Jonathan Swift's Peace of Utrecht

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In January 1713, Jonathan Swift wrote to Archbishop William King of Dublin from London, acknowledging that ‘Some Accidents and Occasions have put it in my Way to know every step of this Treaty better, I think, than any Man in England.’¹ Swift was referring to negotiations, under way since January 1712, which produced the Treaty of Utrecht in April 1713. The following year, Swift petitioned Queen Anne to warn her that, since proceedings ‘in relation to the peace and treaties’ were, however, ‘capable of being very maliciously represented to posterity,’ he hoped that she might appoint him to the post of Historiographer-Royal and thereby enable him to ensure ‘that the truth of things may be transmitted to future ages, and bear down the falsehood of malicious pens.’²

As the essays in this volume vividly illustrate, international diplomacy had started to attract unprecedented levels of public interest by the early eighteenth century. As Swift acknowledged to King, in another letter of March 1713, it was indeed ‘a very new Thing among us,’ to have ‘every Subject interposing their Sentiments upon the Management of foreign Negotiations.’³ Moreover, Swift’s magniloquent claim to possess unparalleled knowledge of the political manoeuvring that underpinned the Treaty of Utrecht was asserted in his capacity as a polemical propagandist who remained in London whilst the diplomatic negotiations took place abroad. Accordingly, this essay examines the ways in which Swift sought to promote public acceptance of the controversial decision of Robert Harley’s Tory government to sue for peace against Britain’s traditional enemy, France, and end the War of the Spanish Succession. In doing so, it emphasizes the phenomenal influence of Swift’s polemical pamphlet, *The Conduct of the Allies* (1711), whilst also exploring arguments advanced in his lesser-known *History of the Four Last Years of the Queen*, which he wrote between September 1712 and May 1713, though the *History* remained unpublished at the time of Swift’s death in 1745. The manuscript was acclaimed,

- 1 *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963–1965), 1: 328.
- 2 ‘A Copy of Dr. Swift’s Memorial to the Queen. April 15, 1714,’ in Jonathan Swift, *Political Tracts, 1713–1719* ed. Herbert Davis and Irvin Ehrenpreis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), 200.
- 3 *Correspondence*, ed. Williams, 1: 339.

however, by his friend, John Boyle, earl of Orrery, in 1752 as 'the clearest account of the treaty of Utrecht, that has hitherto been written' and, six years later, Swift's *History* was published for the first time.⁴ Whilst *The Conduct of the Allies* sought to vindicate the Tory ministry's actions and enjoyed sensational commercial success and polemical purchase, Swift's attempt to supply an ostensibly objective account of the treaty negotiations in his *History* quickly became an awkward and anachronistic liability for the Tory ministers that had instigated peace negotiations.⁵ For his part, Swift's keen interest in writing about the Peace of Utrecht became inextricably related to his hopes for personal and professional preferment that were ultimately frustrated when Swift reluctantly left London for Dublin as the newly-appointed Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in June 1713 and failed to secure appointment as Historiographer-Royal the following year.

Swift's Case for Making Peace

On 27 November 1711, Swift's tract entitled *The Conduct of the Allies, and of the late Ministry in beginning and carrying on the Present War* was published anonymously and sold prodigiously. Within two days, a second edition was printed but sold out within five hours, and, appearing in six editions, more than 11,000 copies had been sold by the end of January 1712.⁶ The day after its first publication, Swift related in his *Journal to Stella* that various people had 'advised me to read it, for it was something very extraordinary' and, two days later, gratifyingly confirmed that 'the pamphlet makes a world of noise, and

4 John Boyle, *Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift, by John, Earl of Orrery* (Dublin: Dean of St. Patrick's, 1752), 327.

5 Extant scholarship has hitherto largely focused on Swift's phenomenally successful *The Conduct of the Allies*. See particularly, J.A. Downie, 'The Conduct of the Allies: the question of influence,' in *The Art of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Clive T. Probyn (London: Vision, 1978), 108–28; J.A. Downie, *Robert Harley and the press: propaganda and public opinion in the age of Swift and Defoe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); J.A. Downie, 'Polemical strategy and Swift's *The Conduct of the Allies*,' *Prose Studies* 4 (1981), 134–145 and J.A. Downie, 'Public opinion and the political pamphlet,' in *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660–1780*, ed. John J. Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 549–571. Interest in *The History of the Four Last Years of the Queen* has hitherto been largely bibliographical; see, particularly, Harold Williams, 'Jonathan Swift and *The Four Last Years of the Queen*,' *The Library* 16 (1935–6), 60–90 and 343–346 and George P. Mayhew, 'Swift's Notes for his *The History of the Four Last Years*, Book IV,' *Huntington Library Quarterly* 24 (1961), 311–322.

