

Erin Severson  
English 182C  
Professor Helen Deutsch  
March 21, 2018

### The Academic Goose Chase: Swift's *Tale of a Tub* Between Print and Manuscript

The present contribution to the colossal body of scholarship on Swift's *Tale of a Tub* draws from readings of Swift's text itself as well as current scholarship on material properties of the book (namely history of the book studies and the emerging complementary interest in manuscript circulation). Putting multiple perspectives on the text in conversation with one another, with particular interest in letting the *Tale* speak for itself, lends clarity to a few big debates about the text. Which edition Swift's *Tale of a Tub* is the best, for example? Which one should be reproduced? For those who only read one version of a text (i.e. most people) which should they read? In other words, what is the definitive version of Swift's best work? To those unfamiliar with editorial practice, this question may not seem complex nor as provocative as it has proven to be.

To begin then with the *Tale*, an examination of the text's prefatory material brings to light how it presents itself as an entity operating within the unstable environment of print culture. The Apology that was pre-pended to the fifth edition of the *Tale of a Tub* employs a rhetoric that hinges upon a precarious distinction between "perfect" and "imperfect" copies of a work. While these terms present as a supposed publication history of the text, such a rhetoric seems to speak to the legacy of the *Tale* as manifest in present scholarly debates about which is the definitive edition of the text. This dialectic relies on the conception of print as an unstable medium, which is predicated subsequently on an idealization of manuscript. While by no means attempting to upend scholarly editorial practice en masse, this paper aims to respond to the singular question of

which edition of the *Tale* is best representative of the text and should therefore be reprinted. To speak more concretely, an analysis of the text itself combined with knowledge of both the publication history of the *Tale* and the nature of contemporary manuscript circulation reveals that one of the best reasons for using the fifth edition of the *Tale of a Tub* is not that it is a “perfect” copy of the work somehow unadulterated by the ill nature of eighteenth-century print culture or even because it is closer to authorial intention but rather because *A Tale of a Tub* is a “surreptitious” text at heart and its unwieldy form is the essence of its brilliance.

To let the *Tale* for a moment speak itself, below is an excerpt from the Apology wherein the character of the rhetoric concerning textual copies may be observed in full tilt. While the Apology initially poses itself as a sort of defense for the *Tale* – explaining its meaning so “the Sour, the Envious, the Stupid, and the Tastless” may not fail to see that the story “celebrates the Church of England” (Rawson and Higgins 5)<sup>1</sup> – the narrator quickly shifts the focus to a long-spun story of a lost manuscript which is supposed to account for the imperfections in the *Tale*.

How the Author came to be without his Papers, is a Story not proper to be told, and of very little use, being a private Fact of which the Reader would believe as little or as much as he thought good. He had however a blotted Copy by him, which he intended to have writ over, with many Alterations, and this the Publishers were well aware of, having put it into the Booksellers Preface, that they apprehended a surreptitious Copy, which was to be altered, &c. This though not regarded by Readers, was a real Truth, only the surreptitious Copy was rather that which was printed, and they made all hast they could, which indeed was needless; the Author not being at all prepared; but he has told, the Bookseller was in much Pain, having given a good Sum of Money for the Copy.

In the Authors Original Copy there were not so many Chasms as appear in the Book; and why some of them were left he knows not; had the Publication been trusted to him, he should have made several Corrections of Passages against which nothing hath been ever objected. He should likewise have altered a few of those that seem with any Reason to be excepted against, but to deal freely, the greatest Number he should have left untouch’d, as never suspecting it possible any wrong Interpretations could be made of them.

---

<sup>1</sup> All references to *A Tale of a Tub* are to the fifth edition of the text as it is reproduced in *The Essential Writings of Jonathan Swift*, edited by Claude Rawson and Ian Higgins.

The Author observes, at the End of the Book there is a Discourse called A Fragment; which he more wondered to see in Print than all the rest. Having been a most imperfect Sketch with the Addition of a few loose Hints, which he once lent a Gentleman who had designed a Discourse of somewhat the same Subject; he never thought of it afterwards, and it was a sufficient Surprise to see it pieced up together, wholly out of the Method and Scheme he had intended, for it was the Ground-work of a much larger Discourse, and he was sorry to observe the Materials so foolishly employ'd. (Rawson and Higgins 10)

