William Shippen, Parliamentary Jacobite: The Politician as Poet

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In the kaleidoscope of eighteenth-century British politics, perhaps no faction is so intriguing or so misunderstood as that of the Parliamentary Jacobites. Denounced by the whigs as enemies of the state in their own time, they have been neglected for the more romantic aspects of the Jacobite movement by historians willing to accept the partisan verdict of their political enemies. Contemporaries of these Parliamentary Jacobites could not agree on the size of their faction or the names of its members. Modern historians can be expected to do no more. Is it possible that most of these supposed apostles of the House of Stuart were, in fact, the last survivors of the old country tories? When the name Jacobite is discarded in favor of country tory, their actions become more intelligible. It cannot be denied that many of these men had dealings with the Pretender and his representatives in England, but so did many of the leading politicians. Jacobitism, for many of these men, was a defiant rebuke to the world that was changing too rapidly to be understood; it was a form of escape.

For the leader of the Parliamentary Jacobites, William Shippen, this was particularly true. Born during the reign of Charles II, in 1673, Shippen lived into the reign of George II, but his heart belonged to the world that passed away on the field of Naseby and with the death of Charles I. Herein lies the tragedy of William Shippen—he was a part of his time, but apart from it; he moved among the great, but was unmoved by them.

To explain Shippen's career as a Parliamentary Jacobite, it is useful first to examine his life during his political apprenticeship. The transformation of the parson's son into the politician has usually been ignored, because there is supposedly no evidence from which to reconstruct the years be-

tween 1693, when he entered the Middle Temple, and 1707, when he entered the House of Commons. While any biography of William Shippen must be of necessity an imperfect puzzle, chiefly a collection of fragments from the diaries and correspondence of his contemporaries, the subject's own poems are an important source of information for this unexplored period. Diaries can be edited, and the truth can be concealed in correspondence, but an author often unconsciously reveals his personality in his work. To a large extent the poems of William Shippen were autobiographical sketches in verse.

The oldest literary piece which may be attributed to Shippen belongs to his student days, being dated July 13, 1695. Composed in imitation of the polished Latin of Virgil, "Letter to C.C. about a Stag Hunt" skillfully blends into a narrative poem elements of the hunting episodes found in the *Iliad*, the *Odessey*, and the *Aeneid*. While the syntax and elegant lines bespeak a scholarly intimacy with the language, the execution of the theme suffers in comparison with its models. Shippen's worth as a poet may have been well stated by the Duke of Buckingham:

> To Shippen, Apollo was cold with respect,
> Since he for the state could the muses neglect
> But said, in a greater assembly he shin'd
> And places were things he had ever declin'd.[1]

However, the critic may find in these lines a hint of malice or perhaps jealousy on the part of a rather dull, minor poet. In this poem, Shippen's skill certainly entitles him to a small niche in the pantheon of eighteenth-century poets. Although the lines are polished and its theme grand, the real worth of the poem is lost if it is merely considered as a pretty piece composed to suit a lady's fancy; allegorically interpreted, it reveals an autobiographical work, the first glimpse into the personality of William Shippen. It is a rare find indeed, considering the few fragments that remain of the papers of a man whose energies were boundless and whose oratorical and literary talents were above the average. Under the influence of his old school-mate now turned playwright, Nicholas Rowe,

Shippen may have considered the ephemeral though glittering promise of a literary career, but the "Letter to C.C." betrays the stronger spell that politics exercised over the personality of the would-be poet. In the midst of tender thoughts, Shippen felt compelled to set forth the first written statement of his political creed. The poem is a portrait of the young man, his apprenticeship in tory philosophy almost finished, his life as a master politician about to begin. Shippen unconsciously began his political career with a poem and ended it half a century later with a poetical valedictory; both were as eloquent and as moving as the lost cause they celebrated.

No problem is posed by the arrangement of the poem, since it is easily divided into three parts: the prologue, the hunt, and the epilogue. However the reader is confronted with a dilemma in the first four lines. Who was Carol C.? Shippen's ardor may have been born of a relationship of some duration, since the poem was offered in a partial apology for his failure to fulfill a promise made but forgotten, as well as his obvious neglect of the lady after a lovers' quarrel.

> O Love! O surely the best part of my life, Carol, whose disposition is generous, whose mind bright! Hear the poem which I promised not so long ago when departing for York, that you may not consider quarrels nor unfeelingly chide your lazy friend.[2]

Reluctant to admit that his was the only guilt, Shippen chided his lady for her disregard for the dreary life of a would-be barrister and reminded her that her hours were not all spent in contemplation of him.

