Swift’s “Skinnibonia”:
A New Poem from Lady Acheson’s Manuscript

Abstract. Swift and Lady Acheson began, but did not complete, a manuscript compilation of poems he wrote at Market Hill. This volume, here described in detail for the first time, provides the text of Swift’s previously unpublished “Excellent New Panegyrick on Skinnibonia” (1728), a 100-line poem about Lady Acheson. The volume includes numerous non-Swift poems, mostly on Irish topics and in some cases unpublished. A full chronological listing of Swift’s Market Hill writings reveals Swift’s 1728–29 Market Hill visit to have been a time of intense productivity.

Few holographs of Swift’s poems survive, and those few had nearly all been discovered by the mid-twentieth century. The only holographs we have that were not available to Sir Harold Williams1 are the “Apollo to the Dean” fragment at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, a three-line snippet at Princeton, the “Wicked Treasonable Libel” manuscript at the University at Buffalo, and Lady Acheson’s recently discovered manuscript of Swift’s poems, which I will describe in the following pages.2 Swift’s friends Charles Ford and Esther Johnson (Stella) maintained

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2 The public collections, and a number of private ones, were canvassed by Alexander Lindsay for his bibliography of Swift manuscripts in the Index of English Literary Manuscripts, Volume III: 1700–1800, Part 4 (London and Washington: Mansell, 1997), pp. 15–91. Aside from Lady Acheson’s manuscript, the new holographs, Lindsay SwJ 17, SwJ 5, and SwJ 376, were first reported, respectively, in David Woolley, “Swift’s Copy of Gulliver’s Travels: The Armagh Gulliver, Hyde’s Edition, and Swift’s Earliest Corrections,” The Art of Jonathan Swift, ed. Clive T. Probyn (London: Vision, 1978), p. 178n84; and my articles “Thomas Sheridan and Swift,” Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture, 9 (1979), 106, and “Writing Libels on the Germans: Swift’s ‘Wicked Treasonable Libel,’ ” Swift: The Enigmatic Dean, eds Rudolf Freiburg, Arno Lößler, Wolfgang Zach (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998), pp. 303–16. I should acknowledge that the Swift Poems Project has a list of five or six unlocated holographs, and no doubt most, if they still exist, will prove to be in private hands.
important manuscript collections of his writing, we know; now Anne, Lady Acheson can be added to the list of such collectors.3

In 1730, for the third time Swift visited Lady Acheson and her husband, Sir Arthur Acheson, Bart, at their Market Hill estate, between Newry and Armagh in the north of Ireland.4 During this third visit, he gave her a blank book, inscribing her name and the year on the flyleaf (Figure 1), and she and Swift began to copy

![Figure 1. Swift's flyleaf inscription, actual size.](image)

his recent poems into it. This book is of immediately obvious significance because it presents a previously unpublished poem by Swift, but it contains important new texts of several other Swift poems as well, and it permits correcting the dating of a number of Swift poems.5 In turn, these redatings offer scholars new lines of inquiry about the development of Swift’s satire and his poetic techniques in the period 1728–32. The volume should therefore make possible a new assessment of the significance of Swift’s relationship with Lady Acheson in this period. It moreover offers specialists in eighteenth-century Irish culture a body of new evidence to assess and interpret.

Since 1730, this volume (for convenience here referred to as “the Acheson manuscript”) has been continuously in the possession of the Achesons or their direct descendants. It is presently owned by Patrick Baron von Stauffenberg and Dr Maya Baroness von Stauffenberg of Frankfurt. For their extraordinarily kind and hospitable cooperation I am grateful, as I am also for their willingness to allow

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3 Ford’s manuscripts are now in the Forst Collection of the National Art Library (Victoria and Albert Museum), in the Pierpont Morgan Library, and in the Rothschild Collection (Trinity College, Cambridge); for the provenance of the Rothschild manuscripts, see Lindsay, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, p. 16. Johnson’s manuscript (Woburn Abbey MS HMC 297) has been missing since 1951, when it was displayed at the Bibliothèque Nationale (see *Le Livre anglais: trésors des collections anglaises* [Paris, 1951], p. 86), though ownership of the manuscript is claimed by the Bedford Estates Archive, Woburn Abbey; see my “Stella’s Manuscript of Swift’s Poems,” *Swift and His Contexts*, eds John Irwin Fischer, Hermann J. Real, and James Woolley (New York: AMS, 1989), pp. 115–32; and Lindsay, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, p. 17.

4 Sir Arthur’s obituary in the *Dublin Journal*, 11 February 1748/9, described his estate as “very large”; it also described him as “a very ingenious Gentleman, an excellent Scholar and a most agreeable Companion, extremely esteemed, and admired by the greatest Genius this Nation ever produced” (Swift).

5 The new texts will be collated in the Cambridge Works of Jonathan Swift’s poetry volumes, which James McLaverty and I are editing.
Swift’s “Skinnibonia”  311

me to share their treasure with other scholars here. The manuscript came to the present owners through Baron von Stauffenberg’s mother, the former Lady Camilla Acheson, daughter of the fifth Earl of Gosford.

Except for an uninformative quotation of one couplet in Notes and Queries in 1876, the manuscript’s existence remained unknown until Victoria Glendinning mentioned it in her 1998 life of Swift. Hermann Real and I were able to examine the manuscript for two days in 2003; I transcribed poems and he proofread my transcripts. In 2004, I returned for two days of study, and in 2008, he and I visited again in order to photograph the manuscript. The book is described in detail here for the first time.

Description of the Acheson Manuscript

The Acheson manuscript is a small quarto bound in green vellum; its 47 quarto halfsheets are variously quired to form 9 gatherings, originally totalling 94 leaves of approximately 19 × 14 cm. There is no title page. Of the 112 pages of writing, the first 31 are used by Swift and Lady Acheson, and 81 more are used by later scribes. The contents, almost entirely verse, are fair copies and appear usually to have been copied from manuscript separates rather than printed sources. After 1730, the book was probably not used again until after Sir Arthur’s death in 1749. The book then began to be filled by poems that he would have collected (items 5 and following in the list below), often inscribed by Sir Archibald Acheson, son of Sir Arthur and Anne, with a few post-1749 additions collected by Sir Archibald up to about 1775. Only some of the post-1730 additions are poems by Swift, and most of them are not directly connected to the Acheson family. Thus what

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6 I am equally grateful to Hermann Real for his resourceful and energetic collaboration.


8 Baron and Baroness von Stauffenberg have permitted me to deposit photographs of the manuscript in the Ehrenpreis Centre for Swift Studies, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität.

9 The volume collates 4°: [1]6 [2]10 [3]12 [4]10 [5]12 [6]10 [7]12 [8]10 [9]8 [-[9]4,5,6,7]; 94 leaves before excisions. (The varying number of leaves per gathering is not unusual in blank books of this period.) Of the 94 leaves, the first ([1]1) and last ([9]8) serve as endpapers and the second ([1]2) as a flyleaf; 8 leaves have been excised, including what would have been the back flyleaf. The writing runs from leaf [1]3 to leaf [6]11, for a total of 112 pages of writing; within that span, one leaf, [2]10, has been excised, and 4 pages have been left blank as indicated in the list below. Though the paper is of good quality, the book is modest both in leaf size and in binding: the plain green vellum was the standard binding for ordinary blank books in this period and suggests no effort to be lavish. When Lord Orrery gave Swift an elaborately bound blank book as a birthday present two years later, Swift did not use it, saying it was “too neatly guilt for me to soil” (Poems, ed. Williams, II, 611 and n).

10 The first 29 pages have been numbered. The excised leaf [2]10 fell within the “Answer to Lindsay” and presumably contained a copying error on Swift’s part (the poem is complete without the excised leaf).
began as a compilation of work by a single poet and family guest became a more miscellaneous assortment of poems, some of great Irish interest and some of them unpublished. One of few surviving manuscript collections of eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish verse, this volume contains twenty-nine poems in all.\textsuperscript{11}

The manuscript was written by a number of scribes. Seven of the hands transcribed more than one poem: Jonathan Swift, Lady Acheson, her son Sir Archibald Acheson, and four unidentified persons here called Hand A, Hand B, Hand C, and Hand D.\textsuperscript{12} In the following list, items have been numbered for convenient reference.\textsuperscript{13}

1. [Swift.] “My Lady’s lamentation, and complaint against the Dean. At Market­hill[.] Jul. 28th 1728”; pp. 1–9. Swift’s hand; lines numbered by tens in the left margins; 227 lines, with a missed line inserted in Swift’s hand; catchwords (Figure 2). First published by Deane Swift in 1765 from a manuscript no longer extant, presumably the one Sir Walter Scott mentions in his 1824 edition of Swift’s \textit{Works}, XV, 215.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2.png}
\caption{Part of Swift’s “My Lady’s Lamentation,” with his insertion, from p. 1; actual size.}
\end{figure}


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\textsuperscript{11} Counting Robert Lindsay’s epigram (item 4 in the following list) and not counting Harley’s prose (item 27).

