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# JONATHAN SWIFT AND THE MIDDLE WAY

By

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ABSTRACT

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"Satire is reckoned the easiest wit of all," Swift wrote in volume 1 of his Miscellanies published in 1712, "for it is as hard to satirize well a man of distinguished vices, as to praise well a man of distinguished virtues. It is easy enough to do either to people of moderate characters." Moderation is a powerful fiction that never lost its appeal to Swift. Moderation allows Swift to embrace contradictory attitudes towards people in places of authority. Swift professes to be the rational, careful, objective voice of moderation, but ultimately he is a subversive. Often what Swift writes ostensibly to endorse religious or linguistic authority has the final effect of undermining those very sources of authority. Chapter 1 examines Swift's writing associated with the Church and explores how Swift attempts to use "reason" as a source of moderation between the extremes of free-thinking deists and the pedantic Roman Catholics. Chapter 2 discusses A Tale of a Tub and Swift's method of putting himself in the center of a boiling cauldron of ideologies, attempting to find a stable center of orthodoxy while finally throwing the reader totally off balance. In

Chapter 3, I discuss the problem of categorizing Swift's poetry as "Augustan" in light of his political portraits and personal assaults against individuals in "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" and other poems. Chapter 4 looks at the Augustan notion of the satirist as a moral reformer and how in his Irish writing Swift repudiates the ideal of reform and becomes a political incendiary in The Drapier's Letters and "A Modest Proposal." Chapter 5 examines Swift's attitudes towards language. Swift portrays himself as the model of orthodoxy and desires "to fix language for ever," but he actually embraces specific beliefs about language considerably more Puritan than strictly Anglican: a commitment to plain, rational preaching, an awareness of the corrupting influence of language, a resistance to Scriptural controversy, and a fear of obscure words and elaborate interpretations.

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At Alma College, Professors William Palmer and Joe Sutfin advised me during several stages of the research and writing, providing encouragement all along the way. The library staffs of both Alma College and Michigan State University patiently endured my questions and searches for books and articles. My students at Michigan State University and Alma College took an interest in my research on Swift, enabling me on occasion to try out my ideas about eighteenth-century literature in the classroom.

I also need to thank my friends Richard Amidon and Craig Bernthal, who preceded me in graduate school; through their positive examples I learned much about the academic world.

I would like to thank my mother Sarah for her support of my studies. My father, the late Professor Samuel Thorndike, inspired me to become a professor myself. My son, Jonathan Frost Thorndike, brought joy to our lives for the past two years. Lastly, I am grateful to my wife Claudia, for her careful proofreading, for seeing me through this journey, and for keeping me happy when I encountered difficulties. I sometimes felt like a pilgrim in a dark and lonely forest. This dissertation would not have been possible without the capable support of the people mentioned above.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

I have a distinct memory of reading A Tale of a Tub for the first time some years ago. It was a broiling hot summer day, and I was crouched in the dark basement of a library whose walls were dripping with condensation. After finishing the book, I felt nauseated, exhilarated, challenged, and betrayed by the barrage of words. The more judgmental I became, the more the text retaliated in unpredictable ways. I returned to it again and again during the summer, driven by some faint hope to "explain" or "describe" the book by way of a competition between organization and chaos.

My personal mission for the summer became to gain the upper hand over this sprawling hallucination. I wanted to master Jonathan Swift's literary subterfuges and imaginative fancies in A Tale of a Tub. Swift's alternation among allegory, exposition, and satire I thought inexplicable but brilliantly executed. The book kept suggesting itself to my mind during that summer like a nightmare I could not quite forget. Fragmentary images kept appearing before me: men wearing costumes and belching, ladders, lunatics, holy relics, banquets, and people being thrown out of churches.

My interest in Swift has grown in many ways since then. I no longer think of reading him as a jungle combat

experience, but Swift continues to disturb and challenge me. When I think of Swift, I think of the ghastly visage of his death-mask staring out from behind a bookcase in a dark alcove of St. Patrick's Cathedral. I think of the irreconcilable worlds of England, Ireland, Parliament, Church, court, and country through which Swift moved, assuming different roles as historian, poet, polemicist, priest, and cultural watchdog. I think of a writer driven by his love of language and learning, miserably upset at the human failures around him and determined to have some impact through his writing. For every image of Swift I carry around, I can conjure up another contradictory one.

The contradictory opinions voiced about Swift in criticism testify to his ability to attract and repel. Like all great writers, Swift forces the reader to become an active participant in the creation of meaning. I have uncovered no impartial assessments of Swift, only forceful deprecations or lavish praise in critics ranging from F. R. Leavis to J. A. Downie. Richard H. Rodino has noted that "Swift critics have never felt easy with pluralistic readings of their hero, partly because Swift scholarship has maintained close ties with the history of ideas, but mostly because the study of Swift since the 1930's has been heavily influenced by psychological assumptions."[1] Scholars often

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[1]Richard H. Rodino, Swift Studies: An Annotated Bibliography (New York: Garland Press, 1984), xv.

agree on Swift's use of reading traps, a decentered text, and the false appearance of logic, but we have nothing like a consensus on the meaning of crucial works.

This was not always the case. It is easy to overlook the fact that despite the academic respectability achieved by Swift studies, Swift's reputation overcame some of the most negative critical opinions ever voiced against an author. In the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, with few exceptions, Swift was viewed as a depraved lunatic who was incapable of the wit of Pope. James Boswell reported that Dr. Johnson in 1785 thought Swift's writing would never last because of its deficiencies:

> He [Johnson] seemed to me to have an unaccountable prejudice against Swift; for I once took the liberty to ask him, if Swift had personally offended him, and he told me, he had not. He said to-day, 'Swift is clear, but he is shallow. In coarse humour, he is inferior to Arbuthnot; in delicate humour, he is inferior to Addison: So he is inferior to his contemporaries; without putting him against the whole world. I doubt if A Tale of a Tub was his: it has so much more thinking, more knowledge, more power, more colour, than any of the works which are indisputably his. If it was his, I shall only say, he was impar sibi.'[2]

Disturbed and amazed at Swift's esoteric allegory, Dr. Johnson reflected the sentiments of many of his contemporaries. Francis Jeffrey, the famous editor of the Edinburgh Review, firmly established the direction in which nineteenth-century Swift criticism would move. Jeffrey's

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[2]James Boswell, Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Dr. Samuel Johnson, LL.D., ed. Frederick A. Pottle and Charles H. Bennett (New York: Literary Guild, 1936), 26-7.

1816 review of a new edition openly admits a bias against Swift so personal and palpable as to obscure the writing behind the reputation:

> In public life, we do not know where we could have found any body half so profligate and unprincipled as himself...nor can we conceive that complaints of venality, and want of patriotism, could ever come with so ill a grace from any quarter as from him who had openly deserted and libelled his party...he was, without exception, the greatest and most efficient libeller that ever exercised his trade; and possessed, in an eminent degree, all the qualifications which it requires:--a clear head--a cold heart--a vindictive temper--no admiration of noble qualities--no sympathy with suffering--not much conscience--not much consistency--a ready wit--a sarcastic humour--a thorough knowledge of the baser parts of human nature--and a complete familiarity with everything that is low, homely, and familiar in language.[3]

The wave of flamboyant condemnations from Macaulay and Thackeray which followed Jeffrey's example make for entertaining reading today. Profoundly disgusted, the great nineteenth-century essayists tended to obscure the small voices raised in defense of Swift.

Despite the insistence of some critics on Swift's extremism, Swift embraces the middle way in some of his poems and prose tracts. In "Sentiments of a Church-of-England Man," Swift writes that to preserve the integrity of Church and State, "whoever hath a true value for both, would be sure to avoid the extremes of Whig for the sake of the former, and the extremes of Tory on account of the latter." Swift tried to use moderation to appeal to persons in powerful offices in

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[3]The Edinburgh Review, XXVII (Sept 1816), 23-38.

the government and Church, and he fervently desired to receive a high appointment in the Church of England. One can still sense Swift's grudging denial of his Irish exile in his correspondence, such as in his letter to a friend in England describing himself as "banished to a country of slaves and beggars; my blood soured, my spirits sunk, fighting beasts like St. Paul, not at Ephesus, but in Ireland."

Swift preached sermons "On the Excellence of Christianity" and wanted to appear as the paragon of moderation in pamphlets like "Sentiments of a Church-of-England Man." Swift was contemptuous of modern religious enthusiasm, pedantry, and hack writers, and he sometimes celebrated a distant past when classical learning reigned in the schools and an absolute monarch protected the freedom of his dependents. C. J. Rawson notes that Swift's contradictory views of authority correspond to contradictions within himself, and that "his professed admiration for compromise, moderation, and the common forms is balanced by moods or contexts of suspicion or dislike for these very things."[4] The reader is so conditioned to look for satire and irony in the writing of Swift that it is difficult to trust anything he says, especially when he confesses whether to satirize or praise someone is essentially an aesthetic decision. When dealing with people of moderate characters,

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[4]C. J. Rawson, Gulliver and the Gentle Reader (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 57.

Swift is liable to take either road.

Swift used both panegyric and satire to direct his praise and blame at ancients and moderns, reason and imagination, scholars and pedants, clergy and "wits," and England and Ireland. On a superficial level, Swift advocated the established order of Church and State, but his greatest writing is satire, a genre rarely respectful of authority. Swift often endorsed the Anglican via media or moderate, orthodox beliefs about theology and man's place in the hierarchy of creation, but in many of his works like A Tale of a Tub he ends up, consciously or not, demolishing the basis for moderation. Swift can so easily switch modes, from praising Robert Harley to assaulting the Duke of Marlborough, that the reader approaches his writing with sometimes unnecessary wariness and suspicion. Swift's education and the intellectual milieu of the eighteenth-century encouraged him to embrace "reason" and the natural order as fundamentally correct principles, but Swift was profoundly attracted to forms of writing that undermined his ostensible beliefs.

# Chapter 1

## Moderation, Tyranny, and Corruption

This study was prompted by a series of questions for which I did not have immediate answers after reading The Drapier's Letters, "A Modest Proposal," A Tale of a Tub, Gulliver's Travels, and other works in which Swift demonstrates his obsession with authority. It is no fresh insight that the via media or "middle road" was an important concept for Swift and his contemporaries, but what troubled me were the powerfully opposed attitudes towards authority in the political tracts, sermons, poems and pamphlets. What or who is the authority in Swift's writing about the Church? Why does Swift seem to waver back and forth from Tory to Whig positions? Is Swift consistently an advocate of a certain brand of orthodoxy? If the Church is the authority, why does Swift satirize some of its rituals and beliefs? If the King is the authority, why does Swift's defense of him sometimes sound patently subversive? If God is the authority, why does not Swift address Him directly?

There are three major bases of authority important to Swift--the Church of England, the English Parliament, and the Monarchy. I see many ways in which Swift accumulates authority for himself to build up the force of his persuasive tracts and sermons, and ways in which Swift sabotages

authority through satirical poems and pamphlets. My thesis is that Swift is often professing to be the rational, careful, objective voice of moderation, but that ultimately he realizes that moderation is impossible. Swift is not a person for whom moderation is an operative principle. For example, there is no sustained via media in The Tale of a Tub, which I shall discuss in detail in the next chapter, because Swift has no concept of what moderation is, although he offers as his purpose the defense of the Church of England "as the most perfect of all others in discipline and doctrine." Swift offers no convincing intermediate position between the "fanaticks" and "Papists" but simply steps into the contradiction perfectly poised to make cryptic statements such as

> Even I myself, the author of these momentous truths, am a person, whose imaginations are hard-mouth'd, and exceedingly disposed to run away with his reason, which I have observed from long experience, to be a very light rider, and easily shook off; upon which account, my friends will never trust me alone, with a solemn promise, to vent my speculations in this, or the like manner, for the universal benefit of human kind; which, perhaps, the gentle, courteous, and candid reader, brimful of that modern charity and tenderness, usually annexed to his office, will be very hardly persuaded to believe.1

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[1]"Digression Concerning Madness," The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, ed. Herbert Davis, 14 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939-68), 1: 114. Hereafter referred to in parenthetical citations as PW. I have departed from Davis in my quotations in that I have eliminated italics and all capitals not specifically allegorical. The use of italics and capitals is a convention of eighteenth-century broadside printing and does not measurably add to the effect of Swift's writing.

In his writings about the Church, Swift's contradictory attitudes towards authority are sometimes expressed in an implied conflict between "fancy" or imagination and "reason," supposedly a guiding principle of the human mind and a force of moderation. Yet if reason is a "very light rider and easily shook off," the reader is unable to trust what authority it may exert over the dangerous delusions of the "fancy." If the reader is unable to trust the narrator of The Tale of a Tub with his professed goal of venting speculations "for the universal benefit of human kind," he is left with no solid principles to guide him. Receding from the text one step further, the speaker says that the "gentle, courteous, and candid reader" surely will listen to his friends who do not trust him to deliver these momentous truths. Of course! Anyone who speaks in double negatives with this kind of manic bravado and knowing self-incrimination is to be given wide latitude by the reader; the reader fears the consequences if his "trust" is taken away.

The problem is that while Swift may cherish authority, he is dissatisfied with the fact that human beings occupy positions of power, not projected images of himself. This provides Swift with an abundance of topics for his writing; examples of failure in the proper administration of authority by persons in the Church and government are evident everywhere, at all times, throughout history, as long as the speaker is on the outside looking in. In his writing about

the Church, Swift often speaks of "reason" as a source of moderation between the extremes of what he sees as the freethinking deists and the institution-bound Roman Catholics. Yet he never offers a consistent definition of reason nor attempts to explain how it actually operates. What does not change throughout the span of his career is Swift's inability to produce a convincing example of moderation. Swift often attempts to use his own voice or that of a persona as a source of objective mediation, but the results can be devastating to that speaker's credibility, as in A Tale of a Tub or "A Modest Proposal."

Swift is different from some of his contemporaries in that he did not have a static, ideal "reason" to guide him in areas of disagreement. John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, writes in his "Satire Against Mankind" that

> Our sphere of action is life's happiness
> And he who thinks beyond thinks like an ass
> Thus, whilst against false reasoning I inveigh
> I own right reason, which I would obey
> That reason which distinguishes by sense
> And gives us rules of good and ill from thence,
> That bounds desires with a reforming will
> To keep them more in vigour, not to kill.
> Your reason hinders, mine helps to enjoy
> Renewing appetites yours would destroy
> My reason is my friend, yours is a cheat
> Hunger calls out, my reason bids me eat.2

Rochester's "right reason" is based on sensory experience and does not quell normal desires like hunger, but serves as a reinforcement to life and inducement to pleasure. This is no

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2The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century, ed. Martin Price (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 51.

staunch "reforming will" like that of some Reformation ascetic such as John Calvin, but a moderate, common sense guide to life. Reason to Rochester is a secular guiding principle which helps to distinguish among false impressions and leads to a life-giving state of happiness. Similarly, Dryden's Religio Laici or religious belief of the layman offers a defense of reason as a moderate, Christian guiding principle against extremes such as the deist philosophy. In his attack against deism or natural religion, Dryden insists on the relationship between "borrowed beams" of reason and the "supernatural light" to which they lead the faithful.

> Dim as the borrowed beams of moon and stars
> To lonely, weary, wandering travelers,
> Is reason to the soul and, as on high
> Those rolling fires discover but the sky,
> Not light us here, so reason's glimmering ray
> Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,
> But guide us upward to a better day.
> And as those nightly tapers disappear
> When day's bright lord ascends our hemisphere
> So pale grows reason at Religion's sight;
> So does, and so dissolves in supernatural light.[3]

The dissolution of reason's light means that there is a continuity between it and the revelations of Christianity, once they appear. The issue, which also concerned Swift, is whether man's reason is self-sufficient and needs no external guide (deism) or whether reason is untrustworthy and can provide no guidance at all in matters of faith (fideism). Dryden is striking a middle course between the two extremes, saying that both independent reason and religious revelation

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[3]Ibid., 90.

have a role in matters of faith.

When contrasting Rochester and Dryden with Swift's "definition" of reason, I can find no similar middle road.

> When a man's fancy gets astride of his reason, when imagination is at cuffs with the senses, and common understanding as well as common sense, is kicked out of doors; the first proselyte he makes is himself, and when that is once compassed the difficulty is not so great in bringing over others, a strong delusion always operating from without as vigorously as from within. For cant and vision are to the ear and the eye, the same that tickling is to the touch. Those entertainments and pleasures we most value in life are such as dupe and play the wag with the senses. For, if we take an examination of what is generally understood by happiness, as it has respect either to the understanding or the senses, we shall find all its properties and adjuncts will herd under this short definition: that it is a perpetual possession of being well deceived (PW 1: 108).

Like Rochester, Swift is concerned with man's happiness, but for him it is an illusion. This famous paragraph has as its thematic premise that imagination exerts a negative influence over reason and that we should avoid being deceived and made false proselytes by having our senses corrupted. Yet Swift undermines the ostensible point with language that is richly inventive and figurative: imagination is described as a brute who "cuffs" common sense and kicks him out of doors, creating a proselyte who operates wonderfully by "tickling" the senses of his converts, subverting reasonable faculties of sight and hearing with imaginative bliss. Finally we are left with the delusion of happiness produced by this "perpetual possession of being well deceived."

Swift draws a clear distinction between imagination with

its self-created figments and reason, which he takes to correspond to outward reality. Most people prefer to live in this "perpetual possession of being well deceived" rather than face the hard facts of reality. In this way, Swift resembles an empiricist, although he is not a consistent adherent of any philosophical school. Swift believes in drawing rules of living not from abstract theory but from experience. He often puts himself in situations that require him to denounce imagination as a delusion corrupting those in power. In fact, the tension created by Swift's imagination energizes his writing, sometimes making him an unlikely proponent of religious orthodoxy. Swift shared with Locke this fear of "enthusiasm" and the workings of men's imaginations. Locke questions

> Is there any thing so extravagant, as the imaginations of men's brains? Where is the head that has no chimeras in it? Or if there be a sober and wise man, what difference will there be, by your rules, between his knowledge and that of the most extravagant fancy in the world? They both have their ideas, and perceive their agreement and disagreement one with another. If there be any difference between them, the advantage will be on the warm-headed man's side, as having the more ideas, and the more lively...but of what use is all this fine knowledge of men's own imaginations, to a man that enquires after the reality of things? It matters not what men's fancies are, 'tis the knowledge of things that is only to be prized: 'tis this alone gives a value to our reasonings, and preference to one man's knowledge over another's, that it is of things as they really are, and not of dreams and fancies.4

Thus the "warm-headed man" with his chimeras and

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4John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 562-63.

"edifices in the air" may gain the upper hand over the sober and wise man who tries to probe inner reality and find out things as they really are. Conflicting attitudes towards authority are introduced when the warm-headed man and his false sense of happiness prevail. He is prevented from seeing the truth or paying due respect to orthodox positions because he sees from behind a bank of fog, in what Swift calls "a perpetual possession of being well-deceived." Any man who does not see the reality behind false appearances cannot possibly understand or appreciate benevolence or virtues in his leaders. On the other hand, if this man takes a seat in the government or church not valuing a "knowledge of things" but overcome by his own extravagant fancy, there may be disastrous consequences. The man deluded by enthusiasm and imagination is capable of abusing the authority he possesses, content with his own self-image of power.

F. R. Leavis has raised the issue that we may lack a positive standard in Swift's writings because even when he concerns himself with defending something of value, the effect is essentially negative. Leavis says that "the positive itself appears only negatively--a kind of skeletal presence, rigid enough, but without life or body; a necessary precondition, as it were, of directed negation. The

intensity is purely destructive."[5] Robert W. Uphaus in his reader-centered criticism qualifies Leavis in saying that there are some works which do uphold a positive standard in the way Swift upholds a person or idea.

> Another way of stating this matter is to say that in The Battle of the Books, "The Argument Against Abolishing Christianity," and The Drapier's Letters Swift serves as a middleman who simultaneously defends something of value--be it Sir William Temple, ancient learning, the Test Act, or Ireland--as he castigates whatever threatens that value--William Wotton, modern learning, repeal of the Sacramental Test, or England's oppression of Ireland. But in Gulliver's Travels or "A Modest Proposal," Swift is less a middle-man or intermediary than he is an aggressor and adversary who, more than anything else, attacks his readers because he no longer trusts them.[6]

Even with the statement that Swift occasionally acts as a middleman, the focus of the chapter is on the increasing phenomenon of "reader distortion," Swift's loss of faith in the reader's reason, and his deteriorating faith in social reform. Uphaus says that "the history of reader responses to A Tale of a Tub and Gulliver's Travels suggests that Swift certainly vexed the world, but the vexation may itself have been prompted by Swift's inability or unwillingness to sustain a satisfactory 'positive standard'" (10).

If Swift is seen as a person whose writings vexed the world, it might come as a surprise that some critics have

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[5]F. R. Leavis, "The Irony of Swift" in Swift, A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Ernest Tuveson (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 17.

[6]Robert W. Uphaus, "Swift and the Problematical Nature of Meaning" in The Impossible Observer (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1979), 9-27.

assumed him to be fundamentally conservative. Phillip Harth dates the general acceptance of Swift's religious orthodoxy from the appearance of Ricardo Quintana's The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift in 1936. Harth himself endorses the portrait of Swift as "Christian rationalist"; he believes Swift's familiarity with late seventeenth-century religious writers such as More, Casaubon, Glanvill, and Tillotson is the essential background for "A Tale of a Tub." Harth's real accomplishment is in precisely documenting how Swift derived from these Restoration Anglicans the ideas for his religious allegory, digression on madness, and exposition on the learned Aeolists. For example, Swift's treatment of Jack as one who was driven mad by enthusiasm can be linked to More's "Enthusiasmus Triumphatus" and Casaubon's "Treatise Concerning Enthusiasme."[7] Harth's basic thesis is that Anglican theologians who influenced Swift believed in a rational faith based on the via media, where reason and faith cooperated against the extremes of Puritan enthusiasm and Roman Catholic dogmatism.

It was usual during the nineteenth century to see Swift as fundamentally irreligious, as a person who used a career in the Church to further political ambitions denied to him by Queen Anne. According to Thackeray, Swift did not respect traditional Christian beliefs and his religious writings were

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[7]Phillip Harth, Swift and Anglican Rationalism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 72-78.

the mechanical product of rationalism without insight or conviction.[8] Swift's sermons are sometimes regarded as uninspired orthodoxy, an opinion not passionately denied by his own correspondence. Writing to his friend and fellow cleric John Winder, Swift says his sermons "will utterly disgrace you...they were what I was firmly resolved to burn, and especially some of them, the idlest trifling stuff that ever was writ."[9] Satisfied that some of Swift's sermons escaped the flames, recent criticism has adopted an image of Swift as a pragmatic, convention-bound pastor. David Nokes says

> Swift's sermons are homilies on social, rather than spiritual topics. They seek to encourage dutiful behavior and orthodox opinions by eschewing theological problems and recommending instead a simple, deferential code of conduct to his parishioners...the sermons present us with the voice of Swift the churchman; it is the voice of a deliberately narrow and shallow orthodoxy. In his literary and political satires we see Swift defending positions of orthodoxy with a bewildering range of unorthodox devices. Few of his religious writings show anything like the same versatility, and the inference is inescapable that it was in his relationship with God that Swift felt most uneasy.[10]

While it is true that Swift's sermons lack the

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[8]William Makepeace Thackeray, "The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century," The Complete Works, 10 vols. (Boston: William Estes, 1881), 8: 124-27.

[9]The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams, 5 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1963-65), 1: 29. Hereafter referred to in parenthetical citations as Corr.

[10]David Nokes, Jonathan Swift, A Hypocrite Reversed (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), 278.

imaginative power of his satire, I think Nokes too quickly settles for the orthodoxy Swift offers because it matches our expectations. We expect Swift to deliver easily digestible packages of moral wisdom in sermons which in no way affront authorities in the church. Yet this is a superficial orthodoxy, a perfunctory endorsement of established order in sermons like "On Mutual Subjection" and "On the Excellency of Christianity." I find that even in the restrained form of the sermon, Swift's imagination is never completely given over to exhorting his congregation to adopt certain forms of behavior. We may expect the voice of the churchman and recognize his familiar Christian platitudes, but Swift's ambivalence towards authority makes him insert some dangerously heretical logic in the three sermons I shall discuss, "The Testimony of Conscience," "Mutual Subjection," and "The Excellency of Christianity."

Before looking at the sermons, I think it is necessary to discuss them in light of what Swift wrote to himself in the form of epigrams or maxims. In "Thoughts on Religion," Swift expresses the idea that reason is the liberty of conscience which may or may not lead to belief in God: "I am in all opinions to believe according to my own impartial reason; which I am bound to inform and improve as far as my capacity and opportunities will permit" (PW 9: 261). The problem is that reason, once planted by God, may act independently of external forces or authorities; incentives

and punishments may be used to solicit certain forms of behavior, but Swift makes it clear that belief itself cannot be coerced by the violent zeal of a prince or preacher. Furthermore, when independent reason leads to opinions that contradict accepted doctrine, Swift feels that every man ought to be content with his own opinion kept in private "without perplexing his neighbor or disturbing the public...the want of belief is a defect that ought to be concealed when it cannot be overcome."

This idea of the independence of reason which makes for private misgivings was problematic for many of Swift's contemporaries like Pope, who wrote of "This light and darkness in our chaos joined/ What shall divide? The God within the mind" (Essay on Man, II, 2Ø3). When we consider the Enlightenment ideal of universal, natural reason, there should be ideally no disagreement on matters of faith which follow from independent contemplation of God's grand design. Swift is saying that such discrepancies are the unfortunate product of reason which God has granted to every person; the best we can do is to conceal such doubts and not let them influence public behavior. Is such self-discipline, denial and division really possible? Apparently not, for Swift advocates the kind of society equipped with safeguards against subversive behavior at the same time he acknowledges the intellectual problem of the liberty of conscience. Every man should enjoy the freedom of possessing his own thoughts

and opinions, but should he decide to act against the established authority, there must be laws in place to regulate his behavior. So there is a constant battle going on inside the mind of this "orthodox" churchman:

> Although reason were intended by providence to govern our passions, yet it seems that, in two points of the greatest moment to the being and continuance of the world, God hath intended our passions to prevail over reason. The first is, the propagation of our species, since no man ever married from the dictates of reason. The other is, the love of life, which, from the dictates of reason, every man would despise, and wish it at an end, or that it never had a beginning.[11]

Reason and the passions are at war just as social institutions like marriage demand that men not act on their private doubts. On the other hand, commonplace wisdom like the love of life depends on passions sometimes gaining the upper hand. There is an enormous suppressed energy in the idea that basic social order depends on this delicate balance. What if every man were to act on his doubts and heed the dictates of private reason? What if anti-rationalism and depravity prevailed? What if the laws of the nation were an insufficient defense against irrational behavior? It is clear from "Thoughts on Religion" that we would have a world blinded by factions, a society of yahoos competing for personal rewards.

"Thoughts on Religion" is a set of unrelated maxims, Swift's private meditations that contradict the more persuasively-directed ideas in the public discourse of his

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[11]"Thoughts on Religion," PW 9: 263.

sermons. "On the Testimony of Conscience" is a sermon in which Swift devotes himself to publicly attacking a view that he privately believes: individual conscience can function independently of the laws of God. But to what kind of authorities does Swift appeal in the sermon? Here Swift reduces the role of conscience saying it is nothing but what we are thinking and doing at the moment.

> Liberty of conscience is now-a-days not only understood to be the liberty of believing what men please, but also of endeavoring to propagate the belief as much as they can, and to overthrow the faith which the laws have already established, to be rewarded by the publick for those wicked endeavors: and this is the liberty of conscience which the fanaticks are now openly in the face of the world endeavoring at with their utmost application (PW 9: 151).

So while Swift seems to advocate freedom of thought in "Thoughts on Religion," his sermon advocates the suppression of religious nonconformists and "fanaticks." This includes groups like Presbyterians, Anabaptists, and Quakers and individuals like Asgil, Tindal, Toland, and Coward.[12] Their proselytizing is nothing but a "wicked endeavor" to violate the law and seek public reward for their rebellion.

Swift's sermon "On Mutual Subjection" might be read as the rehearsal of a traditional Christian theme expressed by St. Peter's maxim: "Likewise ye younger submit yourselves unto the Elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another."

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[12]All referred to directly in A Tale of a Tub and "An Argument To Prove that the Abolishing of Christianity in England, May As Things Now Stand, Be Attended With Some Inconveniences."

But Swift's imagination capitalizes on the second half of this phrase, the inversion of the hierarchy:

> For we may observe by Saint Peter, that having mentioned the several relations which men bear to each other, as governor and subject, master and servant, and the rest which I have already repeated, he maketh not exception, but sums up the whole with commanding all be subject one to another. From whence we may conclude, that this subjection due from all men to all men, is something more than the compliment of course, when our betters are pleased to tell us they are our humble servants, but understand us to be their slaves (PW 9: 141).

The crucial phrase here is "something more than the compliment of course;" the idea Swift expresses goes beyond the orthodox, rational assumptions about superiority and power relationships. There is a latent anarchy in this mutual subjection which challenges the accepted roles of governor/subject or master/slave. If those in power are "pleased" to tell their dependents that they are humble servants while understanding them to be slaves, is not Swift hinting at ambivalent attitudes towards authority? It is impossible to accept conventional patterns without acknowledging the tension in this sermon that purports to endorse the status quo. I find nothing in Swift's explication of St. Peter that defines a middle way between the roles of master and slave. Swift surreptitiously questions the idea of authority in this sermon when he writes that "there must be some kind of subjection due from every man to every man, which cannot be made void by any power, pre-eminence, or authority whatever." Of course we hear of God's great chain of being and how each person must behave

according to his particular station, yet the inversion of Christ, who washed the feet of his disciples, leads Swift to other examples of the powerful and powerless:

> The Prince cannot say to the merchant, I have no need of thee. For the poor are generally more necessary members of the commonwealth than the rich: which clearly shews, that God never intended such possessions for the sake and service of those to whom he lends them...Nay, even the poor beggar hath a just demand of an alms from the rich man, who is guilty of fraud, injustice, and oppression, if he doth not afford relief according to his abilities (PW 9: 143-4).

We are tempted to dismiss this as Swift's feeble attempt to placate the laboring parishioners as "necessary" for the good of the nation. But there is a hidden subversive logic in the "just demand of an alms" from the rich person who sounds like a potential target for Swift's satire. It is impossible to produce an exact date for the composition of the sermons. We do not know where Swift was living when he wrote them, but it is likely that the references to "rich" and "poor" are based on Swift's feelings about England's exploitation of Ireland.

Swift's sermon "On the Excellency of Christianity" is often used as an example of his orthodoxy. Louis Landa notes that Swift's position is the conventional one embodied in Locke's statement that "the true ground of morality can only be the will and law of God, who sees men in the dark, has his hands in rewards and punishments, and power enough to call to account the proudest offender" (PW 9: 115). In this sermon Swift tries to persuade his congregation that Christian

philosophy is in all things preferable to "heathen wisdom", a dilemma in itself remembering how passionately Swift cherished classical authority in tracts like "Contests and Dissensions in Athens and in Rome." Swift even praises the ancients in the sermon, saying they "rose to a greater pitch of wisdom and virtue than was ever known among Christians, and all this purely upon strength of their own reason and liberty of conscience" (PW 9: 242). So how does Christianity ascend over the virtues of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates? Swift tries to prove that their philosophy is grounded upon ignorance and mistakes; they are misled by their own imperfect reason and moral defects. For example, they cannot agree on what virtue is or where the happiness of man can be found.

