnson's strictures.

Other contemporary evidence indicates, in fact, that Churchill at one time had a high opinion of Johnson as an author. Thomas Tyers, in "a biographical sketch" of Johnson, says: "This writer has heard Churchill declare, that 'he thought the poems of "London" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes," full of admirable verses, and that all his compositions were diamonds of the first water'." But Tyers adds that Churchill "wanted a subject for his pen and for raillery, and so introduced Pomposo into his descriptions. 'For, with other wise folks, he sat up with the ghost'."⁴⁷ Elsewhere Tyers repeats these comments in a comparison between Churchill and Pope as critics of Johnson, saying that "Churchill's performances are superior to Whitehead's . . . but are not comparable to *London* or to *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. Pope was alive to praise the merits of the first, and Churchill commended them both." Then, echoing Johnson's "tree" metaphor about Churchill, Tyers concludes, "His laurel-tree had more leaves than fruit. The man and the author were very unlike. He lashed as a satyrist, but forgave as a man."⁴⁸

In Mrs. Thrale's "Anecdotes" about Johnson we also find some speculations about his antagonism to Churchill. "When Churchill nettled him," she remarks, "it is certain he felt the sting, or that poet's works would hardly have been left out of the edition [of Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets*]"; but she qualifies this conclusion by adding that "the booksellers perhaps did not put Churchill on their list." This is followed by another speculation that probably comes nearer to the truth — that "Churchill's works too might possibly be rejected by him upon a higher principle; the highest indeed, if he was inspired by the same laudable motive which made him reject every authority for a word in his dictionary that could only be gleaned from writers dangerous to religion or morality."⁴⁹

Certainly, with the appearance of Book II of *The Ghost* in March, 1762, the die was cast: the public even began to assume Churchillian attacks on Johnson where none existed! A case in point is the public reception of No. 12 of *The North Briton*, which appeared on August 21, 1762. It is Wilkes's severe but witty satire on Johnson for accepting a government pension after defining the word in his Dictionary as "pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country." On September 1 of this year *The St. James's Chronicle* printed a long letter, signed "A South Briton," which strongly objected to his treatment of Johnson's acceptance of a pension. The correspondent assumes that Churchill had written this *North Briton* paper! — "The Author is said to be a Clergy — n."⁵⁰ As late as 1887 this assumption was still being publicly held, for in that year in his book on *English Newspapers* H. R. Fox Bourne emphasizes, although he qualifies, Churchill's authorship of this paper: "Churchill — if it was Churchill who wrote the article, as Johnson supposed when he said, 'I called the fellow a blockhead at first, and I will call him a blockhead still'. . ."⁵¹

Johnson's unfavorable view of Churchill's poetry was undoubtedly colored by his disapproval of "writers dangerous to

religion or morality" and of Churchill's Whig principles and association with Wilkes. But however severely he condemned Churchill as a man, he did come to have a higher opinion of him as a poet; for he admitted to Boswell that Churchill "has shewn more fertility than I expected." This restrained qualification may in a conservative critic be more significant than outright praise by others. Whatever the original cause for the Johnson-Churchill antagonism, it did no good for Churchill's reputation. He remained a kind of outcast from one of the literary inner circles of the time, a misfortune that did not befall his friend Colman, who in 1768 became a member of the famous Johnsonian Literary Club.

After quoting Johnson on Churchill, Boswell gives his own less prejudiced estimate. "In this depreciation of Churchill's poetry I could not agree with him," he says. "It is very true that the greatest part of it is upon the topicks of the day, on which account . . . it brought him great fame and profit at the time. . . . But Churchill had extraordinary vigour both of thought and expression. His portraits of the players will ever be valuable to the true lovers of the drama. . . . Let me add, that there are in his works many passages which are of a general nature; and his *Prophecy of Famine* is a poem of no ordinary merit. It is, indeed, falsely injurious to Scotland, but therefore may be allowed a greater share of invention."⁵² The fact that a Scotsman could see the poetic merits in Churchill's slashing attack on his own country is indeed a tribute both to Boswell as a critic and to Churchill as a poet. Of course, Boswell was already accustomed, perhaps case-hardened, to similar attacks from Johnson himself.

Personally Boswell also seems to have felt a great attraction for Churchill, as he did for Wilkes. Five months after Churchill's death he was still thinking of him, for he wrote half humorously to Wilkes that "methinks I see Churchill bouncing into the regions below, making even Cerberus dread his brawny

force, while poor Lloyd is lounging on the fatal shore, for want of a halfpence to pay his freight."⁵³ And somewhat earlier he sent Wilkes a letter in Latin, which included the following sentence about his proposed edition of Churchill: "Summam spero voluptatem legendo notas tuas acres in poemata acria Churchilli, qui nunc cum Juvenale est."⁵⁴ Among eighteenth-century scholars and gentlemen, such a tribute was indeed a compliment.

The supposed arch-romanticist Robert Burns is another major literary figure who paid his respects to Churchill as a poet. In March, 1788, a quarter of a century after Churchill's death, Burns wrote to an unknown correspondent, saying, "If you did not know me for a Scots Poet, I daresay you would suspect me for a Hibernian.

'Hibernia, famed 'bove every other grace
For matchless intrepidity of face!' "⁵⁵

The above couplet, which Burns quoted so readily, occurs in the *Rosciad* portrait of the actor Thomas King (339-40). This suggests that Burns knew his Churchill well, a fact that is further substantiated by a general reference to him in an earlier letter to Dr. John Moore in January, 1787. Burns is modestly discussing his own literary reputation. "I know very well the novelty of my character has by far the greatest share in the learned and polite notice I have lately had; and in a language where Pope and Churchill have raised the laugh, and Shenstone and Gray drawn the tear; where Thomson and Beattie have painted the landscape, and Lyttelton and Collins described the heart, I am not vain enough to hope for distinguished poetic fame."⁵⁶ In thus linking Pope and Churchill, Burns not only pays the latter a high compliment, but shows a keen critical awareness of a relationship that has been demonstrated only in the last decade.⁵⁷

In the early nineteenth century Robert Southey also revealed a fine critical appreciation of Churchill. He was one of

the few writers who showed any interest in Tooke's first edition of Churchill's poems (1804), for which he wrote a review in *The Annual Review and History of Literature*. This essay is a sober defense of Churchill as "a regular member of the corporation of poets."⁵⁸ Later, in 1836, Southey included a much longer account of Churchill's life and poetry in his edition of Cowper. In this account Southey is even more fair and generous to Churchill as a poet, influenced perhaps by Cowper's own high tribute to his Westminster friend. "Though it might seem that his poems," says Southey, "for their subjects' sake, might properly be relegated among those which formerly used from time to time to be collected under the title of State-Poems, they are too good for this. Manly sense is their characteristic, deriving strength of expression from indignation; and they contain redeeming passages of sound morality and permanent truth."⁵⁹ Southey's placing of Churchill firmly in "the corporation of poets" came at a time when his reputation was at its lowest.

