

1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era

Volume 20

Article 4

2013

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Recommended Citation

Ashley Marshall (2013) "SWIFT AND TEMPLE," *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era*: Vol. 20, Article 4.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/sixteenfifty/vol20/iss1/4>

SWIFT AND TEMPLE

Ashley Marshall

One of the truisms about Jonathan Swift's life and career is that they were greatly influenced by Sir William Temple, the Moor Park baronet for whom Swift served as secretary in his twenties and early thirties. In his magisterial standard biography, Irvin Ehrenpreis bluntly asserts that the "profundity of Temple's effect on Swift has always been underestimated." Swift, he continues, "admired Temple's character and his mind. Temple's literary style, political philosophy, moral outlook, and aesthetic judgment became either models or points of departure for Swift's own."¹ The esteemed mentor, in Ehrenpreis's telling, almost immediately became a father figure

¹ Irvin Ehrenpreis, *Swift: The Man, his Works, the Age*, 3 vols. (London: Methuen, 1962–83), 1:92. David Deeming has argued a version of this hypothesis—stressing the "anxiety of influence"—that is if anything more ponderous. Swift had to do more than imitate Temple, Deeming concludes, because merely to ape his patron's ideas would "have constituted a profound self-betrayal for a man whose country of origin appeared to Temple...as a scene of civil chaos that left the stigmata of barbarism on all its children." See "The Tale, Temple, and Swift's Irish Aesthetic," in *Representations of Swift*, ed. Brian A. Connery (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002), 25–40, at 25.

for his fatherless young secretary, who longed to play the role of son and was desperate to impress Temple.

Ehrenpreis's depiction of the relationship has become standard in its essentials, and with the exception of A. C. Elias, Jr., there have been few dissidents from this position.² Temple, says David Nokes, "moulded Swift's ideas at this formative stage," and his "theories and experiences shaped his secretary's views of politics and learning."³ J. A. Downie, stressing Swift's filial rebellion against as well as his debts to Temple, concludes that, "it seems safe to lay the wonderful development of Swift's literary genius at the feet of" his patron.⁴ More recently, Brean Hammond has emphasized the lasting effect of the Moor Park years: "Swift's life and career were shaped by such a bond—with Sir William Temple—to the extent that many of the relationships he subsequently formed with *eminenti* were re-imaginings of both the enabling and the disabling aspects of that prototype."⁵ Swift's modern biographers have conceded dissimilarities in opinion and temperament between their subject and his pompous neo-Epicurean patron, but the presumption of deep influence and lasting psychological impact remains dominant.⁶ Thirty years ago, Elias mounted a contentious case against the standard reading of the Swift-Temple relationship, attempting to debunk the "myth of Swift's admiring discipleship."⁷ His study has made no significant difference to how scholars talk about Temple's importance to Swift. I will return to the particulars of Elias's countercase throughout the present essay, but should say at the outset that while he most definitely (as one reviewer complained) "overstate[s] his case,"⁸ the long-standing lack of engagement with his argument is unfortunate.

² Elias, *Swift at Moor Park: Problems in Biography and Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982).

³ Nokes, *Jonathan Swift, A Hypocrite Reversed: A Critical Biography* (1985; rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 17.

⁴ Downie, *Jonathan Swift, Political Writer* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 32, 65.

⁵ Hammond, *Jonathan Swift* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010), 101. "Swift's moulding by Temple," Hammond continues, "resulted in a lifelong refusal to make the first move, whether in male-male or male-female friendships" (102).

⁶ Temple routinely appears in lists of Swift's "heroes" and "father figures." See, for example, F. P. Lock, *Swift's Tory Politics* (London: Duckworth, 1983), 100, and Margaret Anne Doody, "Swift and Women," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*, ed. Christopher Fox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 91.

⁷ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 155.

⁸ Pat Rogers, review of *Swift at Moor Park*, in *Modern Language Review* 79 (1984): 667–69, at 668.

In what follows I survey the evidentiary basis on which we must rely in attempting to understand the Swift-Temple connection. That evidence is scanty, scrappy, and ambiguous, which is no doubt why (present consensus notwithstanding) earlier biographers reached such different conclusions about his Moor Park experience. My position—so as not to be mysterious—is that a cold, sober, systematic analysis of what we *actually know* about Swift's relationship with Temple does not, and cannot, support the standard view. The hypothesis offered (as fact) by Ehrenpreis and his successors is not provable, and some parts of it are not very plausible. The implications are important, both for our understanding of how Swift "felt" about his patron and also for our assumptions about Temple's literary and ideological influence on his young kinsman and secretary. In personal and intellectual terms, what exactly do we really know about the young Swift and Sir William?

* Swift and Temple: The Relationship *

In 1689, the twenty-one-year-old Swift entered the household at Sheen (which soon removed to Moor Park), where he functioned as secretary and amanuensis for Temple, an ex-diplomat, dilettantish moral philosopher, and occasional advisor to William III.⁹ Temple's only son had recently committed suicide, and Ehrenpreis is not alone in supposing that both Swift and Temple came to understand their relationship in filial-paternal terms. Swift's stay at Moor Park was not uninterrupted: he returned to Ireland in the spring of 1690,¹⁰ came back to Moor Park in late 1691, and then departed again (1694) to take orders (and eventually to serve as prebend at Kilroot until 1696). In the course of a decade, Swift spent about six years in Temple's household, a period during which—in Ehrenpreis's telling—his "nature underwent...the deepest changes it could suffer." The young Swift viewed Temple as a "Christian hero," and Temple regarded him not as a drudge but as a friend and confidante, a companion in domestic "cosiness," and a literary aide whose master was training him to carry on his own great labors.

⁹ Temple's generosity in serving as benefactor to the obscure Irish parson was used by early (and some later) biographers to support the hypothesis that he was Swift's natural father (or, in some versions, that Temple's father, John, was also Swift's).

¹⁰ The return to Ireland was probably because a change of climate was recommended to ease his "giddiness" (Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:106-7).

Temple was for Swift (so the story goes) the "chief of men."¹¹ Nokes's portrait is likewise poignant: "an intimacy developed between the two men stronger even than that between blood relatives."¹² David P. French refers casually to Temple as "one of Swift's best friends."¹³ I have only one reservation about this account of life at Moor Park: namely that it cannot be documented. There is frustratingly little clear-cut evidence about the interpersonal relations between Swift and his Moor Park master, and such facts as there are have been construed in radically different ways.

The importance of interpretation is made painfully clear by the biographical prehistory. We have arrived at relative consensus, but until the 1930s or so there was considerable contention. Swift's first biographers, Orrery (1751) and Patrick Delany (1754), mentioned Temple only *en passant*, the former principally interested in denying the rumor of Temple's paternity.¹⁴ Deane Swift's account of his cousin's life (1755) is more expansive on the subject, in part because he was particularly keen to increase the honor of the family and therefore defensive about Jonathan's dependence upon Temple. He wishes to show, therefore, that Temple's "uncommon Munificence" reflects not charity but a desire for friendship and an acknowledgment of Swift's genius: "accordingly we find that his Talents were soon remarked, and his Person highly esteemed by that sagacious Minister," and so on.¹⁵ Deane Swift really had to postulate a warm, mutually admiring connection. In 1784, Thomas Sheridan the younger (the son of Swift's good friend) "extended, modified, and romanticized" the interpretation offered by Deane Swift.¹⁶ The extent to which his take on Swift and Temple was influenced by his predecessor's (self-serving) account rather than derived from new knowledge can only be considered worrying. In any case, Sheridan's successors—all the way up to the mid-twentieth century—reached quite different conclusions about the Swift-Temple relationship and varied in their degree of interest in it.

¹¹ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:92, 93, 256, 104.

¹² Nokes, *Jonathan Swift*, 23.

¹³ French, "Swift, Temple, and 'A Digression on Madness,'" *Studies in English Literature* 5 (1963): 42-57, 43.

¹⁴ Orrery, *Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift* (1751), ed. João Fróes (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), 79; Delany, *Observations upon Lord Orrery's Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift* (Dublin, 1754), 54.

¹⁵ Deane Swift, *An Essay upon the Life, Writings, and Character, of Dr. Jonathan Swift* (1755), 63, 42.

¹⁶ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 130. Elias's account (128-54) of "Moor Park and the Traditions of Swift Biography" is excellent.

Most major nineteenth-century chroniclers of the Dean waxed dramatic. Sir Walter Scott (1814) and John Forster (1875) depicted Swift as a friend rather than a dependent, but detractors of Swift described a very different scene: in their telling, Swift was a mere servant in the house of the dour Sir William, one working for money, eating at the second table, and wretched in having to pay compulsory deference to an ungrateful master.¹⁷ Forster challenged this portrait: Swift's "occasional assumptions of over-familiarity" would be "rebuked by [Temple's] caprices of reserve," which was "mortifying," but "that any secret savageness of pride was eating into Swift's heart at the time, has as little foundation in fact as the rest of Macaulay's picture."¹⁸ Henry Craik (1882) insists, on the contrary, that not only was there friction between Temple and his sullen amanuensis, but also that they were fundamentally incompatible:

Between Temple and Swift comparatively little sympathy could exist. They might mutually respect one another: they might agree in certain opinions: they might feel that each owed the other some gratitude, and on suitable occasions they might...express it. But after all it remains an unchangeable fact, that no two characters could be more unlike.¹⁹

Craik's immediate successors mostly agreed with him in presuming that the Moor Park years were unhappy ones for Swift,²⁰ but that reading was starting

¹⁷ This story, picked up by Thackeray and Macaulay, originated with Jack Temple (Sir William's nephew), who insisted that the Moor Park patriarch had "never favoured [Swift] with his conversation, because of his ill qualities, nor allowed him to sit down at table with him" (qtd. in Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 133). This anecdote comes to us through Samuel Richardson, who reported in 1752 having heard it from a mutual friend who heard it from Jack. Elias discusses the biographical reception of this story in some detail (132–40), concluding that the anecdote is "impossible either to build upon or to reject out of hand. For most of the past century and a quarter, though, it has either been enthusiastically built upon or contemptuously rejected out of hand" (138). Elias also points out (citing a grumpy comment about Jack in the *Journal to Stella*) that Jack was a "hostile witness" (141). Elias finds Jack's account credible, but of course there is no way to determine just how accurate or complete it is, and we have only Richardson's summation of what he heard from a secondhand source.

¹⁸ John Henry Forster, *The Life of Jonathan Swift* (London: John Murray, 1875), 88–89.

¹⁹ Craik, *The Life of Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin* (London: John Murray, 1882), 40–41.

²⁰ Sophie Shilleto Smith describes Temple as "a moral Iceberg" who showed no affection for Swift; *Dean Swift* (London: Methuen, 1910), 10. Echoing Craik, W. D. Taylor concludes that

to disappear from the biographical record in the 1930s. In 1936, Ricardo Quintana denied the “myth” of servitude, stressed Swift’s veneration of his patron, and suggested that Swift’s political principles were “implanted by Temple.”²¹ A generation later, John Middleton Murry entitled the relevant chapter of his biography “Hero-Worship” and lamented Temple’s failure to provide his “fatherless and emotionally starved” young secretary with the surrogate *pater* he sought.²² From the mid-1930s to the present, grand claims have been made for the psychological and literary importance of this connection. The only significant naysayer has been Elias, who forcefully objected to presumptions of Temple’s influence, denying paternal and filial affection and presenting Swift as contemptuous of his master, whom he (unlike Ehrenpreis et al.) considered an unoriginal thinker and second-rate diplomat. Elias’s case depended upon a reinterpretation of the available evidence, a reinterpretation that subsequent biographers have found unconvincing. To that evidence we need now turn.

Much of what we know about Swift and Temple comes from Swift himself, which has to be reckoned unfortunate: his comments often reflect self-promotional or otherwise self-serving agendas. As the story goes, Swift came to the Temple household hoping for patronage from a great man. On 29 November 1692, Swift wrote to his uncle William that, “I am not to take orders till the King gives me a Prebendary; and Sir William Temple, tho’ he promises me the certainty of it, yet is less forward than I could wish, because I suppose he believes I shall leave him, and upon some accounts, he thinks me a little necessary to him.”²³ A year and a half later, Swift left Moor Park: apparently exasperated by Temple’s non-efforts on his behalf, he decided to go it alone, hoping to be ordained in the fall.²⁴ In June 1694 he reported

Swift and Temple “differed...radically in mind and temper”; *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Essay* (London: Peter Davies, 1933), 14; Mario M. Rossi and Joseph M. Hone contend, dramatically, that Temple made his young secretary “debase himself...into a position of dependence that seared the soul; when Swift recovered again he was no longer a gentleman”; *Swift: or The Egotist* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1934), 72.

²¹ Quintana, *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift* (1936; rpt. Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1965), 13, 21.

²² Murry, *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Biography* (1954; rpt. New York: Noonday Press, 1955), 51.

²³ *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D.*, 4 vols., ed. David Woolley (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999–2007), 1:116.

²⁴ In the “Family of Swift,” Swift’s not entirely accurate autobiographical fragment, he offers this account of himself: “he had a scruple of entering into the Church merely for support, and Sr Wm Temple then being Master of the Rolls in Ireland offered him an Employ of about 120 ll a year in that office, whereupon Mr Swift told him, that since he had now an opportunity of living

his departure to Deane Swift (senior), grumbling that Temple "was extream angry I left Him, and yet would not oblige Himself any further...nor would promise any thing firmly to Me at all; so that every Body judged I did best to leave Him."²⁵ For ordination, however, Swift needed a character reference. In October 1694 he sent Temple the only extant letter between them, a smarmy and penitential missive that begins "May it please Your Honor" and ends with gratitude "for so many Favors I have received, which whatever effect they have had upon my Fortune shall never fayl to have the greatest upon my Mind."²⁶ To this letter, Swift added a postscript to the effect that Temple's endorsement was needed urgently, and Sir William obliged.