There are more contradictions in this sermon than Swift's regard for Christian and classical authority. What is most revealing is Swift's opinion that classical philosophy's emphasis on material rewards for virtue is mistaken:

> Bodily goods, being only suitable to bodily wants, are no rest at all for the mind; and, if they were, yet are they not the proper fruits of wisdom and virtue, being equally attainable by the ignorant and wicked. Now, human nature is so constituted, that we can never pursue any thing heartily but upon hopes of a reward. If we run a race, it is in expectation of a prize, and the greater the prize the faster we run...but some of the philosophers gave all this quite another turn, and pretended to refine so far, as to call virtue its own reward, and worthy to be followed only for itself (PW 9: 244).

Swift is saying that human nature is such that we will not

pursue anything unless there is the potential for reward, the carrot held out on the stick. This is not necessarily bad if the congregation follows the logic of Pope, who wrote that "Self-love, the spring of motion, acts the soul; Reason's comparing balance rules the whole " (Essay On Man, II, 59). But we must remember that for Swift, reason was not such an unifying force capable of keeping in balance contradictory urges of mind and body. Swift insists that material rewards are insufficient motivations for pursuing virtue, "bodily goods being only suitable for bodily wants, are no rest for the mind at all." He goes on to say that a man looking for preferments and prizes will have no hope for spiritual greatness because he has no firm footing.

But wait a minute! This is exactly the plan Swift advocated in his earlier "Project for the Advancement of Religion," a carefully-engineered scheme in which the appearance of moral integrity is the ticket to political success. In this tract, Swift suggests that if piety and virtue were acknowledged as qualifications necessary for preferment, "every man thus endowed, when put into great station, would readily imitate the Queen's example in the distribution of offices" (PW 2: 48). At first glance, it might seem hypocritical to say that the appearance of integrity is enough to get someone in office but not enough to guarantee rest for the mind.

This kind of ethical relativism has been discussed

regarding Defoe's use of casuistry by George A. Starr, who argues that Defoe's use of "blameworthy" characters compels the reader's sympathy because the reader appreciates the difficult cases of conscience which Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, and Roxana face. Defoe's characters are complex because they embrace so many different moral tensions as they try to justify the rules of religion and morality to suit their particular problems. It was not only in fiction that "bending the rules" of morality was justified. Starr writes that

> During the seventeenth century...casuistry also found a host of advocates. John Selden, for instance, advises that casuistry is one of the "four things a Minister should be at"; casuists, he says, "may be of admirable use, if discreetly dealt with, though among them you shall have many leaves together very impertinent." And George Herbert speaks for many fellow Anglicans when he declares, in his survey of "The Parson's Accessary Knowledges," that "He greatly esteemes also of cases of conscience, wherein he is much versed." In their visitation charges, various prelates prescribe the study of casuistry for the clergy of their dioceses. Thomas Sprat, better known today as the historian of the Royal Society than as Bishop of Rochester, is typical in maintaining that "being a sound and well-experienced casuist is...a most excellent qualification towards all the other ends of your ministerial office; there being no kind of skill or proficiency in all your theological studies that more becomes a divine of the Church of England, whose highest spiritual art is to speak directly from his own conscience to the consciences of all those under his Pastoral care."[13]

What sort of casuistry, if any, is taking place in "An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity?" Swift's use of irony and satire in support of occasional conformity would

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[13]George A. Starr, Defoe and Casuistry, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 6.

seem a perfect example of a circumstantial case where the rules of religion were altered to suit the needs of government officials. Swift says that occasional conformity is better than no conformity at all, but the satirical force with which he describes how men actually conduct their lives leaves me to doubt his true intention.

"An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity" is as close as Swift comes in his writing about the Church to a truly moderate position. The problem is that the speaker is tackling three distinct issues at once, which may account for the dispersion of (or lack of) emotional conviction in his support of "occasional conformity." First is the speaker's advocacy of the Test Act or "nominal Christianity" by which officials in the government demonstrate a token observance of communion in the Church of England. Second, the speaker vents his rage directly against Asgil, Tindal, Toland, Coward and other freethinking deists who believe that official Christianity impedes their liberty of conscience. A related purpose is the speaker's ironic concern for the "scrofulous, consumptive productions furnished by our men of wit and pleasure." Third and most problematic is the speaker's statement that despite the sincere altruism of those who propose to abolish religion, it is impossible to legislate belief. Just because all parties agree that abolishing Christianity would enlarge personal freedoms, eliminate factions, reduce useless bawling on Sunday, and create one

more day for commercial enterprise does not mean that people will actually stop believing in religion. Swift's casuistry may operate at a more official than personal level, and this is where I think the moderate position he delineates fails to convince the reader.

Swift wrote in "Thoughts on Religion" that "you may force men, by interest or punishment, to say they believe, and to act as if they believed. You can go no further." In the truest sense of belief, the point is that Christianity cannot be enacted or abolished and the reasonable speaker fully realizes it. His moderate position between atheism and true belief is easier and more accessible because he admits that finally no one actually knows what is believed. The speaker is caught between having a fine point to argue and finding an empty spot in the heart of his thinking. Swift's argument against eliminating religion is an exercise in rhetorical skill by which he establishes the boundaries of occasional conformity, an official position and nothing more. There is no passionate defense of a moderate position or of belief itself, the true foundation of Christianity. Swift's orthodoxy and faith in the Test Act are fully apparent, but so is the problem of any official act corresponding to reality:

> Will any man say that if the words whoring, drinking, cheating, lying, stealing, were by act of parliament ejected out of the English tongue and dictionaries, we should all awake next morning chaste and temperate, honest and just, and lovers of truth? Is this a fair consequence? Or if the physicians would forbid us to

> pronounce the words pox, gout, rheumatism, and stone, would that expedient serve like so many talismans to destroy the diseases themselves?

So even if everyone should agree to abolish Christianity, the speaker is saying that abolishing belief is quite another thing and quite impossible. The parliament may do all it wishes with words, but words alone are only a faint indication of what is inside a man's head. Swift is saying that you may have it your way and abolish Christianity, but that finally government lacks the authority needed to abolish belief. This kind of casuistry leaves the door open to individual decisions.

Because of the satire and imaginative energy generated in the defense of nominal Christianity, the reader is left with the impression that the speaker's real purpose is to expose the real state of Christianity in England. We know that Swift was in favor of the Church's authority to forbid persons from holding office who did not take communion in the Church of England, but the force of the essay is in the speaker's nonchalance and presumptuous tone:

> I hope, no reader imagines me so weak to stand up in the defence of real Christianity; such as used in primitive times (if we may believe the authors of those ages) to have an influence upon men's belief and actions: to offer at the restoring of that, would indeed be a wild project; it would be to dig up foundations; to destroy at one blow all the wit, and half the learning of the kingdom; to break the entire frame and constitution of things; to ruin trade, extinguish arts and sciences with the professors of them; in short, to turn our courts, exchanges, and shops into deserts...every candid reader will easily understand my discourse to be intended only in defense of nominal Christianity; the other having been for some time wholly laid aside by general consent,

> as utterly inconsistent with our present schemes of wealth and power (PW 2: 27-8).

These schemes of wealth and power, commerce, education, courts, and social institutions are the real things the speaker wishes to point out as more important on a personal level to the average citizen than Christianity. The point is that genuine, primitive Christianity is hopelessly incompatible with the present state of affairs. The speaker says that we can only laugh at those who assume real Christianity is a defensible doctrine. How would this be read by authorities in the church? The answer is that it would anger them to no end and do more damage with off-hand irony than it would persuade in favor of the Church's supremacy.

The speaker tries to model himself as a moderate, reasonable, middle-of-the-road investigator who will equally represent both sides. In the organization of his essay, he is very successful in accomplishing this purpose. The speaker announces that he will "briefly consider the strength of both [positions], fairly allow them their greatest weight, and offer such answers as I think most reasonable." Of course, the reader is likely to question on what basis an argument is decided to be reasonable. Is it only according to the speaker's judgment or is it submitted to an impartial tribunal? The center of the whole piece is the carefully crafted line "Nor do I think it wholly groundless, or my fears altogether imaginary; that the abolishing of

Christianity may perhaps bring the Church in danger," which is more a political than religious statement. What follows is the suggestion that abolishing Christianity "will be the readiest course we can take to introduce Popery," by which he implies that Roman Catholics and Dissenters are Christians, but not proper members of the Church of England and not properly admissable to official, government duties.

The argument supposedly attacks hypocrisy by "defending" the practices of a society that has by common consent adopted the ideal of nominal Christianity. Here the loss of Christianity would mean the death of the forbidden fruits of whoring, gaming, drinking, cheating, and stealing which men so thoroughly enjoy because they are illicit. With no dog-tailed parsons walking the streets, the "great wits" would be deprived an object of scorn and would be forced instead to revile the government. Swift satirizes the practice of the great wits while paradoxically performing this same service in "defending" the Sunday sabbath:

> What if the men of pleasure are forced, one day in the week, to game at home, instead of the chocolate-house? Are not the taverns and coffee-houses open? Can there be a more convenient season for taking a dose of physic? Are fewer claps got upon Sundays than other days? Is not that the day for traders to sum up the accounts of the week; and for lawyers to prepare their briefs? (PW 2: 31).

The speaker's dismissal of primitive Christianity is done at an official level and he offers no emotionally-driven reasons why we should not abolish Christianity; he revels in his exercise of wit and never comes close to endorsing the

authority of the church. If this is not a contradictory attitude towards authority, written while Swift was trying to secure a preferment for himself, then the author was either misguided or totally deluded.

Swift's poetry is equally unsettling if one attempts to locate a stable center of orthodoxy. The satirical poem "On the Irish Bishops" was written in 1732, a time when Swift had permanently settled in Ireland, so he was not in danger of destroying his chances of returning to England in an official capacity. Writing to Bishop Stearne, Swift said

> when those two abominable bills, for enslaving and beggaring the clergy, (which took their birth from Hell) were upon the anvil, if I had found your Lordship's name among the bishops who would have turned them into a law, I might have been apt to discover such marks of indignation, horror, and despair, both in words and deportment, as would have ill become me to a person of your station. For, I call God to witness, what I did then, and do now, and shall for ever, firmly believe, that every bishop, who gave his vote for either of these bills, did it with no other view than a premeditated design, from the spirit of ambition and love of arbitrary power, to make the whole body of the clergy their slaves and vassals until the Day of Judgment, under the load of poverty and contempt. (Corr IV: 182).

This is exactly the spirit of the poem, but whereas the letter is a direct indictment of the bishops as self-serving and tyrannical, the poem with its imaginative comparison between the bishops and Satan is far more powerful. Swift says that the bishops, like Satan, are surrounded with "jewels of sulphur and nitre" and the obsequious parsons, whom the bishops poke with their croziers to keep them in place. The established authorities are damnable bishops with

underlings who do not have the legitimate right of succession. This is Swift's satirical portrait of the idea of religious authority:

> Our bishops puffed up with wealth and pride;
> To hell on the backs of the clergy would ride;
> They mounted, and laboured with whip and with spur,
> In vain--for the devil a parson would stir.
> So the Commons unhorsed them, and this was their doom,
> On their croziers to ride, like a witch on a broom.[14]

The fact that the Irish House of Commons overturned the two bills that would have allowed the bishops to divide large parishes does not matter; Swift's savage attack against the prevailing order shows how imagination creates effective vehicles for subversive thoughts. The theme is that of one set of people metaphorically mounting their horses, living off the sweat of other's labor. It is perhaps the most heretical idea possible for a churchman that his superiors may have things in common with the evil one; they may deceive and appear to be benevolent authorities. Swift's imaginative indictment is more effective than the straightforward anger of the letter because in the poem, he uses the outward signs of authority to destroy the image of moral superiority. For example, he refers to the vestments and accessories which go along with the bishop's office: croziers, mitre, and gowns.

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[14]"On the Irish Bishops" in Jonathan Swift: The Complete Poems, ed. Pat Rogers (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), 499. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition and referred to in parenthetical citations as Poems. I am also indebted to the notes in The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams, 3 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1958).

Now hear an allusion! A mitre, you know
Is divided above, but united below.
If this you consider, our emblem is right;
The bishops divide, but the clergy unite.
Should the bottom be split, our bishops would dread
That the mitre would never stick fast on their head,
And yet they have learnt the chief art of a sovereign,
As Machiavel taught 'em; 'divide and ye govern.'
But, courage, my lords, though it cannot be said
That one cloven tongue, ever sat on your head;
I'll hold you a groat, and wish I could see't,
If your stockings were off, you could show cloven feet.

A mitre would be the first thing a common pastor would notice about the bishop's appearance, and Swift transforms it, using it as symbol of the strategy to divide and subdue. Conventional orthodoxy would have it that any directive from Church superiors must be received with unquestioned acceptance, but Swift shows that, like Satan, the bishop's appearance deceives. They desire to undermine the financial and spiritual independence of the parish priest by dividing their glebe lands and sacrificing their tithes: "with the tithe of the tithe of the tithe to maintain you...you are only to live four years without victuals." The bishops share with Machiavelli and corrupt monarchs the power to prevail over weakness when the opposition is reduced. Although perhaps the bishops' heads have never been anointed by the devil, what is worse is that they <u>are</u> the devil; their stockings pulled off would reveal the plain fact. The poet is not deceived by their false appearances. He sees through their vestments and strategies into the truth of their identity.

Swift's letter (quoted above) to Bishop Stearne refers

to the Day of Judgment as an eventuality, a rite Swift performs continually. This is a final answering point for the corrupt Bishops to account for their preying on the parish lands. Swift's poem with that title is one of his most disturbing and surprising, not because it is satirical but because it is wide-open and violent. Herbert Davis has written that the poem "is the complete triumph of the Comic Spirit, unabashed and unafraid, delighting to overthrow all mankind's claims to dignity and importance and 'ending with a puff' the whole heroic and romantic delusion."[12] There is a certain playfulness in the octosyllabic couplets and one syllable rhymes, concluding with the idea that the reader has been taken by this "bite" or witty trap. We cannot tell if the poem is written in a state of dream, illusion, or madness. What is surprising is that the deity empowered to make judgments is not the Christian God but the ancient Roman god of the sky, Jove "armed with terrors," bursting the skies with thunder and lightning. The poet is amazed and confused with the rest of the world, his fate in the hands of the horrific pagan vision.

> With a whirl of thought oppressed,
> I sink from reverie to rest.
> An horrid vision seized my head
> I saw the graves give up their dead (Poems, 507).

The shift in tenses and the confusion of consciousness

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[12]Herbert Davis, Jonathan Swift: Essays on His Satire and Other Studies, (New York: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1964), 198.

and dreams give the poem a surreal quality. We do not know if the poet is suppressing his own thoughts or if Jove or some other power is forcing him into a dream state. What Davis calls the "Comic Spirit" is the tremendous authority of Jove to put humans in their place, calling them an "offending race...by nature, reason, learning blind." The whole poem is about damnation. The pride of man has allowed him to divide the Church into trivial sects and damn each other while Jove's grand design has been ignored. Jove thunders "I resent these pranks no more./ I to such blockheads set my wit! I damn such fools." The authority here rests on complete acceptance of reason and the avoidance of the faults of self-deceiving pride and imagination.

That Swift had ambivalent attitudes towards authority is evident in other poems he wrote about persons in the Church. Swift's poem "On Dr. Rundle" echoes the condemnations of "The Irish Bishops" but contrasts their general moral decay with an individual whom he celebrates for particular virtues, perhaps as a projected image of himself. I am reminded of Swift's comment to Pope that "I tell you after all that I do not hate mankind; it is vous autres who hate them because you would have them reasonable animals, and are angry for being disappointed" (Corr 3: 118). Swift may be disappointed in the conduct and authority of the Irish Bishops as a group, but he emphatically supports Dr. Rundle of Derry, a person who does not abuse his authority. What he explains as

Rundle's virtues are exactly the values Swift himself admires. The other bishops have quarreled over Rundle's selection according to Swift because he has learning, sense and morals.

> There is a reason still more weighty;
> 'Tis granted he believes a deity.
> Has every circumstance to please us,
> Though fools may doubt his faith in Jesus.
> But why should he with that be loaded,
> Now twenty years from court exploded?
> And, is not this objection odd
> From rogues who ne'er believed a God?
> For liberty a champion stout,
> Though not so gospel-ward devout.
> While others hither sent to save us,
> Came but to plunder and enslave us;
> Nor ever owned a power divine,
> But Mammon, and the German line (Poems, 547).

It is especially revealing that Swift places Rundle's faith in God (what we would take for granted) as his foremost virtue because it implies the other bishops cannot claim virtue. Not only does Rundle have faith, but he is uninfluenced by religious enthusiasm, not a gospel-ward devout but sound in his belief in God. Though fools may doubt his faith, Swift explains that it is real because Rundle has been "exploded" or away from the court for twenty years; there is nothing for him to gain through the appearance of religion: "why should he with that be loaded?" Rundle's authority as a servant of a living God is genuine. Others professing to religion have come to Ireland to plunder and enslave with the authority of commerce or the Hanoverian monarchy, but Rundle stands out as a champion of liberty, genuine faith, unenthusiastic devotion and common sense.

How does Swift contrast Rundle with the other bishops? He compares the bishops with Simon Magus, who offered money to be given the power of laying on of hands and was chastised by Peter (Acts 3: 9-13). From this episode we derive our definition of "simony," and it applies to Swift's condemnation of the bishops: "Were Peter now alive, perhaps/ He might have found a score of chaps/ Could he but make his gift appear/ In rents three thousand pounds a year." The Anglican Bishops are, like Simon Magus, vulnerable to bribery and not above using money to promote themselves, even selling their children, house, and lands to achieve the authority got by Rundle through faith alone. The other bishops are not only possessed by greed, but they also doubt the existence of a Holy Ghost. Rundle has the better jus divinum and Swift celebrates his moral integrity amidst this crowd of cheats and imposters. The real question of authority is thus divided. First, Swift sees the corrupt money-handling and hypocrisy which has elevated men like Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London, into places of power. Second there is Dr. Rundle, whose faith, sense of moderation, and religious integrity have allowed him to rise to his new title.

It is revealing to compare the perceived authority of Dr. Rundle, a man whom Swift personally knew and admired, with that of Dr. William Sancroft, with whom Swift had an obscure relationship. The "Ode to Dr. William Sancroft" was one of Swift's first compositions in verse written to a man

whom Swift idealized as an uncompromising religious hero. The portrait is more abstract and less convincing in some ways. Swift says that Sancroft is so superior that he "moves too high/ To be observed by vulgar eye." Yet Swift also calls Sancroft "primitive" in contrast with the deluded, mistaken schismatics who want to tear down the Church, faction by faction. The foolish men in the Church judge what is best not with reason or common sense but by "flowing opinion dark and blind." Unlike Sancroft or Rundle, the reformers with a hunger for power misguide others with their self-serving philosophy and pride:

> So when Cartesian artists try
> To solve appearances of sight
> In its reception to the eye,
> And catch the living landscape through a scanty light,
> The figures all inverted show
> And colours of a faded hue...
> And some, to be large ciphers in state,
> Pleased with an empty swelling to be counted great;
> Make their minds travel o'er infinity of space,
> Rapt through the wide expanse of thought
> And oft in contradiction's vortex caught,
> To keep that worthless clod, the body, in one place:
> Errors like this did old astronomers misguide,
> Led blindly on by gross philosophy and pride
> (Poems, 61).

The idea is clear. Certain men within the Church are like experimental scientists or Cartesians, seeking truth through physical data and trying to prove that light is created when it is received by the eye. Mistaken by their pseudo-scientific certainty, power mongers in the Church dream of self-importance and make their minds jump over the humble boundaries of common sense to "travel o'er infinity of

space." It is in itself a contradiction because those hungry for recognition pursue personal gain in a Church supposedly preaching humility.

Sancroft is like Rundle in that he has attained his office and position of authority through an independent, strong faith which Swift celebrates. When Swift writes of "some high spiritual throne" Sancroft will be given in heaven, he wants to say that these values are profound and enduring, not the turbulent fantasy of a vain reformer which "crumbles into dust." Sancroft is not being led by avarice and pride because he has persevered through the misguided philosophy of the schismatics. In other words, though Swift's two poems are some 45 years apart in date of composition, his attitude about the source of religious authority has not changed. Swift displays negative attitudes towards authority in the church when it is driven by fanatics, zealots, or fools. These people cannot be shown respect at any cost. The authority Swift respects is in people who have attained high office without being made a prostitute to their imagination and selfish interests, men like Sancroft and Rundle who have held tightly to an independent, responsible faith.

Swift may have celebrated the Church of England or ecclesiastical authority in some of his sermons and pamphlets, but he openly disparages it in poems like "The Irish Bishops" and "On Dr. Rundle." Swift's poem "Verses

Occasioned by the Sudden Drying Up of St. Patrick's Well" takes the unorthodox position of comparing the mission of St. Patrick with the Anglican invasion of Ireland, of which Swift was a representative. "St. Patrick's Well" has in common with the "Ode to Sancroft" a more ornate style which uses archaic phrases and Latinisms generally lacking in his well-known poems. Although the poem is a strongly-worded statement of Swift's view of the Church in Ireland, it is often overlooked even by critics concerned with the issue. It is an excellent example of Swift's contradictory attitudes towards authority not so much because of its imaginative content but because in it he writes in the first person, adopting the voice of St. Patrick.

For all the raillery and contempt Swift has directed against Ireland and her "Papists," "St. Patrick's Well" paradoxically champions the ancient celtic race and the mission of the Hibernian Patron Saint. The most important word in the poem is "tyranny" through which Swift shows the wretched changes conceived under Anglican authority:

> What else are those thou seest in bishop's gear
> Who crop the nurseries of learning here?
> Aspiring, greedy, full of senseless prate.
> Devour the church, and chatter to the state.
> As you grew more degenerate and base,
> I sent you millions of the croaking race;
> Emblems of insects vile, who spread their spawn
> Through all thy land, in armour, fur and lawn.
> A nauseous brood, that fills your senate walls,
> And in the chambers of your Viceroy crawls.
> See, where the new-devouring vermin runs,
> Sent in my anger from the land of Huns;
> With harpy claws it undermines the ground,
> And sudden spreads a numerous offspring round;

> The amphibious tyrant, with his ravenous band,
> Drains all thy lakes of fish, of fruits thy land.
> (Poems, 376)

We first notice stylistic differences between this and Swift's other poems. There is some poetic diction such as "croaking race" or "insects vile," some archaic pronouns, and frequent use of caesura. More importantly, Swift's use of animal imagery to represent the Anglican invasion gives the passage its emotional power. The "nauseous brood" imported from England is a plague or pestilence which infests the land. Vile insects infiltrate the seats of authority and devour it from within. Swift's choice of the rat to represent corrupt judges and bishops is significant because it is an "amphibious tyrant" who crosses the sea and harvests all the fruits from the land, an emblem of absentee landlords in England living off raw materials from Ireland.

The result is that Ireland suffers under the tyranny of this ravenous, corrupt brood of officials, symbolized in the drying up of St. Patrick's well and in the surrender of the speaker in the poem. As long as these "foreign prelates" have their way, Ireland cannot have her religious sanctity. As we have seen in the poems to Sancroft and Rundle, religious authority according to Swift must respect the freedom of the individual. The well which was a symbol of Christian freedom has been drained by the rats, frogs, magpies, and assorted vermin that represent the oppressive plague of the Church. That Swift could write with such

emotion in the persona of St. Patrick is made more remarkable by the uncharacteristic inclusion of copious historical notes and long explanations of classical sources. Swift is not usually inclined to demonstrate the depth of his learning, but perhaps because of the heretical position he takes against his own church he feels compelled to flesh out his knowledge base in notes. Swift takes the position that Ireland would be better off without this invading brood of Anglicans, an indictment against himself in his roles as Priest and Dean.

Swift's attitude towards religious authority is based on the idea that authority must be exercised responsibly, although there is no genuine portrait of moderation in that regard. The middle way or a positive standard for Swift may exist in panegyrical poems, but it is lost as soon as he looks at how authority is actually used. Because Swift cannot accept the fact that he did not achieve a position of authority, he uses satire in his writings about the Church. While he is capable of praising those who embrace a genuine faith and lead by example instead of through manipulation, Swift is still far from being an orthodox, middle-of-the-road apologist for the Church of England. The most powerful impression made by Swift's writings about the Church is not his doctrinal support of the Anglican <u>via media</u>, but his repudiation of religious tyranny and corruption.

## Chapter 2

### "Innovators in the Empire of Reason": The Failure of Moderation in A Tale of a Tub

The reader of A Tale of a Tub is faced with many kinds of authority diametrically opposed to each other: ancients and moderns, reason and imagination, institutionalism and enthusiasm, religion and learning, clergy and wits, fact and fancy, freedom and restraint, Christianity and Gnosticism, Sir William Temple and Reverend William Wotton, allegory and digressions, intellect and emotion, philosophy and science, satire and panegyric, and so forth. In order to make sense of these oppositions, the reader relies on conventional notions about the interactive process between reader and book. The reader assumes that the author of the Tale knows what he is doing.

The point I shall argue is that the author of the Tale self-consciously mixes disparate forms of authority and professes to be an epistemological diplomat. That is, he considers many ways of knowing and tries to define a centrist position; however, the task the author has set out for himself is impossible. The author's strategy is well defined in the "Digression on Madness;" he attempts to moderate the notions of all mankind "exactly to the same length, and breadth, and height of his own...this is the first humble and

civil design of all innovators in the Empire of Reason."[1]

If the author is an "innovator in the Empire of Reason," the reader must adopt the same strategy if he is to understand A Tale of a Tub. In other words, the reader must throw caution to the wind and look beyond any transparent statements the author makes about moderation. The author puts himself in the center of a boiling cauldron of converging ideologies and attempts to find a stable center of orthodoxy or a middle way, appeasing factions in both the learned and ecclesiastic communities. Yet he is not successful in trying to be a moderate. The real point of the Tale is that ways of knowing (or reality itself) are likely to be disturbing and contradictory as one is attracted towards or repelled by different forms of authority at different times. In the reception of reality, Swift's reader is forced to "make" reality.

Many broad implications are at work beyond the paradigm of author--> book--> reader--> reality. Since he is dealing with a book, the reader of A Tale of a Tub attempts to make connections in his mind between the Tale and certain normative conventions he expects to see fulfilled.[2] On one

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[1]"A Digression Concerning the Original, the Use and Improvement of Madness in a Commonwealth" from A Tale of a Tub (PW 1: 105).

[2]This issue has been taken up by Gabriel Josipovici in The World and the Book (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 25-51 and by George Dillon in Constructing Texts (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981).

level, A Tale of a Tub is primarily concerned with ways of reading. The conventions behind reading affect not only the creation of art but also its reception. This applies to A Tale of a Tub as a whole unit of meaning and to statements the author makes about that unit of meaning. In the case of such a diffuse and eccentric book, the reader's deeply-entrenched attitudes about what a book should be and what a book ought to do actually interfere with understanding. Behind every digression and allegorical episode in the Tale are hidden impulses forcing the reader to read the individual sections as they themselves ask to be read. Yet when the reader attempts to make a "valid" interpretation about the meaning of the whole book, he is more likely to pay attention to unconnected units within the book such as the Apology, the "Digression on Madness," or the allegory.

The problem is that the local features of a digression or narrative section do not correspond with Swift's stated purpose for the book. Does this mean the reader needs to invoke two or more sets of standards to evaluate the Tale? Are the author's intrusive or external comments subject to the same kind of scrutiny we give the narrative? One expectation the reader has of a book is that it will exist as a coherent unit of meaning, a self-contained universe or reality that is made accessible or understandable through reading. This is not the case with A Tale of a Tub; its most characteristic feature is a lack of moderation and a tendency

to deconstruct itself. Since no text is self-explicating, the reader is forced to bring his previous knowledge and expectations to bear on what he finds in the book. If A Tale of a Tub means something, then that meaning was constructed by the reader. Swift did not provide the book with any consistent, obvious theme, although he wants to create that impression in the Apology. Even if Swift did have a clearly formed intention, there is no guarantee that the reader would agree with the author about the underlying purpose of the Tale.

Because of the indeterminacy of A Tale of a Tub, we cannot be certain that Swift had a stable or coherent purpose in mind when he wrote it. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Swift's main purpose is to prevent the reader from regaining a sense of balance, even though he supposedly dedicates the book to the Anglican via media. This introduces the theory that what constitutes a valid reading of a book is dependent on whether the meaning derived by a reader corresponds to the stated purpose. When dealing with a writer such as Swift, the reader may be making a fatal mistake if he chooses to take any kind of statement of purpose at face value. If we can demonstrate that the author does not really control all the meanings generated by his text, then "it seems to follow that the author's meaning cannot constitute a general principle or norm for determining the meaning of a text, and it is precisely such a normative

principle that is required in defining the concept of validity."[3] In other words, all the reader can do is make more or less well-informed guesses and reach for a final conclusion that seems highly probable. Absolute, normative certainty is impossible--especially with a text as capricious as the Tale.

Swift assaults the reader with physical data of such force that we have the impression there is a clearly-defined purpose behind it. While the Tale may be dedicated by the author in one statement to a moderate, Anglican doctrine, the most powerfully convincing examples of authority are the extreme positions:

> Reason is certainly in the right; and that in most corporeal beings, which have fallen under my cognizance, the outside hath been infinitely preferable to the in: Whereof I have been farther convinced from some late experiments. Last week I saw a woman flay'd, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse. Yesterday I ordered the carcass of a beau to be stript in my presence; when we were all amazed to find so many unsuspected faults under a suit of cloaths: Then I laid open his brain, his heart, and his spleen; but, I plainly perceived at every operation, that the farther we proceeded, we found the defects encrease upon us in number and bulk: from all which, I justly formed this conclusion to my self; that whatever philosopher or projector can find out an art to sodder and patch up all the flaws and imperfections of nature, will deserve much better of mankind, and teach us a more useful science, than that so much in present esteem, of widening and exposing them (PW 1: 109-10).

The opposition between external appearance (illusion or imagination) and internal fact (science or reason) is a

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[3]E. D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 20.

typical organizing principle. Swift says that we are missing the point if we believe in only physical reality or only in transitory impressions. Similarly from "The Battle of the Books," we see the conflict between reason/ tradition and imagination/ modernism emerging in the dialogue between the spider and bee. The spider grumbles

> What art thou but a vagabond without house or home, without stock or inheritance? Born to no possession of your own, but a pair of wings, and a drone-pipe. Your livelihood is an universal plunder upon nature; a freebooter over fields and gardens; and for the sake of stealing, will rob a nettle as readily as a violet. Whereas I am a domestick animal, furnisht with a native stock within my self. This large castle (to shew my improvements in the mathematicks) is all built with my own hands, and the materials extracted altogether out of my own person (PW 1: 149).

What is the reader to make of such dramatic conflict? In both cases, the reader is attracted to and repelled by the extremes, and there is no comfortable middle way. Having read the apology from A Tale of a Tub and Swift's "statement of purpose," the reader searches in vain for some principle of moderation. Yet the information and ideas supplied by the text correspond to neither the reader's expectation of what a book should be nor to the statement of purpose of A Tale of a Tub. The reader expects the allegorical sections to sustain consistent, stable values that correspond with the three brothers. The reader expects the digressions to meander away from the book's thematic premise. In both cases, Swift deconstructs expectations in that the allegory does not sustain a consistent set of values and the digressions do not

wander away from the main points; they are the main points.

