

SWIFT'S RELATIONSHIP WITH DRYDEN

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CHAPTER I

"COUSIN SWIFT, YOU WILL NEVER BE A POET"

Jonathan Swift, eighteenth-century prose writer and satirist, and John Dryden, seventeenth-century poet, dramatist, and critic, were both prominent and influential literary figures in their day. Especially puzzling in the relationship between the two men is the fact that even though they were distantly related, Swift seems to have held a strong dislike for Dryden, for he made a number of derogatory references to him. In much of his writing, Swift made Dryden the target of his satirical attacks and evidently harbored enmity for Dryden during his whole life. Although there has been much conjecture over the issue, previous studies have explored the Dryden-Swift relationship only summarily, or have approached it from specialized angles. The purpose of this study is fully to explore their relationship by reviewing all the possible reasons for Swift's enmity, as it manifests itself in A Tale of a Tub, in The Battle of the Books, and in his correspondence. More conclusive answers may then be offered toward solving the problem.

In explaining their common ancestry, Ehrenpreis points out that Swift received his Christian name from the family of his father's mother and that Dryden descended from the same line. Both "are traced to a Northamptonshire gentleman, John Dryden of Canons Ashby; for one of his sons was Dryden's grandfather, and another, Nicholas, was Swift's

great grandfather," which would make their relationship a "second
cousinship once removed."¹

Swift's great grandfather, Nicholas Dryden, married a Mary
Emyley, and they called their oldest son Jonathan and their oldest
daughter Elizabeth. According to Ehrenpreis, it was Elizabeth who
married Swift's grandfather, the Reverend Thomas Swift of Goodrich, and
"their fifth son, Swift's father, was named Jonathan, probably after
his Dryden uncle."²

Swift himself seemed very interested in his family history. His
father died before he was born in Dublin, and his mother was reported
to have returned home to England.³ Swift grew up virtually without
father or mother, and perhaps this is why he was influenced by the
memory of his relatives, especially his grandfather, the Reverend
Thomas Swift; one author writes that Swift "identified with his grand-
father; a romantic royalist and churchman" and "proceeded insensibly
to identification with his grandfather's king and even with his grand-
father's God."⁴ Although Swift might have identified with a colorful
man like his grandfather and recalled his ancestry with pride, through-
out his life-time he never said a good word about his distant relative,
Dryden--in fact, all of his references to the poet are uncomplimentary.

¹Irvin Ehrenpreis, Swift: The Man, his Works and the Age, I: Mr. Swift and his Contemporaries (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), 2-3.

²Ibid., p. 5.

³Nigel Dennis, Jonathan Swift: A Short Character (The Macmillan Co., 1964), p. 15.

⁴"A Conjur'd Spirit," review of Jonathan Swift: A Short Character, by Nigel Dennis, Time, XC (January 15, 1965), 90-91.

There has been some conjecture as to why he carried ill feeling towards Dryden, and most of it centers around one incident involving Swift's own early "career" as a poet.

When Swift was still a young man assisting Sir William Temple at Moor Park, and Dryden was an older, established poet, Swift tried his hand at verse. As Samuel Johnson writes:

Swift began early to think, or to hope, that he was a poet, and wrote Pindarick Odes to Temple, to the King, and to the Athenian Society, a knot of obscure men, who published a periodical pamphlet of answers to questions, sent, or supposed to be sent, by Letters. I have been told that Dryden, having perused these verses, said, "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet"; and that his denunciation was the motive of Swift's perpetual malevolence to Dryden.⁵

Although Johnson refers to "these verses," Swift's "Ode to the Athenian Society" (1692) is traditionally designated as the poem upon which Dryden based his statement; the "Cousin Swift" quotation first appeared in Theophilus Cibber's Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland (1753), and it was never certain whether Cibber or one of his helpers included it.⁶ Scholars are still looking for an authentic source for the statement.

An account similar to Johnson's was given earlier by Deane Swift in his essay on Swift (1775):

It is reported . . . that he writ in the early part of his life several poems in that irregular kind of meter, which I think with great impropriety of speech is called the Pindarick; whereby it is certain, that he acquired no sort of reputation. I have been told, that his cousin

⁵Samuel Johnson, LL.D., Lives of the English Poets, ed. by George Birkbeck Hill, D. C. L., III (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1967), 7-8.

⁶Maurice Johnson, "A Literary Chestnut: Dryden's 'Cousin Swift'," PMLA, LXVII (1952), 1024-25.

John Dryden expressed a good deal of contempt for a pretty large collection of these poems, which had been shown to him in manuscript by his bookseller; for which treatment I verily believe it was, that in return to his compliment the Doctor hath on all occasions been so unmercifully severe upon that famous writer.⁷

Certainly posterity would agree that ambitious, serious poetry was not Jonathan Swift's forte; however, if Dryden had spoken slightingly of the younger poet's verse, it is easy to understand how a proud man like Swift would take offense and hold a grudge--especially if Swift himself were sensitive to the faults of his own verse.

Contemporary scholar Maurice Johnson implies that the "cousin Swift" statement was more a product of Samuel Johnson's thinking and humor. He writes:

It had remained for Samuel Johnson to turn an amorphous anecdote into a happy, literary chestnut, perfectly worded. In this version Dryden's speech is untempered, Olympian, devastating, and pig-headed. . . . It is taut and memorable, as impossible to answer as Johnson's own "Sir, you have but two topics, yourself and me. I am sick of both."⁸

The idea that Johnson had turned this statement into a "literary chestnut" is interesting conjecture, but still only conjecture. Apparently neither Swift nor Dryden ever made a direct reference to the incident themselves, or if they did, no concrete evidence remains today.

In spite of this, several authors have worked the account into a dramatic meeting between the two men. Frank Stier Goodwin writes

⁷Deane Swift, An Essay upon the Life, Writings, and Character of Dr. Jonathan Swift (1755), (Hildesheim: George Olms, Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1968), pp. 117-18.

⁸Maurice Johnson, op. cit., p. 1026.

that as a youth, Swift attributed his failure to achieve distinction to the fact that he was living in the country. After he had written odes to the Athenian Society, to Sir William Temple, to Archbishop Sancroft, and complimentary verses to William Congreve, Jonathan was supposed to have met Dryden and Congreve at the Rose Coffee House; when Dryden told Swift he would never be a poet, Goodwin writes:

Jonathan went sick inside. In a black fury, he hated Dryden with all his soul. It was almost more than he could do to maintain his outward composure. He thanked him, however, for reading it, replying tersely that he was sorry it did not meet with his approval. And he remained at the table long enough to convince the others of his indifference to the verdict. . . .