In sum, readers are told that there exists both a more heavily revised “blotted Copy” of the text (i.e. “the Authors [sic] Original Copy”) and a “surreptitious Copy” that was published. The public has supposedly been exposed to a bastardly edition of the *Tale*. However compelling this story may be, the “real Truth” behind it is questionable to say the least. And yet, not all scholars encounter the Apology with the same degree of skepticism; the scholarly response to this story is almost as complex as the *Tale* itself. While some scholars take the entire apology to be a performance (Kelly 27), others have used this story as evidence of the *Tale*'s existence in manuscript. Andrew Carpenter, for example, states in his essay “*A Tale of a Tub* as Irish Text” that, “In his 1710 Apology to the fifth edition of the *Tale*, Swift told the reader that at least three manuscripts of the material in the book had been in circulation between 1697 and 1704” (36). Carpenter not only assumes that the narrator of the Apology is equivalent to Swift himself – itself a dubious assumption, though he is not alone in placing Swift within the tale<sup>1</sup>– Carpenter also takes the narrator's word as bond and concludes that if the Apology says a “blotted Copy” of the *Tale* existed, it must have existed. Carpenter does this while simultaneously admitting that the *Tale* generally, and the fifth edition even moreso, derives its brilliance from being a fundamentally unwieldy text, which “remains in this superficially unfinished form showing its underbelly, still ‘in process’” (37). So, while Carpenter acknowledges that the *Tale* relies on its

---

1 John Traugott argues that Swift is more present than is assumed even in the *Tale*'s most controversial moments.

complex metafictional structure for its satirical bite, he has no problem accepting this dramatic publication history at face value.

Although critics differ in degree of willingness to trust the narrator of the *Tale's* Apology, testing the legitimacy of the proposed publication history is as simple as comparing it with the known publication history of Swift's *Tale of a Tub*. The term "surreptitious Copy" as it is stated in the Apology refers to a supposed unfinished manuscript allegedly used to print editions of the *Tale* that preceded the edition (in which the Apology first appeared). Since the Apology appears in the fifth edition of the text, its accusations are directed foremost toward the first four editions of the *Tale*. This claim is peculiar for several reasons. Firstly, that there was not merely a single edition produced by this "surreptitious Copy" but a total of four – even while the second, third, and fourth editions all bore the mark of being "Corrected" editions – is certainly at odds with the narrator's tone of immediacy and alarm; he characterizes the affair as one of "all hast" which left "the Author not being at all prepared." Six years elapsed between the publication of the first edition in 1704 and the publication of the fifth in 1710. Furthermore, though three of the first four editions of *A Tale of a Tub* were marketed as "Corrected" editions, in truth the text did not change much across these four editions. While some minor changes were made, with a few mistakes fixed and others made, experts on the text consider the second, third, and fourth editions no more than "mere reprints" of the first (*Cambridge Edition xxxii*).

What is telling with regard to the Apology, however, is that the body of the text does not change in the fifth edition either. Nor does it change in the sixth. The very edition which laments the problems of its predecessors seems to willfully neglect remedying those problems itself. The major changes instituted in the fifth edition were the inclusion of the Apology and the apparatus

of footnotes, though the body of the *Tale* stayed the same. The most glaringly obvious items which may be considered deficiencies in the text are the “chasms” which appear periodically throughout the book. Despite the narrator’s explicit criticism, which states that the number of “Chasms” do not reflect what was in the “Authors Original Copy,” the textual omissions remained in all editions of the *Tale*, including and following the fifth. Likewise, while “The Author observes, at the End of the Book there is a Discourse called A Fragment; which he more wondered to see in Print than all the rest,” the Fragment remains a part of the book’s triptych. The elements of the *Tale* which are criticized in the Apology are never changed because they are integral to the structure and satirical success of the *Tale*. The lack of editorial intervention in the body of the text is further evidence of what should be self-evident; the genius of the *Tale* is built upon its mock scholarly form which intentionally bastardizes the print form. This view is also supported by critics who have analyzed the *Tale* as a mockery of the book itself (Kenner; “The *Tale* and the Mock Book”).

Thus, the Apology serves the *Tale* by heightening the irony of publishing and republishing an ostensibly flawed or unfinished text. The rhetoric concerning a “surreptitious Copy” is not a reference to an actual flawed manuscript, rather, the Apology manipulates the gap between print and manuscript as a means to dramatize the corrupting influence of print and resultant idealization of manuscript. Swift’s irony in the *Tale* extends even to the metafictional level in that the text itself offers an evidently feigned Apology for its “deficiencies” which are in fact its satirical strengths. And yet, is there something more to this “surreptitious” rhetoric than the singular genius of Swift’s *Tale of a Tub*?

