Swift, the Book, and the Irish Financial Revolution

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The decade that followed publication of *A Modest Proposal* and the establishment of a sinking fund for the Debt of the Nation is significant to the study of Swift’s career and the Dublin book trade in two ways. First, it marks a time when Swift, who was growing into more of an Irish nationalist writer than a Tory publicist, was becoming more skeptical of working with London publishers and more inclined to publish his most significant works in Dublin. The Irish book trade’s relationship with London’s, meanwhile, was becoming less one of concurrence and cooperation and more one of competition. Second, Swift’s choice to work more often with Dublin printers, changes in press licensing, and the development of a broader market for Irish-themed works were enabling the rise of the category of the “literary” in Ireland. Though political economy continued to shape the Irish political public sphere—albeit one, as I explained in Chapters 4 and 5, in which the “public” was limited to the members of the *Monti*—literary work in Ireland, which depended on that genre for its distinction as a national brand identity, was emerging as its own class of print. The literary sphere, consequently, arose from the national symbolism generated by overtly economic works such as the *Drapier’s Letters*. As Clive Probyn has written, Swift’s persona as the drapier, as the unifying symbol governing the Dublin book market, soon became disseminated enough to support an entire semiotic system for Ireland that went beyond direct political engagement. Swift was becoming “an allegorical figure in the public sphere,” and many taverns, coffeehouses, and clubs “adopted the ‘Drapier’s Head’ as their icon.” The drapier, as a figure for the bookseller, was featured in street theatre and parades. In
general, Dubliners were celebrating the book as the material means by which the *Letters* had expressed Ireland’s sovereignty; the Guild of St. Luke’s float for a 1728 parade featured a printing press as the “symbol of secular, political, and nationalistic enfranchisement.” The semiotic system generated by the *Letters* was the foundation for a larger edifice of culture expressed most visibly in Anglo-Irish literature, which appropriated the style, but not necessarily the substance, of serious political controversy.

The formation of a more strictly literary public sphere was therefore, like Swift’s satire itself, to some extent parasitical on political economy as a host text, yet it also functioned to underwrite the goal of that text, the establishment of Ireland as a sovereign economic community. The history of the Irish book in this period thereby problematizes Habermas’s chronology of the development of the types of public spheres. If we, for a moment, accept the argument that an apolitical “literary precursor of the public sphere in the political domain” emerges as a “training ground” for political writing in this period, the Dublin book trade, by developing its identity in political economy first, seemingly inverts that genealogy. Though Swift himself may have rehearsed for his later political engagement by writing literary works in England, it does not follow that national print cultures as a whole are shaped in literature first. Unlike the early-twentieth-century Irish Renaissance, an era in which “the cultural revival preceded and in many ways enabled the political revolution,” Swift’s writings of the 1720s and 1730s show that political economy formed the culture and readership upon which Anglo-Irish literature could thrive.

Swift was not alone in contending that the encouragement of a more strictly literary book market in Ireland would serve to complement the political market that his writings of the 1720s had formed. George Berkeley, the colleague of Swift’s who applied the term *Monti* to the fund for the Debt of the Nation, recognized the potential that this literary market held for nation building. His book *The Querist*, published in the mid-1730s, questioned the value of various strategies for improving the economy and living conditions of Ireland, among them the potential establishment of a central bank and national paper currency. The printing press and the development of an Irish book market, however, were central to these more economic projects. Berkeley asked whether “it should
not seem worthwhile to erect a Mart of Literature in this Kingdom, under wiser Regulations and better Discipline than in any other Part of Europe? And whether this would not be an infallible Means of drawing Men and Money into the Kingdom?" As Richard Sher and others have indicated, Dublin did indeed rise, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, to become second to London in English-language publishing, especially in reprinting literary works like novels, so perhaps Berkeley’s question was answered. This chapter concerns how the seeds of this growth were sown in Swift and Berkeley’s era. The 1730s, partly because they witnessed the Dublin printing of George Faulkner’s edition of Swift’s collected works, marked the emergence of a distinct literary branch of the book market in Ireland. As Barbara Benedict has pointed out, one of the cultural consequences of the publication of eighteenth-century anthologies like Swift’s was the formation of a set of nationally important works; and it is clear that Swift, by virtue of this process, became the first figure in a distinctly Anglo-Irish canon.

One of the factors that enabled this transformation of the Irish book market was the specifications of the patent for the printing monopoly belonging to the king’s stationer. The patent obtained by George and Constantia Grierson in 1729 and assumed by them in 1732 after the death of Andrew Crooke II was far more limited in scope than that held by previous patentees. This particular license is important because it legally liberated other publishers from regulation of what they could print and because for the first time carried a woman’s name. Both of these changes made conditions more conducive to the growth of literary publication than they had been. Though there was “little or no restraint on the printing of such privileged books as almanacs, primers, and school books” before the 1732 patent, rival printers and booksellers had, in all practical senses, the right to compete with the king’s printer. The new patent, by giving only a very restricted monopoly to the Griersons, made official what had been the practice, and their press began to publish official documents and Bibles to the exclusion of other genres. The effect of this official change was that other printers felt freer to publish other forms, literary works among them. When the king chartered the Incorporated Society for Protestant Schools in 1733, for which Grierson was the official, though not exclusive, printer, there were “further incentives for publishers to supply schoolbooks and edifying digests.”
Bibles, textbooks provided the kind of capital to the printing industry that would enable them to publish other varieties of writing, and the literate audience that would be produced by schools would form a broader market. Significantly, the book trade recognized that what was emerging was a uniquely Anglo-Irish form of cultural capital. In their 1735 satire *The Humble Petition of George Faulkner and George Grierson*, these publishers promoted books written and printed in Ireland as valuable for the “honour and luster” of the Dublin trade, suggesting that Irish textual production had begun to acquire a distinct brand identity.