But once within the privacy of his lodgings, Jonathan then gave vent to his feelings, brooding throughout the night in alternate rage and despair.⁹

This account, of course, and others like it, only dramatize what may have happened. Only Swift could have explained what he felt at this meeting, if such a meeting ever took place, and he probably would have been too proud to relate the defeat.

Another author, Shane Leslie, also discussed a meeting between Swift and Dryden and Congreve. Again, the setting is the Rose Coffee House, and Swift is depicted as a young, hopeful poet offering his works to two who had already achieved fame:

The next time he came to London on business, he waited in the Rose Coffee-house with a bundle of manuscript. Congreve and Dryden were sitting there, in the careless insolence of achievement. Upon Dryden rested the fame of years, and upon Congreve the fame of youth. Unfamed, the poor secretary of Sir William Temple saluted them both. . . .

⁹Frank Stier Goodwin, Jonathan Swift: Giant in Chains (New York: Liveright Publishing Company, 1940), pp. 66-69.

In Congreve's honor Jonathan had a poem prepared. He realized the light of fame, the nimbus of divinity upon his fellow. . . .

But the glorious John was reading his other Ode with acrid eyes. Anxiously Jonathan awaited the verdict. Then spoke Dryden, but whether as a cousin or a poet, Jonathan could not conceive, whether as a friend to poetry or as a friend to Jonathan, though perhaps truly as a friend to both. "Cousin, you will never be a poet," quoth the Prince of Poets. And Jonathan went into his dwelling and hated him unto the hour of his death.¹⁰

The melodrama produced in the telling of this incident seems another attempt to explain why Swift did later attack Dryden in his satires; however, the cards are stacked rather heavily here against Dryden, and whether or not Swift hated Dryden "unto the hour of his death," he never makes any direct references to any such strong feeling.

Evelyn Hardy fixes the dates of Swift's early career as a poet as 1691-93, when he wrote "a series of hollow and frigid odes after the manner of Cowley."¹¹ Although admitting through these words that Swift's early poetry was poor, Hardy uses Dryden's "you will never be a poet" statement as the reason why Swift "never again essayed poetry of exalted style or enthusiastic tone" and writes: "It took but a single rebuff to discourage him, and that so profoundly that he refused to make a fool of himself a second time."¹²

Quintana believes that although Dryden's statement, if he made it, would be proven untrue in time, Swift's "Ode to the Athenian

¹⁰Shane Leslie, The Skull of Swift (Indianapolis: The Bobbes-Merrill Company, 1928), pp. 74-75.

¹¹Evelyn Hardy, The Conjured Spirit (London: The Hogarth Press, 1949), p. 39.

¹²Ibid., p. 67.

Society" and "Ode to the Hon. Sir William Temple" were clumsy and turgid pieces--not indicating that Swift was unable to write verse but that his intellectual energy was momentarily out of control.

. . . Had Swift remained content with the artistic possibilities of heroic couplet and quatrain, had he been willing to check his thought in favour of graceful articulation. . . he would have done well enough. At least he would never have brought forth these monstrosities. But his mind was like a conjured spirit, and scornfully he rejected the easy manner and the slight subject.¹³

These inferior verses produced by Swift could probably be attributed to inexperienced youth. Perhaps a harsh statement by Dryden did discourage Swift, but Quintana believes that "the two odes would have made any other judgment cruelly misleading flattery."¹⁴

Also important to remember is that in spite of the numerous references to a meeting between Dryden and Swift, there is actually no concrete evidence that the two ever met. As David Novarr writes, "Dryden seems never to have been aware of Swift's existence." Novarr believes that Swift's reference to Dryden as a "near relation" when he acknowledged their kinship¹⁵ suggests an impersonal acquaintance, and that Swift had unsuccessfully tried to bring himself to Dryden's

¹³Ricardo Quintana, The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 30-31.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁵The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, ed. by Harold Williams, IV (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1965), 321.

attention. These things, he said, "may have affected him more deeply than any meeting, casual or critical, would have."¹⁶

If Swift did try to bring himself to Dryden's attention, he would only have been doing what many other young men aspiring to literary greatness were doing. Dryden could have helped him a great deal in his career. Perhaps Swift looked around at contemporaries such as Prior, Congreve, Addison, and Steele, who were receiving literary honors, and saw that they rose to fame through the help and protection of more famous men.

. . . Prior clung, without swerving, to Montagu; Congreve never broke with Dryden or the court; Addison and Somers kept up, to the end, a cordial, if something thin, friendship; even the quixotic Richard Steele only left Lord Cutts after a dedication to Lady Albemarle won him a captaincy.¹⁷

Swift's course, however, was different. Save the patronage of Sir William Temple, he got his start pretty much alone. It is possible that he may have attempted to gain the approval of Dryden, and it seems plausible that their kinship would have been a point in his favor. But Swift was a proud, independent man. If Dryden did, in reality, slight him, the relationship probably would have been odious to Swift. Whatever the reasons for Swift's ill-will towards his "cousin," all that seems to exist, as far as an acknowledgement of this antagonism on the part of either man, is Swift's own propensity to make Dryden a target of his biting satire.

¹⁶David Novarr, "Swift's Relation with Dryden and Gulliver's *Annus Mirabilis*," English Studies, XLVII (October, 1966), 342.

¹⁷Ehrenpreis, op. cit., p. 263.

CHAPTER II

SWIFT'S ENMITY REVEALED

Perhaps most important in a study of Swift's relationship with Dryden is an analysis of the satirical references he makes to Dryden in A Tale of a Tub, in The Battle of the Books, and in his correspondence. Dryden apparently never made any direct references to Swift, perhaps because when Dryden died in 1700, Swift was only thirty-three years old, and both the Tale and the Battle were not published until 1704.

Many of the references to Dryden in A Tale of a Tub are concerned with the older poet's literary works and are also levelled at Dryden personally. In "An Apology" for the Tale, Swift discusses "Parodies, where the Author personates the Style and Manner of other Writers, whom he has a mind to expose." Swift continues:

. . . Dryden, L'Estrange, and some others I shall not name, are here levelled at, who having spent their Lives in Faction, and Apostacies, and all manner of Vice, pretended to be Sufferers for Loyalty and Religion. So Dryden tells us in one of his Prefaces of his Merits and Suffering, thanks God that he possesses his Soul in Patience: In other places he talks at the same Rate, and L'Estrange often uses the like Style, and I believe the Reader may find more Persons to give that Passage an Application: But this is enough to direct those who may have over-look'd the Authors Intention.¹

¹Jonathan Swift, A Tale of a Tub, ed. by A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith, 2nd ed. (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 7.

