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THE PERSON OF QUALITY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: ASPECTS OF SWIFT'S SOCIAL SATIRE

JONATHAN SWIFT lived and wrote in an age that is remarkable for its self-conscious awareness of manners, for its repeated emphasis on the artificial as well as the intellectual and moral standards governing social relationships. It is the age of Congreve and the comedy of manners, the era in which the tragic drama is as much involved with the everyday realities of courtly and social conduct as it is with man's place in a universal moral order. Among his contemporaries Swift numbered Addison and Steele, the chief architects of the periodical essay—that literary monument to the period's preoccupation with manners as well as with men and morals. Swift himself made significant contributions to this literature of manners, but in spite of the formidable mass of recent criticism on the multiple facets of his ideas and ironic techniques, there have been few significant studies of Swift as a critic of social manners. Some of these few studies tend, moreover, to subject Swift's work in this area to over-simplified generalizations which ignore the essentially ironic point of view in the relevant treatises. Even so eminent a critic as Herbert Davis appears to miss the irony in the logic of "A Letter to a Young Lady on her Marriage", for, while the work is rightly interpreted as an example of Swift's anti-romanticism, his ironical support of a mercenary marriage of convenience is distorted by the critic's generalization of the work as a rationalistic reaction against the extremes of idealistic romances.¹ Similar problems of interpretation arise in the reading of a work such as "Advancement of Religion and the Reformation of Manners". Does Swift actually condone a system of moral improvement based on polite imitation and fashionable hypocrisy? Or is the work written in the ironic vein of "An Argument"?

In meeting these problems it seems necessary to subject such works to a closer reevaluation than is often allowed by Davis and other critics, and in such reevaluations the appearance of the "person of quality" is often of crucial importance. The person of quality is a ubiquitous character in all forms of

Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy, and as a repeatedly-adopted persona in Swift's satire the figure is relevant here because of its traditional association, in eighteenth-century literature, with the absence of social and moral values. Consequently it is an illuminating factor in the analysis of the ironic patterns of those treatises in which Swift's involvement with problems of social manners is most apparent. Among these essays, three of the major works are specifically attributed by Swift to a person of quality: "An Argument To prove, That the Abolishing of Christianity in England, May, as Things now Stand, be attended with some Inconveniencies, and perhaps, not produce those many good Effects proposed thereby" (1708), "A Project for the Advancement of Religion, and the Reformation of Manners" (1709), and "A Letter to a Young Gentleman, Lately entered into Holy Orders" (1720). The aristocratic and genteel circles of the person of quality are repeatedly satirized in three other essays on society, "Hints towards an Essay on Conversation" (1710), "A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue" (1712), and "On Good-Manners and Good-Breeding" (1754). Finally, *Polite Conversation* (1783), another satire on persons of quality, is set in the polite world of fashion—a point that is emphasized by the full title of the work: *A Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation, According to the Most Polite Mode and Method Now Used At Court, and in the Best Companies of England*. Obviously, therefore, some appreciation of the nature and function of the person of quality as a satiric persona is desirable in a study of Swift's social satire, for the characteristics of the figure can illuminate both the moral problems and the ironic techniques involved in the works on social manners and conduct.

Precisely who is a person of quality in eighteenth-century satire? As the full title of *Polite Conversation* ironically implies, he belongs to an area of society in which gentility is a quality of birth to the exclusion of moral or intellectual excellence, in which ingenuity is denoted by verbal pyrotechnics rather than by profundity of thought, where the forms of ideal morals and polite manners are aped without regard for the very values on which they are traditionally based. In essence, therefore, he is the embodiment of that moral dichotomy in eighteenth-century society which provides the satire of the period with much of its material. This dichotomy is manifest in the disparity between professions of allegiance to social and moral ideals, and the simultaneous travesty of these ideals in the actualities of social conduct. Anyone, as Basil Willey notes, who still held firmly to the traditional values of social and moral excellence, "and yet had the gift of seeing things as they really were,

could find all the materials of satire ready to hand: the ideal and the actual in sharp juxtaposition".² It is the ironic awareness of this moral dichotomy in genteel society that principally accounts for the repeated appearance of affectation as a comic theme in Restoration and eighteenth-century satire. This is what provides one of the common grounds between Swift's social satire and several other writers of the period, and their frequent use of the person of quality as a satiric butt in the theme of affectation elucidates the role of that figure in Swift's work as a comic mask and as a moral constant.