This is a dilemma of the intentional fallacy, or the false practice of judging the meaning and success of a work of art based on the author's expressed or ostensible purpose.[4] The reader finds at least two major purposes (and an infinite number of minor purposes) expressed by the author of A Tale of a Tub. The first is the statement in the Apology about the Church of England, which I shall examine first, and the second is the Father's Will, which I will take up in the latter half of this chapter. In both cases, the reader assumes that what follows the statement of purpose directly reflects on, reinforces, dramatizes or explicates it. Yet one of Swift's real purposes in A Tale of a Tub is to upset conventional notions about the act of reading and the creation of meaning. The reader himself becomes an "innovator in the Empire of Reason" because that is the only way to respond to the book. Finding that moderation does not work, the reader is forced to create new ways of receiving the divergent ideas in each section. In the author's "Dedication to Prince Posterity," he explains

> I can only avow in general to Your Highness, that we do abound in learning and wit; but to fix particulars, is a task too slippery for my slender abilities. If I should venture on a windy day, to affirm to Your Highness, that there is a huge cloud near the horizon in the form of a bear, another in the zenith with the head of an ass, a third to the westward with claws like a dragon; and Your

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[4]The term was coined by W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley in The Verbal Icon (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954).

> Highness should in a few minutes think fit to examine the truth; 'tis certain, they would all be changed in figure and position, new ones would arise, and all we could agree upon would be, that clouds there were, but that I was grossly mistaken in the zoography and topography of them (PW 1: 21).

This precisely describes the problem facing the reader of the Tale; the reader wants to "fix particulars," but finding a theme or a convincing middle road is like trying to describe exactly the location and composition of a cloud. The author of A Tale of a Tub does not establish a solid example of moderation between the extremes of radical enthusiasm and intellectual empiricism because he is himself torn by the struggle. Writing about himself in the third person, Swift explains that at the time he wrote the book, "the author was then young, his invention at the height, and his reading fresh in his head. By the assistance of some thinking, and much conversation, he had endeavour'd to strip himself of as many real prejudices as he could." The author goes on to state the purpose of his book: "it celebrates the Church of England as the most perfect of all others in discipline and doctrine, it advances no opinion they reject, nor condemns any they receive" (PW 1: 2).

Does this mean the whole book is authorized by Anglican doctrine? Does this mean that Swift is really just an Anglican diplomat wearing scholarly clothing? Does Swift merely try to safely negotiate his way through controversy while upsetting no one? Nothing is further from the truth. For one thing, scholars have demonstrated that Swift wrote

his apology some thirteen years after completing the Tale, partly to defend himself against charges of atheism.[5] So the purposes Swift has in mind thirteen years later may not accurately reflect his original inspiration. Consider what Swift has undertaken: An orthodox churchman attempts to expose the follies of fanaticism and celebrate the Church of England as the most perfect of all others by using satire. This is a dilemma because satire has only one object, "attack," and it is not possible to celebrate and attack simultaneously. This dilemma continues to follow Swift throughout his life because his natural proclivity is towards the satiric, and attacking persons in authority is not the most effective way of ingratiating oneself. Swift confesses as much in the Apology, saying that the medium he selected for this message is like trying to pass off a "dull, unwieldy, ill-shaped ox" as a horse when the former has none of the shape, mettle, nor speed of the more noble animal (PW 1: 8). The reader may doubt the success of Swift's project based on his ostensible purpose and design, or much more likely, he may doubt the sincerity of the ostensible purpose. Swift may have desired to put himself in the role of a diplomatic mediator, but he ends up being an innovator in the Empire of Reason. There is no convincing example of moderation in the whole book.

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[5]J.A. Downie, Jonathan Swift, Political Writer (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 91.

Even from the passage in the apology, the reader can tell that the author of the Tale is burdened with conflicting assumptions. While he tries to steer a moderate course and strip himself of real prejudices, the author admits that when he wrote the book he was young and impressionable. Although "he knew to what dangerous heights some men have proceeded," the author indicates that he also aspires towards that same kind of altitude because he is writing satire. By definition, satire is a genre that cannot be written by someone without prejudices. The author further explains that he wrote A Tale of a Tub "for the universal improvement of mankind." Later in the work, he speculates that "there is a peculiar string in the harmony of human understanding, which in several individuals is exactly of the same tuning. Thus, if you can dexterously screw up to its right key, and then strike gently upon it...it will by a secret necessary sympathy, strike exactly at the same time" (PW 1: 106). Ironic as they may be, statements like this lead the reader to hold on to the conventional idea that the author knows what he is doing. We may yet find some inherent, navigable middle way or some common chord inside every human that responds to a moderate view of reality. The author wants the reader to believe that in his diplomatic capacity, the author is trustworthy and his statements of purpose can be received without suspicion.

The eighteenth-century understanding of "author" is

crucial to an appreciation of Swift's use of satire and persona in the Tale. The reader can find references in the Tale to author in the contemporary broad sense, as a writer in general. But Samuel Johnson defines more fundamental shades of meaning, describing an author as 1) "The first beginner or mover of any thing; he to whom any thing owes its original" and 2) "The efficient cause; he that effects or produces any thing."[6] Johnson cites lines from Coriolanus and Paradise Lost: "Be such a gosling to obey instinct; but stand/ As if a man was author of himself" and "Thou art my father, thou my author, thou/ My being gav'st me; whom should I obey but thee?"

This definition of author has more implications and is more political in placing authority in the hands of man (Shakespeare) or God (Milton). Instead of talking only about the creator of text, the eighteenth-century author in this sense is the force behind any political, religious, or creative act. The author of A Tale of a Tub is this kind of prime mover; he does not restrict his creative activity to producing only words. Yet this renders the author more difficult to understand as a certain kind of person--his political and literary power are based on many kinds of authority. To be an author, especially of satire, is to enter into a dilemma where forms of authority are difficult

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[6]Samuel Johnson, LL.D., A Dictionary of the English Language, 2 vols, (London: W. Strahan, 1755 and New York: AMS Press, 1967 facsimile).

to sustain.

The author of the Tale is a person who finds all forms of authority knocking on his door, and he wants to let them into his house one by one so that the religious zealot or the "true critick" may have his say. Swift wants to maintain the guise of an impartial host in his diplomatic capacity, allowing each person to speak but finally controlling the tone of the discussion himself. Yet A Tale of a Tub is conspicuous not for its sense of order, restraint, and moderation but for its imaginative excesses and dynamic oppositions. Swift fails in his role of objective facilitator because there is no middle way. Reality for Swift is not something easily defined by a narrow path through the forest of competing forms of authority.

According to Gabriel Josipovici, scholars have been preoccupied with demonstrating how Swift is a part of his time and how his work is dominated by the traditional Anglican compromise.

> There is little here [in the Tale] of that ultimate faith in common sense which characterizes even so radical a thinker as Sterne. Even Nietzsche does not look with less self-deception at our position in the world. And yet. And yet. The speaker here is, after all, not Swift himself, but the Grub Street Hack, and if there is less of a gap between Swift and his persona than there is between Chaucer and his, the very creation of a persona is proof of Swift's triumph over the paralysing dichotomy. For the burlesque is the solution, the Hack's error and madness the gauge of Swift's sanity. A narrow ledge of sanity, it is true, and one that is only manipulated by the creation of just such a work as this, but all the more impressive for that reason. Swift presents us with no solution to the dilemma he exposes; the solution is the Tale itself, its

> creation and its recreation in the mind and ears of every new reader.[7]

Exactly! Moderation fails to work in the Tale because the energy of Swift's writing feeds on these violent contradictions. The Tale would not be so singular, challenging, and problematic if it were not for the gaping holes in the text and the unnerving distance between intention and execution. Even within the same section, the reader is faced with constructing his own "narrow ledge of sanity" in order to make sense of the combative voices. For example, in the "Digression Concerning Criticks" the author says

> The true criticks are known by their talent of swarming about the noblest writers, to which they are carried merely by instinct, as a rat to the best cheese, or a wasp to the fairest fruit. So, when the King is a horse-back, he is sure to be the dirtiest person of the company, and they that make their court best, are such as bespatter him most. Lastly, a true critick, in the perusal of a book, is like a dog at a feast, whose thoughts and stomach are wholly set upon what the guests fling away, and consequently, is apt to snarl most, when there are the fewest bones (PW 1: 63-4).

In the case of both the "Digression Concerning Criticks" and the "Dedication," Swift subverts the reader's expectations. The reader is betrayed by his own instinct when the author does not follow conventional notions of what this generic component should do. Instead of a meandering barrage of words or a wall of contempt for critics, we see the author becoming a critic, trying to bespatter the king

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[7]Gabriel Josipovici, The World and the Book (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 153-4.

with the rest of them. Instead of a panegyric verbal ornament, the author says in his "Dedication" that it is impossible to "affix" anything of meaning.

There is a special dilemma in trying to talk about Swift, the author, "the hack," the persona or an autobiographical presence in A Tale of a Tub. We might always be asking if a certain section is the voice of Swift or of his persona. Should we limit the authorship of A Tale of a Tub to either Swift or his fictive extension? First, it is impossible to define precisely the qualities of the persona and keep them distinct from Swift himself. The problem has been addressed most effectively by Frederik N. Smith, who writes that Swift's major achievement in the Tale is "to create a loose, flexible satire that is remarkably unassertive and that is based on the interweaving of his style with that of his modern...one reason the work is so difficult is that these two outlooks are not kept closely apart; a reading of the Tale uncovers no easy opposition between Swift and a fully developed persona, but a crisscross of two styles and two ways of knowing."[8] Of course in the chaos of digressions we find more than two ways of knowing. Smith's thesis is that the style of the Tale corresponds to the author's and Swift's view of reality. Because Smith works from a connection between language and reality made by

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[8]Frederik N. Smith, Language and Reality in Swift's A Tale of a Tub (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979), 6.

Benjamin Lee Whorf, I quote directly from that source:

> Actually, thinking is most mysterious, and by far the greatest light upon it that we have is thrown by the study of language. This study shows that the forms of a person's thoughts are controlled by inexorable laws of pattern of which he is unconscious. These patterns are the unperceived intricate systemizations of his own language--shown readily enough by a candid comparison and contrast with other languages, especially those of a different linguistic family. His thinking itself is in a language--in English, in Sanskrit, in Chinese. And every language is a vast pattern-system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyzes nature, notices or neglects types of relationship and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness.[9]

In reality, every reader while he is reading looks inside himself into "the house of his consciousness." The author's text is only a set of lenses through which he sees reality, and the author asks the reader to look within himself as he is reading. Without the author's book, perhaps the reader would not notice new dimensions of his own mind. If the author of the Tale attempts to establish a middle way or a moderate position, we might say that it is a form of thinking and discourse appropriate to Swift's culture and his historical era. But if Smith (and Whorf by application) are suggesting that there is a relationship between style and the author's concept of reality, then Swift's reality is contained by his language but not limited by the purpose of diplomatic moderation. After reading A Tale of a Tub, I do

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[9]Benjamin Lee Whorf, "Language, Mind, and Reality" in Language, Thought, and Reality, ed. John B. Carroll (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1956), 252.

not carry away an emotional and intellectual sense of balance and moderation. The remarkable thing about A Tale of a Tub is that it is an encyclopedia of words, a book of violent confrontations which make it impossible to remain a passive reader. The reader of the Tale is assaulted, tricked, betrayed and shocked at the language and events in the book; there is no balance. If the reader is to find a sense of balance, he must construct it for himself. He must find it within himself. In the words of Frederik N. Smith,

> It is no coincidence that what strikes us most forcefully in A Tale of a Tub is not the mental configuration stamped by the Modern over the face of palpable reality but that reality itself. Although we come away from the Tale with little sense of the Modern Author as a real person, we retain a keen memory of a ladder, a post, a ragged coat, a rotten cheese, a barrel, a well, a crust of bread, a bellows, a cadaver, and a Bedlamite dabbling in his own urine. The Modern's rationalism is likewise undermined by Swift's moments from everyday life: a child whipped with a birch, a man splattered by the horse ahead of him, a fly feeding first on a honeypot and then on excrement, and many other things. The sheer accumulation of these various empirical fragments is itself an appeal to the reader's common sense; on every page they call into question the Modern's purely intellectual approach to the world (140).

If the reader believes the statement in the apology that the work is dedicated to a defense of Anglican doctrine, he might be tempted to see moderation as an attempted principle that fails. But the "failure" is so spectacular that there can be no doubt as to Swift's underlying satirical purpose. In order to adequately explain the range of effects in the Tale, I need to establish some terms that address problems of design, purpose, and genre. First is the problem of design.

The design of the Tale in regard to both the digressions and allegory is a journey from order to chaos with imagination, invention, enthusiasm, and delusion gaining the upper hand as the sections progress. The reader is asked to be more assertive and actively create his own meaning as the book becomes more chaotic. The possibility of a convincing middle way becomes more remote as the author's purpose is subverted by his execution. Whereas Pope would see "Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,/ One clear, unchang'd, and Universal Light" (Essay On Man), the author of the Tale sees the reverse of this, Nature's light becoming obscure as delusion takes over the proper function of the senses. In schematic form showing the topic of each Section, the pattern of disintegration is apparent:

Sec. I: Introduction.

| Digressions | Allegory |
|---|---|
| Sec. III: The Critics. | Sec. II: The Father and his Will, three sons and coats. |
| Sec. V: The Modern Kind. | Sec. IV: Peter kicks Martin and Jack out of doors. |
| Sec. VII: In Praise of Digressions. | Sec. VI: Martin's and Jack's "reforms." |
| Sec. IX: Madness | Sec. VIII: Jack runs mad and founds sect of Aeolists. |
| Sec. X: Preface | Sec. XI: Jack's adventures. |

The Tale consists of a set of preliminaries (apology, dedications, preface, introduction), the allegory of the three brothers, and digressions on abuses in learning and modern writing. Structurally it appears as if Swift is

executing a well-developed "trilogy" of three principal bodies of information with the allegory and digressions alternating practically every other section except for sections IX and X, the digression on madness and the second "preface."

What is Swift's purpose in using this design? We might normally think of an allegory as a cast of metaphorical characters whose words and actions represent abstract ideas in a stabilized scheme as in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, where "Mr. Worldly-Wiseman" represents narrow secular logic and legality. Assuming for the moment that the allegory of A Tale of a Tub serves as the foundation from which abstract ideas are drawn, then the digressions can be thought of as a violation of that stability and assurance. Digressions are not related to the ostensible theme of defining abuses in religion because they serve no purpose in furthering the main narrative or premise of the Tale as in Swift's "Digression in Praise of Digressions." But Swift is not using these techniques as part of a single-minded rhetorical strategy. A dynamic tension is produced by the reader's expectation of a theme and variations structure which does not exist. The effect of the allegory and digressions might be described as an epistemological warfare that energizes the writing itself. The reader searches in vain for some mediating principle between the allegory and digressions, and the final effect is destructive of sustained forms of authority as each section

regresses further from the purpose of the last. The movement is from order to chaos because Swift in his role of benevolent overseer delights in the divergent positions swimming in his head and out on the paper.

The Christian allegory supposedly develops the argument that Martin (Anglicanism) holds a moderate position between the dogmatic practices of Peter (Catholicism) and the fanatical enthusiasm of Jack (Dissenters). If this is true, the reader expects a much more prominent role to be played by Martin, but Swift instead asks the reader to become Martin to make sense of the turbulent assortment of digressions and competing voices that characterize A Tale of a Tub. One important point of A Tale of a Tub is that certain kinds of authority such as that recognized by the Church and by the "illustrious brotherhood" of writers are achieved through the distortion of reason, wit, the senses, learning, and religion. The author explains that reason alone is an insufficient principle of judgment. It is not so simple as deciding

> Whether reason reflecting upon the sum of things, can, like the sun, serve only to enlighten one half of the globe, leaving the other half, by necessity, under shade and darkness: or, whether fancy, flying up to the imagination of what is highest and best, becomes overshot, and spent, and weary, suddenly falls like a dead bird of paradise, to the ground (PW 1: 99).

In a representative passage, the author says "I have thought fit to make invention the master, and to give method and reason, the office of its lacquays" (PW 1: 134). In fact,

Swift never attempts to balance the forces of reason and imagination in the Tale because the overall pattern of the work is that of distortion and disintegration, a major characteristic of his practice of satire. We might expect someone with a passionate interest in history to emphasize the lessons about the proper use of authority that can be learned from studying the past. Yet the author of the Tale consistently dismisses the use of history, memory, and experience in favor of distortion in this work. Historical fact and imagination collide and cancel each other out; or to make matters worse, invention prevails by striking out all remnants of personal memory. When invention or imagination is given the upper hand, we can expect a certain attitude towards religious authority to evolve, namely satire.

Concerning the genre, the author of the Tale states that "he thought the numerous and gross corruptions in religion and learning might furnish matter for a satyr, that would be useful and diverting" (PW 1: 1). The genre of satire is cumbersome in that it includes several purposes not entirely descriptive of Swift's design of allegory and digressions. In early use, the term satire referred to a discursive composition in verse treating a variety of subjects. The OED says, in classic use, satire means a poem in which prevalent follies or vices are assailed with ridicule or serious denunciation. Moreover, satire "is a specific application of satura medley; this general sense appears in the phrase per

saturam, in the lump, indiscriminately; according to grammarians this is elliptical for lanx satura (literally a full dish) which is alleged to have been used for a dish containing various kinds of fruit, and for food composed of many different ingredients."

Edward W. Rosenheim attempts to clarify the effect of Swift's satire by distinguishing between "punitive" and "persuasive" varieties. According to Rosenheim, satire in general is equated with attack. "Persuasive" satire like that of Pope urges its audience towards some future action against the object under attack, while "punitive" satire ridicules, exposing evils while not advocating any specific response. Rosenheim says in punitive satire "no new judgment is invited; no course of action is urged; no novel information is produced. The audience, rather, is asked chiefly to rejoice in the heaping of opprobrium, ridicule, or fancied punishment upon an object of whose culpability they are already thoroughly convinced."10

The Tale leans heavily towards the punitive but instead of having a fully-formed rhetorical purpose, which is implied in the term, it is a work composed of violent confrontations. The Tale is not artistically unified nor rhetorical in any premeditated sense; it makes the reader do most of the work. The Tale is arhetorical or beyond categorization if we assume

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10Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., Swift and the Satirist's Art (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 13.

merely persuasive or punitive intentions. There is no well-groomed middle way by which the speaker "celebrates the Church of England as the most perfect of all others in discipline and doctrine." The diplomat who wrote that line is never again to be heard from because moderation is not a thematic principle in A Tale of a Tub.

Swift's digressions are the heart of his attack on moderation. The digressions often allow the persona in the Tale to accumulate authority for himself. The allegory gives Swift the vehicle by which he can tear down the authority of Roman Catholics and Dissenters. Swift assumes the role of a prophet pointing out what is wrong with modern writing, mimicking its shallowness and hypocrisy, and directing the way towards real knowledge with his "reason," especially in the "Digression on Madness." The reader is to follow the speaker in the digressions because he is showing him the way. But as in "A Modest Proposal" there is no mediating principle or genuine defense of the Church of England. The reader is forced to come to terms with the strident voice of the speaker, to agree either with Swift or dismiss everything he says as delusion:

> A man may laugh at the Popish folly of cursing people to Hell, and imagine them swearing, without any crime; but lewd words, or dangerous opinions though printed by halves, fill the readers mind with ill idea's; and of these the author cannot be accused. For the judicious reader will find that the severest stroaks of satyr in his book are levelled against the modern custom of employing wit upon these topicks (PW 1: 1Ø).

Is the author saying he cannot be held responsible for

any "dangerous opinions" because he is writing satire? The assumption is that the "judicious reader" will agree with the goals of Swift's attack. Swift's digressions exert stress on the reader, forcing him to make sense of the "severest stroaks" of his satire. The digressions move from straightforward commentary and invective to finally transcending the conventions of punitive satire. Section III, Swift's "Digression Concerning Critics," embraces the theme of distortion because the speaker says a critic uses this principle to pass judgment on writing. The critic deals in self-generated rules by which he defaces the reputation of ancient and modern writers. This is not to say that the works he examines are always of any great intrinsic value, for Swift likens the critic to a man walking in the gutters trying to examine excrement without stepping in it: "not that he is curious to observe the colour and complexion of the ordure, or take its dimensions, much less be paddling in, or tasting it; but only with a design to come out as clean as possible." (PW 1: 56).

The crucial point is that most critics' minds function by distortion because "their imaginations are so entirely possess'd and replete with the defects of other pens." The true critic is like a little machine always faithfully on the prowl for error, which he translates into a kind of distorted judgment or evaluation. Swift compares the state of modern writing to a field of noxious weeds which needs to be trimmed

back, but instead is encouraged to grow because "an ass" is browsing on the weeds, nibbling at the surface of imperfections. In fact, the animal and insect imagery are the dominant vehicles of comparison in this section. The metaphors and similes are erratic and violent, and the idea of equating filth with criticism is typically Swiftian. Moreover, the fact that those "that make their court best, are such as bespatter him most" demonstrates the dilemma of A Tale of a Tub and the genre of satire itself. The problem is that while Swift may have intended to celebrate the Church of England and champion the middle way, the effect of satire is wholly incompatible with that intention. By definition, there is no way the speaker can both ridicule and praise. The Church of England is mostly neglected while the wits, fanatic preachers, scholars, and critics are bespattered throughout the book. The reader has to make sense of the chaos.

With each new digression, a more splenetic persona appears to denounce some aspect of modern learning. The "Digression on Madness" of Section IX is the most famous section of A Tale of a Tub and for good reason; it contains the most explicit statement on how delusion and imagination are for most people preferable to a comfortable middle way, and how even reason itself is a mixed blessing because it finally penetrates to reveal what we do not want to see. Most people are perfectly content with "this serene peaceful

state of being a fool among knaves." Edward W. Rosenheim writes that the central section of the digression furnishes "the substratum of doctrine which informs and enforces so much of the satire in the Tale" and that the two famous paragraphs are "a rare instance of Swift's writing at a level of abstraction which transcends the particulars of either satire or comedy."[11]

The moderate position or middle way asks the reader to receive both empirical, factual information and intuitive, imaginative ideas. Yet, according to Swift, people turn away from what is unattractive not because of what it reveals but because it is more comfortable to believe what is wrong. Swift makes a fundamental statement about knowledge and ways of knowing in the lines "how fade and insipid do all objects accost us that are not convey'd in the vehicle of delusion? How shrunk is every thing, as it appears in the glass of nature?" Fiction has more power than truth not because of intrinsic properties but because of how it is received. Imagination and delusion can build more noble scenes and "produce more wonderful revolutions" that we find in reason or nature. On the other hand, scientists who attempt to rid themselves of emotive language and present observations as completely objective are also deluding themselves: "Yesterday I ordered the carcass of a beau to be stript in my

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[11]Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., Swift and the Satirist's Art (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 198.

presence...we were all amazed to find so many unsuspected faults under one suit of cloaths." The middle way or a successful balance of imagination and reason is nonexistent in the "Digression on Madness."

When the reader sees Swift's use of "reason" in the context of madness, he might be tempted to say, aha! Here it is, Swift's statement of a principle of moderation--his belief in reason. But again we are talking about human judgment, which must rely principally on the operation of the two senses of sight and touch. The kind of information the human mind receives is limited to the extent that sight and touch can communicate ideas, and Swift says they "never examine farther than the colour, the shape, the size and whatever other qualities dwell, or are drawn by art upon the outward of bodies." As long as the senses are more powerfully moved by art than by fact, reason will fail to find a middle way.

The speaker is no neutral diplomat or voice of moderation because he admits that in the case of man, the outside is infinitely preferable to the in. Although his tone is that of a scientist conducting "experiments," he is repelled by the physical data and fails to make any conclusions. The speaker tries to be the prophet or guide whose faith in reason leads the reader to this autopsy saying that he knows the way, but he falters with his own observations. What the speaker discovers are "flaws and

imperfections of nature" beneath the appearance of things, and he concludes that a more useful science will be created by a philosopher or projector who uses art, not reason. For as long as people are repelled by the ugliness of internal organs and how things really operate, they will prefer images of people intact. Metaphorically speaking, man's brain has receptacles of a certain configuration that freely receive "films and images that fly off upon his senses from the superficies of things." According to Swift, perception is based on skimming the surface, taking the cream off the top while leaving the unpleasant dregs for philosophy and reason. This is exactly why people will always prefer to be in this serene and peaceful state rather than face ugliness. We may call it madness, but it is a familiar form of madness.

This familiar madness is what issues from the author's statement that he wrote his book to uphold the middle way. What about the other major statement of purpose, the Father's Will beginning the allegory?

> Sons; because I have purchased no estate, nor was born to any, I have long considered of some good legacies to bequeath you; and at last, with much care as well as expense, have provided each of you (here they are) a new coat. Now, you are to understand, that these coats have two virtues contained in them: one is, that with good wearing, they will last you fresh and sound as long as you live: The other is, that they will grow in the same proportion with your bodies, lengthening and widening of themselves, so as to be always fit. Here, let me see them on you before I die. So, very well, pray children, wear them clean, and brush them often. You will find in my Will (here it is) full instructions in every particular concerning the wearing and management of your coats; wherein you must be very exact, to avoid the penalties I have appointed for every transgression or

> neglect, upon which your future fortunes entirely depend (PW 1: 44).

Swift introduces another reading problem in this "statement of purpose;" what is meant by the Will is not explicit or obvious. The Will could mean only the literal sense of a legal document. Yet the reader might expect a broader allegorical meaning, equivalent to what The Father wants to happen to the modern Church. We cannot assume the coats represent Holy Scripture or the original fabric of Christianity because of an enormous discrepancy between the reader's expectations of allegory and Swift's use of this literary mode. The Father comments only on the external features of the coats and how they are to be handled; he assumes that only one kind of reading of his Will is possible. The Father tries to moderate the possible outcomes of reading his Will, but in A Tale of a Tub, moderation and interpretation are antithetical purposes. The reader may expect some kind of value judgement or preferred son to appear in the Will, but the Will (or what little we have of it) is strangely directionless. Even so, the Father does not make a strong case for one kind of ethical standard or moral code over another as long as the coats remain well-preserved; the Father and his Will are perfect examples of the failure of moderation because the reception of the text is based on anything but moderation. The reception of the text is based on superficial appearances (like a scientist observing a cadaver) and on who is receiving it (like a fanatic preacher

belching wind). The reader of A Tale of a Tub and the three brothers are left alone to construct their own meanings and impose their own preconceptions on the Will. The Father can provide a document but not an explication.

Swift carries forth his theme of distortion in the way the Will is received, interpreted, misinterpreted, and used as a source of power. He who possesses the "meaning" holds power in his hands. The Will becomes a kind of litmus test by which the brothers measure and assert their particular brands of authority. The basis for the brothers' authority appears to be the control of the text of the Will, but it can be more accurately described as interpretive abuse. Many times, the way Peter creates meaning clashes with the text of the Will, but Peter's imaginative distortion has more force than words on paper. Because of the Will's inability to explicate itself, like all texts it is liable to all varieties of corrupt casuistry and justification; the brothers' pernicious, tendentious, and distorted readings change the original spirit of the Will. The reader witnesses no "in-between" interpretation of the Will; the Will is misconstrued in every extreme way by Peter, Martin, and Jack.

For one thing, the Father tells his sons to be mindful of every particular and to be very exact "to avoid penalties I have appointed for every transgression or neglect," but he is inexact himself. The Father never explains how the sons are to proceed, what the penalties are, what constitutes a

transgression, or exactly how the penalties are administered. The brothers are given free reign to interpret what constitutes the spirit of the Will instead of being directed by specific instructions. Thus the brothers throw common understanding and judgment out of doors in seeking their fortunes in the secular world. Although the Will is very precise in forbidding alteration of the coats except that which happens naturally through growth, the brothers become mad innovators, each undergoing a process of self-definition and each creating his own version of reality through their readings of the Will.

By using this paradigm of author--> book--> reader--> reality, Swift demonstrates that reading can be a subversive act. The way in which each religious faction defines itself depends on how it has attempted to "create" the text of the Will. Peter's authority is reinforced by the rituals he erects around the words, while Jack's authority is based on his physical manipulations of the text. An interpretation of information is merely a reception that a reader has imposed on the underlying words. That is, Swift sees any kind of interpretation as a potentially violent act because the meaning derived from each reading changes, depending on who is reading, and it puts the interpreter in the position of a tyrant. What is transmitted by Peter, Martin, and Jack to their "congregation" is only a singular, idiosyncratic, and distorted creation of the text. Swift means to implicate

religion, philosophy, criticism, science or any mode of knowledge by which man creates meaning through reading. Just like certain kinds of reading, clothing is liable to go in and out of fashion depending on who is perceived as the authority. Clothing is a metaphor for how people "read" the appearances of each other:

> To conclude from all, what is man himself but a micro-coat, or rather a compleat suit of cloaths with all its trimmings? As to his body, there can be no dispute; but examine even the acquirements of his mind, you will find them all contribute in their order, towards furnishing out an exact dress: to instance no more; is not religion a cloak, honesty a pair of shoes, worn out in the dirt, self-love a surtout, vanity a shirt, and conscience a pair of breeches, which, tho' a cover for lewdness as well as nastiness, is easily slipt down for the service of both (PW 1: 47).

According to Swift, abstractions like honesty, self-love, vanity, and conscience are worn on the outside of one's body like fashionable accessories because that is all they are. Even man himself is nothing but what has been added to the original, a covering or interpretation of a core of being.

The "scholarly" Peter demonstrates in his adept distortion of the letters that he can bridge the gap between what is fashionably appropriate and what is specifically forbidden. In other words, explication and distortion can create new bases for authority. This is exactly what Swift meant in his earlier dedication "praising" the tremendous accomplishments of the vast army of wits, critics, and scholars in the nation. Peter finds it is easy to receive

the text of the Will with his own kind of clothing or misinterpretation by which he garners authority. The author notes that the learned brother "had read Aristotelis Dialectica, and especially that wonderful piece de Interpretatione which has the faculty of teaching its readers to find out a meaning in everything but itself" (PW 1, 51). Peter scatters his knowledge of Greek and Latin through his twisted readings of the Will, allowing the brothers to find proof for anything they want. Many techniques can be used by a trained reader to exert his will over the text. For example, Peter rummages through the Will to pick out the individual letters of "SHOULDER KNOTS" that would allow the brothers to wear this most fashionable accoutrement. When Peter cannot find the letter "K," he subverts the text with his own reasoning when he

> proved by a very good argument, that K was a modern illegitimate letter, unknown to the learned ages, nor any where to be found in antient manuscripts. 'Tis true, said he, the word calende hath in Q.V.C. been sometimes writ with a K, but erroneously, for in the best copies it is ever spelt with a C. And by consequence it was a gross mistake in our language to spell knot with a K, but that from henceforward, he would take care it should be writ with a C. Upon this, all further difficulty vanished; shoulder-knots were made clearly out, to be jure paterno, and our three gentlemen swaggered with as large and flanting ones as the best (PW 1: 50-51).

This kind of reception is made possible through Peter's critical faculties that grow more corrupt as the section progresses. There is nothing even faintly resembling a common-sensical, moderate interpretation of the Will.

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Peter's strategy is to create a smoke screen of confusing Latin words, glosses, references, scholarly apparatus, and persuasive energy. For example, when the brothers want to add gold lace to their coats, Peter says in masterful doubletalk that "you are to be informed that of wills duo sunt genera, nuncupatory and scriptory: that in the scriptory Will here before us, there is no precept or mention about gold lace, conceditur; but, si idem affirmetur de nuncupatorio, negatur." Peter is using a form of Latin academic disputation to say that if the precept appears in writing, he agrees with it, but that if the same thing is affirmed by word of mouth, he denies it. In other words, Peter demonstrates his violent interpretative power in the creative ways he can supersede the text regardless of what is actually written.

