

Jonathan Swift: Defeat, Isolation, and the Price of Failed Norms

Howard D. Weinbrot (University of Wisconsin at Madison, USA)

Abstract Starting with Jonathan Swift's famous letter on the 'falsity' of the notion of man as 'animal rationale', this article investigates the role of norms and the normative in his works. The essay especially considers *A Tale of a Tub*, *Gulliver's Travels*, the mock Marlborough-eulogy, the final 'Stella' poem, and the *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*. The several matters considered include Swift's major concerns and sources of his own infelicity, such as his recollection of regicide and usurping Dissent; the threat on the established Church by a later new dynasty; his removal from England and modest political career; his fear of Irish Presbyterians and the love-hate relationship with Ireland; his poor health and long periods of physical and psychological discomfort; and the role of the concept of original sin had in his works. It then deals with Swift's sense of collapse and loss of order before the presumed moral barbarism of his age, and his desire to resist the gloomy negative forces of history, for all of which Swift pays a high price. Finally, the article sees Swift's greatness in his desire to continue to fight despite his unhappiness with the world; in his portrayal of the consequences of ignoring the very norms which he upheld; and in his refusal to stop labeling corruption, wherever it might be.

Summary 1. Turning out the Light. – 2. Swift, Different, and Bereft. – 3. Ears of Corn and Blades of Grass. – 4. Works cited.

On 29 September 1725 Jonathan Swift wrote to Alexander Pope: «the chief end [...] in all my labors is to vex the world rather than divert it». He would do so yet further if he could avoid harming himself. Now that Pope has given up translation, «when you think of the World give it one lash the more at my Request». He insists that he has «ever hated all Nations professions and Communities and all my love is towards individualls». He hates lawyers as a group, but he loves “Councillor such a one, [and] Judge such a one [...] but principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I hartily love John, Peter, Thomas and so forth». That is Swift's long practiced intellectual system which he shall continue «till I have done with them». Now,

I have got Materials Towards a Treatis proving the falsity of that Definition animal rationale, and to show it would be only *rationis capax*. Upon this great foundation of Misanthropy (though not in Timons manner) the whole building of my Travells is erected: And I never will have peace of mind till all honest men are of my Opinion: by Consequence you are to

embrace it immediately and procure that all who deserve my Esteem may do so too. The matter is so clear that it will admit little dispute (Woolley 1999-2014, vol. 2, pp. 606-607).¹

This famous letter tells us much about Jonathan Swift and his satire. The several disturbing words include *vex*, *hurting*, *lash*, *hated*, *hate*, *hate*, *detest*, *done with them*, *misanthropy*, and *never have peace of mind*. The terms are embedded within a larger framework that includes *divert*, *pleased*, *better*, and *love*. He sends the letter to his friend Alexander Pope with whom he bonds and thus supports Patrick Delany's remark that Swift was «a steady, persevering, inflexible friend» (Delany 1754, p. 291).² His misanthropy includes hatred of mankind, but love to individuals. Swift is hostile to British culture's growingly benevolent view of mankind. We are not the rational animals that scholasticism taught; instead, we are only capable of reason and often are irrational. The section includes two impossible and only half-joking elements: «all honest men» should agree with him, and Pope should «procure that all who deserve my esteem» share that opinion as well. Pope surely enjoyed Swift's playful tone, but many «honest men» and many who deserved his esteem might, and did, disagree that we are as contemptible as he paints us. Moreover, given the «great foundation» on which few others build, Swift «never will have peace of mind». In short, he expects to fail and contents himself with vexing rather than reforming. Violence, dogmatism, darkness of vision, and personal unhappiness outnumber individual friendship in the letter and characterize Swift here and elsewhere. I can only suggest how such a mode of proceeding affected a central concern in satire: assuming that those attacked deserve such attack, how do we know what is the right thing to do and how do we do it?

The connections that Delany stresses in Swift's life are paramount in one such group. He wrote several friendly, chatty, *Market Hill* poems during his amiable, long, three visits to Sir Arthur and Lady Acheson's country estate in Armagh between 1728 and 1730. These show Swift the man and poet as part of a supportive community that admires him and associates him with that old titled family. Sir Arthur was the fifth Baronet, High Sheriff of Armagh, and represented Mullingar in the Irish House of Commons from 1727 until his death in 1748. Frequent Market Hill poetic exchanges include shared and friendly criticism; the hosts are flattered by having their voices

1 The letter also refers to the «rascaly World» and alludes in a friendly way to Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford and former Prime Minister under Queen Anne. For further discussion of the Swift-Pope exchanges and relationships, see Harth 1998, and Griffin 2010.

2 Samuel Johnson reprints these remarks and other favorable ones in his *Life of Swift*. See Mittendorf 2010, pp. 1022, henceforth referred to parenthetically in the text as YE 22. For fuller discussion of Swift and Johnson, see Weinbrot 2014.

ventriloquized; and specific events are memorialized in conversational poetry that circulated in manuscript. The pleasant light verse generally avoids provocative subjects in its enclosed, domestic world of congenial author and reader: «My Lady [...] shews every Creature the Libels I have writ against her», Swift tells the Reverend Thomas Sheridan (18 September 1728; Woolley 1999-2014, vol. 3, p. 194). Swift is pleased regarding the affectionate teasing of a host who has requested affectionate teasing. His later part-Market-Hill *Epistle to a Lady* (1732) characterizes Lady Acheson in varied, successful, and warmly positive ways. She leads «a blameless Life», is «an humble, prudent Wife» who masters «all domestic Ends». She manages her children «by a Nod / [...] without a Rod» (ll. 98-110; see Williams 1958, vol. 2, p. 633).³ She is so obliging that her servants love and obey her, and she is exquisitely gracious to her guests. In terms of Swift's major achievement and predisposition, however, the Market Hill poems are exceptions that prove the rule. Swift cannot stop with his portrait of an ideal domestic woman. About half way through the poem he reverts to politics, attacks the Walpole administration he would like to hang, and nearly gets himself arrested. Swift enjoys domestic harmony, but he almost instinctively moves to hating and detesting «that animal called man».

1 Turning out the Light

There are several reasons for Swift's fear, concern with change, and fury toward those not properly responding to such concern: recollection of regicide and usurping Dissent; a later new dynasty that threatened to diminish the established church; Swift's removal from England and modest political power; a mistrust of such power other than his own; the special case of Irish Catholic subjection; fear of Scotts-Irish Presbyterians and the love-hate relationship Swift had with Ireland; his poor health and long periods of physical and psychological discomfort; the concept of original sin; and of course genetic inheritance that could be a kind of predestination by DNA. Whether separate or together, these suggest a mind more amenable to opposition and objection than to compromise and persuasion. Some of this anger and loss is part of the larger Tory sense of high virtue and low success. Some of it is indigenous to Swift, and much of it is inherent in the concept of cultural fragility cognate with original sin. Nation, church, and state are protected by hardly more than an egg shell under constant attack. One error can be fatal.

³ Significantly, the first part of this poem was written at Market Hill not later than 1730; Swift's turn to hostile political satire probably is in 1732, after Market Hill. Peter J. Schakel discusses the *Market Hill* poems (Shackel 2001) in a volume including also Michael Conlon's essay, which suggests some of Swift's darker and undermining moments (Conlon 2001, pp. 133-146).

