INTRODUCTION

1. *The Conduct of the Allies, Tory politics, and the Barrier Treaty*

On 8 September 1711 Swift, in a letter to his friend Charles Ford, remarked casually of Queen Anne, 'I find no body expects she can live long; and that is one great Reason why they would hasten a Peace.' Then he adds, 'Tis thought by State Astronomers that we shall have a scribbling Winter; but perhaps I shall then be far enough off', and finally, before his adieu, 'I am at least twice oftner with th[e] M—rs than when you was here, yet You see nothing comes of it' (Woolley, *Corr.*, vol. I, p. 381). These lines can all serve in some ways as keynotes for his life that autumn. Whatever the Queen's health, the movement towards Peace which would culminate in the treaty of Utrecht in 1713 was on its way; it was indeed a scribbling winter with Swift as a major scribbler; and though his familiarity with the chief ministers Harley and St John had not yet produced the preferment he was hoping for, what did come of it was his place as the most successful political writer of the Queen Anne period, a period dominated in its final years by the two overriding issues of the peace and the Succession.

Swift was ready for an important new task. On 7 June he had published the last *Examiner* paper totally his own, a review of the accomplishments of the Tory Parliament which was to end five days later; and though there was no announcement that he would be succeeded by another hand, Swift did say that the main design he had had in writing those papers had been now 'fully executed' (Ellis, *Examiner*, p. 470). Though perhaps he did not know it in June, by September he had an important new assignment. On the next day after writing to Ford, in fact, Swift in his *Journal* mentions to Stella that he had hoped to stay at Windsor a week 'to be at leisure for something I am doing' (Williams, *JSt*, p. 356). The nature of that 'something' was made very clear in his comments to her over the next month. On the 28th he wrote to her, 'We have already settled all things with France, and very much to the honour and advantage of England; and the queen is in mighty good humour. All this news is a mighty secret; the people in general know that a Peace is forwarding' (p. 356). The job he had been set was to make the people in general, and especially the members of Parliament, who would be returning

to town in November, not only realize that a peace was forwarding but accept the idea that England was proceeding with negotiations for peace with France without the knowledge and agreement of the Dutch, the Austrians and the other Allies – all contrary to the Eighth Article of the Grand Alliance (1701), which stipulated that peace must be agreed to by all the allied powers. In the next sentence he made the problem plain to Stella: 'The earl of Strafford is to go soon to Holland and let them know what we have been doing: and then there will be the devil and all to pay; but we'll make them swallow it with a pox' (p. 372). His project for the next two months was to make them swallow it, to force it down their throats with facts, figures and cool disdain without directly addressing the question of underhand dealing by the ministers, a question which made even St John uneasy (Holmes, p. 79). Instead of discussing the prospects for peace or Britain's relations with France, Swift would need to focus on the Conduct (or misconduct) of the Allies themselves.

It was a project on which he spent several months, as is made plain by his frequent reference to this 'business' in his letters to Stella from September until November. He was not acting alone; there are plenty of comments about the role of both St John and Oxford in urging him on and furnishing help: 'the ministers reckon it will do abundance of good, and open the eyes of the nation, who are half bewitched against a Peace' (Williams, *JSt*, p. 397). 'Three or four great people', he reports on 10 November, 'are to see there are no mistakes in point of fact' (p. 408). Oxford and St John did more than correct facts or read proof, of course; both furnished ideas. There are even a few verbal similarities between Swift's *Conduct of the Allies* and an earlier tract by Harley (Oxford) called 'Plaine English', and the Lord Treasurer continued to make alterations after the book had gone through three editions (pp. 428–9).[1] As he was writing, Swift made constant visits to consult his printer in the City (John Barber), all duly reported to Stella, with one of the six sheets corrected by St John (Woolley, *Corr.*, vol. I, p. 396). Finally on 27 November, ten days before the opening of parliament, the first edition of *Conduct*, Swift's most influential and successful political pamphlet, was published, the 'great men' having received their copies the night before (Williams, *JSt*, p. 421).