\textsuperscript{12} On Lady Acheson’s handwriting, see “Stella’s Manuscript of Swift’s Poems.” I have identified Sir Archibald Acheson’s hand by comparing the manuscript with known samples of his writing from the National Archives of Ireland (M648–657, letters of Sir Archibald to the fourth Viscount Townshend, 1772); the same handwriting appears in Sir Archibald to Townshend (by then first Marquess), 20 October 1778, BL MS Add. 50006, f. 73. I have ruled out Sir Arthur Acheson as a possible scribe by comparing the manuscript with known samples of his writing from the Houghton Library, Harvard University (bMS 188.5, Sir Arthur to George Bubb Dodington, 23 October 1735), and the Princeton University Library (MS RTC 01, no 121, item 27: Swift to James Stopford, 30 August 1729, addressed and franked by Sir Arthur).

\textsuperscript{13} See Appendix for a first-line index to the manuscript.
margin; one or two corrections in Swift’s hand (Figure 3). Previously unpublished.

Figure 3. Part of Swift’s “Skinnibonia” from p. 11. In Lady Acheson’s hand with an insertion by Swift in line 3; 130 percent of actual size.

3. [Swift.] “The grand Question debated, Whether Hamilton’s Bawn shall be turned into a Malt-house or a Barrack. September 2 1728”; pp. 15–24. Lady Acheson’s hand with a correction by Swift. Lines numbered by tens at the left margin: 168 lines plus a 4-line insert (beginning “Go bring me my smock”), a 2-line insert (beginning “Hist, Huzzy”), and a 16-line insert beginning “Wherever you see a Cassock and gown”). First published, from a different manuscript, in London in January 1732 (Foxon S904).

4. [Lindsay, Robert, and Swift.] “Paulus By Mr L——. Septbr 7th 1728” and “The Answer By …. ” pp. 25–[31]. Both poems are in Swift’s hand with his corrections. Catchwords. First published, from a different manuscript, in William King’s The Dreamer (London, 1754). Unlike the Dreamer text, this one does not date Lindsay’s contribution as from Dublin, leaving open the possibility that he was visiting at Market Hill.

Two pages, [32–33], have been left blank to separate items 1–4 from items 5–29.


7. [Swift.] [“Epistle to a Lady,” untitled]. “Wrote in ye: year 1728”; pp. [43–54]. Hand A. First published in London in November 1733 (Foxon S841). This manuscript is the only external evidence for 1728 as the date of composition.

8. Lindsay, [Robert], “Longford’s Glyn By Mr Lindsay”; pp. [55–57]. Hand A. Unpublished. Another MS copy, unattributed, is bound with eighteenth-
century Dublin halfsheets in the Cambridge University Library: Hib. 3.730.1, item 102. This poem shares only its subject with Patrick Delany’s poem *Longford’s Glin: A True History* (London, 1732), but the Lindsay attribution lends colour to the generally unsupported statement in various biographical sources that he was a poet. The poem was published without attribution in the *London Chronicle*, 10 January 1758.


p. [60]: blank

10. Williams, Sir Charles Hanbury. “An Ode to the Honble Henry Fox on ye Marriage of the Duchess of Manchester to Ed Esq: by S: Charles Hanbury Williams 1746”; pp. [61–64]. Hand B. First published in London in 1746 (Foxon W488–90). In this poem, the Duchess of Manchester, a widow sought after by Henry Fox as well as others, has instead been “conquered” by the Irishman Edward Hussey. This and the following two Hussey-related items were published anonymously.

11. [Williams, Sir Charles Hanbury.] “An Ode addressed to the Author of The Conquered Duchess in answer to that celebrated Performance”; pp. [65–68]. Hand B. First published in London in 1746 (Foxon W486). This poem says that the Duchess is no worse than any other woman “who, for her Pleasure, barters Fame!” and names names.

12. “Hussey to S: Charles Hanbury Williams or the Rural Reflections of a Welsh Poet”; pp. [69–73]. First published in London in 1746 (Foxon H346). Despite the title, this seems to be written in Williams’s persona, and has him hiding in Wales in fear of Hussey’s retaliation. There are references to “Hibernia’s Sons” and to Chesterfield as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Hand B.

p. [74]: blank


14. “An Epigram on Lord Orrery’s Publishing his remarks on Dean Swift’s Writings and George Faulkners reprinting Them in 1751”; p. [78]. Sir Archibald Acheson’s hand. There was an early publication.14

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14 See João Fróes, “Contemporary Writings in Answer to Orrery’s Remarks on Swift,” p. 61 in this volume.
Swift’s “Skinnibonia” 315

15. “The Humble Petition of Margaret Woffington, an Irish Actress, to His Grace the Duke of Dorset Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; Presented in November 1751”; pp. [79–82]. Published as a halfsheet, Mrs. Woffington’s Petition to his G——e the L——d L——t. of Ireland [Dublin, 1751] (ESTC t226010); reprinted in the London Magazine, December 1751. Another copy is in the Irish miscellany Trinity College Dublin MS 7973. In the poem, Woffington is described as wanting to kiss Dorset. The poem alludes to Owen MacSwiney, the opera manager, whom the halfsheet calls “a Gentleman well known among the gay and polite in England, formerly a Director of the Theatre as mentioned in the Life of C. Cibber, Esq;” the TCD manuscript identifies him bluntly as “old M: Swiney a pimp.” Sir Archibald Acheson’s hand.

16. “An Epigram wrote by a Person in Cork upon Sir R: Cox Bar’ 1754”; p. [83]. Not in ESTC. The reference is to Sir Richard Cox, second Baronet, who was Collector of Customs for the Port of Cork starting in 1750 and was dismissed in January 1754; the epigram gloats over the dismissal. Sir Archibald Acheson’s hand.

17. Untitled 8-line epigram beginning “As Satan stept into the House tother day”; p. [84]. Hand C. The epigram concerns Arthur Rochfort, whose brother Robert, Lord Bellfield (later Earl of Belvedere) had won an enormous judgement against him for criminal conversation with Robert’s wife Mary about 1743. (The brothers were sons of Swift’s Gaulstown friend George Rochfort.) Arthur, a member of the Irish House of Commons, is described as Satan’s “Prime agent” and linked with another of Satan’s agents, Sir Thomas Prendergast, Swift’s “noisy Tom,” also attacked in “The Legion Club.” It is envisaged that Arthur Rochfort and Prendergast will be taken to hell, where as punishment Arthur will have to meet his sister-in-law and Prendergast his wife. Sir Archibald Acheson’s annotations describe Lady Prendergast as “a woman of bad Character.” Probably about 1754–55.

18. “The Court Martials Address to his Majesty”; p. [85]. Hand C. A 14-line epigram ridiculing the jury in the court martial of Admiral Byng (1757) for finding him guilty and at the same time recommending royal clemency. The epigram was printed in newspapers at the time.16

19. [Swift.] “A Character Satyr & Panygerick [sic] on the Legion Club”; pp. [86–98]. Hand C; some corrections and notes in Sir Archibald Acheson’s hand. Like some other manuscripts of the poem, this one adds a concluding couplet (here “take them Satan as your due / all except the fifty two”). This and items 20–24 interrupt the general chronological sequence to accommodate poems from c.1736. The poem may have been first printed in the London Magazine

16 For example, London Chronicle (3 March 1757).
for June 1736, but the Acheson manuscript does not derive from that or any
other printed text.

First published in London in the General Evening Post, 11 November 1735,
though it seems to have circulated widely in manuscript.17

See note to item 20.

22. [Browne, Isaac Hawkins.] “In imitation of M’ Thompson”; pp. [102–3]. Hand
C. See note to item 20.

23. [Browne, Isaac Hawkins.] “In imitation of M’ Pope”; pp. [103–4]. Hand C.
See note to item 20.

Chesterfield”; pp. [105–6]. Hand D. Published in the Gentleman’s Magazine,
November 1736.

Acheson’s hand. As Acheson’s note explains, the poem concerns “Lord Kildare
of Carton” and the King’s birthday ball at Dublin Castle, 10 November 1756.
James Fitz-Gerald, 20th Earl of Kildare, became Duke of Leinster in 1766.
Another text of the poem is found among the Smythe of Barbavilla poems,
Trinity College Dublin MS 11198; I have found no printed text.

26. “Verses on the Countess of Brandon, by a halffay officer, who threaten’d by
Letter to Print them, if she did not send him some Money, for both Which
she intends prosecuting him at Law[;] wrote in the year 1766”; p. [111]. Sir
Archibald Acheson’s hand. The poem described the countess as an “old Dame
in Wickedness, Grown Grey” and alludes to her patronage of the Dublin actor
and theater manager Henry Mossop (?1729–74). I have traced no printing of
this poem.

27. Harley, Thomas. “Part of A Very Spirited Address by the Right Honourable
[Thomas] Harley Esq’ Alderman of London to The Livery and Others, The
Electors for the City of London, Published after The General Election, in
Decem’ 1774”; p. [112]; prose. Sir Archibald Acheson’s hand. A similar text
to that in Address of the Right Honourable Thomas Harley, to the Livery of
London [?Hereford, 1774]; copy BL C.116.i.4 (133).

