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Swift's razor

Article

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SWIFT'S RAZOR

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> I am afraid lest such a Practitioner, with a Body so *open*, so *foul*, and so full of *Sores*, may fall under the Resentment of an incensed political *Surgeon*, who is not in much Renown for his Mercy upon great Provocation: Who, without waiting for his Death, will *flay* and *dissect* him alive; and to the View of Mankind, lay open all the disordered Cells of his Brain, the Venom of his Tongue, the Corruption of his Heart, and Spots and Flatuses of his Spleen — and all this for *Three-Pence*.[1]

The "Practitioner" described in these furious lines is a half-forgotten Irish politician of the eighteenth century called Joshua, Viscount Allen. The "incensed political *Surgeon*" is more easily recognized: he is Jonathan Swift, preparing with his usual relish for a familiar satirical operation. The various stages of the procedure described in these lines – the flaying of skin prior to dissection; the use of the scalpel in anger; the specific anatomization of tongue, heart and spleen; the public show – were rehearsed and re-rehearsed in Swift's satire. His writings are full of tongues working as knives, of wit likened to a

razor blade, of human folly dissected. In this passage the pretext for Swift's dissection is investigative, involving the exposure of disease and corruption in an officer of the body politic. But what Swift really wants to do is to punish.[2] In the elaborate detail of the proposed operation, Swift reveals some of the imaginative compulsion with which he returns to these themes of scalpel, skin, and incision. In turn the element of compulsion raises questions of interpretation.[3] What does Swift intend to represent with his metaphors of incision, and to what extent does he keep the meaning of those representations under control, or at least free from paradox?

The razors, knives and "tools for cutting" that appear so often in Swift's writings represent linguistic instruments for the performance of speech acts. Swift often imagines them being deployed for some identifiable purpose, typically the discouragement of "fools" or "knaves" by anatomization. Their sharpness is associated with linguistic acuity, and specifically with the refinement, keenness and power of Swift's own writing. The focus of this article, however, is on another set of associations that Swift attaches to his blades. They tend also to involve ideas of latency, divagation, bluntness, and misappropriation. The soon-to-be-dissected tongue of Joshua, Viscount Allen is a good example. Allen appears elsewhere in Swift's writings as "Traulus" or "the stammerer," mocked with energetic cruelty for his humble birth (butchery is the family profession, allegedly) and his speech impediment:

Hence he learnt the Butcher's Guile,

How to cut a Throat and smile:

Like a Butcher Doom'd for Life,

In his Mouth to wear his Knife.

(37-40)[4]

Swift alludes to the proverbial butcher who searched everywhere for his cleaver, and at last found it clenched between his teeth.[5] Words are what "Traulus" has misplaced, of course, even though they are at the tip of his tongue. The man with a blade in his mouth is a plausible image for rhetorical aggression, but he is less menacing when we realize that his knife is a gag, an impediment to speech. Swift's blades often represent a finely balanced conceptual tension: acuity runs into bluntness, edge is poised against surface, or, occasionally and more positively, incisive violence is mitigated by accomplished tact. It is impossible to say whether Swift, were he alive, could tell us much about the psychological sources of this imaginative tick. But he did leave evidence about the meanings he associated with blades, and about what we might call the structure of his compulsion. The symbol of the razor connects three particularly important problems to which Swift dedicated much thought: first is the ethics of doing things (particularly violence) to people with words; second is the historical nature of modernity; and third is the stylistics of refinement in literature. This essay describes the interdependence of these themes in Swift's writing.

The association of sharp-edged tools with aggressive speech acts was already a familiar one in classical and modern commentary.[6] Thomas Drant, a sixteenth-century translator of Horace, described satire as an "instrument" for

piercing, pinching and cutting, supporting the derivation with a flourish of oriental learning: "A name of Arabique to it they gaue: | For Satyre there, doothe signifye a glaue [sword]".[7] One theme from the classical texts that was particularly interesting to Swift and his contemporaries was the distinction between messy butchery and the kind of precise knife-work involved with surgery and dissection.[8] A well-known example, selected by Swift as the epigraph for *Examiner* no. 32 (15 March 1710-11), is found in Cicero's speech at the defense of Publius Sestius. Swift used the passages as an epigraph for the *Examiner* on the day that the Marquis de Guiscard had attempted to assassinate Robert Harley, the leader of the ministry (soon to be Lord Treasurer) for whom Swift was working informally as head of communications. Guiscard stabbed Harley twice with a penknife, the blade snapping on the victim's rib bone with the first blow:

> *Non ea est medicina, cum sanae parti corporis scalpellum adhibetur atque integrae; carnificina est ista et crudelitas; ei medentur rei publicae, qui exsecant pestem aliquam tamquam strumam Civitatis.*
> It is not a remedy to apply a lancet to a sound and healthy part of the body; that is an act of butchery and cruelty. They heal the State who cut out a diseased portion, as some foul growth, from the body of the Commonwealth.[9]

Cicero's words set up the argument Swift makes at the close of the piece – that the proper punishment for Guiscard's assassination attempt is execution. Swift wants a public beheading, if only to keep up the cutting theme. Having arrived

on the scene soon after the attempt, Swift mentions that Harley gave him the broken blade to look after, saying that "*he thought it now properly belonging Him."*[10] That final pronoun must refer to Harley himself, but remains just ambiguous enough to suggest that the blade might be an appropriate memento for his journalistic axe-man, Swift, whose pen he expects to perform further amputations of the ministry's enemies.[11] Elsewhere in *Examiner* no. 32 Swift struggles to think of historical parallels for Guiscard's attempt, which is unusual for having happened during a sitting of the council of state. The first that occurs to him is the assassination of Caesar before the Roman senate, "but that was an Affair concerted by great Numbers of the chief Senators, who were likewise the Actors in it."[12] The more important distinction, as we know from part III of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), is that Swift thought the part played by Marcus Junius Brutus in Caesar's assassination showed "the most consummate Virtue, the greatest Intrepidity."[13] There was a case of fine state-surgery, quite distinct from the clumsy butchery attempted by Guiscard.