> Perhaps it may not be displeasing for you to hear the schedule and duties of my life, while you yourself remain rather happy in the city and indulge yourself amid beaux, wine, joyous days and pleasant nights.[3]

Who was this Carol? She obviously was of the aristocracy or the gentry, being learned in the classics, otherwise Shippen's choice of Latin would have seemed a bit ridiculous. Per-

haps she was an adornment of that brilliant, witty company into which Nicholas Rowe had introduced his friend, a woman of charm, who had an appreciation of the world of scholarship to which Shippen had devoted most of his life. Rather than offend the taste of this, his first love, with the usual pastoral idyll, Shippen accepted the challenge of suiting a modern political situation to an antique mold. Only infatuation could convince a twenty-two year old that he could succeed where better poets had faltered.

> However I do not wish to express in common and silly verse the green woodlands and the newly cleared fields of the country, it is more pleasing to recall yesterday's labours which an eager band of both young people and dogs had produced.[4]

Shippen chose a lofty theme for his tragic verses: the death of a king. The monarch whose fate he chronicled was Charles I, and although the action was compressed into the hours of a single day, lest the rule of the unities be broken, the events that filled the last months of the life of Charles I were thinly disguised. It was a poignant lament for the passing of a way of life that was only a memory when the poet was born. Shippen began the main portion of the work with an old theme, one often employed and often abused—England before the Civil Wars when all was well. His lines lack originality, but despite this fault, there is a certain freshness, almost an air of innocence.

> Not far from here there is a place surrounded by the rampart of a wall, where the eternal youth of nature feels new life, where the sweet air is fragrant because of the cleansing rays of the sun and health abounds and the mind grows calm. On this side, the mountain threatens the sky with its rising peak, on that side, the valley extends with its flat surface. O quiet spot where from the very beginning of the race, both sheep and antelope and deer bearing lofty antlers have held their sway and kept their laws.[5]

The calm of this paradise is shattered by the bustle and din of the hunt which progresses with ever-increasing ferocity until the slaying of the king of the forest destroys the harmony of that near perfect world. The pattern for the episode is drawn from the first book of the *Aeneid* [lines 180-190] in which the hero of that epic slays seven stags. With a clever reversal of emphasis, Shippen employed seven hunters to kill one stag. Thus Aeneas and the stag are parallel characters, while Shippen's hunters are identified with the slain animals in Virgil's epic. But now the hunter had become the prey, and the quarry the sportsmen.

Shippen's greatest weakness in his composition was his failure to develop the characters of his seven hunters. Only three—Nisus, Ignobates, and Polyglottus—achieve any real identity. The others are only names. The fault lay first in adhering so closely to the Virgilian hunt, which is but a single link in a continuous chain, and then in trying to magnify this mere episode into a separate work which might stand alone. The subordination of seven men, all crucial figures in the English Civil War, to one man, certainly of great importance but not the dominant figure in that conflict, destroys all possible symmetry and reduces what might have been a great theme to a mere insight into the ideas of a young would-be Jacobite.

Nisus and Euryalus are perfect symbols for Cromwell and Ireton; as the former were found slain together on the field of battle, so the latter were exhumed in 1660 and hanged together. Virgil's tragic companions, were never fully developed, remaining but images of youthful devotion and sacrifice. While Shippen assigned to Euryalus or Ireton the role of a subordinate, Nisus like Cromwell, who dominated English politics after 1648, comes to dominate the poem, not so much as a man, but as a shadowy representation of those forces bent on destroying the institution of divine-right kingship. Adores, or Fairfax, is but a name, mentioned once and then lost in the melee that follows. Harpalus and Melampus are completely unrelated to the *Aeneid,* and their inclusion in lieu of a host of more appropriate figures may indicate that Ship-

pen chose to assign names to his characters more for their historical association than for their classical accuracy. Ignobates, a figure of Shippen's imagination, is the most believable and by far the best developed. Colonel Ewer and Major Rolfe, both instrumental in seizing Charles I after his flight to the Isle of Wight, are represented by Ignobates and Harpalus. Melampus, supposedly the first mortal to forsee the future, is Hugh Peter, a rather biting comment on the Puritan monopoly on revealed truth. Polyglottus, the seventh hunter, is introduced later in the poem, and Shippen's clever development of his character demands separate treatment.

Shippen followed Virgil in beginning the hunt at Elaea, the port of Pergamus at the mouth of the Caicus River. This city can be identified with Exeter which on April 13, 1646, fell to the parliamentarians, thereby freeing Fairfax for the final attack on the royalist capital.[7] Thus, as the fall of Exeter signals the beginning of the march on Oxford, so the reference to Elaea signals the beginning of the hunt. Lest there be any doubt of the intent of the poem, that adversary of Aeneas, Juno, personified here as the mother of war, grants her blessing to the chase.