Swift may have thought that God required resistance to perceived evil. Mankind's faults are played out in what Swift regarded as malign political machinations. He makes these clear in the *Examiner*, No. 14 (1710), in which he vastly overstates the deeds of a presumably murderous and genocidal opponent: «this Island of ours, for the greatest Part of twenty Years [has] lain under the Influence of such Counsels and Persons, whose Principle and Interest it was to corrupt our Manners, blind our Understandings, drain our Wealth, and in Time destroy our Constitution both in Church and State» (Davis 1966, vol. 3, p. 12). Unlike so many British Protestants who praised the 1688 «Godly Revolution», Swift regarded the Stuart expulsion and William's arrival as perhaps desirable but certainly dangerous political events. In the *Sentiments of a Church of England Man* (1708-1711) he referred to the Stuarts, but more specifically to James II, as «the abdicated Family». William III's Act of Toleration nonetheless weakened the established church and by extension the monarchy. It now was too late for «so mild a Government» and «so pure a Religion» to bring down the wrath of secular power, but he still hopes for «some strict and effectual Laws, to prevent the rising and spreading of new Sects [...] else there must never be an End» – other than religious and national decline (Davis 1966, vol. 2, pp. 3 and 5).⁴ As we shall see, Swift's *Verses* on his own death (1731; 1739) exemplify a world in which Stuart collapse leads to national collapse – or so Swift feared.

Swift was more moderate than altitudinarian Charles Leslie, but he shared Leslie's premise: to stop such collapse a good man must bravely stand in the gap to protect the endangered nation. Leslie knows that those in the gap «hinder the Builders of *Babel* from Performing *All that they have Imagin'd to do*, both as to *Church and State*» (Leslie 1704, p. 75).⁵ Leslie conflates two grim Old Testament observations. In *Genesis* (11: 1-9), God

4 The first two pages of this tract urge Swift's version of moderation, but contrast sharply with consequent tone and with the later *Examiner* quoted above.

5 The commonplace term was cognate with the concept that one compromise leads to others and to destruction of order. Swift uses the image of 'Babel' in *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, l. 384, in which the new government of George I becomes «a *Babel*». He is referring to what he believes «a dangerous Faction», but also, I suspect, to the monarch's German and often French language and German advisors at court. On George I's linguistic skills, see Hatton 1978 (pp. 128-131), who adds that after the first year or so of George's reign, his royal court «had few Germans; but the very fact that there were any at all offended English susceptibilities and created mutual distrust in moments of crisis» (p. 132). Francis Atterbury often cites the foreign nature of the new monarch, as in his fear that George I might not be «resolved to reign like an *English King*, and not like a *Foreigner*». He hopes that limits upon the king's patronage of «all Forreigners [sic] from any Employments, or Grants of Lands, &c. in these *Nations* [...] may satisfy the People, that his Majesty's Affections are not settled upon Aliens and Strangers», but the Whigs oppose this for self-interested reasons (Atterbury 1714, p. 21; the pamphlet is unsigned). They wish «to bring over *Five or Six Thousand Sluggish Famish'd Palatines* to devour the Bread of the Natives» (p. 24).

punishes and disperses the once linguistically, politically, and morally pure people who build Babel. In prophetic *Ezekiel* (22: 3) « the angry God sees nothing but vice within Israel and «sought for a man among them, that should make up a hedge, and stand in the gap before the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none». Swift uses the familiar image ironically in *An Argument against abolishing Christianity* (1708; 1711). There Christianity itself lends «its Name, to stand in the Gap, and to employ or divert» the aberrations of dissenting ministers or else they would use their energies against the law and «the publick Peace» (Davis 1966, vol. 2, p. 35). More gravely, there could not be such a good man if the land was drowned in sin. Roger L'Estrange's *A Short Answer To A Whole Litter of Libellers* (1680) insists that the government must not permit Presbyterianism. He stresses fragility, consequent danger, and death. Religious comprehension would be «like a *Sea-breach* to your *Grounds*: / Suffer but *One Flaw*, the *whole Country Drowns*» (L'Estrange 1680, p. 3). Swift agreed with that concept and put it this way in 1726: under Elizabeth the «wicked Puritans» began «to quarrel only with surplices and other habits, with the ring in matrimony, the cross in baptism, and the like; thence they went on to further matters of higher importance, and, at last, they must needs have the whole government of the church dissolved» (Davis and Landa 1963, pp. 225-226).⁶ One granted illicit demand leads to dissolution of the established church.

Swift exemplifies a particular kind of disaster by amplifying the horrors of warfare. He is at his often punitive best when attacking an individual(s) or an institution(s) he thinks wrong, unfairly triumphant, deviating from its proper role, or in dangerous decline from a better state. For example, John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough was the great Whig icon who expanded British power to the Continent, smote the Great Satan Louis XIV, surpassed Caesar in military success and, in spite of himself, made possible the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Such praise was rendered the more potent since Marlborough was regarded as Queen Anne's virtuous martial arm against France and for British continental power. As George Smith put it, Anne and her general waged restorative campaigns in which «our QUEEN appears like the Rising Sun upon the Earth, not to burn up and to destroy, but refresh and cherish it». English «Arms were never so Successful, because our Cause was never Better» (Smith 1705, sig. A3v). Swift's Tory campaign against Marlborough helped to force him out of command in 1711 and out of the country in 1712. He returned to favor under George I, in 1722 was buried in Henry VII's chapel in Westminster Abbey, and was removed to Blenheim in 1744 at his widow Sarah's instructions. Giles Jacob's *Britain's Hero* (1722) typifies the patriotic poems on his death. Marlborough is im-

6 Swift ironically gives the narrator the role of standing in the gap on behalf of nominal Christianity. He will fight to preserve it even if the Attorney General gives «an Order [...] for my immediate prosecution» (Davis 1966, vol. 2, p. 27).

mortal, glorious, god-like and «Whole Armies at his Feet expiringly». His troops dispense «Deaths by Thousands as they go». There are «Millions slaughter'd as their Victims ly»; the «Cries of Victors and of Vanquish'd blend» and Marlborough evokes peace and sanguine allied conquest (Jacob 1722, pp. 6-7).

Swift would have none of this for a war he thought unnecessarily prolonged at the cost of a huge butcher's bill. His *Satirical Elegy* on Marlborough's death was written in 1722, but appeared in 1764 and 1765. It savages Marlborough, monarchs, dukes, warriors, pride, and political exploiters. The poem's incandescent conclusion pictures the duke as a glossy superficial bubble forced to the ground. God created Adam from dirt to join with Eve and create the human race. In contrast, Swift's Marlborough stained European dirt with the deaths of thousands in the War of the Spanish Succession he extended for personal gain:

Come hither, all ye empty things,
Ye bubbles rais'd by breath of Kings;
Who float upon the tide of state,
Come hither, and behold your fate.
Let pride be taught by this rebuke,
How very mean a thing's a Duke;
From all his ill-got honours flung,
Turn'd to that dirt from whence he sprung
(ll. 25-32) (Williams 1958, vol. 1, pp. 296-297).

Swift berates Marlborough, military glory, expansionist victories, and celebration of what Jacob called «Death, in all Shapes» extending its «mighty Pow'r» (Jacob 1722, p. 7). The poem nonetheless hardly dented pride, warfare, or political ambition. Instead, Marlborough's victories made Britain a major player in continental Europe, at first enhanced Whig power, and contributed to the Hanoverian monarchs' consequent stability. Swift emphasizes the bloodletting of the warfare he detests, but he writes loser's history. The views he supported, like fewer disruptive allies, a shorter war, earlier peace, and a blue water policy, either were not practical or did not work.⁷ The *Satirical Elegy* is a near paradigm of some Swiftian satire: it

7 Swift discusses these and other aspects of the War of the Spanish Succession in his *Conduct of the Allies, and of the Late Ministry, in Beginning and Carrying on the Present War* (1711, with four editions in that year). As with much of Swift's political polemic, it evoked harsh replies. John Oldmixon thus begins his *Remarks on a False, Scandalous, and Seditious Libel*: «'Tis High Time for every good Englishman to look about him, when our Constitution is so openly attacked; when our Alliances are treated as Villainous and Destructive, and all that we have been doing ever since the Revolution is represented as the Works of Faction and Darkness» (Oldmixon 1711, sig. A1v, with the title page as A1r; italics and Roman type reversed). For a helpful introduction and annotation of Swift's text see Goldgar, Gadd 2008.

is stunningly ordered rage against the malign success that Swift abhors, cannot correct, but can verbally punish.