Here we may compare George Etherege's comedy, *The Man of Mode or Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676), with *Polite Conversation*. In Etherege's play, Medley describes the latest treatise on the subject of affectation: "Then there is the Art of affectation, written by a late beauty of Quality, teaching you how to draw up your Breasts, stretch out your neck, to thrust out your Breech, to play with your Head, to toss up your Nose, to bite your Lips, to turn up your Eyes, to speak in a silly soft tone of a Voice, and use all the Foolish French Words that will infallibly make your person and conversation charming".³ There are some striking similarities to this passage in Simon Wagstaff's introductory essay to *Polite Conversation*. As in *The Man of Mode*, the art of affectation is specifically associated with persons of quality. Hence Wagstaff emphasizes that he has always laboured in "improving, and polishing all Parts of Conversation between Persons of Quality".⁴ His precepts on posture and gestures are reminiscent of "the Art of affectation" in Etherege's play: "there is hardly a polite Sentence in the following Dialogues, which doth not absolutely require some peculiar graceful Motion of the Eyes, or Nose, or Mouth, or Forehead, or Chin; or suitable 'Loss of the Head, with certain Offices assigned to each Hand; and in the Ladies, the whole Exercise of the Fan, fitted to the Energy of every Word they deliver" (p. 24).

There are equally striking parallels between Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700) and Swift's "A Letter to a Young Lady on her Marriage" (1723). In both works there are discussions of the role of social and emotional values in marriage. Congreve's Millamant engages in what is partially an anti-romantic attack on excessive emotionalism: "Ay, as wife, spouse, my dear joy, jewel, love, sweetheart, and the rest of that nauseous cant, in which men and their wives are so fulsomely familiar—I shall never bear that—good Mirabell, don't let us be familiar or fond, nor kiss before folks. . . . Let us never visit together, nor go to a play together; but let us be very strange and well-bred: let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while; and as well bred as if we were not married at all".⁵ But this is more than an anti-

romantic sally. Millamant's wit is also directed at the values of mercenary marriage in which gross materialism and hypocrisy reduce concepts of love, sincerity, and good breeding to mere terms, to "nauseous cant". She is engaged in an ironic attack on two extreme viewpoints—that of the sentimental romanticist, and that of the unfeeling materialist. There seems to be an equal degree of irony involved in a comparable passage from Swift's "A Letter to a Young Lady", for in this work the persona stolidly propounds the exclusively materialistic views that are ironically exploited by Millamant: "I MUST likewise warn you strictly against the least Degree of Fondness to your Husband before any Witnesses whatsoever, even before your nearest Relations, or the very Maids of your Chamber. This Proceeding is so extremely odious and disgusting to all who have either good Breeding or good Sense, that they assign two very unamiable Reasons for it; the one is gross Hypocrisy, and the other hath too bad a Name to mention" (*Prose Works*, IX, 86).⁶ This is really the credo of the person of quality—a cynical indifference to feeling which is being masked by terms once emblematic of the very values being discarded: "good Breeding" and "good Sense".

Lord Chesterfield, another famous contemporary of Swift, provides us with several comparable examples of the manner in which forms and externals are emphasized by persons of quality to the exclusion of real feeling and values. His letters to his son repeatedly stress the importance of formalities in polite society, but in spite of this insistence, Chesterfield is not to be compared with the Wagstaffs of his society. He is neither ignorant of, nor despises, intellectual and moral ideals; but he is well aware of the tastes and affected values of his aristocratic contemporaries, and like a hard-headed man of the world prepares to exploit them. Hence, on the one hand, he derides clumsy and inelegant dress and conduct, and on the other, sees dress and social formalities as silly, superficial, but necessary things in social intercourse. In this connection we may note his distinction between a fop and a "man of sense": "the difference in this case, between a man of sense and a fop, is, that the fop values himself upon his dress; and the man of sense laughs at it, at the same time he knows that he must not neglect it".⁷ Once again we are able to draw parallels between Swift and a contemporary on the subject of social manners, for there are obvious similarities between Chesterfield's statements and the main burden of Swift's "On Good-Manners and Good-Breeding". Swift decries the "endless way of multiplying ceremonies" popular among persons of "weak understandings", and cites the example of "an officious coxcomb" whose obsequious formalities to a duchess send the duchess sprawling. He also recalls the in-

cident of "a great Lady" whose ceremonial flourishes during a dinner conversation are abruptly terminated by a bowl of sauce which she accidentally knocks into her lap (*Prose Works*, IV, 214-215).⁸ In essence, therefore, the distinctions by both Chesterfield and Swift, between empty formalities and true civility, involve attempts to re-define ethical and social values in the light of real feeling and good sense, experiences from which social manners are being divorced in the so-called "polite circles" of persons of quality.