28. Hackett, James. Lines addressed to Sir Archibald Acheson Bart. by James
Hackett, 9 December 1754; pp. [113–15]. A poem with a prefatory letter,
dated “1734” in what must be a scribal error. It refers to Sir Arthur Acheson’s

17 For the attribution, see Poems upon Various Subjects, Latin and English. By the Late Isaac Haukins
Browne, Esq; Published by His Son (London: Nourse and Marsh, 1768), sig. A1v; for the poem’s
eyearly circulation, see H. F. B. Brett-Smith’s edition of Browne’s A Pipe of Tobacco (Oxford: Basil
Blackwell, 1933), pp. 8–9; Brett-Smith notes that the tobacco-pipe poems were printed in the London
Evening-Post, 2 December 1735, as “handed about in M. S.”
funerary monument in Mullabrack Church at Market Hill; Sir Arthur died in 1749, and it would appear that it took several years for the monument, by the sculptor John van Nost, to be erected. Hackett was a local clergyman. The poem says that Sir Arthur would sometimes “touch the Lyre” and “joyn the tuneful train.” He is praised for his hospitality, wit, and piety, and described as “by Leslie[,] Swift and [George Bubb] Doddington belov’d.” This handwriting does not appear elsewhere in the manuscript; note in Sir Archibald Acheson’s hand. I have found no printing of the poem.


None of the Swift-related texts derives from a printed source; each of the Swift texts has independent textual importance and represents a previously unknown compositional stage of its poem. The “Grand Question Debated” text, item 3, settles the doubt about its year of composition—1728, not 1729—and preserves, as does the holograph in the Rothschild Collection, the process of its composition, showing a text with three additional passages marked for insertion. The “Epistle to a Lady” text, item 7, is also dated 1728, a dating that suggests Market Hill composition and that must be taken seriously when we recall that the poem is addressed to Lady Acheson and that an Acheson family member might well be reliably informed about the poem’s date. The volume includes “The Legion Club,” item 19, one of a dozen manuscripts of it that the Swift Poems Project has located (Figure 4).

Lady Acheson and Swift would seem originally to have thought of the volume as a sequel to the transcript of Swift’s poems by Esther Johnson (Stella). After her death in January 1728, Swift presented the Johnson volume to Lady Acheson, and into it she transcribed one Market Hill poem, “On the Five Ladies at Sots-Hole.” On examining the gift, it would have been easy for Lady Acheson to realize that its preparation had had more than mere clerical significance for Johnson. Not only was Johnson collecting and preserving, in chronological order, poems Swift had written since the 1711 Miscellanies, but many of the poems she transcribed were

18 Sir Archibald identifies Hackett as having been the curate of Loughgilly and as having died in 1775. For other details of Hackett’s clerical career, and for the text of the inscription on Sir Arthur’s handsome monument, which is still to be seen in Mullabrack Church, see J. B. Leslie, Armagh Clergy and Parishes (Dundalk: Tempest, 1911), pp. 301, 313. I am grateful to the Revd Neville Hughes, rector of Mullabrack, and to the Irish Architectural Archive for photographs of the monument.


20 Issues of dating are examined in the listing of Swift’s Market Hill writings, below.

addressed to her. For Lady Acheson to inscribe a poem in that book probably indicated her willingness, if not indeed her wish, to assume something like the role Johnson had played as Swift’s amanuensis. Whether she copied “On the Five Ladies at Sots-Hole” into Stella’s book on her own initiative or at Swift’s suggestion I do not know, but although there was plenty of room for more poems, she copied no more into that book. Perhaps she became aware that Swift preferred to think of the book as a relic of the time when Stella was his copyist; after all, the book had not been used since 1722. Lady Acheson continued to transcribe Swift’s Market Hill writings, however, and it would have become obvious both to her and to Swift that in a substantial proportion of these transcripts she was, somewhat as Esther Johnson had been, both the scribe and the subject. Swift’s gift of a book in which they could preserve these poems signified, almost certainly, both affection for her and an awareness that the Market Hill poems were important and worth preserving.

Lady Acheson’s new book was more than large enough to hold all of Swift’s approximately twenty Market Hill poems, but the transcription project did not get very far. Although Swift’s three Market Hill visits stretched from June 1728 to September 1730, the compilation stops after only four of the 1728 poems, plus an epigram by Robert Lindsay that Swift answered. The 1730 visit may have been under strained circumstances; Ehrenpreis conjectures that Swift spent much of it

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22 Only forty of the book’s eighty-five leaves had been written on; see Woolley, “Stella’s Manuscript of Swift’s Poems,” pp. 116–21.
Swift’s “Skinnibonia” at the house of an Acheson neighbour, Henry Leslie, and in his September 1730 poem explaining that he would not, after all, build on Market Hill land leased from Sir Arthur, Swift accuses him of being an inattentive host. Swift decided not to return to Market Hill in the summer of 1731, and by 1732, if not before, the Achesons had separated. Possibly for that reason, Lady Acheson’s miscellany was discontinued, though not before she copied into her book one poem that has never been published, Swift’s “An Excellent New Panegyrick on Skinnibonia,” a mock-panegyrical of 100 lines.

“Skinnibonia”

In September or October of 1728, Thomas Sheridan seems to have visited Swift at Market Hill. He undoubtedly read Swift’s new poems, and he jotted a note to himself, “To write to m’ Pope about Skinnybonia——” It is now clear enough that Sheridan’s note alludes to Swift’s “Excellent New Panegyrick,” henceforth referred to by the short title “Skinnibonia.” On 12 October, Pope replied, telling Sheridan that he had written to Swift and had “inserted a Hint or two of his Libelling the Lady of the family; in as innocent a manner, as he does it, he will hardly suspect I had any Information of it.” From this it appears that Sheridan had stressed the “innocent” character of the “Skinnibonia” libel but also that Swift was reluctant to have it known that he was writing such poems.

The “Skinnibonia” text is a fair copy in Lady Acheson’s handwriting (Figure 5), with minor corrections in Swift’s handwriting. The poem consists of a six-line prelude, followed by four loosely-related parts or movements: the first, describing Lady Acheson’s “quick spirits” and her fidgety gestures, jocularly connects her fidgeting with her leanness; the second part describes her prudish annoyance when she and Swift come upon peasant women carelessly revealing their legs and buttocks; the third part describes her cry of alarm when the wind gets underneath her hoop petticoat and threatens her own modesty; and the fourth part is a fantasia on

23 Ehrenpreis, *Dean Swift*, p. 666.
26 The name Skinnibonia also appears in “Lady A——s——n Weary of the Dean” as Faulkner published it. See *Poems*, ed. Williams, III, 861 and textual note. The latter poem was probably written in the fall of 1728, after Swift had been at Market Hill three months and before the onset of winter (lines 9, 23).
27 Thomas Sheridan notebooks, Gilbert MS 124 (flyleaf), Dublin and Irish Collections, Dublin City Public Libraries and Archive. The note is undated.
her very modish, very high-heeled shoes. Lady Acheson was the heiress of Swift’s wealthy friend, the Irish Lord Chancellor Philip Savage; and the subtext of each part of the poem is that the high fashion to which she had been bred misrepresented the true woman who was within—or who should be within. The high fashion is betokened here not only by the flamboyant heels but also by the expensive silks and brocades and a ruby necklace. To say that clothing misrepresents the person clothed invites us to imagine the person unclothed, and daringly—no doubt smilingly but still daringly—the poem does tempt its listeners or readers to imagine female bodies unclothed:

An excellent new Panegyrick on Skinnibonia

August 12 1728

Skinnibonia, brown and bright,
Consort lean of comely Knight,
Or, to raise thy Title high’r,
Sherriffess of Armagh-shire:
5  Thou be subject of my quill
Nut-brown pride of Market-hill:
Let me, for I know them well,
All thy various motions tell,
How thy spirits quick extend
10  To each Toe and fingers end;
Wonder not they travel so,
Little way they have to go,
Skin and bone so closely fixt,
No intruding flesh betwixt.
15  Now each nimble finger skips
O’r thy Nose, and Chin, and lips,
O’r thy Neck with nails respectless
Scratching round a ruby necklace;
While the joggings of thy feet
20  To thy head in consort meet.
Happy tis that things are thus
For S’ Arthur and for us,
Had thy Skin with flesh been lin’d,
Sure, thy spirits close confin’d,
25  Wanting room from thence to sally,
In thy dang’rous head would rally:
An excellent new Panegyrick on Skinnibonia
August 12, 1728

Numb: 2.

Skinnibonia, brown and bright,
Consort lean of comely Knight,
Or, to raise thy Title high:
Skerriffess of Armagh-shire:
Thou be subject of my quill
Nut-brown pride of Market-hill:
Let me, for I know them well,
All thy various motions tell,
How thy spirits quick extend
To each toe and fingers end;
Wonder not they travel so,
Little way they have to go,
Skin and bone so closely fixt,
No intruding flesh betwixt.
Now each nimble finger skips
Or thy nose, and chin, and lips,
Or thy neck with nails respectless
Scratching round a ruby necklace;
While the joggings of thy feet
To thy head in comfort meet.
Where that busy working pate
Might breed factions in the state,
Or instruct thee how to write
Libels on the Dean and Knight.