The depths to which Churchill's name had sunk at this time may be gauged from Byron's poem, "Churchill's Grave," written somewhat sentimentally after he had visited it in 1816.

I stood beside the grave of him who blazed
 The Comet of a season, and I saw
 The humblest of all sepulchres, and gazed
 With not the less of sorrow and of awe
 On that neglected turf and quiet stone,
 With name no clearer than the names unknown,
 Which lay unread around it. . . .

This beginning leads the poet to the questions:

And is this all? I thought, — and do we rip
 The veil of Immortality, and crave
 I know not what of honour and of light
 Through unborn ages, to endure this blight?
 So soon and so successful?

Which in turn brings us to the famous conclusion of the poem — its "moral,"

In which there was Obscurity and Fame,
The Glory and the Nothing of a Name.⁶⁰

The near-tragic overtones of these two lines imply another deep tribute to Churchill, whose work Byron always held in high esteem. Indeed, "Churchill had been one of Byron's earlier models," says his editor Ernest Hartley Coleridge;⁶¹ and in a review of this poem of Byron's Sir Walter Scott adds that "there was a resemblance between their history and character," after which he explains in considerable detail: "both these poets held themselves above the opinion of the world, and both were followed by the fame and popularity which they seemed to despise. The writings of both exhibit an inborn, though sometimes ill-regulated generosity of mind, and a spirit of proud independence, frequently pushed to extremes."⁶²

But the strongest assertion of Churchill's poetic greatness came from his old school-friend William Cowper. According to Southey, Cowper made Churchill, "more than any other writer, his model. . . . Their only sympathy was in a spirit of indignation, taking in both the form of satire, but which the one directed against individuals . . . the other against the prevailing sins and errors of the age."⁶³ Indeed it is not often remembered that Cowper began his poetic career by publishing eight satires and didactic poems, which in verse form and in technical details reflect the influence of Churchill.⁶⁴

It is in one of these, "Table Talk," that Cowper expresses poetically his admiration for Churchill:

Contemporaries all surpass'd, see one,
Short his career, indeed, but ably run;
Churchill; himself unconscious of his pow'rs,
In penury consum'd his idle hours;
And, like a scatter'd seed at random sown,
Was left to spring by vigour of his own.
Lifted at length, by dignity of thought
And dint of genius, to an affluent lot,
He laid his head in luxury's soft lap,
And took, too often, there his easy nap.

If brighter beams than all he threw not forth,
'Twas negligence in him, not want of worth.
Surly and slovenly, and bold and coarse,
Too proud for art, and trusting in mere force,
Spendthrift alike of money and of wit,
Always at speed, and never drawing bit,
He struck the lyre in such a careless mood,
And so disdain'd the rules he understood,
The laurel seem'd to wait on his command;
He snatch'd it rudely from the muses' hand.⁶⁵

This is forthright, but by no means uncritical, appreciation.

A more unqualified comment on Churchill appears in one of Cowper's letters to the Rev. William Unwin. "It is a great thing to be indeed a poet," he begins, "and does not happen to more than one man in a century." Then: "Churchill, the great Churchill, deserved the name of poet: I have read him twice, and some of his pieces three times over, and the last time with more pleasure than the first." Cowper next gives high praise to three of Churchill's poems, *Gotham*, *Independence*, and *The Times*, after which he turns to the qualities of Churchill's genius: "He is indeed a careless writer for the most part; but where shall we find in any of those authors who finish their works with the exactness of a Flemish pencil, those bold and daring strokes of fancy, those numbers so hazardously ventured upon and so happily finished, the matter so compressed and yet so clear, and the colouring so sparingly laid on, and yet with such a beautiful effect?"⁶⁶ In all of these critical evaluations during his lifetime and for fifty years afterwards, we may see that Churchill was respected and taken seriously by his literary peers.

Churchill's poetic eminence in his own day, the appreciation of his work by writers who followed him, and the sterling quality of his best poetry should, one would think, merit him considerable recognition in modern anthologies and literary histories. If nothing else, his remarkable influence on minor contemporaries and the early Cowper should give him a strong

place in the tradition of neo-classic satire. But a glance at most anthologies and literary histories will show an astonishing neglect of Churchill, and where he is recognized it is with a tone of condescension or restrained contempt. With the exception of Tooke's editions (1804 and 1844), Forster's review of the second of these, and several other editions with introductions based on Tooke, Churchill has been, until recently, the unwanted stepchild of the eighteenth century.

The reasons for this attitude are, of course, numerous and varied. For one thing, a change in literary fashions and standards will naturally affect the reputation of an earlier writer, so that the "romantic revolt" against neo-classic literature made any revaluation of Churchill's poetry unlikely in the nineteenth century. As a social and political satirist, he could at best become what Matthew Arnold called Dryden and Pope — "classics of our prose." Actually, Churchill was never accorded even this "bad eminence." And since the nineteenth century only Laver's edition in 1933 and a few scholarly articles have more than glanced at the poet or his work.

Another tendency in criticism that was especially harmful to Churchill is the perennial one of considering the man versus the poet — the influence of Churchill's private life on the evaluation of his work as poetry. Many other poets of major or near-major stature have broken with the moral conventions of their time (Baudelaire, Byron, Shelley, Oscar Wilde) without unduly sacrificing their poetic reputations. Yet most critics seem unable to approach Churchill the poet except through their distaste for Churchill the man: "He has no ear and no heart. . . . His latest works are positively execrable, whether in morals or in style. . . ." ⁶⁷ Thus Edmund Gosse in 1888. But even in 1948, although "he is saved from oblivion . . . by his fine command of the heroic couplet," Churchill also "has much in common with the cheap politician," his "professedly lofty principles and indignation of the satirical

tradition ring hollow," and "he is actually an irresponsible bohemian and a cynic."⁶⁸ With no intention of "whitewashing" him, our history of the man and his works has at least revealed the extreme critical bias in comments like these.

