

RESOLUTIONS 1699

Textual Introduction

The original manuscript of *Resolutions 1699* is in the Forster Collection at the National Art Reference Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, catalogued as F.MS.504 (48.E.4., fol. 5). John Forster acquired it in 1855, along with other manuscripts from Edmund Lenthal Swift.¹ *Resolutions 1699* first appeared in print on 13 May 1765, edited by its second posthumous owner, Deane Swift, Jr, to whom it had presumably descended via his mother-in-law Martha Whiteway, Jonathan's cousin, friend, and secretary after 1733.² Deane elected to use Swift's own short title, from the endorsement on the blank verso; he misread two words, and observed the major deletion.³

Having acquired the manuscript, Forster reproduced it in line-block in his biography, *The Life of Jonathan Swift* (1875).⁴ His transcription, beneath the facsimile, persisted with the remaining misreading, but for the first time restored the major deletion to the text. Temple Scott conjectured in turn that Deane Swift was the squeamish deleter, printing the deletion in italics. Davis supplied that resolution as first inscribed, letting the reader see for himself in the facsimile plate.⁵

In the examination of the manuscript, it should be noted that the plate in Temple Scott (I, xci), though reduced in size, is clearer than the plate in Davis, which like Forster's line-block is close enough to the size of the original. Like all the plates in the twelve volumes of the Temple Scott edition of Swift, the plate of *Resolutions 1699* was the production of Emery Walker,

¹ David Woolley, "Forster's *Swift*," *The Dickensian*, 70 (1974), 191-204 (pp. 194-95); LINDSAY, p. 85 (SwJ 482).

² Ehrenpreis, *Dean Swift*, pp. 806-7, 875-76.

³ *The Works of Dr. Jonathan Swift, XV: Collected and Revised by Deane Swift*, large octavo (London: W. Johnston, 1765), 419-20 (TEERINK AND SCOUTEN 88).

⁴ John Forster, *The Life of Jonathan Swift, I: 1667-1711* (London: John Murray, 1875), p. 104; in the New York edition of 1876, p. 117.

⁵ *Prose Works*, I, opposite p. xxxvi.

a celebrated master of the techniques of process engraving. The quality of the plates in Davis further degenerated in reprints following the first printing of 1939.

Resolutions 1699 was written hastily but neatly on one side of a small leaf of paper, 180x116 mm. Following a fuller title and the year, there are seventeen resolutions written in a tiny hand within an area of 92x112 mm; each is separated from its neighbour by a short lateral stroke of the quill. Three clues enable us to see how the document was put together: calligraphic style, colour of the ink, and the state of the quill point. On these counts, the sentences may be seen as five sequential units, nos [1] to [11] first, then [12] to [14], then [15], [16], [17] singly.

(i) The first eleven were evidently written at a sitting, at first carefully but with decreasing control; they are perhaps a fair copy. They were inscribed with uniform ink (tan colour) and quill, adding a stroke after each entry except the last. In [9] “over,” qualifying “severe,” is inserted above the line, and “follyes” is written across an abandoned word beginning with *S*. At a later stage, the second clause of [5] was cancelled out. Upon resuming with **12**, Swift supplied the dividing stroke after [11]. (ii) Nos [12] to [14] were added together, with the same ink and quill as the preceding, but they show a constant tilting of the script, farther to the right from vertical than before and rather more haste in execution. In [12], “desire” replaces “Conjure” deleted, a dubious change for the same occurs three words earlier. “Frends” has a dot without the body of an *i*. No [13] provides an example of Swift’s involuntary double punctuation in “much,.”; a quirk seen widely in his manuscript. (iii) Nos [15], [16], [17] were singly added, each with a different shade of ink and different quill. Before commencing with [15], Swift supplied the divisional stroke after [14], using a pale ink and thick point, and then formed his letters rather to a square framework than to the fast zigzag pattern of the previous sentence. The Latin sentence was much amended: the first letter of “et” was raised to a capital; an involuntary initial inscription “herdedetatem” failed, even after several repairs, to become “hereditatem”; and a cancelled component may be “<o[mne]d>.” (iv) No [16] is written in dark brown ink and with a sharp point, used also for the dividing stroke after [15], and also unmistakably for the volutes deleting the notorious second clause of [5] (see

i), showing that this was Swift's and not the work of another hand. The final word was correctly read as "opiniatre" by John Hayward for the first time in 1949.⁶ (v) The climactic resolution [17] was written with another quill in rich brown ink, which was used also for the separating strokes both before *and* (suggesting finality) after. It is in a sense an inversion of [12], which happens also to be the only resolution to commence positively, with "To" instead of "Not to."