Brutus's act of tyrannicide is the focus of another well-known classical passage dealing with blades, language, and brutality, one that had became a point of controversy for modern commentators on satire by the end of the seventeenth century. It comes at the close of Horace's seventh satire in the first book of *Sermones*. There, verbal knife-work has low-life associations. Horace, once a republican comrade of Brutus but now a follower of Augustus, tells a story from the period of Brutus's proscription in the eastern provinces of the empire.[14] Brutus is presiding at a court where two foul-mouthed locals, named

Persius and Rupilius Rex, are in dispute. The satire concludes with Persius making a back-firing pun that humiliates Brutus, although the satire is itself cut short before registering his response:

> Then, in answer to his full flood of wit, the man of Praeneste
> [Rupilius Rex] flings back abuse, the very essence of the vineyard…
> But the Greek Persius, now soused with Italian vinegar, cries out:
> "By the great gods, I implore you, O Brutus, since it is in your line
> to take off "kings", why not behead this Rex?[15]

The homely association of linguistic invective and vinegar gives way suddenly, by means of an appropriately ham-fisted pun, to the violence of decapitation. In the "Discourse Concerning Satire" (1697), John Dryden singled out the "miserable clench" between Rupilius's surname ("Rex") and Brutus's family history of tyrant removal as an instance of Horace's appetite for literary "garbage."[16] During the English "Battle of the Books," Richard Bentley made use of the same pun when attacking the role of Swift's friend the satirist Dr. William King in the composition of Charles's Boyle's *Dr Bentley's Dissertations Examin'd* (1698). King's "Virulency and *Insolence* [are] so far above the common pitch; that it puts one in mind of *Rupilius King*, a great Ancestor of the Dr's, commended to Posterity by *Horace* under the honourable Character, | *Proscripti Regis Rupili pus atq; venenum.*"[17] Horace's satire is characterised conventionally as polite or smiling, but the seventh satire allows both Dryden and Bentley to dwell upon a rougher element in his writing, a willingness to go for the jugular (*cur non* | *Hunc Regem jugulas*? – "why not

behead this Rex?") that lies in reserve behind the satirist's easy self-projections.[18]

Swift makes no recorded comment on Horace's seventh satire, despite his great love of blades and puns. Dryden's comments on it appear, however, only a few pages after a passage in the "Discourse" that Swift did know, and which contains a modern image for the sort of surgical satire that he favoured. The great mystery of the satirist's art, writes Dryden, "which yet no master can teach to his apprentice," is that of "fine raillery," the recognizable skewering of a subject without explicitly naming villain or vice:

> If it be granted that in effect this way does more mischief – that a man is secretly wounded, and though he be not sensible himself, yet the malicious world will find it for him – yet there is still a vast difference betwixt the slovenly butchering of a man, and the fineness of a stroke that separates the head from the body and leaves it standing in its place.[19]

The image is a striking one in every way, and the odd traces of cruelty and comedy that hang about it are a characteristic effect in Dryden's hasty critical style, of which Swift made much fun. Dryden tidies up the image slightly in his "Life of Lucian," where he describes Lucian's satirical irony as "not only a keen, but a shining Weapon in his Hand; it glitters in the Eyes of those it kills; his own God's, his greatest Enemies, are not butchered by him, but fairly slain: they must acknowledge the Heroe in the stroke."[20] Alexander Pope may have had the passage at the back of his mind, as well as the Miltonic one (*Paradise*

Lost, book 6, line 330-53) acknowledged in an authorial footnote, when he let a sylph in *The Rape of the Lock* (1712) get chopped in half by the Baron's scissors. Being a spirit, the sylph's two halves were immediately reunited, which is almost what happens in Dryden's image of decapitation.[21] In any case, Swift does not always respect the general distinction implied here, so important for earlier commentators like Dryden, between messy butchery and fine blade-work. Nor does he subscribe to Dryden's progressive satirical poetics, with its programme for polishing away the roughness of the mode in the pursuit of perfect polemical acuity. As we shall see, in Swift's satire regressive brutality and refined precision remain distinct but equally indispensable functions of the modern satirical armory.

*** * ***

Ancient precedents only take this topic so far, because the satirical blade has its broadest significance in Swift's writing as a symbol of modernity. Swift's earliest intellectual allegiances, as is well known, were to the partisans of ancient learning in the *querelle* of the ancients and moderns. His patron Sir William Temple instigated the British staging of the quarrel, and many of the Oxford wits who extended Temple's campaign remained Swift's friends and political allies for the rest of his life.[22] Towards the end of 1697 Swift wrote "The Battel of the Books," a mock-epic squib that showed plenty of relish for cultural conflict, and that was skewed heavily to the advantage of the "Ancients." Given the willingness of Swift's allies to accept the brutality and

strangeness of classical culture, it is unsurprising that violent blades are wielded on both sides of the conflict.[23] William Harvey the physician is seen at the head of a "vast Body of *Dragoons*… Part armed with *Scythes*, the Weapons of Death; Part with *Launces* and long *Knives*, all steept in *Poison*" – a motley set of blades domestic and agricultural, scythes and lances jarring semantically (and jangling aurally) with the scalpels and lancets of the physician. Charles Boyle, the young champion of the ancients, wields a "Launce of wondrous Length and sharpness" – that is, his 1698 examination of Bentley's *Dissertation*.[24] When it was published in 1704 as part of a miscellany of tracts gathered around *A Tale of a Tub*, however, the "Battel" looked less like a loyal intervention on the ancient side and rather more like a satire on the quarrel as such. This effect was the result of proximity to the *Tale*.

One of the underlying themes of the *Tale* is the way in which certain adversarial modes of philosophical disputation, understood by Swift to be characteristically "modern," exclude from the debate anyone who does not assent to certain general principles upon which the antagonists tacitly agree. In quarrels such as these, the stakes are raised, the winner takes all, and this suits both sides of the competition. Swift does not say much about those excluded, but we can take them to include those sceptical about systematic thinking, for example, or defenders (like Temple's "ancient" allies) of traditional scholastic university curricula. An exemplary quarrel in this respect is the one between Cartesian mechanists and Gassendian Epicureans.[25] One school is caricatured by Swift as intent on using reason to cut into the core of things, the other as

interested only in what can be observed empirically, in the outward features of material objects. One is all edge, the other all surface. As such they complement one another perfectly:

> *Epicurus,* modestly hoped, that one Time or other, a certain Fortuitous Concourse of all Mens Opinions, after perpetual Justlings, the Sharp with the Smooth, the Light and the Heavy, the Round and the Square, would by certain *Clinamina,* unite in the Notions of *Atoms* and *Void,* as these did in the Originals of all Things. *Cartesius* reckoned to see before he died, the Sentiments of all Philosophers, like so many lesser Stars in his *Romantick* System, rapt and drawn within his own *Vortex*.[26]

The faithfulness or otherwise of these representations of seventeenth-century intellectual debates is not at issue here. The point upon which Swift insists is that discursive incompatibility or antagonism covers a hidden unity of purpose, a parallel pursuit of cultural domination. In some classical writings, an alternative moral vision of simplicity, reason, and virtue may still be glimpsed, Swift allows. But those texts have themselves been absorbed into modern print culture, and the modern parties fight under the banners of ancient philosophical schools. Swift tends to conceptualize the perceived doubleness of modernity as a false choice offered between knowledge of the superficies of objects and knowledge of its compacted interior, "a strong Delusion always operating from *without,* as vigorously as from *within.*"[27] The importance of blades to this Swiftian idea of modernity is as instruments that give access to innerness by

means of incision and dissection. Ultimately, in the emblem of the razor – a blade of extreme acuteness and incisive potential that seems from another perspective to be a flat, depthless metal plane – Swift finds a single image that brings together these two dimensions of profundity and surface.