6 Downie, 'The Conduct of the Allies: the question of influence,' 113.

will do a great deal of good.⁷ For Swift was keenly aware that arguments for peace would require detailed vindication from those domestic and foreign detractors keen to denounce ‘Perfidious Albion’ for initiating peace negotiations with Louis XIV’s France without the knowledge and agreement of the Dutch, Austrians and other Allies, thereby contravening the eighth article of the Grand Alliance of 1701, which had stipulated that any peace must be agreed by all parties involved in hostilities. Indeed, less than a month before *The Conduct of the Allies* was published, Swift had indicated to Stella his intention to ‘open the eyes of the nation, who are half bewitched against a Peace.’⁸

Written in trenchantly sparkling prose, Swift sought to disenchant his readers by presenting ‘plain Matters of Fact’ to demonstrate that ‘No Nation was ever so long or so scandalously abused by the Folly, the Temerity, the Corruption [and] the Ambition of its domestick Enemies; or treated with so much Insolence, Injustice and Ingratitude by its foreign Friends.’⁹ Hence the tract’s very title—*The Conduct of the Allies and of the late Ministry*—confirmed the dual extent to which Dutch bellicosity and Whig war-mongering were to be blamed for unnecessarily prolonging hostilities. Whereas the War’s original aim had been to reduce France’s exorbitant power, by 1711, this had been achieved. Accordingly, Swift found it difficult to credit that ‘After Ten Years War, with perpetual Success, to tell us it is yet impossible to have a good Peace, is very surprising, and seems so different from what hath ever hap[pe]ned in the World before.’¹⁰ Against a vociferous lobby that refused to countenance peace until Louis XIV’s grandson, Philip of Anjou, had been removed as Spanish king, Swift insisted that this demand was ‘a new Incident, grafted upon the Original Quarrel.’¹¹ Brilliant victories that far exceeded anything that the War’s original instigators had envisaged had been won, but it was nevertheless alleged that peace was unthinkable. As Swift rued, ‘Ten glorious Campaigns are passed, and now at last, like the sick Man [in Aesop’s fable], we are just expiring with all sorts of good Symptoms.’¹² Moreover, when the Habsburg

7 Jonathan Swift, *Journal to Stella. Letters to Esther Johson and Rebecca Dingley, 1710–1713*, ed. Abigail Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 332–333.

8 Swift, *Journal to Stella*, 311.

9 Jonathan Swift, ‘The Conduct of the Allies,’ in *English Political Writings, 1711–1714*, ed. Bernard A. Goldgar and Ian Gadd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 57.

10 Swift, ‘Conduct,’ Preface: 48.

11 Swift, ‘Conduct,’ 88. In this context, the publication timing of *The Conduct of the Allies* reflected the imminent reopening of Parliament on 7 December 1711, when a motion moved that day by Daniel Finch, Earl of Nottingham, demanding ‘No peace without Spain’ passed the House of Lords by a narrow majority.

12 Swift, ‘Conduct,’ 61.

Emperor, Joseph I, died in April 1711, Swift had privately predicted to Stella that his death would 'cause great alterations in Europe' and 'would hasten a Peace.'¹³ By the time *The Conduct of the Allies* was published, therefore, the accession as Habsburg Emperor of the Allies' preferred contender to the Spanish throne, Charles VI, had seriously undermined the case of those who continued to insist that Philip of Anjou be removed as Spanish king. As Julian Hoppit has succinctly put it, 'many wondered, was a Habsburg leviathan preferable to a Bourbon behemoth?'¹⁴

For his part, Swift deemed it 'a very obvious Question to ask, by what Motives, or what Management, we are thus become the Dupes and Bubbles of Europe?'¹⁵ In terms of domestic party politics, his answer was unequivocal: 'whether this War were prudently begun or not, it is plain, that the true Spring and Motive of it, was the aggrandizing a particular Family [i.e. the Churchills], and in short, a War of the General [Marlborough] and the Ministry [the Whigs], and not of the Prince or People.'¹⁶ Appealing to a provincial patriotism easily taken for granted, Swift lamented that it was 'the Folly of too many, to mistake the Eccho of a London Coffee-house for the Voice of the Kingdom.'¹⁷ City coffee-houses were filled with 'new men' whose personal fortunes depended on stocks, shares and annuities generated by new systems of public credit and the vast sums of government expenditure demanded by continuous warfare. Accordingly, Swift alleged that Marlborough and his supporters had formed an insidious alliance with men whose 'perpetual Harvest is War' and a 'Solemn League and Covenant' with ambitious Whigs seeking a return to office on any terms.¹⁸ There was, indeed, 'a Conspiracy on all Sides to go on with these Measures, which must perpetuate the War.'¹⁹ In this way, Swift insisted that the War had become a duplicitous scandal, mutating from a patriotic struggle against a puissant foreign tyrant who aspired to universal monarchy to a shabbily avaricious opportunity for a minority of monied men to pursue personal enrichment at the nation's expense whilst one individual, Marlborough, aspired to perpetual power. As Swift narrated, 'by these Steps, a G[enera]l during Pleasure, might have grown into a G[enera]l for Life, and

13 Swift, *Journal to Stella*, 188.

14 Julian Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty? England, 1689–1727* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 121.

15 Swift, 'Conduct,' 82.

16 Swift, 'Conduct,' 83.

17 Swift, 'Conduct,' 95.

18 Swift, 'Conduct,' 83–84.

19 Swift, 'Conduct,' 86.

a G[enera]l for Life into a King.’²⁰ The pitiable victims of this unscrupulous Whig conspiracy were not only the hundreds and thousands of British soldiers dying and suffering in combat but also the British people, subjected to unprecedented fiscal extortion and trade disruption. Burdened by unmanageable levels of inherited debt, Swift sarcastically predicted it would be ‘a mighty comfort to our Grandchildren,’ to view the colours and standards captured at the battle of Blenheim as ‘a few Rags hang up at Westminster-Hall,’ whilst ‘boasting, as Beggars do, that their Grandfathers were Rich and Great.’²¹ Thus Swift’s *Conduct of the Allies* cleverly converted what had formerly been a covert and controversial case for peace into a seemingly incontrovertible rationale.