> Now scarcely had the rising sun dispelled the morning stars from the sky, scarcely had it removed its entire orb from the ocean, when the young men, Nisus, Adores, and Euryalus, accompanied by a crowd of country folk assembled near the renowned port of Elaea. Who could control his steed with drawn reins and who but Nisus could better outrun the stag, swift in flight? There was no delay; the hunter gave the signal to begin and called out the route. Harpalus, Ignobates, and Melampus with Juno re-echoed the trumpeter. The heavens re-echoed all around.[8]

Sacred to the virgin goddess, Diana, the stag was the only fit prey for such an assembly of heroes, as Charles I, God's annointed was the only fit adversary for such a company of soldiers and parlimentarians. Shippen introduced the main

protagonist of his poem, the martyr king, not as an earth-bound saint, but as the proud monarch of the forest, supreme by virtue of his strength and age over all the creatures of the wood. What better symbol than a stag could be chosen to represent a man for whom the hunting of that noble animal was a passion. As if to contrast the serious demeanor of Charles with the easy nature of his father, Shippen compared the supreme power of the stag within his realm to the random wanderings through Arcadia of the god Pan, a figure with whom James I once compared himself.[9]

> Soon, when they came to the sunny hilltops, they saw the stag whom whole herds followed, whose age had fortified his strength with a massive body. He appeared a true leader by his gait and proud bearing. Then he turned the blazing glance of his eyes from them and wheeled around shaking the rough forest to its foundations. So once, the god Pan wandering through the mountains of Arcadia, his realm, showed his horns.[10]

On April 27, 1646, Charles I slipped out of Oxford in disguise and began the erratic journey that eventually led him into the Scottish camp at Southwell. Sought by the army as the stag was pursed by the dogs, Charles may have realized the hopelessness of his situation, but he refused to ask quarter, and like Ulysses in the eleventh book of the *Iliad* [lines 473-480], he awaited deliverance from his enemies. Prince Rupert, his Ajax, never came.

> Aroused by the sight Ignobates abandoned his dignity, and urging on the lead-dogs outran the keen-scented pack.
>
> Seeking protection the stag straightway fled to his old lair, but neither it nor any other place offered a safe retreat. For who will be equal to content against the stars and the gods? Who can oppose unchanging nature or revoke her laws? Whither shall the poor stag flee whom his own tracks betray, whom the only hope of safety exposed to certain death?[11]

Perhaps the bitterest section of Shippen's poem chronicles Charles I's flight northward to the Scottish encampment, his appeal for support, and his betrayal to the English.

> While bad omens were apparent for the race about to come, indecisive movements tore his anxious breast; but one fear keener than all other pangs impelled him. Lo! therefore, leaping out of the forest, he took to the slopes of the mountain; then, when by chance he saw at a distance dense herds of his own kind—once prepared to serve his command and share his joys and triumphs—he hastened along his easy course from the highest peak and like the wind sped over the surface of the road casting up showers of sand.
>
> Once in their midst he sought to unite with his kindred, but his own people acknowledged not their master, but willingly kicked at him and kept their distance, more cruel than the enemy itself. O deadly honour! O slippery glory of kings! He who just now, respected, was holding sway in the forest, and whose extended authority knew no bounds, now as a suppliant with vows and prayers, now lacking all things, implores the populace to spare their king about to die. In vain. . . .[12]

Stag and king, both deserted, turned with despair to face the wrath of their enemies, but neither surrendered meekly to the slaughter. Charles I attempted to manipulate the factions that struggled in 1647 to usurp the power of the Crown, only to find his last bid for supremacy thwarted by the growing influence of Oliver Cromwell. Likewise the stag, grown fierce amid the snarling pack, found all hope of victory dashed by the arrival of Nisus. The flight of the stag, like that of the king, seems but a natural attempt to preserve life and Crown from those who would destroy both.

> Rejected, the monarch of the forest considered his course, but rather than endure the insults of his commons he chose to hurl himself unprotected into the

> midst of the fierce weapons. But the assembled youths and the keen-scented ability of the dogs already had encircled the snorting stag with a ring of death. Threatened he renewed his defence under his raging breast, and exciting his mind to madness provoked battle. As the wind, having been shut up in a cave rages around the opening with its whirlwind force and sweeps through the air whatever is cast before it, so he finally was borne violently into the midst of the enemy and powerfully outstripped the East wind with his feet.
>
> The horsemen took to the road and the din of the galloping ran with rapid clatter and caused the earth to quiver. Then the spirited mount of Nisus champed his foaming bit while that foremost hunter at full speed far outstripped all, and the well-born young men followed their leader. . . .[13]

While his titans struggled, Shippen paused to introduce the seventh hunter, Polyglottus. Literally "many tongues," the characterization of that remnant of the House of Commons known as the Rump is the cleverest portion of the poem. Filled with rabble-rousing bluster, this would-be Nimrod adds his hoarse voice to the din, until his overworked steed catapults him from the saddle to the amusement of all. A bit of comic relief, but comedy fraught with significance. A country man in sentiment as well as a keen parliamentary observer, Shippen was aware of the potential power that slept on the back-benches in St. Stephen's Chapel. One who considered the rough and tumble of politics an Englishman's highest duty could only recoil in disgust at the events of the 1640's. Coming in December 1648, Pride's Purge, the event upon which the dismounting of Polyglottus is based, removed the Rump from the race for power, leaving the royal prey to Cromwell and the army.[14] If Polyglottus had cornered the stag, one may only wonder at the outcome.