This chapter examines the migration of ideas of Irish national identity from the discipline of political economy to the genres of literature—a migration that mirrors movements in Swift’s personal career. First, it documents Swift’s further engagements with Ireland’s economic issues, showing that he continued to perform the nationalist role of the drapier, though in a much less robust way, through the 1730s. Second, it discusses how Swift’s poetry of this period—what some have termed his “anti-poetry”—reflects his increasingly skeptical outlook on the British book trade. Poems of the 1730s such as an *Epistle to a Lady* and *On Poetry: A Rapsody*, I argue, mark his transition to working more exclusively with Dublin printers. They were heavily edited by his London correspondents and they were not well received by the authorities, suggesting that his satire was becoming an embarrassment for the Tory cause as it moved from critique of the Whigs to an outright condemnation of the British government, including the king and his court. This development, I argue, transformed Swift from an opposition publicist into a writer disenchanted with British politics altogether who increasingly embraced a more openly Irish patriotic position that transcended partisanship. Third, it discusses the role of anthologies in forming national literary canons, by showing how this transformation is reflected in Swift’s disappointment with *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, which he had published in London with Motte, and in his choice to publish his multivolume collected works with Faulkner in Dublin.

I

It has been argued that, after *A Modest Proposal*, Swift’s contributions to Anglo-Irish political economy were of little consequence. He had writ-
ten to Pope that he was growing tired of writing in the genre and that he often threw away his drafts because he felt that they would not make much of a difference (12:xxiv). He also said that he was going to refrain from causing “his Majesty’s government any further embarrassment by writing about the condition of Ireland” (12:xxxv). Most of his political prose from the 1730s that does survive was not published during his lifetime; it was used as new material in later editions of his complete works and other productions of the Swift culture industry after his death. Further, those pieces that he did write were on themes that he had discussed before. Nonetheless, they are evidence that he continued to be concerned about the politics and economy of Ireland even as his poetry came closer to actualizing the idea that the best way to improve the country was the development of the book trade. For the most part, Swift’s publications on political economy in the 1730s were on coinage and the national debt, on Dublin city politics, on the state of the weavers and the woolen trade, and on Church of Ireland matters such as tithes, appointments to clerical office, and charity.

An Infallible Scheme to Pay the Public Debt of this Nation in Six Months, A Proposal for an Act of Parliament to Pay Off the Debt of the Nation, A Letter on the Fishery, and the Speech on Lowering the Coin are Swift’s central contributions to political economy in the 1730s, though not all of them were published in his lifetime. The first, often misattributed because its title page says it was written by “D—n S—t,” was probably a production of his protégé Matthew Pilkington (12:xxxii). Intervening in the parliamentary controversy of 1731 over renewing the 1729 compromise over funding the national debt, An Infallible Scheme, as Kirsten Sundell has argued, appropriates Swift’s indictment of the luxury and extravagance of the Anglo-Irish landed class.14 The pamphlet, printed in Dublin in 1731, contends that by imposing a tax upon “Perjury, Fornication, Drunkenness, Swearing, Slander, Infidelity, Fraud, Blasphemy,” and other vices, Parliament would no longer be troubled with the need to pass a secondary supply bill to pay the interest on the debt.15 Again, however, this satire should be taken as commenting on the role of the printing trade in creating a national economy. More like Swearer’s Bank, which I discussed in Chapter 2, than like A Modest Proposal, An Infallible Scheme recommends a system of fines resembling what Joseph Moxon identified as the “Solaces” of the “Chappel,” or printing house.16 The total
revenue to be collected from these vices was predicted to be £477,750 in six months, much more than the approximate debt of £300,000. This pamphlet, perhaps more than any other, shows how Swift’s linkage of print culture to finance was being received and understood as such by other Dublin writers.

* A Proposal for an Act of Parliament to Pay Off the Debt of the Nation*, printed in Dublin in 1732 and almost definitely written by Swift, revisits the actuarial logic of *A Modest Proposal* and *An Infallible Scheme* by recommending that the money that Church of Ireland bishops owned or collected on their land be redistributed towards the Irish Treasury. It announces its non-serious, satirical intent from the outset, claiming that “The Reader will perceive the following Treatise to be altogether Ironical” (12:207), yet it contains important information regarding the expenses that government borrowing had been funding. The first cost was national security: “The Debts contracted some Years past, for the Service and Safety of the Nation, are grown so great, that under our present distressed Condition, by the Want of Trade . . . [and] Regiments serving abroad . . . the Kingdom seems altogether unable to discharge them by the common Methods of Payment” (12:207). Whether taken at face value or as an element of the satire that follows it, this statement suggests that the support of the Monti was still on Swift’s mind in the 1730s, that serious economic proposals were continuing to circulate in this period, and that Swift was still committed to parodying them. He proposes selling bishops’ lands for a profit, using half of the money raised, £1,214,400, to pay off the debt and using the other half to store in the Treasury for emergencies.

* A Letter on the Fishery* was not published until 1729 (in London), four years after Swift’s death; it was one of several unfinished items that his publishers used to pad new collections of his works. It shows that Swift was still interested in the problem of Ireland’s trade, yet not as invested in printing pieces about it as he was in publishing his poetry. It complains that the Dutch are monopolizing fishing in the British Isles with the tacit support of the English government, and it expresses disappointment with the “lazy” habits of the native Irish and their “Knavery” (13:113). This letter is more important, however, because it offers insight into the motives of his earlier work. In it he writes of the *Drapier’s Letters*, claiming the letters as his own, describing the risks he took in the
Wood’s halfpence controversy, and saying “What I did for this Country was from perfect Hatred of Tyranny and Oppression” (12:112). The letter is related to Reasons why We Should not Lower the Coins now Current in this Kingdom, which was published in 1736 in Dublin (13:xxxvii). This work attempted to arouse the emotions of the earlier controversy, using a new currency problem to revive memory of Swift’s contribution. The short speech had been delivered before several merchants on 24 April 1736, when Swift once again asserted the right of the “Irish interest” in Dublin against the “English interest,” which was attempting to reset the value of Irish coins because the gold guinea had already dropped in value due to the decrease of silver circulating in Ireland. Swift believed that if this lower value were made official, the average shopkeeper would lose profits while the English appointees in church and state employment would lose nothing. The Speech therefore falls into the tradition of his defense of Dublin merchants.