The mode of emphasizing the instability of print and subsequently relative stability of manuscript extends to other works contemporary to *A Tale of a Tub*, suggesting that there is a degree of truth upon which Swift's lies are scaffolded. A similar rhetorical strategy is employed in a different publication of Swift's works, his 1711 *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*. In a similarly-toned prefatory piece, this one entitled, "The Publisher to the Reader," the narrator states as follows:

To publish the Writings of Persons without their Consent, is a Practise generally Speaking, so Unfair, and has so many times proved an unsufferable injury to the Credit and Reputation of the Authors, as well as a shameful Imposition on the Publick, either by a Scandalous Insertion of Spurious Pieces, or an Imperfect and Faulty Edition of such as are Genuine, that tho' I have been Master of such of the following Pieces, as have never yet been Printed, for several Months, I could never, tho' much Importuned, prevail on my self to Publish them

Since some of the following Pieces have lately appeared in Print, from very Imperfect and Uncorrect Copies. Nor was the Abuse like to stop here, for these with all the Defects and Imperfections they came out under, met with so much Applause, and so Universal a good Reception from all Men of Wit and Taste, as to prompt the Booksellers, who had heard that other of these Tracts were in a Manuscript in some Gentlemens Hands, to seek by any means to Procure them, which should they compass, they would without Question Publish in a manner as little to the Authors Credit and Reputation, as they have already done those few which unfortunately have fallen into their Possession. (A2)

The corrupting potential of print and the unseen world of manuscript are separated by a gap wherein one may exercise enormous feats of imagination. Swift seems capable of navigating this space artfully, playing upon the readers' imagination by constructing an ideal version of the written form of a text which print readers never see. While print culture is characterized as illicit, manuscript seems to only rise in esteem.

On top of the fictional narratives constructed by Swift himself, the gap between print and manuscript also allowed others to foist bizarre publication narratives upon the reverend dean.

Take, for example, Edmund Curll's *Complete Key to the Tale of a Tub*, wherein Curll concocts his own dramatic publication history, tinged with classical intrigue. Though Curll claims, rather backhandedly, to not be interested in ascribing authorship when stating the author is, "Generally (and not without sufficient Reason) said to be Dr. *Jonathan* and *Thomas Swift*; but since they don't think fit publickly to own it, wherever I mention their Names, 'tis not upon any other Affirmation than as they are the *Reputed Authors*" [sic, italics not mine], Curll's *Key* is in fact comprised of and marketed as an explication of "The Occasion of Writing" the *Tale*. Curll claims that the rather straightforward allegory of the *Tale* was written by Thomas Swift, "But when he had not yet gone half way, his Companion [Jonathan Swift] borrowing the Manuscript to peruse, carried it with him to Ireland, and having kept it seven Years, at last publish'd it imperfect" (2-3). The manuscript-to-print narrative here involves something in the vein of the classic in that Curll has cast Swift in a role resembling a classical rape. Again, the manuscript is presented as some perfect thing that was molested in the journey to publication. There is, of course, also irony in the fact that Curll, infamous grub-street printer and arguably King of the Surreptitious, claimed that Swift corrupted his own manuscript. Although the particulars are different in terms of who is doing the corrupting, *A Tale of a Tub* is again alleged to have once existed as an unadulterated text. Interestingly enough, a final example is found in the other major contemporary commentator (other besides Curll, that is) on the *Tale*, William Wotton, who was concerned with the *Tale*'s textual history in a similar fashion. In his *Observations Upon the Tale*, he often makes remarks such as, "It is done decently indeed, and there is a *Hiatus in Manuscripto*, as the *Publisher of the Tale of a Tub* expresses it, that so we may suppose the Comparison was intended to be made, and only by accident left imperfect" (45). Wotton's remarks again bear the

assumption that the manuscript of the *Tale* must be superior to the printed text, “ Just where the Pinch of the Question lay, there the Copy fails” (46). The major difference, however, between Curll and Wotton’s comments, is that Curll was a fool always out to make a buck but William Wotton was a serious scholar of his time. How is it that the question of the *Tale*’s publication history not only touched the fancy of a money-hungry fool but also troubled serious reflections upon the text? What is the basis for this rhetoric? What makes the idea of an unseen manuscript so compelling?

However questionable the legitimacy of the lost manuscript narrative presented in the *Tale*’s Apology (insomuch that it does not correspond to the publication history of the *Tale*), the rhetoric which emphasizes the volatile nature of print does is based on features of print culture in the early eighteenth century. Whatever dramatic purpose the Apology serves, scholarship on the textual history of *A Tale* points to some proper targets of the critique of unauthorized material, because while “surreptitious” may be understood simply as text which is corrupted in some way, the Oxford English Dictionary also defines “surreptitious” as, “Of a passage or writing: Spurious, forged. Of an edition or copy of a book: Issued without authority, ‘pirated’.” Like many other printed works of the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, *A Tale of a Tub* spawned several pirated editions. When the first edition of the *Tale* was printed, there were no legal limitations on printing and authorship; technically there was no such thing as piracy until the year of the fifth edition of the *Tale*, at least in legal terms. The publication of the *Tale* occurred literally in the middle of issues concerning intellectual property. Apparently, Swift’s bookseller at the time of the fifth edition, Benjamin Tooke Jr., entered Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub* into the registry of copyrighted books on the very day that the Copyright Act of 1710 went into effect (Bullard and

McLaverty 61). The line between legitimate text and illegitimate text (i.e. “surreptitious” or “spurious” texts) was being drawn right around the time of the *Tale*’s publication; Swift’s text was, in many ways, participating in the conversation about what is legitimate text.