Churchill himself made no provision for his future reputation. With characteristic faith he decided to leave such matters to the discretion of his friends. In a passage from *The Candidate*, published in the last year of his life, he expressed, fully and clearly, his own views on the subject:

For me (nor dare I lie) my leading aim
 (Conscience first satisfied) is love of fame;
 Some little fame, derived from some brave few,
 Who prizing Honour, prize her votaries too.
 Let all (nor shall resentment flush my cheek)
 Who know me well, what they know, freely speak,
 So those (the greatest curse I meet below)
 Who know me not, may not pretend to know.
 Let none of those, whom, bless'd with parts above
 My feeble genius, still I dare to love,
 Doing more mischief than a thousand foes,
 Posthumous nonsense to the world expose,
 And call it mine, for mine, though [never] known,
 Or which if mine, I living blush'd to own.
 Know all the world, no greedy heir shall find,
 Die when I will, one couplet left behind.
 Let none of those, whom I despise though great,
 Pretending friendship to give malice weight,
 Publish my life; let no false, sneaking peer,
 (Some such there are) to win the public ear,
 Hand me to shame with some vile anecdote,
 Nor soul-gall'd bishop damn me with a note.
 Let one poor sprig of bay around my head
 Bloom whilst I live, and point me out when dead;
 Let it, (may Heaven, indulgent, grant that prayer)
 Be planted on my grave, nor wither there. . . . (123-48)

There is pathos and unintended irony in these lines, for what Churchill calls "the greatest curse" did indeed befall him. His own friends, particularly Wilkes and Colman, utterly failed him. Wilkes, as we know, made a beginning and talked and

wrote for years about his forthcoming magnificent edition of Churchill; but, as we also know, nothing came of it. Colman did nothing at all about the matter. The result was that Churchill's personal and literary reputations were left in the hands of the prejudiced, the ignorant, and the opportunistic.

Like Byron, Churchill seemed to despise his contemporary popularity, just as he seemed to be careless of his later reputation; but, as the above lines tell us, this attitude was to a considerable extent misleading. Beneath the eighteenth-century pose that belittled the man of letters, Churchill actually longed for poetic fame — "That last infirmity of noble mind." The quotation that became his epitaph at Dover tells only half the story. He imagines a poet-traveller visiting his grave (as Byron was to do later), then turning to read his poems:

Life to the last enjoy'd, here Churchill lies;
Whilst (O, what joy that pleasing flattery gives!)
Reading my Works, he cries — Here Churchill lives!

Notes

CHAPTER I

1. *Lloyd's Evening Post*, XV (Oct. 24, 1764), 397.
2. *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed. Mrs. Paget Toynbee (Oxford, 1904), VI, 145.
3. *Lloyd's Evening Post*, XV (Nov. 16, 1764), 477; *Public Advertiser* (Nov. 16, 1764), No. 9371.
4. *St. James's Chronicle* (Nov. 13, 1764), No. 576.
5. *The Correspondence of the Late John Wilkes*, ed. John Almon (London, 1805), II, 97.
6. *John Wilkes, Patriot, An Unfinished Autobiography* (Harrow, 1888), pp. 24-25.
7. Alexander Kippis, *Biographia Britannica* (London, 1784: 2nd ed.), III, 579.
8. M.E.C. Walcott, *Westminster* (Westminster, 1849), p. 308.
9. *St. James's Chronicle* (Nov. 10, 1764), No. 575.
10. Sir Walter Besant, *Westminster* (London, 1895), p. 328.
11. Henry B. Guppy, *Homes of Family Names in Great Britain* (London, 1890), p. 281.
12. John Edward Smith, *St. John the Evangelist, Westminster: Parochial Memorials* (London, 1892), p. 101.
13. *London Chronicle*, XVI (Dec. 1, 1764), 528.
14. Smith, *Parochial Memorials*, p. 102.
15. *Admissions to Trinity College, Cambridge*, ed. W. W. Ball and J. A. Venn (Cambridge, 1911-16), III, 88.
16. Unpublished "Register of Baptisms, 1728-55, St. John the Evangelist, Westminster," p. 6.
17. *Gentleman's Magazine*, XXXVIII (Oct., 1768), 459; Alexander Chalmers says Churchill's mother was Scottish: *Works of the English Poets* (London, 1810), XIV, 265; and in *The Prophecy of Famine* Churchill himself writes about Scotland:
Madly I leagued against that sacred earth,
Vile parricide! which gave a parent birth. (221-22)
18. *The Record of Old Westminsters*, ed. G. F. R. Barker and Alan H. Stenning (London, 1928), I, 186.
19. *The List of Queen's Scholars of St. Peter's College, Westminster*, ed. Joseph Welsh (London, 1852), p. 336.
20. W. Kenrick, *The Poetical Works of Robert Lloyd* (London, 1774), I, xx-xxi.
21. "Vine-Street, Westminster, — at 43, Milbank-st. near the Horseferry-road": *Lockie's Topography of London* (London, 1810);

politically and ecclesiastically, Vine Street was in Mill-bank ward of the Parish of St. John's: *New Remarks of London, Collected by the Company of Parish Clerks* (London, 1732), p. 271.

22. In a rather mysterious hand-written note to these lines, William Tooke, Churchill's nineteenth-century editor, adds: "So he sung to lose a legacy by the allusion": Tooke's MS volume IV of Churchill's Works in the Yale University Library; the same comment appears in Smith, *Parochial Memorials*, p. 422.

23. *New Remarks of London*, p. 269.

24. Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (New York, 1885), I, 234.

25. Smith, *Parochial Memorials*, p. 36.

26. *Raynor's London Morning Advertiser* for Sept. 29, 1742.

27. Smith, *Parochial Memorials*, p. 32.

28. Lawrence E. Tanner, *Westminster School* (London, 1934), p. 68.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

30. Frederick Reynolds, *The Life and Times of Frederick Reynolds* (London, 1826), I, 113.

31. John Sargeaunt, *Annals of Westminster School* (London, 1898) p. 172.

32. Richard Cumberland, *Memoirs of Richard Cumberland* (London, 1807), I, 71.

33. *St. James's Chronicle* (July 2, 1763), No. 363.

34. *The Poetical Works of William Cowper*, ed. H. S. Milford (London, 1934), p. 11.

35. *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. John Bowring (Edinburgh, 1843), X, 30.

36. *Record of Old Westminsters*, I, 186.

37. *The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill*, ed. W. Tooke (London, 1844: 2nd ed.), I, xix.

38. *Ibid.*, I, xix.

39. *The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill*, ed. George Gilfilan (Edinburgh, 1855), p. iv.

40. *The Works of William Cowper*, ed. Robert Southey (London, 1853), I, 61; Tooke, I, lxx; and John Forster, *Historical and Biographical Essays* (London, 1858), II, 217.

41. Tooke, I, 159.

42. *Poems of Charles Churchill*, ed. James Laver (London, 1933), I, 137 n.

43. Sargeaunt, *Westminster School*, p. 177.

44. Tooke, I, lxxxiv.

45. *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit* (London, 1771), I, 31-32.