The triumph of the moderns, then, as Swift describes it, is that they have succeeded in constructing a virtual cultural reality. They present their disputes as totalizing conflicts that admit of no third terms, and of no harmonizing resolution. In its negative way, however, *A Tale of a Tub* does offer some hope for a properly "a-modern" position, to use a term coined by the French social theorist Bruno Latour. Latour's account of the totalizing procedures of modernity has much in common with Swift's and does much to illuminate it, although Latour expands the field of antagonistic positions that it contains.[28] How could all the other non-modern, naturalized cultures – cultures of the sort favoured implicitly by Swift – withstand modernity's triumph? Latour answers:

> They became premodern by contrast. They could have stood up against transcendent Nature, or immanent Nature, or society made by human hands, or transcendent Society, or a remote God, or an intimate God, but how could they resist a combination of all six? Or rather, they might have resisted, if the six resources of the modern critique had been visible together in a single operation... But they seemed to be separate, in conflict with one another, blending incompatible branches of government, each one appealing to different foundations.[29]

Latour adduces the example of social anthropology as a modernistic discipline that embodies within its own procedures this sort of conflict, this capacity to "see double" when examining the human sphere. Social scientists pride themselves on their understanding that things which ordinary opinion invests with meaning – religious icons, for example, or money, fashion, works of art, machines, instruments – in fact have no controlling inner properties, that they are "mere idols shaped by the requirements of social order", as Latour puts it. But when ordinary opinion assumes that people have some freedom to modify their motives and desires in relation to these objects, the social scientist now insists that society is itself determined by the inner nature of things – that is, by human biology as revealed by scientists, by the passions and dispositions that our genes determine.[30]

Long before the emergence of modern social science, the narrator of the *Tub* performs the same dualistic conflation between social/humanistic and natural/objective denunciations of ordinary opinion. He indicates that it is a characteristic process for the modern mind: "In the Proportion that Credulity is a more peaceful Possession of the Mind, than Curiosity", he writes, "so far preferable is that Wisdom, which converses about the Surface, to that pretended Philosophy which enters into the Depth of Things, and then comes gravely back with Informations and Discoveries, that in the inside they are good for nothing".[31] The narrator's choice of empirical wisdom about the surfaces of things over rationalistic anatomizations of the depths of things has little significance in itself. It simply keeps the all-constituting performance of

intellectual conflict going. But while the conflict is in process we can be sure that the "thing" in question – in this case, human nature – will remain unknowable (and, on the whole, a matter of indifference) to the contending parties.

The blades that appear in Swift's satire do not belong particularly either to the modern or a-modern sphere. They are what Richard Sennett calls "sublime tools," instruments that in their simplest forms are almost infinitely adaptable to different applications.[32] When two officers search Gulliver's pockets they find his razor and pocket knife, which 'we obliged him to shew us, because we apprehended they might be dangerous Engines' – and the doubtfulness of the ascription is the significant thing here.[33] But in Swift's satire razors and knives appear most often in the hands of the partisans of modernity, typically as instruments of science. They operate commonly in the dissection theatre, one small remove away from the "state surgery" in which Swift sometimes wielded his own scalpel. The list of mock-treatises that precedes the title page of *A Tale of a Tub* Swift includes a set of "*Lectures upon a Dissection of Human Nature,*" and the Modern who narrates the *Tale* gives further hints about their contents at the start of chapter five, the "Digression of the Modern Kind": "To this End, I have some Time since, with a World of Pains and Art, dissected the Carcass of *Human Nature,* and read many useful Lectures upon the several Parts, both *Containing* and *Contained;* till at last it *smelt* so strong, I could preserve it no longer."[34] The result of his foul inquiries has been what he takes to be a new and important discovery: "That the

Publick Good of Mankind is performed by two Ways, *Instruction,* and *Diversion."* The scalpel of modern moral discourse is, in other words, a violent instrument for the generation of banality. Crucially, it is the structure of that banality that creates the modern illusion of significance. The meaningful is supposedly revealed beneath the superficial: diversion is cut away to get at the instruction below. The dissection motif reappears later in the *Tub* in the "Digression concerning Madness":

> The two senses, to which all objects first address themselves, are the sight and the touch; these never examine farther than the colour, the shape, the size, and whatever other qualities dwell, or are drawn by art upon the outward of bodies; and then comes Reason officiously, with Tools for cutting, and opening, and mangling, and piercing, offering to demonstrate, that they are not of the same consistence quite thro'… Reason is certainly in the Right; And […] in most Corporeal Beings, which have fallen under my Cognizance, the Outside hath been infinitely preferable to the *In:* Whereof I have been further convinced from some late Experiments. Last Week I saw a Woman *flay'd,* and you will hardly believe, how much it altered her Person for the worse. Yesterday I ordered the Carcass of a *Beau* to be stript in my Presence; when we were all amazed to find so many unsuspected Faults under one Suit of Cloaths: Then I laid open his *Brain,* his *Heart,* and his *Spleen;* But, I plainly perceived at every Operation, that the farther

> we proceeded, we found the defects encrease upon us in Number and Bulk.[35]

Controversy over this much-discussed passage has tended to dwell upon the nature of the flaying undergone by the woman. Swift's eighteenth-century readers were likely to imagine the woman as a prostitute suffering the exemplary punishment reserved for sex workers at that time, a whipping.[36] But it is also plausible to read the word "*flay'd*" as a reference to the cutting away of skin prior to dissection, not least because this makes sense as an anticipation of the operation upon the beau's carcass in the next sentence.[37] On the other hand, this second reading plays down the crucial charge of sexual cruelty in Swift's prose, and it depends upon a less common (if not exactly rare) usage of the word flayed. But to worry about the predominance of either interpretation is to miss the point: it is the dynamic between meanings that matters here. At first Swift invites us to assume that the narrator has a prurient interest in the public flogging of women, but we half-revise that impression when it turns out that he is also involved in anatomical dissection for scientific ends.[38] This fleeting trick of irony is significant because it mimics at a formal level the play between "diversion" and "instruction" – between verifiable surface and significant depth – that exercises the *Tub*'s narrator throughout the passage. The opposition of knowledge drawn from the senses and from reason's "tools for cutting" earlier in the passage rehearses the Cartesian/Epicurean context for the distinction once again. The process of comprehension is itself a sort of unpeeling and incision,

an examination from which the narrator (and the reader too) would now like to retreat if there were any way to reverse the incidental mangling of the object.