When the smock-less Nymphs expose
Pairs of legs from knees to toes,
How you scold to see them naked,
Grim’d with dirt by Phebus baked!

In what fury when you spy’d
Her that show’d her brown back-side?
How your eyes were fixt upon her
Zealous for your sexes honor!
Men might think that every Dame
Were she stript would show the same.

Leanest, lightest Skinnibony,
Zephyr’s Mistress, Echo’s Crony;
Zephyr, when you chanc’d to stoop
Strove to get beneath your hoop,
And to waft you Lord knows where,
To his Palace high in air:
But the Dean with counter-charm
Interpos’d his valiant arm,
Lent a Pin to make all tight;
Zephyr fled with grief and spight.
Echo, from the flanker-wall
Flew to ayd you at your squawl;
Who that saw, must be a witch
To distinguish which was which;
Had it not been after dinner
Skinny would be thought the thinner:
Echo wondred why your bones
Were not yet transform’d to stones:
Said, that Laces and Brocadoes
Were but lost in cloathing shadows;
Strip but off that useless cloathing
Soon your Skin would dry to nothing,
Nor, of woman ought remain
But repeating words in vain.
Swift's “Skinnibonia”

65 Echo vow'd she'd be your sister
In good fortune and sinister,
Bear you where no Dean tormentor
Where no teasing Knight would venter;
Round the rocks and cliffs to stray,

70 O're the hills and far away;
Ever with your selves conversing,
Or the shepherds plaints rehearsing.

Prudent husbands often use
To take down the wedding Shoes;

75 Certain cure for womens grumbling:
Take down yours to cure your stumbling,
Wonder not you walk a-wry
With each heel six inches high;
But, S' Arthur I'll maintain

80 Has good reason to complain:
'Tis a most notorious cheat
Both in measure and in weight,
Half a foot of wife together
Clearly lost in wood and leather.

85 Though, according to the Letter
John takes Joan for worse or better,
Still it must be understood
What he takes is flesh and blood;
Honest dealers never use

90 In the count to reckon shoes:
When for goods we have contracted
Pay for paper and for Packthread!

Now, S' Arthur, to reduce
This good doctrine into use;

95 Since a petticoat in fashion
Is nine yards by computation,
Get my Lady’s heels cut shorter
But four Inches and a quarter;
This will save your honor clear

100 Twenty pound in Silks a year.
The poem’s prelude (ll. 1–6) addresses Skinnibonia directly, glancing at her dark complexion and referring, I think superciliously, to Sir Arthur’s recent appointment as high sheriff of County Armagh. Next, the first main part of the poem (ll. 7–30) describes Lady Acheson’s kinetic gestures, much as they are described in other Market Hill poems: she fidgets, she scratches herself, she “jogs” her feet. If Skinnibonia had had any flesh under her skin, the “spirits quick” in her “dang’rous head” could have resulted in “Libels on the Dean and Knight” or indeed in sedition (“factions in the state”), so on balance, all her “motion” is a “Happy” thing. At a time when plumpness was considered healthy, there is an element of concern for her health in the reference to her leanness, and this concern also accounts for Swift’s repeated efforts to enlist her in exercise, for the sake of strengthening her heart, lungs, and stomach.

Apparently, in the Acheson household, a relaxed and freewheeling spirit of flirtatious raillery thrived, and apparently Swift and Lady Acheson happily identified each other as the two with the quickest spirits. Or as Swift explained (or boasted) to Sheridan a month later, “My Lady is perpetually quarrelling with Sir Ar—— and me, and shews every Creature the Libels I have writ against her.” When this poem was written, Swift was 60 and Lady Acheson was probably about 35; Sir Arthur was 40. The Achesons had been married for about 13 years and had several children. Swift licenses the flirtation by repeatedly allying himself with Sir Arthur. Lady Acheson loved these attentions—as Lord Orrery found to his surprise in 1732 when she invited Swift and him to dinner and read him Swift’s seemingly uncomplimentary poem, “Death and Daphne.” Orrery politely “protested” that Daphne could not have been meant for her, but, as Orrery tells it,

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31 Swift to Sheridan, 18 September 1728, Correspondence, ed. Woolley, III, 194.
32 The Achesons married in 1715: John Lodge, The Peerage of Ireland, rev. Mervyn Archdall, 7 vols (Dublin: Moore, 1789), VI, 82. Archdall shows that the Achesons had seven children: five sons, Nicholas (buried 1717), Philip (buried 1727), Archibald (born 1718), Thomas-Philip (died young), and Arthur (married 1753), and two daughters, Anne (married 1742) and Nichola (married 1746). Archibald was the eldest surviving son. The burial dates come from G. E. C., The Complete Baronetage, II (Exeter: Pollard, 1902), 335. Nora Crow Jaffe’s estimate of Lady Acheson’s age seems reasonable: Jaffe, “Swift and the ‘agreeable young Lady, but extremely lean,’” Contemporary Studies of Swift’s Poetry, eds John Irwin Fischer and Donald C. Mell Jr (Newark: Delaware University Press, 1981), p. 150.
the Dean immediately burst into a fit of laughter. “You fancy, says he, that you are very polite, but you are much mistaken. That Lady had rather be a DAPHNE drawn by me, than a SACHARISSA by any other pencil.” She confirmed what he had said, with great earnestness. 33

On the whole, Swift seems to have been blissfully happy at Market Hill. He described his visit in idyllic terms: “I ... love the Retirement here, and the Civility of my Hosts,” he told Sheridan on 2 August 1728. 34 Upon his return to Dublin the following February, he recounted his Market Hill experience to Pope:

I liv’d very easily in the country: Sir A. is a man of sense, and a scholar, has a good voice, and my Lady a better [thus Swift could hear them during his bouts of deafness]; she is perfectly well bred, and desirous to improve her understanding, which is very good, but cultivated too much like a fine Lady. She was my pupil there, and severely chid when she read wrong; with that, and walking and making twenty little amusing improvements, and writing family verses of mirth by way of libels on my Lady, my time past very well and in very great order 35

—by which I think Swift meant “in very good health.” 36 Swift was an avid walker around the Acheson demesne, and an unidyllic fact of Market Hill life that caught his imagination was the inconveniently deposited outdoor excretions of the local country people. He had already written about the subject in “My Lady’s Lamentation and Complaint against the Dean”: there, the “girls of the village” come scavenging for firewood, and

yet are so kind
To leave something behind:
No more need be said on’t,
I smell when I tread on’t. 37

It was probably during this 1728 visit to Market Hill that along with his ditching, thatching, tree-cutting, pig-sty building, rat-catching, and butter-churning, his construction of “zigzacks and walks,” grottoes, bowers, arbours, and other “little amusing improvements,” 38 Swift supervised the construction of two privies on the Acheson estate, a project he describes in epic detail in “A Panegyrick on the

33 Orrery, Remarks, ed. Fróes, pp. 168, 342. I agree with Fróes’s conjecture that the scene occurred “in 1732, and after Lady Acheson’s separation from her husband” (p. 172).
34 Swift, Correspondence, ed. Woolley, III, 192.
35 Swift, Correspondence, ed. Woolley, III, 209.
36 Swift, Correspondence, ed. Woolley, III, 209.
37 Poems, ed. Williams, III, 857. The poem is dated 28 July 1728.
D——n, in the Person of a Lady in the North.” Here he mentions not only these temples to the goddess Cloacina but what occasioned their construction, namely, “some Devotion” to Cloacina

Among our harmless Northern Swains;
Whose Off’ring plac’t in golden Ranks,
Adorn our chrystal River’s Banks:
Nor seldom grace the flow’ry downs,
With spiral Tops, and Copple-Crowns. (ll. 300–4)

By “luckless Error led,” Lady Acheson steps in these “Off’rings,” soiling her embroidered shoes and her petticoat (ll. 299–318).

Although in the “Panegyrick on the Dean,” Swift credited these “Off’rings” to “Swains,” he also, for the sake of affronting the stock genteel dissociation of ladies from bodily processes, liked to attribute the al fresco defecation to women, as he had done in “My Lady’s Lamentation.” Such an affront is what Swift is up to in the second part of “Skinnibonia” (ll. 31–40), which again takes us outdoors to describe Lady Acheson’s coming upon what, if I correctly understand it, is a scene of women relieving themselves. In describing the village “Nymphs” as “smock-less,” Swift is identifying their social status. The smock or chemise, a soft, knee-length washable undershirt, not only protected a woman’s bodice and petticoat from her bodily secretions, but it also shielded her from the rougher fabrics that would have been used in these outer garments. Even fairly poor servant women would have worn smocks, so for a woman to be smockless identifies her as abjectly poor. Though the standards of contemporary female dress expected a woman’s legs to be covered down to her instep, the women Swift mentions would have had to squat and lift up their skirts, which in the absence of stockings would expose their “legs from knees to toes,” just as Swift describes; and if such a woman were careless in the process, she would have been likely to expose her “back-side” as well.