46. Forster, *Essays*, II, 216-17.

CHAPTER II

1. *Admissions to the College of St John the Evangelist in the University of Cambridge*, ed. Robert F. Scott (Cambridge, 1903), III, 580.
2. *Notes and Queries*, 1st Series, V (Jan. 24, 1852), 74.
3. Sargeant, *Westminster School*, p. 60.
4. *Admissions to the College of St John*, III, 126.
5. British Museum, Additional Manuscripts, 5,832, Vol. 31.
6. Tooke, I, xx.
7. Thomas Burke, *The Streets of London* (London, 1940), p. 80.
8. *The Student, or The Oxford and Cambridge Monthly Miscellany* (Oxford, 1751), II, 273.
9. Tooke, I, xxiii.
10. *Admissions to the College of St John*, III, 580.
11. *Loc. cit.*
12. The Living at South Cadbury and Sparkford is not listed as one of those paying "first fruits"; hence it could not have paid more than £50: see John Bacon, *Liber Regis* (London, 1786).
13. *Admissions to the College of St John*, III, 581.
14. [P. Muilman], *A New and Complete History of Essex* (London, 1770), IV, 350-54.
15. Bacon, *Liber Regis*, p. 589.
16. *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Madame Du Deffand*, ed. W. S. Lewis and Warren H. Smith (New Haven, 1939), V, 374.
17. *London Chronicle*, XVI (Dec. 8, 1764), 548.
18. Joseph M. Beatty, "An Essay in Critical Biography — Charles Churchill," *PMLA*, XXXV (1920), 232.
19. *Critical Review*, XIX (March, 1765), 237.
20. *Gentleman's Magazine*, XXX (1760), 317-18.
21. Smith, *Parochial Memorials*, p. 105.
22. "Letter to a Bishop, Concerning Lectureships, by F. T.," *Miscellaneous and Fugitive Pieces* (Dublin, 1774), II, 217.
23. George H. Cunningham, *London* (London, 1927), p. 552.
24. *Walpole's Correspondence with Madame Du Deffand*, V, 374.
25. Smith, *Parochial Memorials*, p. 83.
26. Kippis, *Biographia Britannica*, III, 567.
27. The exact date of this separation is unknown; but it is important for the reputation of Churchill, whether it took place before or after his success as a poet; that is, before or after March 14, 1761, when *The Rosciad* was first published. Tooke implies that it took place afterwards (I, xxxviii), but there is a long tradition that dates it in February, 1761. In his *Works of the English Poets*, Chalmers gives this date, without, however, citing any authority (XIV, 267); this he repeated in his *General Biographical Dictionary* (London, 1813), IX, 316; and

he was followed by the author of the *DNB* article on Churchill (New York, 1908), IV, 309. Forster confidently asserts that "a formal separation from his wife, and a first rejection by the booksellers, date within a few months of each other" (*Historical and Biographical Essays*, II, 225). In view of Churchill's own extreme, though blunt, frankness and honesty, I have accepted the tradition that places the separation before March, 1761.

28. *Admissions to the College of St John*, III, 582.
29. Forster, *Essays*, II, 262 n. Original letter in the Garrick Correspondence, Forster Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum.
30. Kippis, *Biographia Britannica*, III, 572.
31. *Walpole's Correspondence with Madame Du Deffand*, V, 474.
32. *Genuine Memoirs of Mr. Charles Churchill* (London, 1765), pp. 75-76.
33. *London Chronicle*, XVI (Dec. 8, 1764), 548.
34. Tooke, II, 218 n.
35. *Ibid.*, I, xxxii-xxxiii.
36. *Ibid.*, I, xxxiii.
37. *Ibid.*, II, 275.
38. Kippis, *Biographia Britannica*, III, 581.
39. *The Library* (London, 1761), I, 152-55.
40. In his article, "Possible Additions to the Churchill Canon," Edward H. Weatherly also comes to this conclusion: *MLN*, LX (Nov., 1945), 453-58.
41. In this and some of the following chapters (particularly III, IV, and VII) it is a pleasure to record my deep obligation to Mr. J. Leigh Walsh's dissertation, "The Literary Career of Charles Churchill to 1763."

CHAPTER III

1. *The Connoisseur* (Philadelphia, 1803), I, x.
2. *Posthumous Letters from Various Celebrated Men to Francis and George Colman the Elder*, ed. George Colman the Younger (London, 1820), p. 50.
3. Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick* (London, 1780), I, 306.
4. *St. James's Chronicle* (Jan. 18, 1763), No. 292.
5. Southey, *Works of Cowper*, I, 53.
6. Tooke, I, xxxiii-iv.
7. Richard B. Peake, *Memoirs of the Colman Family* (London, 1841), I, 129-30.
8. Laver, I, xxi. Unless otherwise indicated all references to Churchill's poems are to the Laver edition.

9. In the first edition the chief actors are: William Havard, Thomas Davies, Charles Holland, John Palmer, Thomas King, Richard Yates, Henry Woodward, Samuel Foote, Tate Wilkinson, William O'Brien, Blakes, John Moody, Arthur Murphy, Luke Sparks, William Smith, David Ross, Edward Shuter, John Rich, Henry Mossop, Spranger Barry, James Quin, Thomas Sheridan, and David Garrick; the chief actresses: Catherine (Kitty) Clive, Jane Pope, Mary Ann Yates, Susannah Maria Cibber, and Hannah Prichard.

10. Davies, *Life of Garrick*, I, 322.

11. Robert W. Lowe, *The Rosciad and The Apology* (London, 1891), p. xii.

12. For example, Hurd's translation of Horace's epistle "To Augustus" (1751), Mason's "Classical" tragedy, *Elfrida* (1752), and Francklin's *Dissertation on Antient Tragedy* (1760).

13. Davies, *Life of Garrick*, I, 306.

14. *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford, 1887), III, 223.

15. John Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1812), VI, 424 n.

16. *St. James's Chronicle* (Sept. 20, 1763), No. 397.

17. *Ibid.* (Nov. 10, 1763), No. 419.

18. *Lloyd's Evening Post*, XIII (Dec. 5, 1763), 546.

19. Davies, *Life of Garrick*, I, 328.

20. Tooke, I, 3.

21. Edward H. Weatherly, "Foote's Revenge on Churchill and Lloyd," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, IX (1945), 49-60.

22. Lowe, *Rosciad and Apology*, p. xviii.

23. For a detailed account of their quarrels, see any biography of Garrick or Murphy, especially Elizabeth P. Stein, *David Garrick, Dramatist* (New York, 1938), and Howard H. Dunbar, *The Dramatic Career of Arthur Murphy* (New York, 1946).

24. *The Rosciad* (London 1761: 1st ed.), lines 63-64 and 67-68.

25. *Some Unpublished Correspondence of David Garrick*, ed. George P. Baker (Boston, 1907), pp. 113-14.

26. *Critical Review*, XI (March, 1761), 212.

27. *Ibid.*, XI (March, 1761), 210.

28. *Monthly Review*, XXIV (June, 1761), 444.

29. Arthur Murphy, *Ode to the Naiads of Fleet-Ditch* (London, 1761), p. 5.

30. *Monthly Review*, XXV (July, 1761), 78.