It seems that Swift dwells upon these metaphors of dissection because they are so efficiently ambiguous. They allow him to switch in an instant between rather abstract ideas about thinking – such as the mock-methodologies of inquiry, interpretation, and understanding outlined in the "Digression concerning Madness" – and the horrible immediacy of the mangled, dissected body. When Swift likens inquiry to incision, a whole range of basic responses get agitated in the wake of the metaphor, especially reactions of disgust and compulsion. The "Carcass of *Human Nature*" upon which the Tub's narrator reads his lectures is a moralist's abstraction, but Swift's imagination insists on it taking sensible form – it soon "smel[ls] so strong" that even the narrator of the *Tub* has to throw it out. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift makes a similar association between inquiry and repulsion while his hero is in the giant's kingdom of Brobdingnag, where the sub-visual world of the microscopist is revealed to Gulliver's scaled-down naked eye. The most hateful things he sees are the lice that live in the giants' clothes, yet he is drawn to examine them even more minutely – if only he had a scalpel to hand: "and I should have been curious enough to dissect one of them, if I had proper instruments (which I unluckily left behind me in the Ship) although indeed the sight was so nauseous, that it perfectly turned my stomach."[39] The extremely repulsive smells and sights of the dissection theatre were a common topic in early-modern medical writing.[40] The striking thing about the disgust reported here by Gulliver and

elsewhere by the narrator of the *Tale* – both of them amateur dissectors – is that it leads so immediately to an irresistible curiosity.

The physical sensation of the knife's handle in the inquirer's hand (whether implied or experienced) seems important to this association of horror and compulsion. In the poem "On Dreams" (written 1724) Swift imagines how the work of two different sorts of knifeman fills their dreams:

> The Soldier smiling hears the Widows Cries,
> And stabs the Son before the Mother's Eyes.
> With like Remorse his Brother of the Trade,
> The Butcher, feels the Lamb beneath his blade.
>
> (15-18)[41]

While the horror in these lines is displaced from the dream of the hardened knifemen to the gentle reader, the discomfort that Swift aims to provoke is cut through by the immediacy of sensation. The butcher feels the action of the knife as though its blade extends his sense of touch, and it is this delicacy of apprehension (made keener by the weird correspondence of the verbs "stabs" and "feels" in the structure of the quatrain) that provides the focus for his dream. We encounter heightened awareness, an appreciation that "feels" like sentiment, where brutalized or sleepy insensibility might be expected, and probably hoped for.

In each of these dissections the nature of the blade employed – the specifics of its manufacture, for instance – may seem incidental to Swift's imaginings. But his focus on their feel in the hands of dissector and butcher

suggests that Swift had at least an awareness of knives, scalpels and razors as material artefacts with a technological history. It indicates an a-modern alertness to the objects at the heart of the procedures described. The most significant development in the manufacture of cutting blades over the century-or-so before Swift wrote was the increasing metallurgical refinement of shear steel, a laminate metal that gradually replaced the steelified iron used in knife manufacture before the sixteenth century.[42] The relative homogeneity of this metal allowed the production of blades that could be whetted to points of unprecedented sharpness.

In the sphere of science the development of ultra-sharp scalpels and razors had two significant consequences. First, it meant that early-modern anatomists were able, for the first time, themselves to perform accurate public dissections of human corpses, rather than delegating the knife-work to strong-armed barbers. The sharpness of modern scalpels meant that dissection no longer required the powerful strokes from the upper arm that had previously disqualified genteel physicians from such work. It was the Brabantine physician Andreas Vesalius who advertised this revolution most famously in the frontispiece of the first volume of his *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543). Vesalius is depicted standing over the cadaver on the floor of the dissection theatre, scalpel in hand, while two unemployed barbers quarrel below the operation table over who should have the privilege of sharpening the professor's blades.[43] His authority as an anatomist is guaranteed by the personal control he takes over detail of the operation. Second, the modern standards of

blade acuity meant that anatomists and dissectors had to acquire new skills of manual precision that were necessary to control the blade from cutting in too far.[44] This was not most evidently the case in the dissection theatre but in the common surgical procedures of venesection and phlebotomy, where vessels were often pierced by accident. In 1670 Richard Lower, the neuroanatomist and Fellow of the Royal Society remembered by his collaborator Thomas Willis as "an anatomist of supreme skill," proposed a new kind of lancet designed to overcome this problem of incisive tact.[45] Lower specified that the bottom edge of his lancet should be polished, rounded, and relatively thick up to half an inch below the blade's tip, which should still be sharp on both edges.[46] This meant that the surgeon could brace the rounded edge of the blade against the skin of the subject, before levering the tip carefully into the vein, controlling its depth of penetration without tearing the skin around the incision. These two new imperatives of authority and tact in the use of sharp edges are notable only negatively for their absence from the dissections described in *A Tale of a Tub*. But they are relevant to the more positive analogies that Swift makes elsewhere in his works between the use of scalpels for dissection and of pens for writing satire.

* * *

The element of mental compulsion that attends the descriptions of blades in *A Tale of a Tub* has broader significance to our understanding of Swift's work because he often uses the same imagery – and so the same

patterns of thinking – when he writes about the force or effect of satire. The association of pens with swords was already proverbial in the seventeenth century, and it does not seem to have interested Swift very much.[47] But common both in his poetry and prose is an association of blades with tongues, with verbal eloquence, and with failures of eloquence. We have already seen Swift's stammering enemy "Traulus" doomed "like a butcher… in his mouth to wear his knife" – that is, fated to fumble about for words that are on the tip of his tongue. Correspondingly, in one of his earliest poems, the "Ode to Sancroft" (written 1692), Swift lists various situations in which eternal truth will not be found: "In dagger-contests, and th' Artillery of words, | (For swords are madmen's tongues, and tongues are mad-men's swords)". As it happens Swift contradicts himself later in the same work, declaring his intention to write in future so that "[e]ach line shall stab, shall blast, like daggers and like fire."[48] In between there is a long line of Swift's poems in which tongues are slit so that they speak double, or sliced so that they are silent, or otherwise mangled by knives.[49]

The most imagistic example of the articulate blade figure appears among the 1735 instalment of Swift's "Thoughts on Various Subjects," the expanding collection of maxims first published in 1711. This is the Swiftian blade that embodies most starkly the dualistic idea found also in his conception of modernity. It is the blade reduced to its simplest, most sublime form, to apparently depthless surface and pure, depth-probing edge: "Eloquence smooth

and cutting, is like a Razor whetted with Oil."[50] The striking thing about this complete eleven-word text is that the razor does not appear to be doing anything. Its grim latency is at odds with the purposeful speech activity for which it provides a simile.[51] The touch of cognitive dissonance here is irritated by the word "whetted" (to sharpen, *OED* 1a), which carries with it the hint of a pun on "wetted," focusing the reader's attention on the tangibly polished surface of the blade, spread across with liquid oil.[52] Swift wants us to feel how the blandness of the razor's damp, lubricious plane has an inverted correspondence with the keenness of its edge. This is yet another blended evocation of surface and depth, the latter implied strongly by the incisive potential of the blade.

