

THE POSITION OF JOHN ARBUTHNOT  
IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE

by  
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## ABSTRACT

Today John Arbuthnot (1667-1735), physician and satirist, is known primarily as a friend of great writers such as Swift, Pope, and Gay; but, as a writer himself, he created John Bull, the personification of British national character. At the heart of the famous Scriblerus Club, Arbuthnot contributed ideas and sections to his friends' works. He had a talent for friendship, and was so universally admired for learning, probity, and wit that adverse criticism is hard to find. He was one of Queen Anne's doctors, a Royal Society member, and a prominent physician for forty years. In his last years, he wrote medical pamphlets containing original ideas far in advance of his time. He helped establish the Tory party in the Queen's favor, and his satire, The History of John Bull, is credited with helping end the War of the Spanish Succession.

John Bull, analyzed by current criteria for prose satire and compared with a similar pamphlet attributed to Defoe, is a superior work on which Swift's influence has been highly over-rated. Had Arbuthnot written more, he would now probably be considered Swift's equal, Pope's and Gay's superior, in prose satire.

## CHAPTER I

### THE MAN AND HIS MILIEU

#### Introduction

Every anthology of British literature, however cursory, mentions eighteenth-century satire. Many editors use the name, John Bull, as the casual summary term for the British personality, relying on connotation to eliminate half a page of explanation. Some even point out the existence of the Scriblerus Club. What they neglect to mention is that the three--satire, Scriblerus and John Bull--have a common link. It is Dr. John Arbuthnot (1667-1735), physician, mathematician and satirist. Arbuthnot is the man who, in his forty-fourth year, started working a hitherto unknown but rich vein of satiric talent to place himself forever among the literati; the man who was at the heart of the Scriblerus Club during its short but germinatively important existence; and, above all, the man who invented John Bull.

According to general literary history, Dr. Arbuthnot is remarkable primarily for his friends in whose company he is fated always to appear. Since his friends include all the great writers of the age,

particularly and most importantly Jonathan Swift, one cannot complain of the company. However, for the purpose of this paper, they must be temporarily separated in order to answer the following questions: Need John Arbuthnot go through literary eternity forever leaning on Jonathan Swift? Is Arbuthnot's writing sufficiently strong, his talent sufficiently individual, to stand alone?

Since Dr. Arbuthnot's publications include medical and mathematical pamphlets as well as satire, limits must be established for this investigation. Regrettably one must leave the fascinating warfare among the siblings in the cradle of science for another time, and restrict this work to that which can be considered as literature.

In making this restriction, one must decide what of the literature can be considered as that written by John Arbuthnot. Every student of the eighteenth century is aware of the troublesome problem of attribution. In an age of pseudonymous, anonymous, and pirated publication, establishing authorship of a work is hard enough. The problem becomes distressingly complex when the author has a well-documented record for contributing bits, pieces and sections to his friends' works, and never claiming them even when the prefaces to published

editions name him as co-author. Arbuthnot had no sense of personal ownership of a piece of writing. He never acknowledged authorship of even his major work during his lifetime, but contemporary scholars keep finding ways of attributing more and more sections of group efforts, such as The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, and works attributed to a single name, such as "Copies of Verses" prefacing the second edition of Gulliver's Travels, to him.

To avoid problems of attribution outside the scope of this paper, it was necessary to choose for analysis the one major work whose attribution to Arbuthnot has never been successfully challenged. That work is the group of five pamphlets that, originally published separately, are now grouped together under the name of The History of John Bull.

The bulk of this paper, then, will be an analysis of this work as satire and prose fiction. In addition, it will be valuable in estimating Arbuthnot's literary worth to set John Bull against a contemporary work published the same year, in the same form, and written with the same intent. For this purpose, a work by an author who has survived today as a major writer of the eighteenth century would be ideal. To fill this role I have chosen a little-known work attributed to Defoe, called The History of Prince Mirabel's Infancy, Rise and



Disgrace, which meets all the requirements of publication date, form and intent. The choice of Defoe's work for this use is particularly appropriate because Defoe did not start writing novels until 1719 when the first part of Robinson Crusoe was published. The date involved here is 1712, when Defoe was writing political satire both in the Review papers and, as Prince Mirabel and similar works show, in pamphlet form. Prince Mirabel and John Bull, both pseudonymous publications, competed for readers' attention on equal terms.

To set the stage for the analysis and comparison of works, I shall devote the first chapter to presenting biographical and background materials of the man and his milieu to establish Arbuthnot's personality and the major forces that shaped it. Here, too, the problem of isolating Arbuthnot from his friends is a major one. The scholarship on Dr. Arbuthnot is meager and scattered. To form any picture of the man at all, it is necessary to read voluminous material about other people and patiently track down references to him in correspondence that is available in this country. In one book, we catch a glimpse of his generosity; in another, of his compassion and willingness to oblige. In one letter, we hear an echo of his political manipulation; in another, we catch a glimpse of his laughing face as he turns his great bulk

from the gaming table while the company responds to one of his famous witticisms. It is in his correspondence with friends like Swift and Pope that we discover how much concern he had with writing and how highly his literary friends thought of his ability.

An attempt to describe the present position of research on Dr. Arbuthnot would be futile. There is no present position. Many appreciate the "genial Scot" both as a writer and a man, but no one is writing about him. The last of the four full-length works dealing with him written in the 232 years since he died was published in 1950. His correspondence is scattered through the collected letters of the great and near-great of his time, as well as through several historical manuscripts. Dr. Angus Ross of the University of Sussex, Brighton, England, has been working for several years to collect all of Arbuthnot's correspondence for publication, but the collection has not yet been published.

Of the four major works dealing with Dr. Arbuthnot, only one is biography, and it remains the source of all other biographical comments found in publications today. One is a critical evaluation of all of Dr. Arbuthnot's publications, identifying sources, with social, political, religious, and medical commentary. Only John Bull is considered at length as literature, and

then not as political journalism that has become literature, but as some vague, undefined kind of literary satire. The third one is a reprinting of all of the John Bull pamphlets with textual emendation and a discussion of authorship, and the last is a copiously annotated reprint of The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus.

For the rest, we must depend on a few journal articles and peripheral references in critical and biographical books about Arbuthnot's friends. Books of the latter sort usually contain a standard glimpse of Arbuthnot in a large group with a standard admiring comment about his warmth and wit.

Justification of this particular approach to establishing Dr. Arbuthnot's position in the hierarchy of satiric writers of the early eighteenth century must rest on a combination of elements not heretofore combined. Hopefully, I shall present a new look at a man individual and important in his own time, but since obscured by the crowd.

### Part 1--The Man

Although Dr. John Arbuthnot is known to students of literature primarily as a minor writer of the eighteenth century, his personality is so thoroughly woven into the fabric of that time that, no matter where one reads--in literary or political history, biographies of courtiers or scientists, memoirs, anecdotes, correspondence, or the literature itself--one finds strands marked with his name. At first glance he seems just one of the crowd on the periphery of events, but a closer look shows that his influence is pervasive. His imprint is still discernible not only on literature, government, and medicine, but also on the common culture of the English-speaking world. This would indicate that influence on one's own time, or future generations, is not equal to quantity of writing, and justifies the study of a minor writer, such as Arbuthnot, and his few works. One of these works, The History of John Bull, is not only part of the literary canon, but part of the material of political science as well.

Arbuthnot fully exemplified the eighteenth-century phrase, "a man of many parts," and was completely a man of his time both professionally and socially. Although moneyless when he came to London, Arbuthnot had

good connections. With connections, ambition, brains, talent, charm, a flexible personality, and a little luck as the left-hand members of an equation, the result could only be success. By the time he was thirty, he was a successful physician. Before he was forty, he was elected to the Royal Society and was known as a man to whom the Queen listened attentively. At forty-four, he discovered his satiric ability and, within the year, published work that established him in literature. Swift said two years later, in 1714, that Arbuthnot's satiric talent "lay like a Mine in the Earth, which the Owner for a long time never knew of."

To some, the personality might seem too flexible; the charm too often a substitute for strong action; the talent not fully developed. "With pliancy Arbuthnot was perhaps over-blessed. His brilliance was somewhat dependent upon a casual turn of mind, a wayward delight in the chance offering of the moment."<sup>1</sup>

At the height of his success, from his position close to the Queen, he was a channel of application for numerous petitioners for all kinds of schemes. He gracefully accepted patronage and equally gracefully distrib-

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1. Lester Beattie, John Arbuthnot: Mathematician and Satirist, Harvard Studies in English, XVI (Cambridge, Mass., 1935), 4.

uted that within the range of his influence, acting primarily for friendship, occasionally for principle. Nowhere, however, is there the slightest hint of dishonesty, scientific or political, unless willingness to oblige a friend or the desire to advance his own political party can be called dishonest. His reputation comes to us unblemished; his talents glittering with superlatives. Even Pope, who could be biting with little cause, found nothing vindictive to say about Arbuthnot. The Whigs used only the milder perjuratives on him when deriding Tories, and The Grumbler contented itself by calling him "the Quack Arbuthnot" in its quarrel with Pope.<sup>2</sup>

The two best-known comments about Arbuthnot are Swift's and Samuel Johnson's, sure to be quoted whenever Arbuthnot is mentioned. Swift wrote to Pope, in a letter dated September 29, 1725, in reaction to learning of one of Arbuthnot's illnesses, "Oh! if the world had but a dozen Arbuthnots in it, I would burn my Travels . . . ."<sup>3</sup> Johnson said to Boswell, when speaking of the writers of Queen Anne's time, "I think Dr. Arbuthnot the

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2. James T. Hillhouse, The Grub-Street Journal (Durham, N. C., 1928), p. 36.

3. Alexander Pope, Complete Works, eds. W. Elwin and W. J. Courthope (London, 1872), VIII, 54.

first man among them. He was the most universal genius, being an excellent physician, a man of deep learning, and a man of much humor."<sup>4</sup>

In his Life of Pope, Johnson commented:

Arbuthnot was a man of great comprehension, skillful in his profession, versed in the sciences, acquainted with ancient literature, and able to animate his mass of knowledge by a bright and active imagination; a scholar of great brilliance of wit; a wit who in the crowd of life, retained and discovered a noble ardour of religious zeal.<sup>5</sup>

Peter Wentworth was among the many contemporaries who recorded evaluations of Dr. Arbuthnot. Wentworth, who was examining Queen Anne's court for avenues of influence, wrote Lord Raby on August 25, 1710, that Arbuthnot was "the first man at court," and said, "I made a visset [sic] to Mr. Scarborough, who is very well with Mrs. Masham, and yet better with Dr. Albertinote [sic] who is a very cunning man, and not much talkt of, but I believe what he says is as much heard as any that give advice now."<sup>6</sup>

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4. James Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson, ed. Percy Fitzgerald (London, 1924), I, 262.

5. Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets (Philadelphia, 1819), III, 123.

6. George Aitken, Life and Works of John Arbuthnot (Oxford, 1892), p. 34.

George Berkeley, in an April, 1713, letter to Percival, said,

He is the Queen's domestic physician, and in great esteem with the whole Court. Nor is he less valuable for his learning, being a great philosopher, and reckoned among the first mathematicians of the age. Besides which he has likewise the character of very uncommon virtue and probity.<sup>7</sup>

Lord Chesterfield, who was Arbuthnot's long-time friend and patient, had enough to say about the doctor in his correspondence to paint an affectionate portrait. One or more of these bits is usually quoted when scholars mention the eighteenth-century wits. It was Chesterfield who left one of the few glimpses we have of Arbuthnot's family life when he pictured a careless and affectionate father allowing his children to make kites of his papers. In a Character written after the doctor's death, Chesterfield said, in part:

To great and various erudition, Arbuthnot joined an infinite fund of wit and humour, to which his friends Pope and Swift were more obliged than they have acknowledged themselves to be.

His imagination was almost inexhaustible, and whatever subject he treated, or was consulted upon, he immediately overflowed with all that it could possibly produce. It was at anybody's service . . . insomuch that his sons,

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7. Berkeley and Percival, ed. Benjamin Rand (Cambridge, 1914), p. 114, as quoted by Charles Kerby-Miller, ed., Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Work, and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus (New Haven, 1950), p. 11.



when young, have frequently made kites of his scattered papers of hints which would have furnished good matter for folios.

Not being in the least jealous of his fame as an author, he would neither take the time nor the trouble of separating the best from the worst; he worked out the whole mine, which afterwards, in the hands of skilful refiners, produced a rich vein of ore.<sup>8</sup>

The subject of Lord Chesterfield's eulogy died at 68. Literary references to him begin when he was 44, after he met Swift in 1711. Since he was prominent in scientific and court circles for several years before that, using 1700, when he was 33, as a starting point, a composite, although incomplete, picture of his mature years can be pieced together. The sampling of quotations preceding Chesterfield's Character are illustrative of those years when, successful, influential and popular, he moved about the Court of St. James, was active in the Royal Society, served as a Director of the Academy of Music, and socialized with all the great and near-great in the literary world. But what do we know of him during the years prior to starting his medical practice in London when all the tangible equipment he possessed was a new medical degree?

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8. Philip Dormer Stanhope, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield, Collected Works, ed. Lord Mahon (London, 1845), II, 447, as quoted by K. N. Colville, ed., A Miscellany of the Wits: Select Pieces by William King, D.C.L., John Arbuthnot, M.D., and other Hands (London, 1920), pp. xxxiv-v.

Biographies of Arbuthnot are in short supply. A short Life was published in 1750 in his Collected Works. Leslie Stephen wrote an article for the Dictionary of National Biography which was published in 1885,<sup>9</sup> and several short biographical articles, more in the nature of memorials, have appeared in various journals.<sup>10</sup> However, there is only one biography available that deals with Arbuthnot's early years in any detail. It is George Aitken's The Life and Works of John Arbuthnot, documented earlier. From the list of places that Aitken visited, the people that he interviewed, the private documents and letters that he read, it is clear that he provided information about these early years that was unknown before publication of his book.

John Arbuthnot was born April 29, 1667, at Arbuthnott, Kincardineshire, Scotland, where his family history has been traced back to 1540 when the first Arbuthnot settled near there. John was the oldest of seven children of an Episcopal minister who was a distant connection of the then Viscount Arbuthnott.

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9. I, 534-7.

10. John Dennis, "John Arbuthnot," Cornhill Magazine, XXXIX (January, 1879), 91-101; B. W. Richardson, "John Arbuthnot, M.D.; F.R.S. The Medical Scholar," Asclepiad, IV (1887), 194-71; A. A. leM. Simpson, "The Originator of John Bull," London Mercury, XIX (November, 1928), 69-78.

It will have been noticed that . . . in his letters Arbuthnot spelt his name 'Arbuthnott,' while in the printed theses [at St. Andrews] it is spelt 'Arbuthnot'; and it is curious that he always spelt it with two t's in signing his own name, but with one on the title-pages of his books. 'Arbuthnot' is the older form of the word, but the spelling 'Arbuthnott' was introduced apparently in the seventeenth century, and is still preserved in Viscount Arbuthnott's title and in the name of the village where Arbuthnot was born. (p. 19.)

Aitken says that there is no information about Arbuthnot's childhood. He seems to have been reared as the son of a gentleman with wide family connections, including many of prestige, although John's immediate family was on the periphery of the clan. Possibly the "poor relation" status was the shaping power for his extreme willingness to oblige people of position. It might also have formed one of his many sympathetic bonds with Swift.

There is evidence that Arbuthnot attended Marischall College in Aberdeen, but none on either his ambitions or the course he intended his life to take. Whatever that course might have been, it was radically changed by events in 1688.

The first great turning-point in Arbuthnot's life came when he was twenty-one. The Revolution of 1688 brought with it greater changes in Scotland than in England, because the measures introduced by James II had been especially repugnant to the majority of the Scotch nation. All who had not been willing to comply with the Episcopalian form of Church government had been

deprived of religious and civil rights, and it is not to be wondered at that when the opportunity presented itself the people were quick to retaliate. (p. 4.)

The retaliations consisted, in part, of expelling some 200 Episcopal clergymen from their homes and churches, many of whom were beaten and misused. Twelve bishops were deprived of position and property by the Privy Council for refusing to acknowledge William and Mary.