Swift’s writings on the city of Dublin and its politics and those on the textile trade reflect his general disappointment with Irish political and economic affairs, but they also show his continuing interest in advocating on behalf of the Irish. The Substance of What was Said by the Dean of St. Patrick’s to the Lord Mayor and Some of the Aldermen, when his Lordship came to Present the said Dean with his Freedom in a Gold Box (written, but not published, in 1730), Swift’s report on how he was honored by the city for his patriotism, takes steps to chastise the sloppy works and administration of Dublin. An Examination of Certain Abuses, Corruptions, and Enormities, in the City of Dublin, a pamphlet published in 1732, furthers themes addressed in earlier pamphlets by satirizing paranoia about “Jacobites and Papists.” It illustrates how just about any cry that a hawker of goods might make in Dublin’s streets could be interpreted as deliberate political sedition (12:220). Some Considerations Humbly Offered to the Right Honourable the Lord-Mayor, The Court of Aldermen, and Common Council of the Honourable City of Dublin, in the Choice of a Recorder (1732) and Advice to the Free-Men of the City of Dublin in the choice of a Member to Represent them in Parliament (1733) both concern Dublin elections. These works indicate the importance of the City of Dublin in opposing Ireland’s executive branch (the lord lieutenant and his officers). Swift’s printers benefited from this opposition because they were judged by city juries, which tended to be
packed with sympathetic Dubliners, not representatives of the executive branch. Advice to the Free-Men follows a similar line of argument in advocating for a new city of Dublin representative in Parliament. Observations Occasioned by Reading a Paper Entitled The Case of the Woollen Manufacturers of Dublin, written, but not published, in December of 1733, revisits Swift’s familiar arguments on behalf of the Irish weavers. It is more difficult to read it as an example of the text/textile homology seen in his earlier works on cloth, because it was published later in the eighteenth century (1789) from a manuscript that did not have italics and other typographical devices to signal supplemental meaning. In short, these essays reflect Swift’s movement away from direct political engagement with issues in Anglo-Irish political economy.

The vast majority of Swift’s prose works in this decade, however, concern religion and the business of the Church of Ireland. These works can be classified generally as short pieces on patronage and appointments of clergymen to parishes, benefices, and other offices, on the sacramental test, and on the income and economic status of the clergy. A Vindication of his Excellency, the Lord C—t from the Charge of Favouring None but Tories, High-Churchmen and Jacobites (1730) satirizes Dr. Patrick Delany, a friend of Swift’s, for his attempts to gain further patronage from the lord lieutenant of Ireland, John Carteret, who had already, with Swift’s intervention, appointed Delany to the chancellorship of St. Patrick’s Cathedral. Delany had begun this controversy with a poem, An Epistle to his Excellency John Lord Carteret Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, which was “bluntly asserting further preferment.” Swift satirized this request in the poems An Epistle upon an Epistle from a Certain Doctor to a Certain Great Lord, Being a Christmas Box for D. D—ny (1729) and A Libel on D— D— and a Certain Great Lord (1729). The latter was “one of his most violent political verse satires” on “the rottenness of political patronage,” leading to more accusations that Swift was a Jacobite disenchanted with the governments of Britain and Ireland (12:xxiv–xxv). A Vindication responds to these accusations by showing that the lord lieutenant had appointed far more Whigs than Tories to offices in church and state, proving that neither he nor office holders of the Tory persuasion like Delany, Thomas Sheridan, Arthur Acheson, and Swift himself were guilty of any kind of treason (12:167–169).

Swift’s writings on the question of repealing a certain religious test
for state and church employees are implicitly about the problems surrounding patronage and government appointments. Mainly, they were concerned with what the right of Dissenters to occupy such offices—especially teaching positions at schools and universities—meant for Ireland’s Anglican subjects. The Advantages Proposed by Repealing the Sacramental Test (1731), Queries Relating to the Sacramental Test (1732), The Presbyterians Plea of Merit (1733), Reasons Humbly Offered to the Parliament of Ireland for Repealing the Sacramental Test, In Favour of the Catholicks (1733), and Some Few Thoughts Concerning the Repeal of the Test (1733) dwell on the controversy over repealing the Sacramental Test for Dissenting Protestants, a debate that was raging in the early 1730s. They underline that the salaried appointments in church and state are what was really at stake in these religious conversations, and they claim those jobs for Irish Anglicans.

On the Bill for the Clergy’s Residence on their Livings (1731), Considerations upon Two Bills (1731), Some Reasons Against the Bill for Settling the Tythe of Hemp by a Modus (1734), A Character, Panegyric, and Description of the Legion Club (1736), Concerning that Universal Hatred, which Prevails against the Clergy (1736), and A Proposal for Giving Badges to Beggars (1737) expand upon this patronage theme. Beginning in the Tudor era, the Church of Ireland had been accumulating “enormous incomes derived from tithes and rents.” Legislation regarding the distribution of these funds had been a favorite topic of Swift’s since the first decade of the century, when he had been a lobbyist charged with protecting them from appropriation by the crown and British Parliament. Swift himself had been appointed to two parishes in addition to his deanery and was thereby familiar with both rural and urban church business. As a clergyman, he had a stake in the outcome of various governmental and legislative initiatives affecting the survival and prosperity of Anglican churchmen, who, as functionaries of a state church, were the traditional intellectual defenders of the state. Moreover, as a dean unlikely to be promoted to bishop, Swift questioned whether bishops should have the power to dramatically affect the income of the lower-ranked clergy.

