LIKE music, painting, and the other arts the drama was brought to the American colonies as part of the culture of western Europe. In a sense the drama was doubly transplanted, for both plays and players were imported; companies of English actors performed the standard English repertory and translations of a few foreign plays. The first indication that the drama had taken root as a native American art came out of the group associated with Provost William Smith and the College of Philadelphia, a group notable for the almost simultaneous production by three friends of the first American musical composition, the first American drama to be professionally performed, and the first American painting of permanent worth. The first play written by a native-born American and actually performed by a professional company of actors was the work of a Philadelphian, Thomas Godfrey, junior. That this should be so is not surprising; Philadelphia by the time of the production of The Prince of Parthia already had behind it an appreciable theatrical history. Some elements of Philadelphia society, to be sure, would not have agreed that it was a respectable history, since they would have denied the right of anything theatrical to be called respectable.

Many people erroneously picture early Philadelphia as inhabited entirely by Quakers. As a matter of fact, the broad basis of religious toleration which William Penn established in his
"Charter of Privileges to Pennsylvania" made Philadelphia the home of a diversity of religious beliefs and believers. The Quakers were predominant for a considerable time, but the growing prestige of the Church of England began to be felt very early. The Presbyterians were next in number, and after George Whitefield's visits the representation of Methodists began to increase. Other Protestant sects were present in somewhat smaller numbers. Philadelphia was noted as one of the few places in the American colonies where a Catholic church could be established without fear of persecution. Of all these groups only the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church were tolerant of the theater, and even in them there was not complete harmony on the subject. It would be interesting to know whether it was a member of the Church of England or a Quaker wishing to use a good argument against the churchmen who wrote to the Pennsylvania Journal on March 19, 1754, citing the disapproval of plays expressed by eminent English divines, including Bishop Burnet and Archbishop Tillotson. The protest, whatever the source, was ineffective, for the theatrical season in Philadelphia that year ran from April 15 until June 24.1

The history of the Philadelphia stage had, however, an earlier beginning than 1754. In August 1749 the Murray and Kean company played Addison's Cato in a reconstructed warehouse on Water street. Apparently its season had begun the preceding January, when a protest against its playing was made. From Philadelphia the company went on to New York, which it reached in February 1750.2

It was Lewis Hallam's company that visited Philadelphia during the spring of 1754, acting there under a permit issued by Governor Robert Hunter Morris. At the opening performance of the season a prologue was spoken by Mr. Rigby, and Mrs. Hallam recited an epilogue defending the drama against its critics. The epilogue was genuinely interesting, as the following four lines of it will show:

Much has been said in this reforming Age,  
To damn in gross, the Business of the Stage,

1The Pennsylvania Gazette, Nos. 1322 and 1331 (April 25 and June 27, 1754).
2Arthur H. Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War (New York, 1923), pp. 8-9.
Some, for this End, in Terms not quite so civil,
Have given both Plays and Players to the Devil.  

The tone of this epilogue has much about it to suggest some of Francis Hopkinson's writings of subsequent date, but that Hopkinson wrote the piece seems extremely unlikely, considering his youth at the time and the fact that he does not appear to have discovered his genius for humorous verse until a considerably later period. On June 19, 1754, shortly before the close of the season, the company put on a benefit performance for the charitable school associated with the College and Academy of Philadelphia, raising "upwards of an Hundred pounds" thereby.  

In 1759 Mrs. Hallam, who in the meantime had been widowed and had remarried, returned to Philadelphia with the company of her new husband, David Douglass. Its season, which ran from June 25 to December 28, opened with Rowe's *Tamerlane*. Among the plays presented were Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. The quality of the fare which early Philadelphia audiences received was indeed high. Douglass, after visiting New York, Annapolis, and elsewhere with his company, returned to England and then came back to Philadelphia, where he built the Southwark, the first permanent theater in America, which opened November 12, 1766, for a season that lasted until July 6, 1767. Of this season Arthur H. Quinn has rightly said that "its most interesting feature was the production, on April 24th, of Thomas Godfrey's *The Prince of Parthia*."  