Gulliver's Travels (1726, 1735) berates the nature of contemporary warfare as well as the goodness of man. The King of Brobdingnag begins to explain why Gulliver later is banished from Houyhnhnmland: his human vices make him unfit for rational equine company. The king characterizes most British natives, but his words apply to all nations. We are «the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth» (Womersley 2012, p. 189). On this scenario, Nature rather than a loving benevolent God judges us. We no longer are privileged human creatures made in God's image but, in Samuel Johnson's definition, merely permitted to live as vermin, as «Any noxious animal. Used commonly for small creatures». Johnson's third illustration for our lowered state comes from Swift: «He that has so little wit / To nourish *vermine*, may be bit» (Johnson 1755).⁸ The King of Brobdingnag has the proper wit and the proper refusal to be bit. We are suffered rather than chosen. That sufferance can be retracted if the vermin become too unpleasant – as the king threatens when Gulliver, proud of 'Modern' improvements, informs him of gunpowder's splendidly destructive virtues: «he commanded me, as I valued my Life, never to mention [gunpowder] any more» (Womersley 2012, p. 193). Celebration of violence invites violence toward Gulliver himself, who may be squashed like the nasty little bug that the King of Brobdingnag thinks him.

This discussion suggests one way to approach Swift as a satirist, cultural commentator, and autobiographer – namely, to ask what workable norms he offers. We cannot be little people or big people. We should not be almost all of the characters in *Gulliver's* third book or be rational horses in the fourth book. As we shall see, even when Swift's norms are clear, he sometimes undercuts while affirming them and is angry that his affirmation does not succeed.

2 Swift, Different, and Bereft

One of Swift's set of norms is in the italicized passage in *A Modest Proposal* (1729). If followed, that sensible wisdom could avoid infant cannibalism; but the essay concludes with antagonism, defeat, and anger. No man may speak to him of prudent ways to increase Irish prosperity «till he hath, at least, a Glimpse of Hope, that there will ever be some hearty and sincere Attempt to put *them in Practice*» (Davis 1964, p. 117). The norm in *An Argument against Abolishing Christianity* also is clear, the opposite of the narrator's own preference for toothless nominal Christianity; but it

8 All subsequent definitions and illustrative quotations are from this edition.

is a threatened norm that appears only by ironic inversion. We again see Swift's concern with cultural fragility: freethinkers believe that Christianity «is a Sort of Edifice, wherein all the Parts have such a mutual Dependance on each other, that if you happen to pull out one single Nail, the whole Fabrick must fall to the Ground». Christianity must not be abolished and must be made coherent and strong in a firmly based building. The best that ironic Swift behind the speaker can offer is the hope that if Christianity is abolished, it should only be so after the present war ends; otherwise it must trouble «our Allies; who, as it falls out, are all Christians» and proud of it (Davis 1966, vol. 2, p. 38).⁹

We again see Swift's fear of a variously incoherent and destructive culture in *A Tale of a Tub* (1704). That is a brilliant but – we often forget – sad story of a small family that represents a large world. A loving father on his deathbed bequeaths a mystical suit to each of his three sons, whom he regards as of equal age and worth. The neat and simple suit will grow as they grow, provide them with all the wisdom they need, and should not be altered. After the father dies, the sons promptly ignore his legacy, become fashionable and corrupt, and disorder the coat – a surrogate for the Bible – with garish ornaments. They become individuals whose names denote their Christian sects: Peter (Rome), Jack (Dissent), and Martin (Church of England). Peter further violates his father's commands by subjecting his brothers to his self-proclaimed superiority reinforced by secular power («Section IV»). Swift's history of the church in the world is a history of children rejecting their father's legacy, of brutal sibling rivalry, and of the danger to moderates in a growingly insane religious milieu. Jack and Martin realize that Peter has forced unpaternal ornamentation upon them. Jack tears it out, rips the father's suit, and rips himself and his church from God's true meaning. Martin removes some of the junk, but wisely leaves those parts that cannot be purged without damaging the suit's fabric. The Church of Rome as usurper, the Dissenting church as destructive heretic, the Church of England as a sensible but threatened *via media*, become Swift's history of the Christian church through time.

A Tale thus is contemporaneous. As a madman himself, the *Tale*'s 'Modern' narrator is keen on the lunacy and affiliations of his two religious colleagues. Since he wants to conclude his story he merely summarizes «how *Peter* got a *Protection* out of the *King's-Bench*; And of a *Reconcilement* between *Jack* and Him, upon a *Design* they had in a certain *rainy Night*, to trepan *Brother Martin* into a *Spunging-house*, and there strip him to the *Skin*. How *Martin*, with much ado, shew'd them both a fair pair of *Heels*» (Walsh 2010, pp. 132-133). Martin is on the run as one alien, and one vio-

9 Feingold 1983 characterizes some of Swift's affirmations: much of Swift's praise is for political men and women of whom he approved; some other is for aspects of art; others are by ironic inversion.

lent Christian brother joins forces and seeks to trepan him. Swift did not mean but may have hinted at the surgical meaning of the phrase ‘to perforate with the trepan’, as Johnson defines the cork-screw-like implement designed to bore into the skull, relieve pressure and perhaps clean out a wound’s debris. It was a painful and dangerous operation from which few survived. The word’s dominant meaning is Johnson’s second definition: «To catch; to ensnare», which he illustrates from the second canto of Samuel Butler’s third part of *Hudibras* (1678).¹⁰ There a republican verifies the royalists’ nightmare scenario: Presbyterians and Independents are waiting in the wings, sharpening their axes and plotting a return to power. They will have an easier job than before in a new martial venture whose first effort began with nothing. They then «Rais’d Funds as strange, to carry’t on; / Trepann’d the State, and fac’d it down» with their own «Plots and Projects» (Butler 1709, p. 95). The lines implicitly gloss *A Tale*’s epitome of religious combat in mid-to-late seventeenth-century England: the church and state are trepanned, faced-down, subject to plots and false republican utopian projects and apparent papist absolutism and superstition. Martin needs to escape by his heels because a compromised state does not protect its established church.

This sense of collapse, loss of order, of one man who stands in the gap to resist presumed moral barbarism and pays the price, is a dominant theme in Swift’s work and a defining element of his life. Part of that courageous response also concerned belief – not only in Providence, but in the positive aspects of society that Providence supplied. What, then, did Jonathan Swift believe in as workable positive norms toward which his readers might aspire?

In the *Life of Swift* Johnson observed that, upon reflection, the part of *Gulliver’s Travels* «which gave the most disgust must be the history of the Houyhnhms» (Mittendorf 2010, p. 979). Johnson there suggests a problem in our attempts to understand much of Swift’s major works. He is reasonably clear about what and whom he is against and how he would clear up their mess. The *Epistle to a Lady* shows that Swift’s nominal mirth against corrupt politicians, here Sir Robert Walpole and his minions, masks rage: «it must be understood, / I would hang them if I cou’d». He also would «apply ALECTO’S Whip, / Till they wriggle, howl, and skip» (ll. 169-70, Williams 1958, pp. 179-180). Swift feared that his desired victims might retaliate. On 26 November 1725, he inverts both the voice of the Old Testament God who has withdrawn the deluge (*Genesis* 8: 21), and the *Book of Common*

10 Johnson’s illustrative quotation of ‘Trepan’ is taken from Dr John Arbuthnot. Johnson also quotes Robert South: «Those are but *trepanned* who are called to govern, being invested with authority, but bereaved of power, which is nothing else but to mock and betray them into a splendid and magisterial way of being ridiculous». On this scenario, the Church of England appears to have authority, but lacks the power more fully to act upon that authority.