Alexander Arbuthnott [John's father] was among the clergy who would not conform to the Presbyterian system, and accordingly, on the 29th of September, 1689, he was deposed from his living by his patron, Viscount Arbuthnott. The minister and his sons were strong partisans of the Stuarts, and the second son, Robert, a youth of twenty, had taken part in the battle of Killiecrankie . . . (p. 5.)

A few months after this disaster, Rev. Arbuthnott died, leaving John not only penniless, without property or prospects, but unable to bury his father's body until he could resolve an argument his father had been having with the local Church government. The argument had to do with Church records Rev. Arbuthnott had taken with him. John returned the records, and was allowed to bury his father's body eight days after death, but was refused permission to erect a monument or marker over the grave. (pp. 6-7)

For a young man of twenty-one, these events could have been shattering. The uncertainty of life during the months before his father was deposed, the loss of property and prestige when the blow finally fell, his father's death and the ghoulish situation of an unburied body in the house for a week, the loss of whatever career plans he had made--all these could have marked young Arbuthnot adversely for life. A guess at one possible effect of these events would be that he might have resolved never to jeopardize his position by too stubborn adherence to one opinion.

After his responsibilities to his family were concluded, John went to London for the first time in April or May, 1691. He supported himself by teaching mathematics and published his first book, Of the Laws of Chance, anonymously in 1692. It was actually a how-to-do-it for gamblers for whom Arbuthnot, who proved to be a life-long, enthusiastic gambler, devised a mathematical system for beating the cards. (pp. 7-8.) Either his system did not work, or he did not follow his own advice because comments in various correspondence indicate that he frequently lost heavily. Pope, writing to Swift about their friends on September 3, 1726, said, "The doctor goes to cards, Gay to court; one loses money, one loses

his time."<sup>11</sup> Lady Hervey, in a letter to Mrs. Howard dated June 19, 1731, said, "I hear Dr. Arbuthnot is gone to Tunbridge: I wish he may not fill his belly more than his pocket by his journey; I am sure he will do so if John Dories and quadrille players are plenty this season."<sup>12</sup> Lord Chesterfield's opinion of Arbuthnot's ability at the card table led him to joke at Arbuthnot's expense when he wrote to the doctor from France that Lady Murray told him "that you had been melancholy, ever since you had been most shamefully beaten at cards by the superior good play of a French Spaniel lately brought over." (p. 134.)

In 1694 Arbuthnot had an opportunity to attend University College, Oxford, with Edward Jeffreys, a young man for whom he was acting as companion and private tutor. Edward was an uninterested student, and after two years, his father withdrew him from the University. At that time Arbuthnot "resolved on some other course of life," as he wrote Dr. Arthur Charlett, Master of University College, and entered St. Andrews. In September, 1696, at the age of 29, he received his doctor's degree

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11. Pope, Complete Works, VII, 76.

12. Letters to and from Henrietta, Countess of Suffolk, ed. John W. Croker (London, 1827), I, 411.

in medicine, returned to London, opened his office, and from then on prospered. (pp. 11-18.)

Of the next few years, Aitken says:

Arbuthnot's son George, probably the eldest child, was born about 1703. Of Arbuthnot's wife, we know practically nothing, except that she died in 1730; even her name has not been recorded. But there is no doubt that Arbuthnot had a happy married life, and that he deeply loved his children.

By means of his skill, combined with his wit and learning, Arbuthnot had now come to the front as a physician, and on St. Andrew's Day, 1704, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. In the following year, on the 30th of October, he was appointed Physician Extraordinary to the Queen, 'by her Majesty's special command, in consideration of his good and successful services performed as Physitian [sic] to his Royal Highnesse,' Prince George of Denmark. The Prince, it seems, had been taken suddenly ill at Epsom, and had been successfully treated by Arbuthnot, who happened to be on the spot, and who was always afterward employed by the Prince as his physician. (pp. 26-7.)

Arbuthnot started writing serious scientific and mathematical treatises shortly after he settled permanently in London. In 1697 he published a refutation of Dr. Woodward's theory of the deluge, which will be discussed more fully in Part 2 of this chapter, and in 1701, for friends in Oxford, published An Essay on the Usefullness of Mathematical Learning. This essay, in the form of a letter, is of the inspiration-and-up-lift school, and points out to recalcitrant students how greatly their lives would be improved by more energetic

study.<sup>13</sup> In 1705 Arbuthnot published Tables of the Grecian, Roman and Jewish Measures, Weights and Coins, reduc'd to the English Standard, dedicated to the Prince.

In 1709 he was appointed Physician in Ordinary to the Queen, a post he held until her death in 1714 and in 1710 he was elected a Fellow of the College of Physicians. That same year, Swift arrived in London in search of the "first fruits" for Ireland, and in March, 1711, began mentioning the doctor with the "hard" name in his Journal to Stella. (pp. 27-37.)

The moment of Arbuthnot's meeting with Swift and the start of a friendship that lasted the remainder of their lives is a proper place to mention a major Arbuthnot talent that "glitters with superlatives." It is his extra-ordinary talent for friendship. A fifth or sixth reading of the Swift-Arbuthnot letters serves only to increase one's awareness of the intensity of emotion, the love and respect these two men had for each other. Swift sometimes disguised his feelings; Arbuthnot never. On August 12, 1714, Arbuthnot wrote to Swift at Letcombe,

Dear Freind the last sentence of your letter quite kills me; never repeat that melancholy tender word that you will endeavour to forgett me. I am sure I never can forgett yow, till I

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13. An Essay on the Usefullness of Mathematical Learning, in a Letter from a Gentleman in the City to his Friend in Oxford (Oxford, 1701).



meet with, (what is impossible) another  
 whose conversation I can so much delight in  
 as Dr. Swifts & yet that is the smallest thing  
 I ought to value you for.<sup>14</sup>

In July of that same year, Arbuthnot offered to loan Swift £200 with no set time for repayment when he, himself, was short of money.<sup>15</sup> Chesterfield's letter to Arbuthnot, joking about the doctor's ability at cards, continues, "I thank God I can now say with some certainty that I shall see you soon."<sup>16</sup> The following excerpt from a letter from Arbuthnot to Swift, dated March 19, 1729, illustrates not only Arbuthnot's talent for friendship, but the vivacity of his style of writing. Events reported may be somewhat exaggerated, but probably not very much.

John Gay, I may say without Vanity, owes his life, under god, to the unwearied endeavors and care of your humble servant for a physician, who had not been passionately fond of his friend, I could not have saved him. I had, besides my personal concern for him, other motives in my care. He is now become a publick person, a little Sacheverell, & I took the same pleasure in saving him, as Radcliffe did in preserving My Lord Chief Justice Holt's wife, who he attended out of spite to her husband, who wished her dead.

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14. The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford, 1963), II, 122.

15. Swift, Correspondence, II, 69.

16. Aitken, p. 134.

The inoffensive John Gay is now become one of the obstructions to the peace of Europe, the terror of Members, the Chief Author of the Craftsman, & all the seditious pamphlets which have been published against the government. he has gott several turned out of their places; the greatest ornament of the Court Banished from it for his sake; another great Lady in danger of being chasd likewise; about seven or eight Duchesses pushing forward, like the ancient Circum Celliones in the Church, who will suffer martyrdom on his account first. . . . I assure you this is the very identical John Gay whom you formerly knew, and lodged with in Whitehall two years ago.<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Arbuthnot seemed to specialize in friendship for life, no matter the distance between him and his friends, no matter the length of time between visits. Besides friendships as well known as those with Swift, Pope, Gay, Chesterfield, and Bolingbroke, there are many others with less prominent men such as Edward Jeffreys' father, a Member of Parliament; Dr. Arthur Charlett, Master of University College, Oxford; and David Gregory, an astronomer whom Arbuthnot first met at Oxford and later worked with on committees for the Royal Society.

Although Arbuthnot's talent for friendship might have been guided by his ambition--a conclusion possible to reach when one looks at the prominence of even the less prominent men among his long-time friends--it is nonetheless impressive. The somewhat snobbish, in-group

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<sup>17</sup>. Swift, Correspondence, III, 325.

quality of his friendships is mitigated by another comment in Chesterfield's Character. Chesterfield said: "Without any of the craft, he had all the skill of his profession which he exerted with the most care and pleasure upon those unfortunate patients who could not give him a fee."<sup>18</sup>

To prevent an accusation of trying to pin the label of God upon a mere mortal, it is necessary to report some of Arbuthnot's faults. Actually, they are hard to find in recorded comments. The most famous and often repeated are Swift's teasing remarks about the slouch in Arbuthnot's walk. It is difficult to discover who first called him "The King of Inattention," Swift or Chesterfield, but Chesterfield's final comment on that subject can be found in his Character of Dr. Arbuthnot. Chesterfield said, "As his imagination was always at work, he was frequently absent and inattentive in company, which made him both say and do a thousand inoffensive absurdities; but which far from being provoking, as they commonly are, supplied new matter for conversation, and occasioned wit, both in himself and others."<sup>19</sup>

It has also been said that over-eating was a contributing cause to Arbuthnot's death. He was one of the

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18. A Miscellany of the Wits, p. xxxiv.

19. A Miscellany of the Wits, p. xxxiv-v.

group of men whose extreme obesity caused Thackeray to cry out, "all that fuddling and punch-drinking, that club and coffee-house boozing, shortened the lives and enlarged the waistcoats of the men of that age."<sup>20</sup>

Chesterfield's comment about that aspect of Arbuthnot's character was that "he indulged his palate to excess, I might have said to gluttony, which gave a gross plethoric habit of body."<sup>21</sup> Bolingbroke, writing to Lord Bathurst, November 19, 1728, mentions that Arbuthnot had been dining with him, and adds, "He is gone to take care of a brother glutton who is dying, and whose recovery, if by chance he does recover, will kill his physician by the confidence it will give him."<sup>22</sup>

Finally, one has to rely on the cumulative impressions built up from reading and re-reading both Arbuthnot's correspondence and the comments made about him. After conceding that characteristics rated faults in the twentieth century might not have been considered faults in the eighteenth, one is inescapably presented with the results of lack of control in eating and

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20. William M. Thackeray, The English Humorists of the Eighteenth-Century (London, 1899), p. 216.

21. A Miscellany of the Wits, p. xxxv.

22. Pope, Complete Works, VII, 438n.

gambling. There is no doubt that extreme obesity shortens life, and no matter how affectionately people who loved him might have teased him about gambling, the facts remain that, old and sick, he wrote Swift that he had not sufficient money to stay in the country long enough to recover fully from an illness.<sup>23</sup> Obviously, retirement was out of the question. In 1730, he was worried that he would not be able to provide for his children adequately when he died. The following was recorded about a visit he made to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu during one of her illnesses. "Sitting by her bed, he began to say, he hoped he had provided for his Children, tho moderately, yet honestly."<sup>24</sup> This was only five years before he died, and it is sad to contemplate him, plodding tiredly from patient to patient during those last years, suffering from his own illnesses. From the many health reports sent to friends over the years, I have pieced together continuity of symptoms that lead me to guess that Arbuthnot suffered not only from asthma and kidney stones, but probably died of an advanced and painful case of cancer of the bowels.

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23. Swift, Correspondence, IV, 256.

24. George Sherburn, "Walpole's Marginalia," Huntington Library Quarterly, I (1938), 487, as quoted by Robert Halsband, The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (Oxford, 1956), p. 137.

Even if study of the eighteenth century were limited to a survey course of British literature, students would meet the "genial Scot" in Gay's Shepherd's Week, Swift's Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift and Journal to Stella, and Pope's Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.

Gay's is a casual mention in the prologue to the effect that Arbuthnot was the Queen's physician. The four lines concerning Arbuthnot in Swift's Verses were written after twenty years of close friendship, and reflect the heavy-handed irony behind which Swift frequently disguised his deep feeling for Arbuthnot.

Arbuthnot is no more my friend,  
Who dares to irony pretend,  
Which I was born to introduce,  
Refin'd it first, and shew'd its use. (55-58.)

The many comments about Dr. Arbuthnot in the Journal to Stella have provided scholars with a picture of Arbuthnot's and Swift's friendship, as well as documentary evidence for both literary and political activities. Several entries, to be discussed in Chapter II, established Arbuthnot's authorship of The History of John Bull.

In the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, Pope provided lines for A. to say that indicate Arbuthnot's moderate approach to satire.

A. Good friend, forbear! you deal in dangerous  
things.  
I'd never name queens, ministers or kings; (75-76)

. . . .

A. Hold! for God's sake--you'll offend,  
No names!--be calm!--learn prudence of a  
friend! (101-102)

Although the lines Pope gives A. to say later in the poem make it appear that Pope had convinced Arbuthnot to join in personal attack, particularly on Sporus, in actual fact Arbuthnot continued to advise moderation to Pope. On July 17, 1734, about seven months before his death, Arbuthnot wrote Pope a letter summarizing their friendship and requesting "that you continue that noble disdain and abhorrence of vice, which you seem naturally endued with, but still with a due regard to your own safety; and study more to reform than chastise, though the one often cannot be effected without the other."<sup>25</sup>

Swift, Pope, and Gay have been more talked about in connection with the Scriblerus Club than Arbuthnot, but John Arbuthnot was its heart. The meetings were held in his rooms at St. James Palace during the two short London seasons when they met regularly. After the Queen's death and Arbuthnot's removal to Chelsea, he wrote Pope and Parnell that "Martin's office is now the second door on the left hand in Dover Street, where he will be glad to see Dr. Parnell, Mr. Pope, and his old friends, to

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25. Pope, Collected Works, VII, 479.

whom he can still afford a half pint of claret."<sup>26</sup>

Arbuthnot was considered by all the Scriblerians to be their "top idea man," to use a Madison Avenue expression. When Swift was at Letcombe in the early summer of 1714 nervously waiting the fall of the Tories, Arbuthnot suggested in a letter that Swift occupy himself by continuing work on Martinus Scriblerus's Memoirs, the major project of the Club. Swift replied:

To talk of Martin in any hands but yours is a Folly. You every day give better hints than all of us together could do in a twelvemonth; And to say the Truth, Pope who first thought of the Hint has no Genius at all to it, in my Mind. Gay is too young; Parnel has some Ideas of it, but is idle; I could putt together, and lard, and strike out well enough, but all that relates to the Sciences must be from you.<sup>27</sup>

It seems possible, from the correspondence among the men, that it was Arbuthnot who kept alive the idea of the Club and of Martinus himself--maybe for conversational purposes, if nothing else, or possibly as a tangible bond among the widely scattered friends. The Club's major project was never completed as the members planned, and the fragment that Pope eventually published in 1741 was used only as a space filler. Many critics have traced ideas for major works by Swift, Pope, and Gay to Scriblerus Club discussions, an indication of the

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26. Aitken, p. 81.

27. Swift, Correspondence, II, 46.



lasting importance of these meetings to the literature of the eighteenth century. The qualities of mind and talent among the members of this Club are obvious when we note that, although short-lived, sporadic in its meetings, meager in its collective production, the Scriblerus Club lives today while better organized, more productive groups have vanished--unreprinted and unfootnoted.

To summarize, Arbuthnot the man was a combination of charm, high intellect, ambition, warmth, flexibility of personality, great humour, compassion, generosity, honor, and great talent in medicine, literature and friendship. He had few faults. As his family, education and environment molded him, he can be called a true son of his milieu.

Part 2--And His Milieu

The years of Arbuthnot's prime are both unique and paradoxical. It seems almost a time when one could wrap himself warmly in tradition and know the cold air of change would be kept out because the Queen said so. There was Arbuthnot, snug in a conservative niche carved by knowledge out of affability, so comfortable and secure he could safely prod the national character with sharp-pointed jokes.

Yet the era was not really that smug. It was turbulent and vigorous, virulent and charming, reasonable and fanatic, complacent and dissatisfied. Although it was not planned that way, the era was so fertile that it produced probably the bulk of the ideas behind our present way of life.

But the people of the time, deeply engaged in current problems, had not the power to see the wide significance of what was happening. They did not invite William over to inaugurate a new philosophy of government but to free them from Roman Catholic despotism; they did not welcome the resignation of the nonjurors and the filling of episcopal sees with Latitudinarians as steps toward toleration but as buttresses to the Protestant succession; they did not regard the establishment of a national bank and the encouragement of trade as steps toward a new economy but as a means of raising revenues to defeat the ambitions of Louis.<sup>28</sup>

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28. Charles Kerby-Miller, ed., Memoirs of the Extra-ordinary Life, Work, and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus (New Haven, 1950), p. 32.