Conditions were favorable for the appearance of Godfrey's work, for in addition to having a theatrical background Philadelphians also read plays. In the various book advertisements in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and the *Pennsylvania Journal* one finds listed frequently along with the Holy Bible (in folio or quarto), the Spectator, and other usual items Shakespeare's plays and occasionally those of some of the other English dramatists. For instance, on January 21, 1755, William Bradford included a six- 

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Quinn, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-16.
volume set of Dryden's plays in an advertisement in his own paper, the *Journal*.

Perhaps an even more important stimulus to Thomas Godfrey as a playwright than actual stage productions in Philadelphia was his association with William Smith, who had attended plays in London and on his visit to England to raise money for the College of Philadelphia had persuaded David Garrick to give a benefit performance for the New York and Philadelphia colleges. In *A General Idea of the College of Mirania*, his description of an ideal college, Smith had emphasized dramatic productions on the part of the students. He put his theory into practice at the College of Philadelphia, where various briefer exercises reached their first climax in the production in January 1757 of a version, prepared for the occasion by Smith himself, of James Thomson's *Alfred: A Masque*, in which it is possible, though by no means probable, that Godfrey played a part. Smith later transferred his interest in the drama to Washington College in Maryland when he became its principal, as one may see from the account of that institution's first commencement:

In the evening of the same day, Dr. YOUNG'S TRAGEDY of the BROTHERS, notwithstanding the difficulty of the composition, was acted with the greatest applause before a vastly crowded and discerning audience, by the graduates and some others of the students. Messrs. Charles Smith and John Scott, who had before distinguished themselves in *Tamerlane* and *Bajazet*, as well as in some principal characters in other performances, during the last years of their education, concluded their scholastic labours in this way, by shining in the characters of the *Two Brothers*!6

Little is known of Thomas Godfrey's early life. His father, for whom he was named, was a man of considerable parts; it is now evident that he was entitled to a larger share of credit than he ever received in his own day for his contributions toward the improvement of the quadrant. His claims in this regard, it may

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6 [William Smith], *An Account of Washington College, in the State of Maryland. Published by Order of the Visitors and Governors of the said College, for the Information of its Friends and Benefactors* (Philadelphia, 1784), p. 29.
be noted, were forwarded by William Smith in the American Magazine, the journal which he edited during its brief existence (1757-1758) and which was of great value to the members of his group. From this publication and from the introduction to Godfrey's posthumously printed Juvenile Poems comes the bulk of surviving information about Thomas Godfrey, junior. A third source, by way of corroboration as well as addition, is John Galt's life of Benjamin West. After Godfrey's birth in 1736 no events of import marked his life until the death of his father in 1749. From that time on his education and general disposition were in the charge of relatives who were less interested than his father had been in the things of the mind.

The matter of Godfrey's education is so intimately involved with the question of his association with William Smith that the two must be considered together. Nathaniel Evans, another member of Smith's group, who wrote "Some Account of the Author and his Writings" by way of preface to Godfrey's Juvenile Poems, said of Godfrey merely that "he was placed to an English school" by the relatives who had him in charge. In an account in the American Magazine for September 1758 it was mentioned that the young poet had had only "a common education in his mother-tongue." The statement of Benjamin West, quoted by John Galt, that Provost Smith had introduced him to "four young men, pupils of his own, whom he particularly recommended to his acquaintance, as possessing endowments of mind greatly superior to the common standard of mankind"—Francis Hopkinson, Thomas Godfrey, Joseph Reed, and Jacob Duché—leads one to believe, however, that in some way Godfrey studied under Smith, although his name does not appear on any of the extant lists of students (possibly incomplete) in the College and Academy of Philadelphia. He may have attended the Charitable School, lists of whose pupils for the period before 1765 no longer

7 The exact date of Godfrey's birth is difficult to determine. At the time of his baptism in Christ Church, Philadelphia, on December 25, 1736, it was noted that he was "aged three weeks." (Collections of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania [Ms.], cii, p. 206.)
exist. It is not likely that he was a private pupil of Smith's. There were of course various other English schools in the city, most of which disappeared after a brief existence, leaving no records except an occasional newspaper advertisement for pupils. But since Benjamin West specifically included Godfrey among the pupils to whom Smith had introduced him, and since the other three named are known to have been Smith's students, it seems probable that Godfrey too was enrolled in one of the three branches of the College, Academy, and Charitable School of Philadelphia.