31. Robert Lloyd, *An Epistle to C. Churchill* (London, 1761), pp. iii-iv.

32. *The Library*, I, 210.

33. *The Churchiliad* (London, 1761), pp. 7, 11, and 29.

34. *The Scrubs of Parnassus* (London, 1761), pp. i and 31.
35. Dunbar, *Arthur Murphy*, p. 115.
36. *Monthly Review*, XXV (Oct., 1761), 319.
37. Cuthbert Shaw, *The Four Farthing-Candles* (London, 1762), pp. 20-21.
38. *St. James's Chronicle* (Jan. 29, 1765), No. 610.
39. Arthur Murphy, *The Examiner* (London, 1761), pp. 17-18 and 31.
40. *Critical Review*, XII (Nov., 1761), 400.
41. *Monthly Review*, XXV (Nov., 1761), 398.
42. For the titles of more than 100 of them, see Joseph M. Beatty, "Churchill's Influence on Minor Eighteenth-Century Satirists," *PMLA*, XLII (March, 1927), 162-76.
43. *The Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. Peter Cunningham (London, 1854), V, 297-98. And Colman himself, in one of his *Genius* papers, thus describes this literary warfare:
 "The Republic of Letters is in a kind of perpetual civil war, and the beginning of every winter may be considered as the opening of a new literary campaign. . . . The great success of one or two giant satyrists, of transcendent abilities, has tempted almost every puny witling to imagine that fame and infamy are at his disposal": *Prose on Several Occasions, accompanied with Some Pieces in Verse* (London, 1787), I, III.
44. Edward H. Weatherly, "The Personal and Literary Relationship of Charles Churchill and David Garrick," *Studies in Honor of A. H. R. Fairchild* (University of Missouri Studies, Vol. XXI, No. 1, Columbia, 1946), pp. 153-60.
45. *Private Correspondence of David Garrick* (London, 1832), II, 337-38.
46. Peake, *Memoirs of the Colman Family*, I, 61.
47. *Private Correspondence of David Garrick*, II, 338.
48. *Loc. cit.*
49. David Garrick, *The Fribbleriad* (London, 1761), pp. 4-5.
50. Colman, *Prose on Several Occasions*, II, 304-5.
51. Davies, *Life of Garrick*, I, 334.
52. *St. James's Chronicle* (Dec. 5, 1761), No. 115.

CHAPTER IV

1. Eugene R. Page, *George Colman the Elder* (New York, 1935), pp. 20-46.
2. *St. James's Chronicle* (April 29, 1762), No. 178.
3. Southey, *Works of Cowper*, I, 37.
4. *Boswell's London Journal*, ed. Frederick A. Pottle (New York, 1950), p. 266 n.

5. Besant, *Westminster*, p. 329.
6. Henry B. Wheatley, *London Past and Present* (London, 1891), I, 151.
7. *Macbeth*, I, vii, 1-2.
8. Charles Knight, *London* (London, 1843), V, 136.
9. John Timbs, *Club Life of London* (London, 1866), I, 133.
10. Horace Bleackley, *Life of John Wilkes* (London, 1917), p. 41 n.
11. Timbs, *Club Life of London*, loc. cit.
12. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 68.
13. *Boswell's London Journal*, pp. 51-52.
14. For accounts of this famous club, see E. B. Chancellor, *The Lives of the Rakes* (London, 1925), Vol. IV; Ronald Fuller, *Hell-Fire Francis* (London, 1939); and Louis C. Jones, *The Clubs of Georgian Rakes* (New York, 1942).
15. Arthur H. Plaisted, *The Manor and Parish Records of Medmenham, Buckinghamshire* (London, 1925), pp. 219-20.
16. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 1.
17. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 19.
18. Add. MSS. 30,875. f. 201.
19. Timbs, *Club Life of London*, II, 190.
20. *Memoirs of the Bedford Coffee-House* (London, 1763), pp. 13-14.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.
22. *The Connoisseur*, I, 4.
23. Timbs, *Club Life of London*, II, 80.
24. *A Catalogue of Westminster Records . . . in the Custody of the Vestry of St. Margaret and St. John*, ed. John Edward Smith (London, 1900), p. 196.
25. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 10.
26. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 2.
27. As, for example, the artist Hogarth: see Churchill's letter to Wilkes, Add. MSS. 30, 878. f. 59.
28. R. W. Postgate, *That Devil Wilkes* (New York, 1929), p. 39.
29. Add. MSS. 30,878. ff. 2-3.
30. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 4.
31. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 56.
32. *St. James's Chronicle* (Feb. 13 and 20, 1762), Nos. 145 and 148.
33. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 6.
34. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 7.
35. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 9.
36. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 10.
37. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 11.

38. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 13.
39. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 14.
40. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 17.
41. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 16.
42. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 68.
43. Add. MSS. 30,878 f. 70.
44. *Boswell's London Journal*, p. 63.
45. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 19.
46. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 21.
47. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 69.
48. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 58.
49. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 57.
50. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 61.
51. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 63.
52. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 20.
53. Thomas Vaughan, *The Retort* (London, 1761), p. 11.
54. Murphy, *The Examiner*, p. 25.
55. Smith, *Parochial Memorials*, p. 105.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
57. *St. James's Magazine*, I, 418.
58. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 24.
59. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 60.
60. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 59.
61. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 25.
62. Add. MSS. 30, 878. f. 28.

CHAPTER V

1. *The North Briton*, "from No. I to No. XLVI inclusive, with Several useful and explanatory Notes, not printed in any former Edition" (London, 1769), p. 128.
 - 1a. Add MSS. 30,878. ff. 30 r. and 35 r.
 2. George Nobbe, *The North Briton* (New York, 1939), p. 63.
 3. For accounts of Wilkes, Churchill, and *The North Briton*, see Nobbe, H. W. Bleackley, R. W. Postgate, and Peter Quennell, *The Profane Virtues* (New York, 1945).
 - 3a. Postgate, pp. 173-75.
 4. See Nobbe, *The North Briton*, p. 266 and *passim*.
 5. *The Political Controversy or Weekly Magazine* (London, 1762), I, 28 n.
 6. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 5. In his unpublished dissertation, "Charles Churchill as a Political Writer" (Columbia, Missouri, 1952), Dwight A. Lee concludes that Churchill wrote all of *North Briton* Nos. 2, 4, 8, 10, 18, 23, 27, 29, 33, 34, and the original 45; and parts of Nos. 21, 22, 26, and 44: see pp. 80-97.