For the most part, Swift’s prose works of the 1730s repeat themes and arguments that he had been making throughout his life in his British and Irish works. None of them, however, rivaled in popularity and politi-
cal effectiveness productions such as the *Drapier’s Letters* and *A Modest Proposal*. Though a few of them discuss current issues in the Irish Parliament, such as the legislation regarding the repeal of the Sacramental Test for Dissenters, almost none of the later works that were published in his lifetime directly engage with the economic problems associated with the *Monti*. Instead, because Swift was “fully occupied at this time in writing verse,” his efforts were targeted at both the production of literature and the vending of it in the Irish literary book market that he was helping to develop (12:xxxii–xxxiii).

II

Swift’s migration towards working more often with Irish booksellers than with British ones stems from a series of disappointments that he experienced with the London trade in the late 1720s and early 1730s. As James McLaverty has explained, Lawton Gilliver and Benjamin Motte were working to publish in London a series of volumes under the title *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, which appeared from 1727 to 1732, that would reprint many of Pope’s and Swift’s works. The inspiration for this volume, in part, was that Edmund Curll had brought out an edition of Swift’s works (*Miscellanea*) in 1726; and Motte, whose firm had originally published Swift’s *Miscellanies* in 1711, may have been seeking to renew his copyright on that work. Pope, the major player pushing the new project, was seeking to publish some of his own works with Swift’s, and he was acting as Swift’s agent in England. The volumes did not sell well, and Swift felt that Pope was to blame, because he had withheld *The Dunciad* from the collection and published it separately: “The *Miscellanies* had become a repository for Pope’s least impressive pieces, but a collection of some of Swift’s most impressive works.” Swift, in short, felt cheated by the way Pope was editing his writings because it was clear that instead of the monument to their friendship and canonization together, the *Miscellanies* was turning into anthology of pieces that Swift would otherwise have published elsewhere. Pope, meanwhile, was working to preserve his legacy on his own in other works. Swift was becoming less easy in his relationships with his Scriblerian friends in London and less invested in arguing that Tory authors represented higher-quality writing, writing above the fray of the Grub Street popular literature that he
had previously associated with the Whigs. The poems *An Epistle to a Lady* and *On Poetry: A Rapsody*, I argue, express this ambivalence and document his transformation from a writer for the Tory opposition into one more invested in the Dublin book trade and Irish nationalism. They signal Swift’s alienation from both London publishers and the Tory cause in English politics, as does his choice to publish his *Collected Works* with Dublin bookseller George Faulkner to identify himself more as an Irish writer than an English one. The anti-London orientation of these two poems supports Edward Said’s claim that in the 1730s Ireland’s culture “began to provide the stabler framework in which he wished the future to regard him.”

*An Epistle to a Lady* and *On Poetry: A Rapsody*, first published in London in 1733, though claiming to be reprints of Dublin editions, reflect Swift’s comprehension of how writers’ parasitism on major authors was formative of literary public spheres in both London and Dublin. Though they are like Pope’s *Dunciad* of a few years earlier in that they target Robert Walpole’s culture industry and propaganda machine in London, Swift’s observations on how both Whig and Tory writers there were competing for the same Grub Street crown with similar writings are evidence of his growing abandonment of partisan politics in favor of national politics. Especially in *On Poetry: A Rapsody*, Swift displayed a feeling that no change of administration from Whig to Tory would create political conditions more favorable to Ireland, as the kingdom would continue to be raided for its resources by either party. Accordingly, their publication also marks a moment when Swift implicitly announced that, after these London-published poems, he would be making a transition from publishing his more important works with London printers to working with Dublin printers. Though there continued to be cooperation between his publishers in both cities, the Irish book market was beginning to be more profitable for him, and greater control over the editing and content of his works there made it possible for him to better shape his legacy.

*An Epistle to a Lady*, though addressed to Lady Acheson of Market Hill in Ireland, ventriloquizes her to make a case concerning the political effects of his own satirical works. It is presented in the form of a dialogue between Swift and the lady in which the latter is begging him not to make her the subject of his satire. She asks Swift to praise her, not to smear
her in a misogynist manner, as he has done with other female subjects. In making this request, however, she is also asking him to extend those good manners to the treatment of the “Publick,” suggesting, essentially, that he change the topic of the poem containing her ventriloquized voice. Accordingly, at line 133, he transitions to a metacommentary on his own political satire that simultaneously issues further challenges, not only to Walpole, his Whig party, and their publicists, but to the king himself. The last six lines of this passage were the most controversial of the poem, comparing the king himself, not just his courtiers, to a “Monkey” and “Baboon” (lines 149–154). Though these lines could be taken as targeting Colley Cibber, the poet laureate, who wore a crown of laurels, they were the object of a prosecution begun only after the much more damaging poem, *On Poetry: A Rapsody*, was published in December. Faulkner, who in the same year was negotiating with Swift to print his collected works, was so wary of these six lines that he printed asterisks for them when he finally reprinted this poem in 1746.26

In *An Epistle*, Swift reiterates his long-standing excoriation of Whig literary figures who were composing art in support of the state—figures whom he calls “the Nation’s Representers”—in a manner that infers that Tory writers and politicians would be better at statecraft (line 156). He argues that these “Representers . . . enrich themselves” with the “Freight” of the ship of state, which has been “split on Shelves,” or built upon books that Whigs write (lines 161–162). He suggests that he is retiring from the Tory opposition, by saying that, though he is trying to fill a “Nitch” in the book market, he will leave the governing of the state to opposition figures such as Henry St. John (Bolingbroke) (lines 171–180). Via the voice of Lady Acheson, he declares that he ought to emulate her detachment from politics and “laugh at Whig and Tory” instead of contemplating “Machinations brewing, / To compleat the Publick Ruin” (lines 193, 189–190). In short, though this poem contains a controversial indictment of the British court, Whig ministry, and Whig publicists, it signals that he may be departing from Tory partisanship into an outright condemnation of a British system of government that has no interest in improving Ireland.