Prayer, which asks for His mercy to a repentant people. Swift writes to Alexander Pope: «Drown the world! I am not content with despising it, but I would anger it if I could with safety». He wishes that there were some place «built for its despisers, where one might act with safety» (Walsh 2010, p. 6; italics and Roman type reversed).¹¹ Swift often is less overt about what he is for and how one can implement his ideas. Such perceived uncertainty troubled Swift, who could not understand why readers of *A Tale of a Tub* failed to see that he there «*Celebrates the Church of England as the most perfect of all others in Discipline and Doctrine*» (Walsh 2010, p. 6). Swift is brilliantly comic in *A Tale of a Tub*'s mockery of Transubstantiation as real presence (Section IV); but he does not make the case for the Anglican Eucharist as memorial service. Many readers think that the norms in *Gulliver's Travels* are the rational horses. Many others think they are neither norms nor even humanly possible.

At other times, Swift insists on a disappeared, disappearing, or tenuous norm. Perhaps there once was something good in the world, but it did not last, probably cannot be reclaimed, and at best is a distant gleam darkened by the night, as in the evocation of now unachievable classical virtue recalled in *Glubdubdrib*. Occasionally portrayal of that loss can be both beautiful and mournful, as in Swift's final poem to Stella on 13 March 1727. It is both a birth day and death day celebration and begins to answer a difficult question: what happens when a man loses his only norm or source of comfort when, in Johnson's words, he no longer has some one with whom to pass «his hours of relaxation» and with whom he can open «his bosom» (Mittendorf 2010, p. 979).

The moving final poem to Stella also asks us to consider the vexed problem of Swift's relationship with women. Lord Orrery commented that Swift thought of women «rather as Busts, than as whole figures». He thus «has seldom descended lower than the centre of their hearts» (Fróes 2000, p. 165). On 20 April 1704, Swift wrote to the Reverend William Tisdall who hoped to marry Stella: «I have no-where met with a humour, a wit, or conversation so agreeable, a better portion of good sense, or a truer judgment of men and things» (Woolley 1999-2014, vol. 1, p. 154). That potential match collapsed, and thereafter Swift wrote birthday poems to Stella every year from 1719 to 1727; she tended him when he was ill, spoke with him regularly but always with others present, and was a chief source of Swift's

11 For 'Drown', see relevant, and often repeated, annotation like this: after the ark rests on dry land «Noah builds an altar, and sacrifices, 20. God accepts it and promises not to drown the world again, 21. But to continue the seasons of the year, 22» (Poole 1700, sig. C3v, in italics, numbers excepted); or, this one for fair weather: «O Almighty Lord God, who for the sin of man didst once drown all the world» (*Book of Common Prayer And Administration of the Sacraments* 1713, sig. B4v, «Prayers and Thanksgiving upon Several Occasions»). See also Swift's phrase, «please provide productive weather to a reformed people» (Woolley 1999-2014, vol. 2, p. 623, 26 November, 1725). So far as I can tell, the allusion remains unacknowledged.

emotional relief. His final poem to her seeks to keep her alive in him and to deny the reality of the ailments that would kill her on 28 January 1728. The poem's first paragraph describes what Swift hopes will be shared deception. «This Day [...] This Day» must be joyful; the two forget the «mortifying Stuff» of Swift's age and Stella's illness that «not the gravest of Divines» refuses to hear (ll. 1-13). Those terminal-like words are merely two of the many that often harshly punctuate the poem: *decays, few remaining days, no more, time is running fast, die, remembrance, declines, spent, grave, pass, no marks behind, end, better state, and heaven intends. This day and now compete with mortifying stuff and lose.* So indeed does Swift and his attempt to use reason to retain the present in the face of the future, to urge «[a] better and more pleasing Thought» (l. 10). Virtue, proper thoughts and good actions cannot die; they «leave behind / Some lasting Pleasure in the Mind, / Which by Remembrance will assuage, / Grief, Sickness, Poverty, and Age» (ll. 29-32). Intrusive reality follows at once. The remembrance must «shoot a radiant Dart, / To shine through Life's declining Part» (ll. 33-34).

The next paragraph eulogizes the not-yet departed. Surely she must feel contentment with her good actions, her skill in saving the sick from death, her defense of friends, and her detestation of vice. All these may induce contentment and leave radiant darts, but they also denote «a Life well spent» (l. 36), depleted. Swift acknowledges the power of that word *spent* as he asks questions whose answers he knows and dislikes. Is all this mere empty shadows or reflections? Mere speculative fantasies? He moves from the flimsy to the solid, to analogy that he hopes might reject the transience of happy illusion that must, with a repeated rhyme word again suggesting distance, «fly and leave no Marks behind» (l. 54). Food of twenty years ago sustained us through today, just as continued food sustains us thereafter, or we would die. Virtue in humanity is the «Nutriment that feeds the Mind» in the past and must continue to do so: «Then, who with Reason can pretend, / That all Effects of Virtue end?» (ll. 62, 65-66). By the next paragraph Swift no longer can ignore the «mortifying Stuff» of Stella's sickness. Yes, her earlier virtuous acts «join to fortify your Heart» and help her courageously to look «back with Joy where she has gone» (ll. 72, 75). Yet Swift knows that Virtue as guardian must go to Stella's deathbed: «She at your sickly Couch will wait, / And guide you to a better State» (ll. 77-78).

Swift has written an elegy in which at first he attempts neither to speak about nor to acknowledge his beloved's pending death. The attempt fails. He then seeks to reassure her that her life has been virtuous, admirable and ultimately rewarded in that «better State». He also finds that the elegy concerns the living more than the dead and his own soon vacant life rather than Stella's death, which neither Reason nor Swift's reasoning can change. In the final paragraph he is alone, grieving, and angry that he is alone and grieving. The plural «Friends» becomes the singular. *Me,*

me, my, I, and I'm conflict with *you* and *your*: The painful skirmish stresses Swift's new focus as the troubled survivor unable to change places with the soon untroubled invalid.

Oh then, whatever Heav'n intends,
 Take Pity on your pitying Friends;
 Nor let your Ills affect your Mind,
 To fancy they can be unkind.
 Me, surely me, you ought to spare,
 Who gladly would your Suff'rings share;
 Or give my Scrap of Life to you,
 And think it far beneath your Due;
 You, to whose Care so oft I owe,
 That I'm alive to tell you so
 (ll. 79-88) (Williams 1958, vol. 2, pp. 763-764).¹²

Samuel Johnson understood Swift's grief and dismay, as in «Take pity on your pitying friends», in which the plural denotes Swift. Johnson's Swift lamented «the death of her whom he loved most, aggravated by the consciousness that himself had hastened it» and hastened his own alienation from the social world. After Stella's death, Swift reduced his benevolent acts, increased his severity, «drove his acquaintance from his table, and wondered why he was deserted». His bitterness «condemned him to solitude; and his resentment of solitude sharpened his asperity». Bereft Swift refused to wear spectacles, and stopped reading books and enlarging his ideas. He «left his mind vacant to the vexations of the hour» and then to madness because of his loss (Mittendorf 2010, pp. 1003, 1005-1006, 1007, and 1009). Johnson is excessive, but he recognized that Swift's relationship with Stella ultimately was destructive to himself as well as to her.