7. *The North Briton*, pp. 29-30.
8. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 5.
9. Nobbe, *The North Briton*, p. 204.
10. *The North Briton*, p. 85.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
12. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 11.
13. *Correspondence of the Late John Wilkes*, III, 67-68.
14. Tooke, I, 255-56; it also appears in *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit* (London, 1776), V, 79-81.
15. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 28.
16. *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, I, 319.
17. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 6.
18. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 29.
19. *St. James's Chronicle* (Aug. 26, 1762), No. 228.
20. *Ibid.*, (June 14, 1763), No. 355.
21. *Ibid.* July 19, 1763), No. 370.
22. *Ibid.* (July 26, 1763), No. 373.
23. See Nobbe, *The North Briton*, pp. 121-29.
24. See Laver's note to line 602 of *The Candidate*.
25. *St. James's Chronicle* (Dec. 3, 1763), No. 429.
26. *Correspondence of the Late John Wilkes*, III, 199-200; and John Almon, the editor, notes that "Mr. Churchill called on Mr. Wilkes a very short time after the editor had left the house; but his fears for his own personal safety would not permit him to stay a moment": *Ibid.*, I, 102.
27. *A Modest Apology for the Conduct of a certain Reverend Gentleman in a late Excursion: with an infallible Plan for removing all future Animosity between the English and Scotch, by an eminent Hand* (London, n. d.), pp. 18-23.
28. *St. James's Chronicle* (Feb. 25, 1764), No. 465.
29. *London Chronicle*, XV (May 29, 1764), 514.
30. *Ibid.*, XVI (Nov. 10, 1764), 456.
31. From the collection of Walpole-Mann correspondence in the Walpole Room of the Yale University Library, quoted by courtesy of W. S. Lewis and his staff of editors.
32. *St. James's Chronicle* (Dec. 15, 1764), No. 590.
33. *Ibid.* (Dec. 18, 1764), No. 591.
34. "The celebrated Mr. Wilkes, about the time when his *North Briton* began to be much noticed . . . dined one day with Mr. Rigby. . . . He mentioned the office of *Governor of Canada*, and requested Mr. Rigby's good offices with the Duke of Bedford, so as to prevail on that nobleman to apply to Lord Bute for that place. Mr. Rigby said the duke had not much intercourse with Lord Bute; neither could it be supposed that his lordship would purchase Mr. Wilkes's silence by giv-

ing him a good employment. Besides, he could have no security that the same hostile attacks would not still be made against him by Mr. Wilkes's coadjutors, Lloyd and Churchill, after he left England. Wilkes solemnly assured him there need not be the least apprehension of that; for that he would make Churchill his chaplain, and Lloyd his secretary, and take them both with him to Canada": Sir James Prior, *Life of Edmond Malone* (London, 1860), pp. 361-62.

35. *St. James's Chronicle* (Aug. 12, 1763), No. 381.
36. *Ibid.* (Jan. 18, 1764), No. 449.
37. Churchill himself ironically imagined becoming a dean in the church: see *The Author*, 343-46.
38. *St. James's Chronicle* (Jan. 26, 1765), No. 608.
39. [Percival Stockdale], *Churchill Defended* (London, 1765), p. iii.
40. *The Jumble, A Satire* (London, 1763), p. 11.
41. *Churchill, An Elegy* (Bristol, 1765), p. 4.
42. *The Patriot Poet* (London, 1764), p. 6.
43. *Churchill Dissected* (London, 1764), p. 10.
44. *An Epistle to the Irreverend Mr. C—s C—I* (London, 1764), p. vi.
45. *Lloyd's Evening Post*, XV (Dec. 5, 1764), 550; the account in French appears in the *Gazette Littéraire de l'Europe* (Paris, 1764), III, 334-35.
46. *St. James's Chronicle* (June 2, 1768), No. 1133.

CHAPTER VI

1. John Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1812), II, 331.
2. For a full analysis of these characteristics, see Wallace C. Brown, *The Triumph of Form* (Chapel Hill, 1948), pp. 87-102; and Edward H. Weatherly, "Churchill's Literary Indebtedness to Pope," *SP*, XLIII (Jan., 1946), 59-70.
3. An indication of Churchill's personal feelings about the Scottish people, as well as the suggestion that although separated from his wife he was regularly seeing his children, is contained in Kippis's account of Churchill: "I remember well, that he dressed his younger son in a Scotch plaid, like a little Highlander, and carried him every where in that garb. The boy being asked by a Gentleman with whom I was in company, why he was clothed in such a manner, answered with great vivacity; 'Sir, my father hates the Scotch, and does it to plague them'." Kippis, *Biographia Britannica*, III, 571.
4. Yvor Winters, *In Defense of Reason* (New York, 1947), p. 140.
5. For an account of this event, see the article on Elizabeth Parsons in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

6. For a detailed discussion of this problem, see Earl R. Wasserman, "The Return of the Enjambed Couplet," *ELH*, VII (1940), 239-52; and Brown, *The Triumph of Form*, pp. 188-201.

7. Tooke, III, 235 n.

8. *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, I, 262.

9. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 60.

10. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 41.

11. *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit* (London, 1769-76), III, 113; in his notes on Gotham, Wilkes quotes these "spirited lines now before me, in his own MS": *Correspondence of the Late John Wilkes*, III, 22.

12. *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit*, I, 32-33.

13. Tooke, III, 327-28 n.

14. *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit*, VI, 87-88.

15. *Ibid.*, III, 113; this epigram first appeared in *The London Chronicle*, XVI (Dec. 1, 1764), 531, and *The St. James's Chronicle* (Dec. 1, 1764), No. 584. It was cleverly answered about a week later in the *St. James's* (Dec. 6, 1764, No. 586) as follows:

Why not inscribe to Colman, who has clear,
Thanks to old Bath, Nine Hundred Pounds a Year?
A friend like Colman (which is something new)
May be a Poet and a Patron too.

16. *The Muse's Mirrour* (London, 1783), p. 8.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

19. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 30. Nine months later *The London Chronicle* reported that "we hear the Rev. Mr. Churchill is writing a poem, in two volumes, entitled *Culloden*": XV (May 5, 1764), 435.

20. *Works of John Hall-Stevenson* (London, 1795), I, 264.

21. L. H. Butterfield, "Charles Churchill and A Fragment of an Epic Poem," *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* (Cambridge, 1933), XV, 327.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 324-25

23. *Ibid.*, p. 321.

24. *Loc. cit.*

25. *Monthly Review*, LIV (April, 1776), 338.

CHAPTER VII

1. *Boswell's London Journal*. pp. 266-67. It is worth noting that this account was condensed into a single sentence by Boswell for his *Life of Johnson* (I, 395): "So upon Tuesday the 24th of May, after having been enlivened by the witty sallies of Messieurs Thornton, Wilkes, Churchill, and Lloyd, with whom I had passed the morning, I boldly repaired to Johnson."