Having delivered his blast at the members of the Rump, Shippen turned to the final act of the tragedy of Charles I, and it may be said in defence of the author that he resisted

the temptation to be too maudlin in his allegorical treatment of the King's last confused and futile plan to salvage the power of the Crown by fleeing to the Isle of Wight. As the poem draws to a close, Nisus emerges as the central character, an obvious affirmation by Shippen of the popular belief that without Oliver Cromwell, there could have been no judicial murder of God's anointed.

> Meanwhile the stag groaned, and now almost exhausted was no longer able to meet the weapons at close quarters; worn out he drove his steps with panting exertions. Then suddenly before his eyes a river appeared through the by-ways, and amid the brooks that fed it an island arose kissed by the gentle west wind. Here was new hope, a new power; and plunging into the water he sought safety on the far shore but the water gave no safety. Scarcely had he gained the haven when by an unlucky fate, the pack of dogs again assailed his frenzied ears with their barking and everywhere the dangers of death threatened. . . . For a time as victor he punished the enemies from whom he had fled, until a machine hurled a death-dealing missile which swiftly exploded by the hand of Nisus, cut the air and bruised his limbs and loosened the bars of life. Then a new noise arose to the heavens from the applauding horsemen; but the dogs, recalling the signs of the bloody combat prepared to tear the fallen stag to pieces. However the hunters, when the river had been crossed, wrested from the rabid dogs the splendid spoils of such effort.[15]

With the triumph of the forces of discord, the poem is finished, save for the sacrifice. The stag is placed upon the ground in the same prone position the king was forced to assume and its head, like his, is severed at the neck.[16] Drunk with wine and victory, the hunters give themselves up to revelling, as a symbolic darkness descends upon the land. Shippen played out his drama in a manner that relegated the

execution to an anti-climax. These final lines seem stiff and artificial when compared to earlier parts of the poem; therefore the reader is forced to concentrate upon the author's talent for allegory, especially in his treatment of the place of execution, the Banqueting Hall. He described it as a sacred oak presiding over a lofty forest. Since ancient times, the oak had been held in reverence as a sacred tree, and with the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, its leaves and fruit had become a popular badge of the House of Stuart. It is also of interest that in 1572 the second banqueting hall built by Elizabeth I on the site of the present building was of wood with a tent-like canvas roof. The walls were decked with birch boughs and ivy to give the effect of a forest.[17]

In January 1619, James I's banqueting house, dating from 1607 burned to the ground; this disaster gave him an excellent excuse to commission Inigo Jones to replace the earlier structure with a more magnificent edifice.[18] The result was the present Banqueting Hall, a Renaissance jewel originally set amid the brick and timbering of Tudor times. Shippen called the place of execution an altar of Diana and a tree of Jupiter. Elizabeth I was fond of having her virtues compared to those of the virgin goddess. The ceiling of Inigo Jones' Banqueting Hall was reserved for a series of allegorical paintings celebrating the virtues of James I. Among the symbolic figures that filled the central panel were a globe and an eagle, both emblems of the god Jupiter.[19] Although it is difficult to compare James I with the father of the gods, a passing knowledge of tory hagiography will bring to mind the fact that he became the father of a saint a generation after the ceiling was painted.

> Then they sought an oak tree which for many years had been honoured as sacred by the religious scruples of our ancestors; which itself a forest, presided over a lofty forest, a tree of Jupiter and an altar of Diana. They assembled near it and the collected crowd admired the body of huge size stretched upon the grass. But after the seated young men had recounted their victories they severed the neck from the

> shoulders, as was the custom, with solemn rite. Then they girded themselves for the feast after dividing the spoils.
>
> Reviving their strength with food they filled their cups to overflowing and after offering libations to the nymphs of the forest gave themselves up to the spirit of fellowship, heedless of the passing hours. Meanwhile night, brought by its dark chariot, completed its circle, and darkness fell upon the hunters full of wine and rich food.[20]

The last fifteen lines which form the epilogue, like the first thirteen of the prologue, are so different in mood from the main body of the poem that they seem afterthoughts. Where but a few beats before Shippen had lamented the death of a king, he now defends the classical tongues as fit vehicles for the poet to employ when celebrating his muse. The doubts he cast upon the efforts of his contemporaries to render the works of the ancients into English was a probable reference to the translation of the *Aeneid,* then recently undertaken by Dryden. However the criticism was born more of regret than of scholarly acumen; like many of the young men trained in the discipline of the classics, Shippen recognized the supreme talent of John Dryden as a poet in those ancient tongues. To one so blessed, the crassly commercial task of translation may have seemed sacrilege to Shippen. While chiding his master, Shippen might also have paused to thank him. The idea of using a stag to represent the martyr King was obviously borrowed from Dryden, who used a similar device to represent the Roman Catholic Church in his *The Hind and the Panther,* published in 1687. As the works of Shippen are catalogued, it becomes increasingly apparent that it is impossible to overemphasize the influence of John Dryden on the poetry of William Shippen.

