Swift’s First Published Poem: *Ode. To the King*

ABSTRACT. Swift’s *Ode. To the King* was written in July–August 1690 and was printed by the Dublin printer John Brent (1691). The Brent text, published here for the first time since 1691, was revised for Fairbrother’s 1735 volume of Swift’s *Miscellanies.*

Reviewing Harold Williams’s 1937 edition of Swift’s poems, Herbert Davis and Ricardo Quintana both deemed it an editorial triumph for Williams to have recovered Swift’s earliest poem, an ode to King William III. Since 1692 it had been known that Swift had written some such poem, because in his “Ode to the Athenian Society,” published that year, he mentions “an *Humble Chaplet for the King*” which he annotates as “The Ode I writ to the King in *Ireland*.”

Williams owned Fairbrother’s rare *Vol. IV. of the Miscellanies Begun by Jonathan Swift, D. D. and Alexander Pope, Esq. Containing All the Tracts in Prose and Verse That Have Been Since Done by J. S. D. D. S. P. D. to Compleat the Three Former Volumes. To Which Are Added Several Other Poems by the Same Author, Many of Which Are Printed from Original Manuscripts, Not in Any Former Edition* (Dublin: Fairbrother, 1735), and it was this book that furnished him with the text of the *Ode. To the King.* For this volume, Fairbrother not only lifted material from George Faulkner’s 1735 edition of Swift and from Jonathan Smedley’s *Gulliveriana* (1728) but also added an assortment of previously unpublished Swift material that Faulkner had missed or perhaps that Swift had not authorized Faulkner to publish.

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2 *Poems,* ed. Williams, I, 16. Whether this meant that he was in Ireland when he wrote it or only that he had written it while the King was in Ireland was syntactically ambiguous, as Pat Rogers pointed out in *Poems,* p. 601.

3 Pp. 21–6; hereafter referred to as “Fairbrother.” Williams’s two copies of this book are now in the University Library, Cambridge: Williams.164,165.

4 For information on the printed and manuscript sources of Swift’s poems, I have drawn on comprehensive unpublished inventories and other resources developed by the Swift Poems Project, of which John Irwin Fischer and I are editors. The Project, a long-term effort to pro-
Fairbrother's was believed to be the only surviving text of the *Ode*, until Joseph Horrell and then, with admirable assiduity, Mackie Jarrell discovered that parts of the *Ode* had appeared in print before Fairbrother. They showed that John Dunton had appropriated the poem in several of his publications, including *The Dublin Scuffle* (1699).\(^5\) More recently, John Irwin Fischer has explored the possibility that the entire *Ode* might have been in print even prior to 1692.\(^6\) Here, I wish to confirm that Swift's *Ode. To the King* was in fact published in Dublin in late 1690 or 1691.\(^7\)

New Wing, volume II (1982), lists an *Ode* to the King that survives in only one recorded copy, in the library of the Church of Ireland diocese of Derry and Raphoe in Londonderry. That anonymous pamphlet turns out to be Swift’s poem, published in Dublin by John Brent in 1691 (Figures 1–7).\(^8\) The *Ode. To the King on His Irish Expedition, and the Success of His Arms in General*, which has been the earliest writing that we can confidently attribute to Jonathan Swift – earlier than any letter, any essay, or any other poem – is therefore also his first publication of any kind.\(^9\)

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\(^5\) Dunton, *The Dublin Scuffle* (London: printed for the author, 1699). Dunton excerpts the poem, as though it were his own, in several later publications as well; see Joseph Horrell, ed., *Collected Poems of Jonathan Swift* (London, 1958), I, 377; and Mackie Jarrell, ""Ode to the King': Some Contests, Dissensions, and Exchanges among Jonathan Swift, John Dunton, and Henry Jones," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 7 (1965), 145–59. Since Dunton does not recycle Swift's ode prior to *The Dublin Scuffle*, which is the narrative of Dunton's 1698 visit to Dublin, I have thought it likely that Dunton got a copy of the poem from its printer John Brent, with whom Dunton did business and whom he calls "a Man of Letters" (*Dublin Scuffle*, pp. 95–96, 138). It is also possible that Swift himself gave the poem to Dunton, perhaps along with his ""Ode to the Athenian Society,"" and even that he hoped Dunton would republish the poem; compare Ehrenpreis, *Mr Swift*, p. 112n. We have no good evidence, however, either that Dunton knew who wrote the ode or that Swift was aware of Dunton's various plagiaries of it. Jarrell has discussed the possibility that he was (pp. 157–58). All Dunton's uses of the poem derive, directly or indirectly, from Brent’s text.


\(^8\) Derry and Raphoe Diocesan Library G.II.b.14 (8), with collation 4°: *A*; 4 leaves, pp. 1–7 8; drop-head on p. 1, colophon at foot of p. 7. The G.II.b.14 volume is in an eighteenth-century panelled-calf binding and has suffered a bit over the years, as have other volumes in this library, from mice or other vermin. See Donald Wing, *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America and of English Books Printed in Other Countries, 1641–1700*, 2nd ed., rev. Timothy J. Christ, II (New York, 1982), item O135A; I refer to this revised edition as "New Wing." The poem is not listed in the original Wing *STC* (1945–51). The *Ode* was recorded in the on-line ESTC in October 1999: e-mail, 1 June 2000, from John Bloomberg-Rissman, Eighteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue, North America. The ESTC number for the *Ode* is R181173.

