Jonathan Swift and Ireland

Jonathan Swift's response to the economic and political situation of Ireland 1720-1724: An analysis of *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture* and *The Drapier's Letters*.

by

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In memory of my father, 1939-2004

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Abbreviations

Acts of Implication	*Acts of Implication*: *Suggestion and Covert Meaning in the Works of Dryden, Swift, Pope, and Austen,* by Irvin Ehrenpreis, Berkley, 1978
Corr	*The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, Vol. II and III ed. by Harold Williams, Oxford, 1963
CC	*The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*, ed. by Christopher Fox, Cambridge, 2003
Case	*The Case of Ireland Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated*, by William Molyneux, Dublin, 1689
18th Century I.	*History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. I, by W. E. H. Lecky, London, 1882
EHD	*English Historical Documents*, Vols. VIII and X, London, 1953-57
Ehrenpreis II	*Swift*: *the Man, his Works, and the Age*, Vol. II, by Irvin Ehrenpreis Cambridge, 1967
Ehrenpreis III	*Swift*: *the Man, his Works, and the Age*, Vol. III, by Irvin Ehrenpreis, London, 1983
Hypocrite Reversed	*Jonathan Swift*: *A Hypocrite Reversed, A Critical Biography*, by David Nokes, Oxford, 1985
Irish Identity	*Jonathan Swift*: *The Irish Identity*, by Robert Mahony, London, 1995
J. S. and I.	*Jonathan Swift and Ireland*, by Oliver Ferguson, Urbana, 1962
Injured Lady	'The Story of the Injured Lady', in *Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, Vol. 9, ed. by Herbert Davis, Oxford, 1948
Letters	'The Drapier's Letters', in *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. by Herbert Davis, Vol.10, Oxford, 1941
Letters to Ford	*The Letters of Jonathan Swift to Charles Ford*, ed. by D. N. Smith, Oxford, 1935
Masks	*The Masks of Jonathan Swift*, by W. B. Ewald, Oxford, 1954
Modern Ireland	*The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923*, by J. C. Beckett, London, 1972
Political Writer	*Jonathan Swift*: *Political Writer*, by J. A. Downie, London, 1984

Murray	*A History of the Commercial and Financial relations between England and Ireland from the period of Restoration*, by Alice Murray, London, 1903
NHI	*A New History of Ireland*, Vol. IV, ed. by T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan, Oxford, 1986
Proposal	'A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture', in *Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, Vol. 9, ed. by Herbert Davis, Oxford, 1948
PW	*The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, 12 vols., ed. by Herbert Davis, Oxford, 1939-1957
Second Treatise	'The Second Treatise of Government', in *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. by Peter Laslett, Cambridge, 1967
Sir Robert Walpole	*Sir Robert Walpole's Poets*: *The Use of Literature as Pro-Government Propaganda, 1721-1742*, by T. S. Urstad, Newark, 1999

Introduction

I have chosen to write my thesis on 'Jonathan Swift and Ireland' because I want to put focus on Swift as a political commentator of Irish affairs. I think some questions concerning the historical aspect of Swift's Irish writings need to be answered: Why are Swift's Irish tracts important as historical documents? In what way do Swift's Irish tracts have value to historians? What impact did Swift have on his contemporaries and their view on the political and economic situation of Ireland in the early 1720s? In what way does Swift respond to this economic and political situation? I will therefore analyse *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture* (1720) and four of the *Drapier's Letters* (1724), in search of answers to these questions.

I think the topic of Jonathan Swift as an Irish writer in an Irish context is very interesting because of the ambiguity of Swift's relationship with Ireland. There has been an increased focus on this aspect of Swift since the middle of the twentieth century. Critics such as Louis A. Landa have focused on Swift as a member of the Church of Ireland in his book *Swift and the Church of Ireland* (1954). Others like Oliver Ferguson have focused more generally on Swift's relationship with Ireland in *Jonathan Swift and Ireland* (1962). In his outstanding biography *Swift*: *the Man, his Works, and the Age* (1962-1983) Irvin Ehrenpreis has emphasised the importance of Swift's connection with Ireland in understanding his works. While J. A. Downie has devoted a chapter to Swift and Ireland in his book *Swift*: *Political Writer* (1984), Robert Mahony has contributed to the discussion on Swift as an Irish writer with *Jonathan Swift*: *The Irish Identity* (1995).

In addition to these, several collections of essays including articles on Swift's relationship with Ireland have been published. A recent collection like Christopher Fox's *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift* (2003) includes an essay by Carole Fabricant on Swift as an Irishman, but also other essays that closely consider Swift and

Ireland, for instance Patrick Kelly's 'Swift on Money and Economics'. A collection devoted to Swift and Irish studies, *Walking Naboth's Vineyard*: *New Studies of Swift* was published in 1995 by Christopher Fox and Brenda Tooley, throwing 'light upon Swift's relationship to Ireland, its history, its politics and people as well as his more particular connections to the Dublin literary and publishing worlds'.[1] In connection with the 250th anniversary of Swift's death, Aileen Douglas with others published *Locating Swift*: *Essays from Dublin on the 250th Anniversary of the death of Jonathan Swift, 1667-1745* (1998). Last but not least among collections which include a section on Swift and Ireland is Brian A. Connery's *Representations of Swift* published in 2002.

I think Swift's relationship with Ireland constitutes an important aspect of Swift both as a writer and private person. He was born in Dublin and lived most of his life there. He took part in Irish society through his work as a priest and political writer: thus attention to the Irish context is essential in order to understand his works. I believe Swift's Irish works are among his best and therefore deserve even more attention than they have attracted. As mentioned above, there has been an increased attention to Swift as an Irish writer and I want to give my interpretation of Swift and Ireland through an analysis of some of his Irish tracts. My main argument will be that Jonathan Swift's texts can be seen as important historical documents on Ireland. I will try to show through my analysis that Swift as a political writer, with his brilliant use of irony, was able to describe and give an account of the economic and political situation of Ireland in the early 1720s. I have chosen to concentrate on Jonathan Swift's *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture* and the *Drapier's Letters* because they illustrate Swift's first published arguments on Ireland. His main views on Ireland took shape long before the 1720s. In fact, Swift had

[1] Christopher Fox and Brenda Tooley, *Walking Naboth's Vineyard*: *New Studies of Swift* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 7.

written *The Story of the Injured Lady* as early as 1707, containing many of the same ideas.[2] But the *Injured Lady* was not published until 1746, most probably because Swift feared it would ruin his chances for a position in the Church of England. Even though many of the points Swift comments on had references to parliamentary acts of the previous century, he connects those acts to the situation of Ireland in the 1720s. The acts were still enforced in Ireland, so Swift's views were not outdated.

The main reason for this renewed attention to Ireland was that major political events such as the Declaratory Act (1720) and the controversy over Wood's halfpence (1721-1724) made the acts applicable to Ireland again. I wish to take a closer look at and give a detailed analysis of the *Proposal* and the *Letters* in relation to these political events, to examine how Swift reacted to them.

An interesting point about Swift's view on Irish economy and politics is that if one compares the *Proposal* and the *Letters* to later political texts, written by Swift as a response to similar political or economic situations, one finds that his views on politics and economics did not change. *A Short View of the State of Ireland* (1727) and *An Answer to a Paper called a Memorial of the poor Inhabitants, Tradesmen and Labourers of the Kingdom of Ireland* (1728), for instance, present the same arguments as the *Proposal* and the *Letters* did, with references to these earlier works.

In the *Short View*, Swift contrasts the situation of Ireland to a country considered to be more affluent in order to respond to those who claim that Ireland is prosperous. He proposes causes 'generally known, and never contradicted' to constitute a prosperous nation, and then examines 'what Effects arise from those Causes in the Kingdom of *Ireland*'.[3] He comments on the neglect of agriculture and claims that the improvements

[2] Herbert Davis, *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, Vol. 9 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948), 3-9. Hereafter *PW* 9. *The Story of the Injured Lady* will hereafter be abbreviated to *Injured Lady*.
[3] Herbert Davis, *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, Vol. 12 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), 5-6. Hereafter *PW* 12.

made generally left things‘worse than they were’ (*PW* 12, 8). He blames the English for the restrictions on Irish trade (especially the Navigation Acts) and claims that ‘THE Conveniency [Sic] of Ports and Havens…is of no more Use…than a beautiful Prospect to a Man shut up in a Dungeon’ (*PW* 12, 8). He blames the absentees for spending their money in England and not Ireland (*PW* 12, 9), and the English for being ‘denied the Liberty of Coining Gold, Silver, or even Copper’ (*PW* 12, 9).

In *An Answer* he responds to a pamphlet by John Browne called ‘A Memorial *of the poor* Inhabitants, Tradesmen, *and* Labourers *of the Kingdom of* Ireland’, which claimed that Ireland was a rich nation. Again he attacks the landlords for depopulating the country and for causing ‘the Ruin of those few sorry Improvements’ they had (*PW* 12, 18), as well as the English for denying them free trade. Thus, as will be shown in this thesis, there seems not to be a major change in Swift’s view on Ireland and the Irish economy since the 1720s. This comparison illustrates my claim that the *Proposal* and the *Drapier’s Letters* were highly significant as early texts showing the shaping of Swift’s views on Ireland.

The economic and political aspect of the texts

A literary text can be seen as an integrated part of a society’s historical and cultural legacy. It also expresses attitudes particular to a time and place and is thus shaped by the society it is produced in. In the eighteenth century, there was a particularly close connection between politics, culture and literature, not just as political propaganda, but as a reaction to society in general, whether it commented on moral education or religious matters. The theme that dominated the eighteenth-century literature in Ireland was the constitutional relationship between England and Ireland.[4] The close historical connections

[4] J. C. Beckett, ‘Literature in English, 1691-1800’, in *New History of Ireland*, Vol. IV, ed. by T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1986), 456. Hereafter *NHI*.

between the two countries made it inevitable to compare them, since they 'lay close together' and were 'parts of the same monarchy…'[5]

The *Proposal* and the *Letters* are texts which at first glance are concerned with the Irish economy, but which also comment on the political events that contributed to the economic situation. It is the combination of these two themes and how Swift combines his attention on them that I find fascinating. The *Proposal*, for instance, has this combination even in the title. The whole title of this tract is *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture-Utterly Rejecting and Renouncing Every Thing wearable that comes from ENGLAND*. The first part, which is known as the main title, indicates that the text is about Irish economy and trade, but the subtitle suggests that it also has to do with the legislative relationship between Ireland and England since, there would be no need to reject manufacture from England if it had not been for English laws restricting Irish trade.[6]

The *Letters* show the same combination by slowly proceeding from the economic aspect in the first couple of *Letters*, into a more directly political aspect in the next two. This does not mean that there are no implicit references to political issues in the first two *Letters*. It only shows that Swift used the pressing economic situation to comment on the constitutional relationship between England and Ireland.

Jonathan Swift's Irish tracts have historical value in that they comment on significant events in Irish history. They are written at a particular time and for a particular purpose and include references to several events in the past that have contributed to bring about the present situation. The texts show Swift's concern for the Irish situation and how he encourages economic self-sufficiency for Ireland. Through these texts Swift responds to the economic and political situation of Ireland in the early 1720s. He gives a survey of and comments on important political events such as Poyning's Law, acts passed by the English

[5] *NHI*, lv.
[6] J. A. Downie, *Jonathan Swift*: *Political Writer* (London: Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1984), 228-9. Hereafter *Political Writer*.

Parliament to restrict Irish trade (the Cattle Act, the Navigation Acts, the Woollen Act), the Declaratory Act and the controversy of Wood's halfpence.

The *Proposal*

The *Proposal* is perhaps the less discussed of the works, but that does not mean it is less important. It anticipates the *Letters* in giving the same ground principles of Swift's view on Ireland. In fact, I think it is strange that the *Proposal* (like the *Injured Lady*) has gotten so little attention as opposed to the *Letters* since it illustrates not only Swift's first published views on Ireland, but also his main views. The economic situation of Ireland in the 1720s was a result of English restrictions on Irish trade during the previous century. Poverty, shortage of food, shortage of clothes, the inefficient way of running agriculture and trade were all results of English meddling in Irish economy. What I will try to do in the first chapter of this thesis is to show that Swift viewed the Declaratory Act as an occasion to respond to the economic and political situation of Ireland and that the *Proposal* is a result of this. I will analyse the text and comment on the most important aspects of Swift's guidance to a self-sufficient Irish economy. In its protest against the English the *Proposal* focuses on the Irish economy as well as the constitutional relationship itself. I will also comment on the relationship between Swift and the Irish in arguing that Swift blamed the Irish as much as the English for the current situation. It was the feeling of discontent on behalf of the Irish that made Swift join the legislative with the more urgent economic theme.

Critics such as Oliver Ferguson have claimed that 'Although the passions which drove Swift to take this step [to write the *Proposal*] had been raised by political events, the *Proposal* itself was primarily concerned with an economic problem.'[7] This is in a way true, but one cannot fail to see the political implications that the text suggests. Irvin Ehrenpreis

[7] Oliver Ferguson, *Jonathan Swift and Ireland* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1962), 49. Hereafter *J. S. and I.*

has acknowledged this and writes that Swift combined the economic problem with 'the manic nationalism generated by the Declaratory Act'.[8] Thus, he indicates that the economic problem Ferguson mentions has to be viewed together with the effects of the Declaratory Act and how this eventually resulted in an even more stressed economic situation. He is joined by David Nokes who claims that 'Swift's purpose goes further than to reiterate this plea for import controls. He indicts the whole tendency of English exploitation of Ireland.'[9] J. A. Downie says that the *Proposal* 'was at once an attack on English oppression, Irish folly, and universal humanity…But the opening of the pamphlet dealt, albeit ironically, with economic matters…He [Swift] proceeded to offer a positive proposal to assist the Irish economy…'[10] Swift also blamed the Irish for the economic situation. Ehrenpreis has commented on this, and claims that '*A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture* deals with two relationships: that of Ireland to England and that of individual to nation. Swift shows no more fury against the English for their bestiality to a sister race than he shows against the Irish for conniving at their own destruction…'[11] Nokes has also acknowledged this and writes that '*A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture* is vibrant with the sense of injustice. It is a powerfully [Sic] sustained cry of pain and accusation, which marshals a devastating array of charges against English indifference and Irish inaction.'[12] However, this aspect has only been briefly discussed by critics, and I think it is very important in any discussion about the *Proposal*, since Swift not only blamed the English for the present economic situation, but also accused the Irish of neglecting their duty to their country.

[8] Irvin Ehrenpreis, *Swift*: *the Man, his Works, and the Age,* Vol. III (London: Methuen, 1983), 123. See also his discussion of the *Proposal* in general, 123-30. Hereafter Ehrenpreis, III.
[9] David Nokes, *Jonathan Swift*: *A Hypocrite Reversed*: *A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 266. Hereafter *Hypocrite Reversed*.
[10] Downie, *Political Writer*, 228-9.
[11] Ehrenpreis, III, 124.
[12] Nokes, *Hypocrite Reversed*, 266.

The *Drapier's Letters*

The *Drapier's Letters*, on the other hand, are among the most discussed works by Swift. What I will try to do in this study is to show how Swift in the *Drapier's Letters* responds to the economic and political situation in 1724. The *Letters*' intention is well known. They are written to encourage Irish resistance against the English colonial rule. The Irish economy was affected by this in the sense that the Irish trade was not allowed to flourish. The restrictions the English government put on Irish trade was crucial to the Irish economy. Further, I will take into consideration how Wood's halfpence threatened to aggravate the economic situation and how his patent influenced the already stressed constitutional relationship between England and Ireland. My main focus will be on the texts themselves, and I propose to read them closely. I have chosen to include only four of the Drapier's seven *Letters*, mainly because it was after the fourth *Letter* that the patent was withdrawn. The subsequent *Letters* are thus not concerned with the controversy itself, but with Swift's triumph in defending Ireland's cause in this debate. I am aware that the *Letter* to Midleton, where Swift tried to justify the fourth *Letter* by defending the Drapier, was written in October 1724 and is therefore not just 'a *Letter* of triumph.' However, the *Letter* was not published until 1735 as the sixth *Letter* by the Drapier. I have therefore chosen not to include this *Letter* in my discussion.

I will try to look as closely at the *Letters* as at the *Proposal* to analyse the texts and their political and historical value. Thus, as in the chapter about the *Proposal*, my emphasis will be on Swift's combined interest in political and economic issues, something Swift's critics have acknowledged.

Patrick Kelly, for instance, has recognised the important change from a strong economic emphasis to a strong political emphasis as the *Letters* proceeds. 'As subsequent *Drapier's Letters* appeared, political concerns and patriotic rhetoric eventually came to

predominate over economic considerations, while much of what Swift wrote on the economic plane was parasitic on other works that appeared in the controversy…'[13] Moreover, he states that 'In economic terms the affair is noteworthy for the unique success of popular resistance in Ireland, forcing the British government to withdraw a policy on which it had embarked; indeed, it probably constituted Walpole's greatest domestic political set-back as chief minister up to the forced withdrawal of his Excise scheme in 1733.'[14] Thus, he recognises the importance of the *Letters* as political propaganda to strengthen Irish resistance.

One of the problems in the debate over Wood's patent was that the English failed to see that the objections to the patent were not only political. The failure of the English to acknowledge this is also recognized by some of Swift's critics. David Nokes, for instance, has focused on the legislative aspect of the texts: 'In reality, Ireland in 1719 had become a colony in all but name; and it was a colonial system which the *Drapier's Letters* were written to challenge.'[15] He is joined by Ehrenpreis, who seems to believe that the *Letters* are mainly a political attack on George I and his ministers and writes that Swift 'raised it [*Drapier's Letters*] from the bleakness of one more chapter of British mistreatment of Ireland to be an illustration of our concept of liberty'.[16]

Downie, on the other hand, has recognised that the objections to Wood's patent were also influenced by economic issues. 'Although the opposition to Wood's halfpence was partly political in character…there were sound economic reasons for refusing to accept the new coinage, and these the English government failed to appreciate until it was too

[13] James Kelly, 'Swift on Money and Economics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*, ed. by Christopher Fox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 135-36. *The Cambridge Companion* will hereafter be abbreviated to *CC*.
[14] Kelly, 'Swift on Money and Economics', in *CC*, 135.
[15] Nokes, *Hypocrite Reversed*, 286.
[16] Ehrenpreis, III, 187.

late.'[17] This is also something that Ferguson focuses on in his discussion on the *Drapier's Letters*. The economic objections also had a political perspective. The patent 'was a humiliating reminder of Ireland's dependent status. Moreover, the secrecy with which the affair had been negotiated and the reception given their subsequent official protests seemed to the Irish a deliberate affront to national dignity'.[18]

The Literary aspect

According to J. C. Beckett, any 'pamphlet may be a useful historical document; but, unless its writer has succeeded in raising his subject above the immediate circumstances, it can hardly be regarded as a work of literary importance'.[19] The *Proposal* did create a debate and caught the attention of the politicians, and was thus an immediate success. In spite of this, it was ignored as a proposal later on. The *Letters*, on the other hand, were far more effective. They not only created a debate, but contributed to the withdrawal of the patent. Even though Lord Lieutenant Carteret 'had already recommended that the patent should be cancelled',[20] the campaign for a boycott of the halfpence, to which Swift had contributed through the *Drapier's Letters*, put pressure on the politicians in England to withdraw the patent. However, the *Letters* did not have any major bearing on the relationship between England and Ireland other than establishing an Irish resistance to the constitutional connection between them, and getting the patent withdrawn.

The acknowledgement of the *Proposal* and the *Letters* as literary works is mainly due to Swift's magnificent style and use of irony. The works that I will examine are filled with ironic references to both persons and events in the past and present. The use of implication is in itself very striking in the *Proposal*, but perhaps even more so in the

[17] Downie, *Political Writer*, 234.
[18] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 85.
[19] Beckett, 'Literature in English, 1691-1800', in *NHI*, 456.
[20] Nokes, *Hypocrite Reversed*, 290.

Letters, where both implicit and explicit references are made to major political figures such as King George I and Robert Walpole.

Another important aspect of the *Proposal* and the *Letters* is that they have Swift's firm and persuasive tone of voice, which makes the reader listen. The *Proposal* and the *Letters* were written to encourage direct action from the Irish people. In order to do this Swift must sound convincing and make his listeners feel obliged to follow his lead.
The language aspect is also very interesting since the *Proposal* is written to the people of Ireland, and thus needs to have a language that everyone will understand. I think Swift is partly successful in this. The language is quite simple, but the use of irony and implications might not be so easy to understand. In order to grasp the whole meaning behind the words, one has to do a lot of reading between the lines. Thus the language is not always clear, or at any rate not straightforward.

The *Letters*, on the other hand, though most of them are written to the people of Ireland too, change their style according to the audience addressed. They are not only intended for the common people, but also for the politicians in England and Ireland. The individual *Letters* vary considerably in style and tone. Compared to the *Proposal*, the use of exaggeration, biblical allusions, metaphors and irony is taken to a new level. The *Letters* also introduced a persona, which the *Proposal* did not have.

Even though it was Swift who wrote the *Letters*, I think it is important to distinguish between the voice of the Drapier and the voice of Swift. This sometimes involves difficulties since the Drapier often steps out of his role as a humble tradesman and sounds more like the Dean. I feel that the importance of Swift's use of a pseudonym must be a part of a discussion on the *Drapier's Letters*, because I think that the signs are so clear while reading some of the *Letters* that Swift is the true author and cannot, or does not wish, to keep his mask as Drapier from slipping. In certain parts of the *Letters*, Swift's personal

anger toward the English is impossible to hide. As a reader, I had to stop to figure out what made me question the identity of the speaker. Therefore I think it is interesting to see in what way a pseudonym or an assumed identity can change or at least influence the effect the text will have on the reader, and how this distinction between Swift and the Drapier is revealed in the *Drapier's Letters*.

I think that an eighteenth-century reader would be able to understand much more of the implications and irony in both the *Proposal* and the *Letters* than a modern reader is normally able to do. I therefore think it is time to look closely at Swift's texts, not least since it has been a long time since the complete works of Swift were published by Herbert Davis. The *Prose Works of Jonathan Swift* was published in 12 volumes in the period 1939-1957. My analysis of the *Proposal* and the *Letters* will have to comment on many of the references and implications that a modern Swift reader will have trouble with understanding.

Both Oxford University Press[21] and Norton & Company[22] have published one-volume editions of Swift's major works which contain some explanatory notes on the *Proposal* and the *Letters*, but these are in my opinion not satisfactory. Fortunately, Cambridge University Press will publish a new edition of Swift's works in 2006, edited by Ian Higgins and Claude Rawson. The edition will consist of fifteen volumes with full publication histories and explanatory notes. This will be a very important contribution to Swift studies, not only because it will help students of Swift, but because it will also make it easier for a general reader to appreciate Swift's works.

[21] Angus Ross and David Woolley, *Jonathan Swift*: *Major Works*, in the series Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).
[22] Robert Greenberg and William B. Piper, *The Writings of Jonathan Swift*: *A Norton Critical Edition, Authoritative texts, Backgrounds, Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973).

In this thesis, the literary aspect of the *Proposal* and the *Letters* will be viewed in light of the ways in which Swift's style and techniques help him respond to the economic and political situation of Ireland.