2. *The Grenville Papers*, ed. W. J. Smith (London, 1852), II, 59.
3. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 26.
4. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 27.
5. *Boswell's London Journal*, p. 281.
6. *Letters of James Boswell*, ed. C. B. Tinker (Oxford, 1924), I, 13.
7. *Ibid.*, I, 31.
8. *The Private Papers of James Boswell from Malahide Castle*, ed. Geoffrey Scott (Mount Vernon, N.Y., 1928), I, 150.
9. *The Grenville Papers*, II, 76-77.
10. *St. James's Chronicle* (July 9, 1763), No. 366.
11. Colman, *Prose on Several Occasions*, I, viii.
12. *Ibid.*, I, 238-39.
13. *Loc. cit.*
14. *London Chronicle*, XIV (July 16, 1763), 55, and *St. James's Chronicle* (Aug. 24, 1763), No. 386.
- 14a. *St. James's Chronicle* (Aug. 24, 1763), No. 386.
15. Tate Wilkinson, *Memoirs of his own Life* (York, 1790), III, 158.
16. Add. MSS. 30,878. ff. 29-30.
17. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 33.
18. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 36.
19. *St. James's Chronicle* (Oct. 4, 1763), No. 403.
20. *Ibid.* (Oct. 6, 1763), No. 404; *London Chronicle*, XIV (Oct. 6, 1763), 337.
21. *St. James's Chronicle* (Dec. 7, 1763), No. 431.
22. *London Chronicle*, XIV (Oct. 11, 1763), 356.
23. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 62.
24. Add. MSS. 30,878. ff. 38-39.
25. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 40.
26. *St. James's Chronicle* (Nov. 10, 1763), No. 419.
27. *Letters of Horace Walpole*, V, 390.
28. *A Modest Apology for the Conduct of a certain Reverend Gentleman in a late Excursion*, pp. 1 and 7-10.
29. Tooke, I, xlv-xlvii.
30. Add. MSS. 5,832. Vol. 31.
31. Mrs. Montagu, 'Queen of the Blues,' *Her Letters and Friendships from 1762-1800*, ed. R. Blunt (New York, 1924), I, 79.
- 31a. *The Grenville Papers*, II, 156.
32. See Joseph M. Beatty, "Mrs. Montagu, Churchill, and Miss Cheere," *MLN*, XLI (1926), 384-86.
33. Kippis, III, 574; Tooke, I, xlv-xlvi; Laver, I, xxxix-xl.
34. Tooke, I, l.
35. *Genuine Memoirs*, pp. 163-64.

36. Wilkes, *Unfinished Autobiography*, p. 24.
37. Tooke, I, ci.
38. *London Chronicle*, XVI (Dec. 1, 1764), 528.
39. *St. James's Chronicle* (Dec. 7, 1763), No. 431.
40. *London Chronicle*, XIV (Dec. 8, 1763), 550.
41. *St. James's Chronicle* (Dec. 24, 1763), No. 438.
42. Add. MSS. 23,218. f. 112 v.
43. *St. James's Chronicle* (Jan. 27, 1764), No. 453.
44. *Lloyd's Evening Post*, XIV (Jan. 30, 1764), 101.
45. *St. James's Chronicle* (Feb. 7, 1764), No. 457.
46. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 42.
47. Add. MSS. 30,878. ff. 43-44.
48. Kippis, *Biographia Britannica*, III, 579; William Cooke, *Memoirs of Samuel Foote* (London, 1805), II, 146-47.
49. On November 20, 1764, after Churchill's death, Lloyd wrote to Wilkes from prison, concluding: "My own affairs I forbear to mention; Thornton is what you believed him; I have many acquaintance but no friends here" (Add. MSS. 30,868 f. 8). In March, 1765, three months after Lloyd's death, Wilkes wrote to Colman, saying about Lloyd: "I find that he had subject of just indignation against Thornton: so had Churchill. I am a little inclin'd to revenge both their quarrels. . . . What is your opinion?" (*Posthumous Letters*, p. 87). Colman replied in June, referring to Thornton: "I leave him to your justice but commend him to your mercy. Spare him, I beseech you, Good Wilkes!" (Add. MSS. 30,877. f. 41).
50. Kenrick, *Poetical Works of Robert Lloyd*, I, xxv-xxvi.
51. Tooke, I, lvii.
52. Add. MSS. 30,878. ff. 43-44.
53. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 46.
54. Add. MSS. 30,878. ff. 48-49.
55. *Public Advertiser* (Aug. 27, 1764), No. 9308.
56. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 50.
57. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 51.
58. "Yesterday morning the celebrated Mr. Churchill, accompanied by Humphry Cotes, Esq; set off for Boulogne to meet Mr. Wilkes": *Public Advertiser* (Oct. 23, 1764), No. 9352.
59. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 52.
60. *St. James's Chronicle* (Oct. 30, 1764), No. 570.
61. *The Political Controversy*, I, 44 n.
62. *St. James's Chronicle* (Nov. 10, 1764), No. 575.
63. *Ibid.* (Nov. 8, 1764), No. 574.
64. *Ibid.* (Jan. 29, 1765), No. 610.
65. *Lloyd's Evening Post*, XV (Oct. 26, 1764), 407.
66. *Genuine Memoirs*, p. 169.

CHAPTER VIII

1. *St. James's Chronicle* (Nov. 13, 1764), No. 576.
2. *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (Nov. 12, 1764), No. 11,134; and *Lloyd's Evening Post*, XV (Nov. 7, 1764), 445.
3. *Public Advertiser* (Nov. 16, 1764), No. 9, 371.
4. *London Chronicle*, XVI (Nov. 15, 1764), 473.
5. *Lloyd's Evening Post*, XV (Dec. 5, 1764), 550. "M. Churchill a été attaqué d'une fièvre milliare qui l'a emporté après quelques jours de maladie": *Gazette Littéraire de l'Europe*, III, 335.
6. Postgate, *That Devil Wilkes*, p. 96; and Quennell, *The Profane Virtues*, p. 202.
7. Wilkes, *Unfinished Autobiography*, pp. 24-25.
8. *Correspondence of the Late John Wilkes*, III, 66.
9. Add. MSS. 30,878. f. 72.
10. *Public Advertiser*, loc. cit.
11. *St. James's Chronicle* (Nov. 15, 1764), No. 577.
12. Tooke, I, lv.
13. *The Grenville Papers*, II, 455.
14. Tooke, I, lv-lvii.
15. Wilkes, *Unfinished Autobiography*, p. 25.
16. *London Chronicle*, XVI (Dec. 1, 1764), 528.
17. *Loc. cit.* I have left out of consideration the posthumous publication of these sermons: they add little, if anything, to Churchill's life and reputation and may not have been Churchill's at all. See Laver, p. xlvii.
18. *Ibid.*, XVI (Nov. 10, 1764), 456.
19. *PMLA*, XLII (March, 1927), 162-76.
20. *St. James's Chronicle* (Feb. 12, 1763), No. 303.
21. *Ibid.* (July 30, 1763), No. 375.
22. *Ibid.* (Jan. 26, 1764), No. 452.
23. *London Chronicle*, XV (Feb. 2, 1764), 117.
24. *St. James's Chronicle* (June 7, 1764), No. 509.
25. *Ibid.* (Nov. 17, 1764), No. 578.
26. *Ibid.* (Nov. 27, 1764), No. 582.
27. *London Chronicle*, XVI (Dec. 4, 1764), 535.
28. *Ibid.*, XVI (Nov. 20, 1764), 491.
29. *Ibid.*, XVI (Dec. 4, 1764), 535.
30. *Monthly Review*, XXXIV (Feb., 1766), 165.
31. *Ibid.*, XXXV (Nov., 1766), 388.
32. *St. James's Chronicle* (Dec. 6, 1764), No. 586; see also *Lloyd's Evening Post*, XV (Dec. 3, 1764), 533.
33. *St. James's Chronicle* (Dec. 20, 1764), No. 592.
34. *Ibid.* (Dec. 25, 1764), No. 594.