To explore the secondary definition of “surreptitious” that refers specifically to piracy, one example of a pirated edition of the *Tale* is the series of 1711 copies of the text, whose origin is unknown but suspected to be the work of Edmund Curll (Teerink 168; Woolley 18). Though the book was printed in 1711, this edition does not include the material that is unique to the fifth edition published only a year before – namely, the Apology and the footnotes. There seems to be four relatively similar impressions printed in the same year, some containing plates, some not. The text of all copies seems to follow the text of John Nutt’s third edition of the *Tale*, which was authorized by Swift (Teerink 168). One copy of this edition is held in the collections of the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library and may have come from the same impression as one of those four copies that Teerink identifies in the *Bibliography of the Writings of Jonathan Swift*. The book’s title page omits any publishing information, a red flag for a printer who has something to hide. Additionally, this copy of the *Tale* includes the third edition of Curll’s *Complete Key to the Tale of a Tub* as well as his *Examination of Mr. Wotton’s Remark Upon the Tale of a Tub*, which was published at a later date, 1714. This was likely added to the covertly printed *Tale*. The book was rebound to include the *Key*, as indicated by the difference in the piece’s typeface and paper quality from the rest of the book as well as the later publication date. The inclusion of Curll’s *Key* may further support David Wooley’s belief that these books were produced by Curll himself. By definition, this is a surreptitious copy of the *Tale*. This may not be the type of “surreptitious” material directly referenced by the *Tale*’s Apology since the Apology

directed its criticism toward corrupted materials that led to the *Tale*'s initial publication; not to mention that this pirated edition was published at least a year after the Apology was, so referencing it would be chronologically impossible. However, while the accusations of covert publication may have been used for ironic purpose, not aimed at any real molestation of the text, its rhetoric relies on the existence of actual unauthorized publication common in a time and place where copyright laws were merely in their infancy.

So, the line between authorized and unauthorized can be hard to draw with precision. To complicate matters a bit further, what is the difference between the pirated 1711 edition and a Dublin reprint of the fourth edition if they are both printed from the same base text? Dublin reprints, though nearly identical in terms of content, are made on cheaper, lower quality paper, in smaller typeface, and are more sloppily printed than the same books when they are printed in London. This was due to the “relative obscurity” of the Irish Book Trade and the “economic imbalance between the two kingdoms” (Karian 15). Neither the pirated nor Dutch edition has any “spurious insertions” or offensive deviations from the original text. In terms of textuality, pirated copies seem to do little to harm the *Tale* or to any work, especially when compared to other forms of corruptive material.

A further extension of this investigation of corrupt text goes from mere reproduction or mild distortion of text as represented in pirated editions of the *Tale* to the more malicious act of insertion of “spurious” material into an author’s repertoire. This genre of literature was immense; Ann Cline Kelly estimates that “Before 1711, there were 28 *Tale*-related publications, a number that includes editions of *A Tale of Tub*, imitations of the *Tale*, and works fathered on the *Tale*-author” (29). Attempts to intentionally misattribute works was a very popular practice in

eighteenth-century print culture. At the top of the list of material spawned by the *Tale* are Curll's *Key* and Wotton's *Defense*, of course; but the *Tale* inspired a plethora of minor works such as "Essays Divine, Moral, and Political, by the Author of the Tale of a Tub, Sometime the Writer of the Examiner, and the Original Inventor of the Band-Box-Plot," *The Tale of a Tub Revers'd for the Universal Improvement of Mankind; With a Character of the Author*, "A Sermon Preach'd to a Congregation of Glass-Bottles, &c., by the Author of the Tale of a Tub," *A Second Tale of a Tub; or, the History of Robert Powell the Puppet-Show-Man*, and two works later discovered to be by William King, "Some Remarks on the Tale of a Tub to Which are Annexed Mully of Mountown, and Orpheus and Euridice by the Author of the Journey to London" and "The Fairy Feast, Written by the Author of A Tale of a Tub and the Mully of Mountown." This list of works is a small but not representative sample of the material spawned by the success of the *Tale*. These works do not always, or even often, name Swift, but call him merely "the Author of a Tale" or various euphemistic titles such as "that Reverend Person, who has lately Publish'd a compleat System of Divinity, commonly called, or known by the Name of a *Tale of a Tub*" (*The Tale Revers'd*). By and large, these grub-street pieces were exactly the commercially-driven, low-quality works which Swift despised and material that certainly earns the title "spurious." Swift was certainly aware of the materials that tried to pilfer off of the success of his *Tale*; he once contemptuously related in a letter to his friend and printer Benjamin Tooke, in response to reviewing Curll's *Key*, "at this rate, there is no book, however vile, which may not be fastened on me" (Davis xxxi).