Swift and Ireland - the wider significance

Swift wrote in defence of the Irish. However, his reasons for doing this have been questioned. It has been argued that he defended the Irish to get back at the English Whigs, thus suggesting that his main motive was his own bitterness for being denied a position in England. However, 'During the 1720s he ceased to identify himself with England – or at least, with English politics. Yet he had too much pride ever to acknowledge himself as Irish.'[23]

The following passage from Conor Cruise O'Brien's article 'Irishness' gives one definition of the word Irishness which very strikingly includes the Anglo-Irish Jonathan Swift. 'Irishness is not primarily a question of birth or blood or language: it is the condition of being involved in the Irish situation, and usually of being mauled by it. On that definition Swift is more Irish than Goldsmith or Sheridan, although by the usual tests [defining an Irish poet by his birth, descent or adoption] they are Irish and he is pure English.'[24] According to this definition, Jonathan Swift was definitively Irish. However, O'Brien states that Swift was Irish in the sense of being '"adopted", much against his will, by Ireland…'[25] O'Brian treats Swift's as a special case; yet, according to the 'usual tests' that he mentions, Swift was Irish in terms of birth too, because he was born in Dublin. The only 'test' that could be said to reject Swift as an Irishman is descent. According to Swift, his parents were of English descent. His autobiography opens with the statement that 'THE

[23] Nokes, *Hypocrite Reversed*, 285.
[24] Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'Irishness', in *Writers and Politics*: *Essays and Criticism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), 134.
[25] Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'Irishness', 132.

Family of the Swifts was ancient in Yorkshire…'[26] Swift's mother was originally from Leicestershire, but her family immigrated to Ireland in 1634.[27] O'Brien does acknowledge the inadequacy of the criteria defining an Irish poet, but in Swift's case, he is wrong in stating that Swift was 'pure English' according to the three criteria.

Discussions on Swift's Irish identity have flourished since the eighteenth century. Outside Ireland there has been a tendency to emphasise Swift as a literary figure, but in Ireland he has also been a popular patriot. However, his intentions have been questioned even in Ireland. One argument has been that even though Swift was born in Ireland and lived most of his life there, his heart was in England. The evidence has come from Swift's letters where he more than once declared his hatred for the country: 'I do suppose nobody hates and despises this kingdom more than myself.'[28] Swift's expression of hate for Ireland has also been recognised by his many critics, such as for instance W. F. Collier, who wrote that Swift 'was a patriot more from hatred of England than love to Ireland…'[29] Yet, the fact remains that he wrote in defence of the Irish.

Despite Swift's alleged hatred for Ireland his reputation and importance to the history of Irish independence must not be ignored. Together with William Molyneux (1656-1698), scientist and political writer, he was an early nationalist in promoting legislative independence for Ireland. His intention was to promote the liberty of the Irish through securing 'the freedom of the individual from the encroachments of the King and his ministers…'[30] This was acknowledged by Henry Grattan, who when the Declaratory Act was repealed in 1782, announced the following to the Irish Parliament: 'Spirit of

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[26] Herbert Davis, *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, Vol. 5 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 187.
[27] Irvin Ehrenpreis, *Swift*: *the Man, his Works, and the Age*, Vol. I (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1962), 4. See also page 23.
[28] Harold Williams, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, Vol. III (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1963), 322. Hereafter *Corr*, III.
[29] W. F. Collier, *A History of English Literature* (London: T. Nelson, 1862), cited in *Jonathan Swift*: *The Irish Identity*, by Robert Mahony (London: Yale University Press, 1995), 108.
[30] J. A. Downie, 'Swift's Politics' in *Proceedings of the First Munster Symposium on Jonathan Swift*, ed. by Hermann J. Real and Heinz J. Vienken, (München: Wilhelm Fink verlag, 1985), 54.

Swift! Spirit of Molyneux! Your genius has prevailed!'[31] So Jonathan Swift was clearly seen as an early liberator of the Irish and his views on Ireland have been valued ever since.

I believe that the works of all authors of political pamphlets are important historical documents in that they comment on and describe events of the particular time they are living in. It is these descriptions, among other things, that historians have to rely on when they are writing a history of a particular time and place. Jonathan Swift was a political writer concerned with Irish affairs. His views and descriptions of what happened during the 1720s are valuable historical documents, not only because he wrote about important events, but because of the impact he had on his contemporaries. 'Although Swift never wrote a history of Ireland *per se*, he produced a large number of tracts pertaining to Irish affairs.'[32] The *Proposal* and the *Letters* are only a few of these tracts. They are valuable to historians as authentic descriptions of Ireland in the early 1720s. However, the *Proposal* and the *Letters* are different from many other political pamphlets in that they are also valuable as literary works showing Swift's greatness in the art of irony. Compared to William Molyneux, who is purely recognised as a political commentator, and not as a literary figure, Swift is very different. He is first and foremost recognised for his literary genius. I can definitively understand that because Swift was a great literary writer. However, I believe that Swift's Irish tracts are not just great as literary products, but as political propaganda presenting the case of Ireland.

Molyneux had been a Surveyor-General and Chief Engineer during 1684 and again after 1691. He was a well known philosopher in Dublin and the founder of the Dublin Philosophical Society.[33] In 1689 Molyneux published *The Case of Ireland Being Bound by*

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[31] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 186.
[32] Carole Fabricant, 'Swift as Irish Historian', in *Walking Naboth's Vineyard*: *New Studies of Swift,* ed. by Christopher Fox and Brenda Tooley (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 43.
[33] William Molyneux, 'The Case of Ireland being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated', in *Irish Writings from the Age of Swift*, Vol. 5, with introduction by J. G. Simms and afterword by Denis Donoghue, (Dublin: The Cadenus Press, 1977), 8. Hereafter *Case.*

Acts of Parliament in England, Stated. He provided his readers with an outline of Ireland's early relationship with England and how '*Ireland* became a Kingdom Annex'd to the Crown of *England*…' He also presented 'a faithful Narrative of the *First Expedition of the Britains* [Sic] into this Country [Ireland], and King *Henry* the Second's [Sic] Arrival…'[34] and a detailed survey of the history between the two countries. Molyneux argued the case of Ireland by posing questions concerning the constitutional relationship between the two countries and answering them. Molyneux offered straightforward comments on the relationship between England and Ireland. Like Swift, he criticised the way Ireland had been treated, but did not try to hide his comments behind implications or ironies. The fact that Swift's literary eminence is so visible in his Irish tracts and that his texts are so very different from that of Molyneux makes it even more interesting to take a closer look at Swift as a political commentator.

[34] Molyneux, *Case*, 25.

CHAPTER ONE:

A PROPOSAL FOR THE UNIVERSAL USE OF IRISH MANUFACTURE

The political and economic situation of Ireland 1719-1720

In 1720, an Act was passed that changed the legislative relationship between England and Ireland dramatically. The Declaratory Act was 'an act for the better securing the dependency of the kingdom of Ireland on the crown of Great Britain'.[35] It enabled the English Parliament to overrule a decision made by the Irish Parliament and make laws binding on Ireland.[36] According to the Act, Ireland 'was "subordinate unto and dependent upon the imperial crown of Great Britain"; and the King, Lords and Commons of Great Britain had "full power and authority to make laws…to bind the kingdom and people of Ireland" '.[37]

In 1689, only thirty years earlier,[38] an Irish Declaratory had been passed, which stated that the 'PARLIAMENT OF ENGLAND CANNOT BIND IRELAND, AGAINST WRITS OF ERROR AND APPEALS TO BE BROUGHT FOR REMOVING JUDGMENTS, DECREES AND SENTENCES GIVEN IN IRELAND INTO ENGLAND.'[39] It also declared that:

> Ireland is, and hath been always, a distinct kingdom from that of his Majesty's realm of England…had their laws continually made and established by their own Parliaments,…be it therefore enacted…that no Act of Parliament passed or to be passed in the Parliament of England, though Ireland should be therein mentioned, can be or shall be any way binding in Ireland, excepting such Acts passed or to be passed in England as are or shall be made into law by the Parliament of Ireland.[40]

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[35] J. C Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), 164. Hereafter *Modern Ireland*.
[36] D. B. Horn and Mary Ransome, *English Historical Documents*, Vol. X (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1957), 683. Hereafter *EHD*, X
[37] Ehrenpreis, III, 121.
[38] There is a reference to 'Customs and Laws from thirty years past' in 'A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture' in *PW* 9, 15.
[39] Andrew Browning, *English Historical Documents*, Vol. VIII (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1953), 749. Hereafter *EHD*, VIII.
[40] *EHD*, VIII, 749.

Thus, the Declaratory Act of 1689 declared that it was the Irish Parliament which should make laws for Ireland and not the English.

Since the Declaratory Act of 1720 overturned the 1689 Act, it is easy to see why there was such a violent reaction to it in Ireland, and why it made such a difference in the relationship between the two neighbouring countries. Thirty years earlier it had been established that Ireland was an independent country with its own parliament and with the decision to make its own laws. Now, Ireland was a colony.

Up until 1720, no law had stated clearly that Ireland was an English colony. A fifteenth-century law had declared that no act could be passed in the Irish Parliament, which had not been previously approved by the monarch and Privy Council in England.[41] However, this law did not specifically say that England could make laws that were binding on Ireland, as the Declaratory Act did.[42] In a way, the two Acts complemented each other. The Declaratory Act stated more clearly what the intention with Poyning's Law was: to make it impossible for the Irish to have a free, separate parliament. The Declaratory Act stated that the Irish House of Lords had illegally taken the power in their own hands to '*examine, correct and amend the judgements and decrees of the courts of justice in the kingdom of* Ireland…'[43] The incident that led to this statement was a lawsuit which is known as the Annesley Case. This was a dispute over a possession of an estate in county of Kildare between Hester Sherlock and Maurice Annesley. The case was appealed to the Irish House of Lords, which ruled in favour of Sherlock. However, Annesley appealed to the English House of Lords, which reversed the Irish decision. So both Declaratory Acts said that Ireland was subjected to the English government, but the Declaratory Act of 1720 in stronger words declared that the Irish Parliament had no power, unless it was given power by the English government.

[41] This was Poyning's Law, which was passed by the Irish Parliament in 1494.
[42] *EHD*, X, 683.
[43] *EHD*, X, 683.

However, the passing of the Declaratory Act was not the first time England had taken action to secure the control of Ireland. Irish prosperity interfered with the growth of English power. England was determined to avoid competition from Ireland, and one way of doing this was to restrict their trade and make Ireland dependent on England.[44]

Ireland was provided with a good coastline and thus had great opportunities for overseas trade. However, the English restricted Irish shipping with Navigation Acts. They 'aimed at keeping the trade of the country for English instead of Dutch shipping…'[45] The Navigation Act of 1660 'had accorded Ireland the same status as England by stipulating that goods from America or from outside the British colonial system be imported in either English or Irish ships'.[46] In 1663 a further distinction was made. The new law prohibited exportation of goods to any English colony unless they were loaded in English ships at English ports.[47] Further, in 1719 an act was passed that prevented Ireland from importing wrought silks from India, China or Persia unless it was shipped in Great Britain.[48] Since the primary markets for Irish trade were, besides England, France and Spain, the Navigation Acts made it difficult to keep up these connections.

Since Ireland had few mineral resources, but plenty of agricultural land, it was well suited for raising cattle. However, the market for cattle trade was not given the chance to grow and the Irish were soon forced to rely heavily on land. In 1663 a Cattle Act was passed which prohibited all export of live cattle to England during the period between July and December. These were the months that had been particularly active in this trade. In

[44] David Ward, *Jonathan Swift*: *An Introductory Essay* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1973), 101-2.
[45]See G. M. Trevelyan, *Illustrated English Social History*, Vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green & Co Ltd., 1950), 130 for the history of the Navigation Acts.
[46] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 9.
[47] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 9.
[48] Alice E. Murray, *A History of the Commercial and Financial Relations between England and Ireland from the period of Restoration* (London: P.S King & Son, 1903), 87. Hereafter Murray.

1666 the prohibition went from being seasonable to absolute.[49] This put an end to one of the most up-and-coming industries in Ireland.

A more severe restriction was the passing of the Woollen Act in 1699, which prohibited Ireland from exporting woollen products to any other country than England. This Act resulted in thousands of weavers leaving the country, and thousands more remaining to starve in Ireland.[50] Irish woollen products were sent to England and charged with heavy import duties, but this did not stop the wool form being smuggled to France. As a result of the Woollen Act, there was a large surplus of wool in Ireland[51] and 'the price offered by French merchants was four or five times that paid in the legal market, so that the profits of a smuggling trade were temptingly high; and there was ready sale in Ireland for the French brandy, claret and silks that the smugglers brought in return'.[52]

The woollen manufacture, like the cattle industry, was quite a small business in Ireland, and the restrictions that were put on it, discouraging the whole industry, prevented a flourishing trade. Obviously, if the Irish had been allowed to establish a large woollen industry, they might have exported more to the international market and less to England, thus, gradually making their trade independent of England. It is difficult to say whether or not England benefited financially on a large scale from these restrictions on Irish trade. The industries were small, so I believe the main objective for England was to retain control over Ireland. Certainly, by getting rid of competition, England gained total control of the market and could take advantage of that. Without the possibilities of trading with other countries than England, the Irish economy was very vulnerable. Ireland was poor, poverty increased and the government seemed to ignore it.

[49]Beckett, *Modern Ireland*, 128.
[50] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 10.
[51] Murray, 60.
[52]Beckett, *Modern Ireland*, 170.

Ireland was one of Great Britain's first colonies. From the twelfth century, Ireland was under the crown of Great Britain. (Of course, at that time Ireland was under the crown of England since the term Great Britain was not used until 1707 in connection with the union between England and Scotland.) Despite of being a colony, Ireland is hardly mentioned in postcolonial studies. When Ireland is mentioned it is to emphasise the difficulty of placing Ireland in postcolonial studies.[53] Colonialism is by definition 'the policy or practice of acquiring political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically'.[54] As far as the definition goes, Ireland was certainly an English colony. England's aim was to get political control over Ireland, they sent 'settlers' in terms of Englishmen to important political and ecclesiastic positions, and they certainly exploited the Irish economy! However, in postcolonial studies, the usual relationship discussed is that of a European and an African country, where the European country acts as the coloniser who takes advantage of an underdeveloped African country. If that is not the case, the discussions at least involve a cross continental relationship between a European country and a colony on another continent like Asia or America. Either way, Ireland's is a special case. There are two European countries involved. Furthermore, the two countries are neighbours. However, Ireland was not the only country suffering from the mercantilist policies of a colonial power. 'In the early eighteenth century most European governments believed a favourable balance of trade, with a surplus of specie coming into the country, was the mark of prosperity. They treated colonies mainly as a device to enrich the mother country in this sense.'[55]

The economic situation of Ireland in the early 1720s was serious. Poverty was increasing and Ireland was made vulnerable to famine because of lack of food and clothes.

[53] Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism*: *An historical introduction* (Cornwall: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 301.
[54] Judy Pearsall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 282.
[55] Ehrenpreis, III, 113.

Even though there was no famine crisis as there had been in 1710 and was to be in 1727, poverty increased among the lowest classes. Archbishop King said in 1720 that 'all classes and sections of the people were in distress: "Those that are here cannot get their rents from their tenants, the merchants have no trade, shopkeepers need charity, and the cry of the whole people is loud for bread. God knows what will be the consequence; many are starved, and I am afraid many more will" '.[56]

Thus, the condition of the Irish poor had grown insufferable. Ireland's need for an improved economy and a higher standard of living among the poor was immediate. The international market had no need for Irish goods and prices fell. 'Even in March 1720, at the end of the fiscal year with the highest return to date for the century and ahead of the financial crisis in Britain, an agent in Connacht reported rents "remaining due in the poor tenants" hands for want of markets to convert the cows into Money.'[57]

However, English legislation was not the only thing that prevented Ireland from being a prosperous nation. As mentioned above, Ireland was provided with fertile soil, well suited for arable land as well as pasture. Despite the vulnerable condition of their country, many Irish landlords converted most of their land to pasture during this period. The conversion made sense to the landlords since pasture farming acquired little skills and little capital.[58] However, it was not a good solution in the long run. Archbishop King wrote that of 'late, the plough is everywhere laid aside, and generally in the late leases the landlords have obliged the tenants not to plough; one consequence of which is that all manner of grain has been dearer in Dublin than in London, and several times at double the price…'[59] As can be seen in this passage, the result of the conversion was that Ireland suffered shortages of corn. This raised the prices and forced Ireland to import grain from England.

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[56] Murray, 71.
[57] *NHI*, 144.
[58] Murray, 135.
[59] King to Archbishop of Canterbury, Nov. 15th, 1725 (King MSS), cited in Murray, 142-3.

Of course this was not entirely the landlords' fault, since eventually laws that prohibited tenants from converting pasture into arable land were passed by the government.[60] As a result of the restrictions, the Irish subordination to English commercial interest made Ireland dependent on land as its main economical source. So when the country landlords, together with the government ruined one of the most important chances Ireland had to improve the economy and thus the state of the nation, the result was that they made Ireland even more dependent on England.

Another problem with Irish agriculture was the fact that many of the landlords were absentees. 'An absentee landlord was not necessarily oppressive or grasping. His aim was generally to get steady income with the least possible trouble; and to this end he let out his estate in large tracts, on long leases, and at reasonable rents. The men who took such leases, however, were rarely working farmers; they were middlemen, who sub-divided and sub-let their holdings…'[61] Many of the landlords were in fact English and lived in England themselves, while they let out their land to tenants living in Ireland. The problem was that the money the absentee landlords gained from their land in Ireland went straight to England.

However, landlords were not the only absentees in Ireland. Almost all important government and ecclesiastical positions were held by English appointees. They were set to work for the English government in Ireland and lived there while they held their positions. After their work was over, they went back to England. Others lived in England and went back and worth whenever they were needed in Ireland, like the Lord Lieutenant. Thus, in the end, absenteeism led to even more Irish money spent in England.

As shown above, the condition of Ireland in the early 1720s was very much influenced by seventeenth-century restrictions on Irish trade. The Irish government did not

[60] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 47-8.
[61] Beckett, *Modern Ireland*, 168.

help the situation by focusing on other issues than the present situation of Ireland. So the blame for the miserable condition had to be shared between Ireland and England. The Irish government had certainly not done whatever they could to decrease poverty, but in the end, it was not much the Irish could do since they were now declared dependent upon the 'imperial Crown of Great Britain'.

An event that had a great impact on the Irish economy, though not until the end of the year, was the South Sea Bubble. The South Sea Company was founded in 1711 and was, in 1720, to offer to take over more than half of the National Debt as an investment which it hoped to regain by trading with South America. Many invested in South Sea shares, and the value rose quickly. However, within weeks, the bubble 'burst' and 'By June, 1720, the South Sea madness was at its height in England'.[62] The British Parliament passed the Bubble Act in order to prevent this from happening again, but the damage had already been done. When the Bubble collapsed many had already invested thousands of pounds.

> Irish speculators had been as greedy as their counterparts in England, and they reaped the same harvest… Ireland's economy was far less able to survive the crash than was that of England. Burdened as it was by English restraints, it was in so precarious a condition at all times that it could be upset by very little. Consequently, what in England was a crisis amounted in Ireland to an almost irreparable catastrophe.[63]

Swift 1719-1720

In 1713 Jonathan Swift became the Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. He was installed at the deanery in June, but left for London to continue his work as Tory propagandist in writing *The Examiner* for Robert Harley already in September. After the death of Queen Anne in 1714, Swift returned to Dublin to take up his duties as Dean. He lived at the deanery and was preoccupied with tending the Cathedral and its parish.

[62] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 61.
[63] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 61.

According to Swift's correspondence from January to May, the spring of 1720 seems to have been a quiet period in Swift's life. He was troubled by his disease, later to be known as Menière's Syndrome. The symptoms, which included giddiness and deafness, seem to have become worse and stopped him from receiving his guests. Despite his bad health, he seems to have been able to maintain his social life to a certain degree, except from the times when he was forced to spend most of the day in bed.

His correspondence also shows that he received and wrote quite a few letters during this period. Most of them are from Hester Vanhomrigh (Vanessa), who he began a private correspondence with in 1710.[64] He also wrote and received letters from the Earl of Oxford (Robert Harley), Charles Ford, Matthew Prior and Oxford's son Edward Harley. So despite his illness he kept in touch with his closest friends and thus was up to date on the most important issues of the time, like the passing of the Declaratory Act. This can be seen in a letter to Charles Ford from April 1720, where Swift wrote: 'I cannot understand the South-Sea Mystery, perhaps the Frolick [Sic] may go round, and every Nation (except this which is no Nation) have it's Mississippi. I believe my self not guilty of too much veneration for the Irish H. of Lds [Sic], but I differ from you in Politicks [Sic], the Question is whether People ought to be Slaves or no.'[65]

He wrote in the same letter to Ford:

> I am hardly a Month free from a Deafness which continues another Month on me, and dejects me so, that I can not bear the thoughts of stirring out, or suffering any one to see me, and this is the most mortal Impediment to all Thoughts of travelling, and I should dy with Spleen to be in such a Condition in strange Places; so that I must wait till I grow better, or sink under it if I am worse.[66]

According to this letter, he was not able to write at all and could not attend his guests at the time. This must have been awful for a man of letters with a wide circle of

[64]Nokes, *Hypocrite Reversed*, 154.
[65] Harold Williams, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, Vol. II (Oxford: The Claredon Press, 1963), 342. Hereafter *Corr* II.
[66] *Corr* II, 342.

friends. Swift was also fond of exercising either by taking walks or horseback riding. Neither is referred to in his correspondence from this period. Thus, despite being a period influenced by illness, Swift seems to have been very much aware of what happened in political circles. This, of course is not very surprising since he had friends who maintained higher positions in both Dublin and London.

The Story of the Injured Lady

It was in the spring of 1720 that Swift was to write and publish *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture* and the starting point for Swift's career as a Hibernian patriot is often set to this year. However, as mentioned above, it was *The Story of the Injured Lady* that was Swift's first tract on Irish affairs. The main occasion for the *Injured Lady* was the union between England and Scotland in 1707. The *Injured Lady* is an allegory of this event and how it affected Ireland. Swift sees Ireland as an abused lady and England as the abuser who finds another lover and marries her (Scotland). It anticipates the *Proposal* in that it brings up the main points which were to be repeated eight years later.

In the *Injured Lady*, Swift points out that Henry II did not conquer Ireland in the sense that he forced them under the crown of England. He was accepted by the Irish as their king (*PW* 9, 4-5). Thus, Ireland could not be viewed as a colony. There was a mutual agreement that made Ireland subjected to the crown of England. They never agreed to be subjected to the English Parliament and give up their own. The English rule-without-consent policy had never been established by law. A country could not rule over another without the latter's consent. Eight years later Swift was to comment on this by referring to John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, which established that there should be a social contract between all parties in a society. Where there is a sovereign ruler, the ruled should have the opportunity to find another ruler, if the present ruler does not act in the

best interests of the whole society.[67] The Irish had never agreed to England making laws for them. If they had agreed to be subjects of the English Parliament, something that would have meant that Irish trade had to be subordinated to English trade wherever there was a conflict of interest, the Irish would have had the power to reject the English Parliament as their ruler whenever their best interest was set aside by the English.