The subject of the pamphlet would not be taking the town by surprise, since all through the autumn of 1711 printers were kept busy churning out writings about the possibility of Peace. In a pamphlet published in early November, just a few weeks before *Conduct* itself finally appeared, Defoe, himself now

1 J. A. Downie, '*The Conduct of the Allies*: the Question of Influence', in Clive Probyn (ed.), *The Art of Jonathan Swift* (London: Vision, 1978), pp. 120–4.

a ministerial writer, gave his impression of the feverish atmosphere of the Town as it spoke of little except the possibility of peace: 'Unhappy Nation! What End can these Things lead us to? Not a Publick Society, not a Coffee-house, not a Meeting of Friends, not a Visit, but like *Jehu* to *Jezabel, who is on my Side?* Who? Who is for Peace? Who is for carrying on the war?'[2] Even back in June 1711 Defoe had noted in his *Review*, 'Peace is now all the Discourse of the Town, what Ground we have for it I confess I don't see' (vol. VIII, p. 141).

But the real furore had started with the signing of the Preliminary Articles from France on 27 September, which were then, to the dismay of the ministry, revealed to the public on 13 October by the Whiggish *Daily Courant*, having been placed there by the imperial envoy Count Gallas. By coincidence on the same day, Addison sent a letter to Edward Wortley enclosing a copy of the Tory *Post Boy* and commenting, 'I send you Enclosed a paper of Abel Roper's, which every body looks upon as Authentick: we talk of nothing but a peace.'[3] October was then marked by a succession of pamphlets, their titles fairly well revealing their political bent: *The Taxes not Grievous, and therefore not a Reason for an Unsafe Peace* (2 October); Defoe's *Reasons why this Nation Ought to Put a Speedy End to this Expensive War* (6 October); *Anguis in Herba; Or, The Fatal Consequences of a Treaty with France* (advertised on 29 October, but actually a reprint of a much earlier pamphlet by Henry Maxwell); *Reflections upon the Examiner's Scandalous Peace* (probably by Abel Boyer in September 1711). On 16 October Swift found himself abused in another pamphlet by Boyer, *An account of the State and Progress of the Present Negotiation of Peace*, which nastily attacks Swift's political tergiversation, his ambition and even his bad French. Swift mentioned this work to Stella, carefully noting that he had had the 'French dog' taken up by a messenger and that St John had promised he would 'swinge' him (Williams, *JSt*, p. 384). Not all the Whig tracts in these months resorted to abuse, however, since they had their own ironist. Arthur Maynwaring's *Vindication of the Present M—y, from The Clamours rais'd against them* (1711) deftly pretends to defend the Preliminaries against an enraged town. His opening sentence might even have made Swift smile:

> Among the many restless Endeavours of the Ruin'd Party [the Whigs] to sink the Reputation of the present M—y, there is none in which they discover their Good-will to them more than in the Violence they shew in attacking the new Preliminaries, which tho they are such weak wretched

2 *An Essay at A Plain Exposition Of That Difficult Phrase A Good Peace* (1711), p. 7.
3 Walter Graham (ed.), *Letters of Joseph Addison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 265–6.

> things that they must fall of themselves, without any opposition made to them, yet these angry Men run upon them with all their might. (p. 3)

Less than a week after Swift's book was published, Peter Wentworth wrote with concern to his brother the Earl of Strafford, a plenipotentiary at the Utrecht conference, 'there's so many of the Allies to satisfie, that it will be almost impossible to make a fast, honourable, and lasting Peace in any short time' (*Wentworth Papers*, p. 217). Swift's major task, then, was to depict the Allies' demands in an unfavourable light. Yet his full title makes plain that not only the Allies but the 'late Ministry' as well are to blame for beginning and carrying on the war. After Swift lays bare in the first half of his pamphlet all the follies and mistakes in the conduct of the war, all the 'weak and foolish Bargains with our Allies', he asks, how did it happen that we have thus become the '*Dupes* and *Bubbles*' of Europe? Was it our stupidity? And the answer is that they are in a war of this duration because of the 'Family', the leaders of the Whig 'Junto' and the Marlboroughs (Godolphin's only son was married to Marlborough's oldest daughter, and the Earl of Sunderland was married to his second daughter), and because of the 'Monied Men', who had raised vast sums by trading stocks and lending at exorbitant rates. These people are the 'real Causes of our present Misery', Swift says (below, pp. 81–7).

