POLITICS AND LITERATURE
IN THE AGE OF SWIFT

Jonathan Swift was the most influential political commentator of his time, in both England and Ireland. His writings are a major source for historians of the eighteenth century, as well as including some of the greatest works of satire in verse and prose. This volume presents wide-ranging new perspectives on Swift’s literary and political achievement in its English and Irish contexts, bringing together some of the most energetic current scholarship on the subject in both historical and literary studies. The essays consider Swift’s attitude to Dissenters, his relationship with Walpole, and his place in, and understanding of, the political demography of colonial Ireland. They also examine Swift’s poems and pamphlets, and his hoaxes and satires, showing his extraordinary versatility in a wide variety of genres. There is a special emphasis on his political and personal poetry, sometimes undeservedly overshadowed by the towering stature of his better-known prose masterpieces, *A Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver’s Travels*. Full of original insights, this volume offers a rich and important new treatment of Swift’s central role in eighteenth-century political and literary culture.

Claude Rawson is the Maynard Mack Professor of English at Yale University. One of the most distinguished eighteenth-century scholars working today, he has published widely on Swift, Fielding, Boswell and many other authors and topics. He is Founding General Editor of *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* and General Editor of *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift*. 
POLITICS AND LITERATURE IN THE AGE OF SWIFT: ENGLISH AND IRISH PERSPECTIVES

EDITED BY

CLAUDE RAWSON
Contents

List of illustrations .......................... page vii
List of contributors .......................... ix
Preface ........................................ xi
List of abbreviations .......................... xiii

PART I  THE POLITICAL SWIFT I (ENGLAND)

1  Jonathan Swift’s political confession 3
   Ian Higgins

2  Situating Swift’s politics in 1701 31
   Mark Goldie

3  Swift and Walpole 52
   Paul Langford

PART II  THE WRITER AND HIS WORLD

4  Burying the fanatic Partridge: Swift’s Holy Week hoax 81
   Valerie Rumbold

5  Swift and the art of political publication: hints and title pages, 1711–1714 116
   James McLaverty

6  Swift’s poetics of friendship 140
   Helen Deutsch

7  ‘now deaf 1740’
   Entrapment, foreboding, and exorcism in late Swift 162
   David Womersley
vi

Contents

8 Savage indignation revisited: Swift, Yeats, and the ‘cry’ of liberty 185
Claude Rawson

PART III THE POLITICAL SWIFT 2 (IRELAND)

9 ‘Paltry underlings of state’? The character and aspirations of the ‘Castle’ party, 1715–1732 221
D. W. Hayton

10 Old English, New English and ancient Irish: Swift and the Irish past 255
S. J. Connolly

11 Jonathan Swift and the Irish colonial project 270
Robert Mahony

Index 290
Illustrations

1  A hue and cry after Dismal. Reproduction courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.
2  It’s out at last: or, French correspondence clear as the sun.
3  Some advice humbly offer’d to the members of the October Club. Title page of the second edition: NLS, L.C.3339(6). Reproduction courtesy of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.
4  The new way of selling places at court. Title-page: CUL, 7540.d.45 (8). Reproduction courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.
5  Some reasons to prove, that no person is obliged by his principles, as a Whig, to oppose Her Majesty or her present ministry. Title-page. Reproduction courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.
6  The importance of the Guardian considered. Title page. Reproduction courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.
7  The conduct of the Allies. Title page of the fourth edition. Reproduction courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.
8  Annotated page from Swift’s own copy of Miscellanies, by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge.
9  Swift’s epitaph in St Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin.

page 122  126  128  130  131  133  135  164  186
Contributors

S. J. Connolly is Professor of Irish History at Queen’s University, Belfast. His most recent books are Contested Island: Ireland 1460–1630 (2007) and Divided Kingdom: Ireland 1630–1800 (2008). He was General Editor of the Oxford Companion to Irish History (1998) and is also Joint Editor of the journal Irish Economic and Social History.


Mark Goldie is Reader in British Intellectual History at the University of Cambridge, and a Fellow of Churchill College. He has published extensively in the field of political, religious, and intellectual history in the period 1650–1750, including editing or co-editing two volumes in the Cambridge History of Political Thought series and various of Locke’s political writings.