Lady Acheson’s conventional feminine dismay that a woman would let a man see her “back-side” comes in for Swift’s arch ridicule: “Men might think that every Dame / Were she stript would show the same” (ll. 39–40). Lady Acheson is the

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39 Poems, ed. Williams, III, 896. For the dating of the poem, see the listing of Swift’s Market Hill writings, below.

40 On the use of smocks among the poor, see Aileen Ribeiro, Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1715–1789 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 85. Although in the early eighteenth century, many Irish countrywomen continued to wear the traditional Irish dress, with a wide ankle-length skirt, it seems certain that the wearer would have worn a smock under the skirt if she could possibly have afforded one. See Caoimhín Ó Danachair, “The Dress of the Irish,” Éire-Ireland 2, no 3 (1967), 8.

41 Both Swift, in A Short View of the State of Ireland (March 1728), and Sheridan, in Intelligencer, no 6 (June 1728), report that in the current impoverished condition of rural Ireland, it was common to see people going barefoot: Jonathan Swift and Thomas Sheridan, The Intelligencer, ed. James Woolley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 89, 179; hereafter cited as Intelligencer, ed. Woolley.
Swift’s “Skinnibonia” 327

“Dame” at hand. Swift has yet more to say about stereotypical female modesty. At a time when women did not wear underdrawers, it was a classic threat to a hoop-skirted woman’s modesty that if she were to stoop, the wind might catch her petticoat and blow it up over her head. In Cadenus and Vanessa, the young women taunt Vanessa for going hoopless:

A Pettycoat without a Hoop!
Sure, you are not asham’d to stoop;
With handsome Garters at your Knees,
No matter what a Fellow sees.42

The poem’s third part (ll. 41–72), again outdoors, describes Skinnibonia as having had the wind blow her skirts up. Evidently, some other part of her costume blew apart as well, but Swift’s “valiant arm” held down the petticoat, and he lent Lady Acheson “a Pin” to hold herself together otherwise—though not before she emitted a cry that echoed off the wall of the “flanker” or side-wing of the house.43 Swift alludes to Ovid’s story of Echo and Narcissus, in which, as punishment for her “Talkativeness,” Echo wastes away among the “rocks and cliffs,” first reduced to mere stone and then to nothing but a voice that presumably could be heard, as in the old refrain, “O’re the hills and far away.” In this fantasy, Lady Acheson was also wasting away, until she was no more than a voice: her “Laces and Brocadoes / Were but lost in cloathing shadows”—in short, “useless.” There is probably also a suggestion that Echo’s “Talkativeness” mirrors Lady Acheson’s.44

The poem’s fourth and final part (ll. 73–100), about the shoes, alludes to the unsavoury proverb that a prudent husband will “take his wife down in her wedding
shoes.” Here *take down* means “humiliate,” a sense that survives in our idiom “to take someone down a peg,” and the proverb means that to show the wife who’s boss, the husband should humiliate her even before she has gotten out of her wedding clothes. Swift, however, twists the conceit so that the prudent husband, instead of “taking down” the wife, takes down her shoes—shortens the high heels which could be part of women’s modish dress in the 1720s. Swift takes anxieties about whether Sir Arthur’s marriage contract brought him less wife than he bargained for and reduces them to a recommendation of heel shortening, not just to keep Lady Acheson from “walk[ing] a-wry” but also to save money on luxurious silk petticoats. And that is where the poem ends.

As “family verses of mirth,” this rollicking poem was probably meant to be read aloud, perhaps with appropriate vocal and gestural mimicry, as after-dinner or evening entertainment, like other Market Hill poems that allude humorously to family members, houseguests, servants, and neighbours. The new poem also seems designed to manage tensions between Swift and his hosts, including the fact that it was Anne rather than Arthur to whom Swift was particularly drawn, spending much time with her taking walks, tutoring her in Plato, Lucretius, Bacon, and

45 “We have a sort of Proverbial Expression of *taking a Woman down in her Wedding Shoes*, if you would bring her to Reason”: *Tatler*, no 231 (30 September 1710), in *The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), III, 196. Contemporary examples: Mary Pendarves to Anne Granville, 5 December 1728: “A saucy flirt, may be humbled, and brought down in her wedding-shoes soon” (*The Epistolary Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, ed. Lady Llanover, 6 vols [London: Bentley, 1861–62], I, 181); Jane Barker, “This transaction [was] very grievous to me; and did, as it were, take me down in my Wedding-shoes” (*The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen* [London: Bettesworth, 1726], p. 114); the husband had “so much of the Man in him, as to take [the wife] down in her Wedding Shoes” (*Cupid' s Decoy: or, The Fatal Snare. Shewing the Miserable Condition Most Men are under in the State of Matrimony*, 3rd ed. [London: Marshall, ?1730], pp. 62–63). See also *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980 [1970]), under “Wife (shrew).”

46 *Oxford English Dictionary*, online edition, under *take*, sense 82 (“take down”).


49 Presumably Lucretius was their source for Epicurus (*Poems*, ed. Williams, III, 891). Another Market Hill poem also alludes to Lucretius (“Journal of a Dublin Lady,” ll. 184–85). Dirk F. Passmann and Heinz J. Vienken point out a copy of Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura* (Amsterdam, 1631), now Pierpont Morgan Library E2.50.1, that belonged to Swift and that has an old ownership signature “Acheson”; they speculate that this is the copy Swift read at Market Hill (Passmann and Vienken, II, 1122). This signature is, however, that of the book collector Archibald Acheson, the third Earl of Gosford (1806–64), from the period when he bore the courtesy title Lord Acheson (1806–49), and the type in this volume is, I think, too tiny for Swift to have read it with any comfort as late as 1728. The volume seems to have been Swift’s gift to John Jackson, presumably at an earlier date; and I doubt for these reasons that Lord Gosford acquired the book by inheritance.

Swift’s “Skinnibonia” 329

Milton, but also criticizing her appearance, her spelling, her pronunciation, her leisure activities, and her taste. The poem confirms the picture of Lady Acheson that we have from Swift’s other Market Hill writings: an intelligent and high-spirited woman, strikingly slender, and too complacent in adopting a fine lady’s airs, though this poem places a new emphasis on superficial prudery as a facet of Lady Acheson’s femininity and situates Swift in full view of what occasions her displays of prudishness.

Swift’s Market Hill Writings and Their Publication

If by “Market Hill writings” we mean not only the pieces, like “Skinnibonia,” that Swift wrote about Market Hill and its inhabitants but also the other pieces of whatever nature that he wrote while at Market Hill, his Market Hill writings include some pieces about Dublin and even about London and its politics.

Swift’s Market Hill visits lasted from early June 1728 to early February 1729, from early June 1729 to 8 October 1729, and from the end of June 1730 to the end of September 1730. Partly on the basis of their placement in the Acheson manuscript, some poems’ received datings can be adjusted. In 1728, after investing great energy in the Intelligencer, Swift virtually abandoned it after No 10, telling Sheridan as early as 2 August, “I have long quitted it, it gave me too much Constraint, and the World does not deserve it.” As is now evident, he turned to verse. The redating of several poems here reveals Swift’s 1728–29 visit to Market Hill to have been a period of exceptional and unconstrained creative production. In the following chronology, revisions of dates of composition assigned by Williams are shown in bold:

51 Poems, ed. Williams, III, 856.
52 Poems, ed. Williams, III, 891.
53 Poems, ed. Williams, III, 891.
54 See Swift, Correspondence, ed. Williams, III, 293, 298–99, 312, 339, 399–400, 405, 409; and Swift, Correspondence, ed. Woolley, III, 190, 213, 242, 260, 315–16, 329. In working out the Market Hill chronology, I have been indebted to Paul V. Thompson’s “A Jonathan Swift Daybook” (1980); though still unpublished, the “Daybook” is obtainable via interlibrary loan (OCLC 45967084) and is also available at the Ehrenpreis Centre for Swift Studies, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität.
55 Correspondence, ed. Woolley, III, 192.
56 This turn, though leading into the broad shift that interests Arthur H. Scouten, is earlier by a year or two; and the first Market Hill visit, as laid out here, makes the shift Scouten traces in 1729–31 a little less striking: “Jonathan Swift’s Progress from Prose to Poetry,” in Robert C. Elliott and Scouten, The Poetry of Jonathan Swift (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1981).
First Visit, June 1728–February 1729

June 1728?
*Intelligencer*, no 8. First published 29 June–2 July 1728.\(^57\) Includes “A Dialogue between Mad Mullinix and Timothy.”

June 1728?

July 1728?