In *The Compleat English Gentleman* (1729), Daniel Defoe examines the breakdown of moral and social values among the gentry and the aristocracy, and, like Swift, traces the problem to the perversion of ideal norms in the everyday realities of hypocrisy and affectation. Hence he finds it necessary to distinguish between the "born gentleman" who merits his title by birth only and the "bred gentleman" whose innate virtues and acquired accomplishments make him deserving of the title.⁹ In the absence of a sound education, and deprived of all sense of moral values, the "born gentleman" is only the shadow of a gentleman; he is ruined from childhood by parents who equate birth with moral and intellectual excellence; he is deficient in wit and genius; and whatever education he does receive only inculcates further follies and vices (pp. 4, 86-88). Defoe's "shadow of a gentleman" is actually our "person of quality". The "born gentleman", he finds, is merely "an empty, weak, rattling fop, or a raving outrageous bully, a swearing, drunken, debauch't wretch, and, in a word, all that's weak and wicked". Defoe then proceeds to contrast this unfortunate example of contemporary aristocratic excellence with a "former race of worthies" who once made England great (pp. 76-78). Significantly, Swift also sees the degeneration in social manners as the outcome of poor educational standards among the aristocracy and landed gentry. Thus in "A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue" he argues that defects in English manners and conversation will be corrected only when "better Care be taken in the Education of our young Nobility; that they may set out into the World with some Foundation of Literature, in order to qualify them for Patterns of Politeness (*Prose Works*, IV, 10). Similarly, in "Hints towards an Essay on Conversation" he deplores the abuse of conversation in polite circles where civilized and intellectual intercourse has given way to the frivolities emblematic of the loss of social values. Instead of conversation the nobility and gentry are preoccupied with "those poor Amusements of Dress and Visiting, or the more pernicious ones of Play, Drink and Vicious Amours, whereby the Nobility and Gentry of both Sexes are entirely corrupted both in Body and Mind, and have lost all Notions of Love, Honour, Friend-

ship, Generosity; which, under the Name of Fopperies, have been for some Time laughed out of Doors" (*Prose Works*, IV, 94). Like Defoe, therefore, Swift not only relates poor manners to a faulty educational system among the aristocracy and gentry, but also finds that the loss of social and moral values among these classes threatens to deprive English civilization of its natural leaders.

Indeed it is this view of the nobility as the natural leaders of their civilization that invests Swift's essays on language and conversation with a remarkable sense of combined urgency and pessimism, for Swift values polite conversation and well-bred manners as the very essence of civilization. The faculty of conversation, he tells us in the "Hints", is "that Faculty which is held the great Distinction between Men and Brutes (*Prose Works*, IV, 94). In other words, conversation is a peculiarly human and civilized process, and failings in this regard foreshadow a regression to the barbaric stage. Raillery, for example, "the finest part of Conversation", once involved the essentially civilized art of being able to turn an apparent reproach into an unexpected compliment. It typified the very nature of truly polite conversation—the ability to please rather than offend and insult. He gloomily contrasts this ideal faculty with the unpleasant realities of contemporary manners: "It now passeth for Raillery to run a Man down in Discourse, to put him out of Countenance, and make him ridiculous" (*Prose Works*, IV, 91). Here again we may compare Swift's views with those of other writers in the eighteenth century. Thus when Henry Fielding writes of conversation as the centre of man's spiritual and social experience, his arguments are reminiscent of Swift's treatment of conversation as a symbol of civilization. Similarly, both Congreve, in his dedication of *The Way of the World* to the Earl of Montague, and Addison, in *Spectator* No. 409, emphasize the civilized values of polite conversation.¹⁰ Swift's definition of raillery may also be compared with Richard Steele's description of a "man of conversation" as one who is obliging and who may entertain without shocking or displeasing his companions.¹¹