After completion, Swift folded the single leaf along its length, as he often did with documents, and endorsed the blank verso with a short title for reference, "Resolutions 1699." His calendar year commenced 25 March.

For a fresh transcription of *Resolutions 1699*, it is advisable to address one exemplary problem, which surfaces in the *literatim* versions of Temple Scott, Davis, and Ehrenpreis. In the manuscript, three words seem clearly, and uniquely, to have been spelled with consecutive *ee*, which Swift elsewhere inscribes with *ea*: [2] "reely," [8] "cleenlyness," [9] "Weeknesses." These appear in Davis's first printing of *Prose Works* in 1939. In 1962, Ehrenpreis read *ea* for those words,⁷ and he plainly influenced Davis in their working relationship to follow suit in his third printing of *Prose Works* (1965), which was altered accordingly.⁸ David Woolley brought the matter up with Ehrenpreis in the early 1970s and he, with characteristic decisiveness, produced a ball point and firmly delineated the five successively sloppier stages of Swift's autograph *a*, by the last of which it had become virtually an *e* (the second stage is seen in [15] "woman," the third in [8] "Nastyness"). However, this observation, ingenious though it is, needs careful application. First, Swift had no difficulty with five other instances of unambiguous *ea* in that same manuscript, *viz.* [8] "fear," [10] "ear," [14] "beauty," [15] "hearken," [17] "fear." Second, he did not hesitate to inscribe

⁶ *Selected Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. John Hayward (London: The Cresset Press, 1949), p. xv. In earlier editions of the Nonesuch Swift by Hayward, the reading is still "opiniative" (*Swift: Gulliver's Travels and Selected Writings in Prose & Verse* [London and New York: Random House, 1934], p. 468).

⁷ *Mr Swift*, p. 258.

⁸ In fact, "cleanlyness" was delayed till 1968, when it became an erratum correction at *Prose Works*, XIV, 49.

three pointedly comparable examples of *ee* in [2] “keep,” [3] “peevisish,” [10] “free.” Third, Swift was given to phonetic spellings on occasion. After gazing, on three occasions (in 1968, 1973, and 1980), very sceptically and through a good magnifying glass, at the original document, it seemed to me possible that there was a case for sloppy *a* (stage 4) in [9] “Weaknesses”; but none at all for the other two, which had to be *ee*. To be yet more particular, the upper loop of that letter is relatively unformed, signalling an aborted *a*, which is how Temple Scott also rendered it. As a consequence, the following transcription endeavours to represent not what Swift ought to have written, nor what he might have written had he been in less of a dream, but what in fact he did write.

The title is a construct and follows Deane Swift’s persuasive editorial decision in 1765 to combine the authorial endorsement with the dropped heading. The holograph lineation is reproduced.

Historical Introduction

Although nothing is known about the occasion of *Resolutions 1699*, scholars most frequently associate the document with the death of Sir William Temple, in the morning of 27 January 1699. With good reasons, Elias dates it “after the O.S. New Year late in March,” by which time “Swift had left Moor Park for London.”⁹ The majority are also agreed that its chief interest is autobiographical, but what precisely ‘autobiographical interest’ means is contested. One ‘school’ reads *Resolutions 1699* as young Jonathan’s endeavour at self-enlightenment. Having lived for some years “in close intimacy with an old man, whose behaviour would sometimes serve as a warning,” one scholar holds, Swift wished to guard himself “against certain dangerous tendencies” he perceived in his own character.¹⁰ Thinking out the implications of this argument, another compares *Resolutions 1699* with

⁹ *Swift at Moor Park*, p. 272n193.