The manner in which Smith learned of Godfrey's poetic talents is in doubt also. Galt may have been somewhat confused as to just what West told him. What he set down was this:

He [Godfrey] . . . had secretly written a poem, which he published anonymously in the Philadelphia newspaper, under the title of "The Temple of Fame." The attention which it attracted, and the encomiums which the Provost in particular bestowed on it, induced West, who was in the Poet's confidence, to mention to him who was the author. The information excited the alert benevolence of Smith's character, and he lost no time until he had procured the release of Godfrey from his indenture, and a respectable employment for him in the government of the state.¹¹

The chief difficulties in the way of accepting this assertion at face value are that no poem with such a title is to be found in Godfrey's Poems or in either the Pennsylvania Gazette or the Pennsylvania Journal between the years 1753 and 1758, and that no mention of this episode was made either by Smith in his account of Godfrey in the American Magazine or by Nathaniel Evans in his preface to Godfrey's Juvenile Poems. Unless a poem by the title of "The Temple of Fame" appeared in some unnoticed publication and its authorship was revealed by West to Smith, one must conclude that Galt was somehow in error. It is not necessary to assume that Smith knew of Godfrey's poetic ability when he introduced him to West; it is almost certain that he did not know of it until some time in 1758, and the introduc-

tion must have occurred earlier than that. Smith was aware, however, of Godfrey's general capabilities and literary interests.

The first of Godfrey's poems to appear in print (unless there was a "Temple of Fame") was "The Invitation," which was published in the American Magazine for January 1758. Signed "Junius" and dated from Philadelphia on January 20, 1758, the poem carried with it the editor's footnote to the effect that

This little poem was sent to us by an unknown hand, and seems dated as an original. If it be so we think it does honour to our city; but of this we are not certain. All we can say is that we do not recollect to have seen it before.

The poem itself, as the earliest of Godfrey's known works and as the one which brought his talent to Smith's attention, may be worth full quotation.

DAMON

Haste! Sylvia! haste, my charming Maid!
Let's leave these fashionable toys;
Let's seek the shelter of some shade,
And revel in ne'er fading joys.
See spring in liv'ry gay appears,
And winter's chilly blasts are fled;
Each grove its leafy honours rears,
And meads their lovely verdure spread!

SYLVIA

Yes Damon, glad I'll quit the town,
Its gaities now languid seem;
Then sweets to luxury unknown
We'll taste, and sip th' untainted stream.
In Summer's sultry noon-tide heat,
I'll lead thee to the shady grove;
There hush thy cares, or pleas'd repeat
Those vows that won my soul to love.

DAMON

When o'er the mountain peeps the dawn,
And round her ruddy beauties play,
I'll wake my Love to view the lawn,
Or hear the warblers hail the day.
But, without thee, the rising morn
In vain awakes the cooling breeze,
In vain does nature's face adorn;
Without my Sylvia nought can please.

SYLVIA

At night, when universal gloom
Hides the bright prospect from our view,
When the gay groves give up their bloom,
And verdant meads their lovely hue;
Tho' fleeting spectres round me move,
When in thy circling arms I'm prest,
I'll hush my rising fears with love,
And sink in slumber on thy breast.

Damon

The new-blown rose, whilst on its leaves
Yet the bright scented dew-drops found,
Pleas'd on thy bosom, whilst it heaves,
Shall shake its heav'ly fragrance round.
Then mingled sweets the sense shall raise,
Then mingled beauties catch the eye;
What pleasure on such charms to gaze!
What rapture mid such sweets to lie!