28 July 1728

12 August 1728
“An Excellent New Panegyrick on Skinnibonia.” Previously unpublished. So dated in the Acheson manuscript.

2 September 1728
“The Grand Question Debated” (= “A Soldier and a Scholar”). In Trinity College Cambridge MS Rothschild 2271, a holograph, Swift incorrectly endorses the manuscript 2 September 1729 but gives the 1728 date following the title. Williams and Rogers were inclined to favour the 1729 date, which is used by Faulkner, but the 1728 dating is unambiguous in the Acheson manuscript.\(^58\) If we accept the 1728 dating, lines 175–76 (“So, then you look’d scornful, and snift at the Dean, / As, who shou’d say, *Now, am I Skinny and Lean*?”) plainly allude to “Skinnibonia.” First published January 1732 (Foxon S904).

September 1728
“The Answer [to Lindsay].” First published in William King’s *The Dreamer* (London, 1754). The date is inferred from the date of Lindsay’s poem, 7 September 1728, which appears in the Acheson manuscript as well as *The Dreamer*.

14 September 1728
“On Cutting Down the Old Thorn at Market Hill.” So dated in a contemporary manuscript among the Portland Literary Manuscripts, University of Nottingham Library MS PwV 409. Dated 1728 by Faulkner, but the greater specificity of the Portland manuscript, which was probably collected by the second Earl of Oxford, seems plausible and is accepted by Williams. First published June 1732

\(^57\) For the *Intelligencer* datings, see *Intelligencer*, ed. Woolley, pp. 26–33.

Swift’s “Skinnibonia” 331

(Foxon S869). On 18 September, Swift told Sheridan that he was “taken up so much with long Lampoons on [Lady Acheson] that if I do not produce one every now and then of about two Hundred Lines, I am chid for my Idleness.”

September 1728

“An Answer to the Ballyspellin Ballad.” Sent to the printer 28 September 1728. Swift’s holograph is BL MS Add. 4805, ff. 180–81; Lady Acheson’s transcript is Huntington MS HM 14340.

Fall 1728

“Lady A——s——n Weary of the Dean.” The poem was evidently written in the fall, at a time when Swift had been at Market Hill at least “a Quarter” (l. 9) and expected to continue there until winter (ll. 19–23). Of Swift’s three Market Hill visits, only the one in 1728 fits these points, and the poem must be from 1728, not earlier than September and before the onset of winter. Williams and Rogers both rule out 1730. Rogers notes that a 1728 dating would accord with Swift’s report to Pope in February 1729 that he had been writing “family verses of mirth by way of libels on my Lady.” It would also accord with the complaint put into Lady Acheson’s mouth that Swift had called her “skinny, boney” (l. 42). Davis dates the poem “1728?” First published 1730 (Foxon S868).

1728


1728


1728

“An Epistle to a Lady.” Dated 1728 in the Acheson manuscript (Figure 6). It seems likely that the Achesons would have been reliably informed about the origins of a poem about Lady Acheson. Williams says that the poem “must have been begun during one of Swift’s visits to Market Hill, 1728–30. We may surmise that, after a beginning, the poem was laid aside, and completed, with some revision of the earlier part, in 1732–3. The first draft extends, apparently, to line 132. The later addition, with its satire on the authorities of the day and Sir Robert Walpole, may be regarded as beginning with line 133: “To conclude

59 Correspondence, ed. Woolley, III, 194.
this long Essay.’” Rogers finds an allusion in “Epistle to a Lady,” line 67, to “The Journal of a Modern Lady,” but the original title of that poem was “The Journal of a Dublin Lady,” and the London publisher changed its title to achieve wider applicability; thus I doubt that any allusion was intended. I agree with Rogers that “it cannot be stated with certainty that any such gap in composition occurred” as Williams posits, and I concur with him that “there is nothing in the second portion which could not have been composed during the Market Hill period.” In 1728, Swift, having failed the previous year to gain favour and English preferment from Walpole and the new king, George II, was fresher from his grievances against them than he would have been in 1732–33. If the 1728 dating is accepted, it means that “A Libel on D—— D——” (February 1730) was not Swift’s first outburst against Walpole and George II, though it may have been his first published outburst. Rogers dates the poem 1733 on the plausible supposition that publication is likely to follow not very long after composition but says that this dating is “emphatically in the realms of guesswork.” “Epistle to a Lady” was first published in November 1733 (Foxon S841). Faulkner says the poem was “Written at London in the Year 1726,” but his datings are frequently unreliable.

November 1728?

“A Panegyrick on the D——n, in the Person of a Lady in the North.” First published in Swift’s Works, II (Dublin: Faulkner, 1735). Although Faulkner dates the poem 1730, its description of the privy construction as a project lasting “twenty Weeks” (l. 204) means that the project, and therefore the poem, are unlikely to belong to 1730, when Swift’s Market Hill visit lasted about 14 weeks, or to the 1729 visit (about 18 weeks); instead the poem probably belongs to the first, 1728–29, visit, which lasted about 34 weeks. As Ehrenpreis

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63 Poems, ed. Rogers, p. 867.
notes, Swift’s precise reference to “twenty Weeks” is “the sort of fact he was not likely to invent.”64 I suggest that the poem was written not earlier than the twenty-first week of Swift’s 1728–29 Market Hill visit, that is, not earlier than about 20 October. Other pointers to a 1728 date for the “Panegyrick” are its salutation of Swift as “D[ea]n, Butler, Usher, Jester, Tutor” (l. 39), and again as “Thatcher, Ditcher, Gard’ner, Baily” (l. 156), echoing Pope’s “Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff, or Gulliver” from *Dunciad* lines he had sent Swift in mid-January 1728;65 the reference to crowded attendance at the Dublin production of *The Beggar’s Opera* (ll. 65–66), which was a feature of the 1728 season, as reflected in Swift’s *Intelligencer*, no 3;66 and the implied reference to Jonathan Smedley’s scurrilous anti-Swift volume *Gulliveriana*, published 13 August 1728 (ll. 221, 343–46): those who need toilet paper in Swift’s new privies will have an opportunity to use Smedley’s writing, presumably leaves from the *Gulliveriana* volume though figured poetically as Smedley’s “Lay” (l. 221); to be fair, Swift’s writings are also imagined as being available for this purpose.67 It is not unlikely that the “Panegyrick on the D——n” began as a companion to, or mock-retaliation to, the earlier “Excellent New Panegyrick on Skinnibonia”; similar thought processes can be observed in the two poems.

November 1728?


December 1728?

“To Janus on New Year’s Day.” First published in Swift, *Works*, II (Dublin: Faulkner, 1735). Probably intended as a New Year’s gift to Lady Acheson. Faulkner says it was written “in the Year 1729,” meaning perhaps 1729/30, but Swift was not visiting Market Hill on New Year’s Day 1730.

January 1729

“The Journal of a Dublin Lady.” Sent to the printer 13 January 1729; published probably in late January or early February 1729 (Foxon S863).

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64 *Dean Swift*, p. 668n.


Second Visit, June–October 1729

4 August 1729

“Robin and Harry.” Swift’s holograph is Forster MS 521 (Victoria and Albert Museum); the dating is from the holograph. First published in Swift’s Works, XVI (London, 1765).

1729?

“Drapier’s Hill.” First published 30 August 1729 in Fog’s Weekly Journal. In settling the date of composition, Swift’s poem “A Dialogue between an Eminent Lawyer and Dr. Swift, Dean of St. Patrick’s” sheds less light than it might at first appear to do, although it alludes to Swift’s planned house on Drapier’s Hill. In 1762, when Faulkner first published “A Dialogue,” he dated it “February 1728,” meaning presumably February 1728/9. However, collation makes clear that in 1762 Faulkner was reprinting “A Dialogue” from Deane Swift’s An Essay upon the Life, Writings, and Character of Dr. Jonathan Swift (London: Bathurst, 1755), and Deane Swift merely says that the poem was written in 1729 (p. 194). One can conclude no more than that “Drapier’s Hill” was written before 30 August 1729.

1729

“The Revolution at Market Hill.” First published in Swift’s Works, II (Dublin: Faulkner, 1735). All Faulkner’s editions say that the poem was written in 1730, but there is not much to go on other than that it was composed during the period when Swift still intended to build a house at Market Hill, to be called Drapier’s Hill. On the assumption that Swift’s decision not to build had been firmly arrived at by 31 October 1729, the date of “The Revolution at Market Hill” must be earlier than that. See discussion below, under “The D——’s Reasons for Not Building at Drapier’s Hill.”

20 September 1729

“A Pastoral Dialogue.” So dated in a contemporary manuscript among the Portland Literary Manuscripts, University of Nottingham MS PwV 409. Dated 1728 by Faulkner, but the greater specificity of the Portland manuscript, probably collected by the second Earl of Oxford from a knowledgeable source,

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68 Williams believes that “A Dialogue” refers to the controversy surrounding “A Libel on D—— D——” and therefore cannot be earlier than 1730 (Poems, ed. Williams, II, 488–89); Davis (pp. 429–30) follows Williams, but I agree with Rogers that Williams’s reasons are not “conclusive” (Poems, p. 805).

