

Jonathan Swift's prose has been discussed extensively as satire, but its major structural element, parody, has not received the attention it deserves. Focusing mainly on works before 1714, and especially on *A Tale of a Tub*, this study explores Swift's writing primarily as parody. Robert Phiddian follows the constructions and deconstructions of textual authority through the texts on cultural-historical, biographical, and literary-theoretical levels. The historical interest lies in the occasions of the parodies: in their relations with the texts and discourses which they quote and distort, and in the way this process reflects on the generation of cultural authority in late-Stuart England. The biographical interest lies in a new way of viewing Swift's early career as a potentially Whiggish intellectual. And the theoretical and interpretative interest lies in tracing the play of language and irony through parody.

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To Robyn,

the source of all my happiness and security.

Though sometimes distracting me from the mere execution of this work, she has made the life from which it comes worth living. The dedication of this book is poor recompense for the joy she gives me, but it is hers anyway.

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Acknowledgments

As anyone who has read *A Tale of a Tub* can tell you, prefaces are dangerous supplements which can consume hundreds of pages and even entire books. Consequently, I will do my best to restrict myself to acknowledgments here. As it happens, the personal and intellectual debts I have incurred over the years are too numerous to itemise exhaustively, so even this will be a summary exercise.

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Abbreviations

- A Tale* *A Tale of a Tub, to which is added the Battle of the Books and the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*. A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith, eds. 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958; reprinted with corrections, 1973.
- Corr.* *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*. 5 vols. Harold Williams, ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963–65.
- Journal* *The Journal to Stella*. 2 vols. Harold Williams, ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948.
- PW* *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*. 14 vols. Herbert Davis, et al., eds. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939–68.