But politics and literary criticism must give way at last to love. Fearful lest his celebration of the martyrdom of Charles I might not suit the tastes of his lady, Shippen declares that no theme is too difficult if it finds favor with his Carol. In the last lines of the epilogue, he gives one final clue

to the identity of his lady: she is a poetess in her own right; in fact he indirectly compares her to clever Corinna who made even Pindar admit her superiority. The poem ends as it began, in pursuit of the fair.

> Of if you prefer to praise the beautiful figure of beloved Corinna blushing with intermixed radiance, her heavenly mouth, her flowing garments and waxen neck; or if you will consider anything else worthy of poetry, my Carol, my fair love of one inexperienced. For to you Apollo has granted the talent and voice of a poetess and he has given to you to have wisdom of criticism and to have wisdom of poetry.[21]

The *Stag Hunt* failed to win the object of the poet's ardor. Shippen's fair Carol seems to have ended their relationship rather abruptly. He never mentioned her again. This first and obviously painful love affair had a profound effect on Shippen's personality, especially in his relations with women. In an age when a gentleman might indulge in a casual affair without fear of censure, Shippen remained aloof; his name was never linked with a scandal involving a woman. When he finally married in 1712 it was for financial reasons, his bride being a spinster heiress of forty-one, the sister of an old schoolmate. Such behavior on the part of a normally lusty young man might well be considered strange, but neither Shippen nor his situation was normal. Blessed with a fine mind and a ready wit as well as an appreciation of the arts, he fit rather easily into the literary world of Augustan London. But when he attempted to win the heart if not the hand of a lady of fashion and perhaps property, he was forced to remember that he was still the poor second son of a North Country parson. His ego had been inflated when the mysterious Carol, both talented and lovely, deigned to notice him, but his pride would not allow him to accept his own shortcomings as a possible reason for her refusal. Although nervous and given to sudden outbursts of temper, William was an excessively shy man, whose timidity only increased as he grew older. There is evidence that he sought to overcome these

weaknesses by resorting to drink, a factor that made his behavior more erratic and his personality more unstable. Thus an abortive romance became a personal crisis for Shippen, as evidenced by excerpts from an undated letter written in Latin and addressed to Nicholas Rowe.

> Morning Star, dear to me, and as dear to the Aonian nymphs, while you seek the solitude of Evening and the peace of the countryside that you may have time for leisure and friends and with your Pylades you serenely enjoy the passing hours revering Apollo and Amaryllis, that one who is worthy of the god, I am kept busy amid a flood of things and the bustle of the city, remote from the Muses and from friends. Now I feel a continual fever about my heart while Etna cooks my liver and burns my vitals. Oh, if I could but roam again with you amid the snow that hides in the shadows of the Devon mountains and feel the constant breeze upon my face—by what fires am I tormented! Whither shall I flee? What shall I do? It is shameful to admit that such indecision has been called the irrefutable curse of love. . . . Often, for I shall confess it, when I have mastered my courage, I have argued that the fairer sex was frail or that those who were blessed with beauty of face were not so endowed with intellectual gifts; yet he is a wise man who realizes the power of such strong words as well as the power of a woman to slay with a glance. . . . Love now diffuses her sweet poison through my fibers . . . the conquering infection creeps slowly into the veins and passion mingled with madness contaminates the blood causing internal wars with deathbearing tumult.
>
> I do not hesitate to reveal these things to your trustworthy ear, dear friend, to be held in confidence, of course, kind companion of my sorrow and equally of my joy; you who often steady my slipping mind and revive it in your steadfast wisdom, and if you are able again to aid my distressed circumstances,

you will be my deity, for a true friend is as great as a god.[22]

The letter began with the usual flood of classical allusions, but Shippen's anguish soon overcame his literary sense, and he deserted the ancients in order to pour out his heart to probably the only close friend he ever really had. The tone of the letter suggests that Shippen was appealing for sympathy from an older and more experienced confidant, but Rowe was actually the younger of the two. Their friendship appears one-sided when Shippen's dependence on Rowe for attention and understanding is considered. Rowe introduced Shippen not only to his literary circle, but also to his family and intimate friends; hence the opening tribute to Rowe and his friends whom he calls Morning Star and Evening, literary names for the twin deities, Apollo and Diana, Pylades, the friend of Orestes, and Amaryllis, the comely shepherdess. As in the *Stag Hunt*, Shippen bemoans his loneliness, but he compounds his own misery and his friend's concern—if not guilt—by dwelling on a trip the two had made to Devonshire, probably the place in which Rowe was seeking the "peace of the countryside". This letter which began with bombastic rhetoric proceeded on its downward course through Shippen's confession that he was suffering from the effects of two much strong drink or "Etna" until it culminated in fawning desperation. Rowe must have felt pity for one who expected so much from life and received so little in return.