The "Prefaces" Swift writes of here refer to Dryden's Discourse Concerning Satire, which was prefixed to his translation of Juvenal.² Swift detested any affectation, or what he thought was a false show of piety or modesty on any writer's part, although he obviously goes overboard in saying that both Dryden and L'Estrange spent their lives in "all manner of Vice." Dryden himself, in defending his own moral convictions, wrote:

More libels have been written against me, than almost any man living; and I had reason on my side, to have defended my own innocence. . . . I have seldom answered any scurrilous lampoon, when it was in my power to have exposed my enemies; and, being naturally vindictive, have suffered in silence, and possessed my soul in quiet.³

Dryden also says that he only means to defend himself personally--not his poetry--because his works should be left for the critics and posterity.⁴ He remains rather coolly detached, and seemingly above the petty business of quarreling with those who object to his works. Perhaps Swift envied Dryden's position, because it appears the poet did not feel threatened by critics of his poetry.

Samuel Johnson has faith in Dryden's personal integrity and dignity, and he pays Dryden the following compliment:

. . . The writer who thinks his work formed for duration mistakes his interest when he mentions his enemies. He degrades his own dignity by showing that he was affected by their censures, and gives lasting

²Ibid., n. 3.

³W. P. Ker, ed., Essays of John Dryden, I (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), 251.

⁴Ibid.

importance to names which, left to themselves, would vanish from remembrance. From this principle Dryden did not oft depart; his complaints are for the greater part general; he seldom pollutes his page with an adverse name.⁵

Perhaps Dryden did not want to "degrade his own dignity" by condescending to controversies with his critics, as Johnson suggests, and Swift may have interpreted this as a "holier than thou" attitude. Regardless of Dryden's real attitude, however, Swift is intent on making him look bad.

In any event, a strikingly similar reference to the previous one coupling Dryden with L'Estrange as "Sufferers for Loyalty and Religion" is found in Swift's "Introduction" to the Tale. Swift writes:

These Notices may serve to give the Learned Reader an idea as well as a Taste of what the whole work is likely to produce: wherein I have now altogether circumscribed my Thoughts and my Studies; and if I can bring it to a Perfection before I die, shall reckon I have well employ'd the poor Remains of an unfortunate Life.

The footnote to this statement reads:

Here the Author seems to personate L'Estrange, Dryden, and some others, who after having spent their Lives in Vices, Factions, and Falshood, have the Impudence to talk of Merit and Innocence and Sufferings.⁶

Certainly Swift, in pursuing this topic even further, is showing his vindictiveness towards Dryden. The thrust of the satire here

⁵Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, I, n. 4, 400-01.

⁶A Tale of a Tub, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

is aimed at "Vices, Faction, and Falshood," but it is difficult to take Swift seriously, because there is little evidence of any "vice" in Dryden's biography. Ward points out that Dryden's wife Elizabeth was often a popular target of attack by his enemies, as in the line from Azaria and Hushai (1682) which stated that she was "a teeming matron ere she was a wife."⁷ However, moral charges against Elizabeth were based on "ambiguous and inconclusive evidence" of a letter to the Earl of Chesterfield dated 1658 and were most likely made by those who envied or feared her husband.⁸

The terms "Factions" and "Falshood" may be used to attack Dryden's political and religious convictions, but again, there is little evidence that Dryden was insincere in his beliefs. Ward writes that his conversion to Catholicism "was a result of long thought and long study of the problems of faith."⁹ In regard to the political background of Dryden's change, he comments:

His hatred of the political action of the schismatics was matched by his hatred of similar manifestations among Catholics. But he came to dissociate the large body of Catholics from the Jesuits, in whom he found the same predilection for direct political action as he found in the Protestant sects . . . He expressed himself more than once as convinced that danger to established Monarchy in England inhered in the fanatic Protestant sects rather than in the Catholics, whose numbers were minuscule among a large and highly prejudiced majority of Protestants of various shades of belief and conviction.¹⁰

⁷Charles E. Ward, The Life of John Dryden (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 177.

⁸Ibid., Chapter II, n. 25, p. 340.

⁹Ibid., p. 212.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 213.

Rather than being "false" in his convictions, it appears that Dryden was looking for some final authority in government. He believed that a monarchy established by law would be best, because of the danger of fickle and inconstant men. All the same, Dryden's enemies were highly critical of his Tory convictions and of his conversion to Catholicism, saying he had changed his religion for personal gain. A Whig when he wrote the Tale, and always a staunch Anglican, Swift certainly had political and religious reasons for joining the ranks of Dryden's critics.

The reference to "the poor Remains of an unfortunate Life" is also strikingly similar to part of Dryden's dedication of his Pastorals to Lord Clifford. Dryden writes that what he offers to Clifford "is the wretched remainder of a sickly age, worn out with study and oppressed by fortune, without other support than the constancy and patience of a Christian."¹¹ Perhaps Swift could not abide this "weakness" of Dryden's, if want of money is a weakness, or perhaps he objected to Dryden's statement that his only support was "the constancy and patience of a Christian." But again, Samuel Johnson stands up for Dryden when he writes:

The persecution of criticks was not the worst of his vexations; he was much more disturbed by the importunities of want. His complaints of poverty are so frequently repeated, either with the dejection of weakness sinking in helpless misery or the indignation of merit claiming its tribute from mankind, that it is

¹¹Quoted in Lives of the English Poets, I, n. 4, 404-05.

impossible not to detest the age which could impose on such a man the necessity of such solicitations, or not to despise the man who could submit to such solicitations without necessity.¹²

It seems logical to assume that Swift might have "despised the man who could submit to such solicitations"--with or without necessity--especially if he were looking for something to dislike in the man.

In the latter part of the Tale's "Epistle Dedicatory, To His Royal Highness, Prince Posterity," Swift refers to Dryden and his translation of Virgil, published in July, 1697:

I profess to Your Highness, in the Integrity of my Heart, that what I am going to say is literally true this Minute I am writing: What Revolutions may happen before it shall be ready for your Perusal, I can by no means warrant: However I beg You, to accept it as a Specimen of our Learning, our Politeness and our Wit. I do therefore affirm upon the word of a sincere Man, that there is now actually in being, a certain Poet called John Dryden, whose translation of Virgil was lately printed in a large Folio, well bound, and if diligent search were made, for ought I know, is yet to be seen.¹³

Employing the satirical device of understatement, Swift asserts the physical existence of Dryden and his Virgil which "is yet to be seen," obviously attempting to belittle Dryden's abilities as a translator (later, in the "Introduction" to the Tale, Swift quotes two lines from Virgil--"Evadere ad auras,/ Hoc opus, hic labor est"¹⁴--which perhaps suggest his regard for Virgil, whom he

¹²Ibid., p. 404.