Thus in conversation, as in other aspects of social manners and conduct, Swift and his contemporaries evince a keen awareness of the disparity between pretensions to traditional ideals, and the realities of social conduct and attitudes. Social institutions and classes are therefore satirized because of their actual dissociation from values with which they are traditionally aligned. Moreover, and this is the crucial point, the person of quality who symbolizes this dichotomy and the historical figure of Chesterfield who exploits it indicate that the problem of social manners is being examined by Swift and other writers of the

period in relation to the moral inadequacies of the traditional leaders of society. It is this deterioration in their values and conduct that provokes the intense concentration of Swift's satire on the mental and moral debility of the upper classes. It also accounts for his frequent use of the person of quality, the representative of the nobility and gentry, as his satiric persona in essays on manners. Like Matthew Arnold two centuries later Swift looks to the privileged classes for their traditional leadership in an era of the emergence of the mercantile Philistines, and like the nineteenth-century advocate of sweetness and light, he found, not leaders, but barbarians.

The person of quality, then, emerges in eighteenth-century satire as a kind of moral constant, as an unvarying symbol of the moral and intellectual shortcomings of the upper classes. This role as a moral constant results in the figure being an important factor in the interpretation of a number of Swift's treatises. The character's known attitudes and values shed light on the ironic techniques involved in those essays or letters which Swift directly or implicitly assigns to his authorship. As has already been noted, the distinctive qualities of the figure seem to be incorporated within the personality of the writer of "A Letter to a Young Lady". Indeed, the irony involved in the writer's precepts becomes even more evident when the letter is compared with "Hints". When the letter-writer derides love and treats emotional values as the antitheses of good sense and good breeding, he is not simply being used as a mask for Swift's anti-romantic satire, but is also typifying the moral defects attributed to the nobility and gentry in "Hints"—he is making a mockery of "all Notions of Love, Honour, Friendship, Generosity". The ironic functions thus assigned to the person of quality are equally important in the reading of the three remaining treatises that we shall now examine: the "Argument", "The Advancement of Religion, and the Reformation of Manners", and "A Letter to a Young Gentleman"—all three of which are attributed by Swift to a person of quality.

The "Argument" exemplifies three basic features of Swift's social satire: the ironic juxtaposition of the ideal and the real, the criticism of the aristocracy's lack of moral leadership, and the use of the person of quality as the satiric persona in the ironic development of these themes. The pervasive irony of the essay derives in part from the interweaving of two concepts of Christianity: the nominal, advocated by the persona, and the real. Traditional ideals and their associated institutions are stripped of all moral significance. Christianity no longer involves a religious experience but has become a political and social institution, frequently valued only as the ready butt of witty atheists

and free-thinkers. As the chief agents of Christianity the clergy are convenient objects of ridicule on which budding wits and poets may exercise their talents. In the society of the person of quality the traditional duties of the clergyman are wholly frustrated. Indeed, far from being a humbug, the pulpit is welcomed by our writer as an instrument that heightens the attractions of evil by condemning it. But we would also be missing the irony of Swift's attack on aristocratic values if we failed to realize that, as with Swift's satiric personae in general, the distortions of these defective judgements are accompanied by the bland but accurate statement of facts. Hence the dismissal of real Christian values, the acceptance of a purely nominal religion and the defence of an exclusively materialistic concept of experience—all these come together in one sense to form a realistic, satiric dissection of actual experience (*Prose Works*, II, 26-39).¹² The irony here lies in the contrast between the judgments passed by the persona in accepting these realities as desirable, and the implied standards by which the person of quality himself is being evaluated. The persona is not merely a passive mask or "mouthpiece" here, but an active embodiment of specific values—specifically, the values of a fashionable world of nominal morality—and the satire proceeds through the counterbalancing of his attitudes against the conventions of real Christianity.¹³

The theme of nominality also appears in "The Advancement of Religion and the Reformation of Manners", in which the person of quality sets forth a scheme for moral and religious reform based on fashionable hypocrisy and polite affectation. The projected improvements shed further light on the persona's sense of values. Immorality among members of the clergy is to be solved simply by sending the lax clergymen to the West Indies. Thus moral deterioration is not really to be corrected, but is merely to be put out of sight. When the projector suggests that even the admirable members of the clergy would be less open to ridicule if they adopted the dress and habits of the laity, he is not really advocating the alliance of manners with moral standards, but the lowering of the ideals represented by the clergy to the level of actual social conduct (*Prose Works*, II, 41-63). But in the ironic context of this essay the moral problems that are to be remedied are recognized as a part of reality. As in the "Argument" there is an ironic tension between the persona's accurate reporting of actual abuses and the dubious values of his own nominal morality. The need for moral improvement is indisputable, but the methods and moral standards of the proposals ironically reflect the very shortcomings that the persona's project purports to remedy. As Ricardo Quintana has suggested, the reasoning of the projector is that of the world of fashion.¹⁴