Swift also comments on the fact that the Irish had to pay toll on both sides and that their goods were sold for half their value in England (*PW* 9, 6). This anticipates the *Proposal* in that the Woollen Act, the Cattle Act and the Navigation Acts had worsened the condition of Irish trade and thus the Irish economy. In addition to this, the illegal trade with France was a rather insecure source for securing the Irish economy since, according to Swift, the Irish merchants had already warned him of the 'fluctuating Coin in France'.

The primary concern for Swift in his *Proposal* was the increasing poverty in Dublin. However, his main target was not necessarily the Irish. Swift was just as eager to comment on the English intervention and how this affected the Irish economy. In the *Injured Lady* he made some remarks on Irish poverty (*PW* 9, 4), absentee landlords (*PW* 9, 5) and English appointees (*PW* 9, 5), matters which were to be very important in 1720. Thus, Swift as early as 1707 was concerned about the Irish economy and objected to the English policy on Irish affairs.

The Story of the Injured Lady dealt with the fact that Ireland was excluded from a union with England, which they could have benefited from, but still had to act by English law. In *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture*, this discussion is turned into whether or not England could bind Ireland to laws made in England without the consent of the Irish.

[67] John Locke, 'The Second Treatise of Government', in *Two Treatises of Government with a critical edition with an intro and apparatus criticus*, ed. by Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 301, 430-31. Hereafter *Second Treatise*.

Date and Occasion

As soon as word came out that the Declaratory Act was being proposed, reactions against the bill began to appear in the streets of Dublin. In August 1719 a pamphlet called *A Letter from a Member of the House of Commons of Ireland* was published anonymously. This contained an answer to objections made against the judicatory power of the Parliament of Ireland. In February 1720, *A Second Letter to A Gentleman of the Long Robe in G-B* was published, presumably by the same author as the first letter. John Toland published two pamphlets on the same issue in 1720, both opposing the Declaratory Act.[68]

A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture was published during the last week of May, between the 24th and the 28th.[69] That was two months after the Declaratory Act was passed on 26 March, 1720. Obviously, the publication of the *Proposal* was not accidental. On 4 April 1720, Swift wrote a letter to Charles Ford about the dissatisfaction of the Irish towards the Act. 'I do assure you I never saw so universall [Sic] a Discontent as there is among the highest most virulent and antichurch Whigs against that Bill and every Author or Abetter of it without Exception. They say publickly [Sic] that having been the most loyall [Sic] submissive complying Subjects that ever Prince had, no Subjects were ever so ill treated.'[70] Swift certainly had thoughts about the Act and he definitively opposed it.

There are no specific references to the Declaratory Act in the *Proposal*, but it is possible to interpret clues in the text as referring to the Act or at least to see attitudes that were provoked by it. I believe the closest one gets to a direct reference to the Act is the part where Swift says that he could not find any writers of the civil law who claimed that men could be bound without their consent. The Irish had never agreed to the Declaratory Act

[68] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 53. I here refer to Ferguson because I unfortunately have not been able to get hold of the letters myself. An interlibrary loan has not been possible, due to the age of the documents.
[69] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 54. See also David Nokes, *Hypocrite Reversed*, 267, for reference to the King's birthday.
[70] *Corr* II, 342-3.

(or other laws made by the English Parliament) so therefore it should not be binding on Ireland. Also when it comes to trade in the *Proposal*, one can see traces of the Declaratory Act in that Irish trade, after the passing of the act, became subordinate to English trade. Even though this had been the case for several years, it now became official. There was now a law which stated that Ireland was a colony.

The Declaratory Act has been viewed as the main occasion for the *Proposal* by most of Swift's critics. It certainly was difficult to discuss the situation of Ireland in early 1720 without being affected by the Act. It was hugely significant to the relationship between England and Ireland, but it also had a great impact on the Irish economy. I believe that the Declaratory Act provoked Swift to write about Irish affairs again, but I do not think it was the sole target with the *Proposal*. Swift made it into something more than a reaction against the Act itself. He took advantage of the situation and although his main complaint is aimed at the people of Ireland, he also rejects the new legislative relationship between England and Ireland. He saw the need for a more balanced Irish economy and the Declaratory Act did not advance the chances for a better economy. His main proposal contains a resolution to maintain an already damaged Irish economy and improve it by encouraging the Irish to wear clothes from their own country. This would improve the Irish economy by decreasing the importation from England and other countries so that Ireland could use the surplus of wool for their own purposes and create a domestic market instead of exporting it to England and France. Thus, it would have created an independent Irish economy and the dependence on England would have gradually decreased.

The Declaratory Act changed the legislative relationship between England and Ireland, but why would Swift chose to make an economic response to it? Why would he offer a proposal for the Irish to wear only Irish manufacture? Swift chose to look closer at one of the results of this political event rather than the event itself. As Swift saw it, there

was an immediate need for change in the Irish economy. Poverty was increasing among the lower classes and the politicians did not seem to care. It was the immediate surroundings Swift wanted to change first. He was at the time Dean of St. Patrick's and his closest neighbours were the weavers. Thus, he watched the changing condition of this group at close hand. The weavers were 'honest, industrious men' who, without being able to do anything about it, were getting more and more oppressed and Swift felt the need to help them out.[71]

At the time, the Irish economy was determined by English legislation, so to talk about Irish economy one had to take into account English legislation on Irish trade. Swift did not see the restrictions as the only reason for the worsened condition of the Irish economy. He blamed the Irish just as much, if not even more for the situation Ireland was in. In a period of depression it was easy to blame someone who had been blocking Irish trade for ages, so it was inevitable that England should be blamed. Swift, however, saw the bigger picture as well and criticised the Irish society in addition to the English Parliament.

An important question is why Swift chose to write about Irish affairs now, after so many years of silence on the topic? After the death of Queen Anne in 1714, Swift had decided not to enter into Irish politics again. 'I cannot stop my Ears when People of the wisest sort I see (who are indeed no Conjurers) tell me a thousand foolish Things of the Publick [Sic]: But I hope I shall keep my Resolution of never medling [Sic] with Irish Politicks [Sic]',[72] he wrote in a letter to Charles Ford in September 1714. In another letter to Ford in December, 1719, Swift felt compelled to take up meddling in politics again. He wrote that 'as the World is now turned, no Cloyster [Sic] is retired enough to keep Politicks [Sic] out, and I will own they raise my Passions whenever they come in my way, perhaps more than yours who live amongst them, as great noise is likelyer [Sic] to disturb a

[71] Downie, *Political Writer*, 233.
[72] David Nichol Smith, *The Letters of Jonathan Swift to Charles Ford* (Oxford: The Claredon Press, 1935), 60. Hereafter, *Letters to Ford*.

Hermit than a Citizen'.[73] Swift was once again ready to defend the Irish legislative independence from British colonial rule and to confirm his reputation as the Hibernian patriot that he was to become for the Irish people.

It has been argued that Swift's renewed interest in Irish affairs was only based on his will to revenge the lack of a position in England and the disappointment he suffered from the Whigs he once supported. It is odd that he all of a sudden became concerned about the Irish economy after having again and again stated that he hated Ireland and looked upon his existence there as an exile. But why would he write so convincingly and become so involved? I believe Swift was genuinely concerned about the welfare of Ireland and I agree with Ferguson in that it would have been worth the risk for Swift to enter into Irish politics again for the sole reason of getting back at the Whigs. However, Irish politics was under a lot of pressure from England and it was too intricate for Swift to risk his reputation. The fear of being arrested was high. He was basically a Whig when it came to politics and for him to have changed side and written propaganda for the Tories made him very vulnerable to attack.[74] There must have been another driving force behind his renewed engagement and that was the Irish economy. The Irish economy was the perfect topic for Swift. It allowed him to use his talent as a political writer and he knew that he gained a lot of support by discussing such a provocative topic at the time. His decision to blend his resentment for English politics (or rather politicians) with a topic that involved the whole country was to be crucial for his reputation as a Hibernian patriot.

The *Proposal* was only one of many influential pamphlets written by Swift on the topic of Irish independence. Together with the *Drapier's Letters* it was to be significant in forming Swift's contribution to the early Irish nationalists and the battle for an independent Ireland.

[73] *Corr* II, 330.
[74] Ferguson, *J .S. and I.*, 46-7.

Swift's response to the economic and political situation: *The Proposal*

In *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture* there are two main themes. One deals with the legislative relationship between England and Ireland and the other with the people of Ireland and the way they contribute (or rather do not contribute) to the economic welfare of the nation. It is mainly these two themes that hold the *Proposal* together. However, in addition to these themes, Swift also makes a pattern in his text by commenting on different ranks of Irish society. In doing this, he manages to organise the text in another way than focusing solely on the two themes. This allows him to talk about different things and jump back and forth in the text without having to follow a red line. Even though this jumping back and forth can make the text seem slightly disorganised, Swift knew very well what he was doing. He chose the most important issues and used familiar allegories to get through to his audience. His aim is impossible to escape.

Swift's way of narrating is very persuasive. However, I do not think Swift actually believed that Ireland had the same opportunities as England and could compete with them on the continental market. The English manufacturers were better skilled, had better organization and much more experience than the Irish. Swift wanted to force direct action of a particular event on to the people of Ireland. Though he believed in changing the economic development of Ireland, Swift was rational enough to realise that his *Proposal* was not going to be put into reality. He could not attack the politicians directly and confront them on their handling of Irish affairs. That is why the political events he commented on served Swift great service. They helped him to confront the politicians by letting him comment on the present situation and identify the reason why the situation was what it was, thus letting him indirectly attack the governments since they were the ones responsible. In the *Proposal*, Swift on the surface comments on the economic situation by proposing what the Irish government should do. However, he is also objecting to the new

legislative relationship between England and Ireland. The same thing can be seen in the *Drapier's Letters*, when Swift starts out by focusing on the coining of copper coins for Ireland, and ends up with attacking the English government for their treatment of Ireland. It is Swift's way of combining the two themes that are interesting here as well.

Swift's tone, throughout the *Proposal* is firm and persuasive. It brings out his preacher-side and is in general very similar to his sermon, *Causes of the Wretched Condition of Ireland*, written at about the same time as the *Proposal*. One example is the very beginning of the *Proposal*, where he accuses the Irish of their indifference, despite the injustices made by England.

> IT is the peculiar Felicity and Prudence of the People in this Kingdom, that whatever Commodities, or Productions, lie under the greatest Discouragements from *England*, those are what they are sure to be most industrious in cultivating and spreading. *Agriculture*, which hath been the principal Care of all wise Nations, and for the Encouragement whereof there are so many Statute-Laws in *England*, we countenance so well, that the Landlords are every where, by *penal Clauses*, absolutely prohibiting their Tenants from Plowing [Sic]; not satisfied to confine them within certain Limitations, as it is the Practice of the *English*; one Effect of which, is already seen in the prodigious Dearness of Corn, and the Importation of it from *London*, as the cheaper Market: And, because People are the *Riches of a Country*, and that our *Neighbours* have done, and are doing all that in them lie, to make our Wool a Drug to us, and a Monopoly to them; therefore, the politick [Sic] Gentlemen of *Ireland* have depopulated vast Tracts of the best Land, for the feeding of Sheep (*PW* 9, 15).

Compared to the sermon:

> IT is a very melancholy Reflection, that such a Country as ours, which is capable of producing all Things necessary, and most Things convenient for Life, sufficient for the Support of four Times the Number of its Inhabitants, should yet lye [Sic] under the heaviest Load of Misery and Want, our Streets crouded [Sic] with Beggars, so many of our lower Sort of Tradesmen, Labourers and Artificers, not able to find Cloaths [Sic] and Food for their Families (*PW* 9, 199).

Despite the fact that the sermon is more clearly organised, the paragraph from the sermon might as well have been a part of the *Proposal* or the other way around. The most important difference is that the sermon is not ironic. While what Swift preached in the church was straightforward what he believed, his tracts are more difficult to grasp because

he had a tendency to praise what he actually condemned. One example from the *Proposal* is when he puts up the ironic list on page 18 and writes that he was ‘much delighted with a Person, who hath a great Estate in this Kingdom, upon his Complaints’ on ‘*how grievously* POOR England *suffers by Impositions from* Ireland’. Obviously he could not have been delighted to hear any of these points. However, in the *Proposal* his irony is more striking in that it creates a reaction in the reader, something I believe was Swift’s intention in the first place. Obviously an eighteenth century reader would easily grasp his intention behind the irony and respond to it. Take a phrase like ‘the unthinking Shopkeepers’ (*PW* 9, 17), or ‘this deluded people’ (*PW* 9, 16-17), as an example. Clearly, Swift does not mean that the Irish are generally stupid. They have done things that might not have improved their situation, but that does not mean that they totally lack common sense. Swift is trying to get the tradesmen and shopkeepers of Ireland to face that they need to change their attitudes towards their trade in order to improve their miserable situation.

Swift had the same aim for his Irish tracts and sermons. He preached to encourage people to do their duty and whether this was done in a sermon or a political tract, did not really matter. The main point was that his listeners or readers understood what he was saying and felt the urge to listen to his advice. Swift’s sermon *Causes of the Wretched Condition of Ireland* is not that different from the *Proposal*. The drive or energy that is recognisable from Swift’s political writings is definitively present in his sermon as well. Swift does not seem to have a specific sermon style, but still one can see a difference between the tract and the sermon in that he seems to speak more freely in the tract than in the sermon. Of course this has something to do with the publication of the texts since he could easily write a political tract anonymously, while preaching in the church gave him no opportunity to hide his identity.

Swift responded to the economic and political situation of Ireland in the early 1720s by writing *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture* and seeking direct action from all groups of the Irish society to improve the situation. He gives the reader a survey of the economical and legislative situation and suggests what action should be taken in improving the condition of Ireland. To do this, he uses irony and elements of satire, ridiculing persons of higher as well as lower rank. He uses simple language and sharp comments, blaming both the Irish and the English for their indifference. His aim is clearly to promote a measure of economic and legislative independence for Ireland.

Swift's main argument is that the Irish should buy Irish goods in order to develop a self-sufficient economy, without importing goods from England. This was blocked by the Irish in general and the government, the landlords, and the shopkeepers in particular. But first and foremost it was hindered by the English government and their restrictions.

What Swift does in the *Proposal* is to suggest what action should be taken to improve Irish economy. He opens with a comment on the Irish in general and how they have had a tendency to favour things from England. They are very influenced by the English. They import goods and manufacture from England, and take after the way the English manage agriculture, without considering the effect this would have for Ireland. This is of course very ironic since the Irish were forced to do so by English legislation. Swift comes back to this at the end of the *Proposal* when he comments on how the Irish admire English goods and follow the English fashion (*PW* 9, 19-20). Of course the close connection between the two countries made a comparison between them inevitable, but Englishmen were getting better paid and enjoyed greater success in England than in Ireland. However, since England was the most prosperous country, this comes as no surprise. The problem was that because of English legislations, it was difficult for Ireland to become wealthier. So in the end Irish goods were prevailed by English goods and that

led to increased poverty in Ireland. Swift however, wanted to stop this from happening and save the Irish from the faith of starvation.

Swift's resentment towards the English treatment of Ireland is very evident in the *Proposal*. Already in the first paragraph, he blames the English for the 'prodigious Dearness of Corn' and for making 'Wool a Drug' to Ireland. The shortage of corn in Ireland gave England an opportunity to take advantage of the situation. They raised the price on English grain drastically. Thus, the Irish had to use the money they earned on the export of wool to buy corn. To break this vicious circle, Swift offers a solution to stop buying English manufacture and start wearing Irish.

What really stands out in the second paragraph of the *Proposal* is the way Swift treats this in fact illegal trade with France as if it was legal. He says that the 'beneficial Traffick [Sic] of Wool with *France*, hath been our only Support for several Years past; furnishing us all the little Money we have to pay our Rents, and go to Market' (*PW* 9, 15-16). Thus, if it had not been for this smuggling, the Irish would not have been able to go to market and pay their rents. This is perhaps exaggerated, but the Irish did profit from the smuggling and this was an important contribution to a rather poor Irish economy. However, the main point is that the trading with France was illegal and did not secure the economy in any ways. Swift does realise this and questions what should be done 'with our Wool, in case *Barnstable* should be over-stocked, and our *French* Commerce should fail?' (*PW* 9, 16). This question was significant since the possibility of the English, at some point in the future, finding a way to stop the smuggling, had to be taken into consideration. After seeing what restrictions could do, they had to consider all possibilities. Besides, one has to keep in mind that the trade was already under pressure because of the Navigation Acts. Moreover, Swift had already been warned by the merchants of the '*fluctuating Condition of the Coin in* France', and if the trade with France was to stop, the Irish would have to

think in other terms, like Swift by encouraging manufactures for the domestic market. By doing this Swift tried to make Ireland independent of English trade. If the Irish could get a self-sufficient trade, there would be no need for importing goods from England and thus an independent Ireland was in reach.

England was not the only one to be blamed for the Irish situation. The Irish government had to take its share. At the end of the first paragraph Swift states that 'the politick [Sic] Gentlemen of *Ireland* have depopulated vast Tracts of the best Land, for the feeding of Sheep' (*PW* 9, 15). Implicitly he is saying that in stead of cultivating grain to feed the people, the Irish are forced to cultivate land to feed animals. By comparing the people of Ireland to animals, Swift implies that the Irish government views their subjects as less important than animals! This is of course ironic, but his point is clear: the Irish need to cultivate more arable land, not convert all to pasture. Thus, already in the beginning of the *Proposal*, the irony is striking.

What was really needed, then, was attention from the government, because they did not seem to care about what happened with their subjects. Swift blames the Irish Parliament for its indifference to what was happening and for being concerned with other things than the wellbeing of the nation. He wants the government to take action and do something about the condition of Ireland. The increasing poverty and the apathy of the Irish had to be dealt with. He proposes a solution to the difficulties on page 16. As he saw it, the government was more interested in less important issues within politics and the church, without considering the actual case of Ireland.

The government was ignoring the real problems of the nation and was more concerned with 'those great Refinements in *Politicks* [Sic] and *Divinity*' rather than the '*State of the Nation*' (*PW* 9, 16). What Swift refers to is the Toleration Act and Annesley Case.

As mentioned above, the Annesley Case was the case that led to the Declaratory Act. Swift accuses the government of not speaking the case of the Irish by not objecting to the Declaratory Act. In fact, that was a problem at the time: the Irish government lacked the capability to speak for the country it was meant to protect. One of the reasons for this might be that most government positions were held by English appointees and they did not want to go against the government of their mother country. Besides, after the Declaratory Act, the real power was moved from Dublin to London and the representation of Ireland was made more difficult. Ireland 'was ruled by a chief governor or governors, appointed by the crown, normally by commission under the great seal of England'.[75] The structure of the Irish Parliament was very similar to the English. 'The bishops were active and influential, especially in the early decades of the century when few of the lay peers had much aptitude for, or interest in, parliamentary business. Because of the bishops 'political influence the government liked to fill the more important sees [Sic] with Englishmen. All the protestant primates were Englishmen, and for the greater part of the century about half the sees [Sic] were held by English ecclesiastics'.[76]

The other of the 'Refinements' Swift refers to was the Toleration Act. Swift was against toleration. He had experience from parishes with a majority of Roman Catholics and Presbyterians in Northern Ireland during his time as vicar of Kilroot. The established church (the Church of Ireland), including Swift, feared that the Dissenters would take over key positions after the passing of the Toleration Act. The act was passed in 1719 and 'relaxed earlier regulations of church attendance and allowed Dissenting clergymen to administer the eucharist [Sic]'.[77] The established church and the Dissenters disagreed on doctrinal matters, thus; the prior wanted to restrain the influence of the latter and the other way around. It certainly gave them an opportunity to exercise their religion as they pleased.

[75] *NHI*, 57.
[76] *NHI*, 71-2.
[77] Ehrenpreis, III, 119.

Archbishop King wrote in a letter to William Wake that the 'Irish Presbyterians were given "a full liberty…to set up their meetings and propagate what doctrines they please." '[78] Swift believed that 'while thought is free, religious and political expression must be restricted, even censored…'[79] The established church was 'under severe economic strain, politically dominated by England and the English church hierarchy, struggling to maintain its devotional and pastoral position as a minority group of believers amongst indigenous Roman Catholics and immigrant Presbyterians'.[80] He wanted the Anglican Church to maintain its position in Ireland.

According to Swift, the government should have found ways to reduce poverty and make effort to lessen the control that the English had in Irish affairs, so he suggests that the government should make a resolution against wearing of foreign clothes. He proposes that 'a firm Resolution be taken, by *Male* and *Female*, never to appear with one single *Shred* that comes from *England…*' (*PW* 9, 16). He wants the people who refuse to wear Irish manufacture to be 'deemed and reputed *an Enemy to the Nation*' (*PW* 9, 16).

It was not the first time that such a proposal had been made. 'Three times at least [1703, 1705 and 1707][81] in the first decade of the century, the Irish Commons had resolved that "it would greatly conduce to the relief of the poor and the good of the kingdom, if the inhabitants thereof would use none other but the manufactures of this kingdom in their apparel and in the furnishing of their houses" '.[82] However, the proposals never became a reality.

There is a change in tone in this paragraph when Swift goes from criticising the Irish Parliament and proposing a solution to the situation in the same firm persuasive tone,

[78] King to William Wake in Richard Mant, *History of the Church of Ireland*, Vol. II. (London, 1841), cited in Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 48.
[79] Marcus Walsh, 'Swift and Religion', in *CC*, 162.
[80] Walsh, 'Swift and Religion', in *CC*, 162.
[81] See Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 51-52.
[82] Nokes, *Hypocrite Reversed*, 266. See also Ehrenpreis, III., 123.

and then changes to a tone similar to preaching at the end. Swift suddenly makes the proposal sacred by using a phrase like '*and let all the People say* AMEN' (*PW* 9, 16) at the end. Thus, the similarity with his sermons is evident. As in his sermons, Swift, in the *Proposal*, tries to reach out to his audience and force his conviction on them.

Even though the Irish Parliament was the closest the Irish got to a legislative authority, there was one person that had a greater influence than them and that was the King. King George I was king of both England and Ireland and thus had responsibilities towards both countries. Swift gives a short comment on the King and his approaching sixtieth birthday and how pleased he thought the King would be to see 'his loyal Subjects, of both Sexes' celebrating him in Irish clothes (*PW* 9, 16). First of all, the thought of King George I even noticing such a thing is absurd in it self. Secondly, the King's residence was in England and the possibility of the King actually coming to Ireland was very little. In fact 'no eighteenth- century monarch ever came to Ireland'.[83] However, since the King was the head of both England and Ireland, he should also take action against the poor condition of Ireland. Despite all the loyalty and trust the King had received from the Irish, the King did not respond to the poverty of a kingdom under his reign. The King had a tendency of letting English affairs exceed the Irish and therefore neglected a country in need of a stable economy and trade. He sent the Lord Lieutenant, preferably an Englishman, in his place whenever he saw the need to take control over decisions that was made or was to be made in the Irish parliament.

The controversy between England and Ireland did not take the focus away from the Irish economy. It rather strengthened the importance to Swift. As mentioned above, the Irish had to take part of the blame for the condition of Ireland. 'Is there Vertue [Sic] enough left in this deluded People to save them from the Brink of Ruin?'(*PW* 9, 16-17),

[83] *NHI*, 57.