\(^9\) That Swift began *A Tale of a Tub* while still at Trinity College, that he contributed to the Trinity ""Tripos"" in 1688, that he began his ""Ode to Sancroft"" in 1689, or that he began his ""Ode to
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![Figure 1. Swift’s *Ode. To the King*, from the copy in the Derry and Raphoe Diocesan Library, Londonderry, Northern Ireland, reproduced by permission of the United Dioceses of Derry and Raphoe. Shown approximately 5/6 of actual size.](image-url)
What can the Poet’s humble Praise?
What can the Poet’s humble Bays?
(We Poets oft our Bays allow,
Transplanted to the Hero’s Brow)
Add to the Victor’s Happiness?
What do the Scepter, Crown, and Ball,
(Rattles for Infant Royalty to play withal)
But serve t’adorn the Baby-dress.
Of one poor Coronation-day,
To make the Pageant gay:
A three hours Scene of empty Pride,
And then the Toys are thrown aside.

II.

But the Delight of Doing Good
Is first like Fame among the Stars,
And Deifi’d in Verse;
’Tis the best Gemm in Royalty;
The Great Distinguisher of Blood,
Parent of Valour and of Fame,
Which makes a Godhead of a Name,
And is Contemporary to Eternity.
This made the Ancient Romans to afford
To Valour and to Virtue the same Word:
To shew the Paths of both must be together trod.
Before the Hero can Commence a God.

These
III.

These are the ways
By which our happy Prince carves out his Bays;
Thus He has fix'd His Name
First, in the mighty Lift of Fame,
And thus He did the Airy Goddess Court,
He fought Her out in Fight,
And like a Bold Romantick Knight
Rescu'd Her from the Giant's Fort:
The Tyrant Death lay crouching down,
Waiting for Orders at his feet,
Spoil'd of his Lead'en Crown;
He trampled on this Haughty Bajazet,
Made him his Footstool in the War,
And a Grim Slave to wait on his Triumphant Carr.

IV.

And now I in the Spirit see
(The spirit of Exalted Poetry),
I see the Fatal Fight begin;
And, lo! where a Destroying Angel stands,
(By all but Heaven and Me unseen,) With Lightning in his eyes, and Thunder in his hands;
In vain (said He) does Utmost Thule boast,
No poy's'nous Herb will in her breed;
Or no Infe's'tious Weed, When
When she sends forth such a malignant Birth,
When Man himself’s the Vermin of Her Earth;—
When Treason there in person seems to stand,
And Rebel is the growth and manufacture of the Land;
He spake, and a dark Cloud flung o’er his light,
And hid him from Poetick sight,
And (I believe) began himself the Fight
For strait I law, the Field maintain’d,
And what I us’d to laugh at in Romance,
And thought too great ev’n for effects of Chance;
The Battle almost by Great William’s single Valour gain’d;
The Angel (doubtless) kept th’Eternal gate,
And stood ‘twixt Him and every Fate;
And all those flying deaths that aim’d him from the field,
(Th’impartial deaths which come)
Like Love, wrapt up in fire;
And like that too, make every breast their home
Broke on his everlasting Shield.

V.

How vainly (Sir) did Your Fond Enemy try
Upon a rubbish heap of broken Laws
To climb at Victory
Without the Footing of a Cause;
His Lawrel now must only be a Cypress Wreath,
And His best Victory a Noble Death;

His
(5)

His scrap of Life is but a heap of miseries,
The remnant of a falling snuff,
Which hardly wants another puff;
And needs must sink when e'er it dies;

Whilest at Your Victorious Light
All lesser ones expire,
Consume, and perish from our sight,
Just as the Sun puts out a Fire;

And every foolish Flye that dares to aim
To buzz about the mighty flame;
The wretched insects finge their wings, and fall,
And humbly at the bottom crawl.

VI.

The Giddy Britishe Populace,
The Usurping Robbers of our Peace,
Who guard Her like a Prey;

And keep Her for a sacrifice,
And must be sung, like Argus, into ease.

Before this Milk-white Heifer can be stole away,
Our Mighty Prince has charm'd its many hundred eyes:

Has lull'd the Monster in a deep
And (I hope) an Eternal Sleep,

And has at last redeem'd the Mighty Prize.
The Scots themselves, that Discontented Brood,
Who always loudest for Religion bawl
(as those still do who have none at all)
Who claim so many Titles to be Jews,
But, surely such whom God did never for his people choose,
Still murmuring in their wilderness for food,
Who pine us like a Chronical Disease?
And one would think 'twere past Omnipotence to please;
Your Presence all their Native Stubborness controuls,
And for a while unbends their contradicting souls:
As in old Fabulous Hell,
When some Patrician God would please
To visit the Immortal Jayl,
The very brightness of His face
Suspended every Horror of the place,
The Gyants under Ætna cease to groan,
And Sisyphus lay sleeping on his stone.
Thus has our Prince compleated every Victory;
And glad Ierne now may see
Her Sister Isles are Conquered too as well as She.