Chronologically, Swift identified the failed peace negotiations at The Hague in 1709 as confirmation of the Whig-Dutch conspiracy against peace. Despite having already obtained substantial concessions from Louis XIV—including the surrender of Newfoundland, dismantling the defences at Dunkirk, withdrawing French troops from Spain and the abandonment of most French conquests on France’s eastern frontier—Louis had refused to accede to the Allies’ further insistence that he supply military assistance to ensure the removal of his grandson, Anjou, from the Spanish throne within two months, or else face renewed war. In his *History*, Swift later claimed not only that the Allies ‘knew very well, that the Enemy would never consent to this’ but also that—as he put it in *The Conduct of the Allies*—serious doubt attached to the Whigs’ protestation that there could be ‘no security for the island of Britain, unless a king of Spain be dethroned by the hands of his grandfather.’²² Following the collapse of peace negotiations at The Hague, Swift recounted in his *History* how Louis XIV’s foreign minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, marquis de Torcy, had immediately published the Allies’ peace proposals on Louis’s behalf ‘as an Appeal to his Subjects against the Unreasonableness and Injustice of his Enemies,’ which secured the desired result: patriotic outrage and an instant re-dedication of the French nation to Louis’s service.²³ As Swift observed, the French king was ‘not so sunk in his Affairs, as we have imagined, and have long flattered Our selves with the Hopes of’—partly because, as Swift lamented, ‘an absolute Government may endure a long War’ in ways that usually proved

20 Swift, ‘Conduct,’ 87.

21 Swift, ‘Conduct,’ 97.

22 Jonathan Swift, *The History of the Four Last Years of the Queen*, Herbert Davis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1951), 32; Swift, ‘Conduct,’ 99.

23 Swift, *History of the Four Last Years*, 33.

'ruinous to Free Countries.'²⁴ When renewed peace negotiations convened at Geertruidenberg in March 1710 also collapsed, Swift insisted that the failure to end the War was wholly due to 'the Allies insisting upon such Demands as they neither expected nor perhaps desired should be granted.'²⁵

As it happened, Swift himself had arrived in London from Ireland, in September 1710, ostensibly anticipating a short visit, primarily aimed at lobbying the Westminster government for remission of government taxes, known as the 'First Fruits,' that were levied on the Church of Ireland. His arrival in London had thus coincided with the partisan backlash provoked by the Whig administration's decision to impeach the High Church Tory preacher, Henry Sacheverell, in March 1710 for the provocative political content of a recent sermon entitled *The Perils of False Brethren* (1709). Despite being convicted of high crimes and misdemeanours, Sacheverell received a light sentence, depriving him of the right to preach for three years, and his popularity was confirmed in a subsequent progress around provincial England. In October 1710, the Tories swept to a landslide election victory, catalysing the potential to envisage liquidation of the War. Keen to promote the prevalent momentum for peace, it was Robert Harley and a former Secretary at War, Henry St. John who, as A.D. MacLachlan observed, 'more than most perhaps . . . grasped the grotesque paradox of a war that could not be won because it was already won.'²⁶ In this context, an anonymous Whig pamphlet entitled *The French King's Reasons* (1710) ventriloquized Louis XIV's vicarious delight in the Whig mismanagement of Sacheverell's trial and the subsequent revitalization of Tory fortunes. As the French monarch purported to observe, his subjects 'easily saw that their Case was not desperate, and that their Neighbours, while their Armies were assaulting me in my own Territories, were doing my Business at Home.'²⁷ Accordingly, as Swift later narrated in his *History*, it was Louis himself, through Torcy, who approached Britain in April 1711, with formal overtures aimed at 'settling the Tranquillity of Europe upon a solid Foundation.'²⁸ Two months later, the English diplomat, Matthew Prior, had been received at Versailles 'with great civilities' and immediately reassured by Louis of his principled

24 Swift, 'Conduct,' 102.

25 Swift, *History of the Four Last Years*, 35.

26 A.D. MacLachlan, 'The road to peace, 1710–1713,' in *Britain after the Glorious Revolution, 1689–1714*, ed. Geoffrey Holmes (London: Macmillan, 1969), 197–215, 200.

27 Anon., *The French King's Reasons against Peace, in his speech in Council, just before the last Courier was Dispatch'd, to the Plenipotentiaries in Holland* (London: Printed and Sold by J. Baker, 1710), 4.