Swift asks in the *Proposal*. Even though the Irish had limited options, Swift thought that they had to do something about their faith. What they were able to do was to make sure that their goods covered the domestic market before even considering the international. In order to decrease poverty and improve the economy there had to be enough food, clothes and other necessary goods at home. Swift, in contributing a phrase to the late Archbishop of Tuam (John Vesey) says '*that* Ireland *would never be happy 'till a Law were made for* burning *every Thing that came from* England, *except their* People *and their* Coals....' (*PW* 9, 17). He does not go as far as to say he agrees with the alleged quote from the Archbishop, but hopes that the English would stay in England and that there would be no need for English coal in Ireland. The reason why Swift could contribute this quote to the Archbishop was that the Archbishop was dead and no one could prove that he had not said such a thing. In doing this, Swift saves his own skin, so that the quote could not be taken for being his.

There was one group in particular that needed to improve their own trade, and that was the 'unthinking Shopkeepers' of Dublin (*PW* 9, 17). Their lack of contribution in improving their trade was Swift's next target. What he calls for is a willingness from the shopkeepers to do something about the situation they were in. They should have, according to Swift, 'made some *Proposal to the Parliament*' and promised to 'improve the *Cloaths* [Sic] *and Stuffs of the Nation, into all possible Degrees of Fineness and Colours, and engaging not to play the Knave, according to their Custom, by exacting and imposing upon the Nobility and Gentry, either as to the Prices or the Goodness*' (*PW* 9, 17). He believed that the shopkeepers damaged the reputation of Irish goods and that they should concentrate on improving their products. Once improved, their products should be made available for a home market, but not only to the gentry and nobility. They should be available to a larger proportion of the Irish people. He wants the shopkeepers to address

'all Persons of Quality' (*PW* 9, 17) and set up a proposal like the one he made in the previous paragraph. He asks them to find 'some Body who can write Sense, to put it into Form' (*PW* 9, 17). It might be that Swift is referring to himself here, since he already had made a proposal for them. It could also be a reference to the fact that Swift had done something like this before in the negotiations of the First Fruits. These were taxes paid by the clergy to finance Queen Anne's Bounty, a fund for poor clergymen, which the Queen had restored to the Church of England, but not the Church of Ireland.[84] Swift was sent as a negotiator for the Church of Ireland.

Since he was a priest (a Dean in fact, when this was published) Swift had to make a comment about the clergy, even though it was an ironical one. According to Swift, there was no need to mention the clergy and what they could do to improve the Irish economy. He briefly remarks that they would be very happy when they could afford buying Irish clothes. The economy of the lower clergy was horrible at the time and Swift had written in his *Argument Against Abolishing Christianity* that 'there are… in this Kingdom, above Ten Thousand Parsons; whose Revenues added to those of my Lords the Bishops, would suffice to maintain, at least, two Hundred young Gentlemen of Wit and Pleasure'.[85] So the clergy could use some help themselves. The comment on the clergy has clearly a structural purpose, but also emphasises the differences between the English and the Irish clergy. Swift writes that the present Archbishop of Dublin, William King, had already been seen wearing Irish clothes.

> I THINK it needless to exhort the *Clergy* to follow this good Example, because, *in a little Time, those among them who are so unfortunate to have had their Birth and Education in this Country, will think themselves abundantly happy when they can afford* Irish *Crape, and an* Athlone *Hat*; and as to the others, I *shall not presume* to direct them. I have, indeed, seen the present Archbishop of *Dublin* clad from Head to Foot in our own Manufacture; and yet, under the Rose be it spoken, *his Grace deserves as good a Gown, as if he had not been born among us* (*PW* 9, 17-18).

[84] David Oakleaf, 'Politics and History', in *CC*, 33.
[85] Herbert Davis, *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, Vol. II (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), 30.

Swift is obviously hoping for better payment for the clergy. When the Irish shopkeepers and manufacturers improve their clothes and make them available for a larger market, even the lower clergy would be able to buy Irish clothes. Irish manufacture was not expensive in itself, but a large amount of the population was so poor that they could not even afford buying cheap clothes. With the statement on the Archbishop, Swift is implying that higher members of the clergy could afford clothes as opposed to those of the lower clergy, but also that English appointees could afford clothes as opposed those who were '*so unfortunate to have had their Birth and Education in this Country*'.

Another group that Swift only touches briefly on, but which is highly important, is the army. The Lord Lieutenant, Duke of Bolton, wrote in 1719 that 'if they [the Parliament] did not fear a foreign invasion of Ireland they might safely withdraw the greater part of the army for other services…' He urged that Ireland, on account of its extreme poverty, might be relieved from paying the army during their absence.[86] There was no need for the army to be in Ireland because the fear of invasion had decreased after the war with France. Besides, the army added more distress to the Irish since they were paid with Irish revenues.

By this brief mentioning, Swift encourages a fearlessness of the army. 'I HAVE not Courage enough to offer *one Syllable* on this Subject to *their Honours* of the Army: Neither have I sufficiently considered the great Importance of *Scarlet* and *Gold Lace*' (*PW* 9, 18). He makes the army seem insignificant in every aspect and ignores the fact that they were significant to wool trade in Ireland since they wore woollen uniforms. The problem was that their uniforms were bought in England and again the issue of Irish independence arises.

[86] Lecky, W. E. H, *History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. I (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1882), 142-3 Hereafter *18th Century I*.

The legislative relationship between England and Ireland, though seemingly of less importance to Swift than the present economic situation, is not to be forgotten. Swift acknowledges the influence England actually had on Irish economy and uses Ovid's fable of Arachne and Pallas to his purpose.

Ovid's fable is about a young skilled virgin (Arachne) who was exposed to the jealousy of the goddess Pallas Athena when she (Arachne) boasted of her skill in spinning and weaving. Arachne was made into a spider and had to weave and spin out of her bowels forever.[87] Swift compares this to England and Ireland where England becomes Pallas and Ireland, Arachne, which had all the raw material, but was not given the liberty to use them, an obvious reference to the Woollen Act of 1699. Ireland was exposed to the jealousy of English traders and was forced to spin and weave out of her own bowels. This is a rather grotesque example which points forward to *A Modest Proposal* that was to become one of his well known tracts based on the idea of cannibalism.

There is a change of tone here that is quite evident. In other parts of the *Proposal*, Swift has had a firm tone of voice, very confident in what he has been writing about. In this paragraph, however he seems to have softened the firmness of his voice quite a bit. He uses a fable from his school days and reveals that he had always 'pitied poor *Arachne*'. But, after revealing this emotional side of himself he jumps abruptly to a rather grotesque comparison between the fable's protagonists and the relationship between England and Ireland.

In parts of the text his jumps are more drastically than others. On page 18, after this grotesque comparison, Swift yet again gives an impression of the *Proposal* being sacred. He puts in a small paragraph with reference to Ecclesiastes '*Oppression makes a wise Man*

[87] Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, translated and with an introduction by Mary M. Innes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1955), 150.

mad',[88] which can be interpreted to mean that the reason why the Irish act against what is more profitable for them is that they have been suppressed by the English for such a long time. In doing this, Swift is desperately trying to make one last effort to save the Irish people by teaching 'a little *Wisdom* to *Fools*'. It is likely that Swift here refers to the Fool in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. This does not mean that he saw the Irish as fools. The Irish were not stupid in general, but oppression forced them to do things they under other circumstances would not have done. Thus, they were forced into stupidness by the limitations the English put on them. Also, they were fooled by the English to believe that this was the way it was meant to be. The Fool in *King Lear* mixes phrases of the mad and wise, just as Swift does in this paragraph of the *Proposal*. 'THE Scripture tells us, that *Oppression makes a wise Man mad*; therefore, consequently speaking, the Reason why some Men are not *mad*, is because they are not *Wise*: However, it were to be wished that *Oppression* would, in Time, teach a little *Wisdom* to *Fools*'(*PW* 9, 18). In *King Lear*, the Fool often compares the wise man and the fool as for instance in Act III, Scene II where the Fool says to Lear that: '… here's a night pities neither wise men or [Sic] fools.' And when Kent, in the same scene enters and the Fool says: 'Marry, here's grace and a cod-piece; that's a wise man and a fool'.[89]

Swift provides his readers with complaints from a person he knows with a great estate in Ireland and adds to it his own list of '*how* grievously POOR England *suffers by Impositions from* Ireland' (*PW* 9, 18). The list is of course very ironic from Swift's point of view. Swift's purpose is to show that Ireland could be self-sufficient and that the impositions mentioned are actually made by England towards Ireland. The person he mentions could have been fictitious, but there is a reference in one of Swift's letters that establishes that the person with 'a great Estate' is Lord Anglesea. 19 June 1721, Swift

[88] *PW* 9, 18. See also Ecclesiastes 7.7.
[89] William Shakespeare, 'King Lear', in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1975), 990. See also page 982 for more comparisons between the 'Wise and the Fool'.

wrote to Ford that 'Ld [Sic] Anglesea is mortally fallen out with me about a passage in the Pamphlet of Irish Manufacture, where he was meant, but with no Reflection further that differing in Opinion, he has not been to see me, and I him.'[90]

The list opens with a complaint against the Irish, who in spite of the high import duties send their wool to France. The truth was, as shown above, that French merchants paid much more for Irish wool. So regardless of the import duties, the illegal trade with France was beneficial to Ireland.

Swift adds more to his list and includes the fact that '*the* Mayorality [Sic] *of this City is always executed by an* Inhabitant, *and often by a* Native, *which might as well be done by a* Deputy, *with a moderate Salary, whereby* POOR England *loseth* [Sic], *at least, one thousand Pounds a Year upon the Ballance* [Sic]'(*PW* 9, 18-19). One way for England to control the dependency of Ireland was the preferment of Englishmen in Irish offices. As mentioned above, almost all important government and ecclesiastical positions were held by English appointees. The incomes of Englishmen were higher when they took a position in Ireland since the living expenses there were much lower than in England. In the list Swift also states that the Lord Lieutenant lost much money on the government of Ireland. However, the Lord Lieutenant's salary was actually paid with Irish taxes, thus even more Irish money went to England. Swift also writes that '*When* a Divine *is sent over to a* Bishoprick [Sic] *here, with the Hopes of Five and Twenty Hundred Pounds a Year*; *upon his Arrival, he finds, alas*! *a dreadful Discount of Ten or Twenty* per Cent' (*PW* 9, 19). The truth was that Irish bishoprics attracted English priests because of their high incomes. So they were paid more by taking a position in Ireland than in England, but for someone like Swift, who longed for an English bishopric, there was less prestige in Ireland.

[90] *Corr* II, 391-2.

There is also a reference to the farmers of Wicklow and the coal miners in Ireland and the fact that they were using the market of Dublin instead of sending their coal to England. First of all, Irish coal mining was not a great business in Ireland since Ireland did not have as many mineral resources as England. Secondly, most of the trade that Ireland was able to continue with after the restrictions was in fact to the markets in England and especially London.

The last point on this list is the comparison of Irish manufacture and 'the Ballad upon Cotter'. The latter refers to an incident which happened on 7 May when Sir James Cotter, a Roman Catholic from County Cork was executed for rape. On 24 May '*The Ballad upon* Cotter' was sent to the officials at Dublin Castle by the mayor of Cork, and sung in the streets of Dublin.[91] In the *Proposal* Swift basically says that the ballad might as well have been sung about Irish Manufacture because it was more or less sentenced to death as well. What surprises him is that 'the ballad' was '*allowed to be sung in*…' the '*open Streets, under the very* Nose *of the* Government' (*PW* 9, 19). The government seemed to ignore the economical situation and thus could not care less about the continuation of Irish manufacture or the death of it for that matter.

The most controversial theme of the time was whether or not England should legislate for Ireland. In the next paragraph Swift treats the matter of England being able to make laws binding on Ireland without their consent. It is the word *consent* that is most important here. Swift is not able to find anyone, whether '*Scripture*, *Sanderson* and *Suarez*' that say anything about whether a law could '*bind Men without their own Consent*' (*PW* 9, 19). Here he echoes John Locke and his *Second Treatise of Government*. The main point in Locke's *Treatise* is that the ruled or the colonised are to give their consent to the ruler or coloniser, something Swift assures us, never had happened in the case of Ireland.

[91] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 54.

According to Locke, Man is born with natural rights and natural liberties. 'THE *Natural Liberty* of Man is to be free from any Superior Power on Earth, and not to be under the Will or Legislative Authority of Man, but to have only the Law of Nature for his Rule.'[92] When they chose to give up their natural rights and join a community in accordance with a social contract, their rights change. 'The *Liberty of Man, in Society*, is to be under no other Legislative Power, but that established, by consent, in the Common-wealth, nor under the Dominion of any Will, or Restraint of any Law, but what the Legislative shall enact, according to the Trust put in it.'[93]

Thus, Locke's overall point was that one cannot bind people without their consent. In joining a community they sign a contract where they agree to someone making decisions for them, but the contract also applies for the person given that authority. The primary concern of the ruler is his people. If the ruler acts against this agreement, not in the best interest of his subjects, the subjects are entitled to dismiss him as their ruler.

Swift asks in his *Proposal* 'whether a Law *to bind Men without their Consent* be obligatory *in foro Conscientiæ*'. Locke has the answer that '*Scripture, Sanderson* and *Suarez*' lack. No man can be bound without his consent, thus England could not make laws binding on Ireland without the consent of the Irish. For England to be able to do this there ought to be Irish representatives also in the English Parliament.

Swift wrote this pamphlet to promote domestic consumption and he did not agree with the restriction on Irish trade that had taken place during the last century. In fact, nothing had humbled him 'so much, or shewn a greater Disposition to a *contemptuous* Treatment of *Ireland* in some chief *Governors*, than that high Style of several Speeches from the *Throne*, delivered, as usual, after the *Royal Assent*, in *some Periods* of the two last *Reigns*'(*PW* 9, 20). Swift makes it clear that during the last two reigns (William (1689-

[92] Locke, *Second Treatise*, 301.
[93] Locke, *Second Treatise*, 301.

1702) and Anne (1702-1714)) several injustices have been done to the kingdom of Ireland by the English crown and government. Again he uses irony to make his point. 'Neither do I apprehend, how any *good Law* can pass, wherein the *King's* Interest is not as much concerned as that of the *People*'(*PW* 9, 20). The opposite was of course the case. It was more likely that the King was more concerned about his own interests than that of the people, something that Swift comes back to in the *Drapier*'s *Letters* when King George I gave a patent to coin copper coins for Ireland to a friend of his mistress, the Duchess of Kendal.

He also attacks ministers who, once they were in power, treated Ireland as a colony. Swift was greatly disappointed by many of his friends, especially Ormonde and the First Earl of Oxford, Robert Harley, who let him down by not giving him a position in England. Whether or not this had anything to do with the remarks in the text, many of the ministers during this period did look upon Ireland as a colony. Swift was especially disappointed with Oxford. Though a great admirer of Oxford, Swift 'had deceived himself into believing that he was Oxford's trusted confidant and adviser, but now saw that he had merely been a court jester, and hack'.[94] In 1729 he wrote to Bolingbroke that 'you were my Hero, but the other [Oxford] ne'er [Sic] was…'[95] When the Whigs came to power 'they perused "a direct contrary system of politics" to that of the Tories'.[96] In their treatment of Ireland, Swift saw nothing that caused him to change his opinion. In a letter to Oxford's son in 1730, he wrote that 'Your Ministers have ruined this Country, which Your Lordships father from principles of Justice prudence and humanity took care to preserve…'[97] However, it seems like both parties did very little to change the case of Ireland, but it was natural for Swift to feel more resentment towards his old friends, when

[94] Nokes, *Hypocrite Reversed*, 356.
[95] *Corr* III, 353.
[96] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 47.
[97] *Corr* III, 405.

they did absolutely nothing to improve something that Swift himself felt so passionately about, than when it was done by the other party.

By encouraging Irish manufacturers to establish a market for Irish goods in Ireland, Swift in a way accepted the restrictions and tried to find other solutions to the troubled Irish economy. He wanted to improve the whole country by using their own recourses. The Irish needed to see that they could do without imports from England and had to build up a national feeling as well as gaining an improved standard of living. The people of Ireland, at least the manufacturers, had a tendency to act against their own interest in order to gain immediate profit. However, they could hardly be blamed for this since the economy and the legislation of the country forced them to choose between making money to feed their families or starve.

The landlords had to face the same controversy. In the first paragraph of the *Proposal*, Swift makes a comment on the country landlords who 'are every where, by *penal Clauses*, absolutely prohibiting their Tenants from Plowing [Sic]…' (*PW* 9, 15). One effect of this, Swift writes 'is already seen in the prodigious Dearness of Corn, and the Importation of it from *London*, as the cheaper Market…' (*PW* 9, 15). The irony of this paragraph is evident. The landlords were forced to turn arable land into pasture and the result was shortage of corn. Obviously, Swift's greatest fear was that this would lead to depopulation, since shortage of corn led to starvation.

The indifference of landlords is compared to other European farmers later in the *Proposal* (*PW* 9, 21). Swift shows the supposed unique position of Ireland as opposed to other European countries. He writes that the landlords 'have already reduced the miserable *People* to a *worse Condition* than the *Peasants* in *France*, or the *Vassals* in *Germany* and *Poland*…' (*PW* 9, 21). Perhaps this is exaggerated, but he does have a point in that Ireland certainly was exposed to unnecessary restrictions. However, this is more likely to be used

by Swift as a tool to get attention to the condition of Ireland than to be an example of how different the situation was there as opposed to the rest of Europe.

The Irish economy and society in general was in need for a change. Their trade was under English control and the increasing misery of Ireland could be viewed everywhere in the country. According to Swift, it was so bad that 'Whoever travels this Country, and observes the *Face* of Nature, or the *Faces*, and Habits, and Dwellings of the *Natives*, will hardly think himself in a Land where either *Law*, *Religion*, or *common Humanity* is professed'(*PW* 9, 21). Even though poverty increased, the government had a money scheme on its agenda and that was the establishment of a national Bank. The Irish Parliament intended to create a national bank as modelled by the Bank of England. The project started when the shares of the South Sea Company turned out to be a great success with thousands of people buying their shares. A bank might have seemed like a good idea at the time, because money was without doubt scarce. However, Swift, who was very careful with his own finances, probably opposed the idea because to establish a bank meant that money became more available and Swift did not agree with a project that would benefit the moneyed interest at the expense of the landed classes (*PW* 9, xvi-xvii).
The only thing Swift cared about at the time was 'a sufficient Provision of *Hemp*, and *Caps*, and *Bells*, to distribute according to the several Degrees of *Honesty* and *Prudence* in *some Persons*' (*PW* 9, 22). Again, I think Swift here refers to Shakespeare's *King Lear*, where the caps and bells refer to the caps and bells of the Fool. Swift implies that only a fool could suggest such a scheme as the bank scheme. He writes that 'the Jest will be still the better, if it be true, as judicious Persons have assured me, that one Half of this Money will be *real*, and the other Half altogether imaginary'(*PW* 9, 22). I believe that Swift also here refers to the Fool's wise jest in *King Lear* and the way he faithfully follows Lear into madness.

An even worse insinuation is the provision of hemp to be distributed to the proposer (the government), since fibres from the hemp was used to make among other things, strong ropes that again was used to hang people. It did not make much difference whether the government hung the people since they were starving anyway. This is a pretty harsh implication and could easily have been one of the reasons why the pamphlet was considered treasonable.

The publishing of this tract did not have tremendous effect on Irish manufacture, but it showed a resistance to the English understanding of Ireland as a dependent kingdom and the lack of responsibility of the Irish government by letting the economical situation of Ireland getting out of control.

> The government's response to such sentiments was not long in coming. On May 30, 1720, the Grand Juries of the City and County of Dublin, managed by Lord Chancellor Brodrick (who had been created Viscount Midleton) and Chief Justice Whitshed, presented the tract as "false, scandalous, and seditious," and ordered the printer to be prosecuted.[98]

However, the jury would not find the printer guilty so Whitshed determined to prosecute the printer and ordered a new jury. The second jury followed the first's verdict and the case was dropped.

In a letter to Pope dated January 10, 1721 Swift wrote: 'I have written in this kingdom, a discourse to persuade the wretched people to wear their own Manufactures instead of those from England: This Treatise soon spread very fast, being agreeable to the sentiments of the whole nation, except of those gentlemen who had employments, or were Expectants' (*PW* 9, 26). Here he seems satisfied with the attention and this part of the letter gives us explicit information about what Swift wanted with this tract.

Earlier in his career, Swift had hoped for a higher position in England. He viewed Ireland as a place where he was sent in exile but after several disappointments, when he

[98] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 54.

thought he had had a chance of a position in England, recommended by one of his 'friends', he continued to believe that he would succeed one day. As long as Swift believed that he had a chance to get a career in England, he could not risk being connected with something that could offend his future employer. However, at some point he seems to have given up getting help form his friends in England. After the death of Queen Anne one would think that Swift got his hopes up again, since he believed that it was the Queen that blocked his preferment (*PW* 9, 146). 'For want of better employment, he threw himself into his new role as Dean with a martyr's zeal',[99] and from that point on, it seems to me that Swift concentrated more on his literary career than on a bishopric in the Church of England. I believe the main reason for him being anonymous in writing the *Proposal* was the fear of being arrested. Many of his comments offended both the English and the Irish government and after seeing what happened with his printer, he was wise in doing this.

No matter what happened, Swift could at least be content with the response it got from his readers. Despite the fact that most people in Dublin knew who he was and that he had written the tract, nobody turned him in. They probably looked upon him as someone that could speak for them and, as the letter to Pope reveals, most people agreed with the points made in the tract. 'Swift began to be regarded as their defender by his parishioners, the weavers of Dublin, and as a patriot by the Irish people.'[100] However nothing was done and the *Proposal* was ignored. This was perhaps not very surprising since, as mentioned above, at least three resolutions had been made in the past. Swift was well aware of this and probably did not believe that his proposal could be put into action. He did not believe that Ireland had the same opportunities as England or could compete with them on the commercial market. The Irish could not in fact have replaced English goods with their own. 'While labour was cheaper in Ireland, the organization, experience, and skill of

[99] Nokes, *Hypocrite Reversed*, 220.
[100] Norman Jeffares, 'Swift and the Ireland of his day', *Irish University Review*, Autumn, 1972, 129.

English manufacturers made it easy for them often to undersell and generally to outclass the Irish except in coarse materials.'[101] Ireland lacked the mineral resources, in particular coal and iron, on which the remarkable growth of Britain's industrial wealth so heavily depended.[102] However, it was not Swift's intention to replace English goods on the international market. He tried, by focusing on economic issues, to force through direct action in order to improve the condition of Ireland by preventing the increasing poverty. Swift tried to draw attention to the situation in Ireland in the spring of 1720 by promoting a home-market based economy. Inevitably, he had to take into account the English policy towards Ireland, since that was the main explanation to the present condition. The *Proposal* is thus interesting as historical document, commenting on Ireland in 1720, but also as an example of Swift as a great satirist and political writer. In addition to this, I think that the topic of Swift as a political commentator is interesting because Swift does not only comment on what he sees, but he also gives advice to his readers.

Swift's intention might have been to promote Irish trade, but in order to improve Irish economy, the restrictions had to be abolished and that was up to the English government. Later in the *Drapier's Letters*, Swift tries to do the same thing by focusing on the Irish economy and eventually put it into a political perspective.