¹⁰ Davis, Introduction, *Prose Works*, I, xviii.

Swift's revolting picture of the Struldbruggs: "Inordinate desire for life seemed to Swift but a gross passion issuing from the depths of irrationality."¹¹

The second 'school', by contrast, regards *Resolutions 1699* as critical, as Swift's reaction to an enforced contemplation of the aging Temple and his elderly visitors. Ehrenpreis, for one, feels that the resolutions express Swift's "less gracious sentiments upon his master's death," sounding "like the suppressed conclusions of a young man's close, prolonged observation of one or perhaps several old men." Apart from Sir William himself, Ehrenpreis argues, visitors to Moor Park like Temple's best friend, Henry Sidney, first Earl of Romney, would have counted among these.¹² In his later autobiographical fragment, "Family of Swift," Swift remembered Romney as "an old vicious illiterate Rake without any sense of Truth or Honor."¹³ Elias, for another, follows suit: "The list adds up to a caricature of an old geezer – querulous, vain, and egotistical – and in the process betrays an occasional peevishness of its own."¹⁴ Indeed, Sir William seems to be sharply glanced at in resolutions [3], [6], [13], and [14], and Swift's subordinate position at Moor Park gives edge to [2], [4], and [9].

A third group, predictably, sees the truth between these extremes. "It is difficult to judge the extent to which these resolutions were a conscious reaction to life with Sir William Temple," one of them warns (rightly, the Editors think). If some "sound like a young man's thoughts on the peevishness of opinionative old age," he continues, "others ... evince Swift's own capacity for self-deflation."¹⁵ It is in line with this view that the Editors suggest to read *Resolutions 1699* as a kind of scribble in which the scheme of traditional 'wisdom' literature is reversed: a young man is jotting down serious advice to an imagined old man, himself: "My son, hear the

¹¹ Ricardo Quintana, *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift* (London: Methuen, 1953 [1936]), p. 318.

¹² *Mr Swift*, p. 258.

¹³ *Prose Works*, V, 195.

¹⁴ *Swift at Moor Park*, p. 121.

¹⁵ J. A. Downie, *Jonathan Swift, Political Writer* (London, Boston, Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 67.

instruction of thy father” (*Proverbs* 1:8). As a consequence, self-mockery is not absent, either.

The Editors deplore the loss of another exercise in self-examination entitled “Conjectures on the Thoughts of Posterity about me,” ostensibly written some time before 1708.

The Reception of *Resolutions 1699*: Translations¹⁶

Wailly, Léon de. “Résolutions pour l’époque où je deviendrai vieux.” *Opuscules humoristiques de Swift* (Paris: Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, 1859), pp. 453-54.

Wailly, Léon de. “Résolutions pour l’époque où je deviendrai vieux.” *Jonathan Swift, Propositions, résolutions & prédictions (opuscules humoristiques)* (Strasbourg: Circé, 1992), pp. 9-10.

Pons, Émile, Jacques et Maurice Pons, and Benedicte Lilamand, eds. “Résolutions pour quand je vieillirai.” *Œuvres de Swift* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), pp. 1307-8.

Bégot, Monique. “Résolutions pour le jour où je serai vieux.” *La Bataille des livres et autres textes* (Paris: Payot et Rivages, 2003), pp. 51-52.

Berger, Alice. “Vorsätze für die Zeit, da ich alt sein werde.” *Jonathan Swift, Betrachtungen über einen Besenstiel* (Berlin: Eulenspiegel, 1967), pp. 176-77.

¹⁶ This bibliography lists the holdings of the Ehrenpreis Centre only; it does not pretend to be complete. Wherever possible, we record the date of the first edition; later reprints have been omitted.

Schneebeli, Robert. "Wenn ich alt werde." *Jonathan Swift, Satiren und Streitschriften* (Zürich: Manesse, 1993), pp. 485-86.

D'Amico, Masolino. "Quando sarò vecchio." *Jonathan Swift, Opere* (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1983), p. 585.

Lorenzo, Emilio. "Propósitos para cuando llegue a viejo." *Jonathan Swift, Obras selectas* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2002), pp. 773-74.