Swift left to take orders in May 1694 (he became prebend of Kilroot in 1695) and was away for two years. During his absence from Moor Park, his cousin Thomas served as chaplain and secretary to Sir William. Ehrenpreis points out that in January 1694, "Thomas was presented to the rectory of Puttenham, about five miles west of Moor Park....While Temple may have helped him to obtain this living, the duties must have limited the attention which he could give to his patron. Here was one occasion for the recall of Jonathan."²⁷ The evidence that Temple "may have helped" Thomas get his post at Puttenham comes from William Wotton's *Defense of the Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*: "it was at Sir William Temple's Request, that my Lord Sommers, then Lord-Keeper of the Great-Seal of England, gave Mr. Swift a very good Benefice in one of the most Delicious Parts of one of the Pleasantest Counties of England."²⁸ Elias's take on the Jonathan-Thomas-

without being driven into the Church for a maintenance, he was resolved to go to Irel and take holy Orders." See *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Herbert Davis et al., 14 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939-68), 5:194. Hereafter the *Prose Works* will be abbreviated PW. In Nokes's telling, this rejection of Temple's help "caused a good deal of bitterness and recrimination on both sides" (*Jonathan Swift*, 33). Where we find this recrimination voiced he does not specify.

²⁵ *Correspondence*, 1:120.

²⁶ *Correspondence*, 1:122-23. Elias suggests that this letter was penned in suppressed resentment: "A little forelock-tugging is one thing, but Swift overdoes it....With Swift it is hard to avoid a sense of something angrier and more complicated going on" (*Swift at Moor Park*, 50). I agree that Swift's boot-licking is likely feigned, and he cannot have enjoyed having to admit further dependence upon Temple—though I would not go so far as Elias in taking this missive as proof of deep resentment.

²⁷ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:169. Another reason, Ehrenpreis suggests, was the death of Temple's wife in February 1695.

²⁸ Wotton, *A Defense of the Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1705), 67. Marcus Walsh prints Wotton's *Defense* in his edition of *A Tale of a Tub and Other Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); the quotation is at p. 229.

Temple triangle is a bit different: he observes that by the time of Jonathan's departure, Temple not only "had a replacement secretary waiting in the wings" in the figure of Thomas, but had also "been arranging preferments...of the sort which [he] had so conspicuously failed to provide for Swift."²⁹ We have to wonder why, if Temple looked on Swift as a son, he obtained a plum living for Thomas rather than Jonathan.

By the end of June 1696, Jonathan was back at Moor Park, for reasons that remain uncertain. Again, we have only Swift's words, addressed to Jane Waring (Varina) after her rejection of his marriage proposal: "I shall set out on Monday fortnight for Dublin, and...hasten for England....I am once more offered the advantage to have the same acquaintance with greatness that I formerly enjoyed, and with better prospect of interest."³⁰ Ehrenpreis and others have taken this passage to mean that "Temple had felt Swift's loss and was not only inviting him to return but promising not to leave him where he found him."³¹ This is thinkable, but so is the possibility that Swift was exaggerating his hopes in the interest of impressing and pressuring "Varina." Or alternatively perhaps he was fleeing a depressing situation and putting the best face he could on it. Without Temple's "invitation," we can only guess what offer was made, let alone why. Other explanations for Swift's return were proffered by earlier biographers—one that Swift charitably vacated the post to make way for a poor curate, and another that he was fleeing a rape charge.³² The most plausible is simply that he disliked Ireland and was happy to put the Irish Sea between himself and Varina, and that Temple was content to benefit from his services. That Temple warmly summoned the prodigal son is neither demonstrable nor terribly likely.

²⁹ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 50.

³⁰ *Correspondence*, 1:125. Swift's abrupt decision to leave Kilroot was clearly wondered about by those around him. In April 1698, he wrote to his successor there that, "Since the Resignation of my Living and the noise it made amongst You, I have had...Letters...declaring much sorrow for my quitting Kilroot, blaming my Prudence for doing it before I was possesst of something else, and censuring my Truth in relation to a certain Lady [Varina]....For what they say relating to my self either as to my Prudence or Conscience, I can answer sufficiently for my own satisfaction" (130-31; to the Rev. John Winder).

³¹ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:167.

³² Forster's skepticism is well-founded: the two stories are "opposed to each other in everything but extravagance....According to one, he was seized by a sudden desire to befriend an aged curate with eight children and forty pounds a year...[and] rode off to Dublin, resigned the prebend, and obtained the old gentleman a grant of it then and there. The other, traceable to a time when incredible scurrilities assailed him, accounted for his resigning by his having been examined before a magistrate...for a criminal attempt on a farmer's daughter" (*Life*, 79-80).

In any case, Swift stayed another three and a half years at Moor Park, translating and transcribing Temple's works, until the latter's death in 1699, upon which he received £100 and "the care and trust and Advantage of publishing his posthumous Writings."³³ We have no direct information about what Swift gained from selling the copyrights of Temple's posthumous works. To judge from the copyright sale figures preserved in the Upcott Collection,³⁴ he would have been fortunate to get £30 per book and might well have got less.³⁵ The total was probably a significant sum of money in Swift's scheme of things—but it was nothing like a provision for feeding him and keeping a roof over his head. This may have been a serious disappointment to Swift, though if we are to believe an allusion in the "Family of Swift" fragment, he hoped that Temple had arranged a comfortable landing place for him. Swift says that after Temple's death he "removed to London, and applyed by Petition to King William, upon the Claym of a Promise his Majesty had made to Sr W T that he would give Mr Swift a Prebend of Canterbury or Westminster."³⁶ Nothing further is known of this alleged "Promise" and there is no way to evaluate it; Swift is our only source.

What I wish to stress here is the fact that the account of Swift's relations to Temple, and Temple's promises, comes from Swift. That the young secretary hoped for patronage—and had reason to do so—from the ex-diplomat and connected statesman is undeniable. But Swift does have a habit of embellishing, especially on the theme of his grievances with the "great" by whom he felt hard done-by. Just as we have not a scrap of confirmatory evidence that the Dean was promised medals by the Queen,³⁷ so we lack information on just what assurances Temple offered. Significantly, Swift's allusions to Temple's promises appear in letters to relatives. Swift's uncle William was a "source of remittances which kept Swift afloat through the six years" at Moor Park before ordination;³⁸ that Swift would wish to convince his supporter

³³ "Family of Swift," *PW*, 5:194.

³⁴ British Library Add MS 38,728.

³⁵ For analysis of copyright sale prices in the early eighteenth century, see Robert D. Hume, "The Economics of Culture in London, 1660–1740," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 69 (2006), 487–533, esp. 508–513.

³⁶ *PW*, 5:195.

³⁷ Swift complains about the Queen's failure to deliver the medals (promised, according to him, in 1726) throughout the early thirties, as in November 1730 and in January 1733 (*Correspondence*, 3:342–43, 575), and most famously in *Verses on the Death* (ll. 183–86). *The Poems of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Harold Williams, 3 vols. (1937; 2nd ed. Oxford, 1958), 2:559.

³⁸ Woolley, *Correspondence*, 1:117n1.

that he was better off in the current situation than scrabbling for a negligible post in Hibernia is not surprising. To Deane Swift, Jonathan fusses that he has been misled by his patron and is now having to make his own way—and then expresses his hope that “it may ever lye in my Cosin’s way or Yours to have Interest to bring me in Chaplain of the Factory.”³⁹ As with the missive to Varina, we have to be aware of audience.

Exactly what transpired between Swift and Temple at Moor Park there is no way to determine with any precision. There is certainly nothing to support Macaulay’s notion that Swift was regarded as lowly help; neither can we document the domestic “cosiness” asserted by Ehrenpreis: “While everybody was at home, there must have been pleasant, if hierarchical, social evenings together.”⁴⁰ What evidence have we that for Swift the “family atmosphere...was as important...as the intellectual stimulation”?⁴¹ Swift makes one somewhat obscure allusion in the *Journal to Stella*: of Harley, he reports, “I was playing at one and thirty with him and his Family tother night. he gave us all 12 pence apiece to begin with: it put me in mind of Sr W T.”⁴² On the basis of this sentence, Ehrenpreis asserts that, “Frequently, Temple would give the young people a little money for stakes, and they would all play cards.”⁴³ He does not quote Swift’s actual words; he merely gives his interpretation of them as fact. That interpretation seems to me extremely misleading. Ehrenpreis gives the impression that Swift reports Harley doing exactly what he remembered Temple (“Frequently”) doing, but of course this is *not* what Swift says. The allusion is associational, not necessarily precise. Something in the evening with Harley reminded him of something about Temple—something he need not spell out for Stella, who sharing the memory would understand. Ehrenpreis’s gloss is deceptive, and while one particular impression delivered as fact is not critical, such wishful thinking does create serious problems. Every unsubstantiated but “authoritative” statement in the discussion of Swift and Temple contributes toward a false sense of security. Much of Ehrenpreis’s account reads as though it were informed by *certain* knowledge. This is not the case.

³⁹ *Correspondence*, 1:121. F. Elrington Ball explains Swift’s request: “As a result of the treaties between England and Portugal during the reign of Charles II, a large body of English merchants and factors had settled in Lisbon, and as appears from Swift’s reference, a chaplain was attached...to the company.” *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D.*, ed. Ball, 6 vols (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1910–14), 1:12n1.

⁴⁰ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:173.

⁴¹ Nokes, *Jonathan Swift*, 18.

⁴² *Journal to Stella*, 2:561.

⁴³ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:173.

In trying to reconstruct Swift's Moor Park experience, the most we can do is make surmises. Swift would no doubt have enjoyed access to a fine library, to an informed statesman and very occasionally in some fashion to other public figures. The idea that he "spent formative years discussing public policy" with his master is not impossible but is implausible.⁴⁴ Sir William was a smug, arrogant, experienced ex-diplomat: he might hold forth on public matters at high table, and Swift *might* have been among the captive audience, but Temple seems unlikely to have "discussed" policy issues with his inexperienced, low-born, twenty-something Irish secretary. Temple was by all counts a basically decent if somewhat grumpy character who probably neither used his secretary roughly nor forgot the distance between them. Only a handful of letters survive from Swift's time at Moor Park, and they offer little insight into his life there. An exception is a passage in a 29 November 1692 letter to William Swift: "I am often two or three months without seeing any body besides the family; and now my sister is gone I am likely to be more solitary than before."⁴⁵ This dates from relatively early in Swift's Moor Park period, and I am reluctant to read too much into it—but it does not suggest "cosiness," and Ehrenpreis does not cite it.

One part of the narrative about Swift at Moor Park is that Temple used his secretary as a messenger to court, "possibly" (Ehrenpreis suggests) "in order to remind the king of Swift's name."⁴⁶ Swift himself tells us in his autobiographical fragment (written c. 1738–39?) that he "was often trusted with matters of great Importance."⁴⁷ Unfortunately, we know little about the frequency, nature, and implications of these dispatches: there is evidence only of two such episodes. The only specific instance cited by Swift is the 1693 errand to try to persuade King William to pass the Triennial Bill.⁴⁸ Ehrenpreis hangs quite a lot on this assignment: Swift, he says, "would have been mean-spirited indeed if the reliance upon him which Temple showed in this business did not raise expectations of a full step toward making him a career. The errand had been precisely the sort on which Temple had been accustomed to send his son."⁴⁹ There is nothing in the record to bolster the presumption of familial

⁴⁴ David Oakleaf, *A Political Biography of Jonathan Swift* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008), 97.

⁴⁵ *Correspondence*, 1:116.

⁴⁶ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:173.

⁴⁷ *PW*, 5:193.

⁴⁸ Swift reports the unsuccessful mission in the "Family of Swift" (*PW*, 5:193–94).

⁴⁹ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:145. Elsewhere Ehrenpreis details the ways in which Temple involved his son in politics, including the recommendations made on John's behalf and the errands on

solicitude. The only other documentation in this realm comes from Temple's sister, Lady Giffard, who reports in a 1697 letter sending "the secretary" (Swift is not named) with "another compliment from Papa [Sir William] to ye King where I fancy he is not displeased with finding occasions of going."⁵⁰ What we are to make of the impersonality of this passage or Lady Giffard's agency (as opposed to Temple's) is difficult to say. Elias is skeptical about the degree to which Temple used Swift as ambassador to William's court: "Temple generally kept aloof from politics through the 1690s, and most of the 'matters of great Importance' would more plausibly have involved his papers and the decisions he took about publishing or defending them."⁵¹

Was Temple playing the part of a warmly paternal benefactor with an eye toward Swift's prospects? There is no way to be certain. We know frustratingly little about how Temple felt about Swift.⁵² We have only Swift's word and a single missive written by the Moor Park patriarch in May 1690 to Sir Robert Southwell, then Secretary of State for Ireland, recommending Swift:

I venture to make you the offer of a servant, in case you may have occasion for such a one as this bearer.... Hee has lived in my house, read to mee, writt for mee, and kept all accounts as farr as my small occasions requird. Hee has latine and greeke & some french, writes a very good and current hand, is very honest and diligent, and has good friends though they have for the present lost their fortunes in Ireland, and his whole family having been long known to mee obliged mee thus farr to take care of Him.⁵³

If one had to assess what Temple thought of Swift on the basis of this letter—which would not be wise, even if the letter dated from later in their acquaint-

which he was dispatched by Sir William. See "Swift and Mr. John Temple," *Modern Language Notes* 62 (1947): 145–54, at 146–47.

⁵⁰ *Martha Lady Giffard: Her Life and Correspondence (1664–1722)*, ed. Julia G. Longe (London: George Allen & Sons, 1911), 216. Longe concludes that "the errand was invented, no doubt, with the kind intention of bringing again into William's notice the young man in whom he had taken an interest some time previously at Sheen, and had perhaps forgotten" (217).

⁵¹ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 67.

⁵² I note in passing that Lady Giffard's *Life and Character of Sir William Temple, Bart* (pub. 1728) does not mention Swift; this may of course be a matter of her ill will following Swift's publication of Temple's *Memoirs III*.