That Restless Tyrant who of late
Is grown so Impudently Great,
That Tennis-ball of Fate;
This Gilded Meteor which flies
As if it meant to touch the Skies;
For all its boasted height,
For all its Plagiary light,
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_Took its first Growth and Birth_  
From the worst excrements of earth;  
Stay but a little while and down again 'twill come,  
And end as it began, in Vapour, Stink, and Scumm.  
Or has he like some fearful Star appear'd?

_Long dreaded for his Bloody Tail and Fiery Beard,_  
_Transcending Nature's Ordinary Laws,_  
_Sent by Just Heaven to threaten Earth_  
_With War, and Pestilence, and Dearth,_  
_Of which it is at once the Prophet and the Cause._  
_Howe'er it be, the Pride of France_  
_Has finish'd its short Race of Chance,_  
_And all Her boasted Influences are_  
_Rapt in the Vortex of the Britsh Star;_  
_Her Tyrant too an unexpected wound shall feel._  
_In the last wretched remnant of his days;_  
_Our Prince has hit Him, like Achilles, in the Heel._  
_The poy's nous Dart has made him reel,_  
_Giddy he grows, and down is hurl'd._  
_And as a Moral to his Vile Disease,_  
_Falls sick in the Posteriors of the World._

FINIS.

_Dublin, Printed by Jo. Brent; and are to be Sold at the_  
_Printing-house over against the Sign of the Cock in_  
_Capel-street, near Essex-Bridge. 1691._

Figure 7.
Why Swift chose John Brent remains unclear. Brent, trained in London, was a Dublin printer and bookseller who flourished from 1685 to 1704. Perhaps it was with the printing of the *Ode. To the King* that Swift's long-lasting tie with the Brents began. In the *Journal to Stella*, Swift recounts arranging for Brent to take a certain boy as an apprentice. In 1728, Swift said that Brent's wife Jane had been his housekeeper for over thirty years; she seems to have moved into the Deanery in 1714 or 1715, and is memorialized in, among other places, Swift's mock-ballad "Dingley and Brent." After she died in 1735, she was succeeded at the Deanery by her daughter Ann Ridgway. Although John Brent is not known to have printed any other work by Swift, the friendship with the Brents was apparently the first and most long-lasting in a series of friendships Swift had with printers and booksellers, including the Tookes, Barber, Waters, Hyde, the Hardings, Motte, and Faulkner.

Brent's printing of the *Ode* is preserved in a volume of miscellaneous Dublin and London pamphlets dating from 1641 to 1713. The pamphlet appears to have been among the nucleus of the Raphoe Diocesan Library formed by the Trinity vice provost and librarian John Hall. In March 1689, when nearly all the Trinity College fellows abandoned the College for England, Hall was one of only four who remained behind at their posts. Although his books include very little poetry from the reign of William and Mary, the *Ode* would have been of undoubted interest to one who was active at Trinity during the Jacobite war and who, in such a small college, would surely have known Swift. Hall, a Church of Ireland priest, of course, and a pluralist, Temple" in 1689 are all possibilities that have been raised, but though we can be confident that he did writing before the *Ode. To the King*, we have no good information about it. In his letter to the Athenian Society, 14 February 1691/2, he says, "I have been somewhat inclined to this *Folly*," which may well mean the folly of writing odes; *Correspondence*, ed. Woolley, I, 107. In his letter to Thomas Swift, 3 May 1692, he refers to his now lost poem "The Ramble" as "something I wreat to a young lady in Ireland," which might mean during his 1690-91 Irish sojourn or earlier (*Correspondence*, ed. Woolley, I, 111, 113). On the date of the "Ode to Sancroft," Edward W. Rosenheim has persuasively argued that despite the claim offered in its first publication, the *Miscellaneous Pieces* of 1789, that it had been composed in 1689, the poem at least in its 1789 form could not have been finished before 3 August 1691; it will be noted that Swift describes having the poem in progress, unfinished, in his letter to Thomas Swift, 3 May 1692. Rosenheim considers it possible that Swift began *A Tale of a Tub" at least" as early as 1694, that is, "a decade" before it was published in 1704; see "Swift's *Ode to Sancroft*: Another Look," *Modern Philology*, 73 (1976), S26-S27 and n. 14. That *Ode. To the King* was Swift's first publication is corroborated by his oft-remarked reference to his "young and (almost) *Virgin-must" a year later in "Ode to the Athenian Society*" (*Poems*, ed. Williams, I, 18). Regarding the "Ode to Temple," see *Poems*, ed. Williams, I, 26; A. C. Elias, Jr, *Swift at Moor Park: Problems in Biography and Criticism* (Philadelphia, 1982), pp. 248n67 and 305n77; and Bruce Arnold, *Swift: An Illustrated Life* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 36, 244.