69 I am not listing “To Dean Swift. By Sir Arthur Acheson” (beginning “Good cause have I to sing and vapour”), since, pace Williams, I see no reason to doubt the attribution that accompanied the poem when it was first published by Deane Swift in Swift’s Works, XVI (London, 1765). Presumably, it was written after “Drapier’s Hill” and before “The D——’s Reasons.”
Swift's "Skinnibonia" seems plausible, and Williams and Rogers accept it. First published in the 1732 volume of the Swift-Pope Miscellanies.

Third Visit, June–September 1730

1730

"Death and Daphne." First published in Swift's Works, II (Dublin: Faulkner, 1735); Faulkner dates the poem 1730, and no other information exists.

1730

*Memoirs of Capt. John Creichton.* Swift seems to have been Creichton’s ghost-writer. Dated 1730 on the last page; first published 1731. When Faulkner reprinted the *Memoirs*, he said that Swift compiled the *Memoirs* at Market Hill from Creichton’s “memorandums.” Lady Acheson’s copy, with her signature, is in the Huntington Library.

September 1730

“The D——’s Reasons for Not Building at Drapier’s Hill.” So dated in Lady Acheson’s transcript, Forster MS 524, Victoria and Albert Museum. First published in Swift’s Works, XVI (London, 1765). Rogers notes that, as early as 31 October 1729, Swift was telling Pope that he would not build at Market Hill (“The frolick is gone off, and I am only 100l. the poorer”), but Lady Acheson’s dating seems definitive as to the composition of the poem. It may be that Swift continued to toy with the idea of building at Drapier’s Hill; his announcement to Pope is part of his characteristic deprecation of Ireland when writing to him. The burden of “The D——’s Reasons” is, however, his dissatisfaction with Sir Arthur Acheson’s company rather than his decision not to build; Swift added the title in his handwriting after Lady Acheson transcribed the poem, linking, perhaps after the fact, his dissatisfaction with Sir Arthur and his decision not to build. The wife’s careful transcription of her husband’s vivid indictment by a third party seems a poignant augury of the Achesons’ separation, perhaps only a few months later.

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1730?

“Daphne.” First published in Swift’s Works, XVI (London, 1765). Williams argues that this poem “may be linked” with “Death and Daphne” as to subject and date. Rogers says with equal plausibility that it “might be one of the numerous ‘libels’ on her ladyship composed on Swift’s first visit in 1728/9.”

1730?

“Twelve Articles.” First published in Swift’s Works, XVI (London, 1765). Williams argues that this poem “may be linked with “Death and Daphne” as to subject and date (Poems, III, 903). The subject is clouded because “Twelve Articles” was a late addition to the 1765 edition, being inserted on a cancel leaf immediately following “Daphne.” Some editors, including Williams, have persisted in viewing “Twelve Articles” as part of “Daphne,” but those who do not find that view convincing would see less reason to accept Williams’s reason for dating the poem 1730.

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“Answered Extempore” (that is, the answer to “On a Very Old Glass”). First published in Swift’s Works, VIII (Dublin: Faulkner, 1746). It seems not to have been noticed that Faulkner substitutes a different answer for this poem beginning in 1751 with his 12th edition of Volume VIII. One might speculate that the 1746 version came from papers of Swift to which Faulkner had access, and that the 1751 version which replaced it came from the Acheson family and reported the words, presumably by Swift, that had actually been engraved on their glasses, or one of them. Williams, followed by Davis, dates the lines “1728?” I concur with Rogers that “it is not possible to narrow down composition beyond 1728–30.”

Few of Swift’s Market Hill writings were published immediately after their composition. Peter Schakel has shown that, in the Market Hill poems, Swift devised new and sophisticated techniques of voice and characterization exploiting conversational language. Whether or not Swift himself realized how significantly he advanced his craft at Market Hill is not clear. But when his friends in England heard about the poems, he became defensive, deprecating them as family verses and explaining the precautions he took against their publication. Yet some of the poems circu-

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75 Poems, ed. Williams, III, 861; Davis, p. 372; Poems, ed. Rogers, p. 787.
77 Swift to Pope, 13 February 1729 and 6 March 1729; Swift to Ford, 18 March 1729; Correspondence, ed. Woolley, III, 209, 212, 221.
lated in manuscript: by April 1731, Lord Bathurst had seen “The Grand Question Debated” and “On Cutting Down the Old Thorn” in England, though neither had yet been published.\(^7^8\)

Undoubtedly, a part of Swift’s diffidence about putting the Market Hill poems into circulation was that their rough-housing raillery might be misunderstood by persons outside the Market Hill circle, to his discredit as a guest, an unmarried man, and a member of the clergy. Notwithstanding what Sheridan told Pope about the “innocence” of “Skinnibonia,” these dangers surely attached to its familiar insinuations. In 1732, Swift was lampooned for his “great ingratitude and breach of hospitality, in publishing” his poem “The Grand Question Debated,” as he complained to his friend and the Achesons’ neighbour and frequent guest Henry Jenney.\(^7^9\) Yet at the same time, Swift overcame his diffidence to the extent of suggesting to Pope the inclusion of some Market Hill poems in what became the 1732 volume of their Miscellanies in Prose and Verse: “There are five or six (perhaps more) Papers of Verses writ in the North, but perfect family-things, two or three of which may be tolerable, the rest but indifferent, and the humour only local, and some that would give offence to the times.”\(^8^0\) Which Market Hill poems he had in mind as “tolerable” may be inferred from their inclusion in Faulkner’s 1735 edition of Swift’s Works, Volume II: “The Grand Question Debated” (previously published), “On Cutting Down the Old Thorn at Market Hill” (previously published), “An Epistle to a Lady” (cancelled before publication, having already “give[n] offence to the times” in its London edition), “To Janus,” “The Journal of a Dublin Lady” (previously published), “Drapier’s Hill” (previously published), “The Revolution at Market Hill,” “A Pastoral Dialogue” (published in the 1732 Miscellanies), and “Death and Daphne.” “To Janus” and “The Revolution at Market Hill” were among the late additions to Faulkner’s Volume II; and when Swift cancelled poems from the printed but yet unpublished Volume II, he supplied the gap in part with Market Hill poems that had not been part of the volume originally: “On the Five Ladies at Sots-Hole” (not a “family-thing,” to be sure) and “A Panegyrick on the D——n,

\(^7^8\) Bathurst to Swift, 19 April 1731, Correspondence, ed. Woolley, III, 380. Writing to Benjamin Motte in 1732, Swift seems to say that the Market Hill poems published in the 1732 volume of the Swift-Pope Miscellanies had circulated because the Achesons gave copies to Lord Carteret and others, who passed them on: “Some things; as that of the Souldier and Scholar ["The Grand Question Debated"], the Pastorall ["A Pastoral Dialogue"], and one or two more ["On Cutting Down the Old Thorn"] were written at a Man of Qualityes house in the North who had the originals, while I had no Copy, but they were given to the Ld L’, and some others, so, Copyes ran, and Faulkner got them, and I had no property: but Falkner made them his in London,” that is, by arranging for their publication in London, where copyright protection was available (Swift to Motte, 4 November 1732, Correspondence, ed. Woolley, III, 556). Swift’s candour here is not easy to gauge.

\(^7^9\) Swift to Henry Jenney, 8 June 1732, Swift, Correspondence, ed. Woolley, III, 483. As prebendary of Mullabrack in Armagh Cathedral, Jenney was in charge of the Church of Ireland parish church in Market Hill.

\(^8^0\) Swift to Pope, 12 June 1732, Correspondence, ed. Woolley, III, 490.
in the Person of a Lady in the North.” These points suggest a willingness but not eagerness to make some of the Market Hill poems public.81 “Skinnibonia” remained among those withheld from view.

In 1729, Swift said that Lady Acheson had custody of both the foul and the fair copies of his Market Hill writings.82 At some point, perhaps during the preparation of Faulkner’s Volume II, her collection of fair copies, though not the Acheson manuscript volume, came into Swift’s possession: we may infer as much from Deane Swift’s publication, in 1765, of a quantity of Market Hill material that his mother-in-law, Martha Whiteway, had presumably inherited from Swift, including some of these fair copies.83 Since Deane Swift did not publish “Skinnibonia,” we may conjecture that for some reason Mrs Whiteway held no copy of it. Except for that poem, virtually all of Swift’s Market Hill writings that survive today saw print by 1765, while the Acheson manuscript remained hidden.