⁵³ *Correspondence*, 1:101.

tance—one could only reach rather bland conclusions. The “Swift” endorsed here is a conscientious, learned dogsbody whom Temple felt compelled to take in, nothing more, nothing less. Temple’s “thus farr” in the final sentence, moreover, does not suggest a sense of lasting obligation—though his feelings could easily have intensified over time.

Swift’s attitude toward Temple is a messier and more important subject. Ehrenpreis grants some minor disagreements between the men, but, he concludes rather vaguely, “instead of criticizing” Temple, Swift “found an embodiment elsewhere of the harmony which he sought.” Ehrenpreis presumes veneration: throughout his life, we are told, Swift “bathed Temple’s memory in...superlatives,” though these superlatives are unspecified and turn out to be largely imaginary. Swift, he continues elsewhere, “had no reservations about his patron’s magnificence”; in Ehrenpreis’s telling, “the most private allusions [to Temple] are always respectful; the public allusions are always admiring.”⁵⁴ This is not exactly true.

Swift is nothing if not an obsessive personality, and if he had been deeply, lastingly influenced, one would expect to find allusions scattered throughout his corpus. And yet, as Elias observes, “Except in an occasional letter to Temple’s relatives, [Swift] seldom mentions Temple at all after his lean years ended in 1713.”⁵⁵ There are precious few references even before that. What comments there are about Temple are mostly (not wholly) positive, though again, situational context matters. In a 1706 letter to Sir William’s nephew, Swift expresses his gratitude for a “kind Invitation to More-Park, wch no time will make me forget or love less.”⁵⁶ Ehrenpreis quotes this passage out of context and takes it entirely straight, which is misleading.⁵⁷ The one-sentence comment on Moor Park is a polite reply to an invitation from Temple’s nephew—one Swift apparently did not accept—not an unsolicited expression of nostalgia. Sir William’s name is not mentioned.

Swift’s comments in the *Journal to Stella* are few and, as Elias suggests, “neither strongly negative nor strongly positive.”⁵⁸ Two of his remarks are irreverent, though perhaps more teasingly than contemptuously so; both have to do with Swift’s recollection “what a splutter Sir William Temple makes

⁵⁴ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:126, 92–93, 175.

⁵⁵ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 71.

⁵⁶ *Correspondence*, 1:161.

⁵⁷ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:261–62.

⁵⁸ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 95.

about being secretary of state.⁵⁹ The most substantive mention of Temple is tonally somewhat ambiguous; whether it reflects distress or something less significant is impossible to judge. Swift reports his warning Henry St John never "to appear cold to me, for I would not be treated like a school-boy; that I had felt too much of that in my life already (meaning from sir William Temple)." The following day, he continues the allusion: "Don't you remember how I used to be in pain when Sir William Temple would look cold and out of humour for three or four days, and I used to suspect a hundred reasons? I have plucked up my spirit since then, faith; he spoiled a fine gentleman."⁶⁰ These are hardly warm sentiments, and Swift clearly felt condescended to by Temple; whether we can take these statements as evidence of lasting trauma is another matter.⁶¹ Elias presumes hostility toward Temple, and explains the lack of overtly censorious references in the *Journal* as a concession to Stella, who "had every reason to venerate" her guardian.⁶² There is in fact no reason to think Swift *wished* to disparage Temple, though Ehrenpreis's description of Swift's allusions as uniformly reverential is frankly dishonest. The most defensible conclusion is that Temple was not much on Swift's mind.⁶³

Swift's other comments on Temple are scrappy.⁶⁴ On 4 November 1712, Archbishop King begged advice from Swift: "I am told there is a book writ by your friend Sir William Temple called Memoirs.... [T]hough I am not fond of

⁵⁹ *Journal to Stella*, 2:401. Earlier, he had written, "I am thinking what a veneration we used to have for sir William Temple, because he might have been secretary of state at fifty" (1:92). Elsewhere Swift makes a passing (neutral) reference to Temple (1:244), and alludes to a sermon preached at Temple's funeral (2:423).

⁶⁰ *Journal to Stella*, 1:230-31.

⁶¹ Nineteenth-century biographers were inclined to cite these passages as evidence that Swift was very eager to please Temple and permanently wounded by any sign of disapproval from the Moor Park patriarch. See for example Sir Walter Scott, "Memoirs of Jonathan Swift," vol. 1 of *The Works of Jonathan Swift* (1814; rpt. Edinburgh: Robert Cadell and London: Whitaker and Co., 1834), 34.

⁶² Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 95.

⁶³ Swift does allude negatively to Temple's family, probably because of his 1709 spat with Temple's sister over the publication of her brother's works: Lady Giffard complained that *Memoirs III* had been published against Temple's wishes, probably embarrassed by critical allusions in that work to Lord Sunderland, whose widow was a close friend. In the fall of 1710, Swift takes a slight dig at the Temple clan (*Journal to Stella*, 1:69), and claims, "I am glad I have wholly shaken off that family" (1:9).

⁶⁴ In addition to the allusions discussed here, there are passing references in the letters at *Correspondence*, 3:326, 3:557, and 4:376. The second of these is one of the several occasions on which Swift misremembers dates: "...for Sr W Temple was then alive, who dyed in 1697 [actually 1699] and I was then at his house."

reading politic books, I have a great mind to buy this, if you assure me that it is worth my while." A believer in the filial hypothesis of the Swift-Temple relationship would expect a fairly effusive response to King's solicitation, which is after all an invitation to puff the dearly departed mentor to whom Swift owed such profound intellectual debts. Swift's 8 January 1713 reply is not neutral, but it is brief and hardly fulsome: "Sir William Temple's Memoirs, which you mentioned, is his first Part, and was published twenty Years ago; it is chiefly of the Treaty of Nimeguen, and was so well known, that I could hardly think your Grace hath not seen it."⁶⁵ King clearly wondered about the potential application of Temple's work to the current political situation, and Swift just as clearly had little interest in pursuing that question. In 1726, Swift makes one of his longer statements about his Moor Park patron in a letter to Temple's nephew, Viscount Palmerston:

I own my self indebted to Sr William Temple, for recommending me to the late King although without Success, and for his Choice of me to take Care of his posthumous Writings. But, I hope you will not charge my living in his Family as an Obligation, for I was educated to little Purpose if I retired to his House, on any other Motives than the Benefit of his Conversation and Advice, and the Opportunity of pursuing my Studyes. For, being born to no Fortune, I was at his Death as far to seek as ever, and perhaps you will allow, that I was of some Use to him.⁶⁶

This passage is part of an antagonistic exchange with the viscount, and here Swift is gracious about his benefactor, aggrieved by the lack of significant material benefit, and defensive about the perception that he gained more than he gave at Moor Park. One cannot safely privilege any one of Swift's comments over the others—but at a guess, this is a fair representation of his attitude toward the Moor Park years.

In a few instances, Swift does explicitly praise Temple, though assessing such allusions is not an altogether simple matter. In his autobiographical "Family of Swift," he refers to "the Death of that great Man,"⁶⁷ too brief and toneless an epithet to get us very far. Ehrenpreis would no doubt count it as

⁶⁵ *Correspondence*, 1:448–49, 461.

⁶⁶ *Correspondence*, 2:632.

⁶⁷ *PW*, 5:194.

sincere encomium; Elias finds it somewhere between false and delusional.⁶⁸ Neither of these interpretations can be well substantiated. More convincing homage appears in two comments written upon Temple's death. One piece of evidence is no longer extant: a journal Swift apparently kept of Temple's illness, the last entry of which was reportedly, "He died at one o'clock this morning, the 27th of January, 1698/9, and with him all that was good and amiable among men."⁶⁹ The other is an inscription in a Bible: "He was a Person of the greatest Wisdom, Justice, Liberality[,] Politeness, Eloquence, of his age or Nation; the truest Lover of his Country, and one that deserved more from it by his eminent publick services, than any Man before or since," as well as "the most accomplisht writer of his time."⁷⁰ This is as grand praise as Swift ever bestows upon Temple, and would seem to support Ehrenpreis's veneration thesis—except, as Elias points out, in both cases we have reason to believe that Swift was writing for Lady Giffard's eyes.⁷¹ Exactly what Swift stood to gain from ingratiating himself with Temple's sister is difficult to say, but conceivably he saw her as a well-connected potential benefactor. In any case, the ambiguities caused by context are admittedly frustrating, though I have a hard time achieving Elias's degree of skepticism. We can admit the high probability that Swift felt gratitude toward and perhaps even some liking for Temple without endorsing Ehrenpreis's hypothesis of filial devotion and unmitigated adoration.

In the 1710 "Apology" for *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift attacks Wotton for having "drawn his pen against a certain great Man then alive,"⁷² referring to

⁶⁸ "The sentence shows a becoming admiration for 'that great Man' and more exaggeration of the great man's favor, because the erasure of £100 makes 'Legacy' sound more substantial. Under the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that, here or elsewhere, Swift can exaggerate Temple's reliance on him or sound uncritical in his admiration" (Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 70–71).

⁶⁹ Craik quotes this passage (*Life*, 74), explaining that the source of our knowledge of the journal comes from John Lyon's manuscript notes in Hawkesworth's biography of Swift. Elias also prints this passage from Longe's *Martha Lady Giffard (Swift at Moor Park, 99)*. In his note, he reports that because Longe "worked from Lady Giffard's MSS. and other Moor Park materials which descended in her family, it is...possible that she transcribes accurately from a transcript or note of Swift's journal preserved by Lady Giffard herself." If this is the case, Elias adds, "it becomes certain that Swift intended the entry for Lady Giffard's eyes" (257n124). This obviously calls into question the sincerity of Swift's praise of his patron.

⁷⁰ Quoted in George P. Mayhew, "Jonathan Swift's 'On the burning of Whitehall in 1697' Re-examined," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 19 (1971): 399–411, at 404n7.

⁷¹ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 100.

⁷² *A Tale of a Tub*, ed. Walsh, 9.

Temple ("Sir W. T." in the text)—though again only so much can be concluded on the basis of such a reference. Swift is operating here in an aggressive rather than a eulogistic mode, and Elias is not alone in finding *A Tale's* attitude toward Temple complicated (of which more below). Swift commends Temple, this time privately, in his marginalia in Burnet's *History of His Own Times*, where the bishop describes the Epicurean ex-diplomat as "a corrupter of all that came near him. And he delivered himself up wholly to study, ease, and pleasure." Swift's annotation is short but blunt, though the focus is as much Burnet as Temple: Sir William, Swift writes, "was a man of virtue, to which Burnet was a stranger."⁷³ This is approbation, and one would be wrong to dismiss it—but context, as always, matters. As Elias observes, Swift "exercised surprising moderation" vis-à-vis his old patron in scribbling in Burnet's *History*; he refrains from responding to some of the bishop's anti-Temple statements, and where he does react he is comparatively cool and subdued.⁷⁴ One prominent omission is worth noting: Swift's brief account of Stella's life, penned upon her death, makes no mention of Temple.

Before turning to Swift's published prefaces to the posthumous works of Temple, we need to consider a seemingly adulatory line in an early letter that so far as I am aware has been read straight by Swiftians. Writing to his cousin Thomas in May 1692, Swift says that he admires the writing of his friends uncritically, "in proportion to my love of them, and Particularly to Sr Wm T. I never read his writings but I prefer him to all others at present in England."⁷⁵ This sounds rapturous, and critics seem to have been undisturbed by the rather odd locution ("I never read his writings"). Examining this sentence in context, however, makes clear that we should not take it as the evidence of worship that by itself it might seem to be. This comment occurs in Swift's fourth preserved letter; he is still very much a novice. Swift and Thomas are exchanging their thoughts on the difficulties of writing, and the crux of Swift's missive is a (perhaps playful) admission of his own lack of judgment. He confesses himself "overfond" of his own works; boasts a bit of the publication of his *Ode to the Athenian Society*; and cheerfully acknowledges that, though he tries "to be a severe critick," he cannot help but admire works written by those he likes, to find "a thousand beautyes, and no faults." Swift's commendation of Temple follows, as does his conclusion that his too generous estimation of friends' works "is all but a piece of selflove." This letter

⁷³ *PW*, 5:276.

⁷⁴ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 96.

⁷⁵ *Correspondence*, 1:110.

does suggest warm feelings for Temple the man as of 1692, but Swift's expression of extravagant admiration of his patron's writing should probably carry no more weight than his juvenile partiality for his first *Ode*.

The final cluster of relevant documents consists of Swift's prefaces to Temple's posthumous works (the Temple-related odes will be addressed in the next section). Elias devotes several pages to these prefaces,⁷⁶ which—he notes—abound with instances in which Swift defends or praises his patron. But, as Elias observes, that “Swift addresses the public as Temple's literary executor,” which means that there are generic and modal expectations to be met. This does not negate the sincerity of any of Swift's comments, but it is worth remembering. The richest compliment paid to Temple in these writings comes in the first, the “Publisher's Epistle” to the *Letters* volumes (1700): “It is generally believed, that this Author, has advanced our English Tongue, to as great a Perfection as it can well bear.”⁷⁷ Even if one does not detect irony in that last phrase—which I do—this statement's context prevents us from being able to say whether this is pro forma introductory rhetoric or sincere testimony (“an instructive demonstration of [Swift's] fidelity to his patron”).⁷⁸

Elias's reading of the prefaces—like his reading of the odes and *A Tale of a Tub*—identifies tensions and ambivalences, passages where Swift is perhaps implicitly subverting his master. These analyses are varyingly convincing. The longest and most interesting of the prefaces is that to *Memoirs III* (1709), where Swift admittedly makes a pair of unfortunate decisions. The first has to do with his “vindication” of Temple against charges that his earlier works were too self-promoting and too influenced by French style. The problem is that his defense occupies almost half of the preface and “tends to dignify and emphasize the criticism” against Temple.⁷⁹ The second awkwardness in this preface is its treatment of the Earl of Godolphin. Swift suggests that Godolphin is “represented by this impartial Author, as a Person...deservedly entrusted with so great a Part in the Prime Ministry”—although Temple's narrative implies on the contrary “that Godolphin was an ungrateful and self-serving hypocrite.”⁸⁰ Elias's subtle readings of these materials often seems excessively

⁷⁶ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 71–77. The following quotation is at p. 71.