Swift indeed regards much of humanity as self-destructive or incapable of improvement – as in *Gulliver's Travels* and its final, if for many readers at the least improbable, norm. In a much discussed passage in Part IV, Chapter 12, Gulliver quotes Sinon from Virgil's *Aeneid*: «*Nec, si miserum Fortuna Sinonem / Finxit, vanum etiam mendacemque improba finget*» (book 2, ll. 79-80; Conte 2009, p. 35). Though vile fortune has made Sinon wretched, she has not made him a liar, he mendaciously says as he persuades the war weary Trojans to take the horse into their city. Sinon later releases the Greeks within the horse and enables Troy's destruction. Swift brilliantly complicates the Sinon story. Pious Aeneas tells it to Dido as he,

¹² Feingold observes of Swift's remark: «It is the value of his own life that he pleads for here». He adds that «of the results of the plea we can know nothing» (Feingold 1983, p. 194). Johnson thought otherwise, and probably is correct. See Feingold's valuable discussion of this 'Stella' poem, pp. 192-198.

his refugee Trojans, and their household gods journey toward a new home. The Medieval and Renaissance *Aeneid* often was read as an allegory of the soul growing to maturity. Rome rises as a secular empire and then as the spiritually civilizing church. So perceived, it was a story of success after failure. So viewed as well, Swift invites us to take his own rational horse into our proud internal city, allow it to destroy our pride and foster our rebuilding. He teases us toward that insight but soon rejects it. Gulliver cannot integrate with his family or nation; he laments his expulsion from Houyhnhnmland, increases his pride, and fails to see much else in humanity except «deformity and diseases both in body and mind» (Womersley 2012, pp. 437 and 443).¹³ Aeneas's Rome was not built in a day. Swift's internal benign Rome seems not built at all, or perhaps only in so distant a time that not even mythic prediction can picture it.

Swift's 1735 letter from Gulliver to his cousin Richard Sympson supports two germane hypotheses regarding how Swift might communicate such norms as he offers. One is in overt statement. Gulliver angrily rejects the notion that his chief characters in Part IV «have no more Existence than the Inhabitants of *Utopia*» – Utopian, yes, but certainly real in their best values. Yet Gulliver does not care what British yahoos think of him: «I wrote for their Amendment, and not their Approbation». The «united Praise of the whole Race» means less to him than the wisdom imparted by «the two degenerate *Houyhnhnms* I keep in my Stable». The second hypothesis is that, by the mid 1720s and certainly by 1735, Swift, permanently bound to Ireland and permanently exiled from English seats of power, had largely abandoned attempts to reform the apparently unreformable Yahoos every where around him: «I should never have attempted so absurd a Project as that of reforming the *Yahoo* Race in this Kingdom; but I have now done with all such visionary Schemes for ever» (Womersley 2012, pp. 13-14).

Swift has shown that neither church nor state, neither ordinary humanity nor a beloved woman, neither epic precedent nor fantasized equine reason, are enduring and practical models. On whom or on what, then, can he ask himself and us to rely? He attempts to answer that question in *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, where we will see a sadly defeated norm.

13 For allegorical readings of the *Aeneid*, see Baswell 1995, and Wilson-Okamura 2010. *Gulliver's Travels* and its fourth book in particular have generated much heat from 1726 forward. The editors of three relatively recent editions also include critical histories (Fox 1995; Rivero 2004; Hawes 2004). James L. Clifford's important essay lays out the two dominant modes of reading *Gulliver* (Clifford 1974). I take R. S. Crane's essay on Book IV to be definitive (Crane 1967). There also have been recent concerns with Swift's severity and his largely negative response to the 'Moderns'. For some of these, see Rawson 2002, Boyle 2000, Rothstein 2007, and Alff 2014. For Samuel Johnson's troubled relationship with Swift, see Weinbrot 2014. These citations can only suggest the large body of secondary literature on Swift and on *Gulliver's Travels*.

Verses on the Death is a muted conversational version of the Swiftian satiric catalogue of vices. Here, Swift ventures through human benevolence, friendship, collegiality, the publishing world, memory, and simple decency which is on very short rations indeed. He finally evokes a putative impartial spokesman at a public inn rather than at a church or parliament in which Swift should be celebrated. The nameless speaker of course largely is Swift himself, and is nearly as dark, if in a different way, as the speaker in that eulogy for Stella. Now, however, Swift contemplates the results of his own death rather than Stella's death.¹⁴

I suspect that Swift invents an anonymous persona because he fears that no one else will speak affirmatively for him and about him. He tries to become his own norm, to appear reasonably placid amidst a variously and broadly corrupt world. He «kept the Tenor of his Mind, / To merit well of human Kind» (ll. 361-362). So handsome but unlikely a pose soon collapses upon the cluster of negatives, like *ruin* and *slaughter*, that we have seen earlier. For Swift, Britain depended upon an Anglican monarch from a long legally established Anglican dynasty, however much politically defective when briefly Roman Catholic. There is no *ad exemplum regina* in so frail a culture if there is no Stuart queen. There once were «golden Dreams» (l. 372) regarding national greatness and the benign power of Queen Anne – from whom there were no royal heirs. The dream «Was all destroy'd by one Event. / Too soon that precious Life was ended, / On which alone, our Weal depended» (ll. 376-378). The nation's fate hangs from (as in Latin *dependere*) Queen Anne's life and throne, and now is detached and falling. Key words immediately thereafter include *dangerous Faction*, *Wrath and Vengeance*, *ruin*, *slaughter*, *confound*, *turn Religion to a Fable*, *make the Government a Babel*, *Pervert*, *Disgrace*, *Corrupt*, *rob*, *sacrifice*, and *in-*

14 For a discussion of the complex publishing history of this poem, see Karian 2010, pp. 166-204 (which includes and enlarges two of Karian's earlier essays on the subject and gives useful histories of scholarship on the matter); see also Erskine-Hill 2008. John Irwin Fischer provides a useful overview of critical discussion of the poem from about 1967 to 1978 (Fischer 1978, pp. 153-154, n. 2). One aspect of such criticism is the eulogist-narrator's representation of Swift, which from his own time forward has made Swift seem either vain, misunderstanding his own history, or so ironic as to be puzzling. James Woolley, however, argues that «the eulogy as a whole is far closer to a serious representation of Swift than is sometimes supposed». If the eulogy characterizes a myth regarding Swift, «it is a myth he himself took seriously» (Woolley 1981, p. 120). This seems to me correct. Other interpretations of this aspect of perhaps Swift's best poem vary. For Peter Schakel it «continue Swift's concern with being ignored, unrecognized, and forgotten, and supplies the theory which accounts for it» (Schakel, p. 127). For Pat Rogers, Swift confronts death «with a sense of courage and humanity, so that the final effect is more consolatory than depressing» (Rogers 2003, p. 177). Howard Erskine-Hill thinks the poem an *ars moriendi* in which Swift bravely acknowledges his defeat in life and in his culture hereafter: «This is no insignificant act of humility» (Erskine-Hill 2008, p. 157). Rogers rightly says that «we are still far from reaching a consensus on the drift of the *Verses*» (Rogers 2003, p.185). Schakel and Woolley seem to me the most persuasive. Swift sounds like an angry man who resents his varied losses and says so in varied ways.

famous. All this supports the paragraph's final couplet: «When such a Tempest shook the Land, / How could unguarded Virtue stand?» (ll. 389-391). She cannot. Swift, the Dean of St. Patrick's, flirts with politically induced sin when he responds «[w]ith Horror, Grief, Despair» as he beholds «the dire destructive Scene» (ll. 391-392; Williams 1958). On Swift's scenario, Queen Anne's 'precious' life preserves the threatened Anglican church and state; it also resists the trauma of political tempests that blow virtue away upon the accession of the Lutheran German Georges and their Whig allies. Swift finds himself forced to rely upon Anne alone because he cannot rely upon the institutions that are supposed to support her and the nation.