There are two other aspects of this treatise, which taken together with the inherently satiric functions of the person of quality, shed further light on the essentially ironic treatment of the persona's projects. First, there is the suggestive appearance of the word "project" itself. The eighteenth-century "project" is not necessarily ridiculous or fraudulent, and this is the main burden of Defoe's *An Essay Upon Projects* (1697). But *A Tale of a Tub*, "A Modest Proposal", and the third book of *Gulliver's Travels* all attest to Swift's invariably jaundiced view of projectors and projects as a whole. Unlike Defoe, for example, Swift is markedly reluctant to differentiate between bad and good projects. His projectors are always examples of dangerously self-sufficient individualism, intellectual spiders spinning out an endless succession of philosophical, political, and economic schemes from the recesses of their egotistic imaginations. The Grub Street author of *A Tale* and the academicians of Lagado in *Gulliver's Travels* are therefore of the same mould as the fabled spider of *The Battle of the Books*—and so is the projector of "The Advancement of Religion". Like the person of quality, the Swiftian projector is consequently a satiric constant or standard, and when both these figures are combined in one persona as they are in "The Advancement of Religion", it seems fairly obvious that we are dealing with a work written in essentially the same spirit as that of the "Argument".

The second factor that illuminates the ironies of the treatise is an historical one. Swift could hardly have been unaware of the proliferation of societies that were formed in the Restoration and early eighteenth century to promote the reformation of manners and morals and frequently sought to encourage the court and Parliament in the patronage of pious and moral persons whose eminent positions might inspire others to emulate them. Swift's pamphlet actually echoes details of some of the numerous manifestoes and royal decrees that resulted from the activities of these societies. In 1698, the House of Commons presented a petition to King William calling upon him to employ only virtuous persons: "Since the examples of men in high and public station have a powerful influence upon the lives of others, we do most humbly beseech your Majesty, that all vice, profaneness and irreligion be discouraged in those who have the honor to be employed near your Royal person". In 1702, Queen Anne issued a proclamation calling for the "Encouragement of Piety and Virtue": debauchery is to be discouraged, "particularly in such as are employed near our Royal Persons", and "for the greater encouragement of religion and morality, We will, upon all occasions, distinguish persons

of piety and virtue by marks of our royal favour".¹⁵ Significantly, very similar proposals are directed at Queen Anne in Swift's essay:

Princes must therefore supply this Defect by a vigorous Exercise of that Authority, which the Law hath left them, by making it every Man's Interest and Honour to cultivate Religion and Virtue; by rendering Vice a Disgrace, and the certain Ruin to Preferment or Pretensions: All which they should first attempt in their own Courts and Families. For instance, might not the Queen's Domesticks of the middle and lower Sort, be obliged upon Penalty of Suspension, or Loss of their Employments, to a constant weekly Attendance on the Service of the Church; to a decent Behaviour in it; to receive the Sacrament four times a Year; to avoid Swearing and irreligious profane Discourses; and to the Appearance at least, of Temperance and Chastity? . . . Might not those of higher Rank and nearer Access to Her Majesty, receive her own Commands to the same Purpose, and to be countenanced or disfavoured according as they obey? (*Prose Works*, II, 47-48).

By suggesting that "the Appearance at least" of moral conduct will suffice, the person of quality in Swift's essay has subverted the straightforward piety of Queen Anne's proclamation. He is moving away from the moral sincerity emphasized by Queen Anne and the reform societies to the affectation and nominality that are the inherent qualities of the persona. This, of course, is perfectly in keeping with the double-edged satire that Swift develops so well through this specific figure. Thus in one sense the advocacy of affected morality reflects the perverted values of the person of quality, but at the same time it introduces the satiric exposé of reality that undercuts the impracticable idealism of Queen Anne's piety. It is typical of the person of quality, moreover, that he accepts the realities of hypocrisy as a standard of the useful and the moral, and Swift's ironic attitude towards his persona in this regard is evinced by one of the most characteristic features of the Swiftian projector—the series of mathematical computations on the envisaged benefits of a project: "if One in Twenty should be brought over to true Piety by this, or the like Methods, and the other Nineteen be only Hypocrites, the Advantage would still be great" (*Prose Works*, II, 57).¹⁶ Computations of this kind, together with the other aspects of irony in the treatise, seem to indicate an ironic attack on the superficiality of the persona rather than an acceptance of nominality as a valid means of moral regeneration.¹⁷