⁷⁷ *PW*, 1:258.

⁷⁸ The quotation is Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 2:339. Elias is dubious (*Swift at Moor Park*, 71), and N. F. Lowe and W. J. McCormack follow him in finding in this preface evidence of his “growing disaffection” with his old patron. See “Swift as ‘Publisher’ of Sir William Temple's *Letters* and *Miscellanea*,” *Swift Studies* 8 (1993): 46–57, at 56.

⁷⁹ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 73.

⁸⁰ *PW*, 1:268; Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 75.

skeptical, assuming more eagerness on Swift's part slyly to undermine Temple than can safely be assumed. A few related points should not be forgotten: this was a not a genre in which Swift had much practice; it is a difficult mode in which to write in any case, especially for one whose *métier* is not encomium. I suspect that the slips are no more indicative of profound ambivalence than the acclamations are of idolatry.

That Swift did idolize Temple seems unlikely; it is certainly not demonstrable on the basis of the extant record. Ehrenpreis is keen to depict Temple as a model—Swift's "chief of men"—for his young secretary. Swift, he argues, "identified himself, again and again, with the patterns of his master's life." He cites the "migrations of various Temples between England and Ireland," Temple's ineffectual "efforts to reform national policy," and Temple's "utter lack of material reward for a career of distinguished public service" as the "points at which Swift was either to find or to make his own life run parallel with" his patron's.⁸¹ He also compares Temple's and Swift's domestic lives, highlighting the fact that both involved a single man "usually attended by two ladies." Presumably Ehrenpreis has Stella and Rebecca Dingley in mind (not Stella and Vanessa, who of course never cohabited), but in either case the parallel does not work. Temple shared his home with a wife in mutual devotion and with a widowed sister. Swift never lived with, probably did not sleep with, and only possibly married Stella; whatever his life was like with her and Dingley, the relationship's constant chaperone, it was not built on the Temple household model. Leaving that aside, there is the problem that Ehrenpreis does not tell us where Swift made these identifications, or cite his evidence for believing that Swift was trying to "make his own life" follow Temple's. One could identify broad parallels between most men alive circa 1700. What Ehrenpreis does not do is expound upon the rather considerable list of differences between the Swift and Temple, of which more in due course.

Temple was for Swift, in Ehrenpreis's telling, a "Christian hero"—but Swift's adulation is asserted rather than demonstrated, and in some peculiar ways. Upon Temple's return to England after settling the Triple Alliance, he did not push for preferment, instead assuring Charles II that he was satisfied to serve his country well.⁸² This "deliberate indifference to visible

⁸¹ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:104, 93.

⁸² See Temple's explanation in a 1670 letter to his father: "I shall think myself enough rewarded; considering how different a value is now like to be put upon my services in Holland, from what there was when they were performed. 'Tis very likely at that time, as you believe, there were few reasonable things the king would have denied me.... But I have resolved never

rewards," Ehrenpreis concludes, "impressed Swift." So (he implies) did Temple's unwillingness to accept the post as Secretary of State.⁸³ Perhaps the young Swift, bright-eyed and not yet disillusioned, would have applauded the great man's magnanimity and selfless patriotism—but nothing in the extant record bolsters that claim. Whatever he thought of it, he certainly did not imitate it: when Swift "retired" from London and court politics in 1713, he made no secret of the rewards he wanted for his service as *chef de propagande*. Elsewhere, Ehrenpreis celebrates Temple's "candour, and...faith in the efficacy of candour," that "was to seem [to Swift] one of Temple's most admirable traits, and one of those most worthy of emulation." Again, Swift might well have applauded the virtue of sincerity, but Ehrenpreis does not say *where* he did so and does not deal squarely with the fact that Swift's political career was as a propagandist, a decidedly candor-free role.

What, then, can we conclude about the Swift-Temple relationship? On Temple's side, we know very little, though one particularly upsetting question needs to be confronted by any judicious analyst of their connection. Why, if Temple was anything like as kindly disposed toward Swift as Ehrenpreis suggests, did he do so little to help him? Ehrenpreis offers three answers. One is nebulous: Temple's "fatherly feelings" meant that not "only would he have wished to hold on to the young man's company, but the memory of his son's fate would have made protective measures appear kinder than efforts to give Swift independence." The other two explanations are simpler: "it was not in Temple's nature to be a strong pleader," and even if it were, "he would probably have hoped that Swift would interest himself in a more dashing or more public occupation" than the church.⁸⁴ There are problems here. As of 1694, Temple was prepared not only to let Swift go but also to let pass an opportunity to bring Swift back: the request for a character reference came late, and Temple could legitimately have stalled until Swift missed his chance at fall ordination. Why he did not exercise

to ask him any thing, otherwise than by serving him well." *The Works of Sir William Temple*, Bart. 4 vols. (London, 1770), 2:168.

⁸³ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:96, 99. The subsequent quotation is at p. 95. No surviving evidence suggests that to Swift Temple's "way...seemed glorious," having "been ploughed by patience, temperance, and deeps of peace" (104), or that "Nothing about Temple impressed Swift so much as the high road which he had left" (174).

⁸⁴ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:148, 149. Ehrenpreis contends (again without documentation) that, "In Temple's lifetime, it must have been obvious that the master so enjoyed the pupil's company as to tilt the balance of obligation away from Swift, and not toward him" (143).

what power he had to get Swift a decent post has to be reckoned mysterious, especially since he apparently helped place Thomas Swift at Puttenham. If he wanted to keep Swift close, there were posts in England (Puttenham was only about five miles from Moor Park). That he would not make some serious provision for Swift is—if we accept the father-son relationship thesis—incomprehensible. As Ehrenpreis rightly points out, Temple did not provide Swift “with an income or a start in public life,” but instead with “a modest acquaintance in court circles, the disposition of several unprinted works, and a legacy of a hundred pounds.”⁸⁵ This is odd. Given the vehemence with which Swift expresses grudges against those who do not make good on promises, his relative silence on the subject of Temple is surprising—though whether it is indicative of indifference or respect great enough to trump resentment we can only wonder.

Nothing in the record demonstrates that either Swift or Temple thought of their connection in filial-paternal ways. And yet this crucial premise is at the core of Ehrenpreis’s account of the relationship. After his son’s suicide, Ehrenpreis suggests, Temple “could not have stood out long against the eager attentiveness of the impressionable young man who arrived so soon after that catastrophe. To the lonely refugee, who had never known his own father, and whose nearest substitute for one (Uncle Godwin) was dying or dead, the role of a son must have been all too easy to imagine.”⁸⁶ This dramatic portrait cannot really be *argued* with—one can only say, in response, that there is nothing in the extant record on which to hang such claims. Ultimately, we would be unwise to go as far as Elias in supposing that on some level Swift despised and wished to undermine Temple, but there is no probative evidence that Swift hero-worshipped the man with whom he lived for about six years, who was of a vastly different station, and who never managed or (apparently) even attempted to do him much material good.

The dearth of conclusive evidence to be had from Swift’s comments represents a frustrating and insoluble problem. We need now turn to the realms in which we might find more indirect manifestations of Temple’s influence on the young Jonathan Swift.

⁸⁵ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:259.

⁸⁶ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:120. Oakleaf’s conclusion seems much more realistic: “In a society characterized by elaborate networks of kinship and clientage, a patron uses his interest to benefit his protégé. Such support is quasi-familial but by no means necessarily paternal” (*Political Biography*, 62).

* Swift's Moor Park Writings *

Ehrenpreis and others have asserted that Swift not only liked and admired Temple but also borrowed (or sometimes reacted against) many of his literary, political, and historiographical ideas. What is the basis for this claim?

Temple's role in Swift's early "literary" career is tricky to assess. Ehrenpreis's premise is that by the early 1690s "[l]iterary aspirations were beginning to haunt Swift's breast," and that "renewed contact with Temple must have strengthened these ambitions." "Must have" is nervous-making rhetoric in a biography, and Ehrenpreis's movement away from the literary-intellectual and into the psychological is likewise suspect: "By encouraging Swift's poetical beginnings... Temple further enriched the newcomer's filial role."⁸⁷ The most we can say is that either Swift was inspired by Temple toward poetry or that he was inclined that way and had leisure at Moor Park to pursue the hobby (both could well be true). To the Rev. John Kendall in February 1692, Swift says that he has "writt, & burnt and writt again upon almost all manner of subjects, more perhaps than any man of England." He attributes this *furor scribendi* to his own "conjur'd spirit, that would doe mischief, if I would not give it employment," not to Temple's influence, though that could signify nothing.⁸⁸ What we know is that while at Moor Park he wrote a handful of uninspired odes, and that he never did anything in that mode again. Does this suggest that he was moved by Temple—perhaps specifically by Temple's *Of Poetry*—to try to operate in a form for which he was ill-suited? Perhaps. There are two particular instances in which we know Temple was somehow in the background of composition: the ode to the Athenian Society ("Sr Wm T speaking to me so much in their Praise made me zealous for their cause") and Swift's "200 lines" of Virgil. In a letter to Thomas Swift, he reports giving the Virgil lines "to my Ldy G[iffard]. for a sample, and She and Sr W.T. like it as I would have them but He wont allow that I should leave out what I mentioned to you."⁸⁹

Temple's influence here is hard to doubt, but it does seem both limited and quite temporary. Ehrenpreis rightly reminds us that the "manner" of the early poems "is not Temple's"; instead these works are either Pindaric odes following Cowley or exercises "in the newer fashion of Waller's or Dryden's

⁸⁷ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:109, 121.

⁸⁸ *Correspondence*, 1:104. In May, he tells Thomas Swift that he "esteem[s] the time of studying Poetry to be 2 hours in a morning, and that onely when the humor sits" (109).

⁸⁹ *Correspondence*, 1:110, 111.

heroic couplets."⁹⁰ A cliché about Swift and Temple is that the latter disapproved of the satiric and comic and that Swift, in ultimately embracing them, was in some fashion, consciously or unconsciously, rebelling against the patron who had so disappointed him.⁹¹ This disparity has, I think, been understated. Temple's rejection of satire is total. In *Of Poetry* he denounces the mode as

very pernicious to poetry, and indeed to all virtue and good qualities among men, which must be disheartened by finding how unjustly and undistinguished they fall under the lash of raillery, and this vein ridiculing the good as well as the ill, the guilty and the innocent together. It is a very poor, though common, pretence to merit, to make it appear by the faults of other men.

The modern poets, Temple complained, content "themselves with the scraps, with songs and sonnets, with odes and elegies, with satires and panegyrics, and what we call copies of verses upon any subjects or occasions."⁹² Swift did not go in for sonnets and panegyrics, but if one were to remove the scraps and satires and occasional verse from his oeuvre one would be left with almost nothing. His embracing satire has been explained as a kind of "rebellion,"⁹³ and it may have been—but there is no particularly good reason for thinking so. We have to allow for the possibility that Temple was a significant figure in Swift's life for a little while but that the young secretary's decision to become a satirist and propagandist mostly reflects his capabilities and the developing circumstances in which he found himself.⁹⁴

The influence of Temple on Swift's style has perhaps also been overestimated, or at least under-contextualized. Ehrenpreis's flat assertion now seems

⁹⁰ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:109.

⁹¹ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:110; Downie, *Jonathan Swift*, 65.

⁹² Temple, *Works*, 3:423, 420.

⁹³ Following Ehrenpreis, Downie suggests that, "Filial relationships often involve rebellion, and this quasi-filial relationship also had its conflicts" (*Jonathan Swift*, 32).

⁹⁴ I agree with Robert C. Steensma: "Temple was a strong influence on Swift's mind and art, though by no means the only one or even the strongest one," though I suspect that the "strong influence" was essentially local and temporary. See *Sir William Temple* (New York: Twayne, 1970), 128. Ehrenpreis himself points to another model, in a way that weakens his Temple-centric reading: "Swift tried at first to meet the requirements Temple set up for poets," he maintains, but he then concedes that these would appeal to Swift because his "dear teacher, St George Ashe, had made similar pronouncements" (*Swift*, 1:111). Ehrenpreis appeals to Ashe again elsewhere, observing that in his attitude toward religious toleration Swift shares more with his old teacher than with the broader-minded Moor Park patriarch (126).

suspect: "That Swift derived his literary style immediately from Temple one can take for granted, since besides transcribing and editing hundreds of pages of his patron's writings, he also translated scores of the French and Latin letters into English, all under Temple's correction." Ehrenpreis provides a list of similarities, though he enumerates differences as well. Most of the correspondences are, of course, hardly specific to Temple and Swift: as Ehrenpreis himself notes, the two men's "common traits often seem more innate than acquired; and even when a trait does appear to have been taught or learned, it is often the effect either of general fashion or of common masters."⁹⁵ If Ehrenpreis is convinced of Temple's importance as a model, Elias is just as confident that the question of influence is "far too indeterminate to answer." As he reminds us, defining Swift's style is a difficult business in any case.⁹⁶ Two points seem reasonably obvious—to wit, if we are going to talk about Swift's stylistic debts, then we need a specific sense of which Swift work is at issue, and we also need to attend to his other potential stylistic influences. Temple was no doubt an influence, and at a time when his young secretary was beginning to write seriously. But Swift was also reading voraciously in Temple's library, and anyone as inclined to steal "hints" as he was would almost certainly have borrowed liberally from a number of favorites, consciously or not.