Benefits accruing to the twentieth century from efforts of the people of the eighteenth century to solve their own problems include voting precedents, stabilized currency, a banking system, regular postal service, civil marriage laws, insurance companies, the stock exchange, statistics, daily newspapers, magazines, musical comedy, inoculation against disease, optics, physics and the architectural ideas that were built into such national monuments as Mt. Vernon and Monticello.

People of the eighteenth century considered their way of life polished, but the thoughtful put their efforts to achieving perfection, if not in their time, at least in their children's. But, paradoxically, while showing concern about the disastrous consumption of gin, they ignored the disastrous effects of child labor.

The "benevolent" among music lovers could attend the new Italian opera, and not waste his tears on the ways castradi could not perform while enjoying the ways they could. While "projectors" were generally scorned, some of them produced the prototypes of the machinery for the Industrial Revolution. Most physicians practiced medicine on theories produced in libraries based on fragmentary statements by revered "antients," yet modern laboratory methods began then.

It was an era of such political chaos that the cry, "The Protestant Succession is in danger," could panic the population on any given day no matter how frequently heard that month, but it contained the roots for strong Parliamentary control based on a two-party system with an elected head who governed all people with their consent. If the age did not abolish, it at least allowed the literary licensing system to disappear, although actions for libel were still government-controlled, harsh and whimsical. The latter was one of the strongest reasons for the anonymous and pseudonymous publication that flourished at that time.

As a result of growing commerce and increase of education, particularly women's, the early eighteenth century produced the largest book buying and reading public to date. This new market ended patronage as a literary institution and created a new professional--the independent writer. He either exploited the market or met its demands, depending on one's viewpoint. At any rate, one result was the novel. The prolific novelists eventually destroyed the poised, under-stated, unemphatic, gentlemanly, concise, witty, literary prose style of the early eighteenth century. This style, developed after the Restoration threw off the involuted Miltonic style, was the one to which Dryden put the

finishing touches. The writers of Queen Anne's time refined and polished it until it became an instrument of elegance, grace and charm. But the independent writer, to make his money, had to direct his writing toward a large semi-educated majority on whom elegance, grace and charm were largely wasted. They preferred a florid, sentimental, emotional wordiness--a preference that destroyed the elegant conciseness of the early eighteenth-century prose. Another paradox of the era is that this happened at the time rules for "perfecting the language" were being formulated.

This was a time of violent controversies, both political and religious:

Controversies of all sorts were carried on with a virulence which is now difficult to comprehend. High and Low Churchmen attacked each other in print and in the convocations with a violence of language scarcely above Billingsgate; tyrannous bills were introduced into Parliament and debated with a violence of temper which no other people but the English could engage in without bloodshed; the London mobs were easily aroused to burn effigies or attack meetinghouses.<sup>29</sup>

And in this melee, literary geniuses wrote political propaganda as never before nor since. In the Augustan Age "literary men were statesmen, and statesmen men of letters . . . for in these years as in no

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29. Kerby-Miller, p. 33.

other in all English history, the historical and literary elements were intertwined.<sup>30</sup> "The writers of this period were so preoccupied with the issues of the day that they sometimes appear to have been publicists rather than men of letters."<sup>31</sup> Although he came to it rather late, John Arbuthnot was definitely in this category of political writer, fully prepared for what he was to do by twenty or more years of thralldom to the fascination of politics and political maneuvering.

Arbuthnot's letters to Dr. Charlett in 1695-96, which Aitken says are the earliest we possess, reflect the enduring interests of his years of prominence. One of these enduring interests was politics. He tells Charlett the political gossip he hears, shows his interest in the maneuvers concomitant with government action or inaction, and displays his willingness to take part in pressure politics and exerting influence. He was, at that time, still on the farthest periphery of political circles as far as his own influence was concerned, but his interest was lively. For example, on May 14, 1695,

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30. William T. Morgan, A Bibliography of British History (1700-1715), With Special Reference to the Reign of Queen Anne, Indiana University Studies, Nos. 114-128 (Bloomington, Ind., 1937), II, xi.

31. Louis Bredvold, The Literature of the Restoration and the Eighteenth Century: 1660-1798, Vol. III in A History of English Literature (Oxford, 1950), 51.

he tells Dr. Charlett:

By my stay in the contrey yow may guess I am a stranger to news but I will trouble yow w<sup>t</sup> some when I can come by these that are good fresh especially a scheme of the Jacobites politicks. The M. of Carmarthen sitts as president of the Councill but the contest betwixt his and the other party is so high that one of them must to pot.<sup>32</sup>

In April, 1696, he tells Dr. Charlett:

What I had wrote ther [a letter that was never sent] was chiefly concerning the Bp. of St. David's; Mr. Jeffreys [Edward's father and a Member of Parliament] having desir'd that as far as yow could have influence, ther might be all justice done him in the report of the evidence, he being convinced from a particular knowledge of the matters alleg'd ag<sup>t</sup> him, that ther was a great dele of malice in his adversaries, and that the Bp. was not so culpable as they had represented to the world; that upon an account which Mr. Jeffreys gave My Lord Abingtoun he was pleas'd to befriend the Bp. very much in the house of Lords. (p. 15.)

As Arbuthnot moved closer to the center of political action, made friends with the men who headed the state, and eventually reached its very core, he played a part in establishing the Tory party in Queen Anne's favor. While the Whigs were still in power in the early days of Queen Anne's rule, Arbuthnot helped open the back door of the palace for Harley by befriending Abigail Hill, one of the Queen's bedchamber women. It is a common story in the history of that era that Arbuthnot arranged the secret marriage of Abigail Hill and Samuel

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32. Aitken, p. 12.

Masham, one of the Prince Consort's bedchamber grooms, in his own rooms and escorted the Queen to the ceremony.

Mrs. (later Lady) Masham's importance in helping to establish both Harley and the Tory party in power is an accepted fact of history. And if Dr. Arbuthnot was not at Mrs. Masham's side, he was at the Queen's, lending a helping voice in behalf of the Tories. For a short time the doctor influenced what can be called the flow of political traffic. It is impossible to know, of course, what, if any, of his suggestions were included in Harley's, Bolingbroke's, Peterborough's, or the Queen's, actions. To put it in the vernacular, he most likely won a few and lost a few, but his interest in political maneuvering never flagged, not even after his influence waned.

Politics during Queen Anne's reign was largely a matter of personal influence regardless of the party to which a man was supposed to belong. In fact, in practice, many belonged to both. Some Whigs were Tories in Church affairs; some Tories were Whigs in domestic issues. The only point on which both gentlemen and working politicians really took a stand at that time was "Marlborough's War." You were either for it or against it. If you were for it, you were a Whig. If you were against it, you were a Tory. From that point of decision,



a man's position on certain other matters was obvious. Tories were landowners whose lands were taxed to provide funds to finance the war. Whigs were merchants and financiers to whom the war was profitable. This, of course, is oversimplification, yet it is beyond doubt that these conditions existed to influence and identify the political thought and activity of Englishmen throughout Arbuthnot's most active years:

On the Continent fighting had already begun when Queen Anne came to the throne. In less than two months England and her allies formally declared war, and when the queen died twelve years later, although England had been at peace for more than a year, the last of the continental treaties of peace was not yet two months old.<sup>33</sup>

With the so-called Jacobite plotting recurring as a minor element, the war, then, was the major current flowing through Arbuthnot's political milieu. Arbuthnot worked harder to end that war than he worked either for or against anything else about which we have any record.

More substantial than any recorded share in internal management was Arbuthnot's effort to further the constructive work of the Tory government--peace with France. The John Bull pamphlets (1712) played their part, and at the same time displayed a grasp of complexities, international and domestic, which called for deft handling by the politicians. When the treaty was ready (March, 1713), Arbuthnot was

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33. G. N. Clark, The Later Stuarts 1660-1714 (Oxford, 1934), p. 192.

so much concerned for its ratification that he handed to Oxford a memorandum "Concerning the Peace" (April 16), wherein he sketched a bit of strategy for meeting the opposition of the war party.<sup>34</sup>

For the rest he probably could agree with Bolingbroke's 1717 explanation:

I am afraid that we came to Court in the same disposition as all parties have done; that the principal spring of our actions was to have the government of the state in our hands; that our principal views were the conservation of this power, great employment to ourselves, and great opportunities of rewarding those who had helped to raise us and of hurting those who stood in opposition to us. It is, however, true that, with these considerations of private and party interest, there were others intermingled which had for their object the public good of the nation, at least, what we took to be such.<sup>35</sup>

Historically, Arbuthnot stood on the losing side in the transition between court power and parliamentary power. He backed the Tories for the obvious reasons of family background, ambition, and his own preferment by royalty. However, his amiable and flexible personality, well-known compassion and easy-going manner, and most important, his extra-ordinary talent for friendship, made it possible for him to be one Tory able to return to London only a few months after the Queen's death and

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34. Beattie, p. 24.

35. Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, "A Letter to Sir William Wyndham," Political Writers of Eighteenth-Century England, ed. Jeffrey Hart (New York, 1964), p. 176.

take up his medical practice as well as his social life just where he left it. Although George I did not renew Arbuthnot's appointment as a court physician, his private practice remained as considerable as in his days at court.

As a physician, John Arbuthnot was in the forefront of his profession for almost forty years. He was an important and prominent doctor whose comments and opinions were taken seriously inside his profession as well as among laymen. "There is no doubt that Arbuthnot took his profession seriously, and was himself taken seriously by the abler men of his profession."<sup>36</sup>

In Arbuthnot's time, the medical and scientific world was one. This world, though, was in a painful position, stretched agonizingly between God and the experimentalists, with the Royal Society trying to ease the pressure by saying, in effect, "You're both right. You're both right." Beattie says that Arbuthnot's "serious [medical] works, in their content, were realistic, pointed, and uncompromisingly modern," (p. 17.) but both his political stand and his literary attitude were uncompromisingly "antient," to use the terms Arbuthnot inherited with his milieu. Somehow, within John Arbuthnot, these two philosophies--considered

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36. Beattie, p. 375.

incompatible by the majority--lived together in harmony, without either hot or cold wars raging. He, as well as Newton, Halley, Mead, Sloane--in fact all those now claimed as the authentic scientists of the era that founded "modern science"--could demand observation and measurement as the basis for reaching conclusions, and at the same time be versed in and proponents of the humanistic arts.

Most men of learning [in Queen Anne's time] were active along several lines; it was typical rather than exceptional that Newton should devote much time to theology and chronology as well as physics and chemistry, that Clarke should be respected as a metaphysician, theologian, and expounder of science, that Dr. Mead, the most successful doctor of his day, should be an excellent scholar and antiquarian, and that Dr. Arbuthnot should hold a respected place in the fields of medicine, science, antiquarian learning, literature and music.<sup>37</sup>

When Arbuthnot was born in 1667, just seven years after the Restoration, men still were living who had devoted their lives to condemning and actively rooting out of British culture the idea that man could, or even should, be of "many parts." This latter activity formed the basis for the "battle of antients and moderns" so often discussed in relation to the early eighteenth century. The reasons for the painful position of the scientific world in Arbuthnot's time go back to

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37. Kerby-Miller, p. 35.

Puritan ideas of science and education, and the Restoration's reaction to both--all of which contribute to Arbuthnot's ability to work actively as a physician and, at the same time, deride other physicians and scientists.

When the Puritans came to power, their zeal for reform was unlimited.

[They] were out to reform not only Church and State in their narrow connotations, but almost everything else. While their hands were busy overturning the old order of things, their brains were equally occupied with new schemes for the present and visions for the future. . . . Though the character of the age was predominantly religious, two spirits, both springing from Bacon and the new science, and closely related, soon became conspicuous. One may be described as public-spirited and humanitarian; the other as materialistic, utilitarian, scientific. The latter inspired projects of all kinds.<sup>38</sup>

In science, the Puritans "seized with avidity upon Bacon's philosophy and enthroned him as leader of the scientific movement."<sup>39</sup> Although Bacon is credited with being the father of experimental science, he was not the first nor only one to advocate "observe and experiment." Others, however, usually added the injunction to

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38. Richard F. Jones, Ancients and Moderns: A Study of the Background of the Battle of the Books, Washington University Studies, New Series, Language and Literature (St. Louis, 1936), p. 92.

39. Richard F. Jones, "The Background of the Attack on Science in the Age of Pope," Pope and His Contemporaries, eds. James L. Clifford and Louis A. Landa (Oxford, 1949), p. 97.

draw conclusions from the data. This Bacon was against because of his own unique scheme which, with experimentation, made up the "scientific movement" that the Puritans espoused with such fervor. This was the compilation of a natural history. Bacon said that all phenomena in the universe were the result of the operation of a few primary laws of nature. He wanted to discover these laws and master nature. To do this, he said it was necessary to compile a history that would include all data on earth and, at some distant date, when the collection was complete, some great brain would make the applications. No one was to think until the history was complete. "Bacon makes a great deal of the injury to learning which derives from men's relying more on mind than on nature, so that they withdraw from the observation of nature and seek truth through the operations of the intellect."<sup>40</sup>

According to Jones, Bacon said, "For my way of discovering sciences goes far to level men's wits, and leaves but little to individual excellence."<sup>41</sup> It, therefore, took no brains nor talent to experiment, observe, and compile the history. This idea was

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40. Jones, Ancients and Moderns, p. 49.

41. Jones, Ancients and Moderns, p. 56.

reinforced by people who claimed they could learn more about nature from humble ignorant people and simple artisans, who were in direct contact from nature, than from the aristocrats of learning. This attracted all kinds of ignoramuses who wanted to be "equal" with the aristocrats of learning.

The removal of the bars of learning and intellectual competence let loose a crowd of astrol-ogers, empirics, magicians, alchemists, rosi-crucians, and a host of others who defy name and classification, all eager to pursue a path that seemed to lead to money, respectability and fame.<sup>42</sup>

For mankind to reap benefit from these theories, the only logical thing was to make sweeping changes in the university curriculum, this group of Puritans claimed. They wanted to abolish all subjects then taught --logic, ethics, metaphysics and religion, theoretical study of language and literature--and substitute the "new science" plus technological and vocational subjects. "They viewed the study of languages only as the preparation of tools whereby the knowledge contained in them might be secured. They dismissed linguistic study pursued for its own sake or for literary purposes as a vain and useless enjoyment."<sup>43</sup> Greater emphasis is placed on

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42. Jones, "Background of the Attack," p. 111.

43. Jones, "Background of the Attack," p. 100.

utilitarian or applied science than upon pure. Only that which enabled men to build houses and assist mechanical operations was to be taught. Of the social sciences, only history was to remain. Jones said, "The modern reader, perusing [the Puritan educational reform treatises] for the first time finds them strangely familiar."<sup>44</sup>

Any strong movement to make major changes in the traditional order of things stirs up all degrees of reaction for and against it. So it was with the "new science." This era, seen from a viewpoint three hundred years later, can be pointed out as the beginning of modern science, but the people engaged in condemning or defending experiments could not know this. Therefore, we have ardent Puritans, fanatical and ridiculous in many of their other ideas, espousing experimental science and educational reforms. Joining them are moderate and even luke-warm Puritans as well as those not Puritan at all. The same mixture will be found among the people against experimental science and the educational reforms.

Puritan support of experimental science is seen not only in the education treatises. . . but also in the small group of experimenters at Oxford, composed in part of men who in 1645 had

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44. Jones, "Background of the Attack," p. 101.



helped to establish a loosely organized society in London for discussion of the great scientific discoveries of the Renaissance and for trying experiments themselves. . . . These men were in no way fanatical Puritans, but their allegiance was definitely to the Puritan side.<sup>45</sup>

Those we now claim as the authentic scientists among the experimenters were far more interested in their work than in the arguments that were raging about them. Some of these were Puritans; some were not. Most, like Robert Boyle, considered the father of chemistry, had a foot in each camp--the authentic scientists' and the Baconists'. But the group of fervent Puritans backing the scientific movement and the educational reforms wanted it all their way. As they grew stronger and more demanding, the humanists became alarmed. "With spirits nourished by classical literature and philosophy the conservatives of the period were greatly disturbed by the effort to judge humanistic studies by materialistic and utilitarian standards."<sup>46</sup> The arguments were still raging when the Puritans went out of power.