In a "Letter to a Young Gentleman" there is again what appears on the surface to be a straightforward analysis of religion and morals in society. In many respects the statements by the person of quality echo many of the points

to be found elsewhere in Swift's writings—free-thinking and atheism are condemned; it is emphasized that man's unaided reason cannot penetrate the mysteries of religion; and there is a wealth of detail on the subject of lapses in social manners and morals, including corruptions and inadequacies among the clergy. Swift's use of the person of quality elsewhere in his social criticisms should prepare us, however, for some ironic undertones in this essay. The persona is in fact being exploited, as in the previous treatises, to provide an ironically dual concept of his subject. Hence valid observations on the shortcomings of Church and society are partially undercut by the occasionally perverted judgment passed by the persona on these facts. This ironic technique is even more evident when the essay is compared with the sermon "Upon Sleeping in Church". In both works Swift discusses style in sermons. It has been generally assumed that "A Letter" sets forth Swift's preference for a simple style.¹⁸ "Proper Words in proper Places" may sum up Swift's concept of the ideal style, but in judging "A Letter" as a whole we should also bear in mind that in the sermon in which Swift presumably speaks *in propria persona* there is a marked reaction against some of the implications underlying the criticisms of the pulpit by the person of quality. "A Letter" makes it quite clear that in the delivery and the comprehending of a sermon the onus rests entirely on the preacher, yet there seems to be a less one-sided view in the sermon in which Swift goes further by pointing to the laziness and irreligion that prevent members of the congregation from understanding the clergyman. After declaring that the use of proper words in proper places "makes the true Definition of a Stile", the person of quality launches into an examination of various defects in sermons, including the fault of using obscure terms or hard words (*Prose Works*, IX, 65). Swift's sermon attacks the attitude of the congregation: "they object against the particular Preacher; his Manner, his Delivery, his Voice are disagreeable; his Style and Expression are flat and low, sometimes improper and absurd; the Matter is heavy trivial and insipid: sometimes despicable, and perfectly ridiculous, or else, on the other Side, he runs up into unintelligible Speculation, empty Notions, and abstracted Flights, all clad in Words above usual Understandings" (*Prose Works*, IX, 213). The sermon attacks ignorance and irreligion without excepting any specific classes and decrying them as the chief barriers between the congregation and the pulpit. Swift also contrasts the eager acceptance of plays "where all Virtue and Religion are openly reviled" with the lazy indifference to sermons devoted to the defence of these ideals (*Prose Works*, IX, 218). On the other hand, the person of quality exempts his own class from the sins of atheism and free-

thinking. Instead of being gratified by the defence of virtue and religion, he takes umbrage at the fact that their opposites have been attacked in the presence of "People of Quality": "I am at a Loss what to say, upon the frequent Custom of preaching against *Atheism, Deism, Free-Thinking*, and the like; as young Divines are particularly fond of doing, especially when they exercise their Talent in Churches, frequented by People of Quality; which, as it is but an ill Compliment to the Audience, so I am under some doubt whether it answers the End" (*Prose Works*, IX, 77).

This comparison of the two works elucidates the ironic themes of "A Letter to a Young Gentleman". Here, as in preceding works, the characteristic attitudes of the person of quality are exploited by Swift to effect an ironic tension between two points of view. What we find in "A Letter" is not simply a straightforward criticism of the clergy, but an ironic criticism of both pulpit and society—with the persona's occasionally perverse judgments reflecting the inadequacies of his class and of his society just as vividly as he himself seeks to portray the faults of the clergy. This double-edged satire is precisely what makes the person of quality such a strikingly apt instrument of Swift's ironic insight, for this persona is simultaneously a realistic analyst of actual social evils and the embodiment of many of these evils; he combines the satiric realism of the social critic with the inverted values of the nominal moralist.