What of Swift's involvement in the translation of Temple's French letters, cited by Ehrenpreis as further evidence for stylistic inheritance? Both Ehrenpreis and Archibald B. Irwin have celebrated Swift's translations as a major milestone in the development of his style,⁹⁷ but Elias disagrees. He stresses the importance of comparing Swift's translation not to the printed French but to earlier transcripts (not prepared by Swift but used by him). What we find, Elias concludes, is that there is "practically no change or improvement" introduced by Swift. Far from exercising ingenuity, Elias contends, Swift is offering a more or less verbatim rendition of the text from which he worked, in part because Temple "authorized few, if any substantive changes."⁹⁸ This is in keeping with Swift's own account of his role in Temple's

⁹⁵ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:179–80, 179.

⁹⁶ "The most traditional definitions cite his conciseness, his preference for concrete diction, and his sharpness of parallel and antithesis, but even at his most characteristic, Swift can sound windy, fuzzy in diction, and muddy in his periods" (*Swift at Moor Park*, 43).

⁹⁷ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 2:35–36; Irwin, "Swift as Translator of the French of Sir William Temple and His Correspondents," *SEL* 6 (1966): 483–98.

⁹⁸ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 7, 33.

works: "I had particular Commands for every Thing I did, though more particular for some than for others.... They were all copyed from the Originalls by Sr Wm Temples direction.... The Corrections were all his own, ordering me to correct in my Copy as I read it, as he allways did."⁹⁹ Granting that we cannot measure the degree of Temple's oversight with any certainty, the likeliest scenario has Swift functioning—at least in his dealings with his patron's corpus—more as Elias's competent drone than as the impressive "literary aide" and near-collaborator described by Ehrenpreis.¹⁰⁰

Swift's apparently limited degree of involvement in Temple's works does not suggest intimacy, and his own Temple-related writings do not seem to point to unmitigated adulation. The *Ode to the Honble Sir William Temple* (probably written in 1692) is on the surface reverential: it is, in Maurice Johnson's phrasing, an "oddly arranged bouquet of blandishments for the Great Man who had retired from the ugly scrabble of politics to cultivate his prose-style."¹⁰¹ The earlier Swift—unlike the mature Swift, so well-suited for civic combat—might have been capable of composing a straight paean to the pleasure of retirement, but Elias was not the first critic to find the panegyric unpersuasive. The *Ode* attacks the court and praises the country life in a manner befitting a versification of Temple's post-retirement ideals, but its cumulative effect is to suggest "that the court is a place where...development [is] possible and that there is considerable value in persisting in a difficult course rather than withdrawing from it." A. B. England highlights the ode's ambivalence, observing not implausibly that "the several bursts of Pindaric energy look very much as if they were contrived as a means of distracting the reader from certain fundamental contradictions."¹⁰² Nokes, too, finds Swift's panegyric "hollow and unconvincing."¹⁰³ Elias highlights Swift's "parrot[ing of] Temple's thoughts

⁹⁹ *Correspondence*, 1:270–71. This passage comes from a letter to Lady Giffard, in response to her objections about the printing of the *Memoirs*; Swift's denial of responsibility could be only self-defense, but his account does seem in keeping with the evidence Elias surveys.

¹⁰⁰ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 46–47; Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:172.

¹⁰¹ Johnson, *The Sin of Wit: Jonathan Swift as a Poet* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1950), 4. Swift's laudation of retired life is mostly rather flat: "In this new happy Scene / Are nobler Subjects for your learned Pen," and so on (*Poems*, 1:31, ll. 159–60).

¹⁰² England, *Energy and Order in the Poetry of Swift* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980), 31. Richard H. Rodino likewise finds a self-destructing element in the *Ode* to Temple; see "Notes on the Developing Motives and Structures of Swift's Poetry," in *Contemporary Studies of Swift's Poetry*, ed. John Irwin Fischer and Donald C. Mell, Jr., assoc. ed. David M. Vieth (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1981), 87–100, at 88.

¹⁰³ Nokes, *Jonathan Swift*, 25.

and words," suggesting that Swift assumed Temple to be "fond enough of his own work to appreciate its reflection in his secretary's verse."¹⁰⁴

Ehrenpreis, contrariwise, takes the poem essentially straight. He finds in the *Ode* not only evidence that Swift craved authorial fame—"the element through which he establishes a real kinship with his master"—but also "proof" that Swift "not only shared but correctly understood the ideals of the foster-parent from whom he differed so profoundly in character."¹⁰⁵ In the final stanza—which Ehrenpreis reads as indicative of the author's longing for recognition—Swift describes his innate poetic impulse ("the hidden Spark"), which he has tried but failed to quench.¹⁰⁶ How this demonstrates glory-hunger is unclear. More broadly, much depends upon whether we find Swift's rhetorical flourishes to be deeply revelatory, merely an attempt to satisfy generic conventions, or strategic sycophancy. I doubt that Swift is playing a complicated game with Temple; I disagree with Elias's assumption that he is here a "prankster" whose "primary motive was his own amusement."¹⁰⁷ This could be the case, but as a hypothesis it is no more documentable than Ehrenpreis's (exactly opposite) interpretation. The likeliest explanation—also unprovable—is that Swift is trying to ingratiate himself (or wants to believe what he is saying) but remains unconvinced. Another possibility is that what sophisticated modern scholars read as ambivalence reflects a novice poet's attempt to execute his ambitious but uncomplicated intentions.

The problem of the ode *Occasioned by Sir W———T———'s Late Illness and Recovery* (wr. 1693) is not Temple's health but the fact that Swift's attempts to please his patron have met with "contempt" rather than "esteem."¹⁰⁸ His attempts to please Temple have been ineffectual; his hopes for preferment via his patron's intercession have been disappointed. The poet's dejection—and his renunciation of the poetic muse—is a judgment on Temple. Ehrenpreis's suggestion that "Temple's figure merges with the muse," that the rules she represents are Temple's as Swift understands them, is broadly speaking apt. The remainder of his analysis is less convincing: "As father, as inspirer, as censor, Temple had inevitably fallen short of the excessive hopes which Swift had

¹⁰⁴ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 83. As in his reading of *A Tale* and *Battle*, Elias stresses here the importance of the Moor Park audience (81).

¹⁰⁵ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:121.

¹⁰⁶ *Poems*, 1:32 (l. 202).

¹⁰⁷ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 88. "If he enjoyed such hoaxes in his forties and sixties," Elias asks, "what then of his twenties at Moor Park?"

¹⁰⁸ *Poems*, 1:55 (l. 46). For this reading, see England, *Energy and Order*, 38–41.

placed in him. But the young idealist dare not admit either that the original standards were impossible or that his chosen hero has sunk below them; so he scourges himself for failing to please Temple." Swift, however, seems self-pitying and sour at least as much as he does self-loathing. His disenchantment with Sir William is not necessarily (or even likely) a matter of filial rejection of a father-figure; his implication is unlikely to have been that "the impossibly high-minded code preached by the muse (i.e., by Temple) permits one to win greatness only through such means as destroy the rewards of greatness."¹⁰⁹ We do not need pseudo-Freudian armchair psychology to explain Swift's pique: he no doubt *did* wish to impress Temple, to feel appreciated. Throughout his life he is frequently vexed when he feels condescended to or undervalued.

Temple is very much in the background, of course, of Swift's first prose satires as well as his early formal verse. His relevance to *A Tale of a Tub* and its companion pieces has to do with more than his role as spokesman for the ancients. As Elias and others have pointed out, some parts of *A Tale* supply the "clear account of enthusiasm and fascination, from their natural causes" for which Temple called in *Of Poetry*.¹¹⁰ French suggests that "Swift's discussion of the mechanical operation of the spirit probably stems in part from a request by Temple [in *Of Poetry*] for just such a work." He also hypothesizes that, though the "term *vapours* itself was fairly common," its "immediate source" might have been Temple's essay *Of Health and Long Life*.¹¹¹ That Swift borrowed ideas from Temple, especially in his early writings, is manifest; Temple's influence on *A Tale* and *Battle*, and his presence in both, is undeniable. How to assess the nature and implications of Swift's borrowing is, however, not an altogether straightforward question.

Swift's attitude toward Temple and his ideas—as reflected in *A Tale* and elsewhere—can no longer be taken as simple and positive. I cannot do justice here to the details of this multidimensional argument, but a précis of some of the complexities involved is necessary. Elias devotes a long chapter to analyzing some of the "curious tensions and anomalies" in these satires, raising the question of whether Swift wrote "portions of the *Tale* for Temple to read, as he apparently did with the ode to

¹⁰⁹ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:141.

¹¹⁰ See Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 156. Temple's quotation is in *Works*, 3:397.

¹¹¹ French, "Swift, Temple, and 'A Digression on Madness,'" 46, 47–48. The explanation is not implausible: Temple's "emphasis on fumes and mists, which Swift uses as central images, the connection between mental and physical states, and the mocking tone of the whole could lead logically to Swift's digression" (48).

Temple and some of his other Moor Park verse.”¹¹² Elias argues against both Ehrenpreis and French, who contends that while Swift was unquestionably writing to defend his revered patron’s ideas he nevertheless betrays an unconscious emotional rejection of those ideas. French explains the ambivalent moments in *A Tale*, in other words, in terms of Swift’s own divided mind: though Swift “may intellectually accept Temple’s views, he must reject them emotionally.”¹¹³

In Elias’s telling, the “uncomfortable” passages represent a *conscious* deflation of Temple, one that the vain ex-diplomat would never register because (as Swift knew) he would not wish to register it. Much of the point of the anti-Temple innuendo derives from Temple’s fundamental muddle: he condemned man for “seek[ing] truth no further than himself” while claiming “that happiness...came from the same source—the mind operating within itself.”¹¹⁴ A crux of Elias’s argument is that when in the “Digression on Madness” Swift defines happiness as “*a perpetual Possession of being well Deceived*,”¹¹⁵ he is targeting Temple as the fool among knaves. Here and elsewhere, Swift “capitalizes far too cleverly upon Temple’s various prejudices, weaknesses, and inconsistencies to permit us to imagine that he remained largely unconscious of what he was doing.”¹¹⁶ Through this subtle undermining, and through seemingly fleeting “[o]vert laughter at the antiquarians” in *Battle of the Books*, Swift manages to mock Temple as well as Temple’s enemies “without giving the least sign of conscious disloyalty.” Elias admits uncertainty about the nature of the critique—is it “suppressed bitterness, affectionate contempt, sheer mischievousness, or something more complex and intermediate?”—but concludes definitively that the “telltale passages” show “a distinct lack of respect” for Swift’s Moor Park patron.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 155, 156.

¹¹³ French, “Swift, Temple, and ‘A Digression on Madness,’” 51. Deeming’s conclusion seems more suspect: “Psychoanalysis provides a tool through which we may see how Swift, in the *Tale*, enacted an Irish aesthetic of wit negatively, as a way of undermining and exposing English aesthetic sublimations” (“The *Tale*, Temple, and Swift’s Irish Aesthetic,” 37). That Swift was thinking in these terms is very difficult to believe.

¹¹⁴ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 174, 163.

¹¹⁵ *A Tale of a Tub*, ed. Walsh, 111.

¹¹⁶ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 179. Elias raises the possibility that such passages (the others have to do with the discussion of Louis XIV and that of Epicurus) “represent mere coincidence,” but clearly finds that interpretation scarcely credible (177).

¹¹⁷ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 184, 189, 199. “[I]f Swift deeply admired Temple,” Elias asks, “how does so knowledgeable a disciple manage to muddle the job so badly—to turn one borrowing against another, to bring out Temple’s inconsistencies and absurdities, and ultimately to include Temple in the laughter directed at the objects of Temple’s scorn?”

More recent scholars have concurred with Elias in finding elements of disapproval in *A Tale*, though they do not identify anything like the same kind of systematic subversion and games-playing. Nokes observes simply that "the Hack's arguments abound in borrowings from Temple, but few if any of them are used uncritically. While Swift had little sympathy for the egotistical modern pedantry of Bentley," neither could he accept "Temple's complacent superficiality."¹¹⁸ Hammond explains that, "In the case of *A Tale*, Temple is certainly more of a point of departure than he is a model," and that Swift was perhaps "reacting against the smug stuffiness of Moor Park and of Temple's know-all belletrist expertise."¹¹⁹ My own position is that French's reading is not as far-fetched in its essentials as Elias implies; French does labor rather painfully to resolve obvious problem passages, which are perhaps better simply acknowledged, as they are by Nokes, Hammond, and other scholars. One would not expect Swift's attack on Wotton, Bentley, and the Moderns to be a perfect replica, conceptually, of Temple's. That he would adopt some of Temple's positions and critique others seems natural, unsurprising, and not particularly illustrative of his psyche or of any debts to the great man of Moor Park.

* Swift and Temple on Politics and History *

Though Ehrenpreis admits that some of the ideological correspondences between Swift and Temple were commonplaces, he contends unequivocally that Swift's "grand view of history and politics" was "inherited from his master" at Moor Park.¹²⁰ As ever, the evidence with which we can work is limited, and conclusions have necessarily to be somewhat speculative. My concern here is not to measure the degree of Temple's influence on Swift's thinking but to suggest the dangers of overstressing that influence.

Ideology. The ideological common ground between Swift and Temple has been described in rather broad terms. Swift followed Temple in adopting "a cyclical theory of history in which, despite periodic fluctuations, man remains

¹¹⁸ Nokes, *Jonathan Swift*, 47-48.

¹¹⁹ Hammond, *Jonathan Swift*, 34.