While many of these pieces were standalone texts, printed as either books or pamphlets, a peculiar case, and perhaps the most grossly "surreptitious" of all the texts considered thus far is

the 1720 edition of *A Tale of A Tub*, entitled “Miscellaneous Works, Comical & Diverting : In Two Parts by T.R.D.J.S.D.O.P.I.I.” The whole work is an openly surreptitious endeavor. The introduction is said to be a transcription of a letter from Swift himself, “You have here also according to your desire my *Tale of a Tub*, with all the Notes you have formerly seen, & several other I have added since. You may make what use you please of it, provided you return it me safe when you have done, & that you let no body see it, or know from whom you had it” (iv). The book, then, introduces itself as a stolen manuscript. The above quote is wrongly said to be written by Swift himself; but even had it been true, the text claims to be produced from a manuscript never intended to be seen or reproduced. And the concept of the ideal manuscript recurs.

As for the Manuscript I told you I had seen, which contains a great deal more than what is printed, I would very willingly have taken a copy of what is omitted, & have sent it you; but I was not allowed that liberty, having only had leave to read it. I can assure you I found those parts not at all inferior to the others that are printed; but I believe some prudential considerations have hindered their publication. I have writ down the heads of the most material, as near as I can now remember, on the leaves put in at the end of my book...I have extended such parts as have not been printed, something more largely than the others, & as near as I can remember in the Authors own words. And who knows of what great use this may be in the future Ages, to some learned *Freinshemius*, who may undertake to gratify the World with a Supplement of what has been lost of this curious Treatise. (iv-v)

This edition of the *Tale* has proven especially troublesome for Swift scholarship. Although it was published over 10 years after the initial publication of the work, this edition claims to draw from the original manuscript and includes not only new notes and commentary but also “considerable additions.” These additions included a table to the text as well as the dreadful “*History of Martin*,” which is antagonistic toward the Church of England and therefore a direct contradiction of the Apology’s stated intention of the *Tale*. Although the authority of this 1720 edition was contested from the beginning, many later editors included it in reproductions of the *Tale*. Other

editors, like Herbert Davis, however, compromised by separating these sections from the original text and relegating them to an appendix to indicate that they are related to but not actual parts of the *Tale*. This 1720 edition, perhaps more than any others, demonstrates the instability of print, the simultaneous premium placed on manuscript, and how this apparent dichotomy could be manipulated to great effect.

And yet, to pause momentarily for sake of clarification, it is important to remember that the rhetoric that idealizes manuscript is the same rhetoric which constructs the idea of print as “surreptitious.” Therefore, the fictional construct should be understood to exaggerate on both ends of the spectrum, regardless of the existent analog of pirated and unauthorized material that plagued Swift’s *Tale*. Text is unstable, yes, but to a certain extent. An understanding such as this wards off extremist views like those explored by Marcus Walsh in his essay “Text, ‘Text,’ and Swift’s A Tale of a Tub.” Walsh’s piece also examines the instability of print in relation to the *Tale* but from a more philosophical and theoretical standpoint. These broader perspectives lend themselves to views that contend the *Tale* “reveals and explores Swift’s most fundamental fears about the transience of all printed texts” (763). While the reference to a potential anxiety in Swift as the drive for his critique of print is compelling, critics like Terry Castle go so far as to say that “Every writing is a source of corruption, no matter what authority” (763). This Walsh ties to questions of divine authority and debates about hermeneutics strictly based in religious questions that percolated during Swift’s time. These viewpoints, which draw from Swift’s *Tale of a Tub* as evidence, take a more radical stance on textuality in claiming that all writing is unstable. The truth of that claim not being the focus a matter to be discussed here, it is worth noting that Swift seems to find (or rather create) a loophole in the face of the gross corrupting influence of print;

manuscript circulation is a much more controlled and stable media, and Swift seemed to utilize manuscript circulation as a means to publish his writings his whole life (Karian). Swift's words and actions do not seem to demonstrate the belief that all writing is a source of corruption. Instead, he exempts manuscript as a place of stability because print specifically and not writing itself is the source of corruption for Swift; manuscript became a real and created sanctuary for written text. Thus, while Marcus's paper connects Swift's statements to deeply religious and philosophical questions of hermeneutics, the text itself seems more immediately involved in a critique of the volatile nature of eighteenth-century print production.