That grim defeat is sexual, national, and cosmic. Virtue as both image and actor traditionally was female and regularly was so used by Pope and by Swift.¹⁵ Governments should protect political virtue. Since parliamentary and ministerial government is entirely male, its job includes protecting the vulnerable woman, whether Queen Anne or personified Virtue. It does neither. Yet more, as Ephraim Chambers made plain in 1728, Virtue's 'various significations' extended beyond the secular to denote the «*Power, or Perfection of any Thing, whether Natural or Super-natural.*» In its "more proper [...] Sense, *Virtue* signifies a Habit, which improves and perfects the [...] Possessor, and his Actions». Virtue thus is «a Principle of acting, or doing well and readily; and that, either infused from above, such as are the *Theological Virtues*; or acquired by our own Application, as the *Intellectual and Moral Virtues*». The Virtues also are in the third rank of angels in heaven's hierarchy; they have the power both to work miracles and to reinforce «the inferior Angels in the Exercise of their Functions» (Chambers 1728, vol. 2, pp. 311-312, s.v. *Virtue*).¹⁶

The complex meanings of *Virtue* suggest a covert inference: for Swift, the newly Georgian Whig government's wrath, vengeance, ruin, and slaughter indeed attack «old *England's* Glory» (l. 387). As he also may suggest, in the process they attack God, angels, and the good inner morality

15 For an example of female Virtue other than in the *Verses*, see Swift's unsigned *The Birth of Manly Virtue From Callimachus* (Dublin, 1725); later publishers added the words «Inscribed to his Excellency the Lord Carteret». For Pope, see *Epilogue to the Satires* [...] *Dialogue I*, ll. 113, 137, 150; *Epilogue* [...] *Dialogue II*, ll. 95, 119, 199, 218 (Butt 1961, pp. 306-309, 318-325). At line 95 Pope sings: «I follow *Virtue*, where she shines, I praise». At line 119 he is optimistic but may echo Swift: «No Pow'r, when Virtue claims it, can withstand». The poem nevertheless ends in defeat by the reigning political dispensation. In 1740 Pope writes the unfinished, fragment, *1740. A Poem*: «The plague is on thee, Britain, and who tries / To save thee in th' infectious office *dies*» (ll. 74-75). Like Swift before him, Pope turns to one person, here Frederick, Prince of Wales, George II's estranged son and an Opposition hero: «Alas! On one alone our all relies, / Let him be honest, and he must be wise / [...] And one man's honesty redeem the land» (ll. 85-86, 98; Butt 1961, pp. 336-337). Like Swift, Pope too loses (politically ineffectual Frederick died in 1751; his eldest son became George III in 1760).

16 Readers surely noted that Virtue here is as unsuccessful in protecting a beloved woman as it was in the final poem to Stella.

that produces external morality. The wish to make «golden Dreams» real has become the nightmare Swift thinks he sees around him. No wonder he responds with horror.

No wonder as well that the poem's swerve to Ireland also reflects pain and grievance, both in the poem's text and in the prose notes so essential for the text's meaning. Upon Swift's return to Dublin in August of 1727, English enemies attacked him as a Jacobite; he was insulted in public; and he required armed guards to protect him at night. Others gained preferment; he gained friends who became enemies (ll. 399-406). His *Drapier's Letters* saved Ireland from financial ruin, but those «who reapt the Profit, sought his Blood» (l. 414). Judge Whitshed tried to punish him and his printer for pamphlets urging the Irish to use their own manufactures and to reject Wood's half-pence. Swift's alter-ego speaker images him as victimized by an Irish blood-thirsty «wicked Monster on the Bench» (l. 417). Swift does not see Dublin as his home, but as his place of exile distant from his true friends (ll. 431-434). Such friends as he has there are of the middle rank, but he nonetheless acquired local enemies whom he could not reform. «He vented oft his Wrath in vain» against the exploitive, criminal, rent-racking rural squires (ll. 444-454). He may have been too satirical now and again, but he never was malicious. By the time we reach the *Verses'* final six lines, we hear a defeated, angry, self-justifying man behind the fallen mask of a speaker once «quite indiff'rent» who «[m]y Character impartial draws» (ll. 305-306). He lost that putative impartiality, and he has learned the lesson that Swift taught him: the Irish are insane and foolish, certainly in part because they failed at the government level, if not at the Irish people's level, to honor, respect, and reward Jonathan Swift.

He gave the little Wealth he had,
To build a House for Fools and Mad:
And shew'd by one satyric Touch,
No Nation wanted it so much:
That Kingdom he hath left his Debtor,
I wish it soon may have a Better
(ll. 479-484) (Williams 1958; vol. 2, p. 572).

The poem's final couplet is both accusatory and ambiguous regarding the ungrateful Irish nation. William King carried Swift's manuscript from Dublin to England. Upon reading it and even after conferring with Pope and others, he found it confusing and ungrammatical. He asked: «a *better* what?» (Woolley 1999-2014, vol. 4, p. 563; 'William King to Mrs. White-way', 6 March 1738).¹⁷ Whomever «*better*» refers to, or whether Swift

17 King thus printed the final couplet in what became *The Life and Character of Dr. Swift*

ironically and sternly says that Ireland does not have a Better, it cannot improve unless causation magically changes. Human nature in general, English nature in particular as Ireland's rulers, and Irish nature even more particularly refuse to correct the vices Swift identifies. He defeated the «infamous destructive Cheat» (l. 408) of Wood's half pence, but he could not defeat the human evils attacked in *Gulliver's Travels*. *Verses on the Death* tries to present its norms through the final speaker's early values that, in theory, reflect the best of Swift's character and achievement. As the passage progresses, it changes from cool affirmation, social engagement, and upward mobility, to anger, detachment, and the isolation of the grave. Earlier in the poem we read that the Dean «Was never ill receiv'd at Court» (l. 308).¹⁸ By the end of the poem we read about Swift's bequest to help Ireland's «Fools and Mad» (l. 480; Williams 1958; vol. 2, p. 572) amongst whom he was required to live – and die. He preferred to do so in England, from which he felt himself banished, to which he asked to have his greatest poem delivered, and in which it was badly mangled before being sorted out years later.

We can summarize aspects of the norms in Jonathan Swift's arts. The attractive, friendly, and unthreatening world of the Market Hill poems cannot last. In *A Tale of a Tub* the primary paternal norm soon disappears and is replaced by aberration, dislocation, tyranny, madness, and a frail ecclesiastical norm in political, religious, and existential danger. In *Gulliver's Travels* neither classical nor institutional norms work in today's world, and the horses' admirable government by reason seems better for invented equine than real human abilities. In *Stella's Birthday* the death of a beloved woman becomes betrayal: «Me, surely, me, you ought to spare» (Williams 1958, vol. 2, p. 766). In *Verses on the Death* Swift invents a presumably fair and accurate stranger, perhaps the only one who can praise Swift's best traits – to no avail in the face of Swift's own emotional eruptions, defeat, and death. After such experiences, we well can understand why he hates «all nations, professions, and communities» and cannot «have peace of mind till all honest men are of [his] opinion». Given that impossibility, Swift lacked that peace of mind, could not see Virtue stand, and found that if there is only one person «On which alone, our Weal depended» that horror, grief, and despair were probable. We nonetheless should not stop there.

(1733) that he and Alexander Pope edited from Swift's larger manuscript: «Then, since you dread no further Lashes, / You freely may forgive his Ashes» (Williams 1958, vol. 2, p. 550).