¹²⁰ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:123. Elsewhere Ehrenpreis insists that "Swift's opinions were...under not the remote but the *direct* influence of Temple's" (2:49; emphasis added).

relatively unchanged.”¹²¹ Like Temple, Swift’s view of history was partly psychological: they both (says Ehrenpreis) “wished to trace public events not to their divine but to their human origins.” Both are inclined “to exaggerate the effect of intrigues upon history, and to be impressed by how much could proceed from so little.” They both have “a way of reducing public affairs to questions of personal honour.” Both connect standing armies with oppression. Swift follows Temple in “prid[ing] himself upon an aversion to secret political machinations and upon a devotion to simple, honest goodwill.” He also, Ehrenpreis continues, shared Temple’s sense that “the final source of dissension within a state is not a social pattern or a multiple cause but a single constituent of individual human nature.”¹²² Both men were in favor of annual parliaments and the privileging of landowners. One of Temple’s biographers observes that Swift, like Temple, believed “that government should be founded on a dual basis of tradition and consent.”¹²³

These parallels are basically accurate. Just how much we can conclude from drawing them, however, is another matter. As Ehrenpreis concedes, the principles and sentiments Swift and Temple shared were held by most of Swift’s contemporaries.¹²⁴ The two men were hardly unique in professing a belief in limited, “mixed” monarchy and a detestation of absolutism. The debate about standing armies was contentious, but quite a lot of late seventeenth-century thinkers believed in “tradition and consent.” That both Temple and his secretary were against “machinations” and in favor of “honest goodwill” is scarcely worth mentioning.

The question of just what Swift borrowed from whom is a tricky one, but one crux is that Temple was only one source, and a highly unoriginal one at that.¹²⁵ Swift and Temple agreed that human nature was basically

¹²¹ Robert C. Steensma, *Sir Richard Temple* (New York: Twayne, 1970), 23. The quotation comes from Steensma’s description of Temple’s outlook, but Swift’s thinking is defined in very similar ways. See for example Richard I. Cook, *Jonathan Swift as a Tory Pamphleteer* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), 14. Downie explicitly draws the parallel: “Swift’s cyclical view of history and his distrust of the ‘people’ are ideas that can be traced back to Sir William Temple” (*Jonathan Swift*, 76).

¹²² Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:123–25, 2:49. Ronald Paulson follows Ehrenpreis in explaining that Swift “inherited from his mentor Sir William Temple a view of history which saw martyrdom as necessary for the hero, and victory as necessary for the schemer and double-dealer”; “Swift, Stella, and Permanence,” *ELH* 27 (1960): 298–314, at 304.

¹²³ Richard Faber, *The Brave Courtier: Sir William Temple* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), 24.

¹²⁴ See Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:98, 123.

¹²⁵ “The historian of political theory,” Steensma concludes, “would be hard-pressed to find any significant strains of originality” in *Of Popular Discontents*, his most substantive political treatise (*Sir William Temple*, 40).

consistent (allowing for climatic influences); so did Polybius, Thucydides, and many of Swift's other "favorite" historians.¹²⁶ That history operated in cycles is hardly a novel concept as of the turn of the eighteenth century: not all classical historians adhered to a strict cyclical theory of history,¹²⁷ but Thucydides and Polybius are not alone in thinking in those terms. Swift has been charged with "reduc[ing]...history to the drama of personalities,"¹²⁸ and his psychological interpretation of history has been linked with Temple's, but there is considerable precedent for this inclination. The seventeenth-century poet-historian Samuel Daniel famously dubbed history "but a Map of men," neatly encapsulating the mindset of his classical forebears.¹²⁹ Herodotus, says K. H. Waters, "attributed by far the largest proportion of actions to a specific human, and often individual motivation."¹³⁰ Stephen Usher explains that Xenophon systematically recounts "political situations through the eyes of protagonists," and that "the importance of the individual leader...is paramount in Polybius's scheme of causation."¹³¹ A truism about Tacitus (another favorite of the Dean's) is that he distorted history "by representing it as essentially a clash of characters, exaggeratedly good with exaggeratedly bad."¹³² Identifying common ground between the Moor Park patriarch and his secretary in this instance clearly does not help us much.

Significant differences between Swift and Temple have been downplayed or missed.¹³³ Temple was obsessed with the role of climate in influenc-

¹²⁶ As James William Johnson has observed, "the whole flavor of seventeenth and eighteenth century classicism depended upon the premise that a human kinship existed between the man of the classical world and the man of the neo-classical so that nothing familiar to the one could be foreign to the other." See "Scythia, Cato, and Corruption: Swift's Historical Concepts and their Background" (unpub. Ph.D. diss.; Vanderbilt, 1954), 13.

¹²⁷ See John Burrow, *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century* (2007; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 2009), 164–65.

¹²⁸ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 2:601.

¹²⁹ Daniel, "A Defense of Ryme" (1607), in *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Samuel Daniel*, ed. Rev. Alexander B. Grosart, 5 vols. (printed for private circulation, 1896), 4:51.

¹³⁰ Waters, *Herodotus the Historian: His Problems, Methods and Originality* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 100.

¹³¹ Usher, *The Historians of Greece and Rome* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1969), 88, 113.

¹³² R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (1946; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 39.

¹³³ I point out that the Moor Park patriarch's arguments could be appropriated by Abel Boyer in 1714 as a means of attacking the Oxford ministry and its peace—a fact that should concern anyone who believes that Oxford's *chef de propagande* derived the fundamentals of his ideology from Temple. Boyer invoked Temple to demonstrate the "mutual and common Interest"

ing temperament and breeding discontent, a commonplace in his and Swift's lifetime. James William Johnson concludes that Temple "must have had a decisive effect on Swift's concern with the issue of the results of weather and regions on human culture," citing "the marked resemblance in their expressed opinions" as evidence that "the older man did a great deal to cultivate the younger's beliefs on climatic matters."¹³⁴ One can find isolated comments about climate in Swift's writings,¹³⁵ but they are few and far between, and nothing like as prominent as they are in Temple's essays.¹³⁶ The ideas are broadly speaking similar—as one would expect of conventional attitudes—but the climate factor is clearly much more on Temple's mind. There are other differences. Swift's patron tended toward toleration and faith in his fellow human beings,¹³⁷ hardly what we associate with the Dean. This has obvious political import. In *Of Popular Discontents*, Temple called for increasing "easiness of naturalization" and "freedom in our corporations," the allowance of "such liberty in different professions of religion, as cannot be dangerous to the government."¹³⁸ Swift would agree that freedom of religious practice only becomes seriously objectionable when it threatens stability, but he would (of course) have much narrower sense of what was permissible and what potentially destabilizing.

There is both predictable overlap and significant dissimilarity in Swift's and Temple's attitudes toward kingship and authority. Temple had a distinctly paternalistic theory of the origins of government: "the father, by a natural right as well as authority, becomes a governor in this little State," and the kingdom becomes a "great family."¹³⁹ Though Swift argued at various points that

of England and Holland, in an effort to argue that "none but a *corrupt unsound Ministry* will advise the *British Monarch* to Break Alliances with *Holland*, or enter into any with *France*"—as Oxford's ministry had. See *Memoirs of the Life and Negotiations of Sir W. Temple, Bar.* (London, 1714), 179.

¹³⁴ Johnson, "Scythia, Cato, and Corruption," 267.

¹³⁵ See for example in *Of Publick Absurdities*, where (as Davis explains) Swift suggests "that the wisest states are not exempt from folly, and that this proceeds less from the nature of their climate than from that of their government" (*PW*, 5:xi).

¹³⁶ Illustrative passages can be found in Temple's *Works* at 1:29, 3:275, 3:347, 3:389, 3:426, 3:432.

¹³⁷ See, for example, Faber, *The Brave Courtier*, 88.

¹³⁸ Temple, *Works*, 3:59.

¹³⁹ Temple, *Works*, 1:40–43; quotations at 41 and 42. Yu Liu explains that, "Rather than human deficiency or wickedness, Temple believed that politics originated naturally and positively out of human strength and wisdom." See "Tapping into a Different Cultural Tradition: Sir William Temple's Aesthetic Innovations," *The European Legacy* 15 (2010): 301–15, at 306.

a king should protect rather than oppress his subjects, he nowhere expounds the warmly paternalistic notion of government put forward by Temple.¹⁴⁰ He is in the main less interested in philosophizing about remote origins than he is about arguing over the use and abuse of power and the proper role of subjects. Swift and Temple assessed particular monarchs and recent political events quite differently. Temple admired William and liked Charles II.¹⁴¹ Swift despised Charles II, and whatever he felt toward William III was a good deal more complicated than admiration. Downie has concluded that, "Prompted by Sir William Temple, Swift was a wholehearted supporter of William III."¹⁴² One need not accept the Jacobite thesis to find this an oversimplification: William was for Swift a necessary evil, and more generally Swift's attitude toward the Revolution was accepting but nothing like as positive as Temple's.¹⁴³ Divergent takes on the legitimacy of the Revolution hardly represents a trivial point of departure.

A good illustration of the danger of oversimplifying the relationship of Swift's political ideology to Temple's has to do with the issue of faction. In *Of Popular Discontents*, Temple propounds his theory that faction originates from "a certain restlessness of mind and thought," from a fundamental fact of human nature that leaves us "unsatisfied with what we are, or what we at present possess and enjoy."¹⁴⁴ Ehrenpreis naturally highlights Swift's and Temple's likeness of mind:

To Swift, like Temple, the final source of dissension within a state is not a social pattern or a multiple cause but a single constituent of individual human nature. For Temple's vaguer formulation, however, Swift substitutes the irrational 'spirit of opposition' which in *A Tale of a Tub* he identifies with enthusiasm. That the

¹⁴⁰ One might expect Swift to follow Temple in the *Discourse*, but, as Ellis explains, this does not happen: "On the issue of the *origins* of political power, on which Temple and Locke were in total disagreement, Swift pointedly refuses to commit himself." See Ellis's edition of the *Discourse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 128, note to l. 23.

¹⁴¹ Faber, *The Brave Courtier*, 75.

¹⁴² Downie, *Jonathan Swift*, 37.

¹⁴³ Most Swiftians believe that Swift supported the Revolution without being uncritical of it or of its implications. See Oakleaf, *Political Biography*, 151–52 and Downie, *Jonathan Swift*, 145. In the *Examiner*, for example, Swift complains about post-Revolution violations of the English constitution; see in particular nos. 15 (9 November 1710) and 25 (18 January 1711). See *Swift vs. Mainwaring: The Examiner and The Medley*, ed. Frank H. Ellis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 24, 182–83.

¹⁴⁴ Temple, *Works*, 3:34–35.

same general principle is in both men's minds seems borne out by the imagery in which they express it and the conclusions to which they carry it.¹⁴⁵

But Swift's concept of faction is not Temple's. Swift is not uniform in his statements on the subject: he is, as Pat Rogers rightly notes, "very far from offering a systematic exposition, such as might come from a formal political theorist."¹⁴⁶ Temple would be much likelier to have a single, relatively straightforward theory about the origins of faction. He wrote as a moral philosopher, Swift as a civic combatant, holding forth in shifting contexts over many years from different points of view. He has a lot to say about faction, but it does not reduce to a tidy thesis, and certainly his disapprobation as reflected in *A Tale* is not a reliable indicator of the full range of his thinking or sufficient evidence of congruity with Temple. Rogers elaborates on the disparity between Swift and his patron: Temple "argued, in a way Swift would not, that one should choose the stronger faction when in doubt," and he worried that faction increased the threat of invasion, a concern typical in the late seventeenth century but not shared by Swift.¹⁴⁷

A final, broader point: a comparative analysis of Swift's and Temple's ideology is difficult to carry out, which should make us wary of assertions of their congruity. Temple is not entirely consistent, and though Swift has lasting principles, his positions do change to serve the needs of the moment. One can make Swift appear more or less in sync with Temple with selective quotation, but attempting systematically to trace correspondences and incongruities in their "ideology" is something else again.

Temple's political writings and Swift's Discourse. The critical consensus on Swift's *Discourse of the Contests and Dissentions Between the Nobles and the*

¹⁴⁵ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 2:49. The imagery of which Ehrenpreis speaks is explained as follows: "From this *fountain and spring*, says Temple, issue those *streams* of faction which at last overflow governments and laws. It is from the *fountains and spring* of enthusiasm, says Swift, that those *streams* proceed which break forth at last in military conquests and fanatical sects."

¹⁴⁶ Rogers, "Swift and Bolingbroke on Faction," *Journal of British Studies* 9 (1970): 71–101, at 72.

¹⁴⁷ Rogers, "Swift and Bolingbroke on Faction," 86. In *Of Popular Discontents*, Temple argues that the government should try to avoid privileging any party, but if "they must incline to one or other," they should "choose and favour that which is most popular, or wherein the greatest or strongest part of the people [are]...engaged." He then explains the ways in which faction leaves a country vulnerable to "dangers from abroad" (*Works*, 3:47). Temple also accepts and even approves of faction up to a point—"A weak or unequal faction, in any state, may serve perhaps to enliven or animate the vigour of a government"—which Swift would not do (51).

Commons in Athens and Rome (1701) is that, whatever else it does, it “echoes” Temple’s “views of politics and government” as stated in the *Essay on the Original and Nature of Government* and especially *Of Popular Discontents*.¹⁴⁸ Ellis expresses his surprise that, “On several occasions Swift cites” classical historians “in his marginal notes, but actually quotes Sir William Temple in his text.” He mentions only two such occasions, though he also suggests that Temple (rather than a classical historian) could be the source for four other passages.¹⁴⁹ That Sir William would be in the background of the *Discourse* makes sense, given Swift’s familiarity with his essays on government and authority. Temple is a source; that the “ideas of the *Discourse* derive from” him is a more dubious proposition.¹⁵⁰

Such correspondences as can be found in Swift’s and Temple’s authorial positions seem entirely commonplace. Both the *Discourse* and *Of Popular Discontents* reflect a distrust of the *mobile vulgus*, an awareness of the ease with which popular opinion can be cheated, and a fear that “tyrannies...spring naturally out of popular governments.”¹⁵¹ Temple and Swift—like many contemporaries—are chary of innovations that move away from the “ancient constitution.” Both are concerned to preserve the balance of power in government. Ehrenpreis links these two works (and *A Tale of a Tub*) on the basis that all are preoccupied with faction,¹⁵² which is true enough to some extent, though the nature of Swift’s and Temple’s preoccupation seems significantly different. Ehrenpreis puts great emphasis on the fact that “the fundamental image used by both men is precisely the same”—the image of the body politic, in which discord is treated as illness, etc.¹⁵³ Swift could have been inspired by Temple’s use of the trope, but he hardly needed the great man of Moor Park to remind him of its currency in political controversy.