10 See *Prose Works*, XVI, 559.
11 See *Correspondence*, III, 268.
left his books to the Raphoe Diocese in 1735, "desiring thereby," he said, "to make some amends for not residing at my parish [Ramochy] in the said diocese."

Hall's copy of the Ode, tucked away in a small library of church history and theology in Londonderry, was known to New Wing because, in the laconic explanation of New Wing's 1994 volume, "in the 1970s and 1980s, Mary Pollard … made available [to the Wing Project] her manuscript catalogue of pre-1800 Irish imprints."

Anyone who has seen Pollard's magisterial Dictionary of Members of the Dublin Book Trade, 1550–1800, drawn in significant part from the catalogue referred to, will understand something of New Wing's indebtedness to Pollard where Irish imprints are concerned. Before Pollard, E. R. McClintock Dix had also noted the existence of the pamphlet in 1912. Neither Dix nor Pollard, however, identified the author of the anonymous Brent pamphlet, nor, therefore, does New Wing or the ESTC or Tony Sweeney's Ireland and the Printed Word – both the ESTC and Sweeney being, for this item, derivatives of New Wing.

Yet Brent's edition of the Ode was apparently not entirely unknown in eighteenth-century Dublin. It was presumably Walter Harris who had seen the 1691 printing and recorded it, in the note on Swift added to his 1746 revision of The Whole Works of Sir James Ware Concerning Ireland. The note says that before 1696, Swift "had published some Pieces of Poetry, as a Pindarique Ode to King William III. to congratulate him on his great Successes, which was printed in Ireland in 1690, and an Ode to the Athenian Society, published among the Works of that Body in 1691." Deane Swift, writing in 1755, seemed to have seen the Ode but not Harris's edition of Ware. In 1778, he said that about 1732 or 1733 his future mother-in-law Martha Whiteway, Swift's cousin and housekeeper, had shown him (Deane) the poem, evidently in print, and that he had found it unreadable. The significant point here is that Mrs Whiteway had access to a

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14 See James B. Leslie, Derry Clergy and Parishes (Enniskillen, 1937), p. 95; and for the text of Hall's will, dated 24 February 1734/5, see W. Maziere Brady, Clerical and Parochial Records of Cork, Clare, and Ross, 3 vols (Dublin, 1863–64), III, 314–18. The Raphoe and Derry diocesan libraries are said to have been merged in 1834, and the combined libraries have been housed in Londonderry; see Maura Tallon, Church of Ireland Diocesan Libraries (Dublin, 1959), p. 19. At least as late as 1868, however, the two libraries' stocks were not mingled, as appears from the Catalogue of the Raphoe Diocesan Library (Dublin, 1868). This catalogue mentions the volume in which the Ode is found though it skips over the Ode itself (pp. 44–45).

15 For their kindnesses, by mail and in Derry, I wish to express gratitude to successive Diocesan Secretaries (and de facto librarians) of the United Dioceses of Derry and Raphoe, W. A. McConnell and Geoffrey Kelly, and for information about the history of the library, to Canon Frederick Fawcett.

16 New Wing, I (1994), ix.

17 I myself am deeply grateful to Mary Paul Pollard for her encouragement of the present research and especially for making available to me, in advance of the publication of her Dictionary, her notes on Brent.


20 II, part 2 (Dublin: Reilly, 1746), 301.

copy of Brent’s edition, for it can only be that and not Fairbrother’s text, if Deane Swift’s dating (“about five or six and forty years ago”) is correct.

But in short, after Fairbrother in 1735, no editor of Swift knew the Brent edition of the Ode or, until Williams, even knew the poem. In 1776 and again in 1779, John Nichols listed the poem among the “pieces by the Dean, which have eluded his most diligent researches.” In 1780, Nichols misidentified a different poem as Swift’s “Humble Chaplet,” and after that, no one searched further, it would seem, until Williams found Fairbrother and discovered Nichols’s mistake. These two poems – the Brent Ode. To the King and the “Ode to King William, on His Successes in Ireland” found by Nichols – are the only plausible candidates for Swift’s ode to William on his Irish campaign that I have been able to identify.

II

Following Fairbrother, Williams dates the composition of Swift’s ode as 1691. But the Brent text, unlike Fairbrother’s, carries the subtitle “Presented to His Majesty upon His departure from Ireland.” King William, after raising the Siege of Limerick, which had occupied him through most of August 1690, departed Ireland from Waterford 5 September 1690. If the subtitle means what it seems to say, Swift wrote the poem between 1 July 1690 (the Battle of the Boyne) and 5 September. This considerably narrows the period of composition as previously estimated by Irvin Ehrenpreis, “between July 1690 and August 1691” (when Swift presumably returned to England from Ireland); Fairbrother’s “Written in the Year 1691” is apparently only an inference

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23 See A Select Collection of Poems, IV (London: Nichols, 1780), 303–5. Some poems that appear in Fairbrother’s volume IV later appear in Faulkner’s edition of Swift’s Works, VI (1738) and Dodsley’s edition of Swift’s Miscellanea, X (1745) and their derivatives, though whether the text comes directly from Fairbrother or from Fairbrother’s source or some other manuscript source remains to be ascertained.