28 Swift, *History of the Four Last Years*, 36–37.

opposition to any potential union of the French and Spanish crowns, 'being persuaded that such an excess of Power' was indeed 'contrary to the general Good and Repose of Europe.'²⁹ Hence Swift accounted it 'almost a Miracle' that the Bourbon dynasty had not, in fact, become 'the universal Monarchy by right of Inheritance' and denounced 'the unaccountable Stupidity of the Princes of Europe' in having tolerated France observing the restrictions of Salic Law with respect to its own monarchy, whilst simultaneously supplying foreign dynasties with female marriage partners whose initial renunciations of claims to royal titles could later be silently revoked.³⁰

Indeed, an uninformed reader of Swift's entries for 1711, in his *Journal to Stella*, might have assumed that Britain was at war with the Dutch, rather than the French. On 28 September, for example, Swift related a convivial supper he had enjoyed until 1 a.m. that morning, in the company of St. John, Prior and two secret French envoys, Mons. Mesnager, and the Abbé du Bois, as well as the British-based Abbé Gaultier, who had previously acted an intermediary between the French and British courts. Aware that preliminary articles of peace had been signed the day before, Swift confided to Stella that 'We have already settled all things with France,' although 'this news is a mighty secret.' Confirming that Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford, was to be dispatched to Holland to 'let them know what we have been doing,' Swift acknowledged that 'then there will be the devil and all to pay, but we'll make them [the Dutch] swallow it with a pox.'³¹ As Swift later confirmed in his *History*, when Strafford arrived at the States-General that December, he was 'instructed to be very dry and reserved' towards the Dutch ministers and to remind his hosts that, with the new Tory hue of Queen Anne's ministry, 'Britain proceeded in some respects upon a New Scheme of Politicks, would no longer struggle for Impossibilities, nor be amused by Words' and that 'our People come every day more and more to their Senses.'³² No longer would 'the strain of lower Politicks' practised by all Dutch statesmen be endured, whilst Swift also vituperatively denounced the strain of 'inferior cunning' that characterized all Dutch subjects 'from the Boor to the Burgomaster.'³³ Meanwhile, when Marlborough's replacement as Captain General, James Butler, second duke of Ormonde, received his notorious 'restraining orders' in May 1712, ordering him to avoid serious military engagements whilst peace negotiations were underway, confirmation of these

29 Swift, *History of the Four Last Years*, 44.

30 Swift, *History of the Four Last Years*, 150.

31 Swift, *Journal to Stella*, 289–290.

32 Swift, *History of the Four Last Years*, 110–111.

33 Swift, *History of the Four Last Years*, 109, 23.

orders was dispatched to the French court but not to Britain's Allies, and Dutch military losses ensued.

Swift's anti-Dutch animus chimed conveniently with French reasoning. Six weeks after *The Conduct of the Allies* was published in London, Louis XIV's foreign minister, Torcy, ordered that Swift's tract be immediately translated into French and published in Paris,³⁴ and two further editions of *La Conduite des Alliez et du dernière Ministère* were evidently published in Liège and Luxembourg in 1712. So comprehensively and effectively did Swift's *Conduct of the Allies* echo arguments previously disseminated on behalf of Louis XIV's regime by propaganda authors working for Torcy that the French foreign minister thereafter abstained from commissioning any more works to promote the case for ending the War. Instead, as Louis's plenipotentiary at the Congress of Utrecht itself, Melchior de Polignac, observed from Utrecht in February 1712, the French delegation was content to sit back and watch as their British counterparts 'executed to the letter' recommendations contained in Swift's tract.³⁵ In his subsequent *History*, Swift further alleged that Torcy had even sought to exploit British irritation at perceived Dutch procrastination during the Utrecht negotiations by daringly suggesting that 'since the States had acted so ungratefully, the Queen should let her Forces join with those of France in order to compel the Confederates to a Peace'; this proposal had, however, generated only 'the utmost Abhorrence' from the British court.³⁶ This alleged French offer only echoed a warning in the first sermon preached to the official British delegation at Utrecht that, having secured military success, they might 'grow insolent, and will impose, if not impossible, yet unreasonable Terms.' Yet should they seek to humiliate the defeated power and 'push on their Revenge beyond all bounds.' the preacher, William Ayerst, insisted that it would be 'just in Providence to change sides.'³⁷

The Influence of Swift's Critique

By the time the British plenipotentiaries convened at Utrecht, however, Swift's *Conduct of the Allies* had admirably fulfilled its polemical purpose. A week after

34 Joseph Klaitis, *Printed propaganda under Louis XIV. Absolute monarchy and public opinion* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 284n.

35 Klaitis, *Printed propaganda*, 328.

36 Swift, *History of the Four Last Years*, 147.

37 William Ayerst, *The Duty and Motives of Praying for Peace. A sermon preached before [...] Her Majesty's Plenipotentiaries at the Congress of Utrecht. Jan. 27/Feb. 7, 17¹¹/12* (London: Printed for Jonah Bowyer, 1712), 18.

its publication, an Oxford don, William Stratford, wrote to Harley from Christ Church, observing that the tract ‘takes, as much as you could wish . . . It will put the country gentlemen in the temper you desire,’ rendering them ‘very ready to battle it at home for a peace abroad.’³⁸ A couple of months later, a series of resolutions was passed by the House of Commons, condemning the Allies’ wartime record, and Swift claimed credit for the government’s substantial voting majorities. As he recounted to Stella on 4 February 1712, ‘Those who spoke, drew all their arguments from my book, and their votes confirm all I writ; the Court had a majority of a hundred and fifty: all agree, that it was my book that spirited them to these resolutions.’³⁹ Reprinted seven times by the end of March, *The Conduct of the Allies* was grudgingly deemed ‘this Master-piece,’ which ‘was no sooner dispers’d and canvass’d in the world, but it produc’d the desir’d Effect’ by a hostile Robert Walpole.⁴⁰ A generation later, Samuel Johnson likewise admired ‘this wonder-working pamphlet,’ whilst primarily attributing its success to the fact that ‘the nation was then combustible, and a spark set it on fire.’⁴¹