The Restoration was effected before any major change could be made in the university curriculum; the fanatics lost their power and became the object of hostility and derision. Scientific experiment would

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45. Jones, Ancients and Moderns, p. 122.

46. Jones, "Background of the Attack," p. 103.

probably have been completely destroyed had not Charles II, influenced by Cartesianism in France, salvaged the Royal Society. He also created a tradition of royal protection for and approval of the Royal Society that Anne, ultra-conservative though she was, did nothing to destroy.

The year Arbuthnot was born, Sprat's History of the Royal Society was published, and it started the whole ancient vs. modern controversy going again, with the added issue of science vs. religion. The History was so well written, so well received and discussed in society, Jones says, that it created the most violent episode in the controversy. The argument was still going strong thirty years later when Arbuthnot chose his scientific position, "uncompromisingly modern," as Beattie said, by publishing An Examination of Dr. Woodward's Account of the Deluge. Aitken establishes the date of this publication as December 1, 1697.

In 1695 Dr. William Woodward, Professor Physic at Gresham College, published an essay in which he described the cause of the Great Flood of Biblical times, and how the earth was reformed after the waters receded. Aitken summarized the theories as follows:

In this Essay [Woodward] asserted that the centre of the earth was originally a cavity, full of water . . . which burst forth at the

Flood; that the whole globe was thereupon dissolved; and that the present earth was formed by the promiscuous mass of sand, soil, shells &c. [sic] falling down again, the heaviest first, in accordance with the law of gravity. By this means he explained the existence of shells, bones, and leaves embodied in stones as well as in chalk or sand, and he maintained that the shells found in the lower strata were always heavier than those in the upper strata. (pp. 20-1.)

In his refutation of Dr. Woodward's theory, Arbuthnot makes his position very clear vis-a-vis moderns and moderns; that is, the moderns like himself who accepted that part of the Baconian scientific method which requires observation and measurement until sufficient evidence is accumulated upon which to base a conclusion, and moderns like Dr. Woodward who produced fantastic theories based on evidence that would not survive application of ordinary, elementary scientific reasoning. Arbuthnot did not agree with Bacon about the length of time it took to accumulate enough evidence to reach a conclusion; therefore, he was not adverse to scientist's reaching conclusions. He was adverse to what science fiction writers now call "extrapolation," fantasy in the name of science.

Although he pointed out every serious flaw of logic and science displayed in Dr. Woodward's Essay, Arbuthnot gave Woodward credit for useful contributions

Woodward made to science. Arbuthnot's satiric remarks were gentle and amusing, rather than abusive as, for example, in the following comment:

When Woodward[said that]"all Bodies whatsoever that were either upon the Earth, or that constituted the Mass of it; if not quite down to the Abyss, yet at least to the greatest depth we ever dig," Arbuthnot jauntily translates, "That is, if not to the Depth of two thousand Miles, at least of two hundred Feet."<sup>47</sup>

Throughout his life, however, he was adamant in his refusal to accept what he considered fantasy in the name of science.

This attitude, which Beattie calls "incorrigibly rational," is apparent in Arbuthnot's reactions to the work of another modern, Dr. Richard Bentley, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, who devoted himself to textual emendation and analysis of Greek and Roman writings during the bulk of his life, and at seventy, used the same techniques on Milton's Paradise Lost. The uproar every time Dr. Bentley published was considerable. Dr. Arbuthnot's early correspondence with Dr. Charlett at Oxford shows not only his lively interest in literary matters, but reveals what could possibly have been a subject of his early conversations with Swift and another reason for their rapport.

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47. Beattie, p. 197.

Shortly after the appearance of [his Examination of Dr. Woodward's Account] Arbuthnot wrote to Dr. Charlett, and alluded, among other things to the controversy that was then raging around Dr. Bentley. Wotton, in his Reflections on Ancient and Modern Learning, had replied to Sir William Temple, and in 1697 Bentley added a dissertation to the second edition of Wotton's book, showing the spuriousness of the Epistles of Phalaris. The Hon. Charles Boyle . . . replied to Bentley, and was in is turn answered by Bentley.<sup>48</sup>

In his letter to Charlett, dated January 24, 1696/7, Arbuthnot said:

Mr. Bentley says ther is three faults in the Latin of Canis in Praesepe. Mr. Charles Bernard [a famous surgeon] told me he bid him instance in one, he said esteri si quid sciant for sciunt. Mr. Bernard ask'd him if he was sure it was wrong. He said it was & bid him depend upon it. The next day Mr. Bernard sent him this verse in Horace si quid componere curem, but was sorry afterward he did not lett him publish his criticism. We expect impatiently some reply to his dissertation at the end of Wottons book.<sup>49</sup>

One reply was being written at Moor Park at the same time Arbuthnot wrote that letter in London.

Scholars of the eighteenth century are in accord in saying that the ancient vs. modern controversy was a dead issue by the time Temple, followed by Swift, made their contributions. The quality of interest expressed in Arbuthnot's letter shows that the issue was far from

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48. Aitken, p. 22.

49. Aitken, p. 23.

dead for a group of intellectually alive people. The group included, just from this one letter, the Master of an Oxford College and a prominent surgeon, as well as Arbuthnot. It is more than possible that many others of Arbuthnot's and Swift's friends did not consider the issue a dead one. Doctors Woodward, Bentley and others of their ilk were prime targets of both Arbuthnot's and Swift's satire for the remainder of their lives, according to evidence in their correspondence about Scriberlian projects, and published works such as The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, Gulliver's Travels, and the one section of The History of John Bull where modern doctors attempt to cure the first Mrs. Bull.

For a man schooled during the time when "the universities retained for the most part their humanistic character, and science had to make its way as best it could between them and a literature which was mostly classical and humanistic,"<sup>50</sup> Arbuthnot seems to have successfully chosen the best of both the scientific and literary worlds. His medical writings mirror the milieu that saw the emergence of modern science, and his satires pointed clearly to where the Baconian negation of talent and intellect would lead. Arbuthnot, in evaluating

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50. Jones, Ancients and Moderns, p. viii.

scientists, made a distinction between the type represented by the "experimenters" and "projectors" who had so little reasoning power that they "abused learning," and men like Newton, Halley, Sloane and Mead. It was, therefore, without strain that he could be uncompromisingly modern in science while scorning what we can call the pseudo-scientist, the pseudo-scholar, of his day, and fire volley after satiric volley at the likes of Martinus Scriblerus standing there with Bacon on his face.

It may be ironic, or it may just be more evidence of Arbuthnot's flexibility, that he could seriously take part in Royal Society activities, and just as seriously satirize them with Swift and the other Scriblerians. "Philosophical Toys" in the eighteenth century seem to have occupied the present day position of the mother-in-law jokes in their ability to evoke instant laughter, yet the interest excited by publication of the Philosophical Transactions was tremendous. Halley's paper predicting the return of the comet still bearing his name, and the calculations which he made to predict the exact time, are reasonably well-known today. In his day it created a sensation. Another of his papers is not so well remembered, but it, too, created a sensation.

There is little doubt that popular imagination was even more deeply stirred by another paper which Halley presented to the Royal

Society--on the subject of Noah and the Flood! This was one of many papers published in the period by important men of science in which an attempt was made to explain difficult passages in Scripture in such a way as to keep the reverence for the Bible, yet make it consistent with modern scientific thought.<sup>51</sup>

As a true son of his milieu, Arbuthnot took a hand in the latter activity by presenting a paper, later published in the Philosophical Transactions,<sup>52</sup> in which he attempted to prove by application of laws of probability to certain well-known statistics, that art, in God's hands, achieved the balance between numbers of male and females on earth, not chance.

Arbuthnot sets out the following proposition:

Among innumerable Footsteps of Divine Providence to be found in the Works of Nature, there is a very remarkable one to be observed in the exact Ballance that is maintained, between the Numbers of Men and Women; for it is by this means it is provided, that the Species may never fail, nor perish, since every Male may have its female, and of a proportionable Age. This Equality of Males and Females is not the Effect of Chance but Divine Providence, working for a Good End, which I thus demonstrate.<sup>53</sup>

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51. Marjorie Nicolson and Nora M. Mohler, "Scientific Background of Swift's Voyage to Laputa," Annals of Science, II (1937), 315.

52. "An Argument for Divine Providence, taken from the Constant Regularity Observed in the Births of both Sexes," Philosophical Transactions (London, 1712), XVII, 186-190.

53. "An Argument for Divine Providence," p. 186.



Arbuthnot's demonstration involved applying logarithms, mathematical formulae, and results obtained by throwing dice, to tables of statistics recording the numbers of males and females christened from 1629 to 1710. He concludes his argument by saying,

the external Accidents to which males are subject . . . do make a great havock of them, and that this loss exceeds far that of the other Sex, occasioned by Diseases incident to it, as Experience convinces us. To repair that Loss, provident Nature, by the Disposal of its Wise Creator, brings forth more males than Females; and that is almost a constant proportion.<sup>54</sup>

In his comment about this essay, Aitken says that Arbuthnot "deduced the corollary that polygamy is contrary to the law of Nature,"<sup>55</sup> and Beattie quotes the "Scholium" containing this comment,<sup>56</sup> but this concluding paragraph is not in the copy of the Philosophical Transactions available here. Beattie also says that it has been wrongly assumed that Arbuthnot's use of the statistics was the first, and, therefore, constituted invention of vital statistics. "The contribution of Arbuthnot did not consist in finding materials or in making practical inferences, but in bringing the technique of mathematical probability to the support of a statisti-

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54. "An Argument for Divine Providence," p. 188.

55. Aitken, p. 35.

56. Beattie, p. 340.

cal study well known, and in deriving therefrom what he considered a demonstrable belief in Providential design."<sup>57</sup>

A contrast to his proof of Divine Providence is Arbuthnot's position in the matter of smallpox inoculation. In the summer of 1722, a controversy about the value of this inoculation reached great proportions, with the usual declamations from pulpits, and publication of a round of attacks, defenses and counter-attacks in pamphlet form. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu had brought the revolutionary operation to England from Turkey, where she had observed its effectiveness. She had had her son inoculated in Turkey; her daughter, after their return to England. Following Lady Mary's actions, successful experiments were conducted, and the operation was successfully performed on two of Princess Caroline's daughters. As a result, "everybody who was anybody" had their children and servants inoculated. All operations were successful, except two. That was enough to cause an explosion.

The opposition came from two camps, clergy and medical men. In July Edmund Massey, a clergyman, preached against it as a defiance of God's will, and was refuted by an anonymous, witty pamphlet. Maitland [the physician who had accompanied the Wortley Montagus to Turkey]

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57. Beattie, p. 342.

then issued a second edition of his Account [of the operation and its effects] to defend himself; and Massey in turn published a vindication of his sermon. Some theological opposition continued, but it was confined to high-church clergy. . . . Among eminent medical men, it won the support of Arbuthnot, Sloane, James Jurin, and Richard Mead.<sup>58</sup>

Arbuthnot's two important medical essays were published near the end of his life.<sup>59</sup> Both show flashes of genius, or lucky guesses, because later medical research bore out his comments.

The bulk of the first work, An Essay Concerning the Nature of Aliments, is a compendium of eighteenth-century medical practice, including the comment that "feverish heat is modified by bloodletting." The value of the essay in mirroring Arbuthnot's milieu lies in the fact that within this compendium is a radical and visionary thought. While recommending various kinds of foods to keep a body healthy, Arbuthnot took into consideration what we now call "rate of metabolism." He claimed that the various effects of the same food on different people were due to a person's body structure, amount of activity, and the climate in which he lived. He was close to two centuries ahead of his colleagues in

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58. Halsband, pp. 110-111.

59. An Essay Concerning the Nature of Aliments and the Choice of Them (London, 1731); An Essay Concerning the Effects of Air on Human Bodies (London, 1733).

this. Although not the first to observe this, Arbuthnot and his twentieth-century colleagues are also in unison on another matter, all chanting a litany several hundred years old, that "the most common Cause [of fat] is too great a Quantity of Food, and too small a Quantity of Motion, in plain English, Gluttony, and Laziness."<sup>60</sup>

Two flashes of genius are buried in the Essay Concerning the Effects of Air, which "displays Arbuthnot's scientific observation at its best."<sup>61</sup> One idea pointed the way for further investigation of the cause of epidemics from animal, rather than chemical, origins, and in the other, without the knowledge that air is more than one compound, or of the process of osmosis, Arbuthnot reasoned that, somehow, air enters the blood vessels of the lungs in respiration.<sup>62</sup> Although we know now that it is oxygen alone that enters the blood vessels, this is brilliant reasoning.

When Arbuthnot and Swift met at Windsor in 1711, it was the meeting of two brilliant men with great intellectual ability and similar viewpoints. They had much to talk about in politics, literature and science.

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60. An Essay Concerning the Nature of Aliments, p. 210.

61. Beattie, p. 367.

62. An Essay Concerning the Effects of Air, p. 102.

In Journal to Stella, Swift reports a visit on December 13, 1710, to Gresham College and other institutions nearby, such as Bedlam. He said he ended the evening at a puppet show. "Puppet-shows, lunatic asylums, colleges for the advancement of research--they were all one to the satirists of that generation."<sup>63</sup> Between them, Swift and Arbuthnot represented all that was brilliant and contradictory in their milieu--the physician and the parson producing political, scientific, and religious satire that made them literary immortals.

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63. Nicolson and Mohler, p. 320.

## CHAPTER II

### THE HISTORY OF JOHN BULL

#### Part 1--Background

When Swift wrote Stella on March 10, 1712, "You must buy a small two penny pamphlet called, Law is a Bottomless Pit. 'Tis very prettily written, and there will be a Second Part,"<sup>64</sup> he was calling her attention to the first of five pamphlets that have since been grouped together as The History of John Bull, and considered one of the outstanding political satires in the literary canon.

The pamphlets were published from the beginning of March to the end of July in the following order:

Law is a Bottomless-Pit. Exemplify'd in the Case of The Lord Strutt, John Bull, Nicholas Frog, and Lewis Baboon. Who spent all they had in a Law-suit. Printed from a Manuscript found in the cabinet of the famous Sir Humphry Polesworth. March 6.

John Bull In His Senses: Being the Second Part of Law is a Bottomless-Pit. Printed from a manuscript found in the Cabinet of the famous Sir Humphry Polesworth. March 18.

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64. The Journal to Stella, A.D. 1710-1713 in Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, ed. Temple Scott (London, 1913), II, 352.

John Bull Still In His Senses: Being the Third Part of Law is a Bottomless-Pit. Printed from a Manuscript found in the Cabinet of the famous Sir Humphry Polesworth: And Publish'd (as well as the two former Parts) by the Author of the New Atalantis. April 17.

An Appendix to John Bull Still In His Senses: or, Law is a Bottomless-Pit. Printed from a Manuscript found in the Cabinet of the famous Sir Humphry Polesworth: And Publish'd (as well as the three former Parts) by the Author of the New Atalantis. May 9.

Lewis Baboon Turned Honest, and John Bull Politician. Being The Fourth Part of Law is a Bottomless-Pit. Printed from a Manuscript found in the Cabinet of the famous Sir Humphre Polesworth: And Publish'd (as well as the Three former Parts and Appendix) by the Author of the New Atlantis. July 31.

The first pamphlet went into seven editions-- six in London, one in Edinburgh--and the others were reprinted three to five times each, all in the face of stiff competition. Morgan reports the preservation of 748 pamphlets published in 1712,<sup>65</sup> but there probably were many more. Although no specific figures exist for the number printed in each edition, the number of editions shows the immediate popularity of the pamphlets. "Pamphlets which caught the popular fancy sold like wildfire. At least one hundred thousand copies were sold of Defoe's Trueborn Englishman at the beginning of the century. More than ten thousand copies of Swift's

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65. Morgan, II, 273.

Conduct of the Allies (1711) were sold in a single month."<sup>66</sup>

The History of John Bull closely followed publication of Conduct of the Allies and, according to general scholarly consensus, was written primarily to reinforce it. John Bull's worth to the Tory government is indicated by the fact that, following the quick popularity of the first, the other four were written and published as rapidly as possible. As mentioned in Chapter I, they are credited with helping end the war.