This change of position—from an anti-Whig writer into an anti-British one—is manifest to a greater degree in *On Poetry: A Rapsody*. The poem registers this sentiment by revisiting the homology between literature

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and money to signal its irony, conveying to the reader the notion that all of the writers, publishers, and booksellers that he discusses in the poem are not worthy of the name “poet.” The word “Rapsody” in the poem’s title is a “slangy double pun upon “a rap,” or spurious, counterfeit coin, and a “rap, or knock on the head,” indicating that Swift is aiming to injure British literary culture, which he regards as the source of a counterfeit writing that demeans cultural value. By using the term “rap” he is also referencing the continuing scarcity of small coinage in Ireland; Archbishop Boulter wrote in 1731 that Irish tradesmen were “forced to take raps or counterfeit halfpence.” On Poetry can thus be taken as a satire that plays on the homology between currency and literature to assert that Ireland gets neither from England. The poem advises the amateur poet to praise statesmen but implies that such flattery is false wit, and it does so in a manner that plays upon this homology:

Your Poem in its modish Dress,
Correctly fitted for the Press,
Convey by Penny-Post to Lintot,
But let no Friend alive look into’t.
If Lintot thinks ’twill quit the Cost,
You need not fear your Labour lost:
And, how agreeably surpriz’d
Are you to see it advertiz’d!
The Hawker shews you one in Print,
As fresh as Farthings from the Mint:
The Product of your Toil and Sweating;
A Bastard of your own begetting.

Here, Swift repeats the familiar claim that a printing press is like a mint, but that comparison is used ironically to invert the value of the writer and the publisher. The term “bastard” connotes not only illegitimate offspring and texts, but also a kind of cloth, a size of paper, and a counterfeit coin (OED), all of which were homologous in Swift’s lexicon. This motif is given a more specifically Irish and Swiftian dimension in the poem’s comparison of the printed text in question to farthings, which recalls the drapier’s discourse on the debased copper coins that William Wood was trying to introduce into Ireland. This stanza thereby revisits the division of the Irish from the British political public sphere that the Drapier’s
Letters helped bring into being. *On Poetry: A Rapsody* is an Irish text critiquing the British culture industry. Because it implicitly satirizes Pope by reference to his use of the bookseller Lintot, it further reflects the growing distance between Swift and the British Tories.

The poem begins, like much Scriblerian satire, by attempting to create a distinction between high and low art and discussing how to distinguish “which is which, / The poet’s Vein, or scribbling Itch?” (lines 73–74). It speaks of the rarity of good verse, asking, “Say Britain, cou’d you ever boast, ----- / Three Poets in an Age at most?” (lines 5–6). In its address to a young poet seeking advice, it contrasts true poets with Colley Cibber, the poet laureate appointed by Walpole, arguing that most Whig writers who hold positions given to them by Walpole are mercenaries linked to Grub Street (lines 43–60). By comparing a young “true poet” to Cibber, however, these lines actually ironize the pretenses of both, making the poet laureate the “Monarch” of “Grubstreet” (line 58), as useless as a novice because he cannot produce art for party or state. *On Poetry* thereby continues in the vein of Scriblerian works that claim that their art would better support the state than that of the Whigs. Indeed, the poem has been referred to by some critics as Swift’s version of Pope’s *Dunciad* in that it satirizes major Whig writers as residents of Grub Street.30 Swift, however, departs from the standard Scriblerian line by saying that both the Whigs and the Tories have their true poets as well as their Grub Street counterfeits. As Michael Conlon has observed, the poem is not trying to establish a hierarchy of British poets so much as lamenting “the liabilities of being any kind of poet—hack or genius—in George II’s England.”31 Swift establishes the lack of difference between the poets of these parties by writing, “Two bordering Wits contend for Glory; / And one is Whig, and one is Tory. / And this, for Epicks claims the Bays, / And that, for Elegiack Lays” (lines 293–296). These writers accuse each other of amateurism and bad writing; they “Lay Grubstreet at each others Doors: / Extol the Greek and Roman Masters, / And curse our modern Poetasters” (lines 346–348). Despite their complaints, hacks and poets who think they have better taste and wit all live in the metonymic neighborhood of Grub Street: “O, Grubstreet! how do I bemoan thee, / Whose graceless Children scorn to own thee! / Their filial Piety forgot, / Deny their Country like a SCOT” (lines 357–359). Yet Swift’s irony potentially implicates himself in a Grub Street form of production. As Donald Mell
observes, “In his alienation from Grub Street Swift is simultaneously both like the dunces and different from them.” He is drawing attention to the “close proximity, perhaps the indistinguishable nature, of the true and false, the spurious and genuine, the constructive and destructive, good poetry and bad. And he reveals an awareness of his own mixed motives . . . as a poet desirous of fame in the real world.” He had already called for the establishment of a Dublin Grub Street, explaining that he was not necessarily averse to the production of popular literature, or “trash,” yet in On Poetry: A Rapsody he implies that British writers produce nothing but trash and that he may be capable of better. His reference to a Scot’s denying his country, I would argue, is there to make the case that Scottish writers had sold out to England and that Irish writers could make use of the Dublin press’s potential to create a form of Irish national feeling superior to Scotland’s. By literalizing the metonymy of Grub Street to discuss the real geographical location of Scotland, Swift affiliates English and Scottish writers to suggest that the latter have surrendered their national pride in favor of a larger “Britishness.” This abandonment creates space for Ireland as an alternative site of patriotic pride where Irish writers, though working in Grub Street, have more potential to produce great art than do their British counterparts.