But even after exposing the causes, he still needs to address those MPs who may favour peace but only a 'good' one, which for many of them was defined by the cry, 'No Peace without Spain', that is, without restoring Spain to the House of Austria. Although this had been the principle accepted by both parties for most of the war, the defeat and capture of Earl Stanhope in the battle of Brihuega in 1710 had ended the support of most Tories for that slogan, and the Emperor's death in April of 1711 made it militarily unrealistic and politically undesirable to think that the new Emperor Charles VI could also become King of Spain (see Holmes, pp. 77–9). Even if that could be accomplished, it would mean the end of the Balance of Power, one of the principles behind the Grand Alliance, and Austria would replace France as the superpower of Europe. In *Conduct* Swift quotes the Eighth Article of the Grand Alliance to emphasize that it contains no suggestion that a peace must include guaranteeing Spain for the Austrians. Unfortunately, as it turned out, Swift's arguments on this point were put to the test and failed with some readers little more than a week after *Conduct* first appeared; on the first day of the new session in the House of Lords, the Earl of Nottingham successfully moved that a motion thanking the Queen for her Address include a clause rejecting any peace in which Spain and the West Indies were allotted to the

House of Bourbon. This political blow to the administration created near-panic in Swift and other supporters of the ministry, until 29 December, when Queen Anne resolved the crisis by creating 'no less than twelve lords to have a majority', as Swift exulted to Stella (Williams, *JSt*, p. 450).

In all other ways, however, this pamphlet which had cost him 'so much time and trouble' (Williams, *JSt*, p. 420) was having all the success he could have hoped for. It was intended to be ready for the sitting of Parliament, but Parliament, he reported on 25 November, is 'to be prorogued for eight or nine days; for the Whigs are too strong in the house of lords' (p. 421). Even so, almost as soon as it was published it began 'to make a noise' (p. 423), and the printers began working night and day to get a second edition ready. 'They sold a thousand in two days,' and by its third day of life he could claim, 'the pamphlet makes a world of noise, and will do a great deal of good: it tells abundance of most important facts which were not at all known' (pp. 423–4). As the third edition began printing, Oxford made some alterations; in a day half the third edition was already sold. Naturally, the Whigs and representatives of the Allies were less happy. St John told Swift that the Dutch envoy intended to complain about it, and on 3 December Swift heard 'the Whigs are resolved to bring that pamphlet into the house of lords to have it condemned' (p. 429).

Swift was perhaps taken aback by the threat of condemnation, especially when he learned that it had nothing to do with the Allies or Spain but with the Succession. In the first three editions, he had said that if a foreign power were called in to guarantee the Succession of the crown as stipulated in the Barrier Treaty, 'we put it out of the Power of our own Legislature to change our Succession, without the Consent of that Prince or State who is Guarantee, how much soever the Necessities of the Kingdom may require it'. Swift appears to have been truly surprised when Lord Chief Justice Parker considered that passage possibly treasonable and sent for John Morphew, named in the imprint, to try to find the author. Swift wrote a long-winded and perhaps disingenuous substitute passage, which he used in the fourth and subsequent editions, and then in a postscript he protested Parker's reading, pointing out that it goes against the Revolution principles of the Whigs themselves. Finally, in the midst of his next pamphlet, *Some Remarks on the Barrier Treaty*, he protested again, making a distinction between his argument and the Whigs' view of the grounds for altering the Succession: 'The *Whigs* are for changing the Succession when they think fit, though the entire Legislature do not consent; I think it ought never to be done but upon great Necessity, and that with the Sanction of the whole Legislature' (see pp. 129–31). But his protests did little good; even a month and a half

later, he reported to Stella, 'A Whig Membr took out the Conduct of the Allyes, and read that Passage about the Succession, with great Resentmt, but none seconded him' (Williams, *JSt*, p. 488). And of course almost every 'Answer' to *Conduct*, which an eminent modern Dutch historian has called Swift's 'venomous pamphlet', delightedly complained of that passage, and even attacks on Swift that did not focus on *Conduct* managed to drag it in.[4]