Before proceeding to make some final remarks on both actual and fictional attempts to molest Swift's writing, the untreated matter of manuscript warrants due attention. Despite the constructed ideal of manuscript as a perfect and long-lost thing, manuscript culture was not some obscure or dead practice in the eighteenth century. As revealed by the incredibly diligent work of Stephen Karian, manuscript circulation was itself a form of publication that was as, if not more, complex as print culture. Thus, while the concept of "surreptitious" print material had an analog in reality, the idealization of manuscript was merely something that grew out of the former. Manuscript only seemed a perfect medium relative to the obviously problematic medium of print.

With regards to Swift's actual use of and involvement in manuscript circulation, Karian studies Swift as a manuscript writer, explicitly in response to the over-whelmingly print-based study of Swift. As he says, Swift scholarship "initially focused on manuscript as a distinct medium...But subsequent writings...have highlighted the interactivity and fluidity between print and manuscript" (2), laying further emphasis on the need to study and understand "the

complicated nature of eighteenth-century textuality, in which print and manuscript were complementary and intersecting media” (5). Karian claims to seek to “challenge the simple opposition that always defines print as authoritative, public, stable, and author-centered, and conceives of manuscript as ephemeral, private, variable, and reader-centered’ (5). The perceived stability of print that Karian refers to must be a phenomenon of modern times and not of the eighteenth century because authors of that period were invested in and apparently aware of a very turbulent world of print. Writers like Swift constantly observed, and yes, exaggerated, the instability of print.

In terms of the ideal manuscript, there is little of that ideal to be found partially because manuscript circulation usually involved reproduction of text. Though manuscript reproduction did not operate on the same scale as print production, it brings with it the same difficulty of interpretation. Which is the best manuscript? Which is the original manuscript? Oftentimes, manuscripts did not even precede print publication and were instead autograph copies of printed books (46). It seems that the existent perceptions of manuscript are either that they became obsolete with the advent of print – something which Karian argues vehemently against – or that they are inaccessible ideal forms of a printed text which readers can only imagine but never access. Neither of these views reflect the reality of the situation. Manuscripts remained a legitimate mode of publication, and their uses were many and complex. Essentially, the emergence of print drastically changed the perception of manuscript. Though manuscript was a real medium with its own complications, in the chaotic world of eighteenth-century print, manuscript primarily existed as an ideal that served as a foil to reality.

Turning at last to the question posed at the beginning of the paper – what is the definitive edition of Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub*? The general divide in terms of editorial practice on the *Tale* is between those who use the first edition and those who use the fifth edition of the text. However, an understanding of the turbulent nature of print culture at the time of its publication paired the realization that the fifth edition of the *Tale* poses itself as an intentionally surreptitious text, provides support for the use of the fifth edition. The present argument is articulated not merely as a refutation of those who support the first edition but also as an elaboration or even reorientation of the reasons to use the fifth edition instead of the first, which may lead to a more text-centric mode of editorial practice that distinguishes itself from one that gives authorial intention priority.

Reasons that scholars give for rejecting the fifth edition are numerous. In his essay “No Apologies, Dr. Swift!,” for example, Frank Ellis looks upon the fifth edition unfavorably because he sees it as a purely commercial venture which he believes is demonstrated by the inclusion of plates and additional textual material “to sell more copies.” Furthermore, Ellis maintains that the fifth edition of the *Tale* is inconsistent with what Ellis claims was Swift’s original intention. “The illustrations, footnotes, and even the bowdlerizing may be attempts ‘to perfect or complete’ *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), but “An Apology” is not part of *A Tale of a Tub* at all,” he says. Ellis overlooks the literary value of the fifth edition in how it was truly in the spirit of the first, but in a more masterly fashion. The book demonstrated the strength of its satire on learning by absorbing the criticism which followed it; moreover, the Apology also placed the *Tale* more explicitly in conversation with other spurious and surreptitious texts, thereby illuminating the genius of the text’s structural satire. That is, the *Tale* demonstrated its strength as mock book by heightening the drama of being an intentionally surreptitious text. Ellis’s issue is not unique to his own

argument, however; he seems to be led to this faulty evaluation of the *Tale* by the overemphasis of authorial intention and the assumption that earlier editions are the gold standard for definitive editions of a text.