Late in 1700, Nicholas Rowe's first full-length drama, *The Ambitious Stepmother*, a heroic tragedy in blank verse, was performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields. A Persian setting which provided numerous excuses for magnificent special effects, several good parts, and a series of subplots produced a public success which confirmed Rowe in his resolve to forsake the law for the stage. However, the critics did not appreciate Rowe's first dramatic attempt, and despite his able defence of his work on Aristotelian grounds, they condemned *The Ambitious Stepmother*: it was too long; the characters were underdeveloped—mere skeletons in royal robes; and the fifth act, more suitable to the Smithfield slaughter houses than

to the stage, was an offense to refined taste.[23] From a literary point of view, the most praiseworthy portion of the play is the hymn found in Act three, Scene two, which begins, "Hail Light, that doubly glads our sphere." It was composed by William Shippen at Rowe's request, and without question is the finest poem he ever wrote. Until the final stanzas, Shippen maintained his measured and majestic cadence while extolling the glories of Mithras as understood by an eighteenth-century man. Then, in the closing lines, he succumbed to the siren of political allegory.

Hail Orosmades, Pow'r Divine!
Permit us to approach thy shrine.
Permit thy Votartes to raise
Their grateful voices to thy praise.
Thou art the Father of our Kings,
The stem whence their high lineage springs,
The Sov'reign Lord that doth maintain
Their uncontroul'd and boundless Reign.
O then assist thy drooping Son,
Who long has grac't our Persian Throne!
O may he yet extend his sway!
We yet Arsaces Rule obey!
Let thy vitality impart
New spirits to his fainting Heart;
Let him like thee (from whom he sprung)
Be ever Active, ever Young.[24]

Orosmades and Arsaces are but the names of characters, but if they are exchanged for Charles I and James II, while "English" is substituted for "Persian", the sense of the hymn is changed and it becomes a Jacobite lament. Perhaps Shippen pointed out the difference this rather clever substitution made in the nature of the poem, a tactless act in view of the critics' reception of his friend's play. Rowe was not a hack who produced second-rate plays to satisfy the public's thirst for pageantry, but a sensitive craftsman who took great pride in his work; thus it would be unfair to assume he ignored Shippen's behavior. The poem was quite good; in fact Rowe

must have realized that literarily, it made the rest of his play seem a bit rough and unfinished. To discover that the man to whom he had offered comfort as well as counsel had inserted a Jacobite propaganda piece into his first drama was too much.

Politically Rowe and Shippen were poles apart; thus, despite years of mutual respect and complete trust, what may have begun as an innocent jest or an unfortunate accident was misinterpreted and a friendship was destroyed. Both men were too proud to admit themselves at fault. Rowe obviously saw himself as the injured party, for it was said that in later years he would not stoop to speak to a tory.[25] Shippen for his part, shortly after the publication of *The Ambitious Stepmother* in January 1701, threw his energies into the composition of the poem for which he is best remembered, *Faction Display'd*. It was this work that first brought him to the attention of the leaders of the tory faction. Thus *The Ambitious Stepmother* is significant, not only in English drama, but also in the personal history of Shippen, for its publication marked the end of Shippen the poet and the beginning of Shippen the politician.

Although Shippen's feud with Rowe might have inspired an epigram or perhaps a lampoon, it was hardly violent enough to warrant a poem of some five hundred lines lambasting the entire whig hierarchy. If Shippen was bent on antagonizing his former friend, whose political ideas matched those of the whigs, why did he choose as his subject events which occurred over a year after his supposed break with Rowe? The publication of Lloyd's translation of his rather compromising letter to Rowe must have caused Shippen untold embarrassment, and it alone would have been cause for revenge.[26] A further clue may be found in the manuscript copy of *Faction Display'd* in the British Museum. The poem was first read in this form and on the cover has been written the following mock dedication: "Dedicated to the Duke of Somerset/—*Sed non Authore furoris/Sublate cecidit rabies.*/—To be Printed for Jacob Tonson." [27] The Latin phrase is from Lucan and roughly translated it means: "Yet the author of madness calls it pride

not madness." The seeming dedication of such a work to one of the leading whig peers and the indication that it was to be published by another whig might be labeled madness or perhaps pride by the unwary reader. Was *Faction Display'd* Shippen's revenge on the literary establishment that denied him patronage for political reasons? Probably encouraged by the success of his poem in *The Ambitious Step-Mother,* but free from the influence of Nicholas Rowe, Shippen may have sought support for his literary endeavors during that first year of independence, only to discover that all roads to preferment were closed to a young man whose rather vocal opposition to the whig cause and open espousal of Jacobitism could only be considered treacherous. Frustrated and disappointed, Shippen struck back at the system as well as the individuals who fed it or were fed by it.