¹³A Tale of a Tub, op. cit., p. 36.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 55.

felt Dryden unworthy to translate). After this mention of Dryden, Swift also makes satirical references to Poet-Laureate Nahum Tate, the "Poet" Tom Durfey, the "profound Criticks" Rymer and Dennis, and "Dr. B--tl-y" (Bentley) and William W--tt--n, B. D. (Wotton),¹⁵ the latter two of whom, along with Dryden, would be friends of the moderns rather than the ancients in Swift's Battle of the Books. Putting Dryden in this company is potent satire by association. Of all of these men he writes ironically, "Why should I go upon farther Particulars, which might fill a Volume with the just Elogies of my contemporary Brethren?"¹⁶

One practice of Dryden's to which Swift had the most particular aversion was that of writing lengthy dedications. In the Tale's "A Digression in the Modern Kind," Swift writes in regard to "Prefaces, Epistles Advertisements, Introductions, Prolegomena's, Apparatus's, and To-the-Reader's":

This Expedient was admirable at first. Our Great Dryden has long carried it as far as it would go, and with incredible Success. He has often said to me in Confidence, that the World would have never suspected him to be so great a Poet, if he had not assured them so frequently in his Prefaces, that it was impossible they could either doubt or forget it. . . . However, . . . I much fear, his Instructions have edify'd out of their Place, and taught Men to grow Wiser in certain Points, where he never intended they should; For it is lamentable

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 36-7.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 38.

to behold, with what a lazy Scorn, many of the yawning Readers in our Age, do now a-days twirl over forty or fifty Pages of Preface and Dedication, (which is the usual Modern Stint) as if it were so much Latin. Tho' it must be also allowed on the other Hand that a very considerable Number is known to proceed Criticks and Wits, by reading nothing else.¹⁷

The scornful reference here to "Our Great Dryden" certainly shows quite a bit of antagonism coming through on Swift's part. Along with much of this satire, however, is a rather perceptive humor, as in Swift's statement that the world would never have suspected Dryden of being such a great poet "if he had not assured them so frequently in his Prefaces." And the satire on the length of the prefaces will seem justified to those who have tried to read them. The Dedication of Dryden's Juvenal was fifty-three folio pages long, and the Dedication of the Aeneis, forty-seven.¹⁸ Other sections of the Tale are given to ridiculing this "windy" style of writing, which nevertheless was characteristic of the age.

Again, in the "Introduction" to the Tale, Dryden is attacked "in the Business of Titles." Pretending, in the role of Grub-Street Hack, to support the very thing he is attacking, Swift reasons that "Books, the Children of the Brain, should have the Honor to be Christned with variety of Names, as well as other Infants of Quality," and continues:

¹⁷Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁸Ibid.

Our famous Dryden has ventured to proceed a Point farther, endeavouring to introduce also a Multiplicity of Godfathers; which is an Improvement of much more Advantage, upon a very obvious Account. 'Tis a Pity this admirable Invention has not been better cultivated, so as to grow by this time into general Imitation, when such an Authority serves it for a Precedent. Nor have my Endeavors been wanting to second so useful an Example: But it seems, there is an unhappy Expence usually annexed to the Calling of a God-Father, which was clearly out of my Head, as it is very reasonable to believe. Where the Pinch lay, I cannot certainly affirm; but having employ'd a World of Thoughts and Pains, to split my Treatise into forty Sections, and having entreated forty Lords of my Acquaintance, that they would do me the Honor to stand, they all made it a Matter of Conscience, and sent me their Excuses.¹⁹

This time Swift refers to "Our famous Dryden," mocking Dryden's position as the leading man of letters in his day ("such an Authority").

It is believed that the reference to Dryden's "Multiplicity of Godfathers" is a satire on the three dedications to three patrons which Dryden made in his translation of Virgil: the Eclogues to Lord Clifford, the Georgics to the Earl of Chesterfield, and the Aeneid to the Marquis of Normandy.²⁰ It is also pointed out that Swift might be referring to other patrons named in Dryden's

"Postscript to the Reader" and the plates in Dryden's translation:

There were two sets of subscriptions, five guineas and two guineas; and those who paid the larger sum had one of the full-page engravings inscribed to them. The list of these "Subscribers to the Cuts of Virgil" . . . contains no fewer than 101 names.²¹

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 71-72.

²⁰Ibid., p. 72, n. 1.

²¹Ibid.

To whatever the reference may be, specifically, Swift humorously points out the commercial side of the issue through exaggeration, when he writes that he split his Treatise into forty sections and attempted to get forty patrons, but "they all made it a Matter of Conscience, and sent me their Excuses." It is good humor, even if it is at Dryden's expense.

In the "Introduction" to the Tale, Swift also makes a direct reference to a religious work of Dryden's. When listing the "prime Productions of our Society," Swift satirically writes that Dryden's The Hind and the Panther is "the Master-piece of a famous Writer now living, intended for a compleat Abstract of sixteen thousand Schoolmen from Scotus to Bellarmin."²² It is not surprising that Swift would want to have some fun with The Hind and the Panther, as his Anglican convictions would have made him disdainful of Dryden's views in this work and of his conversion to Catholicism.

Swift may be referring indirectly to another work of the poet's when he writes, in the Preface to the Tale:

. . . I am sufficiently instructed in the Principal Duty of a Preface, if my Genius were capable of arriving at it. Thrice have I forced my Imagination to make the Tour of my Invention, and thrice it has returned empty; the latter having been wholly drained by the following Treatise. Not so, my more successful Brethren the Moderns, who will by no means let slip a Preface or Dedication, without some notable distinguishing Stroke, to surprize the Reader at the Entry, and kindle a Wonderful Expectation of what is to ensue.²³

²²Ibid., pp. 67, 69.

²³Ibid., pp. 42-43.

Although the concepts of imagination and invention were commonplace at that time, Swift's reference to his imagination making the "Tour of my Invention" may parallel Dryden's "Letter to Sir Robert Howard," which was prefixed to "Annus Mirabilis" and read in part:

. . . wit in the Poet . . . is no other than the faculty of imagination in the Writer; which like a nimble Spaniel, beats over and ranges through the field of Memory, till it springs the Quarry it hunted after . . . So then, the first happiness of the Poet's Imagination is properly Invention, or the finding of the thought . . . The quickness of the Imagination is seen in the Invention.²⁴

In this same passage, Swift also might be hitting at Dryden when he says that the "Moderns" will "by no means let slip a Preface or Dedication, without some notable distinguishing Stroke." Dryden was more or less in favor of modern rather than ancient learning, and it might be said that he utilized prefaces and dedications just as much or more than most writers in his time. By glancing at Dryden's prefaces to see if he actually does begin with some "distinguishing Stroke," one might further believe that this passage is levelled at him. For example, in both the prefaces to Sylvae and The Fables, Dryden commences with figures of speech which he may have hoped would "kindle a Wonderful Expectation of what is to ensue." He begins the Preface to Sylvae with a metaphysical conceit:

For this last half year I have been troubled with the disease (as I may call it) of translation; the cold prose fits of it (which are always the most tedious with me) were spent in the History of the League; the hot (which succeeded them) in this volume

²⁴Ibid., p. 42, n. 1.

of Verse Miscellanies. The truth is, I fancied to my self, a kind of ease in the change of the paroxism; never suspecting but the humour would have wasted itself in two or three Pastorals of Theocritus, and as many Odes of Horace.²⁵

The Preface to the Fables begins:

'Tis with a Poet as with a man who designs to build, and is very exact, as he supposes, in casting up the cost beforehand: but, generally speaking, he is mistaken in his account, and reckons short of the expense he first intended: he alters his mind as the work proceeds, and will have this or that convenience more, of which he had not thought when he began. So has it happened to me; I have built a house, where I intended but a lodge: yet with better success than a certain nobleman, who, beginning with a dog-kennel never lived to finish the palace he had contrived.²⁶

Both figures of speech--the metaphor of the "disease of translation" and the simile of the poet being like "a man who designs to build"--are fully developed but probably do not "surprize the Reader at the Entry" or display a show of genius. One might suppose that Swift read such prefaces or dedications and came away from them with one more point to satirize in his Tale and one more attack to make against Dryden.

It is in Swift's Battle of the Books, however, where he parodies the "fight" between those factions in his day who favored either ancient or modern learning, that he makes several of his most vituperative references to Dryden.

²⁵W. P. Ker, ed., Essays of John Dryden, loc. cit.

²⁶Ibid., II, 246.

Two other men besides Dryden who were placed on the side of the moderns in the literary controversy were William Wotton and Dr. Richard Bentley; both had been critics of Swift's patron, William Temple, who had defended ancient literature in his Ancient and Modern Learning; Wotton had attacked Swift's Tale in Observations upon the Tale of a Tub.²⁷ In the Battle, Bentley is made "The Guardian of the Regal Library, a Person of great Valor, but chiefly renowned for his Humanity," who, continued Swift, "had been a fierce Champion for the Moderns."²⁸ (In real life, Bentley was named librarian of the Royal Library in St. James Palace and had officially been named keeper of all the king's libraries in April, 1694.²⁹) As Swift continues his satire on Bentley as the library's "Guardian," he works in a reference to Dryden when he writes that Bentley,

. . . by walking much in the dark about the Library . . . had quite lost the Situation of it out of his Head; And therefore, in replacing his Books, he was apt to mistake, and clap Des-Cartes next to Aristotle; Poor Plato had got between Hobbes and the Seven Wise Masters, and Virgil was hemm'd in with Dryden on one side, and Withers on the other.³⁰

The reference to "Withers" is especially important here, because Guthkelch and Smith point out that George Wither was thought an especially bad poet, and that Swift was associating Dryden with a

²⁷Ibid., pp. xlvii-xlix.

²⁸Ibid., p. 224.

²⁹Ibid., p. 214, n. 1.

³⁰Ibid., p. 226.

writer whom he was known to have disliked; as they write, "Here, as in the Tale, Swift shows his resentment towards Dryden for having said, 'Cousin Swift, you will never be a Poet.'"³¹

The role that Swift gives Dryden in the battle seems especially meaningful. The picture of Virgil ". . . in shining Armour, completely fitted to his Body" meeting his own translator, Dryden, is particularly striking. As Swift writes:

. . . The Stranger desired a Parley, and lifting up the Vizard of his Helmet, a Face hardly appeared from within, which after a Pause, was known for that of the renowned Dryden. The brave Antient suddenly started, as one possess'd with Surprize and Disappointment together: For, the Helmet was nine times too large for the Head, which appeared Situate far in the hinder Part, even like the Lady in a Lobster, or like a shrivled Beau from within the Penthouse of a modern Perewig: And the voice was suited to the Visage, sounding weak and remote. Dryden in a long Harangue soothed up the good Antient, called him Father, and by a large deduction of Genealogies, made it plainly appear, that they were nearly related. Then he humbly proposed an Exchange of Armor, as a lasting Mark of Hospitality between them. . . . However, this glittering Armor became the Modern yet worse than his Own. Then, they agreed to exchange Horses; but when it came to the Trial, Dryden was afraid, and utterly unable to mount.³²

This quotation embodies the height of Swift's scorn for Dryden, for Dryden's position on the side of the moderns, and for his verse compared with Virgil's. Osborn points out that "since the foundation of the Royal Society Dryden had been a champion of the moderns," but he adds that "the familiar caricature in Swift's Battle of the

³¹Ibid., n. 2.

³²Ibid., pp. 246-47.

Books distorts the part he played in the fray"; although Osborn maintains that over-simplification in the controversy is dangerous, he cites a letter which Dryden wrote in May, 1693, to his friend Walsh, saying that he would be "very proud, of your entering into the lists, though not against Rymer; yet as a champion of our cause, who defy the Chorus of the Ancients."³³

The picture of Dryden when he meets Virgil "in battle" belittles both the poet himself and his verse compared with Virgil's: his head is too small for his helmet ("like the Lady in a Lobster," which was "a name given by fisherfolk to a part of the stomach of the lobster"³⁴); Virgil's "glittering Armor" is less becoming to Dryden than his own, mean costume (he is too sorry a figure to don the robes of Virgil); and Dryden is even afraid to mount Virgil's horse. The overall impression is that Swift felt Dryden was unworthy to translate Virgil adequately. The fact that Dryden's head is too small for his helmet suggests that he was not intellectually "equipped" for competition with Virgil--perhaps also that he had overestimated his own worth--and upon meeting Dryden, Virgil starts, "as one possess'd with Surprize and Disappointment together." Dryden's voice is "weak and remote," which further emphasizes that the poet was ineffectual.

³³James M. Osborn, John Dryden: Some Biographical Facts and Problems (New York: Morningside Heights: Columbia University Press, 1940), p. 22..

³⁴A Tale of a Tub, op. cit., p. 247, n. 1.

Such debasing references hit at more than Dryden's role as a modern; they attack his skill as a poet, and even his very character.

One reference, particularly, might be speculated upon. When Swift writes that Dryden "made it plainly clear" to Virgil that they were "nearly related," one might be reminded of the Dryden-Swift relationship. It was Swift himself, it might be recalled, who later in life referred to Dryden as a "near relation."³⁵ Perhaps Swift meant here to attack not only Dryden's translation of Virgil, but to indirectly strike out at Dryden as the older, established poet (his "cousin," at that) who had once belittled him, by putting Dryden in a similar situation with an established master. Perhaps we even see adumbrated here a satiric device that would become a favorite with Swift. If Swift as yet was of slight stature compared with Dryden, it would at least have been satisfying to contemplate that Dryden himself was a mere pigmy when measured against Virgil.