It may be difficult for modern readers to understand either why his enemies seemed so outraged or why Swift seemed so persistent on this point, which in subsequent editions he repeated with more elaborate language but without softening his position. Yet though today it may seem harmless enough, in the last years of Queen Anne even to talk about the Succession was to touch on sensitive issues, for the fear of Jacobitism was always present, and the statutes on treason enacted since the Revolution made such talk potentially dangerous. It was of course treasonable to try to hinder anyone named in the Act of Settlement (1700) from succeeding to the Crown, but it was also high treason for a person 'maliciously, advisedly, and directly, by writing or printing', to maintain and affirm that any other person has any right or title to the Crown otherwise than according to the Act of Settlement, or that the Kings or Queens of the realm, with the authority of Parliament, 'are not able to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to limit and bind the Crown and the descent thereof' (1707, An Act for the Security of her Majesty's Person, 6 Anne c. 7). Swift may not seem to be in violation of such laws, but in assuming the possibility of 'legislative defeasibility', as it was called, i.e., in assuming that the legislative body could alter the hereditary succession of the Crown, he was going further than even a Whig Chief Justice could comfortably tolerate. Again, this may seem paradoxical, since to a modern reader it may at first appear, as Swift suggests, very much to the taste of a Whig, but in 1711 any meddling with the Succession immediately smacked of efforts to put the Jacobite pretender on the throne.

Yet Swift persisted in claiming that the passage was completely innocent. When Stella's companion Rebecca Dingley took alarm at it, Swift protested to Stella, 'I here take leave to tell politick Dingley, that the passage in the *Conduct of the Allies* is so far from being blameable, that the secretary designs to insist upon it in the house of commons, when the Treaty of Barrier is debated there' (Williams, *JSt*, pp. 477–8). I have not found that St John especially insisted on it during the debate on the Barrier Treaty, not even

4 Pieter Geyl, *The Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century: Part Two* (London: Ernest Benn, 1964), p. 321. See, for example, Thomas Burnet (attrib.), *The Thoughts of a Tory Author, Concerning the Press* (1712), p. 4.

after, as noted already, a Whig member protested about it. But the alarm or pseudo-alarm over the passage continued, and Swift continued unrepentant.

Modern scholars in commenting on this episode have been of several minds, and since their comments are mostly determined by their views of Swift's entire political orientation, their arguments must be sketched here only briefly. Thus Ian Higgins sees Swift's ministerial writing as ambivalent on the Act of Settlement, 'reflecting his (and the Tory party's) reservations about the House of Hanover and perhaps a calculated attempt to keep legislative alterations of the succession a theoretically open possibility' (Higgins, p. 89 and see pp. 90–5).[5] And Higgins believes that the ministers who 'vetted' Swift's tract allowed the passage to go forward to keep the Jacobites among the Tory members of Parliament content and cooperative in their parliamentary votes. On the other hand, Daniel Eilon argues that the passage is an expression of Swift's consistently 'old Whig' attitudes to the Revolution, in which the 'legislature had the power and prerogative to institute a hereditary succession and also to repeal it in cases of extreme necessity'. Eilon points out that Swift's insistence here on the 'parliamentary defeasibility of the succession', though a source of embarrassment in *Conduct*, was later to become a useful ironic tool against Steele in Swift's *Publick Spirit of the Whigs*, even enabling Swift sarcastically to charge Steele with high treason.[6]

In short, since we obviously cannot know what exactly was in Swift's mind when he insisted on retaining in *Conduct* the substance of a passage which aroused so much concern, today's reader, though recognizing the reason for some suspicion, will also understand that the issue is secondary to Swift's major task in the pamphlet, which was of course to detach the English from the cause of the Allies in an effort to move them further along the road to peace. And it was mainly for that reason, rather than because of concern about the Succession, that it had to be answered effectively.