Unusually for a writer who prided himself on never stealing, this image of the eloquent razor does not seem to have been original to Swift. It is recognizable (though in a less compacted form) in the second satire of Edward Young's *Love of Fame, the Universal Passion* (published in parts, 1725-8; collected with a preface, 1728). Swift knew the work, having written a poem in his friendly "railling" mode in response to Young's dedication of the seventh satire to Sir Robert Walpole in 1726.[53] Young's satire puts on a familiar look of straight-faced Scriblerian didacticism:

> *Parts* may be prais'd, *good-nature* is ador'd;
> Then, draw your *wit* as seldom as your *sword*…
> As in smooth oyl the razor best is whet,
> So *wit* is by *politeness* sharpest set,

Their want of edge from their *offence* is seen;

Both pain us least when exquisitely keen.[54]

Young carefully denotes the relation between politeness and acuity while Swift leaves it latent and implicit, like the action of the blade. The standard of polite wit becomes focused on the idea of a dangerously deep cut administered without the indelicacy of grievous pain. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and John, Lord Hervey used the same idea against Alexander Pope in 1733 in the "Verses Address'd to the Imitator of Horace": "s*atire* shou'd, like a polish'd Razor keen, | Wound with a Touch, that's scarcely felt or seen, | Thine is an Oyster-Knife, that hacks and hews; | The Rage, but not the Talent to abuse."[55] Once again, it is the restraint of passion, figured in the skilful control of a hand accoutred with the most responsive of modern blades, that justifies the bloody business of cultural violence. When Pope experimented with the metaphor himself in the second *Epilogue to the Satires* (1738), he held off from specifying what sort of tool the "sacred Weapon" of satire most resembled, but he retained the focus on manual tact: "The Muse may give thee, but the Gods must guide. | Rev'rent I touch thee!"[56]

It may be, in fact, that Swift is claiming back a debt from Young with his razor maxim. Young's third couplet in the passage quoted above, with its idea that only blunt razors and satires cut painfully, owes something to the encouragement once given by Swift's narrator in *A Tale of a Tub* to aspiring literary hacks:

> May their own Dullness, or that of their Party, be no Discouragement for the Authors to proceed; but let them remember, it is with *Wits* as with *Razors*, which are never so apt to *cut* those they are employ'd on, as when they have *lost their Edge*.[57]

Swift returned to this idea of razors and self-injury a few years later in 'Horace, Bk II, Ode I Paraphrased' when warning Richard Steele not to trifle with high politics: "For Madmen, Children, Wits and Fools | Should never meddle with Edg'd Tools."[58] Young's version of the conceit, if that is what it is, has polished out much of the oddness of Swift's originals, particularly the *Tub*'s narrator's assumption that the lacerations caused by dull razors are somehow desirable, benefits to be anticipated. Neither *The Tub* nor Young spells out the purpose for which the razor is employed – presumably that of shaving, a procedure that of course makes barbarous faces smooth and polite in their turn.[59] In both versions the benefit of exquisite keenness or very fine "*Edge*" is that it allows the blade to operate insensibly, in a way corresponding to that previously imagined by Dryden. The unattractive ideal here is one of an aggression that is apparently tacit or indirect (or at least unfelt) and at the same time violently instrumental.

Swift was always interested in the psychology of self-justification that allows readers to feel the edge of general satire without worrying over how it might cut back upon themselves. Satire is like a looking-glass that reflects every face but the reader's own, which is why nobody is offended by it.[60] The figure of the fine razor allows Dryden and Young the consoling possibility that their sharpest blows leave some sort of mark on their unconscious subjects. One

of the things that distinguishes Swift's razor from the satirical blades of Dryden and Young is his reluctance to grant himself either that consolation of effectiveness or the illusion of control that it involves. In his coverage of the Guiscard affair, Swift insisted that the assassin's original intention had been to stab Henry St. John (later Viscount Bolingbroke), and he was fascinated with the chance of St. John's having been out of the penknife's range at the time. There may be some association in Swift's mind between this incident and the thinking behind a maxim preserved in the final collection of "Further Thoughts on Various Subjects" published posthumously in 1745:

> Men of great Parts are often unfortunate in the Management of publick Business; because they are apt to go out of the common Road, by the Quickness of their Imagination. This I once said to my Lord *Bolingbroke,* and desired he would observe, that the Clerks in his Office used a sort of Ivory Knife, with a blunt Edge, to divide a Sheet of Paper, which never failed to cut it even, only requiring a strong Hand; whereas if they should make use of a sharp Penknife, the Sharpness would make it go often out of the Crease, and disfigure the Paper.[61]

Like all refinements of acuity, St. John's intelligence has a deviating tendency that is true only to its own sharpness. It is this powerful, unpredictable characteristic of his and Harley's statesmanship, compounded with a magnanimous "Neglect of common Forms," that Swift particularly admired, and seems to have identified with his own literary originality.[62] There is also a

slight return here to the old themes of interiority and surface as well as to the classical themes of messy butchery versus fine surgery. The folded page is a medium for the blade that has no depth as such, but that allows the blunt ivory knife to work as though it did. A sharp penknife, by contrast, responds with unmanageable delicacy to the slightest turn or tremor of the fingers that hold it, as though passing across a two-dimensional surface. The remark has the true note of the raillery – profound compliment mixed with really acute criticism – that St. John seems often to have exchanged with Swift.[63] It corresponds with a bit of treacherous flattery Swift directed towards him late in life, reported by Swift's guardian Dr. John Lyon: "Swift used to say of Lord Bolingbroke, *That all the depths of Human knowleg floated on the surface of his mind.*"[64] This is a good image of the magnanimous acumen that Swift admired in Bolingbroke, and an even better way of suggesting how that sort of extreme resourcefulness of wit has the odd effect of turning sound learning into something thin and impermanent. One is reminded of the surprise of the *Tub*'s narrator at the fugitive fame of modern writing: "'Tis certain, that in their own Nature they were *light* enough to swim upon the surface for all eternity."[65] In each of these images the wit and generosity that Swift valued above all other qualities in his friends veer or float off towards disaster and dispersal.