The reference Swift made to Dryden as a "near relation" is found in a letter written to Thomas Beach on April 12, 1735. In the letter Swift not only speaks slightingly of Dryden's versification, but he also speaks disdainfully of Dryden as a poor poet who sacrificed careful art because he was in a hurry to make money. Apparently Beach had given one of his poems to Swift for the latter's critical judgment, and the suggestions Swift makes to Beach trigger the references to Dryden:

³⁵The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, ed. by Harold Williams, loc. cit.

I read your poem several times, and showed it to three or four judicious friends, who all approved of it, but agreed with me, that it wanted some corrections; upon which I took the number of lines, which are in all two hundred and ninety-two, the odd number being occasioned by what they call a triplet, which was a vicious way of rhyming, wherewith Dryden abounded, and was imitated by all the bad versifiers in Charles the Second's reign. Dryden, though my near relation, is one I have often blamed as well as pitied. He was poor, and in great haste to finish his plays, because by them he chiefly supported his family, and this made him so very uncorrect; he likewise brought in the Alexandrine verse at the end of the triplets. I was so angry at these corruptions, that above twenty-four years ago I banished them all by one triplet, with the Alexandrine, upon a very ridiculous subject.³⁶

Swift seems to be assuming the role of "superior critic" when he mentions Dryden's name along with the "bad versifiers in Charles the Second's reign" who utilized the triplet. He is indignant that Dryden introduced the Alexandrine at the end of triplets, and refers to the last lines of one of his own, earlier poems in which he parodied the device. The poem, "A Description of a City Shower," ends with the triplet and Alexandrine: "Sweepings from butchers' stalls, dung, guts and blood,/ Drown'd puppies, stinking sprats, all drench'd in mud,/ Dead cats and turnip-tops come tumbling down the flood."³⁷

The implication that Dryden's verse "abounded" with this type of rhyme, and that he was a poor man "in great haste to finish his

³⁶Ibid., pp. 320-21.

³⁷The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D., ed. by F. Elrington Ball, with an introd. by The Right Rev. J. H. Bernard, D.D., V (London: J. Fell & Sons, LTD, 1913), 162.

plays" and support his family, is a subtle, double-edged way of attacking Dryden: Swift both censures and "pities" him.³⁸ It seems as if Swift may have harbored more than a distaste for Dryden's financial state, or even for his rhyming, to attack the man in this way. The "pity" he said he felt for Dryden does not seem to be sympathy.

Another derogatory reference to Dryden is found in a letter which Swift wrote to John Gay on March 28, 1728. Swift mentions a tale which was written to praise Gay's Fables, but he goes beyond the tale itself to slight Dryden:

I hope Dr. Delaney has shown you the tale, writ by Mrs. Barber, a citizens' wife here [Dublin], in praise of your Fables. There is something in it hard upon Mr. Congreve, which I sent to her, to change to Dryden, but she absolutely refused.³⁹

Whatever the "something" was written to criticize Congreve, it is obvious that Swift went out of his way to make Dryden the target of the criticism. Even though this attempt was unsuccessful, he may have felt that Gay would have condoned the substitution of Dryden's name for Congreve's in the tale; perhaps Gay may have even shared a similar feeling of dislike for Dryden. (The very fact that Swift harbored his antagonism towards Dryden until late in life suggests

³⁸In regard to Dryden's financial state, Samuel Johnson writes in Lives of the English Poets, I, 405, that, "Except the salary of Laureat, to which king James added the office of Historiographer . . . his whole revenue seems to have been casual."

³⁹The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, ed. by F. Elrington Ball, IV, op. cit., 22.

how strong it was--especially since he had been a friend of Pope since 1714 and presumably was aware of Pope's great admiration for Dryden.)

Although the obviously uncomplimentary references Swift made to Dryden in his correspondence, in the Tale of a Tub, and in The Battle of the Books, are written down in black and white for the reader to peruse, the reason or reasons why Swift may have felt antagonism towards the poet should be more carefully explored. The most obvious reason, as mentioned earlier, is that Dryden may have once told Swift he would never be a poet. But there may be other reasons.

CHAPTER III

FROM POLITICS TO PRIDE

If one were to overlook the story that Dryden told Swift he would never be a poet, there would still be other logical reasons why Swift would have felt antagonistic towards Dryden. Some of these reasons have been touched on in surveying Swift's references to Dryden. In this chapter they will be considered more systematically.

Besides the fact that their personalities were very different--for Swift's more volatile spirit seems ever aware of man's baser nature--the two men also embraced different political and religious philosophies. As was pointed out earlier, Swift was a Whig when he wrote the Tale, and Dryden was a Tory. In religion Swift believed in the Anglican via media, which supported the individual's rational interpretation of divine revelation of scripture with the help of the Church; like Swift, Dryden had once gone along with the authority of the Anglican Church, but was later converted to Catholicism. Swift was always a staunch Anglican.

At least two and possibly three of the satiric thrusts already quoted from the Tale lend support to these conjectures. The first is found in "An Apology" for the Tale, when Swift writes that Dryden and L'Estrange had "spent their Lives in Faction, and Apostacies, and all manner of Vice" and "pretended to be Sufferers for Loyalty and

Religion."¹ The second, similar reference found in the "Introduction" to the Tale charges Dryden and L'Estrange with "having spent their Lives in Vices, Factions, and Falshood," and continues that they "have the Impudence to talk of Merit and Innocence and Sufferings."² The third thrust, also from the "Introduction," satirizes both Dryden and his religious work, The Hind and the Panther, by calling it "the Master-piece of a famous Writer now living, intended for a compleat Abstract of sixteen thousand Schoolmen from Scotus to Bellarmin."³ Both Dryden and L'Estrange, the latter of whom was an influential Tory writer, had political views which strongly conflicted with Swift's at the time he wrote the Tale (even though Swift later became a Tory). In his search for a strong, authoritative church which would provide a basis for political and religious unity, Dryden also became a Catholic; his Hind and the Panther (1687) was written in part as a plea for toleration and directed to the Church of England. It is easy to see why religion could have been a source of Swift's enmity towards Dryden. It is more difficult to answer why Swift charges Dryden with vice, unless he viewed Dryden's conversion as an insincere attempt for advancement (of course, Dryden's laureateship had been renewed before his conversion; moreover, Dryden knew Catholicism was an

¹Guthkelch and Smith, eds., A Tale of a Tub, op. cit., p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 70.

³Ibid., p. 69.

unpopular choice, and after 1688 he persisted in his new faith, to his detriment).