¹⁴⁸ Judith C. Mueller, “A Tale of a Tub and early prose,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*, ed. Fox, 202–15, at 202. See also Oakleaf, *Political Biography*, 41.

¹⁴⁹ *Discourse*, ed. Ellis, 161–62.

¹⁵⁰ *Discourse*, ed. Ellis, 162.

¹⁵¹ Temple, *Works*, 1:31. This quotation is from the *Essay on the Original and Nature of Government*.

¹⁵² Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 2:49. Swift’s *Discourse*, Mark Goldie concludes, “drew inspiration from” Temple’s *Of Popular Discontents*, “which regularly alluded to the factiousness of the ancient polities.” See “Situating Swift’s politics in 1701,” in *Politics and Literature in the Age of Swift: English and Irish Perspectives*, ed. Claude Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 31–51, at 32.

¹⁵³ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 2:53.

An obvious problem in seeking parallels between the *Discourse* and *Of Popular Discontents* is simply this: a comparison of two distinctly different kinds of writing is not a simple matter. Temple's impetus is broadly humanistic; his starting point is that "our very natures and constitutions" leave us perpetually unsatisfied, and his unrealizable ideal is a world in which "all men are wise, good, and easily contented."¹⁵⁴ Swift's *Discourse* has a specific political occasion and end: the defense of the four impeached Whig lords and the separate constitutional struggle between the Commons and the Lords. Swift's fifth and final chapter is broader in focus—stressing the dangers of party—but this was evidently added when the impeachment proceedings collapsed before he could publish,¹⁵⁵ and it does not make his enterprise an exercise in political theorizing akin to Temple's. Temple's discussion is ultimately in the service of a call for various sociopolitical reforms to increase stability and happiness,¹⁵⁶ and the breadth of his vision distinguishes his essay from Swift's. Some of what Temple advocates, moreover, is not only irrelevant to the *Discourse* but also unacceptable to Swift (e.g., increased toleration for non-Anglicans).

Two specific issues limit the degree to which we can attribute Swift's arguments to Temple. One is simply the unoriginality of Temple's political thought. The second is, as Edward Rosenheim explains, "the problem of distinguishing between the party doctrines" of Whigs and Tories in the debate to which Swift's essay belongs. "The ground rules for the Paper War...dictated that both parties accept the principles of the Revolution, that neither party express the slightest overt disloyalty toward the person of William III, that such doctrines as passive obedience or hereditary right survive only as the disreputable hallmarks of the Jacobites, and that the successful conduct of a 'mixt government' be accepted as the common goal of political activity and argument." The result, Rosenheim concludes, is that "neither party can be readily distinguished by a characteristic political philosophy."¹⁵⁷ This has important

¹⁵⁴ Temple, *Works*, 3:35, 37.

¹⁵⁵ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 2:47.

¹⁵⁶ Steensma outlines these "recommendations for the welfare of the nation" in *Sir William Temple*, 43. They include "appropriations for the maintenance of a peacetime navy," "abolition of the death penalty for theft and for robbery" "laws encouraging immigration and natural increase of population," "statutes controlling dowries and marriage of heiresses," and several other sociopolitical proposals. For Temple's discussion, see *Works*, 3:51–64.

¹⁵⁷ Rosenheim, "The Text and Context of Swift's *Contests and Dissentions*," *Modern Philology* 66 (1968): 59–74, at 64. Rosenheim goes on to trace the "absence of ideological distinctions between the two parties" in this debate, attempting to clarify "the difficulty of viewing the

implications for what can be safely supposed about Temple's influence. So does the fact that, as Rosenheim pointedly remarks, John Toland, "writing in the Tory interest, is likewise indebted to Temple and, unlike Swift, quotes him directly, with admiring acknowledgment."¹⁵⁸ We need not be troubled by Swift's lack of direct engagement with Temple: citing the quite contemporary publications of his patron would be incongruous with the analogical mode of the *Discourse*. But his occasional borrowings from Temple's essays neither signify nor illuminate much.

In the *Discourse*, Swift also departs appreciably from the ideology behind Temple's political writings. In chapter V, he maintains that "there is hardly a Spot of Ground in *Europe*, where the Inhabitants have not frequently and entirely changed their Temple and Genius"—a statement that, as Ellis observes, "flatly contradicts" Temple's notion of universal human nature.¹⁵⁹ I would also argue that—in their discussions of the role of *vox populi* in government—Temple and Swift have markedly different emphases, and that this matters crucially. For all his fear of instability and dissent, Temple is emphatic about the need for a popular basis of authority. In his *Essay on the Original and Nature of Governments*, he bluntly insists that "all government is a restraint upon liberty," and in *Of Popular Discontents* he issues the reminder that "the governors, who are few, will ever be forced to follow the strength of the governed, who are many."¹⁶⁰ Swift, though elsewhere a champion of (some kinds of) liberty, does not in the *Discourse* wish to rub readers' noses in the importance of the support of the masses. Temple's ideal appears to be a state in which discontent can be neutralized—in which the people's lives can be improved. Swift is, on the contrary, keen to marginalize the popular element: the "dominant theme" of the *Discourse*, Mark Goldie has recently concluded, "remains profoundly anti-populist."¹⁶¹ Swift is ardent in his warning

Discourse as a characteristically Whig document" (65). He also notes that on one "crucial and relatively rare point of difference in party ideology [the "belief that power, once delegated, is irrevocable"], Swift seems to be firmly aligned with the Tories" (66).

¹⁵⁸ Rosenheim, "The Text and Context of Swift's *Contests and Dissentions*," 65. Steensma also highlights the unoriginality of much of Temple's political thought (*Sir William Temple*, 40), which makes attributing Swift's notions to his patron problematic.

¹⁵⁹ *Discourse*, ed. Ellis; Swift's quote is at 118, Ellis's at 148, note to l. 74. Rosenheim highlights a smaller distinction: "Swift's more immediate antecedents in discussing the controversies between nobles and commons include Harrington, who, like Swift and unlike Temple, assails the Gracchi" ("The Text and Context of Swift's *Contests and Dissentions*," 69).

¹⁶⁰ Temple, *Works*, 1:34, 3:47.

¹⁶¹ Goldie, "Situating Swift's politics in 1701," 44.

that powerful polities can be "utterly destroyed by that rash, jealous, and inconstant humour of the People," and that "nothing is more dangerous or unwise than to give way to the *first Steps* of Popular Encroachments."¹⁶² We can find parallels between Swift's and Temple's political discourses if parallels we seek, but that is an easy, un-nuanced game. The differences are more important and more instructive. Rogers's conclusion about *Of Popular Discontents* seems spot on: "It is hard to believe that Swift could have gleaned much from this shallow and discursive essay."¹⁶³

Swift and Temple on Ireland. Although Temple's two Irish writings have received only cursory treatment, the subject of Swift and Ireland is of course huge, messy, and not susceptible of tidy summation. All I wish to do here is briefly remind readers of the nature of Sir William's published accounts on matters Irish. Students of Temple have rightly regarded his two essays on Ireland as minor, peripheral, and uninteresting. The first (*An Essay upon the Present State and Settlement of Ireland*) was written for Arlington in 1668, and the second (*An Essay upon the Advancement of Trade in Ireland*), was addressed to the Lord Lieutenant in 1673. Both, in other words, were penned for English authorities, representatives of the English crown. Temple's concern is practical, his object reform of trade and the increase of revenue—but his arguments are resolutely pro-English. He endorses the Cromwellian settlement, at least implicitly; he insists in no uncertain terms that "whenever Irish trade interests conflict with English, the English should prevail"; and he opposes any modification "that may interfere with English prosperity."¹⁶⁴ That Ireland is and should be subordinate he does not question. What the young Swift thought of his master's easy acceptance of English exploitation of its neighbor we can only guess. Temple's thinking on this issue—however illiberal it now seems—was typical of the late seventeenth century. His essays were no more provocative than they were effectual. At a guess, the Swift of circa 1700 would have considered them as a negligible part of the corpus Temple left for him to see into print. When the mature Swift acted the part of conflicted Hibernian patriot, of course, he fought for a position exactly the reverse of Temple's, though he did so without directly invoking or contradicting his erstwhile patron. Quite possibly, he had never thought of Temple's Irish essays as important, either to their author or to the broader discussion of Anglo-Irish relations.

¹⁶² *Discourse*, ed. Ellis, 97, 115. See also comments at pp. 108, 120, and 121.

¹⁶³ Rogers, "Swift and Bolingbroke on Faction," 86.

¹⁶⁴ Homer E. Woodbridge, *Sir William Temple* (New York: MLA, 1966), 138-39.

Swift, Temple, and the history of England. One of Swift's earliest ventures as a writer was an aborted account (started c. 1700; pub. 1768) of the reigns of the four Norman kings after William the Conqueror.¹⁶⁵ Little ink has been spilled on these "reigns." About them, there is relative consensus: while at Moor Park, Swift was in some fashion involved in Temple's *An Introduction to the History of England* (pub. late 1694), which recounted the time leading up to the start of Norman rule in 1066. Temple's account terminates with the death of William the Conqueror and therefore represents a kind of prequel to Swift's efforts. Temple's admiring amanuensis, Ehrenpreis and others have insisted, was eager to please his patron, and conceived his history as a continuation of the *Introduction*.¹⁶⁶ The assumption has been that Swift tried to follow Temple, bungled what he tried to do, and had to concede in short order that "he was not the best man for the job."¹⁶⁷ I would like to suggest, however, that we need to disentangle Swift's enterprise from Temple's.

The first cliché about the reigns has to do with genesis. The standard explanation is that Swift assisted Temple with preparing his *Introduction* for print. In the preface to that volume, Temple lamented the lack of "one good or approved general history of England," and explained his enterprise as a kind of invitation for a younger, abler scholar to carry forward to the present.¹⁶⁸ Temple's solicitation, Ehrenpreis suggests, is delivered "in words which could easily have referred to Swift,"¹⁶⁹ but Elias's skepticism strikes me as well-founded. He doubts that the great man of Moor Park "would have wanted his *Introduction* to introduce a history by an obscure Irish-born parson, unknown to the world except perhaps as the author of a turgid ode to the rascal Dunton's Athenian Society." Can we plausibly imagine, he asks, that the haughty baronet desired to appear "in print as the harbinger for his own employee"?¹⁷⁰ We cannot make a solid case against Swift as Temple's ideal can-

¹⁶⁵ Related to these reigns is an "Abstract of the History of England," probably composed between 1694 and 1699 but not published until 1765. The "Abstract" consists of notes presumably made from Temple's *Introduction* (and/or from Temple's sources); why Swift wrote it is somewhat hard to figure. Elias ventures the hypothesis that the notes were meant in part for the instruction of (say) Stella (*Swift at Moor Park*, 318).

¹⁶⁶ "Every extant sign," Ehrenpreis concludes, "points to Temple as the instigator of these 'Reigns'"; see "Swift's History of England," *JEGP* 51 (1952): 177-85, at 182.

¹⁶⁷ Philip Hicks, *Neoclassical History and English Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 101.

¹⁶⁸ Temple, *Works*, 3:68. The invitation to "some worthy spirit, and true lover of our country, to pursue this attempt" is at p. 69.

¹⁶⁹ Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, 1:175.

¹⁷⁰ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 323. Elias explains, moreover, that Temple had rather high expectations for the man he hoped would succeed him in the history project. He disapproved

didate, but such a scenario does seem unlikely. What is more frustrating: we know little about Swift's role in or attitude toward Temple's enterprise. Joseph M. Levine assures us flatly that, "It is clear that...Swift approved [Temple's] scheme and participated in it from the beginning,"¹⁷¹ but clear *from what*? We might remember that while Temple was finishing the *Introduction* and ushering it into print, his secretary was another Swift—not Jonathan but his cousin Thomas.¹⁷² To suppose that Swift was not influenced by Temple's *Introduction* would be rash, but to describe his efforts as a hopeful bid to gratify the great man is perhaps more dangerous.

A further awkwardness has to do with composition date. One theory is that Swift wrote his account between 1697 and 1699, and abandoned the enterprise shortly after Temple's death. Ehrenpreis suggests a composition date of circa 1700, which would mean that the reigns were penned not to please Temple but to pay him a posthumous tribute. If the latter, then Swift's abortion of the project does seem odd, given what we know about his rather obsessive psyche. Uncertainty about composition date is a problem: the personal and political contexts of this project are necessarily unclear, which means that no definitive interpretation of Swift's aims and motives is likely to be forthcoming.

We can, however, attempt to define the ideology of Swift's "reigns" more precisely. The assumption has been simply that Swift was following Temple and thus adhering to his method and outlook. In fact the situation is more complicated. Temple had two objectives in the *Introduction*. The ostensible motive is stated in his preface: to help facilitate a respectable history of England. The unstated motive is political: he wished to bolster support for William III after the death of Mary weakened his claim to the throne. Unlike Swift, Temple was unequivocally pro-William and pro-1688, and his panegy-

of a proposed history done by James Tyrrell, who was "[n]either a celebrated statesman nor an acclaimed genius," but merely a "private gentleman" who could bring "neither fame nor a background in public affairs to his task" (57–58). If these were Temple's criteria, then his young secretary could not have qualified for the job.

¹⁷¹ Levine, "Jonathan Swift and the Idea of History," in *Eighteenth-Century Genre and Culture, Serious Reflections on Occasional Forms: Essays in Honor of J. Paul Hunter*, ed. Dennis Todd and Cynthia Wall (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), 79–95, at 87.