On its publication, Swift’s tract predictably unleashed a flurry of supportive and hostile printed reaction. In his study of the pamphlet controversy that surrounded the ending of the War of the Spanish Succession, Heinz-Joachim Müllenbrock found that, in terms of quantitative citation, *The Conduct of the Allies* ‘far surpasses all other pamphlets,’ being ‘quoted almost as many times as all other pamphlets together.’⁴² Denouncing ‘the Frenchified Principles of this Author’ who was intent on ‘rendring the Dutch odious to us,’ Daniel Defoe, for instance, described Swift’s pamphlet as having ‘entered the Stage like a gladiator at the Bear-garden, with a great Flourish, Brandishing its Weapons, carrying a fine Feather in its Hat, the Shirt and Hair tied up with Ribbons, a bright Weapon in its hand *in terrorem* . . . ushered in by the Shouts and Huzza’s of the Rabble.’⁴³ Coinciding with the fifth edition of Swift’s *Conduct* in December 1711, *An Account of the Obligations the States of Holland have to Great Britain*

38 Quoted by Richard I. Cook, *Jonathan Swift as a Tory pamphleteer* (Seattle, London: University of Washington Press, 1967), 30.

39 Swift, *Journal to Stella*, 382.

40 [Robert Walpole], *A Short History of the Parliament*, 2nd edition (London: T. Warner, 1713), 11.

41 Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), 3: 19.

42 Heinz-Joachim Müllenbrock, *The Culture of Contention. A Rhetorical Analysis of the Public Controversy about the Ending of the War of the Spanish Succession, 1710–1713* (Munich: Fink, 1997), 108.

43 [Daniel Defoe], *A Defence of the Allies and the Late Ministry: or, Remarks on the Tories New Idol* (London: Printed by J. Baker, 1712), 46.8, 2.

was published anonymously by the Whig-turned-Jacobite conspirator, Robert Ferguson, and supported Swift's case in its scathing denunciation of Dutch deception. Ferguson discerned pervasive evidence of Dutch adherence to 'the good old Cause'—republicanism—being deployed to deter fearful British subjects from pursuing peace by 'old thre[a]dbare Phrases,' such as 'Popery and Slavery, Arbitrary Power, French Gold, Wooden Shoes, breach of Faith.'⁴⁴ The following month, Queen Anne appointed a fast-day to pray for the peace negotiations that were starting in Utrecht, for which Joseph Trapp preached a sermon at St. Martin's in the Fields, London, insisting that 'Robbing the Publick is surely a Sin.' Equally, of those who used 'Artifices to prolong so Bloody a War, in order to gratify their own Avarice or Ambition, or upon any other private consideration whatsoever' Trapp opined that it would be 'good for them if they had never been born.' Such strictures evidently elicited a hostile response, obliging Trapp to append a postscript to the second edition of the printed version, acknowledging that he had been accused not only of 'burlesquing and wresting the Scriptures' and 'Jingling and Playing with Words' but also of 'being in the Interest of the Pretender.'⁴⁵ As Trapp had found, anti-Dutch attacks often attracted allegations of thwarted Jacobitism. A fortnight after the first edition of *The Conduct of the Allies* appeared, an editorial in *The Protestant Post-Boy* had blamed the 'refin'd French Breeding' for the tract's litany of 'bare-fac'd Calumnies, wretched Inconsistencies, and direct False-hoods.'⁴⁶ Indeed, the efficacy of Whig insinuations was subsequently acknowledged by Swift in a manuscript he composed around 1717, that was published posthumously, entitled *An Enquiry into the Behaviour of the Queen's Last Ministry*. In this tract, Swift recalled discussing the charge of Jacobitism with an unnamed ministerial contact who had evidently denied its validity but 'said to me with much frankness, "You [Tories] sett up the Church and Sacheverall against us, and We set up Trade and the Pretender against you".'⁴⁷ Nevertheless, as Müllenbrock showed, since Whig contributions to the pamphlet debate cited *The Conduct of the Allies* about four times more often than Tory pamphlets, its polemical

44 [Robert Ferguson], *An account of the Obligations the States of Holland have to Great-Britain... with Reflections on the Peace* (London, 1711), 40–41.

45 Joseph Trapp, *A Sermon preached at St. Martin-in-the-Fields; January the 16th 1711. Being the day appointed by Her Majesty for the General Fast: for imploring the Blessing of Almighty God upon the Treaty of Peace now in Negotiation* (London: Printed for Henry Clements, 1712), 11–12, 'Postscript'.

46 *The Protestant Post-Boy* (London: Printed for J. Baker, 1711–1712), 4–6 December 1711, 1–2.