In 1727 the pamphlets reappeared as a whole in Pope's and Swift's Miscellanies under the title, "Law is a Bottomless Pit, or The History of John Bull."<sup>67</sup> Since then all five pamphlets have been known as The History of John Bull. An enduring interest in this work in spite of Arbuthnot's relative obscurity today is evident by the number of times this work has been reprinted in this century. Aitken included all five pamphlets in Later Stuart Tracts in 1903,<sup>68</sup> as did Colville in A Miscellany of the Wits in 1920. The most recent publication has been of the first pamphlet in

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66. Morgan, II, iv.

67. (London, 1727), II, vii + 9-157.

68. Westminster.



Jeffrey Hart's volume, Political Writers of Eighteenth-Century England, published in 1964.<sup>69</sup>

The custom of anonymous and pseudonymous publication in the early eighteenth century, the facts that John Arbuthnot was wholly unknown as a literary man, that the argument reinforced Swift's Conduct of the Allies, that there were many similarities to Swift's style of writing in the pamphlets, that it was well known that Swift was doing that kind of writing for the Tory government--all lead to a widely held notion that the pamphlets were written by Swift. Although neither man publicly acknowledged authorship during his lifetime, Arbuthnot's authorship must have been an open secret among those close to them and among intimates of knowledgeable Tory leaders and their associates. Later, what had been the sub-rosa fact of Arbuthnot's authorship was brought into the open with publication of Swift's Journal to Stella, a work never meant for publication. This attribution was further reinforced by Pope's statement to Spence that "Dr. Arbuthnot was the sole writer of John Bull. . . ."70

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69. Pp. 135-163.

70. Anecdotes, Observations, and Characters, of Books and Men. Collected from the Conversation of Mr. Pope, and other Eminent Persons of his Time (London, 1820), p. 145.

With evidence of this kind available, Arbuthnot's authorship of The History of John Bull was never seriously challenged until 1925 when Herman Teerink published The History of John Bull for the first time faithfully re-issued from the original pamphlets, 1712, together with an investigation into its composition, publication and authorship in Amsterdam.

In this book Teerink establishes the exact days on which each pamphlet was published and offers proof from both external and internal sources that the pamphlets had, after all, been written by Swift.

To establish the exact day on which each pamphlet was published, Teerink uses a correlation of dates from entries in the Journal to Stella and the dating of the issues of The Examiner. The dates of the Journal entries are clear-cut, according to Teerink, but "the peculiar manner of dating of the Examiners (e.g. From Thursday May 8, to Thursday May 15, 1712) first makes it necessary for us to settle the question which of the Thursdays mentioned was the date of their appearance, the first or the second." (p. 6.) He establishes the second Thursday as the proper one in the following manner:

Swift's words in the Journal to Stella on June 7, 1711: ".....and methinks in this day's Examiner the author talks doubtfully, as if he

would write no more", and the fact that this was in Numb. 45: From Thursday May 31, to Thursday June 7, 1711, prove it to be the second. This is confirmed by a reference, in the Examiner, vol. II, Numb. 24, From Thursday May 8, to Thursday May 14, 1712, to the "Appendix"[i.e. pamphlet IV], which is spoken of as "lately Publish'd". And as, according to the Journal to Stella, May 10, 1712, this "Appendix" was published on May 9, the day of issue of the Examiner, vol. II, Numb. 24 must have been May 15, not May 8. . . . We can now fix the exact dates of the pamphlets as follows: Pamphlet I came out on March 6, as is evident from the following advertisement in the Examiner, vol. II, Numb. 14, (issued March 6): "This day is Publish'd, Law is a Bottomless Pit, etc.". (p. 6.)

Teerink's pinpointing of the exact day of publication of each of the five pamphlets has been accepted by scholars as accurate and reliable and these dates are the ones used in the opening page of this chapter.

For external evidence to support his attribution entirely to Swift, Teerink supplies comments from the following people who questioned the authenticity of Swift's statements to Stella and Pope's statement to Spence, even though two of the three offered qualified statements.

1. John Booth, who objected to Sir Walter Scott's attribution of the work to Arbuthnot. (p. 11.)

2. An unnamed book reviewer in Quarterly Review for April, 1893, who objected to Aitken's attribution of the whole History to Arbuthnot, but who said that

Arbuthnot was responsible for the action, plot, and connected story. (pp. 12-15.)

3. K. N. Colville, who, in the introduction to A Miscellany of the Wits, laid emphasis on group effort in the ideas for John Bull, but agreed that the attribution to Arbuthnot was reasonably certain. (p. 16.)

Colville is an even weaker support than Teerink admits. On page xxv of this introduction, Colville says,

Two of the undoubted production of these associates [the Scriblerians] are: The Memoirs of Scriblerus and The History of John Bull. Both were written, it is generally agreed, by Arbuthnot, but as the result of an interchange of wit with his fellow club-members, and entire passages may very well have been contributed by them.

Then, after mentioning the entries in the Journal to Stella, particularly the one in which Swift says, "The pamphlet Political Lying is written by Dr. Arbuthnot, the author of John Bull," and without referring again to his statement that entire passages may very well have been contributed by other Scriblerians, Colville concludes his introduction by saying, page xxviii, "Furthermore, Pope, according to Spence, declared that 'Dr. Arbuthnot was the sole writer,' and as internal evidence agrees therewith, the ascription may be taken as tolerably certain."

Other external evidence that Teerink supplies includes a personal interpretation of the Journal to

Stella entries about that History and two other pamphlets that, although Teerink does not use these words, implies that Swift wrote these entries to manipulate Stella's answers for political purposes. Swift wanted information about reaction to his pamphlets in Dublin without revealing his real purpose to Stella. (pp. 53-63).

Teerink also says that Swift praised only his own work; therefore, the praise he bestowed upon the History is evidence that he wrote it. (pp. 57-58.)

Additional evidence to support Teerink's attribution is the group method with which Swift and the Tory ministers worked out plans for political pamphlets, Arbuthnot's laziness, and lack of talent. Teerink does not say specifically that Arbuthnot lacked talent to do the writing, but that the reason he did not do it was "due to a certain deficiency on his part." (p. 67.) Teerink said he did not know what Arbuthnot's deficiency was, but that "Arbuthnot himself must have been aware of this drawback." (p. 68.)

Teerink's internal evidence consists of words and parallel expressions found in Swift's works that also appear in the John Bull pamphlets. (pp. 82-129).

In conclusion, Teerink says,

The evidence in Swift's favour. . . is so overwhelming in its multiplicity, that in our opinion it fully entitles us to the conclusion that

no other person than Swift can have written the work, and it would be absurd to persist in calling Arbuthnot the author, (p. 130.)

and "without ignoring Arbuthnot's share, it is more in accordance with custom and truth to call Swift henceforth the author of the History of John Bull." (p. 131.)

This stand was received with mixed reactions. A. W. Secord<sup>71</sup> and Edith J. Morely<sup>72</sup> approved in short reviews of Teerink's book, while Emile Pons,<sup>73</sup> Thomas F. Mayo,<sup>74</sup> and Lester Beattie<sup>75</sup> condemn the attribution.

Mayo refutes Teerink's external evidence by quoting letters of two of Swift's and Arbuthnot's contemporaries, George Berkeley and Peter Wentworth. Berkeley tells Sir John Percival in April 16, 1713, that Arbuthnot is the author of John Bull,<sup>76</sup> and Wentworth implies it in a letter to his brother dated August 4, 1712. J. J. Cartwright, editor of The Wentworth Papers,

71. "Reviews of Books: Minor Notices," The American Historical Review, XXXII (January, 1927), 357.

72. "The Eighteenth Century," The Year's Work in English Studies, VI (1925), 220-221.

73. Revue Anglo-Americaine, IV (April, 1927), 254.

74. "The Authorship of The History of John Bull," PMLA, XLV (March, 1930), 274-82.

75. Pp. 36-58.

76. P. 275.

untangled the implication in Dr. Arbuthnot's favor.<sup>77</sup> These de facto statements, Mayo says, as well as "the unanimous acceptance of Arbuthnot's authorship by the whole succession of critics and editors from 1778 to 1920" place the attribution with Arbuthnot.<sup>78</sup>

Both Mayo and Beattie protest Teerink's interpretation of the Journal to Stella entries, saying the evidence is overwhelming in favor of honesty, not artifice nor cunning. "Substantial ground for refusing such a wrenched reading is discoverable in the pages of the Journal itself. Despite unevenness, it is an amazingly frank, intimate, and reliable document. On numerous subjects, often with injunctions of secrecy, Swift opened his heart. . . ." <sup>79</sup>

As for the internal evidence, both Mayo and Beattie say that Teerink's parallels are not sufficient to support the claim for Swift's authorship:

Though many of the parallels collected by Dr. Teerink are striking, and though their cumulative effect is insidiously impressive, it is believed that nothing has been brought forward which cannot be explained as simply a turn of expression characteristic of the time, or as

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77. Pp. 276-77.

78. P. 275.

79. Beattie, p. 45.

the result of the close intimacy of Arbuthnot and Swift.<sup>80</sup>

The so-called parallels of expression are fifty-nine in number. The weakness of this evidence is immediately manifest: thirty-six of the expressions occur only once each in John Bull, and twelve occur only twice. Similarly, twenty occur only once each in the works of Swift here concerned, and ten occur only twice. In other words, a mere handful appear in John Bull with any remarkable emphasis; and half the expressions Swift himself used sparingly. . . . That these phrases were commonplace need not be accepted on faith; they turn up again and again in The Spectator, or in the Review, or in miscellaneous tracts and letters, usually in all three.<sup>81</sup>

Although Mayo and Beattie address their considerable efforts to a point-by-point (word-for-word in the matter of parallel style) refutation of Teerink's evidence, there is one important matter that neither deals with: Teerink's literal approach to irony and other evidence of humor. His evaluation of lines in which ironic intent has been taken for granted for the past 200 years indicates a considerable "deficiency" of his own--inability to understand humor. Teerink accepts the four lines Swift addressed to Arbuthnot in Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift as a serious statement. He accepts a denigrating statement Arbuthnot made about himself in a

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80. Mayo, p. 282.

81. Beattie, pp. 37-38.



letter to Swift as having a serious, straight-forward, non-ironic meaning, when even a casual reading of Swift's and Arbuthnot's correspondence would dispell that idea. They constantly, to use the vernacular, kidded each other ironically; they used sarcasm humorously; they made jokes for each other, and about each other. It could only be Teerink's literal reading of the material that prevented his understanding the irony, straight-forward and inverse, that runs consistently through these letters.

Since Teerink uses a phrase taken from one of Swift's letters to Arbuthnot as the title of one of his chapters--Chapter III: "The Triumvirate of Honest Counsellors," from a letter dated July 3, 1714, "I find the Triumvirate of honest Councillors is at an end"<sup>82</sup>--we must assume that he read the whole letter. In the latter part, did Teerink take as serious Swift's statement that country gossip was better than national politics? That his conversations with the local farmers about the "want of Rain, dearness of Hay, [that the] Summer barley is quite dried up, and We cannot get a Bitt of good Butter for Love or Money," showed either his serious interest in farming or his appreciation of farmers' conversation?

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82. Swift, Correspondence, II, 46.

Or that his concluding comment on the matter, "I could tell you more of the State of our Affairs, but doubt your Tast is not refined enough for it," was Swift's real evaluation of Arbuthnot's refinement of taste? Based on the way Teerink interpreted the Swift-Arbuthnot material that he used in his book, his answer probably would be yes to each of the foregoing questions--an answer that I cannot accept. This examination of Teerink's approach to Arbuthnot's and Swift's relationship leads only to the conclusion that Teerink's decision about the authorship of John Bull is fallacious because of his own inability to comprehend humor and irony.

Since John Bull has descended to this day as the popular embodiment of British national character, there has been some speculation about the origin of the name itself. "Arbuthnot appears to have been the first to apply the name John Bull to the English people, and he drew the character, which has ever since been accepted as a type, of this honest, plain-dealing fellow, choleric, bold, and of a very inconstant temper."<sup>83</sup> Beattie lists a number of actual people named Bull with whom attempts have been made to connect the fictitious name. They include the following:

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83. Aitken, p. 45.

1. John Bull, a celebrated musician who died in 1642.
2. John Bull, an Elizabethan engraver at the London mint.
3. Dr. George Bull, Bishop of St. David's, who died in 1710.
4. Samuel Bull, an engraver at the royal mint during Queen Anne's reign with whom Arbuthnot might have been connected,

but Beattie discards the idea of a family name as the source because of the name's wide use.<sup>84</sup>

A German scholar suggested a source close to Arbuthnot during the time the pamphlets were written and at the center of the political situation--Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke.<sup>85</sup> The eighteenth-century pronunciation of Bolingbroke (Bullin'broke), the facts that Viscount Bolingbroke was known to his friends as "Bull," that the pamphlets were a defense of the political policy espoused by Bolingbroke, and that Bolingbroke himself does not have a part in the pamphlets are offered to support this theory:

Henry St. John had become the dominant figure in the Commons. Friend and foe testify to the splendour of his rhetorical powers, the fame of which extended far into the eighteenth century. Peers were created in December 1711 to overcome a hostile majority in the Lords, and it might have been expected that he would be promoted. . . . There was a hitch, for the Queen did not

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84. Beattie, pp. 104-5.

85. Wolfgang Michael, "Who is John Bull?" trans. Leonard and Helen Hyman, Contemporary Review, CXLIV (September, 1933), 314-19.

appear anxious to give him higher rank than Viscount, and his name was not included in the batch, but was given the greater honour of special selection by itself, though St. John himself would have preferred to remain as he was rather than accept the lower rank. His elevation was announced on July 7th, 1712.

Now Arbuthnot's Tracts appeared in the middle of the session when St. John's intimate friends fully expected that he was about to be raised to the peerage as Lord Bolingbroke, and it is Bullin(g)broke or Bullinbroke that he is referred to. It is not until after the actual creation is announced that Swift uses the more ordinary spelling, It may, then, be confidently assumed that the name was frequently mentioned by the friends, and with the English habit of drastic abbreviation of long proper names in colloquial speech it is not difficult to see how St. John Bullingbrook may have become John Bull. At any rate, contemporaries, who knew the facts, could hardly have failed to recognise the play on names. . . . The History of John Bull is indeed a defence of Bolingbroke's policy. It is not that Arbuthnot is giving a portrait of Bolingbroke in the leading figure, nor is it that John Bull bore a physical resemblance to the famous Minister of State. On the contrary, the latter was a man of refinement and education who knew his Plato and his Machiavelli. What the author wishes to convey is that the genuine national policy might be symbolised by the name of Bolingbroke.

Bolinbroke does not appear in the satire. Would it not be natural to expect to find his figure also under some sort of disguise amongst the circle of John Bull? Beside Marlborough, Oxford and Nottingham, the true author of the Peace of Utrecht might well claim a prominent place. This he did not obtain, however, In other words, the principal actor in the great historical scene, on which the satire is based, is not represented--or rather John Bull himself is Bolingbroke.<sup>86</sup>

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86. Michael, pp. 318-19.

Michael points out that, after the appearance of the History, other writers referred to Bolingbroke as John Bull. Among them was Defoe in 1714, who, in The History of the White Staff, referred to Bolingbroke throughout as "Lord John Bull." Other references include numerous tracts and broadsides published after 1712. One broadside, by John Dunton, was entitled Ox and Bull, "an obvious play on the names of Oxford and Bolingbroke."<sup>87</sup>

Beattie rejects Michael's theory for the reasons that the use of the name John Bull for Bolingbroke after publication of the pamphlets gave no information as to the source of the name, and that

Arbuthnot may have had positive reason for excluding Bolingbroke from the scene--such as public suspicion of his correspondence with the Jacobites, a phase of the peace question avoided to the letter in all the pamphlets; or the embarrassing possibility of mirroring the grave conflict within the ministry.<sup>88</sup>

Considering Arbuthnot's commitment to the Tory cause, that he worked harder to help bring about peace than for any other cause about which he took a stand during his lifetime, plus Bolingbroke's relation to Arbuthnot as both friend and patient, the latter reason has a great deal of validity. But the first is either illogical or naive. A nickname that can be accurately

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87. Michael, p. 318.