Peter proves so skilled at his own brand of deconstruction that he decides to assume complete authority himself. Instead of trying to annex, distort, and receive the Will, Peter decides simply to ignore it. By distancing himself from the text, Peter broadens the extreme positions he can take because there is no longer any comparison to be made. He has succeeded in appropriating all authority for himself through avoidance.

> Fashions perpetually altering in that age, the scholastick brother grew weary of searching farther evasions, and solving everlasting contradictions. Resolved therefore at all hazards, to comply with the modes of the world, they concerted matters together, and agreed unanimously to lock up their Father's Will in a

> strong-box, brought out of Greece or Italy (I have forgot which) and trouble themselves no farther to examine it, but only refer to its authority whenever they thought fit (PW 1: 54).

The best examples of how innovative "reading" creates new kinds of authority are in Peter's manipulation of his brothers' senses. There is no operative jure paterno which cannot be corrupted by distorted logic in the Tale. The idle scholarship of Peter rejects the literal meaning of the Will in favor of a "mythological and allegorical sense." He can find evidence for anything he wants when imagination plays havoc with reason. Although they start out in the world as equals, it is because Peter is most skillful at duping the senses of Martin and Jack that he prevails over them. Not only can Peter convince his brothers of the truth of his allegorical interpretation of the Will, but he also gains authority by convincing them their senses are wrong. It is not so much that certain rituals have been institutionalized by the Catholic Church but that the basis for its authority is in misleading taste, smell, sight, hearing, and touch. Peter is the strongest character in A Tale of a Tub exactly because he garners the most authority through his creative forms of reading and receiving the Will.

Swift's satire against the doctrine of transubstantiation is at once the most hilarious and revealing folly Peter tries to pull over on his brothers; it shows exactly how "reading" can be extended to any way a person receives information. The information supplied by the

senses of Jack and Martin is constantly at war with the imaginative farce Peter spreads over the surface, like a philosophy of clothes over the reality of sensory detail:

> My Lord, said he, my brother, I suppose is hungry, and longs for the mutton, your Lordship hath promised us to dinner. [Peter now calls himself "Lord Peter."] Pray, said Peter, take me along with you, either you are both mad, or disposed to be merrier than I approve of; if you there, do not like your piece, I will carve you another, tho' I should take that to be the choice bit of the whole shoulder. What then, my Lord, replied the first, it seems this is a shoulder of mutton all this while. Pray sir, says Peter, eat your vittles and leave off your impertinence, if you please, for I am not disposed to relish it at present: But the other could not forbear, being over-provoked at the affected seriousness of Peter's countenance. By God, my Lord, said he, I can only say, that to my eyes, fingers, and teeth, and nose, it seems to be nothing but a crust of bread. Upon which, the second put in his word: I never saw a piece of mutton in my life, so nearly resembling a slice from a twelve-penny loaf. Look ye, gentlemen, cries Peter in a rage, to convince you, what a couple of blind, positive, ignorant, wilful puppies you are, I will use but his plain argument; by God, it is true, good, natural mutton as any in Leaden-Hall market; and God, confound you both eternally, if you offer to believe otherwise. Such a thundering proof as this, left no further room for objection: the two unbelievers began to gather and pocket up their mistake as hastily as they could. Why, truly, said the first, upon more mature consideration--Ay, says the other, interrupting him, now I have thought better on the thing, your Lordship seems to have a great deal of reason (PW 1: 72-3).

Although Peter accuses his brothers of being mad for not believing him, it is his madness and his reception of information that allow the illusion to prevail. This is Peter's "ledge of sanity." The brother's senses keep supplying them with the facts that "it seems to be nothing but a crust of bread" or "I never saw a piece of mutton in my life so nearly resembling a twelve-penny loaf." Peter's

passionate rage and imaginative fury convince the brothers that they are blind and ignorant knaves. Peter's thundering proof is a farce and travesty against fact because there is no sustained proof of anything attempted, only the hopeless tickling of the brothers' senses. The most stunning indictment of the scheme is the brothers' last proclamation that "your Lordship seems to have a great deal of reason," by which Swift means the exact opposite. The more passionate and enthusiastic Peter grows in his new authority, the more he lacks basic common sense.

Thus Martin and Jack suffer under "Lord Peter's" corrupt reception of the Will. The two brothers excluded from the interpretive process finally begin to realize that Peter has achieved his authority through his exclusive access to the text. Thus Martin and Jack have begun to learn that in order to create meaning, one must first base that meaning on a reading of the text. From that point forth, anything is possible, as Peter has so capably demonstrated. To rectify the problem, Martin and Jack humbly desire "a copy of the Father's Will, which had now lain by neglected, time out of mind." After reading it over themselves, the religious power and authority created through reception become clear to them, and they resolve to strike out in their own ways.

Each brother creates meaning based on his reception of the Will. The reader might expect some compensation or reform following Peter's abuses, but no moderate

interpretation emerges even from Martin. Some critics have described Swift's choice of Martin Luther to represent the Anglican via media as a strategic mistake. Yet this again assumes that Swift actually intended A Tale of a Tub as a vehicle for the middle way. Even in the way Martin receives the Will, the reader finds no real evidence for a reasonable interpretation. Ehrenpreis writes that "the treatment of Martin is weak because it clashes with the programme of the book as a whole...the safest way to demonstrate its merits is to admit the flaw and then to consider what Swift accomplishes in spite of it."[12] But to "admit the flaw" is to say that Swift did something "wrong" when comparing it with something "right." My point is that the author of the Tale does not have a firm grasp of what is right. The extreme positions or wrongs are too attractive for the author to ignore them.

Historically, Martin Luther was known for his scathing criticism against and violent hatred of certain Roman Catholic laws and indulgences. He hardly seems like a logical candidate for representing the middle way. Luther characteristically recommends rebellion in tracts like "The Babylonian Captivity" and "The Liberty of the Christian Man:"

> For this reason, although we should boldly resist those teachers of traditions and sharply censure the laws of

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[12]Irvin Ehrenpreis, Swift, the Man, his Works, and the Age, vol 1, Mr. Swift and his Contemporaries (London: Methuen and Co., 1962), 188.

> the popes by means of which they plunder the people of God, yet we must spare the timid multitude whom these impious tyrants hold captive by means of these laws until they are set free. Therefore fight strenuously against the wolves, but for the sheep and not also against the sheep. This you will do if you inveigh against the laws and the lawgivers and at the same time observe the laws with the weak so that they will not be offended, until they also recognize tyranny and understand their freedom.[13]

If this does not sound like a moderate position, then it comes as no surprise that Martin does not adequately represent moderation in A Tale of a Tub. The only passage from the Tale that even comes close to embracing moderation is the description in Section VI of Martin "proceeding with caution" in ripping up his coat:

> Martin laid the first hand; at one twitch brought off a large handful of points, and with a second pull, stript away ten dozen yards of fringe. But when he had gone thus far, he demurred a while: he knew very well, there yet remained a great deal more to be done; however, the first heat being over, his violence began to cool, and he resolved to proceed more moderately in the rest of the work; having already very narrowly scap'd a swinging rent in pulling off the points, which being tagged with silver (as we have observed before) the judicious workman had with much sagacity, double sown, to preserve them from falling...For the rest, where he observed the embroidery to be workt so close, as not to hide or strengthen any flaw in the body of the coat, contracted by the perpetual tampering of workmen upon it; he concluded the wisest course was to let it remain, resolving in no case whatsoever, that the substance of the stuff should suffer injury; which he thought the best method for serving the true intent and meaning of his Father's will (PW 1: 85).

This is the closest we come to any sort of extended exposition on Martin's "doctrine." If Martin is to represent

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[13]Martin Luther, "The Liberty of a Christian Man" in Three Treatises, trans. by W. A. Lambert, revised by Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 261-316.

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the middle way by which Swift champions the Church, there is hardly enough about him to justify his existence in A Tale of a Tub. In other words, Swift ironically implies that in order to appear genuinely "moderate" you have to be absent. If A Tale of a Tub is about the creation of meaning, then Swift says the ideal, moderate road to meaning does not exist. This reveals a principle of Swift's satiric practice; arguments in support of moderation are best made by nonexistent people.

Martin and Jack in their own ways both represent a distorted reception of the Will. Martin's decision to remove the quandary of lace, ribbons, fringe, embroidery and points from his coat proceeds from the same logic which motivates Jack; they are both rebellious and both feel that Peter has gone too far in institutionalizing his beliefs and claiming pre-eminence over the Father's Will. Martin acts on the principle of rebellion against this authority which Peter commands--he is no closet conservative. Martin is the first to strip away accessories from his coat and it is only after stripping away "ten yards of fringe" that he decides to reconsider his work. There is no predetermined strategy, common sense, or reasonable moderation at work here.

Finally, at the end of the episode Martin seems to proceed along some theological lines, trying to consider "the wisest course" and attempting to make a decision whether to strip away or let remain the various additions to his coat.

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Martin supposedly has arrived at "the true intent and meaning" of his Father's Will in delaying his renovations, but this does not occur to him until well after he has inflicted severe damage to his coat.

The way that Peter accumulates authority for himself and institutionalizes his corrupt practices is by observing "rules" in the Will that he himself creates. Martin attempts to ameliorate the emotional excess of Jack by saying that "it was not their business to form their actions by any reflection upon Peter's, but by observing the rules prescribed in their Father's Will." This is no easy consolation! Martin mistakenly assumes that observation and interpretation are one and the same when he himself has been victimized by Peter's distorted reading of the Will. Martin is no firm advocate of moderation because he refuses or is unwilling to acknowledge that observing and creating meaning are totally unconnected activities. Martin attempts to find some common ground and serve as a moderator in getting Jack to realize that Peter is still their brother. Yet bringing Jack to reason is impossible because reason is not a viable paradigm for interpreting the Will. Everything that has come before proves that if Martin and Jack aspire to the same kind of authority as attained by Peter, and I think they do, then a "reasonable" or moderate position is not an alternative. There is no moderation as long as factions compete for authority in the church:

> The weight of Martin's arguments exalted Jack's levity, and made him fly out and spurn against his brother's moderation. In short, Martin's patience put Jack in a rage...for bringing Martin to reason, as he called it; or, as he meant it, into his own ragged, bobtail'd condition; and observing he said all to little purpose; what, alas, was left for the forlorn Jack to do, but after a million of scurrilities against his brother, to run mad with spleen, and spright, and contradiction. To be short, here began a mortal breach between these two (PW 1: 87-8).

Jack is equally successful in creating his own throne through a distorted explication of the Father's Will. In founding his sect (the author calls it an "epidemick") of Aeolists, Jack is forced to rely on the fruitfulness of his imagination in receiving the Will. Following the example of Peter, Jack discovers a particular brand of reading, not so much scholarly or judicious but physical in its nature. The reader has already learned about the "phenomenon of vapours" in the "Digression on Madness" by which winds from the lower extremities ascend to overshadow the brain. This seems a particularly apt description of Jack's reading:

> Jack had provided a fair copy of his Father's Will...he began to entertain a fancy, that the matter was deeper and darker, and therefore must needs have a great deal more mystery at the bottom. Gentlemen, said he, I will prove this very skin of parchment to be meat, drink, and cloth, to be the philosopher's stone, and the universal medicine. In consequence of which raptures, he resolved to make use of it in the most necessary, as well as the most paltry occasions of life. He had a way of working it into any shape he pleased; so that it served him as a night-cap when he went to bed, and for an umbrello in rainy weather. He would lap a piece of it about a sore toe, or when he had fits, burn two inches under his nose; or if any thing lay heavy on his stomach, scrape off, and swallow as much of the power as would lie on a silver penny, they were all infallible remedies (PW 1: 122-23).

Jack's remedies are infallible because meaning is in the mind of the reader; the reader is as capable as Peter of creating through "force of his reasoning" the kind of authority he wants. Jack attempts to equal the power of Peter's rituals through mystification of his physical remedies. Instead of manufacturing a ritual or assuming the role of a falsely moderate peacemaker, Jack achieves authority through direct physical contact with the text on his head, toes, nose, or in his stomach. Yet this provides no guarantee of a consistent nor predictable mode of behavior or reading of that text. Jack is the cleric who maintains a "perpetual flame in his belly" and he preaches with steam pouring out of his eyes, nose, and mouth. The author notes that as for reading and interpreting the Will, "the eyes of the understanding see best, when those of the senses are out of the way; and therefore, blind men are observed to tread their steps with much more caution...than those who rely upon the visual nerve." Swift is saying that sometimes the most reliable "reading" is performed by men who cannot see.

The allegory and digressions of A Tale of a Tub fail to elucidate a convincing middle way because Swift has undermined the accepted purposes for these techniques. In his role as a diplomat of moderation, Swift is more powerfully influenced by and more concerned with the satire of extreme positions. Swift uses the reader's preconceptions about what a book should do to throw him off balance. Swift

demonstrates that "innovators in the Empire of Reason" are all around us; when a person must create meaning based on a text, the words are no guarantee that the reader adopts a middle course. While the reader of A Tale of a Tub may expect to see the strengths of a moderate position emerge from the attack, he finally is left with a violent confrontation among factions in the Church and in society. What was ostensibly written to endorse religious and literary authority has the final effect of undermining the very sources of that authority.

## Chapter 3

### Swift's Political Portraits:
### "The Screen Removed, Their Hearts are Trembling."[1]

In previous chapters, I have shown how Swift adopts the rhetorical pose of a moderate in some sermons, poems, and prose tracts. However, in his most vociferous political poems, Swift rejects the middle way in favor of an uncompromising and strident voice. Swift assaults and insults his readers. Swift uses poetry not for aesthetic pleasure but to cause pain--he inflicts damage against his political targets. Swift writes in "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" that "When we are lashed, they kiss the rod." In his best political poems, Swift returns the favor.

If Swift's political poems are difficult to categorize as "Augustan" literature, then how can we describe Swift's poetic voice? Moreover, how does Swift's poetic voice relate to his prose voice? What is Swift's attitude towards the subjects of his poetry? A. B. England notes that some of Swift's poems depart from orderly forms of discourse and are subversive of neo-classical orthodoxies like restraint, proportion, and coherence. One of the ways Swift abandons moderation is through metaphors "that involve drastic gaps

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[1]From "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" in Poems, 491.

between tenor and vehicle; he [Swift] will protract the elaboration of metaphors to extreme lengths of ingenuity, and he will allow metaphors to proliferate into unruly sequences."[2]

I disagree with A. B. England's thesis that Swift's poetic voice can be entirely explained by way of "mechanical" features of language. The disorderly energy in Swift's poems results from a broader discrepancy between intention and execution. The effect of Swift's poetry far exceeds any single metaphor or analogy. With reference to Swift's prose, some critics describe Swift's voice as wholly destructive. F. R. Leavis, in his essay "The Irony of Swift," examines a discrepancy between Swift's ostensible moral intentions and the overwhelmingly negative and destructive tendency of his prose. According to Leavis, Swift's prose contains "the most remarkable expression of negative feelings and attitudes that literature can offer." That we sometimes regard him as a moralist and idealist is "mainly a witness to the power of vanity, and the part that vanity can play in literary appreciation; saeva indignatio is an indulgence that solicits us all."[3] Both the rhetorical criticism of A. B. England and the affective criticism of Leavis question Swift's use of

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[2]A. B. England, Energy and Order in the Poetry of Swift (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1980), 54.

[3]F. R. Leavis, "The Irony of Swift," in Swift: A Collection of Critical Essays ed. Ernest Tuvenson (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 30.

irony and satire. Yet both A. B. England and Leavis assume some external, static, positive standard by which we judge the effect of satire.

We cannot assume satire to have only one accepted outcome or intention. Swift is difficult to categorize because he employs a range of strategies, but some of Swift's best political poems use the technique of portraiture. Swift is political from the moment he opens his mouth, and his use of portraiture heightens the damage inflicted by his satire. Against his political targets, Swift attacks with a descriptive force that seizes upon certain individual qualities of a person and through exaggeration, analogy, satire, and distortion produces a painfully concise, vigorously clear portrait. The difference between Swift's prose and poetry is that his prose ridicules public, societal figures whose vices are familiar to many; Swift's portraits in poetry seize on personal qualities and gain energy from a personal voice.

For example, Swift's "The Description of a Salamander" and "The Virtues of Sid Hamet the Magician's Rod" are distinct from "The Author Upon Himself" and "Horace, Lib. 2, Sat. 6" because Swift produces a new, personally-motivated satirical image to replace the reader's public conception of a Godolphin or Marlborough.[4] In the most powerfully

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[4]Sidney, First Earl of Godolphin (1645-1712), was Secretary of State and Lord Justice under William III. Godolphin fell from power after the high-flying minister

indignant political poems, Swift abandons the voice of moderation in favor of a straightforward, excessive, vociferous indictment. There is absolutely no compromise or pretended politeness; these political poems are the real Swift, the political rabble-rouser and man of excess. The voice is combative, raucous, and confident.

If we accept the view that Swift's poetic voice differs from his prose voice, significant critical questions are raised about Swift's intentions and his use of specific kinds of satire and irony. For example, what is the reader to make of the claim from "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" that

> His satire points at no defect,
> But what all mortals may correct;
> For he abhorred that senseless tribe,
> Who call it humour when they jibe (Poems, 497).

This statement from the "impartial narrator" implies some kind of positive standard by which men can correct themselves, and it disparages the senseless writers who only attack without inspiring reform. But what does Swift do in

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Henry Sacheverell insulted him repeatedly and escaped punishment. Swift originally looked to Godolphin for support, but Godolphin's coolness during Swift's campaign on behalf of the Church of Ireland for the remission of the First Fruits (1709) inspired a lasting dislike. John Churchill, First Duke of Marlborough, was a statesman and soldier who twice served as Captain General. Marlborough amassed an enormous personal fortune. He was charged by the Tories with corruption and forced to live in exile until the Hanoverian accession (1714). Marlborough was a member of the Kit-Cat club and was a heroic figure in contemporary literature, but Swift attacked him for his alleged vices of avarice, ingratitude, and duplicity. See Dictionary of National Biography, ed. Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), 53 vols.

his most personal political portraits? In the lines from "Verses on the Death," Swift makes himself out as an ideal satirist who uses a well-established genre to inspire reform. This formulaic and inaccurate self-assessment does not explain the energy and power behind poems like "The Legion Club" and "The Fable of Midas." In his best political poems, Swift punishes with his verbal whip.

In describing the effect of Swift's poetic satire, what kinds of comparisons can be made? Does Swift adhere to a specific school or style of satire? According to the narrator in "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," Swift's satire is primarily benign, easy-going, amusing, and witty. This variety of satire seeks to ridicule gently the absurdities and follies of man and assumes a "positive" or light-hearted response, such as one might expect from Samuel Butler's description of Sir Hudibras:

> Beside, 'tis known he could speak Greek
> As naturally as pigs squeak;
> That Latin was no more difficile,
> Than to a blackbird 'tis to whistle.
> Being rich in both, he never scanted
> His bounty unto such as wanted;
> But much of either would afford
> To many that had not one word.
> For Hebrew roots, although they're found
> To flourish most in barren ground
> He had such plenty as sufficed
> To make some think him circumcised.
> And truly so he was perhaps,
> Not as a proselyte, but for claps.[5]

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[5]Samuel Butler, Hudibras I, Canto I in The Poetic Works of Samuel Butler, ed. Rev. John Mitford (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1880), 32.

While Swift does write amusing satires, the greatest of his political portrait poems differ from Butler's satire. Swift's portraits are direct and personal, assaulting and insulting with ferocious power. Swift singles out particularly bad individuals--according to his own moral judgment--and lashes out at them in a furious personal indictment. Another major satirist of the eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson, does the exact opposite. Instead of tickling the reader with Butler's laughable characters or assaulting with Swift's moral outrage, Samuel Johnson takes on abstract and generalized notions of vice. Deprived of the particularized detail generated in personal assault, Johnson's satire challenges intellectually but never attains Swift's chaotic, sprawling hatred. Johnson's speaker embraces a realistic and harsh tone and uses imagination to attack vice in the general public with a somewhat cerebral contempt, as in "The Vanity of Human Wishes":

> Unnumbered suppliants crowd Preferment's gate,
> Athirst for wealth, and burning to be great;
> Delusive Fortune hears th'incessant call,
> They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall.
> On every stage the foes of peace attend,
> Hate dogs their flight, and insult mocks their end.
> Love ends with hope, the sinking statesmen's door
> Pours in the morning worshipper no more;
> For growing names the weekly scribbler lies,
> To growing wealth the dedicator flies,
> From every room descends the painted face,
> That hung the bright Palladium of the place,
> And smokes in kitchens, or in auctions sold,
> To better feature yields the frames of gold:
> For now no more we trace in every line
> Heroic worth, benevolence divine:
> The form distorted justifies the fall,

And detestation rids th'indignant wall.6

Compared with Butler and Johnson, Swift's technique of portraiture creates a multi-dimensional, distorted image of his object of attack. The "positive" is created not in any sense of inspired reform but in the overwhelming energy of the assault; Swift bares his soul and deals out his opinions with blunt force. In the case of "The Description of a Salamander," Swift takes on Lord John Cutts, who had acquired the nickname of "the salamander" for his bravery under fire at the seige of Namur (1695):

> With gaudy coat, and shining train,
> But loathsome spots his body stain:
> Out from some hole obscure he flies
> When rains descend, and tempests rise,
> Till the sun clears the air; and then
> Crawls back, neglected, to his den.
> So when the war has raised a storm
> I've seen a snake in human form,
> All stained with infamy and vice,
> Leap from the dunghill in a trice;
> Burnish and make a gaudy show,
> Become a general, peer and beau,
> Till peace hath made the sky serene,
> Then shrink into its hole again.
> All this we grant--why, then look yonder,
> Sure that must be a salamander! (Poems, 89).

Swift's portrait of Lord Cutts is distinct from the satire of both Butler and Johnson.7 Butler gently pokes fun

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6Samuel Johnson, "The Vanity of Human Wishes" in Samuel Johnson; The Oxford Authors Series, ed. Donald Greene (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), 12-21.

7Baron John Cutts fought for William III at the Boyne (1690). His bravery at the seige of Namur and at Blenhiem earned him the position of Commander-in-Chief of Ireland (1705). He was disliked by Swift for personal reasons and for his ostentation and vanity. See the Dictionary of National Biography.

at pedantry and pretense and Johnson castigates with public generalizations. But Swift's portrait of Lord Cutts radically distorts the expected direction of the salamander analogy. Jumping from salamander to serpent, Swift intrudes his personal animosity with off-hand comments like "I've seen a snake in human form." Whereas the comparison was intended as a flattering compliment for a resourceful man who can adapt to his environment, Swift exploits the negative rather than the positive implications of the nom de guerre. Swift launches a vicious indictment against all who assume names without deserving what is implied: "As we say 'Monsieur' to an ape/ Without offence to human shape." Swift uses Lord Cutts as a typical instance of an undeserved reputation won by an inordinately vain man.

The colors, textures, and images created in the portrait help to sharpen Swift's spear and clarify the reasons for his personal hostility. Swift describes war as a storm and peace as the serene sky, and Lord Cutts crawls from his hole in his snake-like form when "tempests rise." Because he has acquired the right name, Lord Cutts can do no wrong to further his reputation--he leaps from a dunghill and quickly wins the respect of the establishment. When the sun comes out, implying the return of natural reason, Lord Cutts drags his loathsome spots back into his obscure hole. Swift does not leave off with Cutts's disappearance, but he pushes the analogy, leaving nothing more grotesque to the reader's

imagination:

> Farther we are by Pliny told,
> This serpent is extremely cold;
> So cold, that put it in the fire,
> 'Twill make the very flames expire:
> Besides, it spews a filthy froth,
> (Whether through rage, or lust, or both)
> Of matter purulent and white,
> Which happening on the skin to light,
> And there corrupting to a wound,
> Spreads leprosy and baldness round. (Poems, 91).

Swift plays on folk superstitions about the spread of disease with disgusting comparisons between pus and the salamander's excretions. The portrait dwells on the fame Lord Cutts received but does not deserve; the reader feels Swift's personal hatred in the suggestion that Lord Cutts should be avoided like the plague. The reader picks up sexual overtones with the juxtaposition of rage and lust, further implying a connection between Cutts's behavior and a sexually-transmitted disease, possibly gonorrhea. All filth and corruption, Lord Cutts's behavior in battle results in a radically different, embarrassing portrait under the fire of Swift's detestation.

Clearly, we need to generate some new terms to describe the effects of Swift's technique of portraiture. It is not enough to say it is either "positive" or "negative" or "indignant." The irony and satire we find in Swift's political poems can be personally defensive or acrimonious (offensive) or playful (indifferent). Swift's satire finally exceeds any categorizations, and I will not suggest that Swift's poetry accomplishes only three goals. Yet within the

range of Swift's poems many variations appear. On one side, the satire is temperate, gentle, and amusing. In these poems, Swift gets caught in the middle of a political squabble, and he needs to be dragged in from the countryside; he is a reluctant participant. On the other side, for example in the acrimonious satire of "A Description of a Salamander," Swift's voice is overt and obstreperous. The angry narrator presents examples of corrupt people and creates portraits overwhelmed by his own chaotic, sprawling outrage. In this kind of poem, Swift no longer concerns himself with rhetorical complexity or a middle way as much as he openly punishes those in places of authority. This acrimonious, "acid satire" allows Swift to create indelible images. The most effective weapon in his arsenal, political portraits go beyond anything merely positive or negative.

Robert W. Uphaus argues that in the absence of any positive standard in Swift's prose, we find in the poems an autobiographical presence that is a surrogate positive. The missing positive that F. R. Leavis was expecting from a moralist "is continually present in Swift's poetry, but that positive performs more a personal than thematic function. That is, in these poems we are continually presented with Swift's estimate of things--with his personal convictions rather than his putative fictions--and we can accept or

reject his convictions, but we cannot ignore them."[8] We cannot ignore Swift's political portraits because they are so menacing. Perhaps Swift's portraiture technique is so effective because when he writes about persons in authority, the reader expects some kind of accurate likeness or vague allusion, not a putrid salamander. Yet Swift never appeals to a patron--apart from his early odes--nor does he present a flattering portrait of anyone besides himself. As we have seen in "The Description of a Salamander," Swift wages war most effectively when he can change the course of a metaphor or make unexpected leaps among associations.

Swift's acrimonious, personal political portraits can be better appreciated by comparing them with two poems in which he does not use the technique: "The Author Upon Himself" and "Horace, Lib. 2, Sat. 6." Both of these poems present a far different Swift, a graceful political moderate with high moral standards called in to smooth ruffled feathers and to "reconcile divinity and wit." Ehrenpreis writes that Swift's poems about himself divide into two classes, those built on self-mockery and those leaning toward self-justification.[9] "The Author Upon Himself" reveals facts about Swift's self-concept but it contains no striking political portrait:

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[8]Robert W. Uphaus, "Swift's Irony Reconsidered" in Contemporary Studies of Swift's Poetry, ed. John Irwin Fischer and Donald C. Mell, Jr., associate ed. David M. Vieth (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1981), 172.

[9]Irvin Ehrenpreis, Swift: The Man, His Works, the Age, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963-83), 2: 735.

> Swift had the sin of wit, no venial crime;
> Nay, 'twas affirmed, he sometimes dealt in rhyme:
> Humour, and mirth, had place in all he writ:
> He reconciled divinity and wit.
> He moved, and bowed, and talked with too much grace;
> Nor showed the parson in his gait or face;
> Despised luxurious wines, and costly meat;
> Yet, still was at the tables of the great.
> Frequented lords; saw those that saw the Queen;
> At Child's or Truby's never once had been;
> Where town and country vicars flock in tribes,
> Secured by numbers from the layman's gibes.
> And deal in vices of the graver sort,
> Tobacco, censure, coffee, pride, and port...
> And now the public interest to support,
> By Harley Swift invited comes to court.
> In favour grows with ministers of state;
> Admitted private, when superiors wait:
> And, Harley, not ashamed his choice to own,
> Takes him to Windsor in his coach, alone (Poems, 163).

The poem's uneven quality results because Swift's self-admiration (he calls himself a "genius," "scholar" and "poet") subverts the moral outrage of the best sections. Moreover, Swift describes himself as a man of modesty and reconciliation, terms not befitting someone filled with saeva indignatio. In the poem Swift gets called in to consult with Harley because of the respect he commands and because of his ability to appease contending factions. Can this really be said about the author of A Tale of a Tub? Not the man of excess, the Swift of "Author Upon Himself" is regarded as a compromising politician who moves discretly in important circles. "Author Upon Himself" conspicuously lacks any strong portrait, analogy, or metaphor because Swift plays his cards carefully--not for the sake of his political fortunes but for his reputation. In this poem, Swift wants to emerge as one who performed what friendship, justice, and truth

demanded and then humbly retired. Swift does not assault and insult because he wants to preserve an image of non-participation; he wants to make clear he was wrongfully accused as a Jacobite and subversive. In the poem Swift remains every bit the modest country parson--though we hardly believe it--who scorns the luxuries of the coffee houses. Because the poem lacks a bold personal portrait, it pales in comparison with political poems like "The Description of a Salamander."

The theme and structure of "The Author Upon Himself" compare with "Horace, Lib. 2, Sat. 6," another poem in which Swift avoids portraiture. A. B. England describes the organization of Swift's poem as elegantly symmetrical; the movement is from the poet's country retreat to the throng of courtly hangers-on, to Swift and Harley at the center, back to the deluded crowd, and finally returning once more to the country retreat.10 The central thematic principle of Horace's poem is a contrast between country and city life; Horace focuses particularly on the peace he enjoys in his natural retreat and the troubles he endures when he visits his patron in the city. Swift borrows from Horace this idea of the country squire invaded by crowds who perceive him as politically important:

> A hundred other men's affairs
> Like bees are humming in my ears.

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10A. B. England, Energy and Order in the Poetry of Swift (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1980), 145.

'Tomorrow my appeal comes on,
Without your help the cause is gone--'
'The Duke expects my Lord and you,
About some great affair, at two--'
'Put my Lord Bolingbroke in mind,
To get my warrant quickly signed:'
Consider, 'tis my first request.'
Be satisfied. I'll do my best--
Then presently he falls to tease:
'You may for certain, if you please;
I doubt not, if his Lordship knew--
And Mr Dean, one word from you--' (Poems, 168-9).

Swift holds the same position as in "The Author Upon Himself"--that is, he serves as a respected intermediary between political factions. When he actually spends time with Harley, the conversation centers around "what's o'clock?" and "how's the wind?" and "have you nothing new from Pope, from Parnell or from Gay?" Swift plays out a role as entertainer and conversation partner for Harley, having none of the political leverage that the petitioners assume him to possess. Harley wants to be amused with gossip from the Scriblerians while the average man on the street asks Swift serious questions about politics, the war, and government finance. The ironic discrepancy between what the crowds think Swift knows and what actually transpires in Harley's court makes the poem light-hearted and amusing. The vindictive, personal contempt the poem lacks follows from its missing political portrait. The most harsh lines are given over to the fools, beggars, and opportunists who want Swift to be their conduit to the powerful. The hangers-on want Swift to serve as a vehicle for their political goals when he only serves an ornamental purpose for Harley.