The original purpose of the Acheson manuscript seems to have been to preserve fair-copy transcripts, in chronological order, of Swift’s Market Hill poems. At the head of each of the first four items in the manuscript, all Swift’s, he numbered them: “Numbr 1,” “Numbr: 2,” and so on. A relic of this numbering system apparently is to be seen on one of the surviving Market Hill fair copies, “Robin and Harry” (Forster MS 521), which Swift has endorsed “No 13.” In the foregoing chronological list, “Robin and Harry” is the fourteenth poem,84 which may suggest that the list is approximately complete and that its redatings are for the most part warranted. If one of the first fourteen is listed in error, it might be “An Answer to the Ballyspellin Ballad,” which Swift tells us was a collaborative effort: “We have a design upon Sheridan. He sent us in print a Ballad upon Ballyspelling, in which he has employed all the Rimes he could find to that word; but we have found fifteen more, and employed


82 Swift to Pope, 6 March 1729, Correspondence, ed. Woolley, III, 212 and n8.

83 If I am right in supposing that the surviving manuscripts of items first published by Deane Swift in his 1765 volumes served as his copy-texts; this point remains to be tested by collation. In the preface to the first of his two volumes, Deane Swift says he will “deposite [the manuscripts] in the British Museum, provided the Governors will please to receive them into their collection”: Swift, Works, XV (London: Johnston, 1765; Teerink-Scouten 89), p. xxxi. Whether the donation was refused or Deane Swift thought better of it is unknown, but the manuscripts are not in the British Library. Some of those to which I refer are in the Forster Collection (Victoria and Albert Museum) or in the Huntington Library, and some of them are in Lady Acheson’s handwriting. The poems were printed in Volume XVI of this set. Derivatives of this Teerink-Scouten 89 edition of Swift’s Works include other formats published in London: in chronological order, Teerink-Scouten 87 (volume VIII, part 2), 90 (volume XVII), 92 (volume XVII), 91 (volume XVIII), and 89 (volume XVI), as well as Faulkner’s Dublin edition of the Works, volume XIII, in three formats (Teerink-Scouten 47, 48, 52, and 53). On the provenance of the manuscripts Deane Swift used, see Lindsay, Index of English Literary Manuscripts, p. 15.

84 Counting from Swift’s No 1, “My Lady’s Lamentation.”
them in abuseing his Ballad.” The co-authors perhaps included both Achesons and their neighbours Henry Jenney, Henry Leslie, and others. Otherwise, the wrongly included poem might be “Epistle to a Lady,” for Williams’s reasons, quoted above.

To summarize the findings and implications of this paper, each of which now requires further analysis by scholars:

First, the Acheson manuscript, a new manuscript of impeccable provenance and authenticity, provides new texts, some of them holograph, for several of Swift’s poems.

Second, among these is an entirely new poem by Swift which enriches our understanding of his relationship with Lady Acheson.

Third, redatings of several poems reveal Swift’s 1728 visit to Market Hill as a period of creative outpouring. Swift’s two later Market Hill visits now appear less productive, though by no means negligible, and the shift of “Epistle to a Lady” to 1728 means that the period 1732–33 loses just a bit of its still undeniable impressiveness.

Fourth, Lady Acheson’s importance in Swift’s Market Hill creativity is confirmed by new evidence. Her manuscript of Swift’s poems seems designed to have been a successor to Stella’s manuscript of Swift’s poems. Though with Lady Acheson Swift does not seem to have had the emotional intensity that he shared with Esther Vanhomrigh or the emotional intimacy that he shared with Esther Johnson, she takes her place in a short list of women who assumed importance in Swift’s life.

Fifth, the other poems in the Acheson manuscript, especially the unpublished ones (items 5, 8, 9, 16, 17, 25, 26, 28, and 29) will eventually, it is hoped, receive the attention of scholars of eighteenth-century Irish culture.

Epilogue: The Acheson Manuscript and the Third Earl of Gosford

In the mid-nineteenth century, John Forster, preparing a biography of Swift and a new edition of Swift’s works, conducted what may have been the last full-scale trawl for Swift manuscripts until Alexander Lindsay’s for the Index of English Literary Manuscripts. One of Forster’s helpers wrote to the Achesons’ descendant,
the third Earl of Gosford, asking whether he had inherited any of Swift’s papers. A distinguished book collector, Gosford, then at Market Hill, replied, “I have nothing whatever of Swift—save Autograph Signatures—and one or two short pieces of Poetry in a MS. Volume locked up in London.”87 We may conjecture that the “MS. Volume” is the very manuscript that I have been discussing. Forster, who died in 1876 before he could finish his biography and who never published his edition of Swift’s works, apparently never pursued Gosford’s manuscript volume, and neither, apparently, did any later user of the Forster Collection.

There is a further postscript. Lord Gosford’s 1855 letter laments the family’s loss of Swift manuscripts. He writes, “I have often heard My Father88 talk of a Certain Chest Containing a quantity of MSS. relating to Dean Swift—which Chest alas! has long since disappeared—I never saw it—and it had Vanished before Sir Walter Scott published his Edition of Swift [in 1814].—Would that I could lay My hands upon it. M’ Forster should have full & free use of its Contents.”89 It was perhaps this regret that encouraged Gosford to acquire, at the William Monck Mason sale in 1858, the holograph of Swift’s poem beginning, “Delany reports it, and he has a shrewd tongue,” a verse epistle to Sheridan written in mirror writing and dated 20 September 1718.90 Until now known only from the sale catalogue, this very manuscript is loosely inserted inside Lady Acheson’s manuscript, with which it has nothing to do, beyond these points of connection: both inscribe poems by Swift, and both were once owned by the third Earl of Gosford. Although for the most part the third Earl’s library was dispersed by his son,91 both the Acheson

89 Although Scott’s edition presented new manuscript material, there is no reason to believe that any of it had been at Gosford Castle (as the Acheson estate came to be called once Sir Archibald was ennobled as Baron Gosford in 1776). Although a few Swift manuscripts now in the Huntington Library or in the Forster Collection were written at Market Hill (on the evidence of Lady Acheson’s handwriting), Swift seems to have acquired them, and they passed into the possession of his cousin Martha Whiteway or of John Lyon, his caretaker in his last years and also the executor of Rebecca Dingley. On the dispersal of Swift’s manuscripts, see Lindsay, Index of English Literary Manuscripts, p. 15.
90 One cannot of course be certain that the mirror writing is Swift’s own, but when viewed in a mirror, the letter forms do look like his. Although there is no proof that the Gosford manuscript was Mason’s, the conclusion that it was seems inescapable (Monck Mason sale, 31 March 1858, lot 510). See “Epigram Erroneously Attributed to Dean Swift,” Notes and Queries, 2nd ser., 5 (1 May 1858), 354–55. The MS was bought by Toovey (as agent for Gosford?) for £2 12s: Catalogue of the Literary Collections and Original Compositions of William Monck Mason, Esq. in the Departments of Irish History and General Philology (London: S. Leigh Sotheby and John Wilkinson, 29–31 March 1858), priced copy in the Department of Manuscripts, Trinity College Library, Dublin. See also Poems, ed. Williams, III, 966–67.
91 See Catalogue of the Fine, Extensive and Valuable Library of the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Gosford, K.P., etc. etc. (Removed from Gosford Castle, Armagh, Ireland) … To Be Sold by Auction, by Messrs. Puttick
manuscript and the “Delany reports it” holograph tucked inside it are still in the family’s possession (Figure 7).  

For their assistance, I wish to thank Toby Barnard, Andrew Carpenter, Ronald and Hazel Geesey, Victoria Glendinning, David Hayton, Edward McParland, Hugh Ormsby-Lennon, James McLaverty, Carolyn Nelson, Erika Real-Choisi, and Susan Overath Woolley. Much of my information is based on the archive of the Swift Poems Project, which seeks to locate, inventory, and make available for a variety of scholarly uses all pre-1825 printed and manuscript texts of poems by, or attributed to, Swift or addressed to him. (The Project is edited by John Irwin Fischer, Stephen Karian, and me.) I have drawn on the resources of many libraries, notably the British Library, the Huntington Library, the National Art Library (Victoria and Albert Museum), the National Library of Ireland, the National Archives of Ireland, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, and the libraries of the Ehrenpreis Centre for Swift Studies (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster), Harvard University, Princeton University, Trinity College Cambridge, and Trinity College Dublin. The research was supported in part by a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. The photography was underwritten by a grant from the Academic Research Committee of the Lafayette College Faculty.
Appendix: First Lines in the Acheson Manuscript.

Numbers refer to items in the “Description of the Acheson Manuscript,” above.

A Milesian by birth 29
A slave to crowds, scorched with the summer’s heats 4
A sore disease this scribbling itch is 14
After venting all my spite 7
As I strolled the city oft I 19
As Satan stepped into the house tother day 17
Asses milk half a pint, take at seven, or before 24
Banished Parnassus and the neighbouring plain 8
Blest leaf whose aromatic gales dispense 23
Clio behold this charming day 10
Critics avaunt! tobacco is my theme 21
De stirpe clarus 29
If real grief ere touched the tender heart 9
Lindsay mistakes the matter quite 4
May it please your grace with all submission 15
O thou matured by glad Hesperian suns 22
Pallas, the goddess chaste and wise 6
Pretty tube of mighty power 20
Skinnibonia, brown and bright 2
Stop, stop, my steed! hail Cambria, hail 12
Sure never did man see 1
The tenth of November the governor’s ball 25
Thus all the muses and each grace adorn 5
Thus spoke to my lady the knight full of care 3
We the court martial now begin to sicken 18
What clamour’s here about a dame 11
When the old dame in wickedness grown grey 26
Whilst William’s deeds and William’s praise 13
Who can behold Sir Arthur’s awful bust 28
You oft told us with glee 16