On Poetry: A Rapsody follows the Dunciad’s logic of accusing some writers of prostituting themselves to the popular fiction that produces the culture amenable to the Whig ministry, but On Poetry expands the accusation to encompass British Tories. Revisiting the homology of writing and money, Swift accuses the writers of both political parties of being publicists, not practitioners of higher literature. He compares Pope and Gay to Cibber by saying that both Tory and Whig wits are “Jobbers,” or writers seeking patronage at court (lines 305–314). The phrase “Jobbers in the Poet’s Art” (line 312), referring to all of the writers, Whig and Tory, treats British writing pejoratively as “stock jobbing,” once again linking the world of publishing to finance. Earlier in the poem he refers to “A publick, or a private Robber; / A Statesman, or a South-Sea Jobber” as the social figures that readers will assume are the ones that the poet intended to target; and, by connecting them to these poets, he suggests that the South Sea Bubble was as much the work of British writers as it was of financiers and politicians (lines 161–162).

Though Pope and Gay were no longer in favor at court, and indeed
disdained Walpole’s administration to the extent that they criticized it in their work of the period, they still valued the court as a center of patronage to be regained if the Tories should come back into power. Swift’s radicalism in *On Poetry: A Rapsody*, however, lies in how it gives up on regaining the court as an objective, giving the impression that Swift no longer acknowledged the monarchy, or Britain itself, as the center of value:

Then *Poet*, if you mean to thrive,  
Employ your Muse on Kings alive;  
With Prudence gath’ring up a Cluster  
Of all the Virtues you can muster:  
Which form’d into a Garland sweet,  
Lay humbly at your Monarch’s Feet;  
Who, as the Odours reach his Throne,  
Will smile, and think ’em all his own:  
For *Law* and *Gospel* both determine  
All Virtues lodge in royal Ermine.  
(I mean the Oracles of Both,  
Who shall depose it upon Oath.)  
Your Garland in the following Reign,  
Change but their Names will do again. (lines 219–232)

The scatology of this stanza, by comparing poetic lines to “Odours” or farts that the monarch likes so much that he claims them as his own, deconstructs not only poetic claims to authority but also political ones. It ridicules the taste of the monarch and says that he is so open to flattery that he does not recognize that poets use the same lines (“garlands”) with each new reign—they change the names of the monarchs and other powerful figures and simply reissue the same poems. These lines, and some of the more controversial ones that were not published in the early editions of the poem, compounded the offenses of an *Epistle to a Lady*, published a few months earlier, to the extent that they led to the arrest of those involved. John Wilford, the London printer, Matthew Pilkington and Mary Barber, friends of Swift who had conveyed the manuscript to London, and Lawton Gilliver and Benjamin Motte, London publishers, were taken into custody. It is said that Walpole “swore out (until later dissuaded) a warrant for the arrest of Swift himself,” which would indi-
cate that his authorship was recognized behind the persona of the narrator.33

*On Poetry: A Rapsody* is a pivotal text marking Swift’s transition from his preference for publishing his important literary works in London towards his full embrace of Dublin publishers because it indicates that Swift no longer saw a great difference between British Whig and Tory writers, that he thinks a change towards Tory rule would be of little help to Britain or Ireland. This transition can be mapped by examining the changes in his relationship with Pope, who often handled the publication of his work in London, on matters of style, trust, and ideology. As Philip Harth has explained, as early as 1725 Swift was commenting on the differences in satirical style between himself and Pope, saying in letters written on 29 September and 26 November of that year that he was not ready to embrace the sort of retiring, philosophical stance nor a withdrawal from political satire into entertainment that Pope was proposing. Stressing his principal difference from Pope, he writes that “the chief end I propose to myself in all my labors is to vex the world rather than divert it,” in lines announcing that he will not soften his critique of corrupt power or the writers and texts that serve it.34

Further evidence of a growing gap between Swift and Pope relates to the level of trust between them, especially regarding the handling and editing of Swift’s London publications, and indicates the growing difference in their ideological orientations. This difference is most manifest in Pope’s excising of lines from poems that Swift sent him to publish with London printers. For example, Pope, without consulting Swift, excluded *A Libel on Dr. Delany* from publication in the final, 1732 volume of their joint *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*. In that poem, Swift praised Pope as an independent writer—one who made money on his works by subscription, not by direct government patronage—and this was objectionable to Pope on three counts. First, it distanced him from many London writers by saying that Pope did not need the form of patronage that Gay, for instance, had to pursue out of financial necessity, effectively indicating that Pope’s claim for the virtue of his work was based on financial independence, not literary merit. Second, praising his independence alienated him from the court “at a time when Pope was hoping . . . to reach some kind of accommodation with the Government,” and the poem’s lines “claiming that he had avoided the Court and refused a visit from
undermined that effort. Third, Pope was afraid that his opinions would be associated with Swift’s, and *A Libel on Dr. Delany*, like other satires that Swift was publishing during this period, risked running afoul of libel laws. Pope, now more risk-averse, no longer wished to be prosecuted for his works, because such prosecutions would be not only costly but also dangerous to his reputation, just at the moment he was seeking reconciliation with the Walpole government. For such reasons, Pope, in editing *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift* for a London edition of 1739, also excised, without Swift’s approval, sixty-four subversive lines that might have offended the government—lines that were about Ireland.³⁵

Swift’s ever more fervent Irish patriotism, as Philip Harth has argued, was the reason for this growing distance between the ideologies of Swift and Pope. Swift now believed that “no change of kings, no alteration of the ministry would significantly improve the condition of Ireland. As long as she remained a subordinate and dependent kingdom, subject to a British crown, ministry, and parliament in whose sole interest every viceroy and other resident official must continue to act, it mattered little who was in power in Westminster.” Swift’s poems of this period, accordingly, “are not Opposition poems in any sense of the word but radically subversive satires” that “implicitly reject the constitutional system itself responsible for Ireland’s enslavement.”³⁶ By using the London press to publish these sentiments, which Swift often did in conjunction with Dublin publication, he was taking the battle over Ireland’s sovereignty to the empire’s home turf. His friends’ and printers’ censorship of them upon arrival justifies Swift’s apparent feeling that Dublin was a more amendable location for these productions, and perhaps that is why he chose to have his complete works published by George Faulkner, a Dublin bookseller.