"Horace, Lib. 2, Sat. 6" successfully imitates Horace, but compared with Swift's other political poems it is not storming with outrage. "Horace, Lib. 2, Sat. 6" does not challenge the reader nor inflict pain. It lacks a real portrait. The poem lacks momentum and dramatic tension. The reader is never shocked by any of the language of either "Horace" or "The Author Upon Himself." In both poems, Swift tries to play up "positive," moderate roles for himself. Both poems conclude in a peaceful retirement that is aesthetically pleasing but incongruous with Swift's reputation for trouble-making:

> Thus in a sea of folly tossed,
> My choicest hours of life are lost;
> Yet always wishing to retreat;
> Oh, could I see my country seat!
> There leaning near a gentle brook,
> Sleep, or peruse some ancient book;
> And there in sweet oblivion drown
> Those cares that haunt a court and town (Poems, 170).

The real voice of Swift does not retire in pastoral bliss--witness the kind of casualties Swift can claim when he really exerts himself. Swift targets even something as small as a name. Swift combines Godolphin's Christian name, Sidney, with that of the supposed Arabic author of Don Quixote, Cid Hamet Benenegli to get "Sid Hamet." Like "Salamander," "The Virtues of Sid Hamet the Magician's Rod" creates a vicious portrait drawn with Swift's personal energy. The poem uses the device of analogy between Godolphin's staff of office and rods celebrated in the Bible, in classical mythology, and in romances. "Sid Hamet" begins

with a simple comparison between Moses' beneficent wand and Sid Hamet's magical staff. In contrast with Moses, the two major themes of Sid Hamet's rod involve punishment and secrecy. Godolphin's white staff symbolizes his office as Lord Treasurer, and the Queen in fact required Godolphin to "break thy rod like a naughty lad" when he was removed from office. But Sid Hamet's rod inverts the conflict of values represented by Moses and his staff:

> Our great magician Hamet Sid,
> Reverses what the prophet did:
> His rod was honest English wood,
> That senseless in a corner stood,
> Till metamorphosed by his grasp,
> It grew an all-devouring asp;
> Would hiss and sting, and roll, and twist,
> By the mere virtue of his fist:
> But when he laid it down, as quick
> Resumed to figure of a stick (Poems, 110).

Instead of remaining dormant in his hand, Godolphin's rod transforms into a poisonous snake when he holds it. Swift delights in the portrait of an "all-devouring asp" undulating in the hand of Godolphin, a symbol of his moral weakness and corruption. In fact, in the poem Swift berates Godolphin for increasingly serious crimes and vices. Swift draws wild, illogical comparisons between Godolphin's rod and a witches' broomstick, divining rod, snake, fishing pole, riding switch, scepter, and penis. The poem proceeds from one basic comparison to more extreme parallelism among all kinds of rods in Swift's imagination. Swift exploits the negative associations with Godolphin's rod and, by implication, all the accusations trace back to him; Swift

wants Godolphin's staff of office to act as a lightning rod attracting all possible incriminating connotations. The OED notes a number of nefarious and some impartial associations with the word, among them "an instrument of punishment" as in "a rod under one's girdle" implying a whipping or the act of being whipped. Shakespeare in Measure for Measure picks up on the possible double meanings:

> ...Now, as fond fathers,
> Having bound up the threat'ning twigs of birch,
> Only to stick it in their children's sight
> For terror, not to use, in time the rod
> Becomes more mocked than feared.11

Thus the range of associations Swift calls into play in the demolition of Godolphin includes the rod as symbol of dignity, power and authority and a possible source of humor. Godolphin's power can just as easily be represented as tyrannical or devoted to punishment, evil and couched in secrecy. (See how Swift uses the bundle of twigs in "The Faggot") The only really straightforward comparison Swift invokes is between the rod and Moses' staff. Once Swift finishes that, he progresses to the more hyperbolic and imaginative portrait of the witches' broomstick:

> So to her midnight feasts the hag
> Rides on a broomstick for a nag,
> That raised by magic of her breech,
> O'er land and sea convey the witch:
> But with the morning dawn resumes
> The peaceful state of common brooms (Poems, 110).

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11William Shakespeare, Measure for Measure, ed. R. C. Bald in The Complete Works, ed. Alfred Harbage (New York: Viking Press, 1969), I, iii, 26.

The analogy from the world of magic is more facetious, especially in the way the witch (Godolphin) raises herself by the magic of her own breech. Swift openly celebrates the absurdity of each subsequent comparison, seeming to lapse into incantations, intoxicated by his own inventive wit. Swift delights in the game of wit, all the while laughing in the background as he launches into more ridiculous associations. The principal moral crimes Swift has accused Godolphin of (hypocrisy and avarice) multiply into a thousand distorted hallucinations. The reader takes the charge of hypocrisy seriously; Godolphin in office, like Marlborough, was a greedy and self-serving man. Godolphin used his rod to realize personal profits from gold mines while pretending to represent impartially the government. The overwhelming conjuring spell of witchcraft and occult imagery leads to the connection between Godolphin and gold mines where "In Scottish hills [Godolphin] found precious ore/ Where none e'er looked for it before." Remember this connection when reading "The Fable of Midas"! Gold leaves its dirty mark on the fingers that touch it.

The reader assumes all of Swift's charges against Godolphin have this same basis in fact--they can be traced to some physical evidence. Swift invokes Moses's walking stick, Hermes' rod, and Achilles' scepter to give a solid feeling of Biblical and classical authority to the charges he directs against Godolphin. But the wild progression of comparisons

is anything but logical: walking stick> broomstick> snake> divining rod> fishing rod. Anything of lengthy, slender configuration can be worked into the frenzied analogies. But the most humorous and damaging of the charges is that Godolphin was a part of some satanic brotherhood. Like Hermes, Godolphin could induce mortal eyes to sleep and "drive departed souls to Styx." The enchantment of the wand of Hermes or Mercury's caduceus is the power to induce sleep, like Godolphin's inducing sleep in the ministry.

> Sid's brethren of the conjuring tribe
> A circle with the rod describe,
> Which proves a magical redoubt,
> To keep mischievous spirits out:
> Sid's rod was of a larger stride,
> And made a circle thrice as wide;
> Where spirits thronged with hideous din,
> And he stood there to take them in.
> But, when the enchanted rod was broke,
> They vanished in a stinking smoke (Poems, 111).

The scene damages because it implies Godolphin is an agent of hell. With his secret tribe, Godolphin has duped the British Parliament with mystical incantations. The esoteric, cryptic rituals were conducted with the host of evil spirits in a "hideous din" throwing evil influence over all. Swift moves from the underworld of Hermes to Achilles' scepter, representing a long descent of kings who have rightfully transmitted power down a hero's line of inheritance. Once again Swift inverts the paradigm because Godolphin emphasizes the negative aspect of inheritance. His power came through an "heirloom." Swift insinuates that Godolphin came to power through his connection with the Marlborough family (his son

married Marlborough's eldest daughter and heiress).

From the range of classical analogies and extended metaphors, the poem abruptly changes tone in the last stanza. Here Swift addresses Godolphin as a child in child-like language with a few more comparisons tossed in for good measure:

> Dear Sid, then why wert thou so mad
> To break thy rod like a naughty lad?
> You should have kissed it in your distress,
> And then returned it to your mistress;
> Or made it a Newmarket switch,
> And not a rod for thy own breech.
> But since old Sid has broken this,
> His next may be a rod in piss.

Swift scolds Godolphin directly as if he were a misbehaving son; the father instructs his son about proper behavior and laughingly suggests he might have turned his rod into a horse-switch. But returning the rod "to your mistress" must imply an illicit affair with the Queen! Or does it mean Godolphin acquired his power through sexual favors? At least since Godolphin broke his staff, he may face "a rod in piss," a low version of "rod in pickle" or a punishment. But as with all metaphorical comparisons, multiple meanings reside beneath the words; "a rod in piss" could easily be taken for a penis. Hence Godolphin is "broken" or made impotent, his reward for his conduct in office.

The basis of Swift's "The Fable of Midas" is as hyperbolic as the progression of rod analogies in "Sid Hamet." Swift compares Marlborough's management of the war with Midas, the legendary king who successfully prayed to the

gods that everything he touched might turn to gold. The poem perfectly divides into halves--the first half devoted to Midas's story and the second half drawing parallels between Midas and Marlborough. In "The Fable of Midas," Swift concentrates on the portrait of Marlborough's avarice, his corruption in managing Allied troops, and his personal profits from protracting the war. Swift's pamphlet The Conduct of the Allies deals with this issue in a more pragmatic manner, but the tract has little of the imaginative fury of the poem. The contrast between poetic and prose voices results because Swift's pamphlet was a public discourse, part of a sustained propaganda assault, while the poem's self-contained hostility is personal and direct. Midas and Marlborough are different because Midas had a change of heart; he prayed to the gods to reverse this "curse" while Marlborough was forcefully removed from office. Marlborough suffered but did not repent, according to Swift. Midas suffers because of unanticipated negative outcomes:

> He chipped his bread; the pieces round
> Glittered like spangles on the ground:
> A codling e'er it went his lip in,
> Would straight become a golden pippin:
> He called for drink, you saw him sup
> Potable gold in golden cup.
> His empty paunch that he might fill,
> He sucked his victuals through a quill;
> Untouched it passed between his grinders,
> Or't had been happy for gold-finders (Poems, 123).

Midas has been so thoroughly rewarded by his "talent" that his body cannot receive the nourishment it needs to survive. Swift strikes the reader with images of such crisp definition

that even in this metallic feast we sense a man victimized by his own greed. People begin to mistake Midas's magic touch for intelligence (Swift wants the parallel application to Marlborough), so Midas is called in to decide whether Pan or Apollo is more musically gifted. Midas decides that Pan is better, and Apollo bestows on Midas a pair of asses' ears--a symbol of his moral impurity. Midas finally prays to have his golden touch rescinded. This is the fate Swift wishes on Marlborough; fame will spread the news and people will travel from afar to see "Midas, exposed to all their jeers,/ Had lost his art, but kept his ears."

Swift lets out all the stops in the second half of the poem in the same frenzied manner he extended the rod associations in "Sid Hamet." The parallels between Marlborough's management of the war and Midas's touch are stretched to the limit:

> Besides, it plainly now appears
> Our Midas too has asses' ears;
> Where every fool in his mouth applies,
> And whispers in a thousand lies;
> Such gross delusions could not pass,
> Through any ears but of an ass
> But gold defiles with frequent touch,
> There's nothing fouls the hands so much:
> And scholars give it for the cause,
> Of British Midas' dirty paws (Poems, 125).

In addition to the metaphorical savagery, the poem contains specific and serious charges against Marlborough. The vicious name-calling and playful comparison contrast with Swift's serious allegations against Marlborough. Marlborough profited from perquisites, pensions, bribes, and commissions,

and Swift drags him through the mud for it. Swift demolishes Marlborough in every conceivable way, through political accusations and, by associating him with an ass, moral outrage. The portrait is of a man who like "gold-finders" carts away dung and offal and searches it for gold; Marlborough had the ability to turn "dung" (unnecessary war) into gold (personal profit). Swift makes the comparison because both Midas and Marlborough end up with similar fates, sunk down by their lascivious pride, on public display with asses' ears and dirty hands.

When Marlborough died in 1722 ten years after the publication of "Midas," Swift's feelings about him had not softened. "A Satirical Elegy on the Late Famous General" concludes with the same image of a man sullied by touching gold and dirtied by his immoral acts:

> Let pride be taught by this rebuke,
> How very mean a thing's a Duke;
> From all his ill-got honours flung,
> Turned to that dirt from whence he sprung (Poems, 242).

In these lines, Swift surprisingly did not take up the opportunity to rhyme "flung" with his favorite excremental synonym. Swift subverts the reader's expectations with his diabolically funny mock-elegy. This is no serious, solemn meditation on the death of a famous person like that in classical literature. The speaker laughs irreverently at the elaborate funeral staged by the Whigs--Marlborough's hearse was a sumptuously adorned chariot, drawn by eight horses. James Sutherland suggests that Thomas Gray as a small boy may

have witnessed the procession to Westminster Abbey, and he may have reflected on it when composing his "Elegy on a Country Churchyard."[12] No doubt many conventional elegies appeared in the popular press, provoking Swift's bitter inversion:

> His Grace! impossible! what, dead!
> Of old age too, and in his bed!
> And could that Mighty Warrior fall?
> And so inglorious, after all!
> Well, since he's gone, no matter how,
> The last loud trump must wake him now:
> And, trust me, as the noise grows stronger,
> He'd wish to sleep a little longer.
> And could he be indeed so old
> As by the newspapers we're told?
> Threescore, I think, is pretty high;
> 'Twas time in conscience he should die.
> This world he cumbered long enough;
> He burnt his candle to the snuff;
> And that's the reason some folks think,
> He left behind so great a stink (Poems, 242).

Swift capitalizes on a topic like Marlborough to bring out three exclamations within one octosyllabic line! Swift has in mind a twisted memorial for Marlborough. In the "Satirical Elegy," Marlborough himself is bothered by all the noise raised over his death. Watching the funeral parade pass by, listening to the loud public clamor, smelling the smells of death, Swift laments the fact that Marlborough did not die sooner. Not a hint of guilt or remorse can be found in Swift's send-up of feigned public sentiment. Instead of meditating on Marlborough's military success--what we might

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[12]James Sutherland, "The Funeral of John, Duke of Marlborough" in Background for Queen Anne (London: Methuen and Co., 1939), 204-24.

find in a traditional elegy--Swift attacks and insults Marlborough's memory. Marlborough's death makes people cry, but for the wrong reasons, according to Swift.

Swift's "Satirical Elegy" expresses moral outrage against this demon who so long burdened the world with his life. The "last loud trump" awakening Marlborough recalls 1 Corinthians 15, 52: "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Swift thinks this impossible for Marlborough, and he hopes that Marlborough rises from the dead because the public lamentation bothers even him, not because he "shall be changed." Swift proves in his mock-elegy that expressing "grief" can be funny; Swift even makes us laugh with improbable slant rhymes about sadness over Marlborough's death:

> Behold his funeral appears,
> Nor widow's sighs, nor orphan's tears,
> Wont at such times each heart to pierce,
> Attend the progress of his hearse (Poems, 242).

Swift lampooned the reader's expectations and the genre itself in the "Satirical Elegy." A comparable effort against the ballad-song in "An Excellent New Song Upon a Seditious Pamphlet" shows how Swift ironically "attacks" his own pamphlet and "defends" something he opposes. Ballads are traditionally associated with non-literate cultures and often embrace legendary heroes, supernatural events or passionate love. Swift's poem inverts expectations because he writes

"An Excellent New Song" in response to the furor raised over his serious economic tract, "A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture." In this pamphlet, Swift concentrates on the mercantilist anti-Irish economic legislation of the British Parliament, but his efforts to heighten the awareness of the Anglo-Irish is a political act. The Dublin establishment took action against the offensive pamphlet, Lord Chief Justice Whitshed prosecuting the printer Waters for disseminating seditious material.[13] "An Excellent New Song" along with "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" was one of the items seen as most offensive, bringing about the decision to cancel certain sections of the text in the Faulkner edition. Comparing the edited version of the prologue with the original yields valuable information about what kind of language Swift's readers and editors found most unacceptable:

> Edited: The author having wrote a treatise, advising the people of Ireland to wear their own manufactures, a prosecution was set on foot against Waters the printer thereof, which was carried out with so much violence, that one Whitshed, then Chief Justice, thought proper, in a manner the most extraordinary, to keep them about nine hours, and to send them eleven times out of court, until he had wearied them into a special verdict.

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[13]William Whitshed was Chief Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland. While regarded by Swift as a competent judge concerning Whig politics, Whitshed's involvement in the prosecution of Waters in 1720 and in legal battles surrounding Wood's copper coinage made Whitshed a prime target in the Drapier Letters and associated poems. See Irvin Ehrenpreis, Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962-83), vol. 3, Dean Swift, 675-7.

> Original: The author having writ a treatise, advising the people of Ireland to wear their own manufactures; that infamous wretch Whitshed prosecuted Waters the printer with so much violence and injustice, that he kept the jury nine hours, and sent them away eleven times, till out of mere weariness they were forced to give a special verdict (Poems, 217).

Not only does the edited version contain more words, but the worst thing it says about Whitshed is that he was "violent," not unusual for a prosecutor. Swift's original bestows Whitshed with indignant descriptive words like "infamous wretch," "injustice," and "forced." The vociferous preamble contradicts the intention of the poem, written by a person supposedly in agreement with Whitshed. Swift pretends to be a person writing against his own pamphlet. This creates the ironic discrepancy between Swift's "defense" of Whitshed and his "prosecution" of the printer Waters. Swift wrote the poem in ballad stanza; the metrical regularity and alternating concluding lines give it a drinking song vitality and humor that Swift uses to his advantage in the portrait:

> In England the dead in woolen are clad,
> The Dean and his printer then let us cry fie on;
> To be clothed like a carcass would make a Teague mad,
> Since a living dog better is than a dead lion,
> Our wives they grow sullen
> At the wearing of woolen,
> And all we poor shopkeepers must our horns pull in.
> Then we'll buy English silks, & c.
>
> Whoever our trading with England would hinder,
> To inflame both the nations do plainly conspire;
> Because Irish linen will soon turn to tinder;
> And wool is it greasy, and quickly takes fire.
> Therefore I assure ye,
> Our noble Grand Jury,
> When they saw the Dean's book they were in a great fury:
> They would buy English silk for their wives, & c.
> (Poems, 217)

Every stanza exploits a central metaphor allowing Swift to point out the ridiculous legal, economic, and social bind the Anglo-Irish have put themselves in. With their cultural ties to England, the Anglo-Irish wish to clothe their women in English silks, damasks, tabbies, and gauzes while ignoring the economic basis for their own health. Swift's irony exposes the hypocrisy of the "true Irish hearts" who buy English cloth. The double-bind of the law requires the deceased to be buried in woolen (to protect the domestic industry). Therefore "a living dog better is than a dead lion." The irony of the situation is that to keep their cultural ties intact, the landowners bought imported silk while watching their land values bottom out--forcing the shopkeepers to "pull their horns in." This perspective Swift would capitalize on in The Drapier's Letters, but in the case of "An Excellent Song," the poet is a stool-pigeon accusing another working-class man. The fire metaphor in the third stanza is beautifully executed, flames meaning to inspire political controversy, produce worthless goods, put grease into fire, and inspire emotional passion.

In a letter to Pope dated January 10, 1721, Swift wrote that during the trial, "the Chief Justice among other singularities, laid his hand on his breast, and protested solemnly that the author's design was to bring in the Pretender, although there was not a single syllable of party

in the whole treatise"[14] Perhaps the best line in the poem is the verdict that the printer "Henceforth shall print neither pamphlets nor linen,/ And, if swearing can do't, shall be swingingly mauled." This use of "swingingly" is cited in the OED as "hugely or immensely," but Swift exploits the pun of the slang meaning. Swift associates a "swinging" with a "hanging." That is, the printer's fate before the Anglo-Irish establishment should be decided finally by the rope if not in the courtroom. This comes from the man who championed FAIR LIBERTY!

The Anglo-Irish double bind irritates Swift like no other political problem. Swift assaults and insults both the Irish and the English in a handful of poems, including "An Excellent New Song." One of the most bitter poems Swift ever wrote--"A Character, Description, and Panegyric of the Legion Club"--also takes up the Anglo-Irish dilemma. Yet "The Legion Club" differs from "An Excellent New Song" and the "Satirical Elegy" because it is deadly serious. It creates a lurid political portrait. Filled with animosity, the poem was far too dangerous for any Dublin printer to risk supporting. Swift exerts the portraiture technique against a host of specific individuals in the Irish House of Commons because of his general aversion for them and because of specific events, like the erection of a building. The Irish

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[14]The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963-65), 2: 365-74.

Parliament had voted to deprive the clergy of pasturage tithes that were legally due them. They had built a new Parliament house, a vainglorious and costly edifice constructed in the Italian style with a facade of Ionic columns.[15] Crucial to the effect of the political portrait are the seven-syllable lines, which Swift uses only a few times, and a cluster of images linked to damnation.

One image is a vast "pile" like a new Bedlam. Peter J. Schakel argues that two central images allow Swift to describe the Irish Parliament house as both a lunatic asylum and a kind of hell.[16] Swift fuses two concepts of madness and damnation to give the poem a unified thematic framework. Exploring the idea of damnation, Schakel demonstrates that Swift's specific allusions to the Bible and to Aeneas' journey into the underworld allow Swift to conflate the classical Hades with the Christian hell, thus bringing together two disparate sources in a coherent moral indictment of Irish politics.

However, I disagree with Schakel's otherwise excellent article because he attributes to the poem a high degree of conscious artistic design. Swift is not creating a literary tapestry carefully weaving together strands from various

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[15]Irvin Ehrenpreis, Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962-83), 3: 828-32.

[16]Peter J. Schakel, "Virgil and the Dean: Christian and Classical Allusion in 'The Legion Club,'" Studies in Philology 70 (1973), 427-38.

sources. Any careful reading of A Tale of a Tub will show that coherent design is more an illusion than a working architectural principle for Swift. "The Legion Club" overwhelms the reader as a piece of invective because it is filled with personal contempt and animosity. The poem is one of the handful of examples of outright offending satire. There is nothing to hold Swift back at this point in his life and career. Swift felt hatred pouring from an open wound, and he cried out openly at a deserving target.

The aggressive and contradictory title of the poem refers to a passage in Mark when Jesus asks the "unclean spirit" possessing the man out of the tombs "what is thy name?" The answer is, "my name is Legion, for we are many." Thereafter, in freeing the man from the evil spirits occupying his body, Christ forces the devils to enter into a great herd of swine. Swift uses the same violent force in his poem, freeing his voice of Anglo-Irish "possession." The members of Parliament in this analogy are unclean spirits, a herd of swine feeding in their vainglorious edifice conducting their club like inmates in an asylum:

> Let them, when they once get in
> Sell the nation for a pin;
> While they sit a-picking straws
> Let them rave of making laws;
> While they never hold their tongue,
> Let them dabble in their dung;
> Let then form a grand committee,
> How to plague and starve the city;
> Let them stare and storm and frown,
> When they see a clergy-gown.
> Let them, 'ere they crack a louse,
> Call for the orders of the House;

Let them with their gosling quills,
Scribble senseless heads of bills;
We may, while they strain their throats,
Wipe our arses with their votes.

Let Sir Tom, that rampant ass,
Stuff his guts with flax and grass;
But before the priest he fleeces
Tear the Bible all to pieces.
At the parsons, Tom, halloo boy,
Worthy offspring of a shoe-boy,
Footman, traitor, vile seducer,
Perjured rebel, bribed accuser;
Lay the paltry privilege aside,
Sprung from papist and a regicide;
Fall a-working like a mole,
Raise the dirt about your hole (Poems, 552).

The portrait is characterized more by open hostility than by coherent design. We witness a collision of voices between a mild-mannered, "objective" narrator and the stinging criticism he delivers. This is the man who "strolls the city" and gently invites his muse to take him on a tour of the asylum: "Thither, gentle muse, conduct me,/ I should ask, and thou instruct me." Yet the narrator changes his tune when he arrives at the gates of hell: "In a fright she [the muse] crept away,/ Bravely I resolved to stay." Swift distances the ferocity of his anger by momentarily focusing on the impartial qualities of the narrator--he does it at the end of the poem again when the narrator retires with spirits spent. The narrator asks innocent questions, but his description of the rabble within is horrific. Recurring clusters of images are pierced with a stench, images of disease, filthy excrement and references to the underworld of Clio, Stygian streams, and satan. But the meek narrator who

still utters condemnations changes into a confrontational zookeeper who demands to inspect the "heroes" one by one.

The individual names of this dire, infectious brood are not so important as the intensity of the portrait. This hell-asylum is more disgusting than anything in A Tale of a Tub. Two male companions bound together in leather kiss and drink each other's urine. A trio of "Clements, Dilkes and Harrison" swagger drunkenly out of their garrison. One prisoner metamorphizes into a snake-haired gorgon, and the narrator accuses him of incest. A grotesque visage with the appearance of satan appears at the door. Swift's technique of portraiture is best represented in self-comparison with William Hogarth, artistic ally of the Scriblerians:

> How I want thee, humorous Hogarth!
> Thou I hear, a pleasant rogue art;
> Were but you and I acquainted,
> Every monster should be painted;
> You should try your graving tools
> On this odious group of fools;
> Draw the beasts as I describe 'em,
> Form their features, while I gibe them;
> Draw them like, for I assure you,
> You will need no caricatura;
> Draw them so that we may trace
> All the soul in every face (Poems, 556).

Note the moral dimension--the emphasis is on exposure of the evil faces and not on artistry. The Irish Parliament is made of "monsters" that need only be represented, not caricatured. Their features need not be exaggerated. While Hogarth may rely on the caricature or distortion of reality, Swift says in such obvious examples of moral weakness one need only look at the face. Every foolish or corrupt thought in the heart

Swift easily sees on the face of a "beast."

"The Legion Club" stings with the most grotesque political portrait, but "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift D.S.P.D" inspires the most contradictory responses. Much criticism creates a screen through which Swift speaks, focusing on whether the poem is ironic, impersonal, or autobiographical. Thus we find various Swiftian images in criticism such as William Ewald's concept of a rhetorical philosopher. Ewald writes that in "Verses on the Death" Swift uses his greatest satiric mask to fight "the same battle Milton fought, for a humble, just, and ordered view of oneself in relation to the world, and against the kind of distortion of values which deludes man into over-estimation of his own importance."[17] For generations, critics have exaggerated the degree of literary artifice in the poem. Ehrenpreis creates the image of Swift as master impersonator and believes all of the first section of "Verses on the Death" is "ironic, sardonic, or sarcastic with the mock-skepticism conveyed by the kind of impersonations which Swift particularly enjoyed."[18] Louis K. Barnett reads "Verses on the Death" as deliberately misleading and calls it "Swift's most accomplished effort to impose order on the materials of

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[17]William Bragg Ewald, Jr., The Masks of Jonathan Swift (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967), 183.

[18]Irvin Ehrenpreis, Swift: The Man, His Works, and The Age, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962-83), vol. 3 Dean Swift, 710.

posthumous reputation and a worthy culmination to his poetry of fictive self-portraiture."19 Maurice Johnson picks up on the controversial apology, creating the image of Swift as impartially hosting the final assessment of his life. Johnson believes Swift "is ostensibly talking about himself, [but] Swift has a good deal to say about friendship, envy, and human relations in general."20

As long as commentators concern themselves with separating the "fictive" from the "true," they will be misled by emphasizing Swift's use of apparently biographical information. Why else would Pope want to squelch the offensive passages? Pope set the tone for much contemporary criticism; he thought "Verses on the Death" was deceitful and false. Writing to John Boyle, Earl of Orrery, who had first given him the poem, Pope said "I return the verses you favored me with, the latter part of which is inferior to the beginning, the character too dry, as well as too vain in some respects, and in one or two particulars not true."21 Pope may have been offended because in "Verses on the Death," Swift spoofed Pope in certain passages:

> Vain humankind! Fantastic race!
> Thy various follies, who can trace?

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19Louis K. Barnett, Swift's Poetic Worlds (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1981), 82.

20Maurice Johnson, The Sin of Wit; Jonathan Swift as a Poet (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1950), 59-66.

21The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, ed. G. Sherburn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), vol 4: 130.

> Self-love, ambition, envy, pride,
> Their empire in our hearts divide:
> Give others riches, power, and station,
> 'Tis all on me a usurpation. (Poems, 486).

On the other hand, some commentators throw out the endless debate over truth and falsehood in "Verses on the Death." Nora Crow Jaffe explains that the poem establishes an alliance between the poet and reader built upon trust: "Swift relies on his bond with the reader to enforce his central point: though all men consult their private ends, and all men should know themselves well enough to know that truth, their habitual selfishness need not preclude acts of public benefit."22 Robert W. Uphaus writes that the poem embodies a distinctly unironic and positive affirmation of the self, a final answer to those who accused Swift of hiding behind satiric masks:

> Swift offers an image to posterity that dares us to challenge his integrity. He does not conceal himself through the manipulation of irony; rather, the irony gives way to autobiographical self-revelation, providing a complex perspective of a highly complicated man. But so long as readers talk about the poem in terms of irony, satire, and persona (or at least hope that these terms apply), they will remain locked in the seemingly never-ending debate that finds Barry Slepian asserting that the poem is an instance of self-irony and John Middleton Murray assuming that the poem is a monstrous example of Swift's vanity.23

"Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" is the most memorable

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22Nora Crow Jaffe, The Poet Swift (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1977), 19.

23Robert W. Uphaus, "Swift's 'Whole Character'; The Delany Poems and 'Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift,'" Modern Language Quarterly 34 (1973): 406-16.

of Swift's portraits because Swift is the hero of the poem, not his "earnest" defense of FAIR LIBERTY. The poem contains the most eloquent statement about Swift's real feelings towards himself and others. Rochefoucauld's maxim "Dans l'adversite de nos meilleurs amis nous trouvons quelque chose, qui ne nous deplaisit pas" moved Swift to realize new things about himself. Moreover, "Verses on the Death" lashes out with power and energy created by contradictory portraits. The poem challenges and disturbs because its purpose is deeply divided. Swift's self-portraits and those of his friends and enemies create an explosive, aggressive melting pot of voices, but there is no coherently artistic mask. Swift throws his sharpest barbs at everyone who knows him; he forces on the reader a hostile and contradictory self-assessment. The argument that "Verses on the Death" misleads or does not follow a systematic organizing principle is irrelevant. "Verses on the Death" is valuable for what it tells us about Jonathan Swift, not about literary artifice.

In the poem, Swift consults his own private ends, resulting in portraits more divided and controversial than anything he ever wrote. Whether or not the portraits--of Swift and of others--accurately represent the truth is unimportant. "Verses on the Death" disturbs the reader because Swift dispenses with all screens and presents an honest estimate of how he understands himself. The only screens in the poem are those forced upon it by commentators.

When the reader looks into the heart of Swift's self-portrait in "Verses on the Death," he finds only contradictions, anger, accusations, reversals, and complexity. Swift says openly "this is what I really am!" We mistake ourselves by separating the man from the poem or by forcing an ordered view of the universe on the poem. Swift's concept of poetry is not Pope's; Swift uses poetry as a vehicle to a larger end. Poetry for Swift is an instrument by which he can inflict damage and make his friends squirm.

What statements does Swift make about himself in the poem? Throughout "Verses on the Death" Swift forcefully takes care of himself first, and he explains in his sermon "On Doing Good" that this does not contradict the law of nature and the law of God. Broadly speaking, the poem moves from self love (1-72) through irony (73-298) to a portrait of Swift as a man of absolute integrity (299-488). Each self-portrait waxes and wanes with chaotic energy because of Swift's deeply divided understanding of himself. We get at least three different Swifts in this extended dramatization.

> We all behold with envious eyes,
> Our equal raised above our size;
> Who would not at a crowded show,
> Stand high himself, keep others low?
> I love my friend as well as you,
> But would not have him stop my view;
> Then let me have the higher post;
> I ask but for an inch at most (Poems, lines 13-20).

> The fools, my juniors by a year,
> Are tortured with suspense and fear.
> Who wisely thought my age a screen,
> When death approached, to stand between:
> The screen removed, their hearts are trembling,

They mourn for me without dissembling. (lines 219-24).

Yet, malice never was his aim;
He lashed the vice but spared the name.
No individual could resent,
Where thousands equally were meant.
His satire points at no defect,
But what all mortals may correct;
For he abhorred that senseless tribe,
Who call it humour when they jibe:
Who spared a hump or crooked nose,
Whose owners set not up for beaux.
True genuine dullness moved his pity,
Unless it offered to be witty (lines 463-74).