¹⁷² Thomas Swift was Temple's go-between with John Dunton, who first offered to carry out the history for which Temple called. Temple encouraged this scheme; as Elias points out, through Thomas, Temple "proposed a patchwork history drawn from the work of the finest and best-esteemed authors already in print," an impracticable plan that went nowhere (*Swift at Moor Park*, 55). The episode between Temple and Dunton is complicated; Elias offers a detailed account (55–59).

ric to William the Conqueror is by association a panegyric to the more recent William to take power via revolution.¹⁷³ Temple's *Introduction* is indirectly and quietly politicized, an uncomplicated exercise in historical analogy.

What of Swift's so-called continuation? It consists of an account of four reigns from William II to Henry II, the last terminating abruptly. There are basically four possibilities as to what kind of "thing" this work is: an undertaking carried out for Swift's own private edification; an attempt to do straight history that could be published, perhaps "as a fillip to better candidates";¹⁷⁴ an indirect comment on present politics, à la Temple; or a more broadly ideological history, generally rather than specifically applicative. If Swift intended his account to bear on present-day England, either in direct or analogical terms, the lack of a precise date makes determining likely relevance tricky: the political milieu of 1697 is significantly different from that of a few years later, as was Swift's political position. Unlike Temple, Swift anticipates an ideological slant, a theme which was to shape the rest of the (unwritten) history: "the present constitution of the *English* parliament hath, by many degrees and alterations, been modelled to the frame it is now in; which alterations I shall observe in the succeeding reigns as exactly as I can discover them by a diligent search into the histories of the several ages."¹⁷⁵

Whatever else Swift is doing, he seems to be working out his own ideas about power and authority, and he is deeply concerned with the development of the English constitution (something in which Temple expressed no systematic interest). The theme of succession is paramount. While no settled and consistent authorial viewpoint emerges, Swift tends to suggest that the wisdom and effectiveness of the *princeps* is more important than the means by which he ascended to the throne. By itself, this attitude toward a de facto king seems supportive of William, as long as he rules well. But Swift also insists that "there is little security in a good title (though confirmed by promises and oaths) where the lawful heir is absent,"¹⁷⁶ and throughout the reigns he specially emphasizes the contingency of power. He is also preoccupied with the meaninglessness of fealty oaths, which are made and broken by both kings

¹⁷³ As Janelle Greenberg explains, both Williams "entered England by the assent of nobles and people. Both governed not as conquerors but according to the laws of Edward the Confessor. And both gave their second homeland cause to rejoice at their coming." *The Radical Face of the Ancient Constitution: St. Edward's 'Laws' in Early Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 292–93.

¹⁷⁴ Hicks, *Neoclassical History*, 101.

¹⁷⁵ PW, 5:37.

¹⁷⁶ PW, 5:47.

and subjects. Swift's positives are order, stability, and moderation among rulers and ruled; his negatives are regal encroachments carried out against the law, subjects who rebel too quickly, faction, and succession squabbles. Broadly speaking, Swift and Temple concur in idealizing the king who behaves kindly toward his *civis*, but—and this is key—the emphasis seems meaningfully, if subtly, different. “[N]othing contributes more to the satisfaction and obedience of subjects,” Temple maintains, “than the presence of a good king.”¹⁷⁷ Though Temple is on the side of William III, he characteristically stresses the fact that the responsibility for a stable polity lies ultimately with the monarch. Swift too believes that princes must respect the law of the land, but he places much more weight than Temple upon the necessity of some degree of obedience among the populace.¹⁷⁸ Swift's reigns are not adequately explained as an ineffective attempt to promulgate Temple's ideology—though this does not mean that Swift was rejecting or consciously revising his master's outlook.

Let me conclude this section with two further points about the incomplete histories of England produced by Swift and Temple. (1) Judging the ideology of either of these accounts is a task made more difficult by their indebtedness to earlier English histories (especially Holinshed and Daniel, but also Baker and Foxe). This unoriginality also means that we cannot easily identify the influence specifically of Temple on Swift. (2) Why Swift abandoned his projected history is not known and is unlikely ever to be known. In a dedication to the venture, added later, he confessed that he found it too demanding and that he became distracted by more immediate political battles.¹⁷⁹ This is as plausible as any other explanation. Conceivably Swift recognized that he was better suited for (or more interested in) topical rather than generally applicative modes of history writing; certainly the *Discourse* seems to represent a kind of transition from the reigns to a more present-centered propagandistic career.

Attempting to identify Swift's ideological borrowings from Temple is a fraught enterprise, and the difficulty bespeaks an important difference between them. Temple's political-historical statements are not perfectly consistent, but one can readily determine most of his commitments and positions. Many of his extant non-epistolary works date from after his retirement from politics, which means that they originate from an essentially stable mind-

¹⁷⁷ Temple, *Works*, 3:129.

¹⁷⁸ See, for example, *PW*, 5:44, 48, 63.

¹⁷⁹ “I was diverted from pursuing this history, partly by the extreme difficulty, but chiefly by the indignation I conceived at the proceedings of a faction, which then prevailed” (*PW*, 5:11).

set and there is little ground for doubt or argument. Swift's politics, on the contrary, continue to be hotly contested because his positions are not consistent. He issues pronouncements in varyingly straightforward or ironic ways over a number of years, speaking from a variety of stances, and this makes identifying his perspective on authority, government, obedience, and so on distinctly tricky. That said, the dissimilarities between Swift's and Temple's viewpoints—which I have made only a start at identifying—should worry anyone who assumes that Swift's understanding of history and politics is simply a version of Temple's. Some scholars have explained the differences in terms of filial rebellion, a theory I would call much too tidy, and not terribly plausible given what we know about Swift. The paucity of comment about Temple does not suggest defiance: Swift, after all, almost never bucks any system *quietly*.

* The Temperate Temple and the Intemperate Swift *

The few analyses of Swift's personal and intellectual connection to Temple have tended to highlight similarities while noting divergence on specific issues. The focus has been on realms in which Swift and his Moor Park patron overlap. What does not get much attention is just how radically different their lives and careers were. Swift never knew Temple as an engaged participant in politics, and there is a very good chance that he did not see his patron's public career as pertinent to his own. The nature of their political engagement is quite different: Temple has been aptly described as "a speculative student [rather] than a practical politician," and as "an analyst rather than an advocate."¹⁸⁰ Of Swift one can only say the opposite. When Temple retired from public life, he took refuge in cultivating his garden and his prose style. He enjoyed the neo-Epicurean *modus vivendi*.¹⁸¹ When Temple claimed that he was content to keep his distance from court, he meant it—unlike Swift,

¹⁸⁰ Edward S. Lyttel, *Sir William Temple* (Oxford: B. H. Blackwell, 1908), 56; C. B. Macpherson, "Sir William Temple, Political Scientist?" *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 9 (1943): 39–54, at 43.

¹⁸¹ Ricardo Quintana made this point well: "It is the seventeenth century that speaks in Swift the moralist, not any single teacher. Least of all did Temple bend Swift's mind to the epicureanism of the *Essays*, the most original aspect of these moral observations." See *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift* (1936; rpt. Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1965), 19–20.

who issued similar pronouncements after summer 1714.¹⁸² One of Temple's key attributes has been described as "the shrinking from responsibility which characterized his whole career, and his selfish preference for the *dilettante* pursuits of cultured leisure when he might have been engaged in rendering good and lasting services to his country."¹⁸³ Swift's personality and preferences clearly led him in a different direction.

Sir William was a stoic, a dilettante drawn to many subjects—gardens, health, abstract political theory, the history of the Netherlands, "the poetic process"—and a moral philosopher with an abiding aversion to satire.¹⁸⁴ Swift was a satirist and a bloody-minded party pen who could not refrain from civic engagement; he returned obsessively to a relatively small number of decidedly local religio- and sociopolitical issues; and his moralism is pragmatic rather than philosophical. Temple urged reconciliation, harmony, and moderation; he was inclined to accept what makes for a peaceful life, which tended to mean (in his reckoning) inclusivity and acceptance. Swift could be tolerant on a personal level, but his vision of a stable polity depended crucially upon the marginalization of Protestant dissenters. The Dean of St. Patrick's might have had Temple in mind when he designed his own garden,¹⁸⁵ but he could never have beat a lasting retreat there. Temple's students sometimes treat him as an occasionalist writer, but his "interventions" are mild urgings, hortatory, indirect, generalized, and bland. Swift is a partisan who puts his neck on the line; he is aggressive and judgmental to the point of bigotry; he is a holder of

¹⁸² Temple makes various pronouncements along these lines, including in *Memoirs III*: "I had learned by living long in courts and public affairs, that I was fit to live no longer in either." He had, he continues, had "enough of the uncertainty of princes, the caprices of fortune, the corruption of ministers, the violence of factions, the unsteadiness of counsels, and the infidelity of friends" (*Works*, 2:551). Swift issues similar assertions throughout his post-1714 career. In August 1714, he grumbles, "Confound all Politicks. Have I had enough of them or no?" Eleven years later he insists that he "know[s] none of the Court," having "been so long out of the World" (*Correspondence*, 2:66, 557). The difference is crucial: Temple seems genuinely content to abandon politics; Swift's acknowledgment of deception and corruption is almost always more angry than resigned.

¹⁸³ Murray L. R. Beaven, *Sir William Temple* (Oxford: B. H. Blackwell, 1908), 111.

¹⁸⁴ In *On Poetry*, Charles H. Hinnant explains, Temple was "preoccupied with specific questions concerning the nature of the poetic process, of the relation between fancy and judgment, and he draws from his explorations some important conclusions about the way poetry originates." See "Sir William Temple's Views on Science, Poetry, and the Imagination," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 8 (1979): 187–203, at 198. This is not Temple's only concern in his career, of course—but his hobbies and pursuits are strikingly unlike those of Swift.

¹⁸⁵ Forster, *Life*, 89.

grudges. Temple tends toward the philosophical and aphoristic, Swift to the personal and topical. The crux here is that nothing about Swift's trajectory, in life or in writing, appears seriously indebted to his patron—and that this seems less a matter of rebellion than irrelevance.

Swift's relative silence on the subject of Temple after his Moor Park period seems telling: if his old patron was an object of either veneration or bitterness, then Swift's reticence is seriously out of character. In most realms, where Swift feels passionately about someone or something his public and/or private writings reflect those strong feelings: witness his lasting obsession with Oxford, his essentially permanent nostalgia for 1710–14, or his equally unswerving hostility to Archbishop Sharpe and the Duchess of Somerset. I grant the possibility that Swift's feelings were too personal and too deep to be shared, but this seems unlikely. What is clear is that he had no public reason to hide or suppress his relationship with Temple: the respectable baronet could only have had, as Elias observes, a sanitizing effect on the reputation of the author of *A Tale*.¹⁸⁶ Anyone wishing to make the case for Temple's intellectual and psychological influence on Swift should worry about the paucity of post-1700 comments by Swift. Another serious concern has to be Temple's negligible presence in the early biographical record—a clear-cut indication that there was no real anecdotal tradition. A third problem is that biographers of the last half-century, working from almost exactly the same evidence as their predecessors, could come up with such drastically different interpretations from those of biographers in the previous two hundred years. A fourth alarming fact is that scholars as learned as both Ehrenpreis and Elias have arrived at diametrically opposite conclusions from the same materials. Either at least one interpretation has to be seriously wrong or, alternatively, the evidence is seriously inadequate to bear the weight of interpretation placed on it. Did Swift think his patron a genius he could scarcely emulate? Or did he regard Temple as a self-satisfied dabbler whose prose style was estimable but whose Epicureanism was merely a cover for indolence?¹⁸⁷ We do not know, and in the absence of evidence that apparently does not survive (and perhaps never existed) we cannot know.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Elias, *Swift at Moor Park*, 70.

¹⁸⁷ Nokes suggests that Swift "came to suspect that Temple's vaunted Epicureanism was merely a polite name for intellectual laziness"—though he maintains (not implausibly) that Swift's "affection and respect went deeper than such reservations" (*Jonathan Swift*, 34).

¹⁸⁸ Some of Quintana's suppositions about Temple's importance to Swift seem dubious, but his conclusion strikes me as spot on: "Temple was not a dominating force in Swift's life—merely the central figure at Moor Park" (*Mind and Art*, 22).

The problem is a very simple one. A great deal has been said about the Swift-Temple connection despite the fact that precious little is known about it. Ehrenpreis's biography is in many ways masterful, but his account of this relationship is essentially fantasy. His interpretation is drastically one-sided, based on selective and decontextualized quotation; his conclusions can neither be corroborated nor definitively invalidated. His view of Swift's Moor Park experience has been popular with scholars eager to believe that Temple *must have* recognized the genius and promise of his young secretary; the notion of Swift seeking his master's affection and approbation has been accepted as fact. Elias's account of the relationship is unfortunately suspect; he was not content to carry out a skeptical reassessment but instead felt compelled to mount a strong countercase. His revisionist account presumes not that the evidence is inadequate but that it shows Swift to be deeply critical of and rebellious against the haughty but second-rate intellectual under whom he served. We have two directly contradictory constructions of the Swift-Temple connection, but on the basis of the surviving evidence, neither will wash.

The only story we can believe is one no biographer wants to tell, because it is brief, undramatic, and fails to illuminate either the mind or the art of our subject. Swift lived with Temple for a while and did some work for him. Swift expected patronage, but whether or not Temple promised it, no remunerative position ever materialized, leaving Swift to shift for himself. He made relatively few remarks on his erstwhile patron in later years, which taken together suggest neither bitter traumatization nor veneration. His intellectual "borrowings" from Temple turn out to be commonplaces; his career is so different from that of the Moor Park patriarch as to make comparison difficult, and not as conclusive as has been suggested. In trying to understand the life and work of Swift, the invocation of Sir William Temple has been, at best, a distraction—regardless of whether Temple is viewed as a beloved surrogate father or a petty despot whose thrall the young Swift resented and systematically resisted. What should be clear, however, is that Ehrenpreis and his successors have put their faith in an engrossing, affecting saga that is essentially illusory.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ A version of this paper was delivered at the Dublin Symposium on 20 October 2012. For careful readings of and advice on earlier drafts, I am grateful to Robert D. Hume and Ronald Paulson.