[101] Ehrenpreis, III, 126.
[102] Beckett, 'Eighteenth-Century Ireland', in *NHI*, lvi.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE DRAPIER'S LETTERS

Swift 1721-1724

According to Swift's correspondence, the period between 1721 and 1724 was influenced by several and prolonged attacks of severe deafness. The autumn of 1724 was particularly bad. In October, he wrote to his friend Knightley Chetwode (1650-1720), the dean of Gloucester, that he had 'the noise of seven watermills' in his ears and that he moped at home, not being able to keep company.[103] Swift had occupied himself during the summer with building a wall around his private garden, Naboth's Vineyard, and the planting of elms and general tending of the deanery gardens. He complained that the building of the wall would ruin his health and fortune.[104] During the autumn Swift was very much involved in writing the *Drapier's Letters* so obviously he did more than 'moap in' his chambers.[105]

Ambiguity in his correspondence can also be seen in his early letters from the period 1721-24. Already in January 1722 Swift complained of worsened health. In spite of this, it was a very busy period. He wrote a lot of letters advising his friends on whatever subject they had written to him about. He travelled a lot, especially to Quilca to see the Sheridans, and often together with Mrs. Johnson and Stella, though these trips were made for Swift to recover from his increased deafness.

Something which must have had a tremendous effect on Swift, and which is only briefly mentioned in a letter of 9 July 1724, is the death of the First Earl of Oxford, Robert Harley, who died 21 May. Swift had met Oxford in 1710 when he was the head of the Tory ministry. He had approached Oxford to obtain his support in trying to restore the First

[103] *Corr* III, 36-7.
[104] *Corr* III, 14.
[105] *Corr* III, 37.

Fruits in Ireland 'and as soon as he [Oxford] had presented Swift's memorial to the Queen, he [Oxford] approached him [Swift] about writing the Tory weekly, the *Examiner*'.[106] Thus, from 1710-1711 Swift contributed to the writing of Tory propaganda.

The first reference to Wood's halfpence in Swift's correspondence is in a letter to Ford in February 1724: 'I can not tell whether I shall see you in the Spring, for I am afraid our Farthings will not pass in and we are daily threatened with them. If they pass, they will bring you English men with Irish Estates, hither with a Vengeance.'[107] 2 April Swift admitted to Ford, though he probably knew already, that he had written 'a small Pamphlet under the Name of a Draper…'[108] with reference to the first of the *Drapier's Letters*. However, in a letter to Chetwode in September he wrote that 'There is a Drapier very popular, but what is that to me?'[109] So it is only in the letters to Ford that he actually admitted that he was the author of the *Drapier's Letters* and commented directly on them. The last reference to Ford about the Drapier is from 27 November where he also commented on the case of Harding, the printer.

The political and economic situation of Ireland 1721-1724

In 1720 a proposal was made to establish a national bank in Ireland. After the collapse of South Sea shares, most people were against the scheme. In a letter to the leader of the opposition, Archbishop King, Swift wrote that 'I hear you are likely to be the sole Opposer of the Bank, and you will certainly miscarry, because it would prove a most perfidious Thing. Bankrupts are always for setting up Banks: How then can you think a Bank will fail of a Majority in both Houses?' The scheme had been approved by the King in July 1721, but was rejected in both Houses of Parliament in December.[110]

[106] Nokes, *Hypocrite Reversed*, 122.
[107] *Corr* III, 5.
[108] *Corr* III, 9.
[109] *Corr* III, 34.
[110] *Corr* II, 405.

The economic condition after the burst of the South Sea Bubble was serious. Unemployment was high and poverty and starvation rising.[111] For relief, the government offered grants of £100. In addition to this, collections 'were made in churches, and a special performance of *Hamlet* was given in April, on behalf of the weavers, for which Swift and Sheridan wrote a prologue and epilogue urging the ladies to forego their silks in favour of honest Irish wool'.[112] However, the charities did not bring in much money.

'The greatest weakness of the Irish economy was the lack of capital; and the steady drain of payments to absentees…'[113] Gold and silver drained away in trade, because the value of gold coins granted for Ireland was too high. Thus, traders and bankers exported silver and imported gold, 'which, unfortunately, could not be used in the ordinary commerce of shillings and pence…'[114] In addition to the shortage of money, the little they had, were old so that 'a memorial was presented to the Lords of the Treasury complaining of the base quality of copper coinage then circulating…'[115]

In previous reigns a policy of licensing private persons to make halfpence and pence to be used in Ireland had been established. The Irish had petitioned for a national mint several times, but it was never granted. 'In 1634 both Houses of Parliament joined in an address to the King beseeching him that such an establishment should be erected, that the coin of Ireland should be of the same standard and intrinsic value of that of England, and that the profits of the coinage should accrue to the Government.'[116] The petition was ignored and the granting of patents to private persons continued.

During the reign of James II, Sir J. Knox, Lord Mayor of Dublin, was granted a patent for issuing copper coins. In the following reign, Lord Cornwallis was granted a

[111] Nokes, *Hypocrite Reversed*, 268-9.
[112] Nokes, *Hypocrite Reversed*, 269.
[113] Beckett, *Modern Ireland*, 171.
[114] Ehrenpreis, III, 188.
[115] Lecky, *18th Century I.*, 451. All the details about the condition of the Irish coinage are based on Lecky, *18th Century I.*, 449-51.
[116] Lecky, *18th Century I.*, 449.

similar patent but when he wanted to renew his patent in 1700, the Lord Justices urged that the government should coin money and not the people themselves. They believed that a government mint had to be strongly supervised to ensure the intrinsic value of the coinage. However, no mint was erected.

Date and Occasion: Wood's Patent

12 July 1722, a patent for issuing copper halfpence for Ireland was granted to William Wood (1671-1730), an ironmaster from Wolverhampton. That is, it was actually granted to King George's mistress, the Duchess of Kendal, and sold to Wood for £10,000. The patent was for 360 tons of copper and coins to the value of £108,000. Objections soon arrived and Wood was accused of using the patent for personal profit and thus threatening the Irish economy. The first protest was from the Commissioners of Revenue, who claimed there was no need for small change. As shown above, this was in fact wrong.[117]

The Irish Parliament set up a committee in September 1723 to inquire into the alleged accusations against Wood and the patent. Both houses of Parliament presented addresses to the King with their objections, accusing Wood of fraud.[118] The King replied in November, promising that he would do 'every thing… in his power for the satisfactions of his People.[119] In 1724 Walpole ordered the English Privy Council to examine the objections, but they could not finish the examination because papers and witnesses from Ireland never arrived. Lord Lieutenant Carteret (1690-1763) had tried to get hold of papers and witnesses to support the accusations, but both houses refused to present them with the inquired information. 24 July, the English Privy Council published a report of their examination of Wood's halfpence, where they presented the accusations made by the Irish

[117] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 86. See also Herbert Davis, *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, Vol. 10 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1941), x-xi. Hereafter *PW* 10.
[118] Ferguson gives a good overview of what happened before and right after the granting of the patent. I have therefore based my outline of this on *J. S. and I.*, 89-90. I have chosen to use Ferguson as my main source since much of the material he cites has been impossible for me to get hold of due to the age of the documents. I believe Ferguson to be a reliable source since I have not found any major objections to the details he presents. However, the address to the king from the Irish House of Commons is to found in *EHD*, X, 686.
[119] See 'The Report of the Privy Council' in *PW* 10, 192.

and the unwillingness of the Irish to produce the papers needed for the examination (*PW* 10, 191-203). The report claimed that nothing could be said to be clandestine in the granting of the patent. Wood's witnesses had 'directly asserted the great want of small Money for Change, and the great Damage that Retailers and Manufactures suffered for want of such Copper Money…' (*PW* 10, 199-200).

In addition to the examination made by the Council, Wood had to defend himself and offered to reduce the amount originally authorised to £40, 000 in order to calm down the Irish. 'MR. WOOD having been heard by this Council, produced his several Witnesses, all the Papers and Precedents, which he thought Material, having been read and considered, and having as he conceived, fully vindicated both the Patent, and the Execution thereof ' (*PW* 10, 201-2).

Since the value and weight of the coins were among the main objections, an assay of the value was established by Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), the Master of Mint, on 27 April (*PW* 10, 187-88). Newton affirmed that the coins he had examined were as good as required. A report of Newton's Assay was sent to the Treasury, but the reactions in Ireland continued to increase.[120] It was at this point Swift joined the debate.

Early responses and objections to the patent

As shown above, the fact that Wood was given the patent was not in itself unusual. It was not the patent that caused reactions because no one questioned the King's right to issue patents. It was the way Wood obtained it and his intentions with it that made people react. The objections were well justified. Wood had bribed the Duchess of Kendal to secure the patent. He had been willing to pay £10,000 for it, so he must have anticipated a large profit for himself. In addition to the bribery, the circumstances around the actual minting of the coins were suspicious. The coins were not to be minted at the Tower, where the minting

[120] For more information about the patent see *NHI*, 111-13. See also Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 83-96.

usually took place, but in Bristol. At the Tower there were supervisors and authorised comptrollers. In Bristol no authorities supervised Wood, and his comptroller was to be one of his co-workers.[121] Without the safeguards that the Tower could provide, many were afraid that the intrinsic value of the coins would not be right and thus that Wood was deceiving the Irish. The low intrinsic value of coins circulating in Ireland at the time already threatened the supply of gold and silver, so it was important that the value was correctly set for a more stabilised Irish currency.

Though Ireland was in need of small change, the amount that was to be minted caused strong reactions. Ireland's total currency was approximately £400,000, so the granted £108,000 made up a large part of the total currency. Even the £40,000 that the patent was reduced to was more than needed. Primate Boulter estimated that £10,000 or £20, 000 would have been enough.[122] The Drapier in his second *Letter* claimed that £25,000 would have been sufficient (*PW* 10, 16).

In addition to these economic objections to the patent, there were also political objections. Ireland's status as a British colony was emphasised by the fact that the minting took place in England and not in Ireland. Ireland was still denied to mint her own coins, and the complaints were many. ' "We shal [Sic] speak our minds freely," Midleton [1660-1728] threatened, "in what maner [Sic] the nation hath been treated in the matter of Mr.Wood from the beginning to the end." ' William King 'declared that the Irish had been treated "with the utmost contempt; endeavoured to be imposed on as fools and children, as if we had not common understandings, or knew when we were abused." '[123]

What added heat to an already stressed debate was the fact that Wood's copper coins were in circulation before the granting of the patent was sent to Ireland. Before the patent

[121] The following details about the early responses to the patent are based on the information found in Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 85-95.
[122] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 86.
[123] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 85.

was granted, King had heard that there was 'a design to coin brass money for Ireland…' He immediately acknowledged what this would mean: 'if it be not managed with the utmost caution, it will drain the Kingdom of the little gold and silver that is left in it.'[124]

Private citizens as well as representatives of the Parliament were strongly against the patent. The Commissioners of Revenue in Dublin sent their protest to Lord Lieutenant Grafton's secretary and the Treasury in London. In addition to the Houses of Parliament, James Maculla published his thoughts in *Ireland's Consternation*, warning the Irish of potential bribery.[125] During 1723 and the beginning of 1724 at least five pamphlets against Wood had been published by private citizens.

Wood responded to the addresses of the Irish Parliament in *The Flying Post* 23 October 1723. He stated that 'his "Credit and Reputation" had been injured' and 'arrogantly accused Parliament of misrepresenting the terms of his patent. The Irish, he charged, opposed his coinage only because the grant had been given to an Englishman'.[126]

Even though many pamphlets and addresses had been published, it was not until Swift, disguised as the Drapier entered the debate that one was able to see a more united campaign against the patent and especially Walpole and the Whig ministry. The '*lower and poorer Sort of People*' needed someone to defend them against '*cold* Easterly *Winds*' (*PW* 10, 82).

Swift's Drapier

Swift gives a full biographical account of his persona M. B. Drapier, a draper of St. Francis Street, in the fifth *Letter* to Viscount Molesworth.

> I WAS bred at a Free-School, where I acquired some little Knowledge in the *Latin Tongue*. I served my Apprenticeship in *London*, and there set up my self with good Success; until by the *Death of some Friends, and the Misfortunes of others*, I returned into this Kingdom; and began to employ my Thoughts in cultivating the *Woollen – Manufacture* through all its Branches; wherein I met with great

[124] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 88
[125] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 87 and 89. See also Ehrenpreis, III., 196.
[126] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 94-5.

> Discouragement, and powerful Opposers [Sic]; whose Objections appeared to me very strange and singular…HOWEVER, I was so mortified, that I resolved, for the future, to sit quietly in my Shop, and deal in *common Goods*, like the rest of my Brethren… (*PW* 10, 82).

Even though Swift chose to use a persona there are plenty of hints in the *Letters* that Swift was the author. The Drapier's attachment to St. Francis Street and the closeness to the Cathedral can in itself imply the author's identity. However, if it had not been for the familiar tone often heard in the Cathedral, and knowledge of Swift's earlier writings, this realistic reference could not have implied Swift as the author as clearly as it actually does. As Herbert Davis writes in *The Satire of Jonathan Swift*: 'The opening sentences of Letter I, to readers in Dublin in March 1724, would, I think, at once be recognizable as having the tone which they were accustomed to hear from the pulpit of St. Patrick's. And as if to make sure of this he associates himself on the very next page with the *Proposal*… which in Dublin was certainly known to have been written by him.'[127]

From the biographical account of the Drapier, a comparison between the lives of the Dean and the Drapier can be made. Swift got his education at Kilkenny School, where he was taught Greek, Latin, and morality.[128] He continued his education at Trinity College, Dublin, and started to work as an apprentice in the household of Sir William Temple in London 1691. He remained there until there was an argument between them concerning Swift's duties to Temple. Swift had hoped that Temple would help him to get a better position in church or state, but this never happened. He therefore left Temple in 1694 to take holy orders in Ireland. On Temple's recommendation he was ordained deacon, but soon went back to Temple at Moor Park. After the death of Temple in 1699 Swift went back to Dublin as secretary and chaplain of Lord Justice Berkeley. After this Swift went back and forth between England and Ireland in order to pursue a better position, until 1714

[127] Herbert Davis, *The Satire of Jonathan Swift* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), 68.
[128]The information about Swift's education and position at the Temple's is based on Nokes, *Hypocrite Reversed*, 9-11, 25-29, 34.

when he, after '*Death of some Friends* [Temple], *and the Misfortunes of Others* [Oxford's ministry which lost their power when Queen Anne died]' was installed as Dean.[129] There is not much in common between the Drapier and Swift in terms of how they got their education. Ironically, the only thing they have in common is the fact that they are both educated. However, this is interesting to the comparison between the Dean and the Drapier.

Swift characterises the Drapier as a humble tradesman with a general knowledge, sometimes above what might be expected of someone of his class.[130] Through the Drapier's inconsistency of tone, especially in *Letters* three and four, the reader is given clues about the real author. In these two *Letters* it is possible to hear traces of Dean Swift and distinguish them from the Drapier. However, it is difficult to distinguish clearly between Swift writing as the Dean and Swift writing as M. B. Drapier. After all the Drapier is a fictitious character created by Swift and it would have been strange if it was not possible to find any elements of Swift in the *Letters*. The fact that the Drapier is a fictitious character makes it even more difficult to compare him to Swift. One can learn much about Swift and his views by reading his works and examine his life. With the Drapier, on the other hand, we only have what Swift has given him. My point is that it is difficult to treat the Drapier as singular author kept apart from Swift when you know Swift created him. However, one way to distinguish the Drapier from Swift is to compare the tone and style of *Drapier's Letters* with one of Swift's sermons to see if there are any characteristic features that can be identified as either Swift's or the Drapier's. I have chosen to take a closer look at the sermon *Doing Good*, which was, like the *Letters*, written on the occasion of Wood's halfpence. It shows, yet again, that Swift's background as a political writer was also visible in his sermons. Both the *Letters* and the sermon are both

[129] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 129.
[130] Ewald, *The Masks of Jonathan Swift* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954)104. Hereafter *Masks*. See also Downie, *Political Writer*, 239.

written to encourage the people of Ireland to resist Wood's halfpence. There are several less positive descriptions of Wood and quite a few analogies to Scripture.

While Swift in the *Letters* encourages public spirit by appealing to common sense, he invokes public spirit as a duty to God in the sermon. 'Whoever is blessed with a true public spirit, God will certainly put it into his way to make use of that blessing, for the ends it was given him, by some means or other…' (*PW* 9, 234), and a true public spirit is 'to consult our own private Good before the private Good of any other person whatsoever' (*PW* 9, 232). However,

> our love to our neighbour in his public capacity, as he is a member of that great body, the commonwealth, under the same government with ourselves; and this is usually called love of the public, and is a duty to which we are more strictly obliged than even that of loving ourselves; because therein ourselves are also contained, as well as our neighbours, in one great body (*PW* 9, 233).

So a true public spirit of 'doing good' is a duty to God. Although the Drapier in the beginning of the first *Letter* invokes God too by writing 'WHAT I intend now to say to you, is, next to your Duty to God, and the Care of your Salvation, of the greatest Concern to your selves, and your Children; your *Bread* and *Cloathing* [Sic], and every common Necessary of Life entirely depend upon it ' (*PW* 10, 3), the rest of the *Letters* are written to get the Irish make up their minds about what is best for their country. The Drapier gives advice on what to do in this situation, but apart from giving a few examples from the Bible to illustrate his point, there are much less direct references to God in the *Letters*.

In the passage from the first *Letter*, a distinction between the Dean and the Drapier is impossible. This might as well have been written in the sermon. And this illustrates the problem with making a comparison like this. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Swift did not seem to have a different style when he wrote his sermons than when he wrote his tracts. Obviously the tone is somewhat different. *Doing Good* for instance, is less aggressive in tone than the *Drapier's Letters*. It is firm and persuasive as the *Letters*, but it

lacks the several attacks of 'violent' language that make the *Drapier's Letters* stand out. Not just in connection with William Wood, but with the attacks on the Irish and English in general. In the sermon there can be no doubt that many of the references to men who have injured the public good are directed against Wood. However, as opposed to the third and the fourth *Letter*, the tone is firm rather than aggressive.

To apply this to the difference between the Dean and the Drapier, it is possible to see a difference in the sense that the Drapier's supposed humbleness at certain points in the *Letters* are overshadowed by Swift's anger and vindictiveness towards the English government. This is especially visible in the fourth *Letter* where Swift can no longer hide his anger behind the Drapier and can no longer direct his anger towards Wood. In addition to the anger aspect, it is possible to see traces of Swift where the Drapier has access to more knowledge than what is expected of him. I will come back to this as I approach the different *Letters*.

But why would Swift chose to use a pseudonym? He had written the *Proposal* without signing his name on the front page and could easily have done the same with the *Drapier's Letters*. However, the Drapier does not only serve as a pseudonym to hide the identity of the author. He is a spokesman for the average Irishman, representing both the uneducated and the educated. He warns them against the halfpence and the dangers it holds for their country. Last but not least, the Drapier tells the Irish what they should do in this controversy.[131]

The Drapier also functions as an antagonist to Wood in the battle between Wood and the Irish people. However, in the end, Wood is just a pawn in the real battle between Swift and the Whig minister Robert Walpole (1676-1745). Obviously, if the Drapier was to

[131] Ewald, *Masks*, 100.

'win' the battle, it would be more humiliating for the English government than it would have been if they were defeated by a Dean.[132]

After the controversy of the South Sea Bubble, there had to be political consequences. Partly as a result of these, Walpole came to power in 1721.[133] He had not prompted the scheme of the South Sea Company and was thus free from blame. He was determined to become Prime Minister and took advantage of the situation to establish closer ties to the King and Parliament. He was appointed First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer in April. As a leading minister Walpole was wrong to underestimate the seriousness of the Irish objections to Wood's patent. He postponed action for six months,[134] and assured Grafton (1683-1757) in 1723 that the Irish 'agitation was merely "a popular run without consideration" '. He was indifferent to the breach of protocol in that the halfpence had been in circulation before a copy of the grant was sent to Dublin.

It is especially in the fourth *Letter* that we find a direct attack on Walpole. However there are implicit references to him and the Whig ministry throughout all the *Letters*. Swift implies that Walpole was behind the attempt to force halfpence on Ireland and uses mock-encomium to convince his readers of this. He praises Walpole in certain parts of the *Letters*, but is really blaming him. I will come back to this as I approach the different *Letters*.

The Drapier's Letters

In a letter to Ford in April 1724 Swift wrote that he had talked to both Midleton and King about the 'farthings'.[135] So it is very likely that he was asked by them to join the debate. After all, as mentioned above, Archbishop King was the leader of the opposition to

[132] Ewald, *Masks*, 109.
[133] Downie, *Political Writer*, 253-4.
[134] The information on Walpole's indifference is based on Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 88-91.
[135] D. N. Smith, *Letters to Ford*, 106.

the patent. However, critics such as Ferguson and Ehrenpreis differ slightly on this point. While Ferguson states firmly that there 'can be no doubt that Swift was asked by King and Midleton to intervene in the controversy',[136] Ehrenpreis modifies his opinion by saying that if 'Archbishop King, Lord Abercorn, and Lord Midleton were responsible for leading the campaign, they were probably responsible for involving Swift'.[137]

There was nothing new in Swift's contribution to this debate. He inherited his arguments from others, especially Archbishop King, who had already commented on Wood's halfpence.[138] When he wrote about Irish manufacture, Swift had pretty much initiated his own campaign for the boycott of foreign clothing. The *Drapier's Letters* however, imposed order on a quite disorganised debate.[139]

Together with *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture* and *A Modest Proposal*, the *Drapier's Letters* were to become Swift's most famous works on Irish affairs. They are addressed to different groups of Irish society. Their aim is to inform the Irish of the circumstances concerning the patent and how this would affect the public. Like the *Proposal*, the *Letters* are written to unite the Irish in their battle for an improved and independent economy, but also generally to focus attention on the constitutional relationship between England and Ireland.

As with the *Proposal*, the *Drapier's Letters* have two themes. In the first two *Letter*s, the emphasis is on Irish economy and the economical effects of Wood's patent. In the third *Letter* the emphasis shifts towards legislative concerns and a focus on the relationship with England, a theme which is fully developed in the fourth *Letter*. I believe Swift's intention was to help the Irish realise how serious their situation was and how it would be affected by Wood's halfpence. However, I think Swift was exaggerating the

[136] Ferguson *J. S. and I.*, 96
[137] Ehrenpreis, III, 206.
[138] Ehrenpreis, III, 206
[139] Ehrenpreis, III, 187.

severity of granting the patent, at least economically. I believe the patent was more of a threat to the constitutional situation than to the Irish economy itself, and that it was this Swift was trying to show in the *Drapier's Letters*. The objections made against the patent were primarily economic, but at the heart of these economic objections were deeper political issues.

Swift's response to the political and economic situation: *The Drapier's Letters*

Letter One

The first *Letter* on Wood's halfpence was written and published during the early spring of 1724 and was dedicated to 'the *Tradesmen*, *Shop-Keepers*, *Farmers*, and *Country-People* in General, of the Kingdom of IRELAND.' In a letter to Ford in April the same year Swift wrote that he had 'sent out a small Pamphlet under the Name of a Draper, laying the whole Vilany [Sic] open, and advising People what to do; about 2000 of them have been dispersd [Sic] by Gentlemen in severall [Sic] Parts of the Country, but one can promise nothing from such Wretches as the Irish People'.[140] To give more people access to the pamphlet, Swift paid for the publishing himself and told the printer to sell them at the lowest price. He also advised the readers to share their copies so that as many as possible could read it.