SYLVIA

How sweet thy words!—but, Damon cease,
Nor strive to fix me ever here;
Too well you know these accents please,
That oft have fill'd my ravish'd ear.
Come, lead me to these promis'd joys,
That dwelt so lately on thy tongue;
Direct me by thy well known voice,
And calm my transports with thy song!²

At first glance the reader of today may not feel that this poem should have provoked editorial enthusiasm. Neither the subject nor the method of approach was new, and the most effective single figure in the poem, that in the first line of Damon's second speech, had been borrowed directly from Hamlet—and not improved in the borrowing. A second glance is repaid by the realization that the author revitalized for his own use the formal pattern of a

great poetic tradition. In workmanship there is astonishingly little fault. While crystalline clarity and a real lightness of touch may not be among the finest virtues of poetry, they are poetic virtues, and they may be seen in “The Invitation.” As one might expect of a poem written in Pennsylvania in 1758 (or 1757, since it was published in January of 1758), the piece lacks the sensuousness that is to be found in the Provençal lyrics of which it is a descendant. Nevertheless, Godfrey’s poem is in no sense emasculated. The emotions are genuinely felt and genuinely expressed. His Sylvia is no puritanical prude but a woman of flesh and blood. Even today there is no “stale and faded prettiness” about “The Invitation”; though many of its terms are antiquated and appeal to the reader only as poetic conventions, it has real emotional force. For a first performance it is indeed remarkable, and one does not wonder that William Smith was excited when it came to his attention—excited and a little cautious lest someone might be trying to test him by sending in the work of an established author to see if it would be recognized.

The new poet again appeared in the August 1858 number of the American Magazine under the heading “A Pindaric Ode ON FRIENDSHIP, By the Author of the Invitation.” In the September issue there followed “A Pindaric ODE on WINE. By the Author of the Invitation.” Sometime before the publication of the September issue Smith had discovered the identity of his contributor. The account of Godfrey which he published in that number is as interesting for its revelation of Smith’s zest as a patron of the arts as for its story of the new writer:

THERE is something very unaccountable in the propagation of genius, if we may be allowed the expression. Some times a Father blest with every human accomplishment shall have a son, who inherits not the least degree of his abilities or graces. At other times, when the father has enjoyed extraordinary talents of one kind, the son shall be distinguished for talents as extraordinary of a kind directly opposite.

This is the case with respect to the sole surviving son of the late Mr. Thomas Godfrey of Philadelphia, mentioned in our two preceeding Magazines. Nature seems not to have designed the father for a greater Mathematician, than she has the son for a Poet. The former, as we have already mentioned, being a Glazier by trade, was perhaps one of the most singular phænomena that
ever appeared in the learned world. For, without the least advantages of education, almost Intuitively, and in a manner entirely his own, he had made himself master of the abstrusest parts of Mathematics and Astronomy, being in fact the true inventor of the famous Sea-Quadrant, generally called Hadley's.

Just so it is with the son, a youth about 20 years of age, who without any other advantage than that of a natural genius, a common education in his mother-tongue, and an attentive perusal of the works of Dryden, Pope, and one or two more English poets, has exhibited such proofs of poetical capacity as really surprize us.

Our readers may recollect, in our January magazine, a most beautiful and delicate little performance called "the Invitation, and likewise in our last magazine "an Ode on Friendship. Both those were the production of young Mr. Godfrey, as is the following "Ode on Wine, which is written with much poetic warmth, tho' a rigid critic may perhaps find reason to object to the Matter and Machinery of it.

But what will ever place him high in the list of Poets (when it shall have received his last hand) is a poem of considerable length, called the "Court of Fancy;" a subject which none but an elevated and daring genius durst attempt with any degree of success; in managing which, he shines in all the spirit of true creative Poetry, far above the common herd of versifiers and others, too commonly honoured with the appellation of Poets.

These pieces, and some and others of his, fell into our hands by accident, soon after the appearance of the Invitation, which was found among the rest; and we reckon it one of the highest instances of good fortune that has befallen us, during the period of our Magazine, that we have had an opportunity of making known to the world so much merit. When we say Merit, we mean in consideration of his circumstances and means of improvement; for he has been liable to disadvantages which we have not yet mentioned.