David Woolley too advocates for the use of the first edition of the text, though he praises it for its textual “accuracy.” Woolley attempts to apply a one-size-fits-all editorial policy on the *Tale* with his claim that, “If the several extant texts of a work form an ancestral series the earliest will naturally be selected” for adherence to authorial intention (14). He also makes the decision to print the Apology and explanatory notes from the fifth edition separately to maintain his text’s theoretical goal “to provide an optimum first-edition texture in every detail” (23). Irving Ehrehpreis, similarly a staunch supporter of the first edition of the text, expresses the same view, “[S]ince the new edition was set up from the fourth...for a sound text of *A Tale of a Tub* exclusive of the footnotes and the “Apology,” one cannot do better than to start from the first edition” (CWJS 388). These final remarks given by Ehrehpreis get at the heart of this paper. Choosing the first edition of *A Tale of a Tub* “for a sound text” is completely antithetical to the nature of the *Tale*, which is – essentially, wonderfully, brilliantly – an unsound text. And to reiterate an earlier point, to deprive readers of the *Tale*’s Apology and footnotes is to remove them from the context of chaotic print culture which is essential to the meaning of the text. As Marcus Walsh, editor of the new definitive edition of *A Tale of a Tub*, says, “It is by no means clear, however, that, for a work published at this phase of print culture, the Gregian argument for approximating the author’s manuscript has overriding force. For such writers as Swift, Addison, Steele, or indeed Johnson, the author’s manuscript was not an ideal or final state of the text, but a draft which they expected to be modified...” (277).

Ultimately, to work along the same binary which the Apology to the *Tale* manipulates to great effect, those who advocate for the use of the first edition of Swift's *Tale* are participating in the idealization of manuscript as the holy grail of authorial intention. They are, in a sense, buying into the joke. The emphasis on authorial intention does not merely guide the editorial efforts of those who are concerned with manuscript studies or early editions; much editorial practice tends to prioritize authorial intention above all else, even in places where such a value is inappropriate.

The newest "definitive" editions of Swift's works come from the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift*; its first volume being the fifth edition of the *A Tale of a Tub* edited by Marcus Walsh. The "General Editors' Preface" states the editorial practice of *CWJS*, "As a general rule the last authoritative version of the work will be chosen, but in the case of works that are bound in tightly to an immediate context of controversy (polemical tracts, for example), the first edition will usually be chosen instead" (xi) which ascribes to a more relativistic method of editorial choice. This editorial method works well for Swift's *Tale* because it is a fundamentally unwieldy text that defies formulaic treatment. The *CWJS* also involves a healthy level of skepticism about the authorial voice present in the Apology, "We are offered a good deal of information about the manuscript forms in which the *Tale* existed. In the 1710 Apology, 'the Author' tells us that in his 'Original Copy there were not so many Chasms as appear in the Book; and why some of them were left he knows not...The claim that the 'Chasms' were either left or made, and the assertion that further alterations were intended, are less likely to be reliable truths than elements in the theatre of obfuscation with which Swift surrounded the *Tale*" (xxii).

In sum, while the commonly employed narrative of lost-thought-perfect manuscripts serves a dramatic role in the *Tale*, this rhetoric is founded on the evident instability of print in the

early eighteenth century. But while representations of the volatile nature of print corresponded to reality, the subsequent idealization of manuscript had less of a factual basis and was evidently only born out of the desire for relative textual stability. Perhaps the greatest difficulty of this study was attempting to distinguish between representations of print/manuscript culture and actual print/manuscript culture because the former is invested in being seen as truthful and study of the latter relies on a combination of anecdotal evidence and surviving textual material, which leaves ample room for the line between fiction and reality to be blurred. Hopefully this paper has asked, if not answered how the gap between manuscript and print publication played on the minds of those invested in both 18th-century print culture and scholarship of such.

In a splendid performance of lack of self-awareness, one of the footnotes for a very obscure reference in the *Tale* concludes by solemnly declaring, “I believe one of the Author’s Designs was to set curious Men a hunting thro’ Indexes, and enquiring for Books out of the common Road ” (Rawson and Higgins 82), essentially acknowledging that he as a scholar has been played the fool. The commentator remarks upon finding himself on a wild goose chase for an excellently constructed bit of nonsense alla Swift. In a similar vein, while the quest for the “Perfect edition” of a text is in some sense a valiant one, adopting a more relativist approach to editorial practice (as represented by Walsh’s work on the *Tale* in *CWJS*) and not simply taking Swift’s words at face value may save future scholars from “a hunting” and “enquiring” for the perfect copy of *A Tale of a Tub* when there is in fact no such thing.

## Works Cited

### Primary Works<sup>1</sup>

Burnet, Sir Thomas. *A Second Tale of a Tub; or, the History of Robert Powell the Puppet-Show-Man*. 1st ed., J. Roberts, 1715.

Curll, Edmund. *A Complete Key to the Tale of a Tub With some Account of the Authors, the Ocasion and Design of Writing it, and Mr. Wotton's Remarks Examin'd*. Edmund Curll, 1710.

King, William. *The Fairy Feast, Written by the Author of A Tale of a Tub and the Mully of Mountown*. 1704.

—. *Some Remarks on the Tale of a Tub. To Which Are Annexed Mully of Mountown, and Orpheus and Euridice. By the Author of the Journey to London*. A. Baldwin, 1704.

*Miscellaneous Works, Comical & Diverting : In Two Parts by T.R.D.J.S.D.O.P.I.I.* Dutch ed., Society De Propagando, 1720.