The unnamed friend, designated only as C.D., who composed one of the two dedicatory poems that precede the introduction to *Faction Display'd* was careful to point out the similarities between Shippen's work and *Absalom and Achitophel.*

> When Dryden's Tuneful Celebrated Muse
> Did God-like David for her Subject Choose,
> She soar'd above her known and common Height,
> To Heav'n she raised her Voice, to Heav'n she took her flight.
> Such is your Muse's Subject and her Tongue,
> Witness this Polish'd and Melodious Song:
> Where the same Majesty of Verse;
> The same just stile, the same deep Sense appears.[28]

The influence of John Dryden, ever strong, is nowhere more apparent than in this work. As Dryden held the first whigs in ridicule, so Shippen caricatured their lineal political descendants; the older poet's power over the younger is evident, not only in the theme, but in the tone of certain passages, in the arrangement of various details as well as in the outright appropriation of lines.[29] Shippen's motive for this reliance on Dryden was two-fold: he may have sought to pay tribute to his master's genius, and he may have attempted to

identify his poem with *Absalom and Achitophel* in the public mind in the hope of attracting the attention of the tory leaders.

Believing that a heroic theme required a classical mold, Shippen unwisely drew the substance and structure of *Faction Display'd*—the theme of a group of plotters against the state —from Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae,* a work whose conversion into a modern polemic required the skill of a master poet. If he had permitted himself the same freedom of expression that he had enjoyed in composing "Hymn to the Sun", the results might have been worthy of a Dryden; unfortunately, *Faction Display'd* only magnified the weaknesses of the *Stag Hunt* tenfold.

Refuting the critics who condemned Lucan as too historical, Shippen opened the introduction to *Faction Display'd* with a defense of the poet as teacher and historian. Such a position automatically assumed a rejection of the poet as narrator, and in particular, the rejection of Virgil for his reliance on fiction and embellishment. This denial by Shippen of his former poetical canons is most important because it marks the beginning of the transition from the poet as politician to the politician as poet.

After his token vindication of historical poetry, Shippen proceeded to state the premise that would be echoed by writers throughout the century—that political factions were the curse of the English system, and furthermore, they were a whig invention contrived to pervert the liberties of the people. These factions were unnatural, and if allowed to run their normal course, would cease to exist; however, they were kept alive by mercenary hacks who were willing to sell their talents to the highest bidder, usually a whig, heedless of the consequences. It is difficult not to speculate that this passage was written by one whose talents, although often displayed, were never purchased.

Although the theme of *Bellum Catilinae,* the conspirators' thirst for limitless power, was well suited to Shippen's purposes, he departed from his model, as he had done in the *Stag Hunt,* to fabricate his own characters, because Sallust per-

mitted only Catiline to speak his treason and Shippen wanted all his conspirators to condemn themselves with their own words. Those men, who supposedly met on the night of March 8, 1702, were but the vanguard of republicans, spiritual descendants of the regicides, bent on pulling down Queen Anne and the Anglican Church. With this vision of another civil war, Shippen began to trace England's path to ruin.

Both peers and bishops were pilloried by Shippen for their betrayal, in the mind of a Jacobite, of both Church and State. To one without a knowledge of the complicated politics of the period the sense of the poem is at times obscure, and to trace the history of each person lampooned by Shippen is too lengthy a task for a work of this size. Perhaps the best passage in the whole poem, and certainly one which shows clearly the influence of Dryden, is that dealing with the death of Queen's Anne's only living son, Prince William, duke of Gloucester.

So, by the Course of the revolving Sphears,
Whene're a new discovered Star appears; 520
Astronomers with Pleasure and Amaze
Upon the Infant Luminary gaze.
They find their Heav'n enlarged, and wait from thence
Some Blest, some more than common Influence,
But suddenly alas! the Fleeting Light 525
Retiring leaves their Hopes involved in endless Night.[30]

Although *Faction Display'd* was published anonymously and Shippen never chose to acknowledge it, lest under a future Whig ministry he suffer the displeasure of those he had maligned, a sizeable proportion of literary and political London guessed the author's identity almost before the printer had finished his work. Despite his inability to prove his own suspicions as well as those of his literary colleagues, Pope credited Shippen with the poem in 1705,[31] and his appraisal was confirmed fifteen years later by Giles Jacob in his *An Historical Account*. Grudgingly the whigs admitted that *Faction Display'd* was "of the very first form" and, despite the mountains of abuse they heaped upon it, that it had "great