24 Ode to the King, on His Return from Ireland (London: Knapton, [1690]) can be eliminated because it is signed by Thomas Shadwell, poet laureate. A Pindarick Ode on His Majesties Return from the Campaign, 1691 (London: Manship, 1691) is an ode to virtue, not addressed directly to the King. Though the latter poem is an interesting comparison to the Brent ode in style and format, neither of these is written, as Swift said his ode was, to the King “in Ireland” but rather to him upon his return from Ireland. Further on the question of attribution, now widely regarded as settled, see Irvin Ehrenpreis, “Swift’s First Poem,” Modern Language Review, 49 (1954), 210–11; and Jarrell, “Ode to the King.”

from the date on Brent’s colophon.\textsuperscript{26} At the same time, the Brent printing offers further confirmation that Williams was correct in accepting Fairbrother’s attribution of the \textit{Ode} to Swift and, concomitantly, in rejecting Nichols’s attribution to Swift of the other claimant. Even if Brent published Swift’s \textit{Ode} in the last month or two of 1690, post-dating it as was customary at the end of the year, it remains clear that the poem was not printed at the time of its composition.\textsuperscript{27}

If we assume (as I do) that Swift personally arranged for the poem to be published and therefore was responsible for the published claim that the poem had been “\textit{Presented to His Majesty upon His departure from Ireland},” it may be tempting to suppose that Swift himself was for some reason present in Waterford and presented the poem to the King in person. The contrary is more likely, however. It was Swift’s lifelong habit to record or otherwise recount his contacts with royalty, and if he had personally been in attendance at this historically significant occasion, his explicit assertion to that effect would almost certainly have come down to us.\textsuperscript{28} We must also weigh the fact that the Brent publication lacks the epistle dedicatory which would have, or at least should have, accompanied a formal presentation to the monarch. It appears fairer to say that we do not know how or even whether the poem actually reached the King’s attention, though apparently in 1690 Swift believed that it did.

Swift himself stated in his autobiographical fragment “Family of Swift” that he went back to Ireland for the sake of his health.\textsuperscript{29} When he went is unknown. In May 1690, Temple recommended Swift to Sir Robert Southwell, who was just departing for Ireland with King William as secretary of state for Ireland.\textsuperscript{30} Whether Swift went to Ireland in Southwell’s employ is uncertain, but there is no reason to believe that he did so; and if he had gone, there is every reason, again, to believe that he would have boasted of his role in ways that would have preserved documentary evidence of it.\textsuperscript{31} It

\textsuperscript{26} Ehrenpreis, \textit{Mr Swift}, p. 112; Fairbrother, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{27} On the dating of imprints generally, see Philip Gaskell, \textit{A New Introduction to Bibliography} (Oxford, 1974 [1972]), pp. 317–18. It may be significant that, as noted above, Walter Harris placed the Brent publication in 1690.
\textsuperscript{28} For this argument, I am indebted to A. C. Elias, Jr.
\textsuperscript{29} The dating of his return to Ireland as “in 1690” appears in the Cobbe transcript of that document, which is quoted in John Forster, \textit{The Life of Jonathan Swift} (London, 1875), p. 13, and which is now Trinity College Dublin MS 11,174. The insertion “in 1690” is not, \textit{pace} Forster, in Swift’s handwriting; A. C. Elias, Jr, who has examined the manuscript carefully, has concluded that such insertions are in the handwriting of John Lyon. Fortunately, we need not rely on the Cobbe transcript to conclude that Swift did indeed return to Ireland in 1690. Denis Johnston’s suspicion regarding this passage in \textit{In Search of Swift} (Dublin, 1959), p. 117, seems unwarranted, as Arnold notes (\textit{Swift}, p. 120n11). Recovering good health may well have been one of Swift’s motives for travelling to Ireland, since his “giddiness,” which we now understand to have been Ménière’s Disease, had its onset while he was in England, at least according to one of his accounts of his symptoms; see Ehrenpreis, \textit{Mr Swift}, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{30} See Swift, \textit{Correspondence}, ed. Woolley, I, 101–3. Although Swift’s name is not mentioned in the letter, it seems obvious that only Jonathan Swift could be the “bearer” Temple refers to. Inasmuch as the letter comes down to us from the Southwell papers, it seems evident that it was delivered.
has recently been suggested that Swift could not have travelled to Ireland in wartime without the Southwell employment. Yet we know from the Trinity College Board’s register that a number of Trinity College personnel who left Dublin for England in early 1689 were able to return as early as mid-July 1690 – assuredly wartime, and Swift, who had been in residence at Trinity and for whom Temple had sought a Trinity fellowship, may have been among those who returned at this time – presumably with hopes of advancement there.