Swift's aversion to what he believed to be any affectation or pomposity in writing could also have alienated him from Dryden. Hugh Macdonald points out that his ill feeling towards Dryden may "have arisen from the difference in their temperaments and the distaste Swift would have felt for much of what Dryden had written, notably the dedications."⁴ The Tale also supports this view. Macdonald goes on to quote from Swift's "On Poetry: A Rhapsody," in which Dryden's prefaces are attacked:

Read all the Prefaces of Dryden
For these our Criticks must confide in,
(The meerly writ at first for filling
To raise the Volume's Price, a Shilling.)⁵

As has been previously pointed out, Swift did object to Dryden's long dedications and prefaces, and to those of any writer, perhaps partly because he thought they were written to gain financial support and were not offered sincerely. Maybe Swift also believed that Dryden was guilty of pride or vanity, since in his Preface to All for Love, Dryden wrote that he had "professed to imitate the divine Shakespeare."⁶

⁴Hugh Macdonald, John Dryden: A Biography of Early Editions and of Drydeniana (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1934), p. 303.

⁵Ibid.

⁶John M. Aden, ed., The Critical Opinions of John Dryden, A Dictionary (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1963), p. 58.

Some of the satirical references already quoted from the Tale also support the conjecture that Swift thought Dryden was too proud. Several insinuate that Dryden was guilty of false pride, or that his humility was affected: in "An Apology" for the Tale, Swift writes that Dryden "tells us in one of his Prefaces of his Merits and Suffering" and "thanks God that he possesses his Soul in Patience,"⁷ while in his "Introduction," he comments that Dryden has "the Impudence to talk of Merit and Innocence and Sufferings."⁸

Another reference to Dryden's pride is found in the Tale's "A Digression in the Modern Kind," when Swift is satirizing lengthy prefaces. Implying that Dryden had a high opinion of his own poetic skills, Swift writes that Dryden "has often said to me in Confidence, that the World would have never suspected him to be so great a Poet, if he had not assured them so frequently in his Prefaces."⁹

In the Battle of the Books, Swift has Virgil meeting his own translator, Dryden, who wears a helmet "nine times too large for the Head, which appeared Situate far in the Hinder Part."¹⁰ Here the suggestion seems not only to be that Dryden was unsuited for battle (translation), but also that he thought too highly of himself and so had assumed a role disproportionate to his slender abilities.

⁷Guthkelch and Smith, eds., A Tale of a Tub, loc. cit.

⁸Ibid., p. 70.

⁹Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 246-47.

Swift himself was extremely critical of the "sin of pride" as seen in man in general, and an extreme example of this aversion can be found in Part IV of Gulliver's Travels. Swift's persona, Gulliver, says that he can abide the "Yahoo-kind" in general, such as ". . . a Lawyer, a Pick-pocket, a Colonel, a Fool, a Lord, a Gamester, a Politician, a Whoremonger . . . ", but adds:

. . . when I behold a Lump of Deformity, and Diseases both in Body and Mind, smitten with Pride, it immediately breaks all the Measures of my Patience; neither shall I be ever able to comprehend how such an Animal and such a Vice could tally together.¹¹

The irony here is especially poignant, because Gulliver himself is smitten with pride, and it is obvious that Swift is attacking all those whose weakness is pride. Perhaps Swift also considered this to be one of Dryden's weaknesses.

It was not only Swift, however, who made Dryden the target of critical attacks. As Macdonald points out, "it is not easy to find any parallel in English literature to so much violence and ridicule directed against one man of letters in his life-time," unless Pope is a possible exception; wondering at this, Macdonald writes that Dryden seemed to be "without undue vanity and . . . was magnanimous to others," but that there might have been something about him, "some vulnerable streak," which made Dryden so susceptible to criticism. Macdonald continues:

. . . Much that he wrote, the Heroic Plays for instance, as he very well knew, was fair game and could not have

¹¹Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels and Other Writings, ed. by Ricardo Quintana (New York: The Modern Library, 1958), p. 242.

escaped ridicule; many of the onslaughts were incompetent answers to his political poems and were inevitable; others, and those usually the most violent, were called forth by his own acceptance of the Roman Catholic religion. . . . Saintsbury suggested his lavish flattery and his somewhat frequent indulgence in complaints as possible factors in arousing enmity, but he had the antagonism of Swift in mind, and Dryden's flattery, though more skillful than that of his contemporaries, occurs in an age when flattery, at least in dedications, was universal.¹²

Perhaps it was the nature of Dryden's writings, then, coupled with his political and religious philosophies, that prompted not only Swift but many others to criticize his works. Perhaps Swift, more than the others, objected to Dryden's "lavish flattery" and "indulgence in complaints" (the latter probably referring to Dryden's unhappiness over his poverty). However, as it was pointed out, this "flattery" was characteristic of the age.

Because Dryden was one of the great writers of his age, Swift could hardly have avoided him, when in The Tale of a Tub and Battle of the Books, he meant to strike out against contemporary writing practices. Maurice Johnson writes that Swift

. . . naturally dealt with Dryden, whose great translations from the Ancients were, as he himself insisted, usually adaptations of greater writings. . . . It is impossible to say that Swift's personal feelings, for one reason or another, were not strongly involved; but granting his general intention, he would be obliged to bring Dryden into a satire on the foibles of "modern" writers.¹³

¹²Hugh Macdonald, "The Attacks on Dryden," Essential Articles for the Study of John Dryden, ed. by H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1966), pp. 49-50.

¹³Maurice Johnson, "A Literary Chestnut: Dryden's 'Cousin' Swift," op. cit., p. 1032.

It seems logical to assume that even if he did not have a "grudge" against Dryden, Swift would have felt that he ought to include him anyway, but not with such animus.

Another reason why Swift, and perhaps other writers, spoke out rather violently against Dryden may be that they were envious of Dryden's literary career. He had been chosen poet laureate of England and was the greatest man of letters in his day. Behind the many attacks against Dryden there may also have been an admiration, or a recognition of the quality of his poems and plays. Novarr suggests that from his youth, Swift had admired Dryden's verse:

To Swift, Dryden was the chief proponent of the heroic, the lofty heir of Pindar's robes and Virgil's. . . . These robes the youthful Swift had greatly admired, but he soon found that they were not entailed to him. Something of his youthful admiration seems always to have remained with him: mock-heroic is frequently the inversion of idealism, and severity of mockery a measure of the degree of illusion.¹⁴

It is difficult to tell just how far Swift's admiration for Dryden may have gone. Although Swift's early poems were recognized as being poor, there is much to be admired in his later verse--even if he went to mock-heroic because heroic verse was not his forte.

For example, Swift parodied Dryden's "Baucis and Philemon, Out of the Eighth Book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," in which a story is told of how the gods change Baucis and Philemon into trees.¹⁵ In his parody

¹⁴David Novarr, "Swift's Relation with Dryden and Gulliver's *Annus Mirabilis*," *op. cit.*, p. 349.