In the first *Letter*, the Drapier explains all the details of the patent with care so that everyone will understand and states clearly his intentions from the beginning. The *Letter* has a very simple structure. The first part is concerned with the response of the Irish to the information given them about the situation of their country. It opens with a plea to the readers that they should take his warnings seriously. 'WHAT I intend now to say to you, is, next to your Duty to God, and the Care of your Salvation, of the greatest Concern to your selves, and your Children; your *Bread* and *Cloathing* [Sic], and every common Necessary

[140] D. N. Smith, *Letters to Ford*, 106.

of Life entirely depend upon it' (*PW* 10, 3). The Drapier invokes God, salvation and Christianity to impress on his readers the severity of the situation.[141] Whether intentionally or not, the Drapier here gives his readers a hint to the author's identity by emphasising his own vocational authority in exhorting Christian virtues.

In a way, this *Letter* starts where the *Proposal* ends. At the end of the *Proposal* there was a reference to a bank scheme and the need for a more stable financial institution in order to improve the Irish economy. In the third paragraph of this *Letter*, the Drapier refers to the prosecution of Waters, the printer of the *Proposal*. He defends the pamphlet and says that it had no other design than to promote a boycott of foreign manufacture and 'said nothing against *the King* or *Parliament*, or *any* Person whatsoever… ' (*PW* 10, 3). Of course this is ironic. The Drapier knew very well that the accusations against the Government in the *Proposal* had created turmoil and that the printer had been arrested because the pamphlet had been viewed as 'false, scandalous, and seditious'. From the reference in this *Letter*, it is obvious that Swift was not satisfied with the response the *Proposal* received. The Irish had not taken the boycott seriously, and he now warned them that this time, in order to help themselves, they should.

With simple language, the Drapier of St. Francis Street goes on to give the readers 'the *plain Story of the Fact*' (*PW* 10, 4) and explains to them how the granted patent would affect the daily lives of the lowest classes. He not only informs them of their rights, but also how they should act to insist on them.

He opens with references to earlier patents and the currency in Ireland. He refers to the scarcity of halfpence and the fact that 'Several Applications were made to *England*' to give the Irish the liberty to coin new halfpence in Ireland, but had been ignored (*PW* 10, 4). I believe the Drapier offers this survey so that the Irish could see for themselves that

[141] Ehrenpreis, III, 209.

Wood's patent could actually make them suffer even more than they already did. Their situation was severe already, but the introduction of the halfpence and its consequences would, if the Drapier was right, ruin their trades and turn them into beggars.

As the *Letter* proceeds, the readers are given clues that it is not only the economic situation that the Drapier is concerned about, but also the constitutional relationship between England and Ireland. In this *Letter* there are several hints to what (perhaps) Swift, rather than the Drapier, really wanted to write about. After all, the Drapier is a fictitious character created by Swift, so everything the Drapier stands for, Swift is really behind. This is especially true when it comes to the subject of Irish independence. I believe the Drapier was created to unite the Irish against the halfpence on an economic level, while Swift himself was to be responsible for what the constitutional parts of the halfpence scheme would mean to Ireland. In the first *Letters* it is Wood and his project to ruin the Irish economy that the Drapier comments on. In the next two *Letters* the topic of Irish independence is allowed to reach the surface at the same time as Swift is allowing himself to get more and more excited about his true intention in writing the *Letters*, that is to put focus on the constitutional relationship between England and Ireland. I think that in *Letter* three and four Swift could no longer hide behind the Drapier. The Drapier was a tool he used to present his cause, but at a certain point Swift got too eager to show that the English government and the King were responsible for the condition of Ireland.

Take his representation of William Wood as an example. Ultimately, it was the King who granted Wood his patent, and was thus to blame. However, the Drapier could not attack the King and his court directly, so he found a way around it and instead personally attacked the '*mean ordinary Man*', Wood himself. He describes Wood as '*a mean ordinary Man, a Hard-Ware Dealer*' (*PW* 10, 4), and an '*ordinary Fellow*' (*PW* 10, 4), but treats the King with utmost respect and blames his ill advisers. He states that if the King

knew that the patent would ruin Ireland, 'he would immediately recall it, and perhaps shew [Sic] his Displeasure to SOME BODY OR OTHER: *But the Word to the Wise is enough*' (*PW* 10, 5). However, as the *Letters* proceed, it becomes clear that although the treatment of George I seems respectful in the first *Letters*, as Swift's authorship becomes more apparent, the *Letters* become more and more ironic.[142] As in the *Proposal*, Swift, through the Drapier, reminds his reader that the King of England is also the King of Ireland and should thus act in the best interest of both countries. If it had not been in the King's power to recall the patent (which it was), he could have ordered his government to do so. The irony is striking. Swift's main opponent was Sir Robert Walpole and the Whig ministers, so it is doubtful that Swift, or the Drapier for that matter, should call them '*Wise*' without being ironic.

The first thing the Drapier needed to do was to make sure that the Irish were aware that no one was obliged to accept these copper coins. He says that Wood is deceiving them and will continue to do so. What he emphasises is first and foremost the value differences between the English and Irish halfpence.

> Now you must know, that the HALF-PENCE and FARTHINGS in *England* pass for very little more than they are worth: And if you should beat them to Pieces, and sell them to the *Brazier*, you would not lose much above a Penny in a Shilling. But Mr. WOOD made his HALF-PENCE of such *Base Metal*, and so much smaller than the *English* ones, that the *Brazier* would hardly give you above a *Penny* of good Money for a *Shilling* of his… (*PW* 10, 4).

Since Wood obtained the patent through bribery his intentions are also questioned. The Drapier tries to blame Wood for the crisis in the Irish economy and make him the scapegoat:

> PERHAPS you will wonder how such an *ordinary Fellow* as this Mr. WOOD could have so much Interest as to get His MAJESTY'S Broad Seal for so great a Sum of bad Money, to be sent to this poor Country; and that all the *Nobility* and *Gentry* here could not obtain the same Favour, and let us make our own HALF-PENCE, as we used to do… We are at a great Distance from the *King's Court*, and have no

[142] Irvin Ehrenpreis, *Acts of Implication*: *Suggestion and Covert Meaning in the Works of Dryden, Swift, Pope, and Austen* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1978) 67-8. Hereafter *Acts of Implication*.

> body there to solicit for us, although a great Number of *Lords* and *Squires*, whose Estates are here, and are our Countrymen, spend all their *Lives* and *Fortunes* there. But this same Mr. WOOD was able to attend constantly for his own Interest; he is an ENGLISHMAN and had GREAT FRIENDS, and it seems knew very well *where to give Money*, to those that would speak to OTHERS that could speak to the KING, and would tell a FAIR STORY (*PW* 10, 4-5).

In this paragraph the Drapier implicitly blames the King for allowing Wood the patent, but this is overshadowed by Wood's allegedly selfish intentions. The Drapier veils his accusations of the King by giving the reader the impression of a deceived king. However, it is clear that Wood used illegal methods to obtain the patent and since the Irish did not have any representatives in England, it would be difficult for them to object before the patent was already granted. However, the objections did come and as stated above, the Commissioners of the Revenue were the first to refuse to accept the coins.

In order to make it clear for all the Irish that he wants them to refuse to accept the coins, the Drapier uses examples from several trades (tradesmen, shopkeepers farmers), as mentioned in the title. He emphasises the fact that at one point, there will be some that will refuse to accept the money because of its low value. It was claimed that Wood made smaller halfpence than the English and that the value differed so much that many would refuse to accept the same amount in halfpence as in any other currency. It was established by law that rents for example were to be paid in gold and silver. The Drapier gives examples of the differences in value and what the same amount of halfpence will mean to the shopkeepers and traders.

> IF a *Squire* has a mind to come to Town to buy Cloaths [Sic] and Wine and Spices for himself and Family, or perhaps to pass the Winter here; he must bring with him five or six Horses loaden [Sic] with *Sacks* as the *Farmers* bring their Corn; and when his Lady comes in her Coach to our Shops, it must be followed by a Car loaded with Mr. WOOD'S Money (*PW* 10, 6).

In doing this he tries to make even the members of the poorest and lowest trades see that Wood's halfpence would have severe effects on their lives too, even though they, in their daily trading, only dealt with small amounts of money as opposed to others. The Drapier's

calculations, even though they seem very applicable, were probably fictitious or at least highly exaggerated. But, whether or not the calculations were correct, they were at least successful in gaining the attention of the lower classes.

In this *Letter* repetition is one of the Drapier's main techniques. In addition to repeating his main points such as the value difference between the English and Irish coins (*PW* 10, 4, 6, 7), the right of the Irish to deny the coins (*PW* 10, 5, 8, 9) and the drainage of Irish money to England (*PW* 10, 5, 8), he puts up a list of his main points on pages 11-12. This supports the Drapier's aim to get through to the lower classes of the Irish people in that repetition increases the possibility of the readers understanding what he is saying. I think that the Drapier was successful in approaching his audience in this *Letter*, because he commented on and explained important issues that confused the common Irishman. The impact the Drapier had on his readers was probably greater than expected. As will be shown later in this chapter, the Drapier, in the second *Letter*, complains to Harding, the printer, that all the copies of the first *Letter* were sold out. This must mean that the printer did not predict the popularity of the *Drapier's Letters*.

The Drapier's main argument is that 'his Majesty's *Patent* doth not oblige…' the Irish 'to take this *Money*, so the *Laws* have not given the *Crown* a Power of forcing the *Subjects* to take what *Money* the *King* pleases…' (*PW* 10, 8). He summarises on page 11 what the Irish are obliged to accept and not, and gives a final plea that the Irish should 'Refuse this *Filthy Trash*' (*PW* 10, 11), that is, Wood's money. This is supported by laws from as early as the reign of Edward I, which the Drapier has had translated into English from Latin. After explaining the case and what to do, the Drapier makes the controversy a battle between Wood and himself.

To make Wood seem even more like a villain, the Drapier makes a comparison to the French government and how they are, after sinking the value of the money to a very

low level, 'coining it a-new at a much higher Value; which however is not the Thousandth Part so wicked as this *abominable Project* of Mr. *Wood*' (*PW* 10, 8). This casting of Wood as the villain makes it easier for the Drapier to approach his target. It would make the readers take a stand and support the Drapier instead of Wood. The laws the Drapier mentions state that gold and silver is the only lawful payment, and thus the only payment the Irish were obliged to accept. Wood might circulate his coins, but if the merchants and traders refuse to accept them, there will be no need for them.

This is a very clear example of how the Drapier sometimes makes an effort to cover over his superior knowledge. Just because he is a drapier, it does not necessarily mean that he can not be well read. However, at certain points in the text he seems a bit too well reflected to be accepted as a common drapier. This is especially evident when it appears that the Drapier has taken the trouble to get some of the laws of coining translated from Latin. He preaches history, law, and morality to make the Irish refuse Wood's copper coins, something that is not easily recognised as a drapier's work. It just seems too technical for a drapier to know so much about the statutes. For the first time in this *Letter* the real author, Dean Swift, shines through.[143] Throughout the *Letter* Swift was successful in displaying himself as a Drapier, but when he is trying to support his arguments with statutes, the humble tradesman is overshadowed by the Dean.

The Drapier continues his battle against Wood in a second *Letter*, published in August 1724.

[143] Ewald, *Masks*, 104. See also Ehrenpreis, III, 210.

Letter Two

The Drapier's second *Letter* was addressed to 'Mr. *Harding* the Printer, upon Occasion of a *Paragraph* in his News-Paper of August 1st, 1724, relating to Mr. *Wood*'s Half-Pence'. The paragraph the Drapier refers to was a report in the newspaper, *The Postboy*, dated 25 July (*PW* 10, 189-90). It was a report of the hearing of Wood and Newton's assay.

Though the *Letter* is directed to Mr. Harding, it is intended for the people of Ireland (*PW* 10, 22). The Drapier has enlarged his audience from shopkeepers to the whole people.[144] The aim of this *Letter* was to give the Irish a '*New* and *Fresh Warning*' (*PW* 10, 15) since according to the Drapier, the hearing of Wood only confirmed what he had anticipated in the first *Letter*: that Wood 'would never be at Rest… ' (*PW* 10, 15) until he had forced the halfpence on Ireland and earned enough money for himself.

The structure of the second *Letter* is quite simple: the Drapier quotes the different paragraphs of the newsletter and then comments on them. He uses the paragraphs in the newsletter to create a pattern in his own text and provides the reader with the right information where he feels that the newsletter is wrong. He uses rhetorical questions to emphasise the falseness of what the newsletter had stated.

There is however a difference in tone from that of the previous *Letter*. In the Drapier's first *Letter* the tone was based on the fear the Irish felt towards the halfpence. In this second *Letter* the Drapier seems angry and the tone very aggressive. The aggressive tone overshadows the Drapier and again reveals traces of the true author. The humble tradesman is about to be overtaken by the Dean. It is especially in the passages where the Drapier mentions the King that this is evident. However, apart from the thundering speeches of the Drapier, there is no clear evidence of the Drapier exceeding the knowledge appropriate for a drapier.

[144] The comments on the Drapier's tone are based on Ehrenpreis, III, 231.

The Drapier's anger is for instance visible in that Wood, as in the first *Letter*, is put down by the Drapier by the use of irony or negative terms in connection with his name. For instance, the Drapier calls him the '*Honest Liberal Hard-ware-Man Wood*' (*PW* 10, 16), 'this little impudent *Hard-ware-Man*' (*PW* 10, 18), 'this little Arbitrary *Mock-Monarch*' (*PW* 10, 19) and so on.

The Drapier opens his second *Letter* by commenting on the following passage from the very beginning of the newsletter:

> YESTERDAY the Committee of Council met at the Cockpit, and had under their Consideration the Objections made against the Patent granted by his Majesty to Mr. Wood for Coining Halfpence & Farthings for the Kingdom of Ireland, when several Merchants and others of an(d) [Sic] Trading to Ireland, were Examin'd [Sic], who all Agreed, that there was the utmost Necessity for Copper Money before the granting of Mr. Wood's Patent; so that some Gentlemen who employ hundreds of the Poor there, were forc'd [Sic] to tally with their Workmen, and give them Bits of Cards with their Seal on one Side, and their Names on the other…(*PW* 10, 189. See also *PW* 10, 15).

Immediately the reader recognises the Drapier's change of tone when he asks the identity of these merchants and traders who claim that there is 'utmost *Necessity of Copper Money*' in Ireland. He concludes that they must be 'Betrayers of their Country, Confederates with *Wood*, from whom they are to purchase a great Quantity of his Coin, perhaps at half the Price that we are to take it, and vend it among us to the Ruin of the Publick [Sic], and their own private Advantage'(*PW* 10, 15-16). The Drapier thus supports those who claimed that there was no shortage of small change in Ireland, such as the Commissioners of Revenue, who in 1722 'maintained that there was "not the least want of such small species of Coin for Change." ' Archbishop King agreed with this, but asserted that 'Ireland needed silver currency, not copper halfpence and farthings'.[145] As shown above, this was not entirely true. There was a need for small change in Ireland.

[145] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 86.

The Drapier then takes one step closer to the issue of the constitutional relationship. He points out the unfairness of the Irish being denied the liberty of minting their own coins and the humiliation of watching an ironmaster from England being allowed something a whole country is denied. In this passage, the Drapier falsely accuses Wood of being responsible for Ireland lacking halfpence, writing that Wood 'hath taken Care to buy up as many of our old Half-pence as he could…'(*PW* 10, 16). This is of course ironic. In representing Wood as the villain, the Drapier gives more power to Wood than he actually has. He uses quite strong words to make his point. He calls Wood and his accomplices 'Enemies to God and this Kingdom [Ireland]…' (*PW* 10, 16). However, this is a reference to the real culprit, the English government. Great amounts of money were drained from Ireland to England annually. The English profited from the blocking of Irish trade, their absentees spent Irish money in England, and so in the end it was the English who had 'taken Care to buy up' the halfpence. Here Wood is treated as an agent for England rather than just a private person granted a patent to make copper coins. The Drapier supports this by making it look as though Wood is attempting to cure the economic ills of Ireland by making the already bad condition worse. He writes that 'Mr. *Wood*'s Remedy, would be, to cure a Scratch on the Finger by cutting off the Arm' (*PW* 10, 16).

Further, the report in *The Postboy* stated that 'Sir Isaac Newton's Report of an ASSAY taken at the Tower by a Jury of Pix [Sic], was Read, by which it appear'd[Sic] that Mr. Wood had in all Respects perform'd [Sic] his Contract' (*PW* 10, 189. See also *PW* 10, 16). The Drapier asks whom Wood has made this contract with. Here he echoes the *Proposal* in that the Irish had never been consulted on the matter. In the granting of the patent, Wood had made a contract with the King and the English ministry, not with the Irish. Again, it is the policy of rule without consent that the Drapier refers to. The Irish

Parliament should have been consulted before the decision had been made. They should have been included in the discussion whether such a patent was even needed.

As mentioned above, it was also the circumstances surrounding the minting that caused reactions in Ireland. Newton had only examined a small amount of the coins that were to be sent to Ireland. What about the rest of them? As the Drapier insinuates, Wood could do anything he wanted with the rest, including changing the value and weight. There were no plans for controlling the coinage's value in the future. However, Wood during his hearing had proposed to 'submit himself to the Inspection, Examination, order and Comptrol [Sic] of your Majesty and your Commissioners of the Treasury or High Treasurer…' (*PW* 10, 202).

As in the first *Letter*, the Drapier has also taken care to emphasise his points with vivid examples in the second *Letter*. He compares the inspection of Wood's coins to someone who is buying sheep.

> But if I were to buy an hundred Sheep, and the Grazier should bring me one single Weather, fat and well fleeced by way of *Pattern*, and expect the same Price round for the whole hundred, without suffering me to see them before he was paid, or giving me good Security to restore my Money for those that were *Lean*, or *Shorn*, or *Scabby*; I would be none of his Customer (*PW* 10, 17).

The Drapier continues with another example of 'a Man who had a Mind to sell his House, and therefore carried a Piece of *Brick* in his Pocket, which he Shewed [Sic] as a *Pattern* to encourage Purchasers…' (*PW* 10, 17).

> The report continued with the reduction of the amount of coins granted.
>
> *First, that whereas he has already Coined 17000l Worth, and has Copper prepar'd* [Sic] *to make it up 40000 l. he will be content to Coin no more, unless the Exigencies of Trade require it, tho' his Patent empowers him to Coin a far greater Quantity*' (*PW* 10, 189).

Wood proposed to the Privy Council to reduce the patent to £40, 000 '*unless the* EXIGENCIES OF TRADE REQUIRE IT…' (*PW* 10, 17). The Drapier asks who is to be the judge when more copper is required. He fears that Wood was to be his own judge since

the Irish were not consulted before it was too late. The Drapier's appeal is yet again to refuse to have anything to do with Wood and his coins. He reminds the Irish that the King himself could not force them to accept the coins.

The last of Wood's proposals was that:

> *In Consideration of the direful Apprehensions which prevail in Ireland, that Mr. Wood will, by such Coinage, drain them of their Gold and Silver, he proposes to take their Manufacture in Exchange*; *and that no Person be obliged to receive more than Five Pence Halfpenny at one Payment* (*PW* 10, 189. See also *PW* 10, 18).

The Drapier reacts to Wood permitting himself to act as if he were the King and calls Wood an 'Arbitrary *Mock-Monarch*' (*PW* 10, 19). Even though the King has been treated with respect in the first *Letter*, we now begin to get hints of what the Drapier really thinks of him. Or rather now, the Drapier is overshadowed by Swift. Implicitly, he is saying that the King is allowing Wood to act as a monarch, taking 'upon him the *Entire Legislature,* and an absolute Dominion over the Properties of the whole Nation' (*PW* 10, 19). But the Drapier still keeps Wood and the King apart and blames Wood and his advisers. 'GOOD GOD! Who are this Wretch's *Advisers*? ' (*PW* 10, 19), he asks. He knew that Walpole and the Whig ministry stood behind Wood, but could not attack them directly. Instead he uses strong words applying them to Wood and his supporters. He compares them to highwaymen and house breakers and claims that if Wood was to oblige him (the Drapier) to take 'Five-pence Half-penny of his Brass in every Payment,' he would shoot him (*PW* 10, 19-20).

He continues in the same tone when he refers to John Hampden (1594-16439),[146] who by refusing to pay ship money during the reign of King Charles I, was sent to prison. The Drapier states that he would rather be hanged than accept Wood's money (*PW* 10, 20). By comparing himself to Hampden, he also compares Wood to Charles I, thus ironically

[146] "John Hampden", *A Dictionary of World History.* Oxford University Press, 2000, *Oxford Reference Online,* Oxford University Press, Oslo University, 9 June 2005.

treating Wood as a monarch, in the same way as he claimed Wood treated himself.[147] The Drapier then goes far in implying that the King has abandoned his responsibilities towards the people of Ireland and allowed Wood to act as an absolute tyrant.[148]

The Drapier is not finished with the King yet. He wants to reassure the Irish that they have every right to refuse the halfpence and that the rumours that the King is going to force them to accept the money are false. Such rumours confused the public. 'Therefore, let no Man be afraid of a *Proclamation*, which will never be granted; and if it should, yet upon this Occasion, will be of no Force'(*PW* 10, 21). The Drapier points out that England profits immensely from Irish money every year and thus neither the King nor his ministers would make a law that would permit the King to force halfpence on the Irish. England gets 'a Million *sterl*. by this Nation; which, if this Project goes on, will be almost reduced to nothing…' (*PW* 10, 22). This only made his appeal to the Irish even stronger than in the first *Letter*, since the drainage of Irish money to England was a great problem in the Irish economy.

Although he is getting closer to a direct attack on the King, the Drapier still blames Wood for anything bad the patent brings with it, and writes that 'should he [Wood] not first in common Sense, in common Equity, and common Manners, have consulted the principal Party concerned; that is to say, the People of the Kingdom, the House of Lords or Commons, or the Privy Council?'(*PW* 10, 21).

The last paragraph in the newsletter concluded that 'N. B. No Evidence appear'd [Sic] from Ireland or elsewhere, to prove the Mischiefs comlain'd [Sic] of, or any Abuses whatsoever committed in the Execution of the said Grant' (*PW* 10, 190). The Drapier responds to this by referring to early addresses sent to the King and ministry. 'First, the House of Commons in *Ireland*; which represents the whole People of the Kingdom: And,

[147] Ehrenpreis, *Acts of Implication*, 69.
[148] Ehrenpreis, *Acts of Implication*, 70.

Secondly, the Privy Council Addressed His Majesty against these Half-pence [Sic]. What could be done more to express the universal Sense of the Nation? ' (*PW* 10, 20). If this was not enough proof to support the objections, what was?