A final dispersal features in the epitaph that Swift wrote to mark his monument in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. Once again, the recursive effect of an unseen knife is felt in every line (Swift insisted that it should be deeply carved and strongly gilt):

> Hic depositum est Corpus | IONATHAN SWIFT S.T.D. | Hujus Ecclesiæ Cathedralis | Decani, | Ubi sæva Indignatio | Ulterius | Cor lacerare nequit, | Abi Viator | Et imitare, si poteris, | Strenuum pro virili | Libertatis Vindicatorem. | Obiit 19º Die Mensis Octobris | A.D. 1745 Anno Ætatis 78º.[66]

The inscription brings together several themes that are recognizable from Swift's published writings. The conventional "abi viator" [go, voyager] *envoi* casts each reader as Gulliver, a traveler sent out into the world to imitate Swift's *virtù* and doomed, of course, to fail in the attempt. The Dean's claim to be a strenuous champion of liberty was established in another auto-epitaph, the *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift* (1739).[67] But most resonant of all is the motif of a vexed and lacerated body, this one granted a measure of peace in the church of which Swift imagined himself an embattled defender.[68] Swift's heart is safe at last, he hopes, from the fierceness of his own indignation. This is an extraordinary confession. Swift implies that every lash he has managed to land on the world with his satire has redoubled and returned itself in self-vexation. It is difficult to tell whether indignant aggression is the prevailing mood here, or surly passivity. Lyon reported the comment of an unidentified "Gentleman of real Wit, thought no Author", that Swift "was the first *left Handed* Genius in the World… where [in fencing] a left handed Adversary makes the Wickedest pass, and the most difficult to be Parryed."[69] The remark does capture something of the oblique approach that Swift's satire makes to its targets. But Swift would

have been surprised to hear of his satire engaging him in any sort of direct sword-play, however asymmetrical, as though he might be vanquished by an opponent, or (equally implausibly) as though the opponent might be chastened in his turn. Swift's razor, selected by the author as a symbol of eloquence, also represents the peculiar rhetorical disengagement at the heart of his satire.

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[1] *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift,* ed. Herbert Davis *et al.*, 16 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1939-74), 12:157-8 (hereafter cited as *PW*); Joseph Addison attacks Francis Atterbury for using the brutal expressions "*Blood-thirsty*, the *Political Butchers*, *State-Chirurgeons*, and the like" in no. 31 (6 April 1716) of *The Freeholder*, ed. James Leheny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 166; for other examples see Ian Higgins, *Swift's Politics: A Study in Disaffection* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 69-70; and Mark Knights, *Representation And Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship And Political Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 286.

[2] On "punitive" Swift see Edward W. Rosenheim jr., *Swift and the Satirist's Art* (Chicago University Press, 1963), 12-18, 109-12; cf. Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington; University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 29-30; on madness and punishment see Claude Rawson, "The Character of Swift's Satire," in *Focus: Swift*, ed. Claude Rawson (London: Sphere, 1971), 17-75, at 24-37; on misanthropic and punitive satire in Shakespeare, Molière and Swift see Robert C. Elliott, *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* (Princeton University Press, 1960), 130-222.

[3] For a subtle exploration of similar questions see Neil Chudgar, "Swift's Gentleness," *ELH*, 78 (2011): 137-161.

[4] "Traulus, the Second Part", *The Poems of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Harold Williams, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 3:800.

[5] *Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, comp. William George Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), 421; cf. Swift, *Polite Conversation*, in *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift*, gen. ed. Ian Gadd *et al.*, 17 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 2008-), 2:334 (hereafter cited as *CWJS*): "*Col.* Well; I am like the Butcher, that was looking for his Knife, and had it in his Mouth;" cf. 2:400; for Allen's stammer see Paddy Bullard, "Elocution, Hypocrisy and the Pulpit in Jonathan Swift's Satire", *Rhetorica* 30 (2012): 252-79, at 275.

[6] Such metaphors were favoured especially by John Marston, eg. his *Scourge of Villanie* (1598), "Totum in toto", E5^{v}: "Infectious blood, yee goutie humors quake, | Whiulst my sharp Razor doth incision make"; and *The Metamorphosis of Pigmalions Image* (1598), "Reactio", 58-68, at 63, of a critic: "Thy wit God comfort mad Chirurgion | What, make so dangerous an Incision? | At first dash whip away the instrument | Of Poets Procreation?" Ian Higgins has traced Swift's satire/knife parallels to newsbook satire of Civil War and Interregnum period in "The Afterlife of A Modest Proposal," *Dean Swift's Modest Proposal at 280*, Dean Swift Seminar Series, Dublin, 2009, <http://www.iol.ie/~rjtechne/swift/2009/higins09.htm>, accessed 18 September 2013. For an example from a contemporary of Swift see Daniel Defoe, *The True-born Englishman. A Satyr* (1700), "Introduction," 3: "search, *Satyr*, search, a deep Incision make; | The Poyson's strong, the Antidote's too weak. | 'Tis pointed Truth must manage this Dispute, | And down-right English *Englishmen* confute;" for

other examples see R. Grant Williams, "Disfiguring the Body of Knowledge: Anatomical Discourse and Robert Burton's The Anatomy of Melancholy," *ELH*, 68 (2001) 593-613; and Katherine Rowe, "'God's handy worke': Divine Complicity and the Anatomist's Touch," in *The Body in Parts: Rhetoric and Anatomy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (London: Routledge, 1997), 285-312.

[7] Thomas Drant, "Priscus Grammaticus de Satyra", lines 5-6, in *A Medicinable Morall, that is, the Two Bookes of Horace his Satyres, Englyshed* (1566), A4^{v}; for the false derivation from the Persian *sätür* ("butcher's cleaver"), see Mary Claire Randolph, "Thomas Drant's Definition of Satire, 1566", *NQ*, 180 (1941), 417-8; for Casaubon and later scholarly derivations see Griffin, *Satire*, 10-14.

[8] The contrast is already implicit in one of Swift's 1711 "Thoughts on Various Subjects:" "Physician ought not to give their Judgment of Religion, for the same Reason that Butchers are not admitted to be Jurors upon Life and Death", *PW*, 1:244.

[9] *Pro Sestio and In Vatinium*, ed. R. Gardner, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941), "Pro Sestio," LXV.135. Vatinus, the object of Cicero's anger, suffered from wens on his body. For text in *Examiner* 32 see *PW*, 3:106.

[10] See Swift, *Journal to Stella*, ed. Harold Williams, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), 214-5. For more on the broken blade see Delariviere Manley (working from hints by Swift), *A True Narrative of what Pass'd at the Examination of the Marquis de Guiscard* (1711), 14-5. In the account of the incident Swift gave to Archbishop King, 8 March 1710-11, *Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, ed. David Woolley, 5 vols. (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999-), 1:337, Swift mentions the interesting circumstance of

Henry St. John stabbing Guiscard, whereupon his "sword was taken from him, and broke".