18 For the most recent rejection of Swift's fantasy of power at court, see Winn 2014, pp. 578 and 622. Swift ignored the warning not to publish the offensive «Windsor Prophecy» that slandered the Duchess of Somerset, Queen Anne's Groom of the Stole. This offense supplements, or perhaps replaces, the usual view that Queen Anne refused a bishopric to Swift because of *A Tale of a Tub*.

3 Ears of Corn and Blades of Grass

It would be understandable if we concluded that Swift's search for workable norms ended in anarchy, despair, and chaos. He well-depicts these in his late *A Character, Panegyric, and Description of the Legion Club* (1736). The Irish parliament consists of «Many a Head that holds no Brains» (l. 10); these heads diabolically plan to ruin church and state, «plague and starve the City» (l. 54) and «Tear the Bible all to Pieces» (l. 66). Such incorrigible creatures deserve whipping and, Swift concludes, «May their God, the Devil confound 'em» (l. 242; Williams 1958, vol. 3, pp. 829, 831). Yet we confuse the relatively large darker part with the sometimes bright much larger whole if we take anger and anguish as Swift's only message. We also would ignore harsh and punitive satire's essential trait of overstatement in order to force attention to a serious problem. Swift claims that Irish legislators worship the devil and thus, he hopes, awakens us to their presumed threat to orthodox religion and national interest. Excess evokes awareness, which evokes attention, which, he again hopes, might check decay. Swift thus does not often provide comfort, but does evoke a norm that requires reorientation or significant stretching of our own norms. For example, in the *Verses* on his death he rightly says that, «Fair LIBERTY was all his Cry» (l. 347; Williams 1958, vol. 2, p. 566), for which he would give his life. Hatred of English colonialism in Ireland aside, however, that concept of "liberty" is more constrained than are such concepts in twenty-first century values. In general, then, we can look for Swift's norms under three overlapping rubrics: political and religious stability, checks upon human ambition and pride, and simple good sense that joins men and women with shared concerns.

For example, Swift surely believed that both the British limited constitutional monarchy and the Church of England were bound by Christian principles, national law, and the ethical conduct inherent in each. Church and state, if reluctantly, protected their opponents unless they became enemies and forfeited protective law. The state carefully balances the individual's right to freedom against the nation's right to order. Swift's concern for institutions, his understanding of the English civil war, and his fear of new dynasties lead to searches for stability. In such a scenario, free speech and religious dissent may be limited if thought to encourage instability. As Swift says in the *Argument against Abolishing Christianity*, enemies of religion in general and of Christianity in particular are so because «by laying Restraints on human Nature» they desirably restrict «Freedom of Thought and Action» (Davis 1966, vol. 2, p. 38). The King of Brobdingnag extends such restraint to politics. He tells Gulliver that those «who entertain Opinions prejudicial to the Publick» should not be obliged to change them but, in a term alien to much modern thought, should be «obliged to conceal them». It would be tyranny to disallow those thoughts, and destructive

weakness not to enforce the censorship: «For, a Man may be allowed to keep Poisons in his Closet, but not to vend them about as Cordials» (Womersley 2012, p. 187). Law and religion should restrain some corrupt human action. Law governs both the crown and the crown's subjects who need constant reminders of their proper, limited, place in the nation and the universe. If freedom is poison disguised as a cordial, it should indeed be restrained both in the church and the state to which it is intimately connected. Politics and religion cannot be separated. Tories were the Church party; Whigs were not and, for Swift, promoted disorder. Fair Liberty is a norm; but it should be constrained if it threatens stability, without which true liberty is impossible.

Alexander Pope inadvertently alluded to one of Swift's points of reference in human life and action—pride and its affront to God's plan. The first part of Pope's *Essay on Man* (1734) thus states: «In Pride, in reas'ning Pride, our error lies» (ll. 123-30; Mack 1950, pp. 30-31). Pope extends the image to the angels' revolt against God. Swift is more secular in this case, but both he and Pope ask us to learn the limits of the self, to accept our small role in the large world, and to accept modest triumphs as major achievements. In social as in religious and political life, restraint and acceptance of the quotidian should, but rarely do, dominate. Swift endorses the King of Brobdingnag's wisdom regarding government, justice, and agriculture as a form of human nourishment and morality—which, typically for Swift, are both desirable and largely absent from British life. His giant majesty deplored princely or ministerial intrigues, mysteries, and «*Secrets of State*». Government should function within «*very Narrow Bounds*» and look to

common Sense and Reason, to Justice and Lenity, to the Speedy Determination of Civil and criminal Causes [...] And, he gave it for his Opinion, that whoever could make two Ears of Corn, or two Blades of Grass to grow upon a Spot of Ground where only one grew before; would deserve better of Mankind, and do more essential Service to his Country, than the whole Race of Politicians put together (Womersley 2012, p. 194).

Intelligent common sense extends to human relations. In the *Progress of Marriage* (1722, 1765) a marriage that begins as a conceptual failure becomes a marital failure. A wealthy 52-year old clerical Dean receives permission to court and marry an empty-headed young woman «[n]early related to an Earl» (l. 4). The adult, the coquettish post-adolescent, and her family share blame for a relationship that ends with the Dean's fatal illness in Bath where he fancied he could conceive an heir. She inherits his estate, marries a rake-ensign who throws her out of her own home, spends her fortune on his whores, and leaves her the present of a «rooted Pox to last for ever» (l. 66). The pox becomes the emblem of an infectious destruc-

tive marriage. As so often in Swift's work, and certainly so in many of his poems about women and men, he expresses his obvious norm in a negative statement. Older husband and younger wife must differ, for they lack a

common Ligament that binds
The various Textures of their Minds,
Their Thoughts, and Actions, Hopes, and Fears,
Less corresponding than their Years
(ll. 33-36) (Williams 1958, vol. 1, pp. 289-295).¹⁹

The binding common ligament is emotional, psychological, and intellectual rather than physical, but it is a clear norm and guide. The statement is intelligently sensible: human beings who share values are more likely to get along than those who do not share values.

Stability, restraints upon ambition, and shared rather than competing human interests in human relations of course also are under regular threat in Swift's world, as they are in ours. Queen Anne's fallible but basically decent reign was Swift's emblem of stable Anglican monarchy. Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, was Swift's emblem of the restrained political power. Harley oversaw the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) that ended the War of the Spanish Succession, in which victorious Marlborough was so bloody. The *Market Hill* poems are emblems of amiable domestic family relations, in which Swift briefly was included. His *Stella* poems are emblems of more than amiable binding ligaments – for a time. Swift's greatness consists in part of his regular portrayal of the consequences of ignoring those norms, including the implicit self-indictment of his final poem to Stella. It also consists in his refusal to stop labeling corruption, wherever it might be. We pay a high price for an uncertain, incoherent world in which costly ambition, lack of connection, and moral and political decay too often are paramount. The *Drapier's Letters* excepted, Swift lost his battles but continued the fight, as he perhaps hoped that we would, however much he wrote for our amendment and not our approbation.

¹⁹ Swift's relationship to women has been much discussed. Other than studies of specific poems, see Pollak 1985, Doody 2003, Mell 1996, Barnett 2007 (especially pp. 124-153, and 154-170). The terms «Hopes, and Fears» recall a comparable line in Samuel Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749). After several failures of human desire to find happiness based on human ambition, Johnson's reader asks: «Where then shall Hope and Fear their objects find?» Johnson's answer is that «petitions yet remain, / Which heav'n may hear, nor deem religion vain» (ll. 343, 349-350; McAdam 1964, pp. 107-108). Johnson can urge such petitions because in the poem he separates religion from politics, as Swift could not.