Even though the language has been fairly simple throughout the *Letter* and the Drapier has not exceeded his knowledge too much, it is still striking when he takes care to explain to his readers what N. B stands for. Up until this point, the Drapier seems to have directed himself to his equals with appropriate examples, but now he seems to have sunk down to those below him again. After all, the *Letter* was written to the people of Ireland and should thus be easy to read for all classes. Again, the Drapier is successful in commenting on important issues that were to be evident in uniting the Irish against the English.

The Drapier wants to keep up the spirit of the Irish because Wood hoped that the Irish should 'be weary of contending with him[Wood]; and at last out of Ignorance, or Fear, or of being perfectly tired with Opposition…', they should 'be forced to yield' (*PW* 10, 22).

The *Letter* ends with a proposition for a signature campaign against the halfpence and a notice to Harding that he needs to do something about the scarcity of copies of the first *Letter*.

The Drapier started a campaign which he hoped would make the Irish aware of the consequences of the patent. Now he is steadily approaching the theme of constitutional relationship and the real target of his *Letters*, the English government. There is still a battle between the Drapier and Wood in this *Letter* and Wood is clearly designed to be the villain of the two.

Letter Three

The third *Letter* was written as a response to the English Privy Council and its report on Wood's patent. It was addressed '*To the Nobility and Gentry of the Kingdom of* IRELAND,' with the full title 'Some Observations upon a *Paper*, called, *The* Report *of the Committee of the Most Honourable the Privy Council in* England, *relating to* Wood's *Half-Pence*' (*PW* 10, 27-49). It was written 25 August 1724 and was fairly long compared to the two previous *Letters*. The Drapier comments on this at the end of the *Letter*:

> I MUST now desire your *Lordships* and *Worships* that you will give a great Allowance for this long undigested Paper. I find my self to have gone into several Repetitions, which were the Effects of haste, while new Thoughts fell in to add something to what I had said before. I think I may affirm, that I have fully answered every Paragraph in the *Report*; which although it be not unartfully [Sic] drawn, and is perfectly in the Spirit of a Pleader, who can find the most plausible Topicks [Sic] in behalf of his Client; yet there was no great Skill required to detect the many Mistakes contained in it; which, however, are by no Means to be charged upon the Right Honourable Committee, but upon the most false, imprudent, and fraudulent Representations of *Wood* and his Accomplices (*PW* 10, 47-8).

This passage also shows that the Drapier deprecates his own way of writing and claims that it does not take a lot of talent to see what is going on. However, in this *Letter* there are not so many traces of the modest Drapier who wrote the two previous *Letters*. He has changed his tone, improved his knowledge and become much more learned and skilful. He gives a detailed history of the Irish coinage, information about previously granted patents in general and John Knox's patent in particular. He gives the reader details about the royal prerogative and what that consists of in such a manner that there are few signs of the humble tradesman. The Drapier has become Swift.

On page 28 he admits that the topic is perhaps too much for 'an *illiterate Shop-keeper*', but justifies the Drapier by referring to his improved 'small Portion of Reason'. After quoting a passage from the report about the difficulty of proving witnesses against the patent, he asks 'HOW shall I, a poor ignorant Shop-keeper, utterly unskilled in Law, be able to answer so weighty an Objection? ' (*PW* 10, 29). Still, he goes on to attack the

Committee's prejudice 'by calling the united Sense of both *Houses* of *Parliament* in *Ireland*, an UNIVERSAL CLAMOUR' (*PW* 10, 30). There is no doubt who the original author is anymore.[149]

At the end of the *Letter* the Drapier claims to have little assistance, only 'some Informations [Sic] from an *eminent Person*; whereof I am afraid I have spoiled a few, by endeavouring to make them of a Piece with my own Productions; and the rest I was not able to manage…' (*PW* 10, 48). This emphasis on not revealing himself as the author, only indicates that Swift really was the author. The subject of Irish economy and constitutional rights is not fit for the Drapier to write about, so by doing opposite of what is expected of him, and thus making the reader wonder how he, a common drapier can write in such a tone or on such a subject, Swift manages to reveal that there is someone else behind the *Letters*. Of course Swift was not the only one that could have written them, but his readers probably recognised his tone and way of writing from earlier works. By trying so hard not to reveal himself, he creates suspicion in his readers, who then try to figure out who the real author is. There must be a reason why most Irishmen knew that Swift was the author although the *Letters* were signed M. B. Drapier. Most probably it was the style and the tone of the *Letters* that revealed him. He was known for his persistent and persuasive tone seen in his sermons and in earlier tracts. Another point is that the subject of Irish independence was something Swift burned to write about and a subject he often discussed openly with friends and others.

The Drapier makes excuses for his humbleness and admits that he has benefited from advice, which he has altered to fit his case. Thus, he admits that some of his facts might be fiction. By doing this, the Drapier/Swift shows that the *Letters* were written to get more attention on the case of Ireland and not only to comment on the halfpence affair. This

[149] Ewald, *Masks*, 106.

does not mean that the *Letters* are not interesting as historical documents. It only means that one has to take into consideration the possibility of some of the facts being altered or even fictitious. It is this aspect of the *Letters* that makes Swift a very interesting political commentator. He used his literary skills to make a more interesting comment on the situation of Ireland in the 1720s. Thus, it is Swift's way of commenting on Ireland that makes him a great political writer, not only what he comments on. Since some parts of what he is writing about are altered to fit his case, the facts are exceeded at the expense of Swift getting through to his readers, something I think is just as interesting as the facts themselves. However, I do not think that these alterations are of such character that totally changed the common reaction to the halfpence affair. These alterations are minor in comparison with the impact the *Drapier's Letters* had on its readers.

Swift claims to have written the *Letter* in haste and struggled to put his thoughts where he wanted them, something that can easily be seen in the disorganised structure of the *Letter*. Swift jumps from one subject to another, only to come back to the same point later in the text. One example is the treatment of Wood's witnesses. He begins his presentation of them on page 28, and then digresses to give a closer presentation of Wood himself and to comment on a number of other points from the report. He does not return to the witnesses until page 37. There are numerous examples of the same jumping from one subject to another. As a result of this, there is a lot of repetition of arguments previously made in the other *Letters*.[150] Given this repetition, I will concentrate on what is new to the debate in this *Letter*.

With this third *Letter,* the Drapier felt he had to set straight the real facts, which the Privy Council's report had failed to do.

[150] Ehrenpreis, III, 238.

> I was in the Case of *David*, who *could not move in the Armour of* Saul: and therefore I rather chose to attack this *uncircumcised Philistine* (*Wood* I mean) *with a Sling and a Stone*. And I may say for *Wood*'s Honour, as well as my own, that he resembles *Goliah* [Sic] in many Circumstances, very applicable to the present Purpose: For *Goliah* [Sic] had *a Helmet of BRASS upon his Head, and he was armed with a Coat of Mail… and he had Greaves of BRASS upon his Legs, and a Target of BRASS between his Shoulders*. In short, he was like Mr. *Wood*, all over BRASS… (*PW* 10, 48).

The first sentence states clearly the Drapier's position in the controversy. Implicitly he is saying that he could not attack the persons truly responsible, so he attacked Wood. The word 'brass' had been used in the previous *Letter*, but then mostly with reference to copper. In this *Letter* the repetitious use of the emphasised word 'brass' is clearly a reference to Robert Walpole, who in the end was Swift's main target. '*Goliah* had *a Helmet of* BRASS *upon his head*' and so did Wood: he had the support of Walpole. Walpole was known for his several code names and 'brass' was only one of them. [151]

The David and Goliath analogy is very applicable and also very ironic. In one sense it serves its purpose since Wood was armed with all the right connections (the Whig Government) and the Drapier (Swift) was only a humble tradesman. It also is a good analogy since Goliath, Wood, the Whig government, and the King were all armed with brass!

A new perspective to the *Letters*

What stands out in the third *Letter* is that the debate is given a new perspective, namely the cause of Irish independence. It becomes very clear that Swift was very much influenced by William Molyneux's *The Case of Ireland Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated*. The *Case* 'denied the claims of the English parliament to legislate for Ireland and of the English house of lords [Sic] to be the final court of appeal in Irish cases'.[152]

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[151] Maynard Mack, *The Garden and the City*: *Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope, 1731-1743* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 156-8. See also Tone Sundt Urstad, *Sir Robert Walpole's Poets*: *The Use of Literature as Pro-Government Propaganda, 1721-1742* (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), 16-18 for details on code names for Robert Walpole. Hereafter *Sir Robert Walpole*.
[152] Molyneux, *Case*, 7.

It is not only the Drapier against Wood anymore, though Wood is still being used as a scapegoat. Now the battle is for Irish independence. Swift argues in line with Molyneux, asserting the rightful liberty of the Irish.

> WERE not the People of *Ireland* born as *free* as those of *England*? How have they forfeited their Freedom? Is not their *Parliament* as fair a *Representative* of the *People*, as that of *England*? And hath not their Privy Council as great, or a greater Share in the Administration of publick [Sic] Affairs? Are they not Subjects of the same King? Does not the same *Sun* shine over them? And have they not the same *God* for their Protector? Am I a *Free-man* in *England*, and do I become a *Slave* in six Hours, by crossing the Channel? (*PW* 10, 31).

I think this is a very important paragraph. It states clearly what Swift thinks about the relationship between England and Ireland. He could have stopped after the first sentence, but continues his bombardment of rhetorical questions. Irish independence is not a separate topic in this *Letter*, but it is linked with the main topic of all the *Letters*, that is, the economic effect of Wood's halfpence.[153] In the end, the controversy of Wood's halfpence is a question of Irish independence. It boils down to the Irish right to mint their own coins and the fact that they are denied this by the English. One reason for this emphasis on Irish independence is the lack of communication between the English and the Irish government. The Irish were never asked whether the need for small change was as evident as Wood and his accomplices claimed. Swift does have a point in claiming that when a decision about Irish affairs should be taken, the Irish had the right to be involved. He writes that 'It was a *Secret* to the People of *Ireland*, who were to be the *Only Sufferers*; and those who best knew the State of the Kingdom, and were most able to advise in such an Affair, were wholly Strangers to it'(*PW*, 10, 36). Here the *Letter* points back to the *Proposal* and the policy of rule without consent that England adopted towards Ireland. It is also central in the discussion of the Royal Prerogative.

[153] Downie, *Political Writer*, 240.

> THAT the Kings of *England* have exercised their Prerogative of coining Copper for *Ireland* and for *England*, is not the present Question: But (to speak in the Style of the Report) it would *seem a little extraordinary*, supposing a King should think fit to exercise his *Prerogative* by coining Copper in *Ireland*, to be current in *England*, without referring it to his Officers in that Kingdom, to be informed whether the Grant were reasonable, and whether the People desired it or no, and without Regard to the Addresses of his Parliament against it. God forbid that so mean a Man as I should meddle with the King's *Prerogative*: But I have heard very wise Men say, that the King's *Prerogative* is bounded and limited by the *Good* and *Welfare* of the *People*. I desire to know, whether it be not understood and avowed, that the Good of *Ireland* was intended by this Patent. But *Ireland* is not consulted at all in the Matter; and as soon as *Ireland* is informed of it, they declare against it… (*PW* 10, 34).

The 'very wise man' Swift refers to here could be both Molyneux and Locke. However, John Locke was the one with the original idea. In his *Second Treatise* he devoted a whole chapter to the prerogative of the executive power. 'This Power to act according to discretion, for the Publick [Sic] good, without the prescription of the Law, and sometimes even against it, *is* that which is called *Prerogative*.'[154] Thus, the prerogative should be protecting the Irish against something that would harm them.

> Molyneux too echoed Locke in his perception of rule without consent.
>
> That the Right of being subject *Only* to such Laws to which Men give their *own Consent*, is so inherent to all Mankind, and founded on such Immutable Laws of Nature and Reason, that 'tis not to be *Alien'd* [Sic], or *Given up*, by any Body of Men whatsoever: For the End of all Government and Laws being the Publick [Sic] Good of the Commonwealth, in the Peace, Tranquility[Sic] and Ease of every Member therein; whatsoever Act is contrary to this End, is in it self void, and of no effect…[155]

Thus, the King's innocence in all this is more clearly questioned in this *Letter*. Of course it had been implicitly and ironically questioned in the two other *Letters*, but now he comments directly on the King's prerogative. He still treats him with respect (at least on the surface) and says 'Surely His Majesty, when he consented to the passing of this Patent, *Conceived* he was doing an Act of Grace to His Most Loyal Subjects of *Ireland*, without any Regard to Mr. *Wood*, farther than as an *Instrument*… ' (*PW* 10, 34). I wrote that Swift

[154] Locke, *Second Treatise*, 393.
[155] Molyneux, *Case*, 93.

treated the King with superficial respect, because the King had granted the patent to his mistress and knew that she would sell it to Wood. The Drapier, in the previous *Letters*, and Swift in this third *Letter*, repeatedly describes the Irish as very loyal to the crown and the King as loyal to his people of Ireland. But why then is the King treated so respectfully when he had granted the patent that caused so much reaction in Ireland? After all, the Irish were not even consulted on the matter. The point is that the King was not as innocent as he might seem, but still Swift/the Drapier describes him as though he were not to blame. Clearly, as mentioned above, Swift could not attack the King directly, and thus uses implications and irony to avoid being prosecuted for insulting the King. Ironically, in the end the printer Harding and his wife was arrested for publishing a treasonable pamphlet.

Swift also comments on the King's right to force the copper money on his subjects:

> …for in specifying the Word IRELAND, instead of saying *his Majesty's Subjects*, it would seem to insinuate, that we are not upon the same Foot with our Fellow-Subjects in *England*; which, however the Practice may have been, I hope I will never be directly asserted; for I do not understand that *Poining's* [Sic] Act deprived us of our *Liberty*, but only changed the Manner of passing Laws here…that the People of *Ireland* have not the same Title to the Benefits of the *Common Law*, with the rest of his Majesty's Subjects; and, therefore, whatever Liberties or Privileges the People of *England* enjoy by COMMON LAW, we of *Ireland* have the same; so that, in my humble Opinion, the Word *Ireland* standing in the Proposition, was, in the mildest Interpretation, a *Lapse of the Pen* (*PW* 10, 39).

Yet again, this is very close to Molyneux, who stated that acts which do not name Ireland should not be binding on Ireland either. Molyneux supported this by asking why such acts should not be binding on Scotland as well.[156] He wrote that there have been occasions to think that since Ireland is named, the law is also binding on Ireland. But how can an act be binding on Ireland without Ireland being allowed Irish representatives in the English Parliament? Molyneux offered examples of laws naming Ireland, which have been believed to bind Ireland, yet cannot be said to do so.[157]

[156] Molyneux, *Case*, 75-6.
[157] Molyneux, *Case*, 76-80.

The key argument in this *Letter* is that the Irish were never consulted in the matter of Wood's patent. The King's answer to Irish objections promised an inquiry and that the King would do '*every Thing in his Power to the Satisfaction of His People*' (*PW* 10, 46). However, Swift asks whether the King should not have withdrawn the patent when he realised what it would do to the kingdom of Ireland. Yet again Swift attacks the King, but this time, more directly. He says that 'It should seem therefore, that the Recalling the Patent is not to be understood as a Thing *in his Power*…' (*PW* 10, 46) only to observe that this is insignificant anyway since the King can not force the halfpence on them. The Drapier suggests that the King's action is of no consequence since the next step is entirely up to the people of Ireland.

The main point about the discussion around the King and the prerogative is that Ireland was not consulted until after Wood's patent was granted. Both Swift and Molyneux believed that although under the same crown as England, Ireland was an independent kingdom, with the same rights as the English. 'Therefore whatever Justice a FREE PEOPLE can claim, we have at least an *Equal* Title to it with our Brethren in *England*; and whatever Grace a good Prince can bestow on the most *Loyal Subjects*, we have Reason to expect it…' (*PW* 10, 35).

Response to the Report of the Privy Council

As mentioned above, this *Letter* was written as a response to the English Privy Council's report on the halfpence affair. The report stated that there was nothing clandestine about the patent and that everything was done correctly. Swift of course disagreed and felt that after addressing the people in the two preceding *Letters* it was about time to address a third to the '*Lordships and Worships*'. The first page of the *Letter* presents the publishing details of the report. Swift suggests that the publishing of the report is 'a *Project* of some *Printer*, who hath a Mind to make a Penny by publishing something upon a Subject, which now

employs all our Thoughts in this *Kingdom*' (*PW* 10, 27). In the next sentence he not only implies, but goes far in stating that Wood was the one who got the report published.

> Mr. Wood in publishing this Paper would insinuate to the World, as if the *Committee* had a greater Concern for his Credit and private Emolument, than for the Honour of the *Privy Council* and both *Houses of Parliament* Here [Sic], and for the Quiet and Welfare of this Kingdom: For it seems intended as a Vindication of Mr. *Wood*; not without several severe Reflections on the Houses of *Lords* and *Commons* of *Ireland* (*PW* 10, 27).

Thus, it is still Wood who is Swift's main target.

Swift felt that he had to point out the shortcomings of Newton's assay and the patent, because the report aimed 'to Clear *William Wood*, and to charge the other Side with casting Rash and Groundless Aspersions upon him' (*PW* 10, 27). In the *Letter*, Swift goes through some of the statements of the report and responds to them. However, as mentioned above, it is not always easy to follow Swift's thoughts in terms of coherence between the different paragraphs.

The response to the report opens with Wood's witnesses. The Drapier mentions the names of three out of four alleged witnesses and gives them a depreciatory characterisation. One of them, Coleby 'was tried for robbing the Treasury in *Ireland*; and although he was acquitted for want of legal Proof, yet every Person in the Court believed him to be guilty' (*PW* 10, 28). Later Swift gives the readers more information about Coleby and Mr. Finley, the Banker. Coleby had been 'out of the Kingdom almost Twenty Years, from the Time that he was tryed [Sic] for *robbing the Treasury*; and therefore his *Knowledge* and *Credibility* are equal' (*PW* 10, 37). Mr Finley had confessed that he 'was ignorant whether *Ireland* wanted Copper Money or no…' (*PW* 10, 37). The naming of the witnesses is bold in it self, but Swift goes further and characterises them too. By doing this he not only attacks Wood but his accomplices and gives the impression of Wood's witnesses being as ignorant of the case of Ireland as Wood himself. So the personal attack on Wood continues. As to show the inconsistency of structure, Swift now all of a sudden

goes on to give his readers more information about Wood himself before he returns to the report a couple of paragraphs later.

The Council's report also stated that the Lord Lieutenant found it difficult to obtain papers and witnesses from Ireland which supported the objections. Allegedly, he found that '*none of the principal Members of both Houses, who were in the King's Service, or Council, would take upon them to advise how any material Person, or Papers, might be sent over on this Occasion, & c*' (*PW* 10, 29. See also *PW* 10, 192-93). He comes back to this on page 31 where he states that 'IT happens, however, that, although no Persons were so bold, as to go over as Evidences, to prove the Truth of the Objections made against this Patent by the *High Court of Parliament* here; yet these Objections stand good, notwithstanding the Answers made by *Wood* and his *Council*' (*PW* 10, 31).

Newton's assay and the testing of the coins are also subject to Swift's critique. He blames Wood for not providing 'sufficient Quantity of such Half-pence as would bear the Tryal [Sic]; which he was well able to do, although *they were taken out of several parcels*…' (*PW* 10, 31). He also claims that the only reason why Wood wants this patent is for personal profit. Ireland and its economy stand to be ruined, but Wood will profit immensely.

> It is likewise to be considered, that for every Half-penny in a Pound Weight, exceeding the Number directed by the Patent, *Wood* will be a Gainer in the Coinage of Three hundred and sixty Tun [Sic] of Copper, Sixteen hundred and eighty Pounds Profit more than the Patent allows him; out of which he may afford to make his *Comptrollers* EASY upon that Article (*PW* 10, 33).

Swift compares the circumstances of Wood's patent with that of John Knox's. Knox's patent was passed in Ireland in 1685, after the government found it necessary for the Irish economy, and after the advice of the King's Council in Ireland. Wood got his by bribery, claiming to have evidence that supported a need for small change. The Irish

government was never consulted. In the end Wood's patent was granted upon false premises, and thus not comparable to previous patents as the King's answer claimed.

Letter Four

The Fourth of the *Drapier's Letters* is the most famous one. It was against this *Letter* that there was put out a proclamation, offering £300 in reward to the person who could name the author. On 27 October 1724 the Privy Council in Ireland met and agreed on the arrest of the printer, Harding, and to reward the person who could identify the author. The latter is very ironic in it self since both Carteret and the rest of the Council knew very well who the author was. On 31 October Carteret wrote that 'Tis the general opinion here that Doctor Swift is the author of the pamphlet, and yet nobody thinks it can be proved upon him; tho' many believe he will be spirited up to own it.'[158] This is supported by Swift in a letter to Ford in November 1724 where he wrote that Carteret seemed to suspect that he had something to do with the *Drapier's Letters*.[159]

Archbishop King refused to sign the prosecution of Harding and when Carteret asked the Privy Council to issue the proclamation offering reward for the identity, King and three others declined.[160] Those who signed revised the proclamation so that it was not directed against Swift's tract in general, but at certain seditious paragraphs in it.

Nobody turned Swift in. 'Swift had so firmly established the Drapier as a symbol of resistance against Wood's coin that in the popular mind betrayal of the Drapier was betrayal of Ireland.'[161] After all, it was not until Swift joined the debate that the opposition won ground. They were taken more seriously and their opponent had to consider what to do about their objections. A slightly altered paragraph from the Bible with a reference to the First Book of Samuel was often quoted during this period. 'And the People said unto

[158] Downie, *Political Writer,* 243.
[159] D. N. Smith, *Letters to Ford,* 112.
[160] The details about what happened after the fourth letter was published can be found in Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 122-24.
[161] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 123.

Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, and he died not.'[162]

On 7 November 1724, Harding and his wife were arrested. The Grand Jury met 21 November and against the will of Chief Justice Whitshed, the jury refused to make a presentment.[163] Whitshed urged them to reconsider, but the jury refused. The Chief Justice then discharged the jury. A new jury met 23 November and was to submit their presentment on the 28.

In the meantime Swift had published 'Seasonable ADVICE *to the Grand-Jury, concerning the Bill preparing against the* Printer *of the preceding Letter*' (*PW* 10, 69-71). Here he gives advise to the jury what they should consider when they are to make a decision in the case against Harding and the author. He asks them to consider that the author did not introduce a new subject. He had already written three other *Letters* on the same subject, which neither had been censored, but rather 'universally approved by the whole Nation' (*PW* 10, 69). The second argument to be considered is the fact that the author never had done anything to make them doubt his sincerity. He had only done what he thought was 'THE GOOD OF HIS COUNTRY' (*PW* 10, 69). Thirdly, he believes that the jury should take a closer look at the paragraphs said to be '*wicked, malicious, seditious, reflecting upon his Majesty and his Ministry, & c.,*' (*PW* 10, 69) since he doubts that there are reasons to describe the paragraphs as such.

The first 'seditious' paragraph is to be found on page 56 of the fourth *Drapier's Letters*:

> 'This I only mention, because, in my private Thoughts, I have sometimes made a Query, whether the *Penner* [Sic] of those Words in his Majesty's *most gracious Answer*, AGREEABLE TO THE PRACTICE OF HIS ROYAL PREDECESSORS,

[162] *PW* 10, xx. See also I Sam. Xiv, 45 for the original quotation form the Bible.
[163] A formal presentation by a jury, regarding a matter in court.