88. Beattie, p. 107.

identified with a well-known personage that strikes the popular fancy will be picked up and used, either maliciously or affectionately, as long as that person is in the public eye, and many times long after. One eighteenth-century example is that of Gay's use of Walpole's nickname, "Bluff Bob," in The Beggar's Opera that helped glue it to the man for the rest of his life. History and contemporary life are full of such examples. Although a recognizable pattern of public reaction is not, after all, proof of the validity of a statement about a literary source, it could possibly come under the heading of a where-there's-smoke,-there's-fire idea. Viewed from this angle, Beattie's objection would seem more like support of Michael's theory than condemnation.

But Beattie has two theories of his own to put forward. He says that the source for the animal names chosen for France (Lewis Baboon), Holland (Nicholas Frog), and England (John Bull), was the extraordinary vogue for Aesop's fables that had started in England in the 1690's and continued well into the eighteenth century. The fables were re-written for contemporary use, with the allegories becoming more and more political. He says that political allegory in animal fables had a long tradition, connecting certain animals with certain countries. England had, in various fables, been represented

as a mastiff, a lion, a unicorn and an eagle; France, a cock and a tiger; Holland, a frog, an eagle, a hen, and a hog, but mainly a frog. (pp. 94-100.)

Beattie found reinforcement for Bull to represent England in what he called "an extraordinary legend [that] came into print [early in 1712] connecting the bull with assertive English patriotism, so opportunely that the idea of its crystallizing action in contact with hints from the fables, while beyond proof, is well-nigh irresistible." (p. 109.)

This "extraordinary legend" concerned Sir Richard Bulstrode who died in 1711. A volume of his letters was published in January, 1712, containing a prefatory account of his long family history, pre-dating William the Conqueror by several hundred years. The episode that fascinated Beattie was the one in which the head of the family, then named Shobbington, defied William's attempt to confiscate his property by demolishing a large Norman camp, killing and/or putting to flight large numbers of Norman soldiers. Shobbington and his men accomplished this feat, not mounted on horses, but on bulls. Later, summoned before William's court, Shobbington approached the royal presence still astride his faithful bull. Shobbington and William agreed that Shobbington could keep his lands provided he would be

faithful to William, and Shobbington triumphantly rode his bull home. The family thereafter was known as Bulstrode and had a bull's head in their crest. (pp. 110-111.) Beattie thinks Arbuthnot was acquainted with Sir Richard's son, Whitelock, a lawyer and minor functionary in the court at that time, whose sympathies were much the same as Arbuthnot's, although Beattie admits there is no record of such an acquaintanceship. (pp. 111-12.)

Because Arbuthnot and his pamphlets have received so little critical attention, there has been no further investigation nor discussion in the critical literature of other possible sources of the name by which Englishmen are known throughout the world today. From the information gathered to date, and from as much insight as one can get into John Arbuthnot's personality and character with the material available, I would agree with Michael. Beattie himself said that Arbuthnot's "brilliance was somewhat dependent upon a casual turn of mind, a wayward delight in the chance offering of the moment." (p. 4.) Sherburn, Kerby-Miller, Aitken, and others who have touched on Arbuthnot in relation to the Scriblerus Club, or Pope, Swift, Gay, et al., individually, mention his congeniality and close rapport with the major Tory ministers, as well as the literary great. I noted Arbuthnot's talent for friendship, and that his ambiguous



position on the fringe of a prominent family, followed by his preferment by royalty made him into something of a snob. His correspondence reveals his ability to be stimulated by the immediate situation, or the person immediately engaging his attention; his limited literary output, how short-lived each stimulation was. To all of these intangibles can be added another fact--the pamphlets were written while the Congress of Utrecht was in session to create support for the peace treaty. And Henry St. John, awaiting elevation to a kinsman's title, Lord "Bullenbrook," was principal negotiator. For Arbuthnot to have reached so far out of his circle as the Bulstrode family as a source for the name of John Bull is not only farfetched and out of character, but highly improbable. The fate of Tory government goals rested on "Bullenbrook" who was, to Arbuthnot, immediate, intimate, and, above all, central to the whole political plan. According to Aitken, proposals recommended in The History of John Bull "were ultimately embodied in the Treaty of Utrecht." (p. 45.) With all these considerations, I fail to see how the Bulstrode family, however fascinating the latter's legend might be, figured in this at all.

Other elements that mitigate against Beattie's conclusions are the exigencies of practical political

journalism. First of all, the pamphlets had to be written fast to have an effect in a rapidly changing political situation. Under such necessity, a writer grasps material that comes immediately, easily and quickly, to mind. Beattie even says, "Arbuthnot's habit was clearly that of working up remembered hints as they occurred to him in time of need, and intermingling his own devices, not that of transferring characters or situations consciously from a carefully scrutinized page." (p. 87.)

Another necessity of practical political journalism is that the symbols had to represent ideas or people whose identities were common knowledge. The "good guys" and the "bad guys" had to be named immediately by the reader, with a sense of triumph at pulling away a thin disguise, for the satire to be successful. The continued use of Bull for Bolingbroke by writers of less subtlety proves Arbuthnot's success in providing a disguise just thin enough for its purpose.

Third, a party writer, particularly one who believes in his party, and is working for its future in power, has to write forcefully and persuasively for present aims; subtly and cleverly to lay the groundwork for future possibilities. If the writer is not a paid hack, and is in an influential position, as he happened to be in this case, he might steer his political cargo

in a direction favored either by a splinter group within the leaders with whom the writer identifies himself, or in a direction favorable to one man's ambitions with whom the writer is in agreement. If the latter is what happened, then Arbuthnot accomplished a remarkably suave and sophisticated political maneuver under great pressure. Beattie's objection to Bolingbroke as the basis for the name because the ministers were split, or that Bolingbroke himself was vulnerable to attack, is no longer viable when viewed from this standpoint. In the pamphlets, Arbuthnot aimed at ending the war immediately. In the proper manner, he presented the picture of a united Tory party to the public. For the future, he prepared the way for Bolingbroke to become head of the Tory government by using his nickname and, as Michael said, making him the symbol of national policy. Bolingbroke's vulnerability to personal attack could be safely ignored under these circumstances--in fact, it had better be ignored. When he was in power, it could be explained away. Bolingbroke's continued work in the government after 1712, his well-known ambitions, his break with Oxford and the intrigue resulting from that, his statement after Queen Anne's death that, had she lived fourteen more days, he would have become head of the Tory government, all support this possibility.

Since Arbuthnot and Swift were in agreement politically, Swift's comment to Stella on February 23, 1711/12, might be extended to include Arbuthnot. Swift said,

I dined with the Secretary today, who is much out of order with a cold, and feverish; yet he went to the cabinet council tonight at six, against my will. The Secretary is much the greatest commoner in England, and turns the whole Parliament, who can do nothing without him; and if he lives and has his health, will, I believe, be one day at the head of affairs. I have told him sometimes, that, if I were a dozen years younger, I would cultivate his favour, and trust my fortune with his.<sup>89</sup>

If Arbuthnot's medical skill could have prolonged the Queen's life, then The History of John Bull would, indeed, have been complete, and completely successful.

### Part 2--Analysis

As literature, The History of John Bull can be examined from the standpoints of satire and prose fiction. But why should a piece of practical political journalism, even in as specialized a genre as satire, be viewed as literature when it appeared and disappeared in less than six months? True, many of its kind did not last six weeks, or even six days, but what makes one of a product as short-lived as pieces written for a

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89. Swift, Prose Works, II, 342.

political purpose--even when it accomplishes its purpose  
--survive 250 years?

These are particularly pertinent questions after Beattie identifies the many sources current from 1705 onward from which Arbuthnot picked up the idea of a lawsuit to symbolize war. Among them, Beattie considers two of Defoe's works as primary sources. In 1709, "the equivalence of litigation and war was stated plainly by Defoe in one of his satirical papers against 'our Complainers.'" (p. 78.) In the Review for December 11, 1711, which Beattie says Arbuthnot could hardly have escaped seeing, Defoe provides his readers with the exact comparison--a lawsuit with war, a treaty with attempts to settle the suit. (p. 81.) Beattie goes even further and assigns other debts of Arbuthnot to Defoe.

The issue of [the Review] of January 12 [1712] gloomily describes the state of Cornhill, Lombard Street, Cheapside, and Fleet Street, as the war has reduced the number of shops and depressed those which are still able to do business. The economic effects of the struggle (the basis of John Bull's embarrassment) are stressed particularly in the issue of February 9. (p. 82.)

In other words, these pamphlets were among many using the same symbolism, the same problems, and even suggestions of the same characters. Why, then, did The History of John Bull survive? The following comment, which must be the collective view of current scholarship

because of the place where this statement is to be found, will supply a part of the answer:

[The History of John Bull] might be extremely boring, but it is told so slyly, with such zest, and with so much of the liveliness of a novel in its descriptions and conversations, that we are actually eager to know what will happen next, even with 250 years dividing us from the actualities it represents.<sup>90</sup>

Another way to find answers to these questions is to hold John Bull against criteria established for satire, and reach some judgments about its effectiveness.

In recent years the custom of analyzing a satirical work only by the biographical or historical method, or a combination of both, has given way before acceptance of the idea that the satire is a fictional work in its own right, and deserves consideration independently of its writer and its times. About the historical and biographical methods, Alvin Kernan comments:

Our attention is thus directed away from the satiric work itself and toward some second object, the personality of the author or the contemporary social scene. In this way satire is denied the independence of artistic status and made a biographical and historical document, while the criticism of satire degenerates into discussion of an author's moral character and the economic and social conditions of his time.<sup>91</sup>

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90. Bonamy Dobree, English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century 1700-1740, Vol. VII of The Oxford History of English Literature, eds. F. P. Wilson and Bonamy Dobree (London, 1959), p. 97.

91. The Cankered Muse (New Haven, 1959), p. 1.

He declares that satire is a separate art form, and requires an adequate set of terms by which to analyze it. For this purpose, he establishes the following nomenclature:

Using the terms of drama, the picture of society drawn by the satirist becomes the "scene," and the voice we "hear" becomes the satiric "hero." Since the chief character of satire always lacks so signally the qualities which we associate with heroism, it will be better to refer to him simply as the "satirist," . . . whether named, identified as "I," or the anonymous voice that tells the tale in a satiric work. The author will be designated by other terms. The adoption of two dramatic terms, scene and satirist, entails the use of a third, "plot," for whenever we have characters in a setting there is always movement, or attempted movement, in some direction.<sup>92</sup>

Maynard Mack said,

Inquiries into biographical and historical origins, or into effects on audiences and readers, can and should be supplemented, we are beginning to insist, by a third kind of inquiry treating the work with some strictness as a rhetorical construction: as a "thing made," which, though it reaches backward to an author and forward to an audience, has its artistic identity in between--in the realm of artifice and artifact.<sup>93</sup>

Dr. Mack establishes that the writer and his persona--Kernan's "satirist"--are separate and the latter an invention of the writer:

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92. Kernan, p. 6.

93. "The Muse of Satire" in Studies in the Literature of the Augustan Age, ed. Richard C. Boys (Ann Arbor, 1952), p. 221.

Obviously, the two agents to be considered in the fictive situation are the person speaking and the person addressed. . . . It is with the satiric speaker that the difficulty has come. We may call this speaker Pope [in "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot"] if we wish, but only if we remember that he always reveals himself as a character in a drama, not as a man confiding in us. The distinction is apparent if we think of Wordsworth's use of the word young in a famous passage from "The Prelude" about the early days of the French Revolution: "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, And to be young was very heaven"--and then compare it with Pope's remark to a friend with whom he professes to be conversing in the first dialogue of the "Epilogue to the Satires": "Dear Sir, forgive the Prejudice of Youth." Wordsworth's young is determined by something outside the poem, some thing true (in the years to which the poet refers) of himself in real life. But in real life, when Pope wrote his dialogue, he was already fifty; his youth is true only of the satiric speaker of the poem, who was an assumed identity, a persona.<sup>94</sup>

Acceptance of Dr. Mack's use of the word, "persona," as the voice of the narrator, or the invented character telling the fiction, is demonstrated by the frequency of its use by people writing about satire and its authors in the fourteen years since publication of his essay.

For Mack's "artifice," and Kernan's "scene and plot," Rosenheim uses the phrase, "a manifest fiction," as part of his definition of satire, and explains satire's variety of forms:



As the central, indispensable element in the satirist's "method," the satiric fiction can assume an infinite number of forms. It may appear as a slight but patent exaggeration, a brisk derisive metaphor, a manifest sarcasm--constituting, it may well be, the kind of "wit" which for most of us marks the satiric "touches" imbedded in writing whose general nature is not satiric at all. At the opposite extreme, the term "fiction" applies equally well to book-length narrative structures which are fictional in every detail.<sup>95</sup>

For the purpose of this section, I shall concentrate on the "artifice," the "plot," "the manifest fiction," but use the word "story" because of its simple, obvious meaning. Because "satirist" has been identified with the author of satires for too many centuries for Kernan's usage to create any result other than confusion, I shall adopt Dr. Mack's word, "persona," until I establish another for this particular work.

The story of Arbuthnot's History of John Bull is a reasonably connected one. I say "reasonably connected" because Beattie calls it a patchwork, uneven, wandering and disjointed. It is reasonably connected by the lawsuit, which Arbuthnot never allows to vanish from the reader's sight, and by the consistency of the persona and four main characters, Bull, Frog, Baboon and Hocus. Beattie says, "The ultimate unity of the structurally incoherent satire resides in its central figure. John

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95. Swift and the Satirist's Art (Chicago, 1963), p. 18.

Bull gives the other characters ample opportunity to reveal their frailties and their talents; but he dominates the entire scheme of things." (p. 119.) Beattie does not consider any of the other characters in relation to the unity of the work, nor does he consider the persona, in the current definition, at all. The latter is understandable because Beattie wrote his book before it became academically acceptable to separate the satirist from his work. In Beattie's entire discussion of John Bull, Arbuthnot and the unnamed narrator are one.

Beattie assumes that the narrator's comments about politics, legal and religious thought, concern for business, domestic and foreign policy, and all the actions of the story regarding these matters that the narrator points out to the reader are all revelations of Arbuthnot's personal philosophies and his personal judgments on many governmental actions. From this viewpoint within the traditional biographical-historical analysis, without the concept of the persona as an invented character, Beattie finds so many contradictions that it is almost impossible not to view John Bull as a schizoid production. Beattie says, "It is in fact the middle class rather than the influential guiding spirits of the nation, whether in 1712, or now, that John Bull stands for," (pp. 118-19) yet he earlier placed Arbuthnot

politically in support of the aristocratic element as the influential guiding spirits of the nation. Beattie also says that

Arbuthnot's chief acquaintances were the sophisticated men of the time, the rulers of both parties, men like Bolingbroke, Shrewsbury, Somers, Addison; and there were Sloane, Newton, Congreve, Berkeley, Chesterfield, Mead in relations other than political. Yet he shrewdly selected a figure calculated to appeal to the Whigs, the rank and file of them, whose support for the peace was to be won, the money-earning interest rather than the landed gentry. (p. 119.)

Beattie, indeed, was in a quandary trying to reconcile his analysis with the two ideas he put forth--that the narrator is actually the author, yet Arbuthnot also spoke through the character, Bull, calculated to appeal to the rank and file of the Whigs--because a reading of the pamphlets shows that the persona and John Bull were basically in agreement on the issues involved in the satire. Obviously, Beattie's only recourse had to be that the work was "structurally incoherent." We have, on one hand, the author who spent his life making sure he was accepted as a "gentleman" in the eighteenth-century sense even without lands or title to defend; on the other, as narrator, in sympathy with the major character, who has all the characteristics of the Whig merchants. The persona is consistently concerned about commerce and how the lawsuit is ruining it. He continuously pushes

the point home that the business had to be put back on a paying basis. This is particularly significant during those times when John himself loses sight of his business, and what is happening to it. Although Arbuthnot, the staunch Tory, is not against the idea of a sound nation in which commerce exists in a healthy condition, the sympathies exhibited and viewpoints expressed in the pamphlets are primarily those of a Whig.