When very young, he discovered a strong inclination to Painting, and was very desirous of being bred to that profession. But those who had the charge of him, not having the same honourable idea either of the profession or its utility which he had, crossed him in that desire; which affected him so nearly that it made him contract a sort of melancholy air, and chuse to be much by himself; which was considered by many as sourness of temper and want of spirit. After some time he was put to a watch-maker, a very ingenious man in this city;
but still the *Muses* and *Graces, Poetry* and *Painting*, stole his attention. Every moment he could be absent from his business was employed in reading or writing, or in the company of a young gentleman a *Painter* in this place, who was his sole acquaintance and friend.

At last, he quitted the business of watch-making, and got himself recommended to a lieutenant's commission in our provincial forces, raised a few months ago for the western expedition; in which service he now remains, it being his lot and mortification to be left in garrison at one of our outforts, when his great desire would be the scene of action, and to sing those victories and triumphs, which, 'tis hoped, we shall yet reap. When he went away he left his poetry in the hands of his fore-said friend, by which means we enjoyed that pleasure which his own modesty and diffidence would, perhaps, long have prevented.

We hope our readers will not think this account too particular, when we are endeavouring to do that justice to the genius of a descendant of *Thomas Godfrey*, which his own genius never had, while it could be of service to him.  

John Galt said that Smith after learning of Godfrey’s poetic skill obtained his release from indenture and secured him “respectable employment . . . in the government of the state.” On May 2, 1758, Godfrey was commissioned ensign in the third battalion of the Pennsylvania Regiment.  

The question that immediately arises is whether Smith knew of Godfrey’s poetical talent by that time. Smith’s statement that Godfrey’s pieces “fell into our hands . . . soon after the appearance of the *Invitation*” certainly suggests that he did, though one wonders why in that event he waited so long to publish his account of the poet. If Smith knew by May that his anonymous contributor was young Thomas Godfrey, did he obtain the commission for him? It is not improbable that the provost helped to release him from his indenture, but that he was responsible for obtaining Godfrey’s “respectable employment” is doubtful. The relations between Smith and the province of Pennsylvania during 1757 and 1758 were rather strained. In fact, the editor spent February, March, and a part of April of 1758 in the Walnut Street Gaol as unwilling guest

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12 *The American Magazine*, vol. i, pp. 602-603 (September, 1758).
of the assembly, and he abandoned publication of his magazine after the October 1758 issue to make a trip to England for the purpose of prosecuting his appeal to the privy council from the actions of the provincial assembly of Pennsylvania. While Smith did have many friends in the executive branch of the government, it is not likely that the governor would have cared to invite the ill will of the assembly by granting him a favor. All that can be said with certainty is that Godfrey did receive the commission, and that Smith would have done everything in his power to aid the young poet.

Another question brought up by the account in the *American Magazine* is: Who was the painter who had charge of Godfrey's manuscripts and who apparently saw to their transmission to the *American Magazine*? In the "Ode on Friendship" the second stanza begins:

O G—! if now no charming maid  
Waits thy pencil's powerful aid,

while "A Night Piece," published in the October 1758 *American Magazine*, contains a reference to "th' expressive art of G—n." A footnote to the latter poem in the *Juvenile Poems* (p. 39) identifies the artist as "Mr. JOHN GREEN, an ingenious Portrait Painter, a particular friend of Mr. GODFREY'S." Because of the close friendship that seems thus to have subsisted between him and Godfrey, Green was undoubtedly the painter referred to by Smith.

Godfrey's poem in the *American Magazine* for September 1758 which called forth the prose preface quoted above was reprinted in the *Juvenile Poems* (pp. 34-37) as "A Dithyrambic on Wine." The conscientious Nathaniel Evans added an explanatory note:

As our Poet appears so warm on his subject, it may not be amiss to remark here, that he never drank any Wine, and that his bumpers are all ideal, which may serve, perhaps, as a refutation of that noted adage, that a water drinker can never be a good Dithyrambic Poet.

Godfrey's poetry in itself does not prove the falsity of the "noted adage." While it is gay enough and has a certain vigor, it is scarcely "good Dithyrambic" poetry. Its lack of conviction
would be just as noticeable without the comment that the author confined his drinking to water.