The *Ode* is devoted entirely to the Battle of the Boyne and does not seem to reflect William’s other major military operation in Ireland, the unsuccessful Siege of Limerick, which took place during August of 1690. Probably, therefore, it was not long after the Boyne that Swift found opportunity to write. Swift begins his second published poem, the “*Ode to the Athenian Society*” (1692), with two stanzas recounting the composition of the *Ode. To the King.* Although the account is narrated with some figural obscurity, through the story of Noah’s flood and Noah’s dove, some of Swift’s meaning may be unpacked. “*Learnings little Houshold*” (l. 12) – the little Trinity College academic community in which Swift was an MA candidate – was significant especially for its understanding of “her World’s fruitful System,” that is, of natural “*Philosophy*” (ll. 13, 15). Evidently, the criticism of empirical science in *Gulliver’s Travels* reflects a later development in Swift’s thinking.

Upon the “Inundation” of the Jacobite war in Ireland (l. 11), the “Houshold” left Dublin by ship (“did embark,” l. 12), but when William’s forces won at the Boyne, an event seen at the time as a decisive turning-point in the Jacobite war, the “Houshold” could reappear, presumably in Dublin (ll. 14–15) – as we know it did in fact do in mid-July 1690. Swift, who assigns himself the role of the “Dove-muse” (l. 16), is not explicit about whether the writing of the *Ode. To the King* was done while he was still at Moor Park or whether he wrote the poem after returning to Ireland. He tells us that

> The eager *Muse* took wing upon the Waves decline,  
> When War her cloudy aspect just withdrew  
> When the *Bright Sun* of Peace began to shine. (ll. 22–24)

Was the taking wing a poetic flight of inspiration or a physical movement to a different locale? On Mount Ararat, the dove-muse “pluckt a *Laurel* branch”

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32 Arnold, *Swift*, pp. 35–56. See also Bruce Arnold’s essay in the present collection, pp. 41–43.
35 See Ehrenpreis, *Mr Swift*, pp. 46–47. Swift may have been thinking particularly of his tutor St George Ashe, one of the TCD fellows who had left for England and who, like a number of Trinity fellows, participated actively in the Dublin Philosophical Society; see K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Common Scientist in the Seventeenth Century: A Study of the Dublin Philosophical Society, 1683–1708* (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1970), pp. 34–39, 42–44, 238n65. For a recent discussion of complexities in Swift’s attitude towards the New Philosophy, see Frank Boyle, *Swift as Nemesis: Modernity and Its Satirist* (Stanford, 2000), chapter 4.
36 Stubbs, *The History of the University of Dublin*, p. 133.
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And thence with joyful, nimble Wing
Flew dutifully back again,
And made an Humble Chaplet for the King. (ll. 26–31)

Particularly from Swift's reference to flying "dutifully back" and then making the chaplet, one may conjecture that the poem was written after the young poet's return to Ireland, although the location of Ararat, where the muse "for a while in heav'nly Contemplation sate" (l. 25) before returning to write, remains unspecified.

In any case, the poem would have been written fairly rapidly. As soon as William raised the Siege of Limerick, he promptly withdrew to Waterford en route to England. After the disappointments of Limerick, an ode on the "Success of His Arms in general" might have seemed strangely inapposite. Perhaps this awkwardness accounts for the suppression, in 1735, of the information that the poem was presented to William upon his departure from Ireland.

A related awkwardness lay in the fact that though William departed in September, at least a little time elapsed before Swift published his poem in "1691." This appearance of self-serving delay – waiting to publish until the outcome of the Irish campaign became clearer – may also have been conducive to Fairbrother's suppression of any reference to the poem's presentation to the King. Indeed, in Swift's "Ode to the Athenian Society," he compresses into a single couplet the history of the war between the Boyne and his own departure from Ireland for England about August 1691 (ll. 32–33), before turning to his enthusiastic discovery of the Athenians, seemingly in his estimation a learned society even more impressive than the University of Dublin. But he wishes the "great Unknown, and far-exalted" Athenians (l. 60) to be aware that, though he is a young poet, he is not without achievement and that he, Jonathan Swift, lays claim to the honour due to him for his recent anonymous Dublin panegyric.

Why in fact Swift had his Ode. To the King published belatedly is not clear, any more than it is clear whether he wrote the poem entirely on his own or at the suggestion of someone else. Presumably, when he printed the poem, he did so for the sake of its impact on a Dublin readership and possibly with encouragement, though exactly what he hoped that impact would be remains a matter for conjecture. In 1692, he told his friend John Kendall that "a person of great Honour in Ireland" had taken an interest in him, by implication in him as a writer. David Woolley has conjecturally identified this great person as Henry Lord Sidney, later Earl of Romney, who went to Ireland with William as one of his generals and who after William's departure served until 16 December 1690 as one of the Lords Justices of Ireland. Sidney was Temple's "clos-