D. W. Hayton is Professor of Early Modern Irish and British History and Head of the School of History and Anthropology at Queen’s University, Belfast. He has published widely on the political history of Ireland and Britain in the early eighteenth century. He wrote the Introductory Survey for the 1690–1715 volumes of the History of Parliament (Cambridge University Press, 2002), and a collection of his papers on Irish political history appeared in 2004, entitled Ruling Ireland, 1685–1742: Politics, Politicians and Parties. He was elected a member of the Royal Irish Academy in 2008.

Dr Ian Higgins is Reader in English at the Australian National University. He is the author of Swift’s Politics: A Study in Disaffection (1994) and Jonathan Swift (2004), and of many articles on Swift and his contexts. He is an editor (with Claude Rawson) of Gulliver’s Travels (2005) and is one of the general editors of the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift.
List of contributors

Paul Langford, FBA, is Professor of Modern History in Oxford University, and Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford. He is General Editor of *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, 1981–, eight volumes completed, and is Chairman of the History of Parliament Editorial Board. He is author of numerous books and articles, largely on Britain in the eighteenth century. They include *The Excise Crisis: Society and Politics in the Age of Walpole* (1975); *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689–1769* (1991); *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727–1783* (1989); and *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650–1850* (2000).

Robert Mahony is the author of *Jonathan Swift: The Irish Identity* (1995) and numerous articles on Swift’s Irish writings. He retired as Professor of English from The Catholic University of America in 2008, where he also founded the Center for Irish Studies.

James McLaverty is Emeritus Professor of Textual Criticism at Keele University. He is the author of *Pope, Print, and Meaning* (2001) and textual adviser to the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift.


Valerie Rumbold is Reader in English Literature at the University of Birmingham. She is the author of *Women’s Place in Pope’s World* (1989), and editor of *Alexander Pope: The Dunciad in Four Books* (1999) and of volume III of *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, containing the *Dunciad* in its 1728 and 1729 versions (2007). She is currently preparing a volume for the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift, to include the Bickerstaff papers, *Polite Conversation* and *Directions to Servants*.

Preface

This volume seeks to present a wide-ranging perspective on Swift’s literary and political achievement in its English and Irish contexts. It brings together some of the most energetic scholarship in the subject in both historical and literary studies. The first and third sections deal directly with political ideas, events and relationships in England and Ireland. These include the large questions of Swift’s attitude to Dissenters, his relationship with Walpole, and his place in, and understanding of, the political demography of colonial Ireland, as well as the important particularised topics of the Kentish Petition and Conolly’s speakership of the Irish House of Commons.

The middle section, on ‘The writer and his world’, shows Swift in a more direct writerly mode. This includes the hoaxing, which is one of Swift’s unsung gifts, culminating in *Gulliver’s Travels* but beginning in a richly political April Fool’s caper in 1708. It also includes the typographical strategies Swift exploited in his political pamphleteering of 1711–14, examined in a particularly fine example of the application of bibliographical studies to literary understanding. The largest part of this section concerns the poems, a deliberate emphasis designed to draw attention to Swift’s distinction as a poet, still somewhat occluded by that of his friend Pope, and also by Swift’s own towering reputation as the greatest of prose satirists. Swift’s achievement as a poet has perhaps been more wholeheartedly celebrated by poets (from Byron and Yeats to Eliot, Auden, and Geoffrey Hill) than by critics, although critical and academic recognition in recent decades has been considerable. The poems studied here belong to the 1720s and 1730s, his greatest period both as a poet and as an activist in Irish politics. The third section begins with a close study of the ‘Castle’ party in the Irish Parliament, which often came within the range of Swift’s fire in the writings of this period.

In planning this volume, I have avoided topics specifically dedicated to familiar major works already much discussed in their own right. *A Tale*
Preface

_of a Tub, Gulliver’s Travels, and A Modest Proposal have been left to find their natural place within the various political and literary contexts provided by the individual contributors. The volume is closely associated with the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift. Many of the contributors are editors or general editors, or serve on the advisory board. The volume could not have been undertaken without the support of Linda Bree, Publisher, Literature at Cambridge University Press, and Robert C. Ritchie, Director of Research at the Huntington Library, whose distinguished institution provided a setting for a conference, on 14–15 March 2008, at which early versions of these papers were delivered. I also owe thanks to all the contributors for their exemplary cooperation. The final preparation of this volume owes everything to the dedication and expertise of my assistant, Cynthia Ingram.
Abbreviations


**Correspondence**  *Correspondence*. Edited by David Woolley, 4 vols. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999–2007.