Godfrey's four poems which appeared in the *American Magazine* were reprinted in the English *Grand Magazine of Universal Intelligence* for March 1759. This magazine was published by Ralph Griffiths, a friend of Smith's. C. Lennart Carlson, who first noted this republication, is undoubtedly correct in his suggestion that William Smith was responsible for it.15

Included in the *Juvenile Poems* were several poems dated 1758 besides those which had been printed in the *American Magazine* during that year. One of these, "Verses Occasioned by a Young Lady's asking the Author, What was a Cure for LOVE?" is a little ponderous in spots but contains some good lines, and the whole is well handled. Typical is the following extract:

> In vain the sages turn their volumes o'er,  
> And on the musty page incessant pore,  
> Still mighty LOVE triumphant rules the heart,  
> Baffles their labour, and eludes their art.16

Also written in this year was an "Epistle To a Friend, from Fort HENRY. Dated August 10, 1758." In the *Juvenile Poems* Evans added a note to make it clear that this poem was "wrote, when the Author was, a Lieutenant in the Pennsylvania Forces, and, garrisoned at Fort HENRY," thus corroborating the statement in the *American Magazine* that Godfrey had received a lieutenant's commission. Since he was referred to in September 1758 as a lieutenant, it is quite likely that he had received his promotion by the time that this "Epistle" was written.17 The poem itself is not particularly remarkable, except in so far as it reflects the gloom and despair which were felt by the inhabitants of the frontier and which Godfrey caught in his verses.

> Here no enchanting prospects yield delight,  
> But darksome forests intercept the sight;  
> Here fill'd with dread the trembling peasants go,

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17 If Godfrey was a lieutenant on August 10, 1758, he must have been promoted after July 9, for on that day he was returned as an ensign in the company of Captain Christian Bussee at Fort Henry. (*Pennsylvania Archives*, fifth series i, p. 241.) This is, incidentally, the last official record of Godfrey's military service.
And start with terror at each nodding bough, 
Nor as they trace the gloomy way along 
Dare ask the influence of a chearing song." 

This "Epistle" was followed in the Juvenile Poems by three pastoral poems, the first of which was entitled merely "To the same," evidently meaning the same friend to whom the epistle had been addressed. Although the name of the friend is in both instances concealed by the usual dashes, it may have been either Green or one of Provost Smith's pupils to whom Godfrey addressed himself. One is reminded of Benjamin West's recollections of his hours with Godfrey in such lines as

How oft together Schuylkil's verdant side
We've trac'd, or wanton'd in its cooling tide,
Or soft reclin'd, where spreading shades were wove,
With joyful accents fill'd the sounding grove.
Then all was gay, then sprightly mirth was found,
And nature bloom'd in vernal beauties round. 

The third of these pastorals may probably be assigned to the year 1759, since it bears the title "To the Memory of GENERAL WOLFE, who was slain at the taking of QUEBEC." It is a justifiable criticism to suggest that a pastoral dialogue celebrating the death of a contemporary military hero is a piece of pure eighteenth-century affectation. When Benjamin West painted the scene which Godfrey's verse commemorated, he boldly depicted General Wolfe and all the other figures in the costumes of 1759. Godfrey might well have anticipated his friend by dropping such Greek names as Lysidas, Damoetas, and Araintor just as West dropped the toga and the robe. Yet Godfrey's use of the traditional is not indefensible. In poetry such a pastoral representation is definitely recognized as symbolical and figurative. No one would ever take eighteenth-century generals, no matter how beautifully draped in togas, to be anything but eighteenth-century generals. In this instance poetry has the advantage over historical painting in the breadth of its scope and application. Since the time of Spenser readers of English pastorals have expected words to carry more than their usual meaning. In God-