47 Jonathan Swift, 'An Enquiry into the Behaviour of the Queen's Last Ministry,' in Jonathan Swift, *Political Tracts, 1713–1719*, ed. Herbert Davis and Irvin Ehrenpreis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), 164.

success was confirmed by the fact that 'the Whigs simply could not help taking up Swift's arguments.'⁴⁸

Even within Swift's own circle, however, the confidentiality necessarily imposed on the peace negotiations inevitably provoked incessant rumour and suspicion. In an oft-quoted line, taken from a letter to Swift in May 1712, Archbishop King of Dublin complained that since 'perhaps no negotiations were ever managed with so much secrecy as this,' sceptics were suggesting 'that this peace is like that of God and passes all understanding.'⁴⁹ The following March, however, he remained confident that when his *History* of recent events was published, it would 'unriddle you many a dark Problem' and ensure that 'the World will have other Notions of our Proceedings,' by showing 'that Faction, Rage, Rebellion, Revenge and Ambition' had been the sordid motives of those who had either disparaged, or directly sought to sabotage, the government's negotiations.⁵⁰ Delighting in his proximity to the highest ministerial *échelons* and the privileged access he perceived was thereby conferred, Swift boasted to Stella in February 1711 of Harley, St. John and other Tories: 'They call me nothing but Jonathan; and I said, I believed they would leave me Jonathan as they found me; and that I never knew a ministry do any thing for those whom they make companions of their pleasure; and I believe you will find it so, but I care not.'⁵¹

Swift was thus naïvely confident that his detailed history of the peace negotiations would be both authoritative and impartial, on account of his refusal to accept payment for any government-supported publications, in conspicuous contrast to hired authors such as Defoe. As Swift confirmed in the preface to his *History*, 'I never received one shilling... except that of a few books; nor did I want their assistance to support me. I very often indeed dined with the Treasurer and Secretary; but, in those days, that was not reckoned a bribe.'⁵² Furthermore, around one-fifth of his printed narrative comprised extracts that had been transcribed verbatim from diplomatic documents associated with the peace negotiations. Swift took his research project extremely seriously, complaining to Stella in October 1712, 'I toil like a horse, and have hundreds of letters still to read; and squeeze a line perhaps out of each, or at least the seeds of a line.'⁵³ In contrast, however, to the Tory ministry's clear sponsorship and

48 Müllenbrock, *Culture of Contention*, 108.

49 *Correspondence*, 1, ed. Williams: 298.

50 *Correspondence*, 1, ed. Williams: 339–340.

51 Swift, *Journal to Stella*, 145.

52 Swift, *History of the Four Last Years*, xxxv ('Preface').

53 Swift, *Journal to Stella*, 455.

concurrence in publication of *The Conduct of the Allies*, the idea of producing a detailed *History* of the peace negotiations was very much Swift's own.⁵⁴ Hence although Swift railed to Stella the following month that 'I have a world of writing to finish: & little time; these Toads of Ministers are so slow in their helps,' the politicians' studied procrastination rather confirmed ministerial unease at Swift's eagerness to publicise the covert overtures made to Louis XIV's France during these years.⁵⁵

Hence it was much to Swift's bitter disappointment that his *History of the Four Last Years* was to remain unpublished during his lifetime. If *The Conduct of the Allies* had succeeded in its polemical purpose, Swift's subsequent *History* was simply too partisan to achieve its aim of supplying an objective narrative. Having finished writing the *History* by May 1713, Swift intended its publication to coincide with submission of the peace terms agreed at Utrecht before Parliament. As he had accurately suspected to Stella in January, however, 'My large Treatise stands stock still; some think it too dangerous to publish, and would have me print only what relates to t[h]e Peace. I can't tell what I shall do.'⁵⁶ Aside from political sensitivities arising from much of its content, the *History's* moment had passed. Both Harley and St. John—now elevated as the earl of Oxford and Viscount Bolingbroke respectively—feared that its defensively partisan vindication of the rationale for peace might only provoke distracting counter-attacks at a time when public attention should be focused on the territorial and trading gains that Britain stood to derive from treaty ratification. Having left London for Dublin in June 1713, Swift subsequently learned that various clauses of the proposed Anglo-French commercial treaty had been rejected by Parliament. As Swift wrote to his friend and confidant, Charles Ford, the following month, he was 'tempted to think' that if his *History* 'had been published at the time of the Peace, some ill Consequences might not have happened.'⁵⁷

Swift's optimism that prompt publication of his *History* might have mitigated the subsequent misfortunes of Oxford, Bolingbroke and the Tory party was misplaced. For his claim, in the preface, that his *History of the Four Last Years* was written 'with the utmost impartiality' was reflected in his insistence, at the outset of his narrative, that he would not 'mingle Panegyrick

54 Regarding the relative influence of both Harley and St. John on Swift's pamphlet, see: Downie, 'The Conduct of the Allies,' 108–128.

55 Swift, *Journal to Stella*, 462.

56 Swift, *Journal to Stella*, 485.

57 *The Letters of Jonathan Swift to Charles Ford*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), 12.