The competition between the Motte-Gilliver *Miscellanies* and Faulkner’s emerging *Collected Works* was not only one about intellectual property; it was also about the shaping of a national canon and Swift’s place in it. At the same time, because anthologies contribute to the formation of a canon “by continually stealing from each other,” this rivalry to anthologize his writing was enhancing his potential canonical status.³⁷ By work-
ing with both anthologists, Swift may have been attempting, however inadvertently, to canonize himself in both the English tradition and the developing Anglo-Irish one. By the time the Miscellanies began production in 1727, his reputation in England had already been solidified by such works as *A Tale of a Tub*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, the 1711 Miscellanies, and various pirated collections. Consolidating his reputation as an Irish writer, however, required the new Faulkner effort. Because “anthologies help to mold both the reader’s subjectivity—his or her imaginative interaction with the text—and the literary values that lead to a canon,” this project was formative of a modern Irish identity for both the readers and the author.38 Swift’s more strictly literary identity was built upon, yet functioned to support, the political subjectivity that emerged from earlier works such as the Drapier’s Letters.

When Swift began working with Faulkner on his Collected Works, the two men had already known and worked with each other for many years. One of Faulkner’s first published pamphlets was *A Defense of the Conduct of the People of Ireland in their . . . Refusal of Mr. Wood’s Copper-Money* (1724), a work related to the Drapier’s Letters, though Swift and Faulkner did not meet until 1726, in London, ironically. In 1725, he printed the Drapier’s Letters together in *Fraud Detected*, doing so without consulting Swift and sharing the copy with his London partner, William Bowyer, who produced his own edition in 1730 and imported it to Ireland via Faulkner. Faulkner also published *An Answer to the Ballyspellin Ballad* (1728) via an intermediary, John Worrall, whom Swift had asked to help him find an Irish publisher. Faulkner was working “in earnest” as Swift’s printer by 1729 or 1730 when he printed *A Vindication of Lord Carteret*. In 1731 he was indicted for printing Swift’s Queries related to parliamentary bills regarding the clergy in his *Dublin Journal*; he was pardoned in 1733. Swift may have opted to work with him on his complete works as early as 1732, and the first four volumes were produced in late 1734. Faulkner continued to publish Swift manuscripts, printing political works in his *Dublin Journal*, such as Swift’s comments on a new scheme for copper halfpence in 1737 and *Directions to Servants* in 1745.39 Swift’s choice to work with Faulkner at this late stage in his life and career reflected a recognition that “his patriotic service to Ireland was the likeliest basis for an enduring reputation.”40 In short, Swift became the founding author of modern Anglo-Irish literature because his selection
of a Dublin printer who continued to reprint his work well into the latter half of the eighteenth century helped guarantee his lasting reputation as an Irish author.

Swift’s reasons for publishing his *Collected Works* with Faulkner seem to have stemmed from Pope’s poor editing and a concern about payment for his contributions to the *Miscellanies*. He may also have chosen this path because British copyright laws did not apply to Ireland, making it possible for him to proceed without payments and delays associated with gaining these rights from booksellers and other copyholders, and because he could have more control over content by working in person with a Dublin printer. His complaints about the publication of the *Miscellanies* mainly concerned which texts the volumes used; Pope had been a poor editor of his prepublication manuscripts, he felt, and, as mentioned, had failed to include *A Libel on Dr. Delany* in the *Miscellanies* because Pope feared alienation from the court, from which he was seeking support.41 In December 1732, Swift had written to Motte saying, “I am not at all satisfied with the last miscellany” and that he had “no advantage by any one of the four volumes”—no payment for them. He hints at the possibility that, because booksellers in Ireland had “no property” or copyright on what they published, Dublin printers might produce collections of his work that he would “neither encourage or oppose.”42 As McLaverty has written, Swift had already assigned the copyright of eighteen pieces to William Bowyer, Faulkner’s London partner, between the years 1729 and 1733 even as he was corresponding with Motte and Pope about giving copyrights to them. In addition, Matthew Pilkington, who had been given the rights to several of Swift’s writings, had begun to sell them to Bowyer and Faulkner. In fact, the Faulkner edition of Swift’s complete works seems to have been well under way before Swift’s 1732 letter to Motte, for *Miscellanies the Fifth*, published by Bowyer to rival the four volumes of *Miscellanies* published by Motte and Gilliver, made use of prepublication sheets from Faulkner’s *Works*.43 It was clear that a conflict was beginning to arise between the Bowyer-Faulkner partnership and the Motte-Gilliver one, though it is unclear whether Swift asserted any agency in fomenting it or whether he was at the mercy of various stakeholders in his works and reputation.

It was not long after Swift’s *Collected Works* appeared in Dublin as a native manufacture and in London as an import that Motte brought a
lawsuit against Faulkner for piracy against his copyright. The concern about piracy by Dublin printers over the previous decade had not been directed at Irish reprints that were sold in Ireland but at the sale of such reprints in England. In 1735, Motte won the lawsuit against Faulkner when the court issued an injunction stopping the sale of the Works in England. To clarify the law concerning this matter, a 1739 amendment to the 1709 English Copyright Act was passed that forbade the import of any book that was a reprint of a title originally published in England.\textsuperscript{44} This law, though it may have dampened the Irish reprint business’s profits from export to England, did not prevent Dublin printers from selling reprints in North America and other places in the British empire. Nor did it affect their domestic sales; not technically pirated, because of the lack of an Irish copyright law, Dublin reprints of English books continued to form the basis for a thriving home market.\textsuperscript{45}