Although there were numerous others, the major answerer to Swift was Francis Hare, Marlborough's chaplain, his 'stupid priest', as St John called him (Bolingbroke, *Letters*, vol. I, p. 367), who had already published a defence of Marlborough called *The Management of the War* (1711). Now he 'continues to spoil paper' (St John again), attacking Swift in a four-part series under the general title of *The Allies and the late Ministry Defended against France and the Present Friends of France*, appearing from 5 December 1711 to 5 March 1712. The pamphlets are not lively reading, despite some help from Arthur

5 On Swift's 'Jacobitism', see below.

6 Daniel Eilon, 'Did Swift Write *A Discourse on Hereditary Right*?', *MP* 82 (1985) 381–4, and his *Factions' Fictions: Ideological Closure in Swift's Satire* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), p. 103.

Maynwaring, since Hare attempts to move through *Conduct*, answering Swift point by point, after first over-simplifying and reducing Swift's arguments to three: 'To go into the Grand alliance was wrong in it self. 2. The Terms of it don't oblige us to insist upon the *Restitution of the Spanish Monarchy*. 3. The Allies are a Pack of Rogues' (p. 31). Along the way, however, he does point out Swift's mishandling of documents: his omission, for example, of a phrase in the Eighth Article of the Grand Alliance and his misquotation of the first Separate Article of that treaty. But St John had spoken with cold and accurate assurance when he said of Hare and others who protested the dismissal of Marlborough, 'They had best for their patron's sake as well as their own, be quiet. I know . . . how to revive fellows that will write them to death' (Bolingbroke, *Letters*, vol. I, p. 365).

In the first few weeks following its publication, in addition to attacks in the Whig press like the *Observator*, there were also pamphlet attacks by writers less verbose than Hare but no less ineffective: *Remarks on a False, Scandalous, and Seditious Libel, Intituled, The Conduct of the Allies, and of the Late Ministry* (perhaps by John Oldmixon), such an incoherent, rambling, hit-and-miss response that it is hard to believe Maynwaring had any share in it, as some have suggested; and *A Defence of the Allies and the Late Ministry: or, Remarks on the Tories New Idol* (1712), once said to be by Defoe, Swift's fellow labourer in the Tory vineyard, an interesting attribution because the author is scathing on the subject of Swift's 'voluminous' style as he comes 'blustering upon the Stage, shouted in by the whole Tory Mob' (p. 3) – but Defoe's authorship has recently been firmly disputed.[7] (The following June Defoe did apparently write *A Further Search Into the Conduct of the Allies*, but it is a sequel, not an answer, a Tory piece attacking the Dutch memorial of April 1712.) Several of the hostile pamphlets hint that Swift, or sometimes just 'the Examiner', is their opponent, and they do what they can to capitalize on his 'suspect' comment about the Protestant Succession. But they can do little in the face of Swift's assured rhetoric.

Swift had promised in the postscript to the fourth edition of *Conduct* that 'whatever Objections of Moment' he could find in any of the answers, including Hare's, would be fully answered in a paragraph at the end of the Preface in the next edition. But of course since he never responded, he means us to assume he found no such objections of moment in any of them. And indeed they are not a brilliant bunch. As Douglas Coombs pointed out long ago, their problem was their audience; Swift preaches to the half-converted,

7 P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens, *Defoe De-Attributions* (London: Hambledon, 1994), pp. 52–3.

to those who were already willing to believe the worst of the Allies because they were tired of the war. Essays which tried to counter his appeal to their feelings of impatience by reminding them that they should always be grateful to the Dutch for their role in the Revolution or by slurring him as a Jacobite were doomed to be ineffective.[8] By February 1712, Swift's triumph was complete; he saw his work bear fruit in the House of Commons. Though ten days later one member attempted to diminish its effect by reading the passage about the Succession, Swift could report to Stella on 4 February, 'The house of commons have this day made many severe votes about our being abused by our allies. Those who spoke, drew all their arguments from my book, and their votes confirm all I writ; the Court had a majority of a hundred and fifty: all agree, that it was my book that spirited them to these resolutions' (Williams, *JSt*, p. 480). And that view was seconded several years later in a short, hostile pamphlet by Robert Walpole, a man who was to dominate the political scene during the major decades of Swift's later productive career. In his *Short History of the Parliament* (1713) Walpole reflected on the effect of Swift's political 'masterpiece':