or Satire with an History intended to inform Posterity, as well as to instruct those of the present Age.' His aim was, ostensibly, an objective record 'Since Facts truly related are the best Applauses, or most lasting Reproaches.'⁵⁸ Yet Swift's avowals should not be taken at face value: Swift, was, after all, an author constitutionally incapable of impartiality. The first of the *History's* four books contained, for example, a series of devastatingly effective and succinct character assassinations. Of the former Tory peer, Nottingham, who had led the 'No peace without Spain' campaign, apparent virtues were alchemized into insidious vices, as Swift alleged that Nottingham's 'outward Regularity of Life, his Appearance of Religion, and seeming Zeal for the Church, as they are an Effect, so they are the Excuse for that Stiffness and Formality with which his Nature is fraught.'⁵⁹ Elsewhere, Swift identified 'three Furies' that governed the conduct of Sarah, duchess of Marlborough ('sordid Avarice, disdainful Pride, and ungovernable Rage'),⁶⁰ whilst also directing his caustic wit towards her husband whom Swift had privately described to Stella in 1710 as being 'as covetous as Hell, and ambitious as the Prince of it: he would fain have been general for life, and has broken all endeavours for Peace, to keep his greatness and get money.'⁶¹ In his printed works, however, Swift's awareness of the popular respect that Marlborough continued to command prompted him to deploy the rhetorical device of apophasis against the General, thereby discussing allegations whilst simultaneously disclaiming his intention of doing so. In *The Conduct of the Allies*, therefore, Swift insisted he would 'wave any thing that is Personal' regarding Marlborough's suspected avarice, and thereby 'say nothing of those great Presents made by several Princes, which the Soldiers used to call Winter Foraging, and said it was better than that of the Summer; of Two and Half *per Cent.* subtracted out of all the Subsidies we pay in those Parts, which amounts to no inconsiderable Sum; and lastly, of the grand Perquisites in a long successful War, which are so amicably adjusted between Him and the States' of Holland.'⁶²

Ironically—and perhaps unconsciously—Swift himself was also potentially guilty of benefiting from the War, via the secret Franco-British negotiations that had started in 1711. As seen, his case for pursuing peace was predicated on charging the former Whig administration, in conjunction with its Dutch allies, of prolonging hostilities against France for reasons of mutual self-interest.

58 Swift, *History of the Four Last Years*, xxiv, 1–2.

59 Swift, *History of the Four Last Years*, 11.

60 Swift, *History of the Four Last Years*, 8.

61 Swift, *Journal to Stella*, 104.

62 Swift, 'Conduct,' 83–84.

Citing the Scriptural text Matthew 21:12, Swift insisted in *The Conduct of the Allies* that the War had been maintained by 'the Fears of the Mony-changers, lest their Tables should be overthrown,' suiting 'the Designs of the Whigs, who apprehended the Loss of their Credit and Employments in a Peace.'⁶³ Despite thus condemning his Whig adversaries for deriving personal profit from the financial secrets of waging war, Swift himself could be charged with effective 'insider trading' when, shortly before publication of *The Conduct of the Allies*, he resolved to purchase £500 worth of stocks—'which will cost me three hundred and eighty ready money'—in the new South Sea Company that had recently been created by, among others, Harley, as Lord Treasurer.⁶⁴ Aware that Britain was likely to receive, as part of any peace agreement with France, the right to supply Spain's colonies with slaves (known as the *Asiento*), Harley had sought to restore British national solvency through the South Sea Company, which would take over the national debt and replace government bonds with shares in return for a guaranteed 6% interest payment. Prudently, however, Swift had postponed making his actual investment until January 1712: i.e. until just after Harley had narrowly secured Parliament's formal sanction for peace negotiations, having relied on Queen Anne's unprecedented creation of twelve new peers on New Year's Day.⁶⁵

Swift's Retrospective Defence of the Peace

Scattered hints from Swift's correspondence during the 1720s and 1730s indicate that he sporadically returned to the manuscript of his *History of the Four Last Years*, revising certain sections with a view finally to securing its delayed publication. Two decades after the events it narrated, however, the *History's* polemical and amphibian character continued to provoke unease among not only those whose political actions Swift hoped to vindicate but also their descendants. In November 1723, for example, Swift teasingly assured Harley that 'It is destined that you should have great obligations to me, for who else knows how to deliver you down to posterity'?'⁶⁶ Over a decade later, in August 1737, Swift's friend and former Under-Secretary of State, Erasmus Lewis, advised Swift that it was 'now too late to publish a pamphlet, and too early to publish a

63 Swift, 'Conduct,' 85.

64 Swift, *Journal to Stella*, 322.

65 See John Richardson, *Slavery and Augustan literature. Swift, Pope, Gay* (London: Routledge, 2004), 47.

66 Swift, *Correspondence*, 2: 468.

history.⁶⁷ Eight months later, however, Lewis confirmed to Swift that his manuscript history had been attentively read by several colleagues 'who think, in all political matters, just as you do,' including the current earl of Oxford (the former Lord Treasurer's son). According to Lewis, all had concurred that the sections relating to negotiation of the Peace of Utrecht 'they admire exceedingly, and declare they never yet saw that, or any other transaction, drawn up with so much perspicuity, or in a style so entertaining and instructive to the reader in every respect.'⁶⁸ At the same time, however, acute residual concern had been expressed about several sections including an implied attack on Marlborough's personal courage and Swift's unsupported claim that the 'incurable hatred' allegedly felt by the Austrian Habsburg envoy, Prince Eugene of Savoy, towards Lord Treasurer Harley had resulted in the Prince's suggestion that Harley might be assassinated, if this could be contrived to appear as an accident.⁶⁹ Warning of dire punishments likely to be meted out to any printer who produced Swift's manuscript in its current form, Lewis urged Swift to publish the sections relating to negotiations of the Peace of Utrecht 'and leave out everything that savours of acrimony and resentment.' To do so, Lewis insisted, 'would be of great service . . . nothing have yet been published on the peace of Utrecht, in such a beautiful and strong manner as you have done it.'⁷⁰ Now aged over seventy, however, Swift evidently had little appetite for such extensive and conceivably craven revisions, but Swift's London advisers remained adamant.