¹⁵*The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. by James Kinsley, IV (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1958), 1565.

of this poem, also called "Baucis and Philemon," Swift introduces Philemon as "a good old honest Yeoman" and his wife, "Goody Baucis,"¹⁶ who meet the same fate. During their "metamorphoses," Swift writes that,

. . . Baucis hastily cry'd out;
My Dear, I see your Forehead sprout;
Sprout, quoth the Man, what's this you tell us?
I hope you don't believe me Jealous:
But yet, methinks, I feel it true;
And re'ly, Yours is budding too--
Nay,--now I cannot stir my Foot:
It feels as if 'twere taking Root.¹⁷

Whatever his reasons for the parody, Swift is having some fun here, and it is delightful humor in any age. Dryden's "Baucis and Philemon" does not suffer from the parody, and, as Samuel Johnson writes, Dryden's style

. . . could not be easily imitated, either seriously or ludicrously; for being always equable and always varied, it has no prominent or discriminative characters. The beauty who is totally free from disproportion of parts and features cannot be ridiculed by an overcharged resemblance.¹⁸

A recent study in the Dryden-Swift relationship suggests that Swift used one of Dryden's major poems as the basis for a chapter in Gulliver's Travels, but that it was not a complimentary "borrowing." Novarr parallels Dryden's "Annus Mirabilis," an historical poem dedicated to the city of London, with the fifth chapter of "A Voyage

¹⁶The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. by Harold Williams, I (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1937), p. 111.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 116.

¹⁸Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, op. cit., I, 418.

to Lilliput"; specifically, he compares Gulliver's naval victory and his extinguishing the fire with Dryden's "forced and askew conjunction of the naval victories in the Dutch Wars and of the fire of London."¹⁹ Although Novarr does bring out the interpretations of other critics, such as Ehrenpreis' equating the fire with the Treaty of Utrecht, and Case's maintaining that the story of the fire represents Swift's support of the Tories' illegal peace settlement,²⁰ Novarr suggests that the parallel partly resulted from Swift's reaction against Dryden's "vanity." He writes of Swift that,

. . . his view of history and his inclination toward mock-heroic would have determined his response to the hyperbolic heroics of Dryden's poem. Dryden has so labored to adorn his "single Iliad" with noble thoughts, to express those thoughts with elocution, to invest them in images which would beget admiration, that his poem sags under the strain for sublimity. . . . Swift's response to Dryden's vanity here in his Homeric habiliments is reflected in his transforming the two major events of the poem into Gulliver's extraordinary deeds in Chapter 5.²¹

Novarr assumes here that Swift has made a deliberate attempt to plan the parallel as a reaction against the "heroics" of the poem, and it is also interesting to note that he supports the idea that Swift considered Dryden guilty of the sin of pride (if not pride in his own worth, then "vanity" in his "Homeric habiliments").

¹⁹David Novarr, "Swift's Relation with Dryden and Gulliver's *Annus Mirabilis*," *op. cit.*, p. 353.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 352.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 354.

In spite of the many differences between the two writers, Kathleen Williams makes the point that "Swift's situation in the neoclassic tradition was in some ways akin to Dryden's," and she parallels ideas in Swift's "Thoughts on Free Thinking" with Dryden's insistence "on the power of the mind to select and shape the thoughts which flow in upon it."²² She further cites lines from Swift's early poem, "Ode to the Athenian Society," as dealing with the same main topics as those from Dryden's "To Sir Robert Howard": providence of wit in a writer and providence that formed the world.²³ Although it is refreshing at this point to consider the writers' similarities in thought, most evidence refers to the dissimilarities which support Swift's antagonistic attitude towards Dryden.

²²Kathleen Williams, Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1958), p. 23.

²³Ibid., p. 25.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Although the Dryden-Swift relationship is a topic that necessarily involves much conjecture, there are several plausible answers to the question of why Swift always expressed antagonism towards the poet. If factual evidence existed that Dryden had once met and insulted his "near relation," this incident might be given considerable weight; however, until further evidence is turned up, this incident must be viewed with some skepticism, since neither writer ever acknowledged it. And even if Dryden actually said that his cousin would "never be a poet," there would still be other reasons for their differences.

It seems more logical to assume that Swift's antagonism towards Dryden arose more out of their distinct personalities and philosophies than anything else. Much attention has been paid to Swift's volatile temperament, and to the fact that he was quick to point out the weaknesses and foibles of mankind. As Swift wrote in a letter to the Rev. John Kendall on February 11, 1692, "a person of great Honour in Ireland . . . us'd to tell me, that my mind was like a conjur'd spirit, that would do mischief if I would not give it employment."¹

¹The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, ed. by Harold Williams, op. cit., I, 4.

Certainly Swift did quite a bit of "mischief" to Dryden and to the man's works. It is not recorded, however, that Dryden ever made any uncomplimentary references to Swift, whether it was because he was an older, established poet who never even acknowledged Swift, or because he died before Swift attacked him in print; in any event, Dryden emerges as the more restrained personality, the more benevolent scholar.

As has been pointed out, Swift's early political and life-long religious convictions were in opposition to Dryden's: Whig versus Tory, Anglican versus Catholic. These opposing convictions came out in their writings. Swift held staunch views and was quick to attack his opponents. When he wrote the Tale, Swift was speaking as a Whig; he dedicated the work to Somers, whom the Tories in power were trying to impeach, along with the Earl of Oxford, and Halifax.²

Quintana writes of Swift's convictions:

Born in Ireland, reared in Trinity College, toryism still meant to him as to all of his class the pretender, catholic dominance, an uprooting of the English interests in Ireland. His intercourse with Temple had confirmed his whig prejudices. . . . And in regard to the church of England, his position was to remain in certain respects that of a moderate whig. It can be said that his early political convictions were never entirely broken down, and . . . they were in later years to hold his tory enthusiasm in check.³

As an influential Tory and a convert to Catholicism, Dryden might easily have evoked Swift's enmity. The very fact that Swift's

²Ricardo Quintana, The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift, loc. cit., p. 109.

³Ibid., pp. 109-110.

"early political convictions were never entirely broken down," and that he remained an Anglican, would be important factors in his life-long enmity towards Dryden.

Because he sided with the "moderns," Dryden would also have come under the critical eye of Swift, who shared Sir William Temple's belief in the superiority of the ancient writers. As a "modern" author who used such popular writing techniques as dedications and prefaces--and Dryden might be said to be a major proponent of these techniques--he would have been a likely target. Perhaps his very position as the leading man of letters in his day made him most vulnerable to Swift's attacks. And whether it was envy, or a belief that Dryden was guilty of pride, Swift's disdain for his "near relation" is evident.

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