*A Sermon Preach'd to a Congregation of Glass-Bottles, &c.* Printed, and Sold by the Booksellers of London and Westminster, 1715.

Swift, Jonathan. *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*. John Morphew, 1711.

—. *A Tale of a Tub. Written for the Universal Improvements of Mankind. To Which is Added, an Account of a Battel Between the Antient and Modern Books in St. James's Library*. 1st ed., John Nutt, 1704.

---

<sup>1</sup> All listed primary works are held in the collections of the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library in Los Angeles, California.

- . *A Tale of a Tub. Written for the Universal Improvements of Mankind. To Which is Added, an Account of a Battel Between the Antient and Modern Books in St. James's Library.* 2nd ed. Corrected, John Nutt, 1704.
- . *A Tale of a Tub. Written for the Universal Improvements of Mankind. To Which is Added, an Account of a Battel Between the Antient and Modern Books in St. James's Library.* 3rd ed. Corrected, John Nutt, 1704.
- . *A Tale of a Tub. Written for the Universal Improvements of Mankind. To Which is Added, an Account of a Battel Between the Antient and Modern Books in St. James's Library.* 4th ed. Corrected, Dublin, Reprinted, 1705.
- . *A Tale of a Tub. Written for the Universal Improvements of Mankind. To Which is Added, an Account of a Battel Between the Antient and Modern Books in St. James's Library.* 5th ed., John Nutt, 1710.
- . *A Tale of a Tub. Written for the Universal Improvements of Mankind. To Which is Added, an Account of a Battel Between the Antient and Modern Books in St. James's Library.* 1711.
- . *A Tale of a Tub. Written for the Universal Improvements of Mankind. To Which is Added, an Account of a Battel Between the Antient and Modern Books in St. James's Library.* 6th ed., S. Tooke and B. Motte, 1724.
- Essays Divine, Moral, and Political, by the Author of the Tale of a Tub, Sometime the Writer of the Examiner, and the Original Inventor of the Band-Box-Plot.* London, 1714.
- The Tale of a Tub Revers'd for the Universal Improvement of Mankind; With a Character of the Author.* A. Baldwin, 1705.
- Wotton, William. *A Defense of the Reflections Upon Ancient and Modern Learning, in Answer to the Objections of Sir W. Temple, and Others. With Observations Upon the Tale of a Tub.* 3rd ed. Corrected. Tim Goodwin, 1705.

## Secondary Works

- Bullard, Paddy, and James McLaverty, eds. *Jonathan Swift and the Eighteenth-Century Book*. Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Carpenter, Andrew. "A Tale of a Tub as an Irish Text." *Swift Studies*, no. 20, 2005, pp. 30–40.
- Davis, Herbert, ed. *A Tale of a Tub with Other Early Works, 1696-1707*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957.
- Ellis, Frank H. "No Apologies, Dr. Swift!" *Eighteenth-Century Life*, vol. 21 no. 3, 1997, pp. 71-76. *Project MUSE*.
- Guthkelch, A. C. and D. Nichol Smith, eds. *A Tale of a Tub to Which is Added the Battle of the Books and the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1920.
- Karian, Stephen. *Jonathan Swift in Print and Manuscript*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Kenner, Hugh. "The *Tale* and the Book." *The Essential Writings of Jonathan Swift*, edited by Claude Rawson and Ian Higgins, Norton Critical ed., W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010, pp. 759–762.
- Kelly, Ann Cline. *Jonathan Swift and Popular Culture*. PALGRAVE, 2002.
- Rawson, Claude, and Ian Higgins, eds. *The Essential Writings of Jonathan Swift*. Norton Critical ed., W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010.
- "surreptitious, adj. 2.b." OED Online. Oxford University Press, January 2018. Web. 18 March 2018.
- Traugott, John. "A Tale of a Tub." *Focus: Swift*, edited by C. J. Rawson, Sphere Books, 1971, pp. 76–120.
- Teerink, Dr. H. *A Bibliography of the Writings of Jonathan Swift*. Edited by Arthur H. Scouten, 2nd ed., University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963.

Walsh, Marcus. "Swift's *Tale of a Tub* and the Mock Book." *Jonathan Swift and the Eighteenth-Century Book*, edited by Paddy Bullard and James McLaverty. Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 101–118.

—. *A Tale of a Tub and Other Works*. *CWJS*, Vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

—. "Text, 'Text,' and Swift's *A Tale of a Tub*." *The Essential Writings of Jonathan Swift*, edited by Claude Rawson and Ian Higgins, Norton Critical ed., W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010, pp. 762–777.

Woolley, David. "The Textual History of *A Tale of a Tub*." *Swift Studies*, no. 21, 2006, pp. 7–26.