The History of the Four Last Years of the Queen was eventually published posthumously in 1758 by Andrew Millar in London and, shortly afterwards, by George Faulkner in Dublin, provoking an acrimonious dispute among Swift's literary executors and trustees. It first appeared in print, therefore, during the Seven Years' War, when Britain once again found itself locked into a protracted armed struggle for global dominance against its old enemy, France. In Dublin, the young Edmund Burke seized on the acerbic character-sketches that Swift had penned of former Whig ministers and reprinted them in the *Annual Register* 'as a striking example of the melancholy effects of prejudice, and party zeal.'⁷¹ Meanwhile the anonymous author of *A Whig's Remarks on the Tory History of the Four Last Years of Queen Anne* (1768) dismissed 'the whole

67 Swift, *Correspondence*, 5: 66.

68 Swift, *Correspondence*, 5: 104.

69 See Swift, *History of the Four Last Years*, 26.

70 Swift, *Correspondence*, 5: 106.

71 *The Annual Register, or A View of the History, Politicks, and Literature, Of the Year 1758* (London: J. Dodsley, 1759), 256.

of his historical medley a most infamous libel' and denounced the *History's* 'venomed malevolence' as the debased output of a 'meddling dean,' who had found himself 'basking in the sunshine of court favourites, and in warm intimacy with the chief betrayers of their country.'⁷²

Controversial at the time of its conclusion, the Peace of Utrecht had a prolonged afterlife. During the Seven Years' War, William Pitt visibly prioritized treaty obligations to Britain's allies over domestic concerns and once denounced 'the treaty of Utrecht, [as] the indelible reproach of the last generation.'⁷³ In the preface to his *History*, however, Swift had confidently averred that no other negotiators could 'have bound up the French king, or the Hollanders more strictly than the Queen's plenipotentiaries' had done at Utrecht.⁷⁴ From France, Britain had regained Hudson Bay, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in Canada, St Kitts in the West Indies, and a commitment to the Hanoverian succession, whilst Spain had ceded to Britain Gibraltar, Minorca and the *Asiento* contract. Anticipating imminent signing of the Treaty by the British delegation in early March 1713, Swift reported dining with Harley, who had showed him portions of the speech on the Peace that had been drafted for Queen Anne to deliver to the Westminster Parliament 'w^{ch} I corrected in sev^{rall} Places and penned th[e] vote of Address of thanks for th[e] Speech' that was duly returned by members of the House of Lords on 11 April.⁷⁵ In celebrating this Tory diplomatic feat, Swift remained as central as in supporting its prosecution.

Before the Peace had been concluded, however, Swift had insisted to Archbishop King in January 1713 that 'We have done all we can,' denying that 'in publick Affairs, human Wisdom is able to make Provisions for Futurity.'⁷⁶ Three months later, however, King had directed Swift to 'look back on all the treaties that have been between England and France for the last four hundred years' to realize that France had always ultimately triumphed over Britain in the long term.⁷⁷ Indeed, Queen Anne died in August 1714, a Whig ministry returned to power the following February and Louis XIV died in August 1715. By that

72 *A Whig's Remarks on the Tory History of the Four Last Years of Queen Anne* (London: Printed for J. Staples, 1768), 65, iv, 63, 3.

73 Quoted by Brendan Simms, 'British strategic culture, 1714–1760,' in *Cultures of Power in Europe during the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. Brendan Simms and Hamish Scott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 129.

74 Swift, *History of the Four Last Years*, xxxvi.

75 Swift, *Journal to Stella*, 509.

76 *Correspondence*, 1, ed. Williams: 329.

77 *Correspondence*, 1, ed. Williams: 343.

time, impeachment proceedings had been lodged against Bolingbroke, Oxford and Ormonde on charges relating to their alleged foreign policy mismanagement and betrayals. For his part, Swift had left London, having reluctantly accepted the deanship of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, where a special *Te Deum* was commissioned by the Bratislavan-born composer, John Sigismund Cousser, for the public thanksgiving held to celebrate the Peace of Utrecht.⁷⁸ Swift's dreams of being appointed Historiographer-Royal following publication of an acclaimed *History of the Four Last Years* had, however, evaporated; instead, in March 1714, his Whig enemies successfully manoeuvred Queen Anne into issuing a proclamation that formally denounced Swift's anonymous *The Public Spirit of the Whigs* (1714) as a 'false, malicious and factious libel' and offered a reward of £300 for identification of the tract's author.⁷⁹ The following September, Swift received a letter from an Irish colleague 'delivered . . . in such a Manner' that he nostalgically confessed to having—momentarily—'thought that I was at Court again,' before recalling that 'I was in Irel[an]d, that the Queen was dead, the Ministry changed, and I was onely the poor Dean of St. Patrick's.'⁸⁰

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- 78 Brian Boydell, 'Music, 1700–1850,' in *A New History of Ireland. iv. Eighteenth Century Ireland, 1691–1800*, ed. T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 574.
- 79 See Maurice J. Quinlan, 'The prosecution of Swift's *Public Spirit of the Whigs*,' *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 9 (1967–8), 176–184.
- 80 *Correspondence*, 2, ed. Williams: 132–133.