Bibliography

- Alff, David (2014). «Swift's Solar Gourds and the Rhetoric of Projection». *Eighteenth-century Studies*, 47, pp. 245-260.
- Atterbury, Francis (1714). *English Advice to the Freeholders of England*. London: s.n.
- Barnett, Louise (2007). *Jonathan Swift in the Company of Women*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baswell, Christopher (1995). *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the Aeneid from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacrament* (1713). London: J. Baskett.
- Boyle, Frank (2000). *Swift as Nemesis: Modernity and its Satirist*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Butler, Samuel (1709). *Hudibras: The Third and Last Part*. London: T. Horne.
- Butt, John (ed.) (1961). *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, vol. 4, *Imitations of Horace*. London; New Haven: Methuen and Yale University Press.
- Chambers, Ephraim (1728). *Cyclopaedia: Or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*. London: Knapton et al.
- Clifford, James Lowry (1974). «Gulliver's Fourth Voyage: 'Hard' and 'Soft' Schools of Interpretation». In: Champion, Larry S. (ed.), *Quick Springs of Sense: Studies in the Eighteenth Century*. Athens (GA): University of Georgia Press, pp. 33-49.
- Conlon, Michael (2001). «Anonymity and Authority in the Poetry of Jonathan Swift». In: Weinbrot, Howard D.; Schakel, Peter J.; Karian, Stephen E. (eds.), *Eighteenth-century Contexts: Historical Inquiries in Honor of Phillip Harth*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 133-146.
- Conte, Gian Biagio (ed.) (2009). *P. Vergilius Maro: Aeneis*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Crane, Ronald Salmon (1967). «The Houyhnhnms, the Yahoos, and the History of Ideas». In: Crane, Ronald Salmon, *The Idea of the Humanities and Other Essays Critical and Historical*, vol. 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 261-282.
- Davis, Herbert, Landa, Louis (eds.) (1963). *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, vol. 9, *Irish Tracts 1720-1723 [...] And Sermons*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Davis, Herbert (ed.) (1964). *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, vol. 12, *A Modest Proposal*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Davis, Herbert (ed.) (1966). *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, vol. 2, *Bickerstaff Papers and Pamphlets on the Church*, vol. 3, *The Examiner and Other Pieces Written in 1710-11*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

- Delaney, Patrick (1754). *Observations upon Lord Orrery's Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift*. London: W. Reeve.
- Doody, Margaret Anne (2003). «Swift and Women». In: Fox, Christopher (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 87-111.
- Erskine-Hill, Howard (2008). «“Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift”: The Interests of Cuts and Gaps». In: Hudson, Nicholas; Santesso, Aaron (eds.), *Swift's Travels. Eighteenth-century British Satire and Its Legacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 143-159.
- Feingold, Richard (1983). «Swift in His Poems: The Range of His Positive Rhetoric». In: Rawson, Claude (ed.), *The Character of Swift's Satire: A Revised Focus*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, pp. 166-202.
- Fischer, John Irwin (1978). *On Swift's Poetry*. Gainesville: The University Press of Florida.
- Fróes, João (ed.) (2000). *Lord Orrery, John: Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift*. Newark: University of Delaware Press.
- Fox, Christopher (ed.) (1995). *Gulliver's Travels: Complete, Authoritative Text with Biographical and Historical Contexts*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press.
- Goldgar, Bertrand Alvin; Gadd, Ian (eds.) (2008). *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift, vol. 8, English Political Writings 1711-1714: The Conduct of the Allies and Other Works*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Griffin, Dustin H. (2010). *Swift and Pope: Satirists in Dialogue*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Harth, Phillip (1998). «Friendship and Politics: Swift's Relations with Pope in the Early 1730s». In: Real, Hermann J., Stöver-Leidig, Helgar (eds.), *Reading Swift: Papers from the Third Münster Symposium on Jonathan Swift*. Munich: Wilhelm Fink, pp. 239-248.
- Hatton, Ragnhild Marie (1978). *George I: Elector and King*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
- Hawes, Clement (ed.) (2004). *Jonathan Swift: Gulliver's Travels and Other Writings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Jacob, Giles (1722). *Britain's Hero: A Poem on the Death Of His Grace John, Duke of Marlborough*. London: H. Cole.
- Johnson, Samuel (1755). *Dictionary of the English Language*. London: Knapton et al.
- Karian, Stephen (2010). *Jonathan Swift in Print and Manuscript*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leslie, Charles (1704). *The Wolf Stript of his Shepherd's Cloathing*. London: (publishers of London and Westminster).
- L'Estrange, Roger (1680). *A Short Answer to a Whole Litter of Libellers*. London: J.B. for Henry Brome.
- Mack, Maynard (ed.) (1950). *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Al-*

- exander Pope, vol. 3.1, *An Essay on Man*. London; New Haven: Methuen and Yale University Press.
- McAdam, E.L. Jr.; Milne, George (eds.) (1964). *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, vol. 6, *Poems*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Mell, Donald C. (ed.) (1996). *Pope, Swift, and Women Writers*. Newark: University of Delaware Press.
- Mittendorf, John H. (2010). *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, vol. 22, *Lives of the Poets (1779-1781)*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Oldmixon, John (1711). *Remarks on a False, Scandalous, and Seditious Libel*. London: A. Baldwin.
- Pollak, Ellen (1985). *The Poetics of Sexual Myth: Gender and Ideology in the Verse of Swift and Pope*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Poole, Matthew (1700). *Annotations upon the Holy Bible*. 4th ed. Edinburgh: Successors of Andrew Anderson.
- Rawson, Claude (2002). *God, Gulliver, and Genocide: Barbarism and the European Imagination, 1492-1945*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rivero, Albert J. (ed.) (2004). *Gulliver's Travels: Based on the 1726 Text*. New York: Norton.
- Rogers, Pat (2003). «Swift the Poet». In: Fox, Christopher (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 177-201.
- Rothstein, Eric (2007). *Gleaning Modernity: Earlier Eighteenth-century Literature and the Modernizing Process*. Newark: University of Delaware Press.
- Schakel, Peter (1978). *The Poetry of Jonathan Swift: Allusion and the Development of a Poetic Style*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Schakel, Peter (2001). «Swift's Voices: Innovation and Complication in the Poems Written at Market Hill». In: Weinbrot, Howard D.; Schakel, Peter John; Karian, Stephen E. (eds.), *Eighteenth-century Contexts: Historical Inquiries in Honor of Phillip Harth*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 114-132.
- Smith, George (1705). *The Vanity of Conquests, and Universal Monarchy: Being a Succinct Account of all the Great Conquerors and Heroes Both of Ancient and Modern Ages*. London: R. Smith.
- Walsh, Marcus, ed. (2010). *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift*, vol. 1, *A Tale of A Tub and Other Works*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weinbrot, Howard (2014). «“Tis well an Old Age is out”: Johnson, Swift, and his Generation». In: Weinbrot, Howard (ed.), *Samuel Johnson: New Contexts for a New Century*. San Marino (CA): Huntington Library, pp. 47-68.

- Williams, Harold (ed.) (1958). *The Poems of Jonathan Swift*. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Wilson-Okamura, David Scott (eds.) (2010). *Virgil in the Renaissance*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Winn, James Anderson (2014). *Queen Anne: Patroness of the Arts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Woolley, David (ed.) (1999-2014). *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D. D.* 4 vols. Frankfurt am Main-Berlin: Peter Lang.
- Woolley, James (1981). «Autobiography in Swift's Verses on His Death». In: Mell, Donald Ch.; Fischer, John Irwin; Vieth, David M. (eds.), *Contemporary Studies of Swift's Poetry*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, pp. 112-122.
- Womersley, David (ed.) (2012). *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift*, vol. 16, *Gulliver's Travels*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.