[11] The tortoise-shell knife remained in Swift's possession until his death, when Deane Swift (*Essay upon the Life of Dr. Swift* [1755], 163) returned it to the Harley family, in whose possession both knife and blood-stained doublet remain (private communication with Edward Harley, Brampton Bryan, 2006); see David Womersley, "Souvenirs of Mortal Pain: Jonathan Swift and the Abbé Guiscard's Assassination Attempt on Lord Treasurer Harley," *TLS*, 5571, 8 January 2010, 14-17.

[12] *PW*, III:106.

[13] *Gulliver's Travels*, Part III, Ch. VII, *CWJS*, 15:291; see also *Discourse of the Contests and Dissensions* (1701), in *PW*, 1:222, and *Letter to a Whig Lord* (1712), in *CWJS*, 8:176.

[14] For historical context see Emily Gowers, "Blind Eyes and Cut Throats: Amnesia and Silence in Horace, *Satires* 1.7," *Classical Philology*, 97 (2002): 145-161, at 149-151.

[15] Horace, Satires I.vii.28-35: "Tum Praenestinus salso multoque fluenti | Expressa arbusto regerit convicia… | At Graecus, postquam est Italo perfusus aceto,| Persius exclamat: 'per magnos, Brute, deos te | Oro, qui reges consueris tollere, cur non | Hunc Regem iugulas';" on the energy of plebian language here see John Henderson, "On Getting Rid of Kings: Horace, Satire 1.7," *Classical Quarterly* 44 (1994): 146-70, esp. 157-65.

[16] *The Poems of John Dryden, III:1686-1693*, ed. Paul Hammond and David Hopkins (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 426.

[17] Richard Bentley, *A Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris* (1699), "Preface," xxix [italics reversed]; it was King who, among other things, reported Bentley's

notoriously insolent conversation at the bookshop of Thomas Bennet, see *Dr Bentley's Dissertations Examin'd*, 8. For Bentley's commentary on the satire see *Q. Horatius Flaccus, ex recensione & cum notis atque emendationibus Richardi Bentleii* (Cambridge, 1711), 264-5; the incident is not investigated by Kristine Louise Haugen in *Richard Bentley: Poetry and Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 110-123.

[18] See for example John Dennis, "To Prior, Upon the Roman Satirists," in *Critical Works*, ed. Edward Niles Hooker, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1943), 2: 219.

[19] *Poems of Dryden*, 3:42; Marcus Walsh detects a direct allusion to a part of this passage in *Tub*: see *CWJS*, 1:26 and n.21 on 1:341; Dryden offers his own character of "Zimri" (the second Duke of Buckingham) in *Absolom and Achitophel* as an example of fine raillery, and it is possible that he is thinking about the initially undetected stabbing of the first Duke by John Felton in 1628 when he writes of secret woundings.

[20] "Life of Lucian," *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. H. T. Swedenberg jr. *et al*., 20 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956–2002), 20:208-203, at 221; the passage is sometimes misattributed to Ferrand Spence (for whom Dryden had great comtempt): eg. Melinda Alliker Rabb, "The Secret Life of Satire," in *A Companion to Satire: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 568-584, at 575.

[21] Pope, *Rape of the Lock*, canto III, lines 151-2, *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt *et al*. 11 vols (London: Methuen, 1939-69), 2:175 (hereafter cited as *Twickenham*).

[22] Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 13-46, 106-120; at various point in the

Journal to Stella Swift records dining with all of the Christ Church wits (John Friend, George Smalridge, Robert Friend, Francis Atterbury and William King: *Journal to Stella*, 1:102, 1:142, 1:258, 1:271; 2:452), except Anthony Alsop.

[23] See Larry F. Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient: Literature and History in Early Modern France* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), 113-30.

[24] "Battel of the Books," *CWJS*, 1:153, 164.

[25] For summary of the historical controversy between Cartesians and Epicureans see Catherine Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 113-130, esp. 116-7; see also Margaret J. Osler, *Divine Will and the Mechanical Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 153-68.

[26] *CWJS*, 1:108.

[27] *CWJS*, 1:110.

[28] For Latour and Swift see Alexis Tadié, "Gulliver au pays des hybrides: Science, langage, fiction dans *Gulliver's Travels*," *Études Anglaises*, 49 (1996): 144-57.

[29] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Harvard, 1993), 38.

[30] Ibid. 53; this passage appears only in the English translation, not in the original: cf. *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes: essai d'anthropologie symétrique* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991), 73-5.

[31] *CWJS*, 1:111.

[32] Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London: Penguin, 2008), 194-5;

[33] *CWJS*, 16:51; in his essay 'Technology' in *The Companion Encyclopedia to Enthropology*, ed. Tim Ingold, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 420-459, at 437,

François Sigaut rejects André Leroi-Gourhan's functional definition of knives as instruments for cutting, since cutting is 'at most a category of working modes'.

[34] *CWJS*, 1:4, 1:81; the *Tub*'s "dissections" are a re-literalization of the humanist "anatomy," as sketched by Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 1:139-149, [Part 1, Sect. 1, Memb. 2] "Digression of Anatomy"; for the larger tradition see W. Scott Blanchard, *Scholar's Bedlam: Menippean Satire in the Renaissance* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1995), 97-107, 160-4.

[35] *CWJS*, 1:111-12.

[36] See for example Claudia Benthien, *Skin*, tr. Thomas Dunlap (New York: Colombia University Press, 2002), 85-9; earlier debate about this passage is summarized by Marcus Walsh, *CWJS* 1:439, n. 49.

[37] For flaying and the "thin" understanding of skin in early-modern anatomy see Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin* (London: Reaktion, 2004), 13-18, 30-2.

[38] This forcing of the reader into revised interpretation across the passage of a paragraph is a poet's trick, associated historically with the enjambment and "discovered *contre-rejet*" typical of Milton's verse; see John Hollander "'Sense Variously Drawn Out': On English Enjambment", in *Vision and Resonance: Two Senses of Poetic Form*, 2nd. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 91-116, at 106-7.

[39] Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, *CWJS* 15:159; Gulliver's skill with knives and swords is dwelt upon elsewhere in part II: he kills a rat with his hanger in chapter I (15:132), and he slices wasps in two as they fly past him in chapter III (15:154), "wherein my Dexterity was much admired."

[40] For a contemporary illustration that may have been known to Swift (his friend the satirist William King wrote a parody of the work) see Martin Lister, *A Journey to Paris in the Year 1698* (1698; 3rd ed. 1699), 63-4; for a discussion see Lynda Payne, *With Words and Knives: Learning Medical Dispassion in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 79-102, at 85.

[41] Swift, "On Dreams" (1724), Williams, *Poems*, 2:364; for an earlier dissertation on dreams see Swift, "Harrison's *Tatler* no. 5," *CWJS*, 2:105-14.