35. *Ibid.* (March 21, 1765), No. 631; see also No. 584 (Dec. 1, 1764), No. 590 (Dec. 15, 1764), No. 591 (Dec. 18, 1764), and No. 608 (Jan. 26, 1765).

36. Kenrick, *Poetical Works of Robert Lloyd*, I, xxv.

37. Add. MSS. 30,875. f. 7.

38. Add. MSS. 30,868. f. 8.

39. Add. MSS. 30,868. f. 147.

40. *London Chronicle*, XVI (Nov. 29, 1764), 519.

41. *The Poets of Great Britain Complete from Chaucer to Churchill*, ed. John Bell (Edinburgh, 1783), LIII, xiii.

42. Tooke, I, xl n.

43. Charles Johnstone, *Chrysal; or the Adventures of a Guinea*, ed. E. A. Baker (London, n.d.), pp. 462-64.

44. James Ridley, *The Contrast* (London, 1764), p. 10; this poem is also attributed to C. Morell, "a neighbour": *Miscellaneous Poems*, Vol. 25, Yale University Library. However, "Sir Charles Morell" was a pen name often used by Ridley: see Austin Wright, *Joseph Spence* (Chicago, 1950), p. 203, note 27.

45. *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, I, 418-19. The germ of this account of Johnson on Churchill first appears in *Boswell's London Journal* for July 1, 1763, p. 287:

"He began to lash Churchill. I said he was not a fair judge, as Churchill was a sort of enemy of his. 'Sir,' said he, 'I am a very fair judge; because he turned my enemy when he found that I did not like his poetry. And, indeed, I have a better opinion of him now than I had at first, as he has shown more fertility than I expected. To be sure he is a tree that cannot produce true fruit. He only bears crabs. But, Sir, a tree that produces a great many crabs is better than one which produces only a few crabs'."

46. Boswell cites one instance of their agreement: both disapproved the poetry of John Ogilvie. "When I asked Dr. Johnson's permission to introduce him, he obligingly agreed; adding, however, with a pleasantry, 'but he must give us none of his poetry.' It is remarkable that Johnson and Churchill, however much they differed on other points, agreed on this subject. See Churchill's *Journey*": *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, I, 423 n.

47. *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford, 1897), II, 354.

48. [Thomas Tyers], *An Historical Rhapsody on Mr. Pope* (London, 1782), pp. 113-15.

49. *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I, 271-72.

50. *St. James's Chronicle* (Sept. 1, 1762), No. 231.

51. H. R. Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers* (London, 1887), I, 161. The following "Bon Mot of Dr. Johnson" is worth recording:

"Soon after his Majesty's accession to the throne he conferred a pension of 300 l on Dr. Johnson. Churchill attacked the Doctor in his poem of the Ghost, and in bitter terms call'd him Pensioner, &c. When Johnson read the invective, he said — *If I can't bear this I don't deserve my money*": *An Asylum for Fugitive Pieces*, ed. John Almon (London, 1785), I, 283.

52. *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, I, 419-20.
53. *Letters of James Boswell*, I, 73.
54. *Ibid.*, I, 70.
55. *The Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. Francis H. Allen (New York, 1927), II, 30.
56. *Ibid.*, I, 115-16.
57. See, for example, Edward H. Weatherly, "Churchill's Literary Indebtedness to Pope," *SP*, XLIII, 59-70; and Wallace C. Brown, *The Triumph of Form*, pp. 87-102.
58. *The Annual Review and History of Literature*, ed. Arthur Aikin (London, 1805), III, 580-85.
59. Southey, *Life of Cowper*, I, 65.
60. *The Works of Lord Byron: Poetry*, ed. E. H. Coleridge (London, 1901), IV, 45-48.
61. *Ibid.*, IV, 46.
62. *Quarterly Review*, XVI (Oct., 1816), 203.
63. Southey, *Life of Cowper*, I, 61.
64. See Brown, *The Triumph of Form*, pp. 132-41.
65. *The Poetical Works of William Cowper*, ed. H. S. Milford (London, 1934), p. 15.
66. *The Correspondence of William Cowper*, ed. Thomas Wright (London, 1901), III, 89-90.
67. Edmund Gosse, *A History of Eighteenth-Century Literature* (London, 1906), p. 324.
68. Alan Dugald McKillop, *English Literature from Dryden to Burns* (New York, 1948), pp. 352-53. In the early twentieth century, however, Oliver Elton gives more space to Churchill (three and a half pages) and shows more appreciation of his poetry than most of his predecessors. After accepting some of the old shibboleths ("Churchill admired and followed Dryden rather than Pope. . . . He emitted verse with fatal speed. . . . He went on with his cataract of rhymes," etc.), Elton does write perceptively as follows: Churchill "managed, for all his looseness of form, to set his own stamp on the style that he inherited. Possibly influenced by dramatic blank verse, he did something to unshackle and quicken the heroic couplet. He likes to launch on a long rhetorical period and to go on till he is out of breath; the result, however imperfect, is free from the 'vile antithesis' and continual backward jerk which beset the measure": Oliver Elton, *A Survey of English Lit-*

erature, 1730-1780 (New York, 1928), I, 344. And Mr. Yvor Winters is the only important modern critic to appreciate Churchill's metrical achievements: "He is the most radical innovator in the history of the couplet, and by means of his innovations he uncovered a range of feeling, and created a poetry, as complex in their way, perhaps, as those of Pope, though he lived to master his discoveries in one poem only [the *Dedication to Warburton*]" : see Yvor Winters, *In Defense of Reason* (New York, 1947), pp. 138-42.

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