Thomas Godfrey, Juvenile Poems, p. 20.
Ibid., p. 23.
frey's poem the only extension of meaning required was the exchange of the name of Wolfe for that of Amintor. Granting his right to use this form, one must admit that Godfrey's attempt was far from being a mere formal exercise. It is true that the piece abounds in phrases from the standard poetic diction of his time: "night's sable curtains" spread all around, "pallid Cynthia" shone, and the conditions of the eighteenth century's taste in pastorals were complied with. But the whole has a dignity of movement, achieved largely through a skillful use of repetition. Godfrey apparently knew *Lycidas*, for his phrase "The first of Shepherds, brave Amintor's dead" bears some resemblance to one of Milton's. This line, with some variation, comes as a powerful repetend. While it is not true that Godfrey exhibited the skill of Mrs. Browning with her "Pan, Pan is dead," his work was effective and genuine. The taste of the times led him to make use of this form, but his own poetic talent helped him to make good use of it and at least partially overcome its inherent difficulties. On November 8, 1759, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* (number 1611) carried an anonymous poem "On the Death of the Much Lamented General Wolfe" whose author protested that had he "Duché's or Godfrey's magic Skill," he could do his subject the full justice it demanded. In any event Godfrey's poem on Wolfe, if known in Philadelphia in 1759, would have been sent there from North Carolina, for it was in the spring of that year that Godfrey

... had an offer made him of being settled as a factor in North-Carolina, and, being unemployed, he accepted of the proposal, and presently embarked for that place, where he continued upwards of three years.²⁰

The importance of the year 1759 and Godfrey's residence in North Carolina is shown in Nathaniel Evans' memoir of his friend:

At Carolina it was, that he finished the Dramatic Poem, called, *The Prince of Parthia*, as appears by a letter of his, to a Gentleman in this city; dated, as early as, November 17th, 1759; which was received after the manuscript of it. "By the last vessel from this place," says he, "I sent you the copy of a Tragedy I finished here,

and desired your interest in bringing it on the stage; I have not yet heard of the vessel's arrival, and believe if she is safe, it will be too late for the Company now in Philadelphia."

Godfrey's letter from North Carolina was very likely addressed to William Smith, and the provost undoubtedly hastened with the manuscript of The Prince of Parthia to the company of actors then in Philadelphia. The theatrical season closed on December 28, 1759, however, and there was no possibility of getting up a new play in the time still left.

Exact dating of Godfrey's poems after his removal to North Carolina is difficult. From the praise given to it in the American Magazine for that month The Court of Fancy, though apparently still incomplete, must have existed in some form before September 1758. It was published by William Dunlap in Philadelphia on August 12, 1762.22 Godfrey that same year had, "on the death of his employer, left Carolina, and returned to Philadelphia."23 One can imagine that he brought his manuscript of The Court of Fancy along with him and showed it to Provost Smith before that gentleman's departure for England early in 1762. Smith, pleased with what he read, may well have recommended its publication. At any rate Godfrey turned his attention to seeing it through the press. His reasons for having it published at that time were set forth in an

ADVERTISEMENT, by the EDITOR.

WHEN the Author of the following Poem returned to this City, he was concerned to find that several incorrect Copies of his first Plan had been handed about; and was under some apprehension, lest it should fall into the Hands of some one, who (biassed by Novelty) might publish it in that immature State, in his Absence. This, added to the Expectations, the Authors of the American MAGAZINE have given the Publick, of receiving it one Day from the Press, have induced him to furnish a Copy to be submitted to their Candour, sooner than he otherwise intended. He would not however permit it to be

2Ibid., loc. cit.
22The Pennsylvania Gazette, No. 1755; The Pennsylvania Journal, No. 1027 (August 12, 1762).
23Thomas Godfrey, Juvenile Poems, p. vi.
published, without an Acknowledgment, that he took the Hint of the Transition, from the Court of Fancy to that of Delusion, from Chaucer's Change from the House of Fame, to that of Rumour; and that in describing the Walls of the Court of Fancy, he had his Eye on the Description of the Temple of Fame.\textsuperscript{24}

Nathaniel Evans prefaced the reprint of *The Court of Fancy* in the *Juvenile Poems* with an adaptation from the original advertisement:

The learned reader need not be acquainted that the Author took the hint of the Transition from the Court of Fancy to that of Delusion, from Chaucer's Poem called the House of Fame, where the change is from the House of Fame to that of Rumour; and that he likewise had Mr. Pope's beautiful Poem on that subject in his eye, at the Time when he compos'd this Piece.\textsuperscript{25}

Although anybody in America in 1758 or 1762 who knew anything at all of literature was familiar with Pope, the number of persons acquainted with Chaucer must have been small. Even in England the great revival of interest in Chaucer had not yet come. He was probably not so completely forgotten as was once thought, but certainly he was not a popular writer whose name was on every tongue. Godfrey's knowledge of Chaucer must surely be attributed to William Smith. How else the young man could have learned of that great well of English undefiled one is at a loss to explain.

The pleasant introductory verses of *The Court of Fancy* are well managed. Though uneven, they rise at times to a considerable height of expression.

\begin{verbatim}
'Twas sultry noon, impatient of the heat
I sought the covert of a close retreat:
Soft by a bubbling fountain was I laid,
And o'er my head the spreading branches play'd;
When gentle slumber stole upon my eyes,
And busy Fiction bid this vision rise.

Methought I pensive unattended stood,
Wrapt in the horrors of a desert wood;
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{25} Thomas Godfrey, *Juvenile Poems*, p. 44.
Old Night and Silence spread their sway around,
And not a breeze disturb'd the dread profound.
To break the wild, and gain the neigh'ring plain
Oft I essay'd, and oft essay'd in vain;
Still in intricate mazes round I run,
And ever ended where I first begun.
While thus I lab'ring strove t' explore my way,
Bright on my sense broke unexpected Day:
Retiring Night in haste withdrew her shade,
And sudden morn shone thro' the op'ning glade.
No more the scene a desert wild appear'd,
A smiling grove its vernal honors rear'd;
While sweetness on the balmy breezes hung,
And all around a joyful Mattin rung.
Soft was the strain as Zephyr in the grove,
Or purling streams that thro' the meadows rove.
Now wild in air the varying strain is tost,
In distant echoes then the sound is lost;
Again reviv'd, and lo! the willing trees
Rise to the pow'rful numbers by degrees.
Trees now no more, robb'd of their verdant bloom,
They shine supporters of a spacious dome,
The wood to bright transparent crystal chang'd,
High fluted columns rise in order rang'd.

The individual descriptions of some of the personages whom
the poet met in the "Court of Fancy" are very good. Some
are extended, like that of Pygmalion.

Pygmalion there the statue seem'd to move,
Assisted by the pow'rful Queen of Love;
With rapture fir'd, to his exulting breast
The animated stone he fondly prest;
Transported on each shining feature gaz'd,
Now soften'd into life, and saw amaz'd,
Awaken'd into sense, her eye-balls roll,
And heaving breasts bespoke the ent'ring soul;
Saw on her cheeks the rosy tincture burn,
And felt her lips the ravish'd kiss return.

Others are expressed in terse couplets.

Great Homer here enjoy'd superior day,
Illuminated by bright Fancy's ray;

Ibid., pp. 45-46.
Ibid., pp. 50-51.
THOMAS GODFREY

Appelles there, whose magic hand could give
Form to the mass, and bid the fiction live;
Timotheus next, whose animated Lyre
Cold Grief could charm, and thoughtless rage inspire.²⁸

Godfrey’s description of poetry and its purposes furnished him an opportunity to describe a more abstract character.

    Sweet Poesy was seen their steps behind,
    With golden tresses sporting in the wind;
    In careless plaits did her bright garments flow,  
    And nodding laurels wav’d around her brow;
    Sweetly she struck the string, and sweetly sung,
    Th’ attentive tribe on the soft accents hung.
    'Tis her’s to sing who great in arms excel,
    Who bravely conquer’d or who glorious fell:
    Heroes in verse still gain a deathless name,
    And ceaseless ages their renown proclaim.
    Oft to Philosophy she lends her aid,
    And treads the Sage’s solitary shade;
    Her great first task is nobly to inspire
    Th’ immortal Soul with Virtue’s sacred fire.²⁹

²⁸ Ibid., p. 53.
²⁹ Ibid., p. 57.