[42] John Kirkup, *The Evolution of Surgical Instruments: An Illustrated History from Ancient Times to the Twentieth Century* (Novato, CA: Jeremy Norman & Co., 2005), 110-13, 135-141.

[43] Andreas Vesalius, *On the Fabric of the Human Body. Book I: The Bones and Cartilages*, trans. William Frank Richardson (San Francisco, CA: Norman Publishing, 1998), [xlv]; see Carlino, Andrea, *Books of the Body: Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 39-53; see also Martin Kemp, "A Drawing for the *Fabrica*; and some Thoughts upon the Vesalius Muscle-Men," *Medical History*, 14 (1970): 277-88; for British literary context see Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), 85-140.

[44] See Sennett, *Craftsman*, 197-8; Sennett's points are borne out by Pierre Dionis, *A Course of Chirurgical Operations, Demonstrated in the Royal Garden at Paris* (1710), 13-15.

[45] Thomas Willis, "Præfatio", *Cerebri anatome* (1664), *a*2^{v}, "*Anatomices summè periti*", quoted in *ODNB*.

[46] See Richard Lower, *Tractatus de Corde*, 2nd ed. (1670). Appendix, "De vene sectione," 15 (with illustration); Lower's proposal was duplicated in the English translation of Wilhelm Fabricius Hildanus, *Cista militaris, or, A Military Chest* (1674), 1-6; cf. Paul Barbette, *A Complete Treatise of Chirurgery* (1674), 37-42, on the difficulties involved in venesection.

[47] See for example Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. John Harrington (1591), 153; Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1:337, quoting St. Bernard; Sir John Denham, *Coopers Hill a Poeme* (Oxford, 1643), 5; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), 51. Also implied by Pope's "…the last pen for freedom let me draw," *Epilogue to Satires*, dial. II, line 248, *Twickenham*, 4:327.

[48] "Ode to Dr. William Sancroft," Williams, *Poems*, 1:35, lines 13-14; 1:37, line 91.

[49] "A Quiet Life, and a Good Name," Williams, *Poems* 1:220, lines 11-14; "Windsor Prophesy," Williams, *Poems* 1:147, line 10; "A Riddle," Williams, *Poems* 3:915, lines 15-16; "The Yahoo's Overthrow," Williams, *Poems*, 4: 816, lines 51-4; "An Epigram, Inscribed to the Honourable Sergeant Kite," Williams, *Poems*, 3:818, esp. lines 3-4; cf. Thomas Sheridan, *Ars pun-ica, sive flos linguarum* (1719), A4^{v}: "so take a *Starling* when 'tis Young, | And down the middle *slit the Tongue*…"

[50] Swift, "Thoughts on Various Subjects," *PW* 4:251.

[51] Cf. Alexander Pope, *Dunciad* (1728), book III, lines 105-6, in *The Poems of Alexander Pope, Volume III, The Dunciad (1728) & The Dunciad Variorum (1729)*, ed. Valerie Rumbold (Harlow: Longman, 2007), 90, 'How keen the war, if *Dulness* draw the sword?' Rumbold notes that Pope changes 'draw' to 'whet' in the fourth and fifth impressions of the first edition, suggesting that he did so in order to make the image

more vivid. My own sense is that Pope wanted Dullness's action to be less active and immediate. The reading reverts to 'draw' in 1729, however (see 275).

[52] Cf. *OED* "Whet, *v.*" 4., meaning to inculcate, referring to the tradition of commentary on and translation of Deuteronomy VI.7, noted for example by John Locke, *A Common-place Book to the Holy Bible* (1697), 157: "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently (or, whet or sharpen) unto thy children: and shall talk of them, &c."

[53] "On Reading Dr. Young's Satires," Williams, *Poems*, 2:307; in a letter to Charles Wogan, 2 August 1732, *Corr.* 3:516, Swift talks in terms of acuity when characterizing Young as "the gravest among us, and yet his Satyrs have many Mixtures of sharp Raillery."

[54] Edward Young, *Love of Fame, the Universal Passion. In Seven Characteristical Satires*, 2nd ed. Corr. (1728), 30.

[55] "Verses Address'd to the Imitator of Horace," in *Essays and Poems*, ed. Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 267, lines 25-38.

[56] Pope, *Epilogue to the Satires*, Dialogue II, lines 212-6, *Twickenham*, 4:325.

[57] "The Preface," *CWJS*, 1:30.

[58] Williams, *Poems*, 1:181.

[59] For Swift's appreciation of good shaving razors see his letter to Charles Ford, 16 Aug. 1725, Wooley, *Corr.*, 2:588.

[60] See "Battel of the Books," *CWJS*, 1:142; cf. *PW*, 8:140: "I have already said too much, and to little or no Purpose; which hath often been the Fate, or the Fortune of the Writer. J. Swift;" and A *Tale of a Tub*, *CWJS*, 1:32, where satire is "but a *Ball* bandied to and fro, and every Man carries a *Racket* about Him to strike it away from himself

among the rest of the Company;" and most cuttingly the "Letter to Sympson," *CWJS*, 15:10-11.

[61] *PW*, 4: 4251.

[62] Swift, "An Enquiry into the Behaviour of the Queen's Last Ministry," *PW*, 5:139, quoting to Hobbes; the continuation of this passage, concerning "act[ion] in Business, out of the common Road", corresponds closely with the "Further Thought" about Bolingbroke.

[63] See "To Mr. Delany," lines 29-40, Williams, *Poems*, 1:216, and Bolingbroke's own railing remark that Swift was himself a "hypocrite reversed" in Thomas Sheridan, *The Life of the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Swift* (1784), "Introduction," A2r-v; see Helen Deutsch, "Swift's Poetics of Friendship", in *Politics and Literature in the Age of Swift: English and Irish Perspectives*, ed. Claude Rawson (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 140-161, at 145-6.

[64] Quoted by A.C. Elias Jr., "Swift's Don Quixote, Dunkin's Virgil Travesty, and other New Intelligence: John Lyon's "Materials for a Life of Dr. Swift," 1765," *Swift Studies* 13 (1998): 27–104, at 68.

[65] "Epistle Dedicatory to Prince Posterity," *CWJS*, 1:21.

[66] The inscription in St. Patrick's is substantially as specified in "Dr. Swift's Will," *PW*, 13:149-47, at 149.

[67] Esp. *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift* (1731), lines 339-430, Williams, *Poems*, 2:566-570; see Claude Rawson, "Savage Indignation Revisited: Swift, Yeats and the 'Cry' of Liberty," in *Politics and Literature*, ed. Rawson, 185-219, especially 190-4.

[68] "I look upon myself, in the capacity of a clergyman, to be one appointed by providence for defending a post assigned to me, and for gaining over as many enemies as I can," *PW*, 9:262.

[69] Elias, "Swift's Don Quixote," 72.