Wait a minute! How is it possible that Swift wallows in the self-absorbed malice of his friends and enemies in section 2 and confesses in section 3 that "malice never was his aim"? The particularized detail of portraits in section 2 stings with malice and specific name-calling; Swift gets in his most vicious rabbit-punches at his enemies before it is too late. Swift's chance to scream the unvarnished truth results in this disturbing collision of voices and multiple Swift-images in "Verses on the Death." The chaotic, sprawling outrage does not lend itself to easy categorization or to tidy rhetorical criticism because the reader responds to the intensity of Swift's lashing rod.

Notice how easily Swift changes linguistic clothing and shifts from first to second to third person even within the same stanza. Swift has no premeditated, coherent theme to guide him, and even dividing "Verses on the Death" into three sections seems artificial. The reader confronts contradictory voices and the power and energy generated in each portrait. The poem's shotgun method of organization

undermines critics who want to see "Verses on the Death" as an orderly self-justification.

If the poem has structure, it generates itself in response to Rochefoucauld's maxim. As Robert W. Uphaus has noted, "there is ample reason to believe that Swift views the maxim as an expression of a morally neutral fact of human nature which, it turns out, he earlier examined and defended is his sermon 'Doing Good' (1724):"

> Nature directs every one of us, and God permits us, to consult our own private Good before the private Good of any other person whatsoever. We are, indeed, commanded to love our Neighbour as ourselves, but not as well as ourselves. The love we have for ourselves is to be the pattern of that love we ought to have towards our neighbour: But, as the copy doth not equal the original, so my neighbour cannot think it hard, if I prefer myself, who am the original, before him, who is only the copy. Thus, if any matter equally concern the life, the reputation, the profit of my neighbour, and my own; the law of nature, which is the law of God, obligeth me to take care of myself first, and afterwards of him. And this I need not be at much pains persuading you to; for the want of self-love, with regard to things of this world, is not among the faults of mankind.[24]

This is exactly what Swift means in "Verses on the Death" with his lines "I love my friend as well as you,/ But would not have him stop my view." Yet knowing Swift consults his own private ends first does not explain later lines like "He was cheerful to his dying day,/ And friends would let him have his way." Moreover, in certain passages Swift says the exact opposite, that his own private ends <u>are not</u> as

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24Robert W. Uphaus, "Swift's 'Whole Character'; The Delany Poems and 'Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift,'" <u>Modern Language Quarterly</u> 34 (1973): 406-16.

important as reconciling friends or "to merit well of humankind."

Is Swift deceitful or schizophrenic? Is he incapable of deciding whether his reputation or his integrity matters more? Part of the dilemma is the "impartial" speaker of section 3, who has been described as attempting an autobiographical summary of Swift's career. But the impartial speaker inaccurately defines Swift's satire according to certain well-established categories:

> Had he but spared his tongue and pen,
> He might have rose like other men:
> But, power was never in his thought;
> And, wealth he valued not a groat:
> Ingratitude he often found,
> And pitied those who meant the wound:
> But, kept the tenor of his mind,
> To merit well of humankind:
> Nor made a sacrifice of those
> Who still were true, to please his foes.
> He laboured many a fruitless hour
> To reconcile his friends in power;
> Saw mischief by a faction brewing,
> While they pursued each other's ruin.
> But, finding vain was all his care,
> He left the court in mere despair (Poems, 494-5).

This formulaic vision of Swift enforces the image of an ideal satirist, one who championed FAIR LIBERTY and honestly desired "to merit well of humankind." The impartial narrator presents a Swift of absolute moral integrity, generosity, and benevolence, totally at odds with the menacing portraits in section 2. Remember the savage criticism of Lady Suffolk, the Queen, St. John, and Swift's female friends!

> Kind Lady Suffolk in the spleen,
> Runs laughing up to tell the Queen.
> The Queen, so gracious, mild, and good,

Cries, 'Is he gone? 'Tis time he should.
He's dead you say, why let him rot;
I'm glad the medals were forgot.
I promised them, I own; but when?
I only was a princess then;
But now as consort of the King,
You know 'tis quite a different thing...

My female friends, whose tender hearts
Have better learnt to act their parts,
Receive the news in doleful dumps,
'The Dean is dead, (and what is trumps?)
Then Lord have mercy on his soul.
(Ladies, I'll venture for the vole.)
Six deans they say must bear the pall.
(I wish I knew which king to call)' (Poems, 490).

As Swift learned so early in his career, satire does not easily ingratiate itself to those in places of authority. In fact, at least three radically different self-portraits dominate "Verses on the Death." The reader cannot accept Swift's grandiloquent speech about preparing to die for FAIR LIBERTY having suffered under the stinging whip in section 2. This is the rub--Swift's poem is filled with such passion that the reader cannot help getting swept away, even by the speech about liberty. The fact that the poem is peppered with historically wrong statements does not explain away its power. For example, the self-portrait in section 3 includes the lines "He never courted men in station,/ Nor persons had in admiration" (lines 325-6). Swift wrote propaganda for the Harley administration and openly campaigned for a high appointment in the Church of England. Furthermore, Swift writes that

Though trusted long in great affairs,
He gave himself no haughty airs:
Without regarding private ends,

Spent all his credit for his friends (lines 329-33).

In fact, Swift was a dangerous person to have in government and Queen Anne did not trust him--she exiled him to Ireland after reading A Tale of a Tub. Perhaps most disturbing is the statement "without regarding private ends" because it undermines the theoretical premise of the entire poem.

> In all distresses of our friends
> We first consult our private ends,
> While nature kindly bent to ease us,
> Points out some circumstance to please us (lines 7-10).

Swift supposedly translates Rochefoucauld's maxim in "Verses on the Death" and sets out to teach the reader that accepting self-love does not necessarily oppose the pursuit of virtue. Yet if the poem teaches anything, it cannot be contained only by this theme. Self-love and the pursuit of virtue are themes in "Verses on the Death," but the final message goes beyond any single theme or self-portrait. Commentators endlessly debate the problem of intentional fallacy, but the greater dilemma is the complexity of the chaotic, sprawling outrage that motivates the poem. Swift spares nothing; he confronts people he knows face-to-face.

"Verses on the Death" demonstrates how we cannot assume satire to have only one accepted outcome and how difficult it is to make Swift fit into accepted categories. When Swift uses the technique of portraiture, he sometimes ridicules public, societal figures whose vices are familiar to many. But Swift's portraits in poetry are motivated by personal qualities and gain energy from a personal voice. If we

assume Swift to be only satiric or ironic, we isolate ourselves from broader, more disturbing and contradictory revelations in his poetry.

## Chapter 4

### Swift's Irish Writing: Rage, Resentment, and Reform

In his book The Augustan Defence of Satire, P. K. Elkin argues that late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century writers justified satire on the grounds of moral function. Dryden, Pope, and even Swift attempted to define satire as a vehicle for correction and moral reform. According to this moralistic view, literature had two primary goals: the reformation of vice and the promotion of virtue. When properly employed, satire supposedly identified social "ills" that any right-thinking, practically-minded citizen might agree needed reform. Elkin writes that Augustan satire based itself on the philosophical notion that men are free and responsible creatures who can change and improve themselves and their society through the exercise of reason.

As we have seen in previous chapters, "reason" for Swift is more often a source of delusion than enlightenment. But many Augustans like Pope committed themselves to a high-minded, ideal conception of the satirist as "a worthy citizen performing a public duty." Elkin quotes from Des Maiseux's standard defense of the satirist's motives and character:

> It is not, either, malice or envy or a sour captious humour that inclines him to write; but the sole desire of making men better. It is the consideration of their disorders that angers him; his sharpness proceeds only from his vexation to see vice, error, or folly, prevail. As he has a natural sense of good-nature, justice, and

> humanity, he interests himself in every thing that concerns other men; he sympathizes with their misadventures; and the wrong they receive, either in their person, or reputation, makes as quick an impression upon him, as if himself had suffer'd those indignities.1

This sounds very much like one of Pope's letters to Arbuthnot, in which he writes "that disdain and indignation against vice, is, I thank God, the only disdain and indignation I have." Pope claims "a true love for virtue" goes hand in hand with satire, because "to reform and not to chastise, I am afraid is impossible." Pope compares himself to Horace and Virgil, although he says they enjoyed the protection of the court. Pope dismisses general satire, refusing to be afraid of possible retaliation against him from persons implicated in the writing: "To attack vices in the abstract, without touching persons, may be safe fighting indeed, but it is fighting with shadows."2

Swift is another matter. Writing to Pope, Swift states "I do profess without affectation, that your kind opinion of me as patriot, since you call it so, is what I do not deserve; because what I do is owing to perfect rage and resentment, and the mortifying sight of slavery, folly, and

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1From The Works of Monsieur Boileau (1711) cited in Peter Kingsley Elkin, The Augustan Defence of Satire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 91.

2The Works of Alexander Pope, ed. Rev. Whitwell Elwin, 10 vols (London: John Murray, 1871), 7: 481.

baseness about me among which I am forced to live."3 Swift's description of "the mortifying sight of slavery" corresponds with Pope's "disdain and indignation," a sense of moral outrage necessary to write proper satire. But Swift's account of his own motives repudiates the Augustan idea of "a worthy citizen performing a public duty." In Swift's Irish writing, including his correspondence, The Drapier's Letters, "A Modest Proposal, and "A Proposal for Giving Badges to Beggars," we discover an immense store of anger and frustration directed at Anglo-Irish problems. Frequently Swift seizes on the metaphor of "a free man among slaves" to describe his exiled life in Ireland, such as in the poem "Traulus."

> What spirit since the world began,
> Could always bear to strive with man?
> Which God pronounced he never would,
> And soon convinced them by the flood.
> Yet still the Dean on freedom raves,
> His spirit always strives with slaves.
> 'Tis time at last to spare his ink,
> And let them rot, or hang, or stink.4

Known only by the initials M. B., Swift's Irish tradesman in his Drapier's Letters directly challenges English political authority:

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3The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963-65), 3: 289. Henceforth referred to in parenthetical citations as Corr.

4Swift wrote "Traulus" in response to Dr. Patrick Delany's "Epistle to Lord Carteret," which pleads for a preferment despite the fact that Delany already held some valuable offices in the church as a result of Swift's interest. See Poems, 425.

> Were not the people of Ireland born as free as those of England? How have they forfeited their freedom? Is not their Parliament as fair a representative of the people, as that of England? Are they not subjects of the same King? Does not the same sun shine over them? And have they not the same God for their protector? Am I a freeman in England, and do I become a slave in six hours, by crossing the Channel?[5]

Although we might group Swift with other satirists who profess the aim of moral improvement, and Swift does at times argue with moral issues, I must make the distinction between theory and practice. Swift uses satire to attack in order to assert his own superiority, not to change the moral or political climate of Ireland. Satire is Swift's favorite weapon for both public exposure and personal attack, but he never seriously believes in any grandiose corrective agenda like Pope. Swift's satire does not aspire to a moral high ground implied in overthrowing the tyrant (England) or freeing the captives (Ireland). While Swift generates Old Testament prophetic denunciation and ferocity in his Irish writing, he adopts a corrective agenda only when writing in the abstract such as in his "Vindication of Gay's Beggar's Opera." Swift sometimes pretends to be inspired by righteous indignation or cruel injustice, but his fundamental belief in Irish perversity prevents him from becoming a true believer in reform. Swift believes the Irish are beyond reform,

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5"Some Observations Upon a Paper Called the Report of the Privy Council of England," the third of the Drapier's Letters in The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, ed Herbert Davis et al., 14 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939-68), 10: 31. Henceforth referred to in parenthetical citations as PW.

although it would be a simplistic reduction to suggest that Swift entirely rejected a moral purpose for his writing.

The master/ slave analogy Swift uses to describe England's relationship with Ireland is crucial to Swift's Irish writing. England has the freedom to mold Ireland into dependency, an issue Swift takes up in the Drapier's Letters. As the "master," England enjoys the power of controlling the Irish economy, making Ireland depend on English wool, linens, food, and manufactures. Ireland's status as a "slave" state allows England to extract forcibly commodities, precious metals, raw materials, workers, and finished goods. Most importantly, Swift's acquired identity as "a free man among slaves" gives him unique independence and authority--a force to be reckoned with in his satires. Swift has a problem dealing with traditional bases of authority like the Irish Parliament or the English Prime Minister. His "free man among slaves" image puts him beyond the complete dominion of both England and Ireland. Swift's freedom allows him to float unattached between the two nations, asserting his own superiority while "impartially" commenting on ills that need correcting. Swift satirizes English colonialism, but this very injustice and imbalance provides Swift with the opportunity and object of attack; without William Wood, Walpole, or absentee landlords, Swift would never have vented his rage and resentment.

This is the paradox and power behind Swift's Irish

writing. A free man cannot "reform" slaves because he cannot identify with the reasons for their captivity. Swift believes Irish problems to be primarily self-inflicted. Swift's tone of moral outrage goes hand-in-hand with an assumed desire for reform in criticizing the master/ slave paradigm. The fact is Swift never desires to free the captives because, according to his correspondence, the Irish are incapable of reform and self-determination.

In his Irish poems and prose, Swift accepts impossible combinations of zealous support for Ireland and willful debasement of her citizens and leaders. To discuss the complexity of the master/ slave paradox purely in terms of ironic textuality does not answer to the emotional power and contradictions in the Drapier's Letters or "A Modest Proposal." The "free man among slaves" image implies a definite agenda--overthrowing corrupt regimes, fighting battles, or standing up against tyranny--that just does not exist. Paradoxically, Swift accepts the draconian economic and political control of England and the ruinous relationship between the two nations at the same time he challenges representatives of England: William Wood, Lord Lieutenant Carteret, mercantilists, and political economists. While we associate with satire some of Pope's idealistic goals of improving society, Swift never desires to reform English administration of Ireland nor Ireland herself.

The Augustan belief that satire performs some urgently-

needed, civic-minded correction causes the reader to look in the Irish tracts for Swift's proposed "solution." A "positive" direction must be hidden somewhere in the satire and irony, the assumption goes, or else Swift would not have written about these problems. F. R. Leavis has persuasively argued that Swift's use of irony and satire may be discussable as a criticism of vice and folly, but without a clear reference to a positive standard or a direction for reform. Leavis says that while Gibbon's use of irony implies an agenda and "a solidarity with the reader," Swift's irony is "essentially a matter of surprise and negation; its function is to defeat habit, to intimidate, and to demoralize." Leavis writes that "the positive itself appears only negatively--a kind of skeletal presence, rigid enough, but without life or body...the intensity is purely destructive."6 What Leavis calls Swift's "remarkably disturbing energy" and "peculiar emotional intensity" does not originate from a desire to reform. Swift's satire is so volatile because his fury is often directed at available targets or at easily-isolated scapegoats such as William Wood, the "ironmonger" behind the proposed English-minted copper coin for Ireland. Swift desires to rebel, to slap away the paternalistic hand of English colonialism, but he advocates nothing with which to replace it.

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6F. R. Leavis, "The Irony of Swift" in Swift: Modern Judgements, ed. by A. Norman Jeffares (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 122-23.

Other critics make Swift into an Irish hero, a lone voice in the wilderness who defends Irish liberty at all costs.[7] Peter J. Schakel describes Swift's Irish writing as divided by two kinds of "prophecy" against external and internal evils. "Much of the evil against which the patriot declaims, and the source of Ireland's destruction, is external," writes Schakel. The Drapier warns that England and William Wood desire the "slavery and destruction of a poor innocent country." But much of the responsibility for the failure to avert Ireland's destruction Swift places on internal vices, the laziness and corruption of "young fops" and the vanity, pride and luxury of the women. Thus Swift continues to cry out against English oppression and to strive with slaves, "hoping to induce the spirit and wisdom needed to follow the remedies he regularly proposed to mitigate the poverty and suffering of the Irish."[8]

Schakel assumes Swift wanted to reform the Irish. I contend that Swift is no reformist humanitarian. If one believes there is any real basis for Swift's concern for Irish reform, only a brief survey of the correspondence proves otherwise. Convincing evidence from Swift's

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[7]See Oliver W. Ferguson, Jonathan Swift and Ireland (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), a well-researched historical and biographical account of Swift's years in Ireland documenting the myth of Swift as Hibernian patriot.

[8]Peter J. Schakel, The Poetry of Jonathan Swift (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 165.

correspondence supports the claim that Swift hates Ireland with her self-serving government and indolent natives. His correspondence with friends in England brings out Swift's unmitigated animosity. Swift's favorite metaphors for describing his life in Ireland involve damnation and slavery. Writing to his friend Ambrose Philips in England, Swift desires Philips to "wish for me amongst you. I reckon no man is thoroughly miserable unless he be condemned to live in Ireland; and yet I have not the spleen; for I was not born to it" (Corr 3: 154). "I cannot think nor write in his country," he complains in his letter to Charles Ford, and "being in England only renders this place more hateful to me, which habitude would make tolerable (Corr 2: 127). Swift expresses anger to Ford again because the English Parliament deprives the Irish House of Lords of any real power: "You fetter a man seven years, then let him loose to shew his skill in dancing, and because he does it awkwardly, you say he ought to be fettered for life" (Corr 2: 342). Writing to a high-society acquaintance, Lady Worsley, Swift imagines himself talking with her in person, then "on a sudden I recollect where I am sitting, banished to a country of slaves and beggars; my blood soured, my spirits sunk, fighting with beasts like St. Paul, not at Ephesus, but in Ireland" (Corr 4: 79).

Why does Swift fight with Scripture instead of a palpable enemy? Because Swift equivocates on identifying the

"friend" or "foe." Swift is incapable of a sustained defense of the native Irish on moral, ethical, religious, and personal grounds. For example, in argumentative tracts supporting Ireland's need for self-determination, Swift continually undermines the ostensible intent with deprecating comments: "Whoever travels this country, and observes the face of nature, or the faces, and habits, and dwelling of the natives, will hardly think himself in a land where either law, religion, or common humanity is professed."[9] Similarly, in the poem "Ireland" Swift pleads for salvation from this land of political cronyism, complaining even about his friend Lord Lieutenant Carteret:[10]

> Remove me from this land of slaves,
> Where all are fools, and all are knaves;
> Where every knave and fool is bought,
> Yet kindly sells himself for naught...
>
> Meanwhile the Whig is always winner
> And for his courage gets a dinner.
> His excellency too perhaps
> Spits in his mouth and strokes his chaps.
> The humble whelp gives every vote:
> To put the question strains his throat.
> His excellency's condescension
> Will serve instead of place or pension.

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9"A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture," PW 9: 24.

10John Carteret became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1724. Swift generally admired him for his sophistication and ambition, though Carteret achieved comparatively little in national politics. Despite the tensions surrounding Carteret's sudden visit to clear up the Drapier's controversy, Swift's relations with Carteret were friendly. Carteret wrote in a letter of 1737, "When people ask me how I governed Ireland, I say that I pleased Dr. Swift." See Dictionary of National Biography, ed. Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), 53 vols.

Thus like "Traulus," the poem "Ireland" remains locked in the disgust felt by a free man trying to preach to slaves about something beyond their comprehension. Swift's obsession with the master/ slave analogy continues the themes of corruption and the hopelessness of any simply political solution. In the poem, the Whig wins out not for his moral courage or intelligence but because he sits on the right side of the fence. Carteret needs only to spit and rub his chin to influence Irish politics. The system of political preferments and the weak-willed Irish Parliament assure the impossibility of true reform gaining momentum. Swift's frank assessment of Carteret and the Whigs subverts the reader's expectations of a Hibernian patriot willing to "strain his throat" against a representative of English exploitation of Ireland.

While he did not believe in Irish reform, Swift was a complex person, and he gained power from sometimes claiming moral or reformative goals in writing. Simply because Swift hated Ireland does not mean he could not present idealized notions of satire and express a desire for reform when it suited his purposes. For example, in a letter to Charles Wogan, Swift describes himself as a man of poetry writing about trivial topics, "yet never without a moral view." Swift admits to dealing generally in raillery and satire and blames his failure to win a high political preferment on those in power exacting revenge, but "I followed what I

thought to be my talent, and charitable people will suppose I had a design to laugh the follies of mankind out of countenances, as often to lash the vices out of practice." Moreover, Swift writes that he sets himself above Pope and Gay in "one important article"; he tried to save Ireland from utter destruction and he did succeed in stopping Wood's coin. Note that Swift simultaneously claims success in defeating "evils" that might have overrun the nation at the same time that he describes Ireland as "this wretched island" and the Irish as "vulgar":

> I confess myself to be exempted from them in one article, which was engaging with a ministry to prevent, if possible, the evils that have over-run the nation, and my foolish zeal in endeavoring to save this wretched island. Wherein though I succeeded absolutely in one important article, yet even there I lost all hope of favour from those in power, and disobliged the court of England, and have in twenty years drawn above one thousand scurrilous libels on myself, without any recompence than the love of the Irish vulgar, and two or three dozen sign-posts of the Drapier in this city (Corr 4: 53-4).

Swift presents a similarly idealized, Augustan notion of Horatian or "smiling satire" in his defense of Gay's The Beggar's Opera.[11] While Swift lets the critics debate which writer has the most talent, he says the most useful satire "gives the least offence" and instead of lashing, "laughs men out of their follies, and vices." Moreover, this kind of satire prompts men of genius and virtue "to mend the world as far as they are able." However, Swift expects some kind of

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[11] Intelligencer #3, written in Ireland in 1728, PW 12: 32-37.

reward for this work:

> If my design be to make mankind better; then I think it is my duty; at least, I am sure it is the interest of those very courts and ministers, whose follies or vices I ridicule, to reward me for my good intentions (PW 12: 34).

These statements about moral intention, satire, and reform are wholly at odds with the more famous statements Swift made about "the great foundation of misanthropy" upon which Gulliver's Travels is constructed. Writing to Pope about the progress of his book, Swift confesses "the chief end I propose to my self in all my labours is to vex the world rather then divert it," and if that could be accomplished without hurting personal fortunes, "I would be the most indefatigable writer you have ever seen." What follows is Swift's notorious confession about the basis for Gulliver's Travels, one that casts serious doubts on any positive standard that Swift may have held:

> Since you will now be so much better employed, when you think of the world give it one lash the more at my request. I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communityes and all my love is towards individuals; for instance I hate the tribe of lawyers, but I love Councellor such as one, Judge such one, for so with Physicians (I will not speak of my own Trade) Soldiers, English, Scotch, French: for the rest but principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I hartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth. This is the system upon which I have governed my self many years and so I shall go on till I have done with them. I have got materials towards a treatis proving the falsity of that definition animal rationale; and to show it should be only rationis capax. Upon this great foundation of misanthropy (though not in Timons manner) the whole building of my Travels is erected (Corr 3: 1Ø2-3).

Upon reading this passage, Pope interpreted Swift's

insistence on the love of individuals as the main point, unlike later critics like Thackeray, who read the same letter and described Swift as "filthy and obscene."[12] Pope writes that he freely enters into "your principle of love of individuals, and I think the way to have a publick spirit, is first to have a private one; for who can believe...that any man can care for a hundred thousand people who never cared for one?"[13] Pope misses Swift's point. Swift adamantly does not care for "a hundred thousand people," especially Irish, nor did he ever pretend to have that care. Swift's point is that individuals have failed to live up to the ideal conceptions of nations, professions, institutions, and social bonds. According to P. K. Elkin, the point Swift expresses transcends misanthropy because "it is the outlook less of a misanthrope than a moralist, or moral philosopher, who has a profound sense of the limitations of human achievement and the shortcomings of human beings in the performance of their social duties."[14]

While Swift is no moral philosopher, the distinction between individual and institution in his letter to Pope is clearly related to his Irish identity as "a free man among

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[12]William Makepeace Thackeray, "The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century," The Complete Works, 10 vols. (Boston: Estes, 1881) 8: 125.

[13]The Works of Alexander Pope, ed. Rev. Whitwell Elwin, 10 vols (London: John Murray, 1871), 7: 59.

[14]Peter Kingsley Elkin, The Augustan Defence of Satire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 96.

slaves." Swift is capable of loving individual Irishmen--he had close Irish friends like Thomas Sheridan--but the mass of vulgar natives and elite Protestants Swift lumps into this group of "slaves." Ireland has become a failed "institution" unto herself, just as the island's inhabitants have become slaves to others. One might assume that the individual has been wrongfully victimized by the institution, but in the case of Ireland, Swift's satire attacks both. Swift often sets the individual against an institution (Parliament, Church, King, or Nation), but he favors satire without implied corrective measures. While Swift uses satire to highlight absurd Irish political impotence, he never seriously believes whole-hearted moral reform of the Irish is possible.

Swift continues the topics of master, slave and reform in the Drapier's Letters, using his rustic shopkeeper M. B. to unite the divisive Anglo-Irish and native factions against England. But we must maintain the distinction between a "pragmatic" and an authentic, moral reform. The Drapier's Letters claim an undeserved importance in many Swift biographies and period studies.[15] Swift does not single-handedly change the course of English colonialism in Ireland. Swift succeeds in pragmatically redirecting existing Irish

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15See J. A. Downie, Jonathan Swift, Political Writer (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), F. P. Lock, Swift's Tory Politics (London: Duckworth, 1983), and Oliver W. Ferguson, Jonathan Swift and Ireland (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962).

malaise towards a tangible target, William Wood. The Drapier's Letters exert a self-assured power over the reader, but Swift still vituperates both against those he defends (the Irish weavers and tradesmen) and those he opposes (Wood, Walpole, and England). Swift's only agenda is to attack, not to replace Wood's coinage with something better. The best letters contain many graphic examples of how Swift violently assaults English authority, but he fails to offer any positive alternative. For example, in "A Letter to Mr. Harding, the Printer," the second letter, Swift accuses the "ironmonger" William Wood of treason and willful debasement of the Irish currency:

> Good God! Who are this wretch's advisers? Who are his supporters, abettors, encouragers, or sharers? Mr. Wood will oblige me to take five-pence half-penny of his brass in every payment. And I will shoot Mr. Wood and his deputies through the head, like high-way men or house-breakers, if they dare to force one farthing of their coin on me in the payment of an hundred pounds. It is no loss of honour to submit to the lion: but who, with the figure of a man, can think with patience of being devoured alive by a rat? (PW 10: 19-20).

The rhetorical question allows Swift to imply a corrupt underworld of "supporters, abettors, encouragers," and "sharers." Wood's gang of mercantilists plunder and invade, another example of English exploitation of Ireland. Swift thunders: "refuse this filthy trash" from Mr. Wood, "a mean, ordinary man, a hard-ware dealer."

Swift arouses the reader's animosity against William Wood when he should assault King George I, the English Parliament, and the Walpole adminstration directly because

they are responsible for authorizing the coinage plan. Wood is only a front-man for the real enemies of Ireland. Swift wants to know why a rat (Wood) devours Ireland when Ireland would willingly submit to a lion (King George). Swift replaces the traditional symbol of monarchy with the pernicious vermin, a rodent holding an entire nation hostage. Swift implies that someone has overthrown King George in the matter of currency, or far worse, that the King allows corruption to proliferate.

Recent critics assume a reformist agenda, focusing on the Drapier's Letters as literary artifacts of a specific historical era. Some critics search too hard for thematic unity and attribute to the letters a premeditated design; they want to see the Drapier's letters as either "mimetic," artistic or a pragmatic means to an end, a way to defeat Wood's coinage. J. A. Downie writes that "Swift was perfectly sincere in his championing of the weavers. Theirs was a symbolic struggle for survival." Swift discovered in the Drapier an opportunity "to rally the nation around a potent symbol of English oppression."16 F. P. Lock recently remarked that Swift "went to unusual pains to create the Drapier as a credible fictive author, even if the mask is always patently a mask."17 Nigel Wood sees Swift's choice of

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16J. A. Downie, Jonathan Swift, Political Writer (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 233.

17F. P. Lock, Swift's Tory Politics (London: Duckworth, 1983), 164.

the Drapier as rhetorically distinct from the Dean and "that very choice discloses a desire to project his polemic against Wood's patent from an alternative perspective."[18]

I disagree with these pragmatic readings. The Drapier's Letters are important for what they say about Swift and his concept of satire, not for that they say about William Wood, Carteret, or the King. The reckless, emotional fury of M. B. in the Drapier's Letters results because Swift attempts to justify a radical political act to a nation he believes incapable of gaining the moral high ground. Swift satirizes the slave mentality in every one of the letters through specific economic arguments aimed at awakening the Irish. In the first letter--"A Letter to the Shopkeepers, Tradesmen, and Farmers"--Swift describes Wood's coin as "the accursed thing" and "a plague" that will infest all economic and social interaction. On the other hand, Swift says in politely-framed sentences that the King certainly realizes no man is obligated by law to accept the coin:

> Therefore, my friends, stand to it one and all: refuse this filthy trash. It is no treason to rebel against Mr. Wood. His Majesty in his patent obliges no body to take these half-pence: our gracious Prince hath no such ill advisers about him: or if he had, yet you see the laws have not left it in the King's power, to force us to take any coin but what is lawful, of right standard, gold and silver. Therefore you have nothing to fear (PW 10: 11).

Swift says the exact opposite in the second letter, that

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18Nigel Wood, Swift, Harvester New Readings Series, (Brighton, England: Harvester Press, 1986), 104-5.

"ill advisers" have influenced the King's policy. Every one of the Drapier's Letters sabotages both English and Irish authority through Swift's manipulation of specific key-words, all involving concepts too slippery for the average tradesman. The first letter attacks "prerogative," the second "exigencies of trade," and the fourth a "depending kingdom." "A Letter to the Shopkeepers" depends on the dilemma that Ireland must submit to the English King's prerogative, yet other "foxes" watching the hen house really make the day-by-day decisions about how to manage the Irish economy.

Although Swift recoils at the presence of a supreme authority like a King, he never openly challenges the King's prerogative when it comes to legally-based decisions. But we can only define prerogative clearly in relation to an absolute sovereign, which King George is not. The OED cites conflicting definitions for prerogative, one arguing for the integrity of the law and one arguing against it: "The King of England's very prerogative is no more than what the law has determined" (from Marvell's "Growth of Popery") and "This power to act according to discretion for the publick good, without the prescription of the law, is which is called prerogative" (from Locke's Government). The King can influence economic matters indiscriminately, but Swift proves the law says unequivocally that only gold and silver are legal tender. Swift moves from the difficult political

concept of prerogative to the simple matter of metallurgy, something shopkeepers understand: "By the laws of England, the several metals are divided into lawful or true metal and unlawful or false metal; the former comprehends silver or gold, and the latter all baser metals" (PW 10: 9). While prerogative is a murky concept, the law states explicitly what the average shopkeeper must accept in exchange for goods.

In a similar manner, Swift seizes on the "exigencies of trade" in the second letter, "A Letter to Mr. Harding, the Printer." As in the first, the tone of inflammatory anger runs through this letter, rousing the Irish landowners and menacing the complacent English government. The sentences echo with violence; Swift fans the flames with questions implying a deeply-entrenched, evil conspiracy. Swift champions the decision to boycott Wood's half-pence as above all a moral act, but his disdain for the public shows through when Swift assesses Ireland's ability to respond:

> If I tell you there is a precipice under you, and that if you go forwards you will certainly break you necks: if I point to it before you eyes, must I be at the trouble of repeating it every morning? Are our people's hearts waxed gross? Are their ears dull of hearing, and have they closed their eyes? I fear there are some few vipers among us, who, for ten or twenty pounds gain, would sell their souls and their country; although at last, it would end in their own ruin as well as ours (PW 10: 22).