> had maturely considered the several Circumstances; which, in my poor Opinion, seem to make a Difference'(*PW* 10, 56).

Since King George was German and knew very little English, Swift in Seasonable Advice sees it as a necessity 'that some other Person should be employed to pen what he hath to say, or write in that Language (*PW* 10, 70). In addition, the King's answer was written in third person and thus obviously not in 'the Words of his Majesty…' (*PW* 10, 70). The point is that since the bill was not written by the King but his ministers, it lacked authority.

The second of the provocative paragraphs from the fourth *Letter* is to be found on pp. 61- 2:

> Those who come over hither to us from *England*, and some *weak* People among ourselves, whenever, in Discourse, we make mention of *Liberty* and *Property*, shake their Heads, and tell us, that *Ireland* is a *depending Kingdom;* as if they would seem, by this Phrase, to intend, that the People of *Ireland* is in some State of Slavery or Dependence, different from those of *England*…' (*PW* 10, 61-2).

Swift thinks that the jury should ask a lawyer about which laws make Ireland '*a depending Kingdom*', which of course would not be possible to answer satisfactorily since there are no such laws.

According to Swift, there is however another thing the jury should consider before they judge Harding, and that is 'what Influence their finding the Bill may have upon the Kingdom…' (*PW* 10, 70). Since the people have not reacted to anything in previous *Drapier's Letters*, they, when they discover that the Grand Jury condemns the Drapier's fourth *Letter*, will believe that the halfpence is to be accepted. What the main consideration will be then is what is more important: 'one or two Expressions…in a Book written for the publick [Sic] Service; or to leave a free open Passage for *Wood's* Brass to over-run us, by which we shall be undone for ever?' (*PW* 10, 70).

Lastly, the jury should consider the consequence their decision will have on Harding, a totally innocent man, who 'knew the Author's Design was honest… and advised with Friends, who told him there was no Harm in the Book…'(*PW* 10, 71).

Another thing that Swift wants to remind the Irish of is the fact that the jury consists of people who does 'not expect any Employment in the State…' while chief justice Whitshed and the other justices who '*advise, entice, or threaten* them [the jury]…' to make a presentment against Harding, 'have great Employments; which they have a mind to keep, or to get *greater*…' (*PW* 10, 71).

After reading this, Carteret had to act, but prolonged the case to protect Swift. He had known about the pamphlet since 14 November, but as shown above, the jury in Harding's case did not meet until 21 and thus did not consider the pamphlet until then. Carteret's prolongment puzzled his co-ministers, but made sense since Swift was a friend of his and since he knew that 'Walpole's motives in sending him [Carteret] to Ireland had been to confront him with a situation that was almost impossible to solve to the satisfaction of both England and Ireland'.[164] Furthermore, before the publication of the fifth *Letter*, where Swift intended to put his own name on the cover, Carteret warned Swift, through King, that he should not put his name on it. He said that 'no man in the Kingdom how great and considerable soever [Sic] he might think himself was of weight enough to stand a matter of this nature'.[165] Thus, Swift lay aside what was supposed to have been his fifth *Letter* directed to Lord Chancellor Midleton (published as the 6th *Drapier's Letter* in 1735).

On 28 April Swift wrote a letter to Carteret where he mentioned Wood's halfpence and made sure that Carteret knew how the Irish felt about it. He also sent him the first of

[164] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 126. See also Patrick McNally's article 'Wood's Halfpence, Carteret, and the government of Ireland, 1723-6', *Irish Historical Studies*, xxx, no. 119 (May 1997), 361 for more information about Walpole's exile of Carteret.
[165] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 124. See also *PW* 10, xx-xxi.

the *Drapier's Letters*.[166] After receiving no answer from Carteret, he wrote a new letter 9 June to make sure Carteret had gotten his letter.[167] He did not receive an answer until 20 June. Carteret mentioned Swift's two letters and wrote that 'The principle affaire [Sic] You mention is under examination, & till that is over, I am not inform'd [Sic] sufficiently to make any other judgement of the matter…'[168]

On 28 November, the jury returned with a decision which they directed against 'all such Persons as have attempted, or shall endeavour by fraud or otherwise, to Impose the…Half-pence upon US,' not the Drapier or Harding. If any such persons were detected, they were to be declared 'Enemies to his Majesty's Government and to the Safety, Peace, and Welfare of all his Majesty's Subjects of his Kingdom'.[169] Harding was thus released.[170]

The fourth *Letter* was published the same day as the new Lord Lieutenant, Carteret, was expected to arrive in Dublin, 22 October 1724, and addressed 'To the whole People of IRELAND'. It more than the others, promotes a national unity against the English government.

The structure of the *Letter* is much more organised than the third *Letter*. Like the second it was written in response to rumours, this time set out by Wood to weaken the Irish resistance. Swift claimed that 'some weak People begin to be alarmed a-new, by Rumours industriously spread' (*PW* 10, 53). The rumours were to be found in the newspapers allegedly written or promoted by Wood. In this fourth *Letter* the Drapier responds to the accusations made in this newspaper.

When it comes to the distinction between Swift and the Drapier, I believe that there are, as in the previous *Letter* more traces of Swift than the Drapier. Obviously the Drapier

[166] *Corr* III, 11-13.
[167] *Corr* III, 13-14.
[168] *Corr* III, 17.
[169] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 127. See also *PW* 10, xxi-xxiii, 75-6.
[170] See *PW* 10, xxi-xxii. See also Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 125-8 for details of the trial and '*Seasonable Advice*'.

by far exceeds the knowledge of a common drapier and makes sure to apologise for this, saying that he has explained the King's prerogative 'as far as a *Tradesman* can be thought capable of explaining it…'(*PW* 10, 55), but that is also the only reference he makes to himself as a tradesman. After this he seems to forget his true profession again and exhibits all the detailed information he needs about statutes and history. There are no longer references or examples directed at the lower classes. There are few references to the halfpence itself. The one thing that Swift continues from the previous *Letters* is the attack on Wood. He describes Wood with words such as an 'Impostor,' (*PW* 10, 54) '*Ironmonger*' (*PW* 10, 54) and as 'so *little a Creature as Wood*' (*PW* 10, 57). However, now it is difficult to distinguish between Wood as a private person and Wood as an English agent. The whole *Letter* seems like an attack on the English treatment of Ireland in general, so the emphasis is not longer on Wood and his patent.

As mentioned above, I think Swift at this point was so eager to present his case that he forgot all about the Drapier for a while. Despite the restrictions made on Irish trade and English laws including Ireland, Swift believed that Ireland was not a colonised country, utterly dependent on England. The anger which the Drapier here displays resembles the anger Swift bears towards the English government.

> One great Merit I am sure we have, which those of *English* Birth can have no Pretence to; that our Ancestors reduced this Kingdom to the Obedience of ENGLAND; for which we have been rewarded with a worse Climate, the Privilege of being governed by Laws to which we do not consent; a ruined Trade, a House of *Peers* without *Jurisdiction*; almost an Incapacity for all Employments, and the Dread of *Wood*'s Half-pence (*PW* 10, 55).

However, it also shows the anger Swift felt towards the Irish, as I mentioned in the first chapter about the *Proposal*. 'BUT, because great Numbers of you are altogether ignorant in the Affairs of your Country, I will tell you some Reasons, why there are so few Employments to be disposed of in this Kingdom' (*PW* 10, 58).

As mentioned above, Swift responds to the different accusations made in the newspapers and starts with the paper generalising all the Irish as Catholics.

> In one of their Papers published here by some obscure Printer, (and certainly with a bad Design) we are told, that the *Papists in* Ireland *have entered into an Association against his Coin*; although it be notoriously known, that they never once offered to stir in the Matter: So that the two Houses of Parliament, the Privy-Council, the great Number of Corporations, the Lord-Mayor and the Aldermen of *Dublin*, the Grand-Juries, and principal Gentlemen of several Counties, are stigmatized in a Lump, under the Name of *Papists* (*PW* 10, 53-4).

The accusation that the Irish Catholics were against Wood was in a way true, since the majority of the Irish people were Catholics and according to Swift, the majority of the Irish people were against Wood. However as Swift states in the *Letter*, 'it is the *True English People* of *Ireland* [the Irish Protestants], who refuse it [the halfpence]; although we take it for granted, that the *Irish* will do so too, whenever they are asked' (*PW* 10, 67). So although he emphasises the fact that the Irish Catholics were in the majority, it was the English Protestants who enjoyed the power. Thus, Swift accuses the paper of calling the whole people of Ireland Catholics.

Secondly, the newspapers claimed that the Irish were disputing the royal prerogative. To prove Wood and his assistants wrong, and since there seems to be some confusion about the prerogative, Swift takes the trouble of explaining the meaning of the prerogative.

> THE Kings of these Realms enjoy several Powers, wherein the Laws have not interposed: So, they can make War and Peace without the Consent of Parliament; and this is a very great *Prerogative*. But if the Parliament doth not approve of the War, the King must bear the Charge of it out of his own Purse; and this is a great a Check on the Crown. So the King hath a *Prerogative* to coin Money, without Consent of Parliament: But he cannot compel the Subject to take that Money, except it be Sterling, Gold or Silver; because, herein he is limited by Law (*PW* 10, 54).

Since the law only obliges the people of Ireland to accept what is lawful money of England, they can only accept gold and silver. Thus, 'the vile Accusation of *Wood* and his Accomplices, charging us with *disputing the King's Prerogative*, by refusing his Brass, can

have no Place; because compelling the Subject to take any Coin, which is not Sterling, is no Part of the King's Prerogative…' (*PW* 10, 55). The King could grant the patent, but could not force the Irish to accept the money.

The references to the King in this *Letter,* as in the previous ones, are ambiguous in that Swift makes it seem as though the King is treated with respect and not given any blame. But, implicitly Swift reminds the King that there is nothing he can do and thus emphasises the King's lack of power.

The papers further claimed that the Irish were against Wood because they wanted to shake off their dependence upon the Crown of England. Swift believed this accusation to be false, because Ireland was an independent kingdom. 'Those who come over hither to us from *England,* and some *weak* People among ourselves…tells us, that *Ireland* is a *depending Kingdom*; as if they would seem, by this Phrase, to intend, that the People of *Ireland* is in some State of Slavery or Dependance [Sic],different from those of *England…'*(*PW* 10, 61-2). Ironically, Swift makes it seem like the Drapier does not understand the phrase '*a depending Kingdom*' and says that it 'is a *modern Term of Art*; unknown, as I have heard, to all ancient *Civilians,* and *Writers upon Government…*' (*PW* 10, 62). He echoes Molyneux's *Case* where he had argued that the Irish have the same rights as the English. They are under the same Crown as England, but not the same government.

> And from the Days of these Three Kings, [Henry II, King John and Henry III] have *England* and *Ireland* been both Govern'd [Sic] by the like Forms of Government under one and the same Supreme Head, *the King of England;* yet so, as both Kingdoms remain'd [Sic] Separate and Distinct in their several Jurisdictions under that *One Head,* as are the Kingdoms of *England* and *Scotland* at this Day, without any *Subordination* of the One to the Other.[171]

Thus, Ireland was an independent kingdom with the right to make its laws on the same level as England. Swift writes that he had 'looked over all the *English* and *Irish* Statutes,

[171] Molyneux, *Case,* 57.

without finding any Law that makes *Ireland* depend upon *England*; any more than *England* doth upon *Ireland*' (*PW* 10, 62). The English Parliament had taken it into their power to make laws for Ireland without the consent of the Irish.

Swift also echoes Locke in stating that 'all *Government* without the Consent of the *Governed*, is the *very Definition of Slavery*…' (*PW* 10, 63). He says ironically that Ireland has become a slave of England, because somehow the Irish have lost their independence without knowing about it.

He goes on to comment on the way England has treated Ireland and the injustice they have been subject to.

> One great Merit I am sure we have, which those of *English* Birth can have no Pretence to; that our Ancestors reduced this Kingdom to the Obedience of ENGLAND; for which we have been rewarded with a worse Climate, the Privilege of being governed by Laws to which we do not consent; a ruined Trade, a House of *Peers* without *Jurisdiction*; almost an Incapacity for all Employments, and the Dread of *Wood*'s Half-pence (*PW* 10, 55).

As if the situation of Ireland was not bad enough, the Irish had to deal with the threat of having their economy utterly ruined by copper coins with a value below the English coins.

The liberty of the Irish continued to be the main topic of this *Letter*. As mentioned above, the King had sent out his answer to the addresses from both Houses of Parliament in Ireland, and there were some words in that answer that Swift felt he had to set the King straight on: The King's answer stated that the patent granted was 'AGREEABLE TO THE PRACTICE OF HIS ROYAL PREDECESSORS, *& c*.' (*PW* 10, 56). This was something Swift did not agree with. As in the previous *Letter* Swift compares Wood's patent to the patents in the reigns of King Charles II and James II, which were 'passed under the great Seal of *Ireland*, by References to *Ireland*; the Copper to be coined in *Ireland*, the Patentee was bound, on Demand, to receive his Coin back in *Ireland*, and pay Silver and Gold in Return. *Wood*'s Patent was made under the great seal of *England*, the Brass coined in *England*, not the least Reference made to *Ireland*' (*PW* 10, 56).

The papers had also written that the Lord Lieutenant was coming to Dublin. Normally the Lord Lieutenant only came over to perform his duty to the King and went back again as soon as he could. So when the word came that Lord Lieutenant Carteret was coming over 'at an *unusual* Time' most people assumed that 'some *unusual* Business' had to be taken care of (*PW* 10, 57). Carteret was not expected to come to Ireland until the following year and his arrival thus created insecurity among the Irish. Swift gives the impression of not believing that the Lord Lieutenant was coming over, though he knew very well that he was. He wrote in a letter to Knightly Chetwode in September that 'Lord Carteret is coming suddenly over.'[172] He asks why the Lord Lieutenant would take the trouble to go over to Dublin because of an insignificant ironmaster. Besides, the Irish Parliament had already made up its mind about the controversy and whether it had changed its view was very doubtful.

Carteret's main opponent in England was Robert Walpole.[173] In 1712 Walpole had been found guilty of corruption as a Secretary-at-War and sent to the Tower.[174] He was widely known as a corrupt statesman. As mentioned above, it is in this *Letter* that the references to Walpole are most evident.

> Thus, it hath been given about for several Days past, that *Somebody in England*, empowered a second *Somebody* to write to a third *Somebody* here, to assure us, that we *should no more be troubles with those Half-pence.* And this is reported to have been done by the *same Person*, who was said to have sworn some Months ago, that he woud [Sic] *ram them down our Throats…* (*PW* 10, 63).

According to Swift, several newspapers (he mentions two pamphlets: 'Short Paper printed at Bristol'[175] and a 'Newsletter'[176]) had been blackening Walpole's reputation and he does not seem to understand why such an 'Honourable a Name as that of Mr. *Walpole*

[172] *Corr* III, 35.
[173] For more information about the conflict between Carteret and Walpole see Patrick McNally's article 'Wood's Halfpence, Carteret, and the government of Ireland, 1723-6', *Irish Historical Studies*, xxx, no. 119 (May 1997), 358-374.
[174] J. H. Plumb, *Sir Robert Walpole*: *The Making of a Statesman* (London: The Cresset Press, 1956), 180.
[175] 'A Short defence of the People of Ireland Occasioned by a view of a Letter from Mr Wood to one of the Managers of his Copper Half-pence in Bristol'.
[176] Written in *The Flying Post*, 12 October 1724.

to be mentioned so often, and in such a Manner, upon his [Sic] Occasion' (*PW* 10, 67). Here Swift uses mock-encomium and defends Walpole, but intends to attack him by use of irony in the preceding paragraphs.[177] Swift writes that Walpole had a 'Universal Opinion of being a wise Man' and 'an able Minister…' (*PW* 10, 68). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Walpole had several nicknames and was often ironically referred to as 'Great' and 'Wise'.[178] Swift goes further and says that Walpole had an '*Integrity* above all *Corruption*' and a '*Fortune* above all *Temptation*' (*PW* 10, 68). This is of course ironic since everybody knew that Walpole had been involved in corruption before. Though Swift is making an impression that the Irish, including himself, has nothing against Walpole, he makes it quite clear that this is ironic.[179]

> In his [Walpole] efforts to force the halfpence on Ireland, Walpole never attacked directly the principle on which the Drapier based his arguments. Instead, he attempted by rumors[Sic] and threats to weaken Irish resistance…in August 1724, he tried to unload Wood's brass on the Commissioners of Revenue, who would in turn have had to use it to pay the army quartered in Ireland. This scheme, however, was blocked by the same constitutional guarantee that protected the private citizen: the Commissioners of Revenue were obliged to accept only coin of gold and silver.[180]

That Wood was trying to weaken the Irish resistance by rumours printed in different papers should not frighten the Irish. Swift comes with a final plea at the end of the *Letter*: 'Let *Wood* endeavour to *persuade* the People *There*, that we ought to *Receive* his Coin; and let Me *Convince* our People *Here*, that they ought to *Reject* it under Pain of our utter Undoing. And then let him do his *Best* and his *Worst*' (*PW* 10, 66-7).

The *Drapier's Letters* opened as a campaign against Wood's halfpence and ended as a campaign to promote Irish liberty.

> Swift embodies Ireland in the heroic drapier whose voice he assumes. He embodies England in the villainous William Wood. Having set up these opponents, Swift associates certain persons and qualities with each. The drapier is patriotic; Wood is

[177] Ewald, *Masks*, 112.
[178] Tone Sundt Urstad, *Sir Robert Walpole*, 16.
[179] Ewald, *Masks*, 111.
[180] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 99.

> mercenary. The Irish want liberty and justice; the English wish to impose slavery and injustice…[181]

Swift created the communication that was lacking between the English and the Irish government by setting up two opponents in order to renew the focus on Irish independence. The 'degree of corruption involved in granting Wood's patent was hardly greater than usual for the period…'[182] By making Wood the villain and scapegoat for the Irish economic problems, Swift found an effective way to remind the English authorities that Irish resistance was still alive.

Jonathan Swift's writings and commitment in the controversy over Wood's halfpence seem to demonstrate that he was sincere in his concern for the Irish. Jonathan Swift contributes immensely to the documentation of what happened in a very important stage of Irish economy, with his comments in the *Drapier's Letters*. Whether 'he loved Ireland or no is little to the purpose, for he did her very sterling service'.[183]

[181] Ehrenpreis, *Acts of Implication*, 66.
[182] Nokes, *Hypocrite Reversed*, 295.
[183] J. H. McCarthy, *An Outline of Irish History from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: Chatto and Windus, n.d. [1883]), cited in *Irish Identity*, by Robert Mahony, 119.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined Jonathan Swift's greatest works on Ireland. I have analysed the *Proposal* and the *Drapier's Letters* in light of its historical contexts. I have focused on these texts as historical documents describing a particular time (1720 and 1724) and occasion (Irish woollen manufacture/the Declaratory Act and Wood's halfpence). My purpose has been to show how Swift responded to certain political and economic events, as a means of focusing on Swift as political commentator of Irish affairs. I believe I have accomplished this by analysing the different texts, focusing on Swift's views on the relevant economic and political situations.

I realise that the topic of Swift and Ireland has been much discussed during the last centuries and that a lot has been said on the subject. My intention has not been to discover a totally new and previously undiscovered area of Swift's political engagement, but to concentrate on an already established topic, which I think could be further explored. My thesis shows that Swift through the *Proposal* and the *Letters* gave his contributed to a debate which had great significance in Ireland at the time. Jonathan Swift commented on important historical events regarding Ireland and deserves acknowledgement as political commentator as well as a literary figure.

In the beginning of the process of writing this thesis I believed that Swift's Irish tracts could be used as authentic materials on which the historians could base their knowledge of Ireland in the early 1720s. However, after having analysed the *Proposal* and the *Letters*, I have come to realise that the tracts must be used with care because of the exaggerations, ironies and implications in the texts. This does not mean that they are of no value for historians. I believe that Swift's presentation of the situation of Ireland during the early 1720s attracted so much attention as political 'propaganda' because he provoked his readers by attacking the people of Ireland as well as the Irish and the English governments.

Swift used his literary skills to draw more attention to the causes he was writing about. He wanted the readers of these pamphlets to react and do something in order to improve the situation of their country. Swift knew that in order to make the seriousness of the situation clear to the public he needed to provoke them to take action. I think the *Proposal* and the *Letters* are commonly considered 'literary' rather than 'political' texts for the manner in which Swift comments on the period, not mainly for the contents of his writing. The texts do comment on the period, but in a different way than, for instance, Molyneux.

Swift had a great impact on his contemporaries and on their views on the economic and political situation of the early 1720s. Critics have emphasised the fact that the *Proposal* and the *Letters* did not have any direct results politically, but they have also acknowledged the fact that Swift achieved a significant role as hero in Ireland's defence. Ferguson states that from the time of writing the *Proposal* 'Swift had the trust and affection of the common people, and he came to be regarded by Dublin weavers as their champion in particular'.[184] Ferguson and Downie have claimed that Swift in the *Drapier's Letters* made the Irish aware of the serious situation they were in and united the people of Ireland.[185]

As shown in this thesis, both the *Proposal* and the *Letters* created reactions from both ordinary people and politicians. Even though it seems like the decision of withdrawing Wood's patent had already been made, I believe that the Drapier's contribution to the debate must at least have advanced the decision. I believe most Irishmen looked upon Swift as a spokesperson arguing their case. He was admired for being brave enough to speak his mind freely on the controversial subject of the constitutional relationship between England and Ireland. Why else would so many deny their knowledge of the true identity of the author?

[184] Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 58.
[185] Downie, *Political Writer*, 128. Ferguson, *J. S. and I.*, 137.

The topic of Jonathan Swift and Ireland is very wide, so in the process of selecting a particular angle there were many alternatives. I could have written my thesis on Swift's personal relationship with Ireland and how his correspondence and literary works seem to establish a hatred for the country he lived in for most of his life. I could have written about Swift and his connections with the English ministers in order to explore their impact on Swift's writings. I could have analysed his sermons to put focus on Swift as an Irish clergyman, and so on. However, I decided to write my thesis on Swift as a political commentator of Irish affairs, an area I think could be explored more. In my thesis, I have touched briefly on a comparison between Jonathan Swift and William Molyneux. This is something I think could be done more thoroughly in the future. After all, the *Letters* are more or less based on the principles in Molyneux's *Case*.

Since the emphasis has been on Swift as a literary figure and the texts have thus been discussed on a literary level, perhaps further work on the political aspect of Swift's texts should next be taken into consideration. Perhaps more work should be done in looking at Swift's contribution to Irish independence with an emphasis on the actual impact he had on his contemporaries. It would have been interesting to make use of pamphlets, newspapers, and other written materials from the periods of his writings as evidence of his impact on both politicians and common Irishmen.

Jonathan Swift made a great effort in trying to unite the people of Ireland. 'Swift created a public opinion; Swift inspired hope, courage and a spirit of justifiable resistance in the people; Swift taught Irishmen they had a country to love, to raise and to cherish.'[186] I believe that this is the main reason why Swift is so interesting as a political writer. He commented on important issues and at the same time made a great impact on his readers.

[186] Mahony, *Irish Identity*, 108.

His comments were not only comments, but advice to the people and politicians of Ireland on how to insist on their natural rights as a free people.

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