Vogue and Credit." [32] Those whose anger could not be assuaged by playing the critic took it upon themselves to answer the poem by beating the unknown author at his own game and flooding the booksellers' stalls with their rebuttals and parodies. The most impressive, *Faction Display'd, a second Part,* made a serious effort to expose the tory counterpart of the whig cabal, while on the other extreme, the badly written *Faction Display'd, Burlesqued* sought to display the author's malice by means of a rather obvious parody. Shippen tried to outflank his opponents with *Moderation Display'd,* a hastily composed poem of inferior quality written to justify the beleaguered tory position. If Shippen had been able to appraise both poems honestly, he might have been forced to agree with Edmund Waller that fiction was an easier theme for poetry than truth. The appearance of *Moderation Display'd* tended to divert the already confused hunt for the author of *Faction Display'd* to the extent that as late as 1710, William Pittis was convinced that Bertram Stote, Shippen's close friend and the brother of his future wife, was the author of *Moderation Display'd.* Only Pope was not misled by the inferior quality of the poem and being aware of Shippen's inability to leave well enough alone, assigned it to him, as well as the final installment in the tory trilogy, *Moderation Vindicated.*[33]

Speculation on *Faction Display'd* continued as late as 1705, but by that time both whigs and tories had diverted their energies to the imminent election; reward or revenge would have to await the outcome of the battle at the hustings. However, *Faction Display'd* had achieved its purpose; William Shippen had become a man to be reckoned with, a poet whose acid-tipped pen, although it could not ruin a reputation, could certainly besmear one. His name was now known in circles where such talents could be used; within three years Shippen would take his place in the House of Commons.

In the years ahead, William Shippen would become, by self-appointment, the erstwhile champion of the public conscience. A minor figure in Parliament, he achieved his prominence after the tory faction was ruined with the death of Queen Anne. He was used and abused by whigs in power or in oppo-

sition, but his vigilance kept the idea of a loyal opposition alive. For almost thirty years, he continued his independent course, leading the remnant of the more extreme tories in assault after assault on ministerial extravagance, the standing army, foreign influences on British policy, the enemies of the Church of England, and the corruption of placemen.

In his poems and later in his speeches William Shippen never swerved from his conviction that monarchy was ordained by God as the best form of government, but he despised the oligarchy that controlled it and the courtiers that preyed upon it. He was not a precursor of the tory democracy of the nineteenth century; he was one of the last links with the old world of pre-industrial Britain, a marvelous anachronism who left his mark upon his own time by simply refusing to change his principles to suit the current fashion. At the end of his life he was still secure in the belief that he had been true to himself. Few of his colleagues could boast a greater victory.

NOTES

1. John Sheffield, duke of Buckingham, *The Works of John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, Marquis of Normandy, and Duke of Buckingham* (London, 1753), I, 145-146.
2. William Shippen, "Letter to C.C. about a Stag Hunt", Margaret G. Willis, trans. (Unpublished translation, Waynesboro, Va., 1967).
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. Otis Brooke, *Virgil, a Study in Civilized Poetry* (Oxford, 1963), p. 388.
7. Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England Begun in the Year 1641*, W. Dunn Macray, ed. (Oxford, 1888), IV, 191; C.V. Wedgwood, *The King's War, 1641-1647* (Manchester, 1958), p. 513.
8. Shippen, "Letter to C.C."
9. David Harris Willson, *King James VI and I* (London, 1956), p. 432.
10. Shippen, "Letter to C.C."
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. Clarendon, IV, 465-467.
15. Shippen, "Letter to C.C."

16. C.V. Wedgwood, *A Coffin for King Charles, the Trial and Execution of Charles I* (New York, 1964), p. 223.

17. George S. Dugdale, *Whitehall Through the Centuries* (London, 1950), p. 19.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 38-39.

20. Shippen, "Letter to C.C."

21. *Ibid.*

22. "An Epistle to N. Rowe, Esq.; by William Shippen, Esq." appeared in *Examen Miscellaneum* published in London in 1702. The poem was translated from the Latin at this time by H. Lloyd; this version is based on a more recent translation by Margaret G. Willis.

23. Frederick S. Boas, *An Introduction to Eighteenth-Century Drama, 1700-1780* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 2-8.

24. William Shippen, "Hymn to the Sun" in Nicholas Rowe's, *The Ambitious Stepmother* (London, 1701), p. 41.

25. Charles Harding Firth in D.N.B., s.v. "Nicholas Rowe."

26. The work was originally published in Latin in 1698 in a collection entitled *Examen Poeticum Duplex: Sive Musarum Anglicanarum delectus alter, cui subjicitur Epigrammatum seu Poematum minorum specimen novum.*

27. Frank H. Ellis, ed., *Poems on Affairs of State, Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660-1714*, vol. VI, New Haven, 1970, p. 650.

28. William Shippen, *Faction Display'd. A Poem* (London, 1704).

29. Ellis, p. 648. Three lines (377-379) are Dryden's outright; many of its scattered details (e.g. 129, 301, 473) and even something of its tone (532-33) can be traced to him. I am indebted to Dr. Ellis for this information.

30. Shippen, *Faction Display'd*, p. 20.

31. Ellis, p. 650.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 649.

33. *Ibid.*