> This Master-piece, fill'd with Falsities and Misrepresentations, was no sooner dispers'd and canvass'd in the World, but it produc'd the desir'd Effect, affording Arguments for artful and ill-designing Instruments to . . . prejudice the Minds of weak and deluded People, and firing others, who had no Leisure or Opportunity to be better inform'd, with Resentment and Indignation against the Allies. (p. 8)

Walpole's harping on the 'Falsities' of Swift's masterpiece was echoed much later in a passage in volume II of Bishop Burnet's *History of His Own Time* (1724–34); Swift, the 'mercenary Pen', defamed the Dutch in his *Conduct* with 'much Art, but with no regard to Truth', claiming that England was so exhausted that the war was impossible to carry on and that the Allies, especially the Dutch, had failed the English repeatedly (p. 581). To this charge Swift responded in his margin only by a single, emphasized comment: *'It was all true'* (Davis, vol. V, p. 293).

Near the end of *Conduct* Swift refers again to the Barrier Treaty with the States, 'which deserveth such Epithets as I care not to bestow: But may perhaps consider it, at a proper Occasion, in a *Discourse* by it self' (p. 91). In the event it was February 1712 before the Commons called for the treaty to be considered, although St John's letters make it plain that it had been a topic high on the ministerial agenda for almost a year. In the meantime Swift served

8 Douglas Coombs, *The Conduct of the Dutch* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1958), pp. 287–8.

the Court and diverted himself by addressing in print an issue of internal Tory politics, the impact of the high-Church high-Tory parliamentary group called 'The October Club'. In February 1711, almost a year before the piece was written, Swift had described the group in this way to Stella:

> We are plagued here with an October Club, that is, a set of above a hundred parliament-men of the country, who drink October beer at home, and meet every evening at a tavern near the parliament, to consult affairs, and drive things on to extreams against the Whigs, to call the old ministry to account, and get off five or six heads. The ministry seem not to regard them, yet one of them in confidence told me, that there must be something thought on to settle things better. (Williams, *JSt*, pp. 194–5)[9]

Their activities were not limited to talk; they planned debating tactics, packed committees, and organized slates for elections to parliamentary commissions, and by early in the new year they were causing delays in Harley's plans for money and supply. By the end of 1711 they numbered over 140, and had won significant concessions from Harley, now since May the Earl of Oxford and Lord Treasurer.[10] Apparently on his own, with no ministerial prompting, Swift used his arts of impersonation to help quiet these barking dogs.

He knew his target, for he was on good terms with some of the members; in April 1711, while still writing *The Examiner*, he had been invited to dine with them and been forced to decline the invitation as improper, considering his friendship with the ministers. On 12 and 13 April he wrote to Stella of the Tory complaints that the ministry did too little to get rid of Whigs in place and find appointments for Tories, adding significantly 'and indeed I think they have some reason to complain' (Williams, *JSt*, pp. 241–2). In short, putting himself in the mind of an 'October man' in order to preach moderation in his little pamphlet required, I think, only a short imaginative step. Indeed, in *Memoirs* Swift admits his belief that 'if this body of men could have remained some time united, they would have put the crown under a necessity of acting in a more steady and strenuous manner' (Davis, vol. VIII, p. 125). But Oxford, who best understood the Queen's dispositions, had to break their measures, he goes on to say, and though never named it is the Lord Treasurer who is the hero of Swift's *Some Advice Humbly Offer'd to the Members of the October Club*; the Duke and Duchess of Somerset (now the Queen's favourite) are the antagonists; and the Queen herself is the weak pawn in this little drama in which the narrator says, sympathetically, yes, we

9 See H. T. Dickinson, 'The October Club', *HLQ 33* (1970), 155–73.
10 *HP 1690–1715*, pp. 460, 470; Dickinson, 'The October Club', 163–4.