Swift’s reaction to Motte’s copyright case was an angry one that stands as documentation of the Irish book trade’s reaction to this new twist in the copyright problem. It is significant in that it lists some of the reasons why Swift chose to publish his \textit{Collected Works} in Ireland and because its emotion provides insight into Swift’s split with London’s trade and embrace of Ireland’s. In the tradition of the textile/texts homology used in \textit{A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture}, it compares the book trade to the wool trade by saying that both suffer from British oppression:

\begin{quote}
[O]nly one thing I know, that the cruel Oppressions of this Kingdom by England are not to be borne. You send what Books you please hither, and the Booksellers here can send nothing to you that is written here. As this is absolute Oppression, if I were a Bookseller in this Town, I would use all the safe Means to reprint \textit{London} Books, and run them to any Town, in \textit{England} that I could, because, whoever neither offends the Laws of God, or the Country he liveth in, commisseth no Sin. It was the Fault of you and other Booksellers, who printed any Thing supposed to be mine, that you did not agree with each other to print them together, if you thought they would sell to any Advantage. I believe I told you long ago that Mr. Faulkner came to me, and told me his intention to print every Thing that my Friends told him they
\end{quote}
thought to be mine. . . . But I am so incensed against the Oppressions from England, and have so little Regard to the Laws they make, that I do as a Clergyman encourage the Merchants both to export Wool and Woollen Manufactures to any Country in Europe, or any where else. . . . And, so I would encourage our Booksellers here to sell your Authors Books printed here, and send them to all the Towns in England, if I could do it with Safety and Profit.46

This letter reads like a declaration of war against the London publishing industry, articulating why Swift was disappointed with it and why he should not be blamed for its failure to organize a project for his complete writings. The blame, he argues, lies not only with London booksellers, but with a British legal and political system that continually deprives Irish industries like the wool trade and the printing trade of the right to compete with their English counterparts. This letter, referred to by Irvin Ehrenpreis as “Swift’s patriotic defence of Dublin booksellers,” is evidence of resistance to a colonialism of a particularly culturally imperialistic kind.47 Anglo-Irish print capitalism, in the context of this mid-1730s copyright dispute, seemed to unite the self-interest of the commercial enterprise with argumentation about political and economic sovereignty in a manner that consolidated the previous decades’ efforts to build an Irish imagined community.

The Collected Works is thus testament to “the power of anthologists to shape national identity.”48 Through this collection and others to follow over the course of the eighteenth century, Faulkner took charge of a Swift culture industry that he had helped to create. He managed Swift’s reputation as a patriot writer in a manner that located his Irish works as the ur-texts of an emergent Irish national canon. As Robert Mahony has argued, “Swift’s own claim upon Irish memory” was established as a monument to his patriotism both by the anthology and by the marble bust of him for which Faulkner collected contributions from Dubliners of all classes.49 In fact, Swift’s Irish identity may have come to serve as a model for later patriot writers, themselves in search of an authorial identity and an imagined community for their writings.
Part of creating a national canon via an anthology is converting readers into writers and critics in their own right. Not only is literature turned into a commodity for readers in this anthologizing process, but the anthologies themselves “disseminate literary culture as purchasable elitism” or cultural capital to be used by them. Swift’s work retained a general audience, who began to take Anglo-Irish literature as a status symbol and as a proper object of criticism, and it attracted specialized readers involved in cultural production themselves. His Anglo-Irish coterie—people like Patrick and Mary Delany, Matthew and Laetitia Pilkington, Mary Barber, and Constantia Grierson—enhanced his reputation by publishing imitations and parodies of his work. These protégés thereby contributed to the canonization that his *Collected Works* intimated. Their work helped to constitute Anglo-Irish literature as a distinct category of the market in Irish books. By doing so, it participated in the delineation of academic disciplines, a phenomenon that emerged in the eighteenth century from a rapidly expanding print culture in need of a classification system.

The involvement of women, in particular, was crucial in the canonization of Swift, because they played such a large role in the marketing of anthologies and were beginning to be hailed as the main audience for literary works. The rise of Anglo-Irish female writers clearly signifies a move towards a gendered sphere of letters. Constantia Grierson, Barber, and Laetitia Pilkington began to participate in Anglo-Irish cultural production. Whereas Barber and Laetitia Pilkington are usually considered imitators of Swift’s style in their poetry and verse, Constantia Grierson tends to be regarded as a writer of a higher caliber. She brought literary imagination and technical ability to her work and was a noted editor and press corrector for the family business. These women modeled the performance of Swift appreciation, informing other women about his work but also enhancing their own reputations.

The 1730s were significant to this gendering process because the sphere of the literary began then to separate from the sphere of the political. Reflecting the broader English and Continental model of classifying literature as a private and domestic category—and therefore the province of women—the Irish book trade contributed to the segregation of a mas-
culinized public sphere of political economy from a feminized private sphere of literary production and consumption.⁵² There had begun to be some demand for domestic Anglo-Irish literature that, because it was frequently reprinted outside of its immediate political context, had come to serve more as fashion than as political instrument. These transformations in print culture are significant in that they are evidence of increasing literacy and a taste for the new distinctly Irish art. The splitting of the literary away from the overtly political textuality in eighteenth-century Ireland is an early instance of how niche markets for literatures depend on the conditioning of audiences by an initial, if not continuous, strategy of political exhortation and mobilization.

There is, as well, a more postmodern case to be made for the emergence of an autonomous literary sphere during the 1720s and 1730s. When Swift deployed satire in the 1720s, it had been generally for the purposes of political critique, in which case it could be taken as a parasite on actual events. When imitators began to parody his style, however, their works were becoming parasites on texts, undermining the power of the latter’s polemic by mocking its seriousness. What was reified in this act of parody was style, not substance. What began to circulate in the 1730s was a purified form evacuated of serious political content; what was emerging was a taste for an Anglo-Irish literary style, not realpolitick.