The prophetic violence of "Letter to Mr. Harding" arises directly from the questions Swift poses to his readers. Swift considers how William Wood has fulfilled his contract

with the crown: "Contract! With whom? Was it with the Parliament or the people or Ireland? Are not they the purchasers?" The crux of the letter centers around Wood's change of heart, his decision to manufacture no more coins unless the "EXIGENCIES OF TRADE REQUIRE IT" (Swift's capitals). Wood has reduced his original proposal of 108,000 pounds of copper to 40,000, but Swift charges through the open door left by the provision: "Again I ask, who is to judge when the exigencies of trade require it? Without doubt, he means himself [Wood]; for as to us of this poor kingdom, who must be utterly ruined if his project should succeed, we were never once consulted" (PW 10: 18). M. B. states that he intends his letters "for all my countrymen. I have no interest in this affair, but what is common to the publick." The reader might accept this statement if not for Swift's belief that Ireland was plagued from within and without, burdened with a population of "slaves" and beleaguered by a powerful "master" governing over her.

If the king's "prerogative" and "exigencies of trade" propel the first two Drapier's Letters, then in the fourth and most devastating letter, Swift attacks the core issue--Ireland's political status. Swift addressed the fourth letter "To the Whole People of Ireland" and released it on the day Carteret set foot in Dublin.[19] In September of 1724,

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[19]See Irvin Ehrenpreis, Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962-83), 3: 245.

London newspapers reported that Catholics in Ireland "enter into an association to refuse Mr. Wood's copper money."[20] Lord Lieutenant Carteret traveled to Ireland on short notice, frightening many Irish leaders who believed Carteret would bring down an iron fist, squashing resistance.

Swift puts his genius to work in the fourth letter, a "Letter to the Whole people of Ireland." Swift scolds and punishes the Irish for failing to live up to principles set out in the first letter. Swift writes that Ireland may have too easily assumed the attitude of a "slave" state: "people long used to hardships, lose by degrees the very notion of liberty; they look upon themselves as creatures of mercy" (PW 10: 53). While handicapped by Swift's belief in Irish perversity, the Drapier simultaneously embraces a spirit of rebellion in subverting the accepted definition of a "depending kingdom." Swift writes that certain ignorant people say "Ireland is a depending kingdom, as if they would seem by this phrase to intend that the people of Ireland is in some state of slavery or dependence different from those in England." Yet, like the king's prerogative, "depending kingdom" is a relative concept. Swift demonstrates with references to legal documents and history how a "depending" kingdom is never absolutely bound into slavery. Swift's obsession with this phrase leads him to write one of the most politically dangerous paragraphs of his career:

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[20]Ibid., 248

> Let whoever think otherwise, I, M. B. Drapier, desire to be excepted. For I declare, next under God, I depend only on the King my sovereign, and on the laws of my own country, and I am so far from depending upon the people of England, that, if they should ever rebel against my sovereign, (which God forbid) I would be ready at the first command from his Majesty to take arms against them; as some of my countrymen did against theirs at Preston. And, if such a rebellion should prove so successful as to fix the Pretender on the throne of England; I would venture to transgress that statute so far, as to lose every drop of my blood, to hinder him from being King of Ireland (PW 10: 62).

What infuriates Carteret is how Swift walks the narrow path between treason and allegiance, between traitor and patriot. "Depending" cannot be indiscriminately applied to everything Irish. Swift goes beyond his personal doubts and the economic background of the problem to champion an ideal, mythic, unified Ireland, although the reader hardly believes it because of what Swift has said about the Irish. This passionate statement of loyalty to the King (far exceeding the sentiments of the average Englishman) arouses Carteret's animosity because Swift splits hairs with definitions. Swift's exuberant defense of the king comes at the same moment, in the next paragraph, when he subverts the idea of government itself, seemingly advocating treason against England and Ireland: "all government without the consent of the governed is the very definition of slavery." Swift also expands the scope of his attack beyond the "diminutive hard-ware man Wood" to include Prime Minister Walpole, who threatens to come over personally and cram Wood's brass down Irish throats. M. B. quotes Walpole swearing he will force

the Irish to accept these coins "or eat our brogues." Swift cannot restrain himself from satirically answering Walpole's challenge, extending the analogy to frenzied extremes:

> This brings to my mind the known story of a Scotch man, who receiving sentence of death, with all the circumstances of hanging, beheading, quartering, embowelling, and the like; cried out, what need of all this cookery? And I think we have reason to ask the same question: for if we believe Wood, here is a dinner getting ready for us, and you see the bill of fare; and I am sorry the Drink was forgot, which might easily be supplied with melted lead and flaming pitch (PW 10, 67).

Swift's tone of moral outrage is generated through attack, not hope for reform. The violent energy of the Drapier condenses the spirit of anger, rebellion, loyalty, and emotional power, although he is occasionally distracted with the realization that Ireland cannot really reform herself. The Drapier carefully avoids any direct reference to treason, but his patriotic defense of King George still sounds patently subversive. Swift's negative, destructive energy lurks beneath the rhetorical fireworks of the Drapier's Letters; he strongly believes many Irish, from absentee landlords to Dublin beggars, are unwilling to do anything about the English economic stranglehold over Ireland.

Swift's sermon on "Causes of the Wretched Condition of Ireland" contradicts the image of fierce independence and Irish unity projected by the Drapier. Swift articulates three causes of Ireland's misery in "the Wretched Condition," and two out of three are directly the fault of the Irish.

Swift cannot advocate reform when he so seriously doubts the necessary Irish sense of injustice. Swift does admit that Ireland lies under "intolerable hardships" created by England, "by which we become as hewers of wood and drawers of water, to our rigorous neighbors" (PW 9: 200). But in probing the second cause of Irish poverty, Swift attributes it to the monstrous vanity and ingratitude of Irish landlords "who think of themselves as too good to live in the country which gave them birth, and still gives them bread; and rather chuse to pass their days, and consume their wealth, and draw out the vitals of the mother kingdom." Swift stretches the Irish reader to the limit of sympathy when he describes the third reason for Ireland's malaise:

> The natives are from their infancy so given up to idleness and sloth, that they often chuse to beg or steal, rather than support themselves with their own labour; they marry without the least view or thought to being able to make provisions for their families; and whereas, in all industrious nations, children are looked on as a help to their parents, with us, for want of being early trained to work, they are an intolerable burthen at home, and a grievous charge upon the public (PW 9: 201).

The theme is repeated again and again throughout Swift's Irish writing. In the sermon, Swift the churchman speaks fully aware of the impossibility of Irish reform. In fact, the self-confident projector of "A Modest Proposal" uses similar metaphors equating children with natural resources used by industrious nations. Swift's ambivalence about Ireland's capacity to save herself punctuates the sermon. Still, Swift writes with enormous confidence in his right to

attack England in other tracts like the Drapier's Letters.

In "A Modest Proposal," Swift's dispassionate, reasonable tone induces a feeling of compromise and agreement at the same time the reader is disgusted by the "solution." In fact, Swift satirizes not only England's exploitation of Ireland but the English reader's hope for an easy, formulaic answer to a complex problem. The attack of the proposal comes around through the back door, implied in how effectively the projector manages his "slaves," the Irish poor. The projector's tone suggests what F. R. Leavis calls "solidarity with the reader"--trust in his evaluations and conclusions. Yet the attack of the satire and irony deeply contrasts with the reconciliation and reform implied by the projector's argument. The predominant impression is that of a man frustrated with reform, and he offers his scheme as a cocksure criticism of how England actually uses Ireland. Swift expresses enormous rage and resentment through the confidence by which the projector outlines his cannibilistic solution. Though his language may suggest otherwise, reconciliation and reform are the last things on the mind of the projector. His distorted brand of reform demonstrates how Swift's Irish writing embraces contradictions, both humanitarian and barbaric solutions to Irish poverty. The projector equivocates between steadfast loyalty to his purpose and monstrous cruelty to fellow humans. "A Modest Proposal" concerns cannibalism, Irish poverty, English

mercantilism, and presumptuous "solutions," but its power cannot be restricted to a single metaphorical reading. Because he invokes reform only in mockery, Swift simultaneously tears down what his projector so vigorously erects. The Academy of Projectors in Book 3 of Gulliver's Travels mirrors the same tension between promotion and destruction that motivates the "Modest Proposer:"

> None of these projects are yet brought to perfection, and in the meantime the whole country lies miserably waste, the houses in ruins, and the people without food or clothes. By all which, instead of being discouraged, they are fifty times more violently bent upon prosecuting their schemes, driven equally by hope and despair.21

Swift challenges the complacent English reader in "A Modest Proposal," offering in the guise of a solution a fundamentally impossible scheme. The reader shudders instantly at suggestions of cannibalism and mercy because they happen in the same sentence. The reader responds to the projector's humane rationality, intellectual manipulations, and moral outrage instantaneously. The hoped-for "positive moral ideal" fails to materialize because the projector is motivated by resentment and despair. Note the collision of styles employed by the projector, the first humanitarian and passionate and the second cynically removed and hopeless:

> There is likewise another great advantage of my scheme, that it will prevent those voluntary abortions and that

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21Gulliver's Travels, ed. Peter Dixon and John Chalker with introd. by Michael Foot (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), 222. All other quotations are taken from this edition and referred to in parenthetical citations.

> horrid practice of women murdering their bastard children; alas! too frequent among us; sacrificing the poor innocent babes, I doubt, more to avoid the expence than the shame; which would move tears and pity in the most savage and inhuman breast (PW 12: 110).
>
> Some persons of a desponding spirit are in great concern about that vast number of poor people, who are aged, diseased, or maimed; and I have been desired to employ my thoughts on what course may be taken, to ease the nation of so grievous an incumbrance. But I am not in the least pain upon that matter; because it is very well known, that they are every day dying, and rotting, by cold and famine, and filth, and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected (114).

Commentators have labored for years to turn the projector of "A Modest Proposal" into a rhetorician. Martin Price emphasizes the image of Swift as master craftsman and calls the tract "the most economical and intense use of the ironic mask." Price views the projector as a typical theorist who attempts what no man has achieved before, "a reconciliation of England's interest with Ireland's and a demonstration that in Ireland, as well as in other lands, people are the riches of a nation."[22] Charles A. Beaumont isolates the projector's coherence and stylistic traits. Beaumont's rhetorical reading finds the generic structure of classical oration in "A Modest Proposal" and traces "a revolutionary new proposal insinuated in a traditional, respected form."[23] Describing Swift as rhetorician assumes he controls all meanings generated by his writing. Robert W.

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[22]Martin Price, Swift's Rhetorical Art (London: Archon Books, 1963), 71-74.

[23]Charles A. Beaumont, Swift's Classical Rhetoric (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1961), 16.

Uphaus argues the opposite, that reader responses to both Gulliver's Travels and "A Modest Proposal" point to the wide range of possible meanings. Swift's own language becomes a liability because he presents "observer narrators who, though initially confident of the self-sufficiency of reason, willingly or unwillingly become participants, and sometimes victims, of the very actions they wish to describe with rational detachment."[24]

Swift's projector may be rationally detached, but he has no intention of social reform; certain aspects of Irish society such as the master and slave division between the ruling class and the population are beyond even the most radical revisions. The voice, projecting what F. R. Leavis calls "a remarkably disturbing energy," does not originate from desire to reform. The projector's hysteria stems from both resignation and rebellion. Swift talks about the native poor of Ireland and packages his analysis in terms of an English political economist. I doubt the observations are wholly ironic, although irony is an ingredient, because Swift expresses the same ideas in straightforward sermons. That the projector believes murdering bastard children would "move tears and pity in the most savage and inhumane beast" points to the commingled hope and despair in the essay. The

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[24]Robert W. Uphaus, "Swift and the Problematical Nature of Meaning" in The Impossible Observer: Reason and the Reader in 18th-Century Prose (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1979), 14.

projector calls the unwanted children "poor innocent babes," in the same breath adopting the language of mercantilist cattle breeders. The ironic, implied meaning that England literally feeds on the "natural resources" of Ireland has an appallingly real presence throughout the proposal. While directing his attack against the victimized instead of the aggressors, the projector's energy perfectly represents a man frustrated from years of straightforward, failed attempts at reform.

The projector's use of animal metaphors reduces the Irish to the level of beasts, while his self-assured pedantry and pretended concern for the public savages English complacency. The projector dehumanizes the Irish, then "processes" them into various kinds of food and clothing for the enjoyment of gentlemen and ladies. The reader must accommodate images like "dropped from its dam," "reserved for breed," and "render them plump and fat for a good table" with "the fore and hind quarters will make a reasonable dish" and the skin will make "admirable gloves for ladies and summer boots for fine gentlemen."

The projector's style also contributes to his mixed purposes. Consistent, credible, and authoritative, the projector creates the impression of someone well-meaning and serious. The long title evokes an air of authority even though it is "modest," or a humble offering in the interest of public welfare. The projector's familiarity with the

language of political economists allows him to compute, reckon, and calculate financial information about maintaining a breeding stock; this per annum basis for evaluation is a brutal metaphor for the avoidance of emotion, and it reinforces Ireland's "slave" mentality. The projector's use of irony, such as his objection to hunting adolescents as "cruel," reinforces the frustrated tone of his commentary. The projector's harsh control over his emotions prohibits him from the dynamic assaults that characterize the Drapier's Letters. The projector only once directly comments on the "several young girls of the town" who appear in public wearing imported fineries. The author's reliance on statistical data provides him with a language through which he can reduce the issue of human suffering to numerical values. The projector's naive, optimistic reduction of poverty allows him to dismiss real solutions as utopian and impractical. As in A Tale of a Tub, the real message of "A Modest Proposal" is found in the digression following "Therefore, let no man talk to me of other expedients" in which Swift advocates taxes on absentee landlords, a rebirth of patriotism, forbidding the import of foreign fineries, and quitting factions and animosities.

The final autobiographical remark that the projector has no children of an age suitable for slaughter and that his wife is beyond breeding age also mirrors a man frustrated by reform. The projector finally confesses that he will not

escape from the consequences of project, but the lack of an emotional response heightens suspicions about his honesty. The projector boasts that his personal situation proves that he is free from self-interest because, luckily, he has nothing to gain from the project. The projector defines "luck" according to the distorted logic of his proposal, confessing he is "lucky" to have no children to contribute to his own scheme.

One of Swift's final proposals, and one of the few to which he signed his name, was "A Proposal for Giving Badges to Beggars." Swift's scheme advocates identifying all the "proper" beggars in each Dublin parish with badges, "well sewn upon one of their shoulders, always visible, on pain of being whipped and turned out of town." The proposal continues the theme of master and slave in that Swift disposes, manages, punishes, and rewards his "slaves" as he sees fit. In talking about the endless numbers of bastard children and "foreign beggars" streaming into the city from the countryside every day, Swift adopts the same tone as the projector in "A Modest Proposal." The beggars are commodities to be managed like livestock, maintained as objects of charity appropriate to the mission of the Church. But more fundamentally unsettling is the contempt and hostility Swift expresses not towards poverty but towards the beggars themselves. This time the ironic detachment is no literary game. Swift presents himself as a frequenter of

Dublin streets, one "personally acquainted with a great number of street beggars," but he is irritated by their pretensions. While the proposal has the tone of a serious project for reform, Swift undermines it with satire and personal contempt for the Irish poor.

What Swift attempts to justify as a "solution" comes across as a truly misanthropic statement. Although Swift proposes to alleviate the problem of foreign beggars, he substitutes critical evaluation with rage and resentment:

> They are too lazy to work; they are not afraid to steal, nor ashamed to beg, and yet are too proud to be seen with a badge, as many of them have confessed to me, and not a few in very injurious terms, particularly the females. They all look upon such an obligation as a high indignity done to their office. I appeal to all indifferent people whether such wretches deserve to be relieved. As to my self, I must confess, this absurd insolence hath so affected me, that for several years past, I have not disposed of one single farthing to a street beggar, nor intend to do so until I see a better regulation...if beggary be not able to beat out pride, it cannot deserve charity (PW 13: 134-35).

The "better regulation" is what Swift supposedly advances in the proposal, but his comments about the beggars subvert the entire basis for the argument because Swift states the beggars are not worth saving. The idea of begging is that unfortunate paupers can appeal to the generosity of street-walkers and scratch out a living. Swift seems bent on driving out the last vestige of humanity from the street people, demanding that the beggars lose their sense of pride or lose their right to charity. Swift denies the beggars even basic human personality, reducing them to a mindless lot

of creatures to be labeled and redirected.

It is not so much the tone of disgust that upsets the reader as much as the underlying assumption that certain kinds of people (impoverished Irish) are disposable. Genuine reform is impossible, for one thing, because the Irish are reduced to a starving condition not only by "the work of God" but "merely from their own idleness, attended with all manner of vices, particularly drunkenness, thievery, and cheating." Swift does not believe in reform because he treats the symptoms of poverty, not the cause. These "slaves" may be overcome by idleness and "all manner of vices," but instead of receiving some kind of moral instruction the reader expects from a cleric, Swift attempts to pass the buck, to treat the superficial reality instead of the problem. The crux of Swift's solution is that the beggars can do what they choose, but not in his backyard: "What shall we do with the foreign beggars? Must they be left to starve? No; but they must be driven or whipt out of town; and let the next county parish do as they please, or rather after the practice of England, send them from one parish to another." Swift does not associate the problem of foreign beggars wandering in from the countryside with the problem of absentee landlords or the lack of incentive to improve agricultural methods, as he does in earlier tracts like "A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture." Swift is an old man made bitter by years of failed attempts to alert people. The "solution"

is in fact only a disguise for Swift's outright animosity for Ireland and the poor: "To say the truth, there is not a more undeserving, vicious race of human kind than the bulk of those who are reduced to beggary, even in this beggarly country."

Ireland defies logical, reasonable solutions and reform, because it is "the only Christian country where people, contrary to the old maxim, are the poverty and not the riches of the nation; so, the Blessing of increase and multiply is by us converted into a curse." It is no wonder, therefore, that the prospect of reform in Swift's Irish writings elicited nothing but rage and resentment. Swift cannot resist satirical shots at the "beneficial branch of commerce" conducted by England whereby great colonies of English beggars are shipped annually to Ireland in exchange for money.

> These [beggars] are they so kind to send over Gratis, and duty-free. I have had the honour more than once to attend large cargoes of them from Chester to Dublin: and I was so ignorant as to give my opinion, that our city should receive them into Bridewell, and after a month's residence, having been well whipt twice a day, fed with bran and water, and put to hard labour, they should be returned honestly back with thanks as cheap as they came: Or, if that were not approved of, I propose, that whereas one English man is allowed to be of equal intrinsick value with twelve born in Ireland, we should in justice return them a dozen for one, to dispose of as they pleased (PW 13: 136-7).

Swift is more interested in satire for the purpose of destruction than for reform, propelled by his own resentment and rage at the ease with which England dumps anything of ill

value on her colony. Like the Drapier's Letters and "A Modest Proposal," "A Proposal for Giving Badges to Beggars" leaves the indelible impression of a writer made bitter and hopeless. Swift's method of demonstrating his superiority over these problems is to destroy anything in his way. Swift's identify of "a free man among slaves" incites him to write these Irish proposals and tracts. For Swift, satire is not so much a vehicle to criticize vice and folly in hope of improvement as it is an assertion of his own authority.

# Chapter 5

## Swift and Language:
## Anglican Churchman with Puritan Bible

Recent critics have made divergent claims about Swift's understanding and use of language. Ann Cline Kelly believes that in his proposals arguing for linguistic preservation Swift consciously determined to "improve the world." Kelly writes that like the early humanists, Swift "entertained a vision of the world bound together by the clear and honest use of language--a vision epitomized in his ideal of conversation, a subject that preoccupied him throughout his life."[1] Kelly's thesis is that Swift saw himself as a linguistic savior protecting the fundamental truths conveyed by language, fighting against improper discourse and corruption that might lead civilization into decay. In so far as Swift concerned himself with language as a social fabric, he had an abiding belief that exposing error and promoting rational norms would induce social progress and encourage clear communication.

While Swift's concern about language was genuine, Kelly assumes that Swift's linguistic agenda naturally led to him to the position of social reformer. As discussed in the

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[1]Ann Cline Kelly, Swift and the English Language (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 3.

previous chapter, Swift often repudiates the Augustan idea of the satirist as "a worthy citizen performing a public duty." Swift often goes on the attack in his Irish writing in order to assert his own superiority, not to change the moral or political climate of Ireland.

In Jonathan Swift and the Vested Word, Deborah Baker Wyrick explores Swift's use of language in the context of a referential theory of language that asserts words mean things to which they refer, and their purpose is to name and therefore to make ordered sense out of the real world. Swift alternately and sometimes simultaneously embraces and rejects the referential theory and does not arrive at a synthesis. According to Wyrick, Swift's contradictions, retreats, and denials create a "negative dynamic" that returns to the text itself. Each of Swift's negative dynamics "generates a new investigation from another linguistic or textual angle, investigations that keep centering upon the phenomenon of the word, the topography of meaning, the risks of writing, and the threats of interpretation."[2] Wyrick argues that Swift used the metaphor of clothing as language as "a complex semiotics at once didactic and self-reflective." But the nature of Swift's relationship with language remains obscured in Wyrick's attempt to persuade in the terms of contemporary criticism. Wyrick's use of "textocentric" and

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[2]Deborah Baker Wyrick, Jonathan Swift and the Vested Word (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 5.

"somatocentric" to describe the power of Swift's writing detracts from the good points in her book. For example, in a chapter on "Transvestitures," Wyrick writes that Swift incorporates features of nonverbal discourse into his writing:

> When a nonverbal network of signifiers is subjected to the same risks of loss and strategies of conservation as is language, it becomes what can be called a transvestiture, a figural exploration of language activity that uses terms drawn from nonlinguistic discourse. A Swiftian transvestiture is an elaborate intertextual trope that conveys meaning through the communication of its own components and through its metaphorical or allegorical relationships with language (129).

That is precisely the problem with Wyrick's approach; she forces terms from the realms of semiotics, phenomenology, and linguistics into accounting for Swift's use of arcane clothing metaphors. Wyrick emasculates Swift in a theoretical and philosophical clothing of her own manufacture. Wyrick makes a serious mistake in trying to employ so many "modern" assumptions against a man whose love of language led him into satirizing the artificial constructs of pedantry of this very sort.

Language is power, and Swift creates textual authority for himself by relying on Scriptural authority and the language of the Book of Common Prayer in his writings about language. Swift deeply desires a "corrected, improved, ascertained" language and the cultural benefits it might assure such as a wide audience for his work and a continuing reputation as a writer. Swift sees a need for some

benevolent despot to oversee the use of language because it is a dangerous, fluid medium prone to corruption and barbarisms. Swift believes the English language, as a part of an educational background and cultural heritage, must withstand innovations and corruptions. But Swift is equally fascinated by the arcane, nonstandard, bizarre, and hallucinatory uses of language as any reader of A Tale of a Tub might attest.

Though in theory Swift advocates the need for a standardized, institution-bound language, he instinctively resents boundaries and limits. Swift always wants to test the limits, to see how many insults, satires, puns, and parodies the reader can tolerate. In his most famous tracts and poems, Swift enjoys walking the narrow line between the acceptable and the unacceptable. Swift portrays himself as the model of orthodoxy and desires "to fix language for ever," but he actually embraces specific beliefs about language considerably more Puritan than strictly Anglican: a commitment to plain, rational preaching, an awareness of the corrupting influence of language, a resistance to Scriptural controversy, a desire to reform, and a fear of obscure words and elaborate interpretations. This chapter explores the contradictions between Swift's Anglican inheritance and his operative Puritan beliefs about language. While we categorize Swift as an author of the eighteenth century, "Project for the Advancement of Religion," "Letter to a Young

Gentleman Lately Entered Into Holy Orders," and "Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue" actually reflect a seventeenth-century dispute in the Church over the proper use of language.

Historians sometimes insist on a division between Anglicans and Puritans on a variety of topics: preaching, Scriptural exegesis, church government, the sanctity of the text, and reform. The traditional understanding of English Protestantism emphasizes how the Anglicans approved of Roman Catholic doctrine and ritual but claimed the English Church as independent of authority in Rome. In this sense, the Anglican is an adherent to the doctrine and discipline of the reformed Church of England. Anglicans believe in church government through the authority of bishops. Anglicans believe their Church to be a genuine representative of the "Catholic Church," but they repudiate certain institutional tenets of Catholicism as corruptions.

On the other hand, Puritan groups from within the Church of England regarded the reformation under Elizabeth as incomplete and called for its further purification. People resisting the bishops' attempts to enforce conformity in worship and Church discipline began to be called "Puritans" in the 1560's.[3] The name Puritan gained acceptance for identifying persons reforming the established Church from

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[3]William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 83.

within. More radical groups like Anabaptists and Separatists were not called Puritans because they pursued new religious practices apart from the established Church. Above all, the Puritans stressed the Bible as the basis for worship and faith, and in doing so encouraged specific uses of language, some of which Swift energetically adopted.

The argument between orthodox Anglicans and Puritans took root in a conflict over how much authority should be granted to the Bible over the governing authority of the Church, and the subsequent issue of who was qualified to interpret Scripture. Puritans objected to what they considered unscriptural or corrupt forms of ceremony held over from the Catholic church. Puritans protested any form of worship, ritual, or doctrine they believed to be at variance with New Testament principles. Sixteenth-century Puritans like Benjamin Hoadly and Thomas Cartwright passed on to Swift specific beliefs about the use of the Bible in their scrupulous observance of the text and strict adherence to a plain style of preaching. Yet Anglican apologists such as Richard Hooker and Thomas Cranmer also placed strong emphasis on the sanctity of the Bible and the careful reverence with which it should be studied.

Swift's use of the language of Scripture as textual authority, his respect for the power of words, and his belief in reforming language indicate more Puritan than Anglican affinities. Charles Beaumont has written that "Swift cared

little for men who always had a phrase of Scripture on their tongues" and that "Swift's quotations are sometimes merely verbally facile in the surface of the text with no profound allusive quality."[4] I completely disagree. Swift creates textual power through his use of Scripture in the Drapier's Letters, A Tale of a Tub, and his best poems. Swift's respect for the written "Word of God" allows him to deflect away from himself dangerous political positions and cite an external authority. Through reference to Scripture, Swift avoids personal ownership for ideas seen as radical to orthodox Anglicans. Swift builds up the credibility of his arguments with the language of Scripture and with Biblical ferocity. For example, Swift warns against Wood's debased currency in his "Letter to Mr. Harding," quoting from Psalm 58: "Be not like the deaf adder, who refuses to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely." In the poem "Traulus, The first Part," Swift attacks Lord Allen, employing the language of Mark 5:

> Directing every vice we find
> In Scripture, to the devil assigned:
> Sent from the dark infernal region
> In him they lodge, and make him Legion.
> Of brethren he's a false accuser,
> A slanderer, traitor and seducer;
> A fawning, base, trepanning liar
> The marks peculiar of his sire (Poems 424-25).

The Puritans regarded reading the Bible as empowering, a transformative force in their daily lives. Wide circulation

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[4]Charles Allen Beaumont, Swift's Use of the Bible (Athens: University of George Press, 1965), vii.

of the Bible in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gave ordinary people access to the "mysteries" of Christianity. While priests and scholars wanted to limit Scriptural exegesis to an educated elite, Puritans celebrated the individual receiving the "inner light" of Christ through reading. Although all English Protestants believed in the Bible as the word of God, John R. Knott believes "the Bible was much more alive for some than for others, in the sense that they felt themselves dramatically changed by reading it for themselves or by hearing it preached." Some Puritan groups were "convinced that the energy of the spirit was manifesting itself in a continuing reformation."[5]

Laymen preachers like John Bunyan and Arise Evans interpreted the Bible with little formal education, but they opened the door for many English readers. Evans wrote that before his awakening to the power of the Bible's words, "I looked upon the Scripture as a history of things that passed in other countries, pertaining to other persons, but now I looked upon it as a mystery to be opened at this time, belonging also to us."[6] Puritan reactions to the language of the Bible injected an element of radicalism into seventeenth-century English society. John Jewel portrayed the

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[5]John R. Knott, Jr., The Sword of the Spirit: Puritan Responses to the Bible (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 39.

[6]Arise Evans, An Eccho to the Voice of Heaven (1653) quoted by Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down (New York: Viking Press, 1972), 72.

transformative power of reading Scripture with enormous confidence:

> So constant is he that hath learned the word of God, and hath set his delight upon it, and is through it assured of the will of God. Heaven shall shake; the earth shall tremble; but the man of God shall stand upright...Such a ground, such a foundation, such a rock is the word of God.7

Some clergymen thought the Puritan response to the Bible too emotional and self-directed. Anglican apologists often stressed the role of reason in Scriptural exegesis and attempted to preserve the mysteries of Christianity, rendering them inaccessible to individuals.

As an Anglican clergyman and supporter of High Church doctrine, Jonathan Swift might seem the extreme antithesis of English Puritanism. In "Sentiments of a Church-of-England Man," Swift writes that a true Church man "abhors the humour of the age, in delighting to fling scandals upon the clergy in general; which, besides the disgrace to the reformation, and to religion itself, casts an ignominy upon the kingdom" (PW 2: 9). Yet Swift shared more beliefs with the Puritans than he was willing to admit. Swift had in common with Puritans a disdain for lax living and a belief in simplicity. Yet Swift was unlike the Puritans in his attempt to avoid Scriptural controversy. Moreover, Swift championed the role of reason in exegesis.

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7Bishop John Jewel, quoted by John R. Knott, Jr., The Sword of the Spirit: Puritan Responses to the Bible (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 28.

Swift's experience as an Anglican clergyman led him to distinct views about the appropriate use and control of language. Above all, Swift held tightly to Puritan beliefs about language and the sanctity of authority of the Bible and Book of Common Prayer. Swift's position in "Sentiments of a Church-of-England Man" links him with a tradition of Anglican apologists who voiced similar views on the Church, government, Scriptural authority, and language. Seventeen-century Anglican apologists like Thomas Cranmer and Richard Hooker advocated authoritarian views on language, Scriptural exegesis, and the final authority of the Church to regulate language transactions. Swift had in common with these theologians a resistance to Scriptural controversy, a respect for reason and revelation, and a profound reliance on the language of the Bible and Book of Common Prayer as vehicles of truth needed to negotiate one's way through a dangerous world. However subversive and aberrant some of Swift's satire, he was always loyal to the Church and to this specific view of language from "A Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue":

> If it were not for the Bible and Common-Prayer Book in the vulgar tongue, we should hardly be able to understand any thing that was written among us an hundred years ago; which is certainly true: for those books being perpetually read in churches, have proved a kind of standard for language, especially to the common people. And I doubt whether the alterations since introduced, have added much to the beauty or strength of the English tongue, although they have taken off a great deal from that simplicity, which is one of the greatest perfections in any language...I am persuaded that the translators of the Bible were masters of an English

> style much fitter for that work, than any we see in our present writings; which I take to be owing to the simplicity that runs through the whole. Then, as to the greatest part of our liturgy, compiled long before the translation of the Bible now in use, and little altered since; there seem to be in it as great strains of true sublime eloquence, as are any where to be found in our language (PW 4: 14-15).

In other words, the Bible and Book of Common Prayer have ensured the preservation of language and set the standard for eloquence, simplicity, and truth. From that straightforward base of linguistic authority, one might assume profound agreement within the Church about the nature of Scriptural interpretation. This was not the case. As we shall see, Swift advocates a specifically Puritan model of reading Scripture and ascertaining the truth of Christianity in "Letter to a Young Gentleman Lately Entered Into Holy Orders" and "Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue."