NOTES

1. *Jonathan Swift: Essays on his Satire and other Studies* (New York, 1964), pp. 60-61.
2. *The Eighteenth-Century Background: Studies on the Idea of Nature in the Thought of the Period* (London, 1940), pp. 101-102.
3. II, i, 148-154. In *The Dramatic Works of Sir George Etherege*, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith (Oxford, 1927), II.
4. *Swift's Polite Conversation*, ed. Eric Partridge (London, 1963), p. 21. Quotations from other works by Swift are taken from *Prose Works*, ed. Herbert Davis, 14 vols. (Oxford, 1939-1962).
5. IV, i, 379. In *William Congreve*, ed. A. C. Ewald (London, 1948). Arabic numerals in reference to this edition indicate pages only.
6. But Davis sees this only as the "sweeping away" of "all romantic nonsense". At the same time he recognizes similarities with Congreve's play (*Jonathan Swift*, pp. 60-61).

7. *The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope 4th Earl of Chesterfield*, ed. Bonamy Dobrée (London, 1932), II, 459-461; III, 698.
8. This is comparable with Lord Chesterfield's remarks on good breeding: "This good-breeding, you know, does not consist in low bows and formal ceremony; but in an easy, civil, and respectful behaviour" (*Letters*, II, 523-524).
9. Ed. Karl Bulbring (London, 1890), pp. 3-4.
10. "An Essay on Conversation" in *The Works of Henry Fielding*, ed. James P. Browne (London, 1903), IX, 361-401. Compare *William Congreve*, pp. 314-315, and *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford, 1965), III, 529.
11. *Tatler* No. 21 in *The Tatler*, ed. George A. Aitken (London, 1898), I, 176. Chesterfield also links the art of conversation to the "art of pleasing" (*Letters*, III, 1035).
12. This attitude towards the clergy is shared by the equally cynical persona of "A Letter of Advice to a Young Poet" (*Prose Works*, IX, 329-331).
13. Thus Martin Price sees the "Argument" as an example of Swift's use of the impersonator behind the mask for the purposes of irony. See *Swift's Rhetorical Art: A Study in Structure and Meaning* (London, 1963), pp. 66-71. On the other hand, Kathleen Williams refers to the persona as Swift's "mouthpiece" who scorns even the "nominal version" of Christianity. See *Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1959), p. 95.
14. *Swift: An Introduction* (London, 1955), p. 86.
15. Joseph W. Krutch, *Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration* (New York, 1949), pp. 177-178.
16. There are comparable computations at the close of the "Argument" where the persona calculates the possible economic consequences of abolishing Christianity (*Prose Works*, II, 38-39). John M. Bullitt has examined the use of what he calls "dehumanizing statistics" in "A Modest Proposal" and "Answer to the Craftsman". See *Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire: A Study of Satiric Technique* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), pp. 61-62, 200-201.
17. Kathleen Williams argues that this treatise illustrates Swift's willingness "to accept any way to the improvement of public morals" (*Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise*, pp. 97-98). Among other works, Miss Williams cites the sermon "On the Testimony of Conscience" and *Examiner* No. 29 in support of her argument. But the sermon really makes a distinction between hypocrisy and the religion of conscience without actually viewing affectation as a desirable or logical stepping-stone to sincere moral reform (*Prose Works*, IX, 157). In the *Examiner* paper, Swift suggests that even a man who conceals his lack of interest in religion can be "an Instrument for contributing towards the Preservation of the Church" (*Prose Works*, III, 92). Concealment in this rather negative sense, however, is hardly comparable with the active pretence and hypocritical imitation advocated in "The Advancement of

Religion". Another point of contrast between the *Examiner* paper and the person of quality is that the passive instrument of the former is not promised ultimate regeneration as the outcome of his concealment.

18. See Charles Allen Beaumont, *Swift's Classical Rhetoric* (Athens, Ga., 1961), p. 9.

ACTAEON

David A. Giffin

Actaeon was so eager to be off that day —
 To hasten to undreamt-of fame — he wolfed his breakfast,
 Snatched his weapon and let loose the dogs,
 And very foolishly neglected to consult
 The morning paper's astrological advice:
 His horoscope would certainly have warned him
 It was better not to venture far from home that day.

But silver-limbed Diana, what he really sought,
 The true uncomplicated exhibitionist
 To work the delta domination thing,
 Was waiting to complete his doom.
 Her being there and his arrival were necessity.
 Alas, he did not find his analyst in time.

Quaint posturings of terror mimicking the moves of love
 Freeze into the classical exemplum of futility:
 Girl-hunter Actaeon, hapless *voyeur*,
 Overmastered by his own desire,
 Gnawed at by the dogs of lust.