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37 As Arnold has surmised from its "intense and passionate tone" (Swift, p. 37).
38 See J. G. Simms, Jacobite Ireland, 1685–91 (London, 1969), pp. 160–73. The siege lasted from about 13 August until about 30 August; see Finch MSS, II, 412–44, especially Southwell's summary comment of 28 August to Nottingham: "I have no good newes to tell your Lordship" (II, 434).
39 The appearance of the delay has been shrewdly observed by Tony Sweeney, Ireland and the Printed Word, item 3228.
40 For the date of Swift's return to England, see Ehrenpreis, Mr Swift, p. 107.
41 Compare Elias's incisive comments about the odes as written primarily for a Moor Park readership: Swift at Moor Park, pp. 80, 244–45, and elsewhere.
42 About his frenetic writing, Swift said, "And this it is, with a person of great Honour in Ireland who was pleas'd to stoop so low as to look into my mind us'd to tell me, that my mind was like..."
est” friend. Swift records in his “Family of Swift” that about 1699 Sidney “professed much friendship for” Swift, and Sidney may have done so in 1690 as well. If he encouraged publication of Ode. To the King, his encouragement did not inhibit later private merriment at Sidney’s expense in Swift’s poem “The Problem.” From all this detail we get tantalizingly little understanding, however, of what Swift was doing in Ireland from day to day in 1690–91 or of how a 22-year-old came to the attention of “a person of great Honour.” If he went to Ireland hoping for advancement within Trinity College, that did not occur, if only because funds that could have supported his continuation at the College were lacking. As Stubbs records, on the 1st of May, 1691, a notice was fixed upon the Chapel door by the Provost and Senior Fellows, stating that in consequence of the poverty of the College, and the late troublous times which had interfered with the studies of the Students, the election of Fellows and Scholars was deferred until the 20th of November following.

Swift returned to England without waiting for November, and he took his MA at Oxford the following July.

III

Naturally, it has been presumed that Fairbrother printed the Ode. To the King from Swift’s manuscript. In his preface, after all, Fairbrother says that in addition to the material taken from Faulkner’s new edition, “several new Poems are added, taken from the D——ns own Original Manuscripts, never before Printed.” Somewhat more judiciously, Fairbrother’s title-page announces that “many” of the additional poems “are Printed from Original Manuscripts.” Collation of the 1691 and 1735 texts shows with reasonable probability, however, that Fairbrother was reprinting from Brent, with revisions, rather than following a manuscript copy-text, which would throw off a far greater range of variation in accidentals. Fairbrother introduces mostly stylistic variants, not counting variants of line indentation, always problematic in the printing of Swift’s pindarics. Of these Fairbrother variants, a number are likely to be authorial, the most substantial of these changes being the re-sequencing of parts so that stanza

43 Ehrenpreis, Mr Swift, pp. 102-3; Elias, Swift at Moor Park, p. 227n13.
44 See Prose Works, V, 195.
46 Stubbs, The History of the University of Dublin, p. 135. See also Ehrenpreis, Mr Swift, p. 108. George P. Mayhew has observed that Swift’s failure to take his MA at TCD while he was in Ireland may also have reflected the slight he alluded to in his telling his uncle William, after taking his Oxford MA, that Oxford had been more obliging to him in a few weeks than TCD had been in seven years; see Mayhew, “Swift and the Tripos Tradition,” Philological Quarterly, 45 (1966), 99 and n.; Swift to William Swift, 29 November 1692 (not 1691 as Mayhew says), Correspondence, ed. Woolley, I, 116–17.
47 Rogers presumes that Fairbrother printed the Ode from manuscript (Poems, p. 601), and Williams implies that he did (Poems, ed. Williams, I, 5); Ann Cline Kelly draws a similar inference, see “The Birth of ‘Swift,’” Reading Swift: Papers from The Second Münster Symposium on Jonathan Swift, p. 17.
6 precedes stanza 5. Other apparently authorial variants include the change in stanza 4 (bottom of Figure 3) from "poys'nous Herb" to "poys'nous Beast" in the Destroying Angel’s denunciation; in stanza 6 (second line of Figure 5), the change from "The Usurping Robbers of our Peace" to "That Tyrant-Guard on Peace" – a change presumably requiring, in the next line, the alteration of "guard" to "watch;" four lines down from that, the change from "Mighty Prince" to "Prince" – perhaps to avoid a repetition of "mighty" three lines later; and in stanza 6 (middle of Figure 6), the reduction of two lines to a single line: that is,

When some Patrician God would please
To visit the Immortal Jayl,

becomes

When some Patrician God would visit the Immortal Jayl,

perhaps to avoid having the word "please" in the rhyme position twice within five lines. Fairbrother’s text also inserts one grammatical error that Pat Rogers gamely defended ("The poys'nous Darts has made him reel") and corrects an interesting reading, perhaps a typo, at the end of the poem where Brent’s text tells us that Louis “falls sick / As a moral to his vile disease”; Fairbrother has “As a Mortal to his vile disease.” Fairbrother adds as well three presumably authorial notes, one explaining that the “Utmost Thule” in stanza 4 means Ireland, and two explaining references to King Louis’s supposed bastardy and his anal fistula.

Several problems remain. There is some evidence that, in the mid-1730s, Swift was sorting, re-copying, and perhaps revising his unpublished manuscripts. We do not know whether or not the revisions of the Ode were part of this late revision process; they could have been carried out at any point after the original Brent publication.