In all his writing about language and the Church, Swift locates the boundaries of his discussion, pointing out the spectrum of possible extreme abuses. Swift champions the authority of the Bible and a "reasonable" interpretation of Scripture. Most importantly, this kind of reading fundamentally depends on the maintenance of clear standards and on the reader's ability to free himself from personal bias. It requires that a preacher respect the impenetrable mysteries of Christianity and be aware of the notoriously unreliable mechanism of human understanding. Though language is an imperfect medium, Swift believes in absolute control and absolute authority.

"Before things proceed to violence," Swift writes in "Sentiments of a Church of England Man," the most noble service a citizen may hope to do for his country is "by unbiassing his mind as much as possible, and then endeavouring to moderate between rival powers." This desire for a "fair proceeding with the world" exactly describes Swift's opinion on the regulation, reform, and use of language. Though faced with corruption from all sides by religious sects, illiterate gentry, pedants and hacks, Swift believes the safe course of Scriptural exegesis preserves the integrity of language and the nature of Christian truth. Swift sees linguistic authority as intimately tied to reading the Bible and to an unbiased mediation of competing explications.

Phillip Harth describes three major attitudes in the seventeenth-century Anglican Church regarding the basis of faith and Scriptural interpretation.[8] The deists believed that reason was sufficient for discovering all kinds of truth, and it alone provided the basis for religion. On the other hand, the fideists believed that reason was incompatible with the basis for supernatural religion, and that only through divine revelation was the reader made aware of the truth of Christianity. The Puritans rejected the use of reason in interpretation of Scripture, arguing that an

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[8]Phillip Harth, Swift and Anglican Rationalism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 14-52.

"inner light" provided for "a special illumination of the Holy Ghost." A middle course between the two extremes was developed by proponents of "Anglican rationalism," the topic of Harth's study. These moderates believed that both reason and revelation had a place in Scriptural interpretation, together providing a basis for faith and Christianity. This was the predominant attitude of the seventeenth-century Anglican Church that Swift inherited. While Puritans felt that only in divine revelation as expressed in Scripture did one find the grounds for religion, the Anglican divines stressed the role of reason in religion and the authority of Scripture. This was Swift's dilemma: while Puritans insisted on the authority and force of Scripture, Anglican Apologists like Richard Hooker argued against Scripture as self-authenticating.

Let me further illustrate opposing views among Anglican clergy about Scriptural authority and interpretation by examining the writings of Benjamin Hoadly and Richard Hooker. Benjamin Hoadly was the leader of extreme latitudinarians who firmly upheld the principles of the Puritan revolution. While accepting of the episcopacy and the standard form of worship, Hoadly did not actively support the bishops' authority, nor did he insist on strict adherence with established Church doctrine. Hoadly attempted to minimize the mystery and doctrinal content in religion through emphasis on the otherworldliness of the Kingdom of Christ.

In his "Sermon Preach'd before the King," Hoadly writes only Christ "hath an absolute authority in interpreting any written or spoken laws; it is He, who is truly the law-giver, to all intents and purposes; and not the person who first wrote, or spoke them."[9] According to Hoadly, in English society the interpretation of law or existing authority is not absolute because many legislators did not author the laws over which they preside. Corruption begins when men take over the authority once lodged in Christ; "they then become the legislator, and not Christ; and they rule in their own Kingdom, and not his."

This position completely contradicts the opinions of Richard Hooker, who asserts the authority of the visible Church and the necessity of interpreting Scripture in the light of reason. Hooker's influential defense On the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity became the official treatise of High-Church Anglicans and many members of the Church of England, including Swift. Hooker believed that God made a revelation to man through Scripture, repeating natural truths necessary for salvation:

> The mayne drifte of the whole newe Testament is that which Saint John setteth down as the purpose of his owne historie. These things are written, that yee might believe that Jesus is Christ the Sonne of God, and that in believing Yee might have life through his name...the holie Scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation...so our owne wordes also when wee extol the

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[9]Benjamin Hoadly, "Sermon Preach'd before the King" in Jonathan Swift: The Contemporary Background, ed. Clive T. Probyn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), 81.

> complete sufficience of the whole entire body of the Scripture, must in like sorte be understoode with this caution, that the benefite of natures light be not thought excluded as unnecessarie, because the necessitie of a diviner light is magnifyed. There is in Scripture therefore no defect, but that any man what place or calling whatsoever hee holde in the Church of God, may have thereby the light of his natural understanding so perfected.1Ø

Swift was characteristically Anglican in his belief in a reasonable interpretation of Scripture, but more Puritan in his emphasis on a plain style of preaching and his references to Scriptural authority. Swift believed the preacher should strive for a common currency of language that transcends divisions of age, class, education, and intellect. In "Letter to a Young Gentleman," Swift writes that without simplicity, "no human performance can arrive to any great perfection" (PW 9: 68). In "Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue," Swift argues that the simplicity of the Bible and Common-Prayer Book "have added much to the beauty and strength of the English Tongue" (PW 9: 15). A simple style of preaching sometimes implies the simplification of Scripture itself. Nicholas Udall's seventeenth-century preface to the New Testament was dedicated to simplifying Scripture for the "unlearned multitudes," and he describes parishioners who yearn "for the simple and plain knowledge of God's word: not for contentious babbling, but for innocent living: not to be curious searchers of the high mysteries,

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1ØRichard Hooker, Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, ed. Georges Edelen (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1977), 128-29.

but to be faithful executors and doers of God's biddings."[11]

In "Letter to a Young Gentleman," Swift carefully minds this middle road. He writes that "a Divine hath nothing to say to the wisest congregation of any parish in this kingdom, which he may not express in a manner to be understood by the meanest among them" (PW 9: 66). Swift's advice to young clerics in the pulpit in "Letter to a Young Gentleman" is to be mindful of both passion and reason:

> If your arguments be strong, in God's name offer them in as moving a manner as the nature of the subject will properly admit; wherein reason, and good advice will be your safest guides: But beware of letting the pathetick part swallow up the rational: For, I suppose, philosophers have long agreed, that passion should never prevail over reason (PW 9: 70).

"A Letter to a Young Gentleman Lately entered into Holy Orders" is written not by a parish priest or dean but by "a person of quality." In some ways, Swift's choice of this persona is a distancing device that allows him to look objectively at the art of preaching. The tone of the first half of the letter is like the instruction given by Swift's contemporary Lord Chesterfield to his son, Philip Stanhope. Chesterfield attempts to supplement his son's scholastic education with lessons on decorum and "practical morality." In strangely Swiftian terms, Chesterfield tells his son if he really wants to know a man, to paint a portrait that includes his weaknesses and to "suspend your last finishing strokes

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[11]Nicholas Udall quoted in John R. Knott, The Sword of the Spirit (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 26.

till you have attended to and discovered the operations of his inferior passions, appetites, and humours."[12] Of course, Swift will not tell a young cleric to dwell on the inferior passions of his congregation. But in "Letter to a Young Gentleman," Swift does describe a very systematic, simplified, and reasonable use of language and Scriptural authority.

Simplification of Scripture might be wrongly associated with deception on the part of the preacher. Many Anglicans felt it was their duty to mediate between Scripture and interpretation, smoothing over complexities and refocusing the Bible for the needs of a congregation. Thomas Cranmer incorporated Scripture into the Anglican routine of worship with his Book of Common Prayer. Cranmer simplified Scripture and ensured its acceptance into daily reading.

Robert W. Uphaus approaches the problem of language and reception in his discussion of "dissimulation" in the novels of Defoe. According to Uphaus, Defoe's dissimulation allows him to break down the sense of distance between the author and characters in Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, and Roxanna. Defoe projects himself entirely into a character's mind and allows the reader to participate in active thoughts, observations, and interactions with other characters. Uphaus quotes a letter from Defoe to Robert Harley in which Defoe

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[12]Lord Chesterfield, Letters to His Son and Others, ed. R. K. Root (London: J. M. Dent, 1929), 142.

recommends a dissimulation "which is not unlike what the Apostle sayes of himself; becoming all things to all men, that he might gain some. This hypocrisie is a vertue, and by this conduct...you shall be faithfull and usefull to the soveraing and belov'd by the people."[13] While it is possible to dismiss Defoe's method as directionless or lacking conviction, he clearly attempts to link it with the authority of Scripture in the way the Apostle Paul hides under a false appearance for the public good. Defoe desires to use dissimulation in order to make his characters flexible and successful. Uphaus writes that dissimulation reflects on the needs of the individual and society:

> Conventional morality tends to regard dissimulation as hypocrisy, as something akin to vice, but Defoe's fiction frequently represents dissimulation as the necessary means of achieving and consolidating public success, as well as the occasion for expressing the secret desires and needs of his own readers. Defoe's dissimulating characters act out what is at least latent in the lives of many of his readers: the need to dissimulate in order to preserve secrets and the desire to know the secrets of others as they dissimulate in public life (49).

In "Project for the Advancement of Religion and the Reformation of Manners," Swift embraces dissimulation as a means of using language to encourage religion and morality. Swift acknowledges the behavior of clergymen contributes to the problem: "I mean, by affecting so much to converse with

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[13]From The Letters of Daniel Defoe, ed. George Harris Healy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 42-43. Quoted in Robert W. Uphaus, The Impossible Observer: Reason and The Reader in 18th-Century Prose (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1979), 48.

each other, and caring so little to mingle with the laity, they have their particular clubs, and particular coffee-houses, where they generally appear in clusters" (PW 2: 52-3). In order to promote his plan, Swift--like Defoe--cites the Scriptural authority of St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians for the very definition of dissimulation:

> I do not see any other method left for men of that function to take, in order to reform the world, than by using all honest arts to make themselves acceptable to the laity. This, no doubt, is part of that wisdom of the serpent, which the author of Christianity directs: and is the very method used by St. Paul, who became all things to all men, to the Jews a Jew, and a Greek to the Greeks (PW 2: 54).

The "honest arts" of the clergy and "wisdom of the serpent" would seem antithetical doctrines, but St. Paul clearly shows his purpose in 1 Corinthians 10:27-- "If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any questions on the grounds of conscience...give no offense to Jews or Greeks or to the Church of God."

Swift's use of Scriptural authority and his desire to instigate reform are noticeably Puritan in tone. Swift rants and raves with prophetic denunciation about the great need for religion and morality in England: "I suppose it will be granted, that hardly one in a hundred among people of quality, or gentry, appears to act by any principle of religion" (PW 2: 44). The center of the "Project" is Swift's assessment of human nature and his proposed solution:

Thus human nature seems to lie under this disadvantage,

> that the example alone of a vicious Prince, will in time corrupt an age: but the example of a good one will not be sufficient to reform it without further endeavors. Princes must therefore supply this defect by a vigorous exercise of that authority, which the law hath left them, by making it every man's interest and honour to cultivate religion and virtue; by rendering vice a disgrace, and the certain ruin to preferment or pretensions (PW 2: 47).

Swift cites Scriptural authority and passionately advocates making piety and virtue "qualifications necessary for preferment," but the implications of such a plan shock the reader. Swift uses dissimulation and advocates becoming all things to all people as one of the props of reform. Therefore people understand religion as a necessary prerequisite for success. Swift's connection of piety and virtue with preferment would seem the logical extension of such principles, but it clearly opens the door to hypocrisy, false appearances, and corruption. How could the Queen possibly know whether all her preferments were given to pious men? Would she constantly monitor their behavior once in office? Swift seems to admit that the appearance of religion and morality is the next best thing to actual virtue. Swift's position closely resembles his veiled advocacy of occasional conformity in "An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity," a High-Church, Tory position. So while "Project for the Reformation of Religion" contains Puritan vehemence and cites Scriptural authority, it collapses upon itself in Swift's advocacy of the essentially orthodox doctrine of nominal Christianity.

Moreover, Swift contradicts himself if we compare his "Project for the Advancement of Religion" with his sermon "On the Excellence of Christianity." In the sermon, Swift attempts to defend Christianity against all forms of classical philosophy, and in doing so he explains "the second great defect in the Gentile philosophy was, that it wanted some suitable reward proportioned to the better part of man, his mind, as an encouragement for this progress in virtue" (PW 9: 244). Swift faults his own "Project" in arguing that material rewards "are no rest for the mind; and if they were, yet are they not the proper fruits of wisdom and virtue, being equally attainable by the ignorant and wicked." Exactly! The Queen cannot expect a genuine reformation of morals when she rewards it with political power and wealth. Swift correctly surmises that virtue and "bodily goods" are incompatible sources of motivation for the average person.

Swift embraces a decidedly more overt, orthodox attitude towards language in "Letter to a Young Gentleman Lately Entered into Holy Orders." While the "Letter" is usually read as a discussion of style, the real point is that the preacher must think, write, and speak according to "a plain convincing reason." Through this moderate, simple mode of speaking, the clergyman can effectively reach the most illiterate and the most educated members of his congregation:

> A plain convincing reason may possibly operate upon the mind both of a learned and ignorant hearer, as long as they live; and will edify a thousand times more than the art of wetting the handkerchiefs of a whole

congregation, if you were sure to attain it (PW 9: 70).

Swift's belief in the power of reason links him with the writings of Hooker and Cranmer, especially regarding understanding the mysteries of Scripture. The author is an advocate of a specific kind of exegesis appropriate for an Anglican priest. The author says certain obscure terms should be avoided in sermons because they are beyond the comprehension of the average man:

> I defy the greatest Divine, to produce any law either of God or man, which obliges me to comprehend the meaning of omniscience, omnipresence, ubiquity, attribute, beatifik vision, with a thousand others so frequent in pulpits...I may venture to insist further, that many terms used in Holy Writ, particulary by St. Paul, might with more discretion be changed into plainer speech (PW 9: 66).

Swift says difficult words should be avoided because Scripture speaks most directly in its most direct form, as in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. Moreover, a preacher does not want to appear pedantic and falsely educated. A priest should utter no sentence that cannot be understood by the wisest and meanest member of the congregation.

Swift embraces the orthodox Anglican position in his fear of Scriptural controversy. The preacher must be mindful of a certain boundary of comprehension that cannot be crossed. Swift warns against exposing too much information or probing profound mysteries: "As I take it, human comprehension reacheth no further; Neither did our Saviour think it necessary to explain to us the nature of God; because I suppose it would be impossible, without bestowing

on us other faculties than we possess at present" (PW 9: 73). The human mind has inherent limitations that must be respected. A preacher must strive for simplicity and clarity, for "proper words in proper places" and avoid pedantry and ostentation, but his words are still vulnerable to any number of misinterpretations. Swift wants to believe that if a speaker allows himself to be directed by his own natural reason, a man's words will gravitate towards simplicity and perfection; this is the spectrum of human understanding and perception. Strong eloquence or erudite wit misleads because it is outside of the boundaries imposed by the process of understanding. Swift also envisions a congregation of "rational hearers" who are naturally ashamed and intolerant of any preacher who tries to penetrate unspeakable mysteries.

But Swift adopts more strongly Puritan attitudes about language in his fear of the corrupting influence of language, especially regarding deists and free-thinkers in his congregation. Swift wants to distance himself and prove he is above them in every way because free-thinkers are the most prone to the distortion of language. While a true Church man is properly educated and knows how to decipher books, a free-thinker reads only "in order to transcribe wise and shining remarks, without entering into the genius and spirit of the author" and ends up creating only an "incoherent piece of patchwork."

Swift also satirizes the corruption of language in his description of the word machine at the Academy of Lagado in Gulliver's Travels. The illustration in the book demonstrates how language is compartmentalized and dissected; both the production and reception of language happen independently of each other in this fragmented, unsystematic word factory. The Professor shows Gulliver "several volumes in large folio already collected, of broken sentences, which he intended to piece together, and out of those rich materials to give the world a complete body of all arts and sciences."[14]

Swift embraces decidedly Puritan attitudes towards language in "Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue," In the "Proposal," Swift intends to reform language and establish an academy to preserve the nation's culture. Swift means by "ascertaining" to find the perfect language through investigation and discovery; however, he contradicts the explicit goal of fixing language. Language cannot be hermetically sealed from the turbulent forces of social change until it has been perfected, and Swift several times confuses himself with his indecision on this point. Swift cannot decide if society should perfect language before it is "fixed," or if it is enough merely to prevent change:

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[14]Gulliver's Travels, ed. Peter Dixon and John Chalker (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), 229.

> The English tongue is not arrived to such a degree of perfection, as, upon that account, to make us apprehend any thoughts of its decay; and if it were once refined to a certain standard, perhaps there might be ways to fix it for ever, or at least till we are invaded, and made a conquest by some other state (PW 4: 9)

> I am of opinion, that it is better a language should not be wholly perfect, than that it should be perpetually changing; and we must give over at one time or other, or at length infallibly change for the worse (PW 4: 14).

The main problem crippling the effectiveness of Swift's proposal is that he finds people responsible for the production of language have actually encouraged its distorted reception. The "Proposal" becomes more a personal vendetta against these people than a serious-minded attempt at public reform. Instead of setting up guidelines, procedures, principles, and standards, Swift's "Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue" launches into a frenzied assault on the very people who should be the responsible guardians of culture and linguistic good taste. As it turns out, Swift has only three vaguely prescriptive recommendations to make: first that simplicity is the greatest perfection in any language, second that the Prime Minister should somehow take on the role of "inspecting our language and rending it fit to record the history of so great and good a princess" (PW 4: 17), and third that women should monitor social conversation.

There are several problems with these statements and with "Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue" as a whole document. The "Proposal" confuses because Swift undermines his own arguments. Swift describes the problem when the

reader expects a proposal to carry prescriptive solutions. Swift never gets around to describing exactly how this proposed academy might prohibit linguistic change and corruption and ensure cultural continuity. The entire "Proposal" is undermined by Swift's vagueness and satirical remarks about certain privileged gentlemen who pretend to "know the world" through conversation. Swift excels in elaborating on how absurdly shallow-brained and fashion-driven the production of language has become, and in doing so, he sounds very Puritan. Swift believes corrupt pronunciation, abbreviations, and mannered styles of writing have become the norm instead of simple clarity. For his standard of excellence, Swift consistently refers to Scripture.

Although he upholds the Bible and Book of Common Prayer, Swift does not explain how his academy might effectively regulate language as well as he documents, and to some degree accommodates, the various barbarisms he wishes to avoid. Swift's proposal insinuates a radical and authoritarian intention, imposing a fundamental linguistic improvement upon society by a centralization of power into the hands of the Prime Minister, to whom the pamphlet is addressed. Swift's premise is that an elite institution under the able leadership of the Lord High Treasurer Robert Harley will lead the nation into linguistic purity. In fact, Herbert Davis argues that the lengthy panegyric to Harley praising him as

"one who saved his country from ruin by a foreign war" clearly establishes the tract as Tory and ministerial (PW 4: xii).

I submit that the "Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue" has just as much to do with Swift's views on language as politics. Swift wants to establish some standard of what is appropriate in writing and conversation, and for this he turns to his Puritan understanding of Scriptural authority. The standards of former years no longer work. The court used to be the standard of propriety and correctness in speech during Queen Elizabeth's reign, but Swift admits "I think [the court] hath ever since continued the worst school in England, for that accomplishment; and so will remain, till better care be taken in the education of our young nobility" (PW 4: 10).

In his assessment of how language is actually used, Swift looks at the privileged and powerful, the gentry and peerage segment of society who should be responsible guardians of language. Swift assaults the "dunces of figure" who take credit for introducing a new word or turn of phrase into conversation, soon transferring it into the "current scribbles of the week." Whereas poets should be sensible craftsmen and careful etymologists, Swift blames them for introducing "that barbarous custom of abbreviating words to fit them to the measure of their verses." The poets corrupt language with jarring sounds so difficult to utter that "none

but a Northern ear could endure." Another segment of language-producing society Swift describes are the young men at universities. These men should be cultivating the highest regard for propriety and learning from the rich heritage of English letters. Instead they are driven by a "fear of pedantry."

> Several young men at the universities...think all politeness to consist in reading the daily trash sent down to them from hence; this they call knowing the world, and reading men and manners. Thus furnished, they come up to town; reckon all their errors for accomplishments, borrow the newest set of phrases; and if they take a pen into their hands, all the odd words they have picked up in a coffee-house, or a gaming ordinary, are produced as flowers of style; and the orthography refined to the utmost. To this we owe those monstrous productions, which under names of trips, spies, and amusements, and other conceited appellations, have over-run us for some years past (PW 4: 12).

Having thus surveyed the wide assortment of illiterate abusers of language, it comes as no surprise that Swift sees English society as ill-equipped to deal with its reformation and preservation. Swift describes the English as naturally not very polite because of "the barbarity of those Northern nations from whom we are descended." One of the few prescriptive comments that Swift makes in his "Proposal" is also one of the strangest. After having assessed and discounted the usual arbiters of taste, the educated and privileged classes, Swift turns to an unexpected quarter: "If the choice had been left to me, I would rather have trust the refinement of our language...to the judgement of women than of illiterate court-fops, half-witted poets, and university-

boys." This seriously undermines the intention of the whole proposal. Swift spreads out his search for a proper and pure language so far that any genuine idea is likely to be dismissed.

One of the few times when Swift actually makes a specific recommendation is when he mentions the Bible and Common Prayer Book, widely studied by all levels of society. If not for these two books, Swift feels "we should hardly be able to understand anything that was written among us an hundred years ago." Swift's insistence on Scriptural authority in matters of language regulation sounds much more Puritan than orthodox Anglican. On one level, Swift honestly wants to be the man who subdues "barbarism, rudeness, and rusticity."

In his writing about language, Swift sees himself leading civilization into a glorious era of eternal truth and beauty of expression, just as the Puritan movement attempted to reform the Church of England. Although Swift portrays himself as the model of orthodoxy and desires "to fix language for ever," his belief in plain, rational preaching, his awareness of the corrupting influence of language, his resistance to Scriptural controversy, and his fear of obscure words and elaborate interpretations demonstrate many more Puritan than Anglican tendencies. On many points, Swift agreed with Thomas Cartwright's new conception of Scriptural authority, since "it would above all else have made the

ministers supreme, since they alone were the final interpreters of Scripture...from which every other rule of life could be by them infallibly deduced."[15]

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[15]William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 12.

## APPENDIX

Findings in the Manuscript Department of the Trinity College, Dublin Old Library.

TCD MS 1050 Table of Contents (as written):

I. A short account of the family and life of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick, in his own hand writing. Given to the library by Deane Swift, Esq--July 23. 1753. It was first published, with some notes, by that gentleman in his Essay on the Life, Writings, and Character of Dr Jonathan Swift--Republished also by Sir Walter Scott in the first vol. of his Edition of Swift's works--p. 500.

II. A Sermon on brotherly love, by the Dean, in his own handwriting--Preached at St. Patricks Decr. 1st 1717. Published in Sir Walter Scotts Ed. of Swifts works--vol. vii p. 461. Given to the library, April 2nd 1754.

III. An Autographed Letter from the Dean to Mrs. Swanton in St. Peter's Street, dated "Deanery House, July 12th 1733" with Col Dwyer's letter, by whom it was presented to the University, Oct. 13 1831. This letter is not published in his works. [probably refers to Scott's edition; it does appear in Harold Williams' edition]

IV. "Doctor Sw--ts Circular Letter to the Clergy of the

Diocese of Dublin, exhorting them in the conduct of their lives to regulate themselves always according to the present humour of the times--" With Sir W. Scotts letter relative to it--dated 7th March 1818. This scarce tract was evidently written against the Dean, not by him.

V. An autograph letter of Sir Walter Scott, dated Edinb. 7 March 1818, addressed to T.C.G. Gordonly relative to a MS. in this volume.

VI. The Legion Club, in Swifts autograph (???) (This MS. I purchased from a dealer in Dublin, for L 3.ØØ. I have added it to this collection Mar 15 1855.) This in my judgement is not in Swift's handwriting. J.K.A., Librarian June 19ØØ.

Commentary

I.

The autobiography fragment is in good condition, a little thin and faded around the edges. The paper is in excellent condition considering it is over 25Ø years old. The sheets are approximately 6" X 8" and are glued by the edge to the TCD binding. One additional sheet of paper separates each leaf. Swift's papers are folded in half, and I can deduce his method of composition from looking at the arrangement of the script. The bulk of the autobiography is written in a 3" X 8" space.

It appears that Swift folded the paper in half to create a margin for himself, allowing him to write a gloss of comments, titles, section headings, and notes to himself in the space at left. In this area Swift also edits the composition; crossed off lines at right are revised and rewritten in the space left of the margin. In some places entire lines are rewritten and then crossed and circled over many times, as if Swift wrote a revised sentence and then changed his mind, going back to the original version. Occasionally Swift makes reference notes to himself, like "see a book called Mercurion's Dublin and another in a folder."

The quality of the handwriting is very legible in the beginning. The letters are in black ink, very small, with occasional blots and thick letters across the page. The hand looks slightly unsteady, but in general the lines are very straight. There is an average of about 5 words per line, 24 lines per page, approximately 120 words per page of manuscript. In characteristic eighteenth-century practice, Swift writes the last word of a page at the bottom right, a repetition of the first word on the next page.

Pages 13-14 contain the famous, probably fabricated anecdote about Swift being stolen as a baby. He writes about himself in the third person: "When he was a year old, an event happened to him that seems very unusual; for his nurse, who was a woman of Whitehaven, being under an absolute

necessity of seeing one of her relations, who was then extremely sick, and from whom she expected a legacy; and being at the same time extremely fond of the infant, she stole him on shipboard unknown to his mother and uncle, and carried him with her to Whitehaven, where he continued for almost three years. For when the matter was discovered, his mother sent orders by all means not to hazard a second voyage, till he could better able to bear it."

On pages 17-18, the manuscript changes in quality. Swift is not writing on both sides of his center margin and the handwriting is smaller, more obscure, averaging about 180 words per page. This section tells the story of Swift's apprenticeship with Temple and his early school days, including his time at TCD. The final page is 20 and on it are written only the words "were then 30 years old." There is something scribbled out at the bottom of the pages and obviously the fragment ends abruptly.

II.

The manuscript of the sermon is written in a different manner. The date at the top of the page reads Nov. 24, 1717, which does not agree with the date given in the table of contents. Swift is using the same size paper, but the handwriting is clearer and larger, perhaps so that he could read it from the pulpit. Again this is not a finished draft but a manuscript with many lines crossed over and writing between lines. Swift still folds the paper in half but

writes across the whole width, approximately 8 words per line and 22 lines per page. Swift writes large numbers in the margins to correspond with the three main points of his sermon, for example "First I shall enquire into the Causes of this great Want of brotherly Love among us." The sermon touches on the division between "Papists and Fanaticks." Swift draws horizontal lines at the end of the line when the words do not reach the edge of the paper, as if he needs to fill up the entire page.

On the whole, Swift seems to write a more finished text in the sermon. There are fewer crossed out words. Perhaps the organization of the three-point sermon allows him to more freely proceed without too many digressions. But which method produces more effective writing? Swift is not known to have been a brilliant preacher. Every time Swift reaches the next point, he writes the number in the margin, announcing that he has arrived to the second and third points. In this hierarchical strategy, there are subheadings under each main point, such as "the 3rd reason for restoring brotherly love." On the final page, 20, Swift tries to cram the last 10 lines at the bottom quarter of the page. For some reason, he apparently feels that a manuscript should not exceed 20 pages, yet this sermon is more densely packed with words than the autobiography because of Swift's change in writing practice. The last section of the sermon is a summary of the main points and Swift's reasoning behind the

sermon. A note at the bottom reads "finished Novbr. 29, 1717." So apparently he finished writing it a day or two before he was to preach it. Swift did not preach every Sunday, but perhaps required the impending date to motivate himself to write a sermon.

III.

Text of the letter from Col. Dwyer:

"Dawson Court, Bootertown 13 Oct 1831.

Dear Sir,

I beg leave to Enclose the letter of Dean Swift which I mentioned to you yesterday when you were so very obliging to me and my East India friends, in Shewing us the curiosities Contained in the Library of your University.

The paper may be deemed original Curious in itself as the original writing of the Dean, but it is also curious from the subject and manner in which his Strong mind treated it. My Brother, the Rev'd Geo Dwyer, lately got it in the Co. Galway by accident, and gave it to me. I do not see that I can better store it than through your Hand, in the College Library should you deem it worth a place there.

Your Obliged Servant,

T. Dwyer, Lt. Col.

To the Rev'd Doctr. Tadler."

Swift's letter is in the same handwriting as the autobiography and sermon. It is folded three times into thirds with the outer leaf serving as an envelope. Mrs.

Swanton's address is written on the outside.

"Madam,

I have been considering the account you gave of me of your eldest daughter's privately conveying her self out of your house and taking all her cloaks with her determining to put her-self out of your Protection. I have been assured that there is a man in the case, and that she hath been enticed by some Servant of yours to run into the arms of some beggarly rascal, who would pass for a Gentleman of fortune. Although such an action in a daughter whom you have used so well can deserve no pardon, yet I would have you leave her without. Sent to her to come home. If she refuse, send a second and third time and if she still refuseth; Let her know in plain terms that you will never have the least correspondence with her, that you will never see her, nor give or leave her or her children (if she shall have any) a morsel of bread. Let her know, You have given her fair warning, and if she will run into destruction with her eyes open, against common sense, and the opinion of all rational people, she hath none to blame but herself; And that she must not expect to move your compassion some years hence with the cryes of half a dozen children at your door for want of bread. Let this and whatever else you think proper be writ to her in your own hand and let your letter be given to her before witnesses, and keep a copy of it to produce when there is occasion; And show the Copy you keep to any acquaintance who may be willing

to see it. And let whoever pleaseth, see this letter of mine as the best advice I can give you. For you are to suppose that you never had such a daughter, and that her children will have no more title to your charity, than the brats and bastards of any other common beggar. This is all I think necessary to say upon so disagreeable a subject. So I conclude.

Madam. Your most obedient servt.

Jonath. Swift.

Deanery-house

Jul 12th 1733"

Figures written on outside of envelope:

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|---|---|
| 14-4 | 12- |
| 4-6 | 12-4 |
| 9-10 | 14-4 |
| 14 4 | 9-16 |
| | 4-6 |

IV. & V

I cannot read Sir Walter Scott's handwriting, but he is saying that the manuscript called "Doctor Sw--ts Circular Letter to the Clergy of the Diocese of Dublin, exhorting them in the conduct of their lives to regulate themselves always according to the present humour of the times--" is authentic. Comparing this to other documents in this collection, it becomes obvious that the MS. is not Swift's handwriting. The date of Scott's letter is 1818, well after he had published

his edition of Swift's collected works, which would lead one to conclude that Scott did not read many manuscripts for his compilation.

VI.

The Legion Club MS. is in much poorer condition. It does not resemble Swift's handwriting in the autobiography, sermon, and letter. The letters are much straighter and more patiently drawn, with wider gaps in the middle of letters. It is heavily faded brown paper glued on another backing and it appears to have suffered water damage. The paper is folded both lengthwise and crosswise, not in Swift's manner of folding only lengthwise. The paper is also taller and more narrow than the paper characteristically used by Swift. The pamphlet is unsigned and is bound in a multi-colored blotter paper, perhaps by someone selling the manuscript for its supposed authenticity.

There is also an envelope of thin blue paper on which there is written "enclosed is a title page of 'Legion Club' cut from original MS in Swift's own handwriting." Apparently the autobiography, sermon and letter were on display in a glass case at one time because there are also large-letter titles for them. A note inside the blue envelope reads "Given to Libris Trin Col Dublin Feb 21, 1871 by Dennis Crofton A.B. This page officially belonged to the MS now in the College Library and was removed when the MS underwent the trimming and strengthening process by orders of the Late J.H.

Lord D.D.  Dennis Crofton Feb 9, 1871."

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