The persona as a fictional character is particularly important to this story. He sets the tone and mood. He directs the reader's attention. He posts himself stage front, so to speak, and, with many a wink, nod, and knowing shake of the head, points out the fallacies of poor, pitiful humanity lacking the necessary common sense to guide their affairs aright. When the author shifts the spotlight from the persona to the principal characters as they reveal themselves in action and dramatic dialogue, the reader is still conscious of the persona's attitude, can still hear his amused drawl, "Pity, isn't it?" from his dark corner.

The shift from narrative to dramatic dialogue is, to Beattie, one of the flaws in the work's structure. He says the dramatic dialogue "usurped the main office, and pushed the story-teller, with his power of judicial comment, entirely off the page." (p. 59.) This particular

quotation refers to an episode in the original edition of the pamphlet that was omitted from the 1727 edition in the Miscellanies and is used to support Beattie's contention that the chapter was ineffectual, but his complaints about shifts from narrative to dialogue continue throughout his discussion:

In pamphlet three the medium is chiefly description or objective narrative, with wholly dramatic chapters inserted; and in pamphlets four and five the narrative often changes to that of dialogue in a twinkling, so that many chapters are of two colors, with an arbitrary break at the point of division. (p. 60.)

In the first place, Beattie never does say what immutable law of literary composition requires that a piece of fiction be either narrative or dramatic dialogue. Secondly, the shifts are not as abrupt nor as pointless as he implies. The persona is still at work, calling attention in a series of flashbacks (the dramatic dialogues in pamphlet three) to the causes of the present predicament. These dialogues are held in present time in the story when John explains to his second wife the actions that brought on the lawsuit. In pamphlet four, the "narrative that changes into dialogue in a twinkling," usually records the meeting of two people whose conversation makes up the dialogue.

If we accept the idea of the persona as an invented character directing the reader's attention, the

shifts and flashbacks become coherent; the story less of a patchwork, the sometimes scrambled time sequence and character introductions less primitive, than if it is read literally. From this viewpoint, whether Arbuthnot intended it or not--and chances are he did not--the whole production becomes surprisingly modern. For example, take the unnamed narrator in Thornton Wilder's Our Town. He directs the time sequence of the play; he comments to the audience, calling its attention from one idea to another; he is a character in the play, but has no part in the story; and nobody has ever claimed he was Wilder. Wilder's technique in this play was considered a revolutionary experiment of the 30's. And there is an even more recent production in which the narrator acts amazingly like Arbuthnot's persona. He shifts abruptly from narrative to dialogue; he scrambles the time sequences even more wildly by recording events in the past while carrying on a conversation in the present; he philosophizes and, with many a wink, nod and knowing shake of the head, points out the fallacies of poor-pitiful humanity lacking the necessary common sense to guide their affairs aright. The production is a recent British film entitled Alfie, and the satire is directed at Alfie himself who, by the end of the picture, is revealed as the example of poor, pitiful humanity who

has not guided his affairs aright. Of course, there is no relationship in subject matter, philosophy, or form among these three productions, except that each deals with problems of its own time in a popular form of that time. It is the technique in the use of the persona that is so startlingly similar.

The unnamed persona in The History of John Bull, the "I" in the opening statement, "I need not tell you of the great quarrels that happened in our neighbourhood since the death of the late Lord Strutt,"<sup>96</sup> should be called the Gentleman Observer. He cannot really be called Sir Humphry Polesworth because the Preface that identifies Sir Humphry as the "plain dealer," called in to write this memoir by John Bull's historiographer to "speak the truth and spare not," originally appeared in the fifth and last pamphlet. In the 1727 Miscellanies, it was moved to its present position. The Gentleman Observer was fully created before Arbuthnot and/or Swift decided to give him the pseudonym used to disguise authorship of the History.

The Gentleman Observer embodies all the qualities of the witty, accomplished, knowledgeable, educated

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96. All quotations from The History of John Bull will be taken from Aitken's edition in The Life and Works of John Arbuthnot. Page numbers will be included in the text.

eighteenth-century aristocratic, though untitled, gentleman. He is calm and deliberate, never overcome with the passions that lead lesser mortals astray. He is honest and reasonable, so fair-minded and such a fair-dealer himself, that he can point out the fair-dealing qualities, the small honesties in the characters of the otherwise reprehensible Frog, Hocus and old Lewis Baboon, and give credit to the good intentions even of misguided advisors, and those with private interests as motivation.

Though given to aphorism on occasion, this Gentleman is no prude, no didactic moralizer, no wet-blanket over the fun of living. He is something of a neighborhood gossip, delighting in stories not always to the credit of the Bull family, but so interesting, so titilating, so human, that one can accept them with undiminished sympathy for John and his family. He never becomes vulgar--what gentleman would?--but, as a gentleman of the world, sophisticated though realistic, he knows about sex and what physical entanglements can lead to. He delicately points out the relations between Hocus and John's first wife (the Whig ministry) by saying, "Every body said that Hocus had a month's mind to her body; but be that as it will, it is matter of fact that upon all occasions she ran out extravagantly on the praise of Hocus." (p. 207.) But he was really more



interested in fairness—he just didn't like to see John hoodwinked when he was such a fine fellow and deserved better treatment.

Why is the Gentleman Observer in such a fret about John's condition? Because he is one eighteenth-century gentleman, he'll have you understand, who wants to know who is minding the store, and who keeps the value of the pound clearly in view. Me look like a Tory? he laughs. Don't be silly. I took my Whig off just for a moment. It's right here on the counter. I don't have to wear it all the time for you to know we are all trying to reach the same goal. He reinforces his implication of the "one-world" of eighteenth-century politics by making detailed comments about the merchandise and tools of the clothier's and linen-draper's trades to establish his commercial knowledge. He is familiar with the intricacies of the law, and, devoid of bitterness, fully aware of the avarice, perfidy, unscrupulousness, misuse of fellow by fellow, cheating and lying that are rampant in men, especially those not guided by a sober reason like his.

The Gentleman Observer, although in better control of his passions, could understand how John would be intrigued by the law, with its "catalogue of hard words," high sounding and lovely to roll upon the tongue, but,

he implies to the reader, was this engrossing fascination really logical, reasonable, or to John's best interests? Of course not. What practical, levelheaded, sturdy, 100% British tradesman would go off the deep end like that on his own? He was led astray--and in pamphlet three, Arbuthnot reveals how: Hocus and the lawyers kept poor John drunk for five years. John admits to his second wife that ale, brandy, and lavish praise were strong stuff, much too strong for him. (p. 249.)

As for Nic. Frog, to say the truth [and the Gentleman Observer always says the truth, though it hurts--what else could a gentleman do?] he was more prudent; for, though he followed his lawsuit closely, he neglected not his ordinary business, but was both in court and in his shop at the proper hours. (p. 206.)

Our Gentleman is familiar with the vagaries of women, and although he really hates to say it, the first Mrs. Bull got what she deserved when her husband finally noticed her intrigue with Hocus, and quarrelled violently with her, wounding her fatally during the melee.

Mrs. Bull aimed a knife at John, though John threw a bottle at her head very brutally indeed, and, after this, there was nothing but confusion: bottles, glasses, spoons, plates, knives, forks, and dishes flew about like dust; the result of which was that Mr. Bull received a bruise on her right side, of which she died half a year later. (p. 208.)

Pity, isn't it, that things like this have to happen before reason can be restored?

The Gentleman Observer reveals his Tory affiliation, in spite of his Whig sympathies, in his approval of John's second wife, the symbol of the Tory ministry. He approves heartily of the advice she gives John to forget his fantasies about becoming a lawyer, settle the lawsuit, and mind his own business. She is described as

a sober country gentlewoman, of a good family, and a plentiful fortune, the reverse of the other in her temper; not but that she loved money, for she was saving, and applied her fortune to pay John's clamorous debts, that the unfrugal methods of his last wife, and this ruinous lawsuit, had brought him into.  
(p. 210.)

That her methods were successful appear when John consents to look over his bills for the first time in ten years and see what has happened to his business. The first pamphlet ends with John in shock "at the prodigious dimensions of [the bills]," and the knowledge that "besides the extravagance of every article, he had been egregiously cheated," while the forces for whom "John's cause was a good milch cow," abused the second Mrs. Bull and warned her to stop interfering. (pp. 211-12.)

Throughout the other four pamphlets, the second Mrs. Bull is consistently characterized as the reasonable, level-headed, loving, guiding hand, whose theme, "Let's be logical about this, John," helps John throw off the confusions of the past years and leads him back to

prosperity. Through it all, the Gentleman Observer applauds her actions, her conversation, her ability to see through sham, and the way she calls a spade a spade to the consternation of Hocus and his henchmen.

The character of the Gentleman Observer is, no doubt, a major reason for the continuing interest in these pamphlets. For a character he is, in the full fictional sense. However much he might resemble Arbuthnot in some respects, he is an invention, and a fully rounded one at that. Throughout the whole History, Arbuthnot never falters in the Observer's personality, viewpoint, or polite acceptance of the noise and turmoil when all he really wants is peace in the neighborhood, with reason guiding his neighbors' actions. His vitality never flags. His gusto never diminishes. He is as vivacious today as he was in 1712, and equally delightful to have in the house. At the end of the History, he enjoys the frolic as much as John and his family:

I dare say John Bull's joy was equal to that of either of the two; he skipped from room to room, ran up stairs and down stairs, [of his newly acquired castle] . . . peeped into every cranny; sometimes he admired the beauty of the architecture . . . at other times he commended the symmetry and proportion of the rooms. He walked about the gardens; he bathed himself in the canal, swimming, diving, and beating the liquid element, like a milk-white swan. The hall resounded with the sprightly violin, and the martial hautboy. The family tripped it about and

capered, like hailstones bounding from the marble floor. Wine, ale and October flew about as plentifully as kennel water; . . . (pp. 287-8.)

The other characters who connect the story are John Bull, a clothier, who allegorically symbolizes England in general and the government in particular; Mrs. Bull, the political party in power; Nicholas Frog, a linen-draper, the Dutch; Lewis Baboon, a Jack of all trades, the French King Louis XIV; and Humphry Hocus, the lawyer, the Duke of Marlborough. Minor characters worth mentioning include Philip Baboon, formerly the Duke of Anjou, now King of Spain; John Bull's mother, the Church of England; his sister Peg, Scotland; and Squire South, the Archduke of Austria, candidate for the Spanish throne. Lord Strutt represents King Charles II of Spain. He is dead on the first page, and thereafter Philip Baboon is called "young Lord Strutt," but the name Baboon is important to establish his relationship to Lewis Baboon.

The first pamphlet, Law is a Bottomless Pit, presents the allegorical concept of war as a lawsuit, and delineates the characters. Events shift, and the characters are pulled this way and that by both events and each other, but at the end, no one has changed. John Bull eventually sees the wisdom of ending the lawsuit, but, at the close of the fifth pamphlet, is the same man who

"naturally loved rough play," and is still true to the characterization set out in the first pamphlet, that he is an

honest plain-dealing fellow, choleric, bold, and of a very unconstant temper; he dreaded not old Lewis either at backsword, single falchion, or cudgel-play; but then he was very apt to quarrel with his best friends, especially if they pretended to govern him: if you flattered him, you might lead him like a child. John's temper depended very much upon the air; his spirits rose and fell with the weather-glass. John was quick, and understood his business very well; but no man alive was more careless in looking into his accounts, or more cheated by partners, apprentices, and servants. This was occasioned by his being a boon companion, loving his bottle and his diversion; for, to say truth, no man kept a better house than John, nor spent his money more generously. By plain and fair dealing John had acquired some plums, and might have kept them, had it not been for his unhappy law-suit. (pp. 203-4.)

The same is true of the others:

Nic. Frog was a cunning sly whoreson, quite the reverse of John in many particulars; covetous, frugal; minded domestic affairs; would pinch his belly to save his pocket; never lost a farthing by careless servants, or bad debtors. He did not care much for any sort of diversions, except tricks of high German artists, and legerdemain: no man exceeded Nic. in these; yet it must be owned that Nic. was a fair dealer, and in that way acquired immense riches.

Hocus was an old cunning attorney; and though this was the first considerable suit that ever he was engaged in, he showed himself superior in address to most of his profession; he kept always good clerks, he loved money, was smooth-tongued, gave good words, and seldom lost his temper; he was not worse than an infidel, for he provided plentifully for his family; but he loved himself better than them all. (p. 204.)

Lewis Baboon was described as

an old cunning rogue, or (as the Scots call it) a false loon, of a grandfather, that one might justly call a Jack of all trades; sometimes you would see him behind his counter selling broad-cloth, sometimes measuring linen; next day he would be dealing in mercery ware; high heads, ribbons, gloves, fans, and lace, he understood to a nicety; . . . he would descend even to the selling of tape, garters, and shoe buckles; when shop was shut up, he would go about the neighbourhood, and earn half a crown by teaching the young men and maids to dance. By these methods he had acquired immense riches, which he used to squander away at back-sword, quarter-staff, and cudgel-play, in which he took great pleasure, and challenged all the country. (p. 200-1.)

The reader has to keep these set characterizations in mind as the story twists and weaves through approximately fifteen years. In pamphlet five, when John "wisely moderated his choleric temper," and "wisely stifled his resentments" to make the settlement, he had not changed basically. He was just following his wife's advice this time. At the end, when John and his family are celebrating the lawsuit's conclusion and acquisition of Ecclesdown Castle (Dunkirk), John, true to his character, cannot resist calling in some of Frog's people to crow over them. He then leans over the battlements to address Nic. Frog, concluding with, "If thou wantest any good office of mine, for all that has happened, I will use thee well, Nic., Bye, Nic," (p. 288.)

and one wonders who will be the next to flatter and lead John like a child into another disastrous predicament.

### Part 3--Comparison of Works

In his discussion of the sources and form of the John Bull pamphlets, Beattie uses Defoe's work for a majority of his comparisons. As noted earlier, Beattie considered Defoe's publications to be Arbuthnot's primary sources for the story of John Bull. About the form Arbuthnot chose for the pamphlets, Beattie says, "The taste of contemporary political writers for allegory is reflected in its frequent use in the Review." (p. 87.) And it is against the Review allegories that Arbuthnot's skill as a storyteller is evaluated. Although in comparison with the Review papers, Arbuthnot fares well in Beattie's evaluation--Beattie said, "Defoe was inclined to mix the figurative and the literal just enough to spoil the illusion," (p. 89.) while "the method of Arbuthnot is that of pure metaphor." (p. 90.)--there are a number of pamphlets attributed to Defoe that are so much more like The History of John Bull than the Review pieces as to place Beattie's comparisons in the realm of trying to match a newspaper editorial to a short story.

A pamphlet attributed to Defoe, entitled The History of Prince Mirabel's Infancy, Rise and Disgrace:



with the sudden Promotion of Novicius, was even published in London in 1712, the same year as John Bull, and was intended to perform the same sort of political job--although for which side has been questioned. It is catalogued in the major bibliographies as a mild satire on the Duke of Marlborough, sometimes for and sometimes against him. Because he wrote in favor of what he called "a good peace," Defoe was accused of being in Harley's pay at the time. Defoe denied this, saying the accusation was "abominably false; he 'had suffered deeply for cleaving to principles.'"<sup>97</sup> A year later, though, Harley got him out of jail, paid his fines, and got him pardoned. However, there is no doubt in my mind that Harley did not commission this piece.

The Introduction to Prince Mirabel projects a History in three parts. Part I deals with Prince Mirabel's infancy, youth, and manhood, detailing his character, training, and rise to power, as well as his romantic intrigues, his true love, and subsequent marriage. The Novicius in the title does not even appear in Part I. This part can be read two ways, I think, depending on the reader's view of sexual matters. If you see Mirabel through the closest you can get to an eighteenth-century

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97. Aitken, Later Stuart Tracts, p. xxiii.

viewpoint, part one is favorable to him. His amours are described with verve, gusto, and laudatory admiration of his technique and endurance. The Introduction summarizes his character by promising the reader "you will discover a promising Bloom, a bold disclosure of Greatness, a vigour of Soul not to be match'd, an Address irresistible with the Fair; a dexterity in Business surpassing all Mankind." (p. [5].) Defoe keeps that promise, to the letter. Unless there are historical nuances present that escape me, there is nothing but praise for Mirabel in all of Part I.