Many poems Fairbrother published in his 1732 volume of the Miscellanies embody recent authorial revisions, however; indeed, Faulkner uses that volume as one of his copy-texts in his 1735 edition of Swift’s Works. Neither these “authorial” revisions

48 See Rogers, ed., Poems, p. 603n143.
49 Fairbrother does not characteristically add notes in this volume; typically, indeed, when reprinting from Gulliveriana, he never adds a note and always deletes them.
50 James Woolley, “Stella’s Manuscript of Swift’s Poems,” Swift and His Contexts, eds John Irwin Fischer, Hermann J. Real, and James Woolley (New York, 1989), p. 121; and James Woolley, "Writing Libels on the Germans: Swift’s ‘Wicked Treasonable Libel,’” Swift, the Enigmatic Dean: Festschrift for Hermann Josef Real, eds Rudolf Freiburg, Arno Löffler, and Wolfgang Zach (Tübingen, 1998), p. 315. It may have been in the course of some such revision that Swift came up with the erroneous dates attached to the “Ode to Sir William Temple” and the “Ode to Sancroft”; for the error of the dating, see Poems, ed. Williams, I, 26, and, on “Ode to Sancroft,” Rosenheim, “Swift’s Ode to Sancroft,” pp. S25–S26. On the other hand, Johnston thinks 1689 the right date for the “Ode to Temple” (In Search of Swift, p. 83), as does Arnold (Swift, p. 34).
of 1732 nor those in the Ode are the sort that A. C. Elias, Jr has called “creative” or that John Irwin Fischer has described as a process of inserting and occasionally deleting lines so as to “enrich, complicate, comment upon, and possibly obscure the underlying structures within which they occur.” Rather, like the 1732 revisions, the Ode revisions mostly address “minor questions of prosody and logic,” and the “author” responsible for them may not have been Swift himself but some other person or persons whose editing, one may guess, he countenanced. These “authorial” revisions match reasonably well the sort of revising that Elias has attributed to a “senatus consultum” in Dublin around 1729–35 and specifically that he found in Fairbrother’s 1732 reprint of the Miscellanies: as he wrote, “the phrasing is changed to something more logical but less memorable.” Whether the revisions to the Ode are Swift’s personal work or that of an agent or agents, the revising may well have been done with a view to further publication, such as in fact occurred in Fairbrother’s 1735 volume. If so, that raises, in turn, the possibility that at some level Swift acquiesced in what has been considered Fairbrother’s unauthorized appropriation of Faulkner’s 1735 edition.

The cautionary note most clearly sounded by a comparison of the Brent and Fairbrother texts of the Ode is that our received texts of Swift’s other poems of the early 1690s may likewise not be exactly what Swift wrote in his twenties. According to Thomas Sheridan the younger, the three Swift odes he published from manuscript in Miscellaneous Pieces (1789) came to him in Esther Johnson’s handwriting, but when she transcribed them is unknown. To complicate matters only a little more, the odds are

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54 Sheridan’s annoyance with Fairbrother’s volume IV may reflect a belated realization on his part that Fairbrother had incorporated material from Gulliveriana; I have conjectured that Gulliveriana riled Sheridan when it appeared in 1728: see Swift and Thomas Sheridan, The Intelligencer (Oxford, 1992), pp. 136, 217, 223, 230. Perhaps a better explanation of Sheridan’s unhappiness with Fairbrother is Fischer’s, that Sheridan felt guilty about having supplied Fairbrother manuscript material without Swift’s authorization (“Swift’s Early Odes,” pp. 226–27).
55 See Swift, Works, ed. Sheridan (London, 1784), X, 1n: “When I first gave this sermon [“The Difficulty of Knowing One’s Self”] to be published [in Miscellanies, X, 1745], I had some doubts whether it were genuine; for, though I found it in the same parcel with three others in the Dean’s own hand, and there was a great similitude in the writing, yet as some of the letters were differently cut, and the hand in general much fairer than his, I gave it to the world as dubious. But as some manuscripts of his early poems have since fallen into my hands, transcribed by Stella, I found, upon comparing them, that the writing was exactly the same with that of the sermon; which was therefore copied by her.” These early poems are evidently the three odes, besides the misattributed “Ode to King William,” that Sheridan published in Miscellanies Pieces in Prose and Verse (London: C. Dilly, 1789): “Ode to Dr. William Sancroft,” “To Mr. Congreve,” and “Occasioned by Sir W—T’s Late Illness and Recovery.” Interestingly, Sheridan implies that he retained the MSS that Dodsley published in Three Sermons (London, 1744) and in volume X of the Miscellanies (London, 1745). For Sheridan’s expression of doubt in Miscellanies, X, and for Louis Landa’s analysis of the publication history of “The Difficulty
good, given Swift's tendency to revise, that even Brent's text of the *Ode. To the King* was a revision of what Swift composed for presentation to William III.\(^5^6\)

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\(^5^6\) On this point, John Irwin Fischer's "Swift Writing Poetry" is suggestive.

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