Part II, which was published some time later than Part I, begins just before Anne's accession to the throne, and, as the Introduction promises,

leads you through a Variety of important Business devolv'd upon his [Mirabel's] Hands by the Death of the Emperor; enters you into all the private Negotiations at Home, the Struggle of two Juncto's of the same party in the Court of Britomartia upon the Empress Palatina's Accession to the Empire, opens the Foreign Cabinets, briefly Descants upon Mirabel's Godlike Labours, his uninterrupted Successes and Triumphs; sets the first attempts of Novicius's Treachery upon Mirabel and his Friends in a true Light; Vindicates the Resentment of Mirabel: and in fine explains the reasons for his Abandoning Novicius and his Junctillo. . . (pp. [5-6].)

Part II can only have been written by an ardent Whig. It is as vicious a personal attack on Harley as an enthusiastic, dedicated Whig writer could have produced.

Novicius can be easily identified as Harley by any casual reader of eighteenth-century political history. So can many other prominent members of the court from the time of Queen Anne's accession to the end of the War of the Spanish Succession.

Part III is either unavailable here, has not been preserved, or was never written. A first edition of Part I is at the Clark Library, where it is catalogued as the complete work. Part II is at the Huntington Library, where it is catalogued as the complete work.

In John Bull, Arbuthnot places his story completely outside court and politics and invents incidents and people, as Beattie puts it, in "pure metaphor." Defoe attempts to make disguise do the work of invention by changing names, but following recognizable historical events. Prince Mirabel is set in the court of the State of Britomartia (England). Queen Anne is called Empress Palatina; Marlborough, Mirabel; Harley, Novicius; Godolphin, Delphino. The House of Commons is called the House of Proatins. Nobles are Mandarines. Protestantism is called the Reformato religion; the House of Lords, the Britomartian Senato; pounds, chequins; and Blenheim is Blenia. Among the titles are Prime Thesaurario for Lord Treasurer, Bojar for General, and Custodian of the Privito Sigillo. France is Lilliano; Holland, the State of Belgiano.

Part I is told history book fashion. The persona is a voice lecturing in great detail. The personality displayed is that of a politician's public relations man lecturing to a group of prospective contributors to campaign funds. Mirabel is truly Godlike. There is no shadow to obscure the luster of his shining personality. There is nothing he cannot achieve exceptionally well. All the glory he is accumulating is only his just due. The persona himself is equally magnificent, shining in reflected glory. His language is dignified; his hyperbole extravagant, but in good taste; there is not an unkind word uttered throughout the entire section. Even people Mirabel could have expected to be his enemies are understanding. All is sweetness and light, and leaves the reader feeling as though he had eaten a meal composed entirely of whipped cream.

In Part II the story, if such it can be called, becomes a little more like fiction. It ceases to be an unrelenting recitation, and the reader is given scenes with characters moving and talking. The persona undergoes a major character change, too. The whipped cream has curdled, and he becomes nasty, belligerent, and didactic. He carps almost constantly, finds fault with all but Mirabel and the Empress, allows his language to descend almost to the gutter, sermonizes, exhorts, and

raises his voice in righteous indignation--old Holy Joe himself, the Righteous Ranter. All of this is in defense of Prince Mirabel, of course, which justifies the whole performance.

Prince Mirabel needs defending, according to the Righteous Ranter. He was Novicius's victim from the beginning because Novicius is as black as Mirabel is white. Novicius is insatiably ambitious, greedy, dishonest, hypocritical, lascivious, ungrateful, and every other damning term one can think of. Poor, sweet Princess Mirabella was tricked and betrayed by the cunning Montiana (Abigail Hill) who conspired with Novicius to bring about the change in political power so disastrous to Mirabel. Empress Palatina is presented as blind to the whole false, nasty intrigue against Mirabel, remaining loyal and generous to him until the lies and distorted stories of events were too much for even her.

Unlike the Gentleman Observer in John Bull, the Righteous Ranter comments, moralizes, exhorts, and bewails man's perfidy before, during, and after every event. He never steps aside to allow dramatization of his points. Without one minim of humor or grace, he plants himself firmly and four-square in center stage and refuses to budge. The reader has to imagine the action around him, and hear the characters only when he pauses

for breath. The Righteous Ranter's typical comments, such as the one that follows, inevitably stop what little action there was while he points the moral. This is about religion.

. . . but where Bigotry prevails, there Reason loses its mastery, and we seldom find but too Warm a Zeal for Indifferent Things in Religious Worship, such as Ceremonies, has as bad, if not a worse effect than a meer Indolence, or no Concern at all for Things of that Nature. (II, 11-12.)

The Ranter introduces the series of actions that resulted in the Tory party taking over the government by saying, "in order to Account for some Changes at Court that will follow in due Course, I am here to acquaint the Reader, that Delphino [Godolphin] was a Mandarine," and goes on to describe the other Whig ministers in complimentary terms.

Meanwhile, back on the battlefield with Mirabel:

he [Mirabel] so behaved himself in the First Campaign he made, by taking several strong Towns from the Enemy, after he had in vain offer'd them Battle, and Enlarging the Frontier of Belgiano, that he return'd laden with Laurels to the Court of Britomartia, where his good Services were so well accepted by the Empress, as to obtain for him a Pension of Ten Thousand chequins per Annum, and a Mandarine's Title of the first Rank, next to the Princes of the Blood. (II, 16.)

Mirabel then returns to war and was brave, gallant and honorable, "present in the most Hazardous Undertakings." (II, 19.) He wanted to storm the enemy's lines but was

prevented by deputies of Belgiano and had to content himself with the surrender of two Lillianian towns. He then returns to court and helps Novicius start his rise to power. Mirabel is fooled by Novicius from the start.

As he [Novicius] was Master of Address enough to make a Feign'd Goodness to be taken for a Real, so Mirabel had Credulity enough to think him Faithful and Sincere. He was too Just himself to suspect others of ill Designs, and too much Interested in the Welfare of the Government, not to endeavour the Promotion of those who profess'd the greatest zeal for the Support of it. (II, 21.)

The Moral Ranter reveals his vulgarity and the author his lack of invention in the following quotations. The first is an example of the kind of phony gentility in which the Righteous Ranter is clothed throughout the History. It is as indicative of his pettiness as Arbuthnot's Gentleman Observer's lack of similar comments is indicative of his large stature.

Montiana had been usher'd into an Attendance at Court from a very mean Condition, by the charitable Compassion of Mirabella, who saw some Cunning in Her, which she misinterpreted and call'd Discretion. I shall not Descend so low as to Trace her from the little servile Offices she went thro' in several Private Gentlemen's Families; neither shall I lose my own Time, or Reader's, in dwelling upon the Nature of her former Employments. Let it suffice that she was now made one of the Madonna's that Button'd on the Imperial Robe upon the Empress's Shoulders, and, by a fawning Diligence, let into the most Secret Recesses of Palatina's Soul. (II, 23.)

The next quotation is from what is probably the best dramatic scene in the whole of this satire. In comparison with Arbuthnot's inventive power through scene after scene in John Bull where people are alive, lively events take place, the conversations vivacious and acceptably human, Defoe's best in this genre is a poor thing.

But Novicius, who was unacquainted with Gratitude, and had a Soul that had no knowledge of content, thought the Post of Scrivan, which was highly Superior to his Merits, infinitely short of them, and resolved to make an Adventurous push at some greater Preferment. The Thesaurario's Place ran in his Mind, and the Tempting Inchantment that arose from the Possession of it Inflam'd his Desires to such a Degree, that he would venture all Hazards for its Purchase. Oh! said he, my Dear Montiana, when he had got her upon the Couch, according to laudable Custom, and was Toying with that Succubus, what shall I do to remove this Obstacle of my hopes, Delphino, from our Mistress's Presence? Do! says she, Is that a Question with one of your Cunning? What should you else but Blacken him? Get Mercenary Scriblers to Defame him, and give out in some Virulent Libel, that he Misapplies the Publick Treasure, converts Millions to his own Use, and keeps a Correspondence with Liliana; In the mean time, I'll whisper Suggestions in the Ears of the Empress; insinuate, That She's a Slave to her own Servants; and tell her of this and that Chimerical Danger if she keeps some of them about her much longer: That Mirabel in a short time will be too Great for a subject; for I cannot bear with Mirabella's Interest at Court, tho' it is by her means that I am in any tolerable Capacity to oppose it; . . . Spoke like an Angel, said Novicius, I'll Drink with you 'till I cannot see, for this Excellent Device; my Friend Anselmo shall talk Nonsense with you, and Arcurio, and Henrico, shall do something else with you, to Encourage you to go on with your Projects. (II, 36-38.)



Contrast this dismal little scene and its attempted dramatization with almost any scene from John Bull, and it is easy to see why John Bull has survived as the best of its kind. The following bit from John Bull dramatizes the time when the Congress of Utrecht was going badly. According to Aitken, "When the members met, the Dutch would not speak their sentiments, nor the French deliver in their proposals."<sup>98</sup>

'Well, neighbours,' quoth [John], 'let's now make an end of all matters, and live peaceably together for the time to come; if everybody is as well inclined as I, we shall quickly come to the upshot of our affair.' And so pointing to Frog to say something, to the great surprise of all the company, Frog was seized with a dead palsy in the tongue. John began to ask him some plain questions, and whooped and hallooed in his ear. . . . Nic. opened his mouth, and pointed to his tongue, and cried, 'A, a, a, a, a!' which was as much as to say, he could not speak. John Bull: 'Shall I serve Philip Baboon with broad-cloth, and accept of the composition that he offers, with the liberty of his parks and fish-ponds?' Then Nic. roared like a bull, 'O, o, o, o!' John Bull: 'If thou wilt not let me have them, wilt thou take them thyself?' Then Nic. grinned, cackled, and laughed, till he was like to kill himself, and seemed to be so pleased, that he fell a striking and dancing about the room. . . .

John, perceiving that Frog would not speak, turns to old Lewis: 'Since we cannot make this obstinate fellow speak, Lewis, pray condescend a little to his humour, and set down thy meaning upon paper, that he may answer it in another scrap.'

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98. P. 254n.

'I am infinitely sorry,' quoth Lewis, 'that it happens so unfortunately; for, playing a little at cudgels t'other day, a fellow has given me such a rap over the right arm, that I am quite lame; I have lost the use of my forefinger and my thumb, so that I cannot hold my pen.'

John Bull. That's all one, let me write for you.

Lewis. But I have a misfortune, that I cannot read any body's hand but my own.

John Bull. Try what you can do with your left hand.

Lewis: That's impossible; it will make such a scrawl, that it will not be legible. (pp. 354-356.)

The contrast between the scenes in Prince Mirabel and John Bull illustrate not only Arbuthnot's greater inventiveness and storytelling ability, but also Arbuthnot's greater ability to use the language. Arbuthnot is colloquial without being illiterate. He is not afraid to use slang, nor is he afraid to use any multi-syllabic word where it will serve his purpose. His writing has a swing and rhythm, a verve and vitality that keeps the story moving--qualities that are noticeably absent from Prince Mirabel. Where Defoe rants, Arbuthnot is quiet, thus achieving an ideal of ironic statement, according to George Saintsbury.

The essence of irony, when irony itself is in quintessence, is quietness. If the ostensible expression attracts too much notice to itself by clangour of sound, or by flamboyance of color, the inner meaning has no (or at least less)

opportunity to slip its presence into the reader's mind and its sting into the enemy's body.<sup>99</sup>

Arbuthnot's language has what Saintsbury calls "the singing prose line," a rhythmic swing that carries the reader along gracefully. Defoe's language lumbers. The reader bumps and thuds over the cobblestones of every situation. Arbuthnot did not have to use gutter language. He had imagination enough to invent nasty names that were pointed, but funny, too. In Pamphlet II, detailing England's relationship with Scotland, he creates scenes in which John and his sister Peg fight until they call each other names. "In short, these quarrels grew up to rooted aversions; they gave one another nick-names: she called him gundy-guts, and he called her lousy Peg." (p. 234.) Arbuthnot did not have to draw pornographic pictures like that of Montiana and Novicius on the couch. He is a master of the casually dropped innuendo, the zestful slyness that Dobree points out. For example, in the chapter describing how Jack (Calvinism) gained Peg's heart, Arbuthnot has the persona, with one of his winks and knowing nods, slip in a sly statement that, in one sentence, has more of an impact than a paragraph of Defoe's gasping, earthy description. Compare the following: the first from John Bull; the second, Prince Mirabel:

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<sup>99</sup>. A History of English Prose Rhythm (London, 1912), p. 241.

"Jack bragged of greater abilities than other men; he was well-gifted, as he pretended; I need not tell you what secret influence that has upon the ladies."  
(p. 235.)

The warm struggles of that Happy Pair must never be forgotten. . . . The Heat of the Action rous'd all the Reserves of Passion, and Love play'd from all his Batteries; the Combatants overpower'd with the fierceness of the Struggle, lay languid for some time [until Mirabel] came on briskly to the Second Charge . . . (I, 36-7.)

In discussing the "familiar and friendly" prose style of the first half of the eighteenth century, Sutherland comments, "The standards were still aristocratic; and, because they were so, prose had the well-bred freedom that is one of the natural accompaniments of confident aristocracy."<sup>100</sup> And, in another place, said,

The characteristics of this style, the 'middle style,' have been accurately defined by Johnson. It is 'exact without apparent elaboration. . . . His sentences have neither studied amplitude, nor affected brevity; his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy.' In short, this style is 'familiar, but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious.'<sup>101</sup>

It is this "well-bred freedom," the balance between "studied amplitude" and rounded periods, "the elegant

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100. On English Prose (Toronto, 1957), p. 76.

101. "Some Aspects of Eighteenth-Century Prose," Essays on the Eighteenth Century Presented to David Nichol Smith (Oxford, 1945), p. 945.

but not ostentatious" that makes Arbuthnot's prose style so easy on the sensibilities; the lack of freedom and balance that makes Defoe's so heavy, stolid, and leaden, although both men wrote in the same tradition and genre. One could, of course, argue difference in background. I would argue difference in talent.

To summarize, The History of John Bull was written by Arbuthnot because of pressing political problems concomitant with bringing about an end to the War of the Spanish Succession. Arbuthnot had never written satire before, but the five pamphlets that make up the History were immediately popular and influential. Because Arbuthnot was unknown as a literary man, the anonymous publications were attributed to Swift. Although neither man admitted authorship publicly during his lifetime, attribution to Arbuthnot has never been successfully challenged. The allegorical form and use of animal names grew out of the long standing popularity of Aesop's fables which were adapted to political propaganda, while the name John Bull to symbolize England probably had Viscount Bolingbroke's nick-name--the first syllable of "Bullenbrook" in the eighteenth-century pronunciation--as its source. The possible strategy behind Arbuthnot's use of Bolingbroke as the symbol of national policy was his agreement with members of his

political party that their immediate goal was termination of the war, their goal for the future was to prepare the way for Bolingbroke to become head of the Tory government.

John Bull is an effective satire because of the use of the persona as a fictional character, and the presence of a story in the full fictional sense. It is a reasonably unified work because of the consistent characterization of the persona and the four major characters, plus the presence of the lawsuit as a unifying element of the story throughout the five pamphlets. This analysis replaces traditional analyses by the historical-biographical method, thereby resolving contradictions created by the long-held idea that everything in the History is a revelation of Arbuthnot's personal beliefs. In comparison with a similar political satire, attributed to Defoe and published the same year as John Bull, The History of John Bull proves to be superior in creation of character and incident, as well as in use of language. It has survived for 250 years as the best of its kind for the following reasons:

It is obvious, first of all, that the historic particular [of satire] is not necessarily or totally unique and that the controversies of one age clearly have their echoes in another. . . . Yet, to identify the persistent appeal of great satire, we have, I believe, to look beyond the timeless questions which satire tends to reflect or the satisfactions we derive from attack, whatever its ground. For the immediate

effectiveness and the permanent attractiveness of satire depend most crucially not upon the fierceness or justice of the attack itself, but upon the artifice by which satire lays claim to be regarded as a literary form. . . . Between [a literary craftsman] and the most contemptible specimen of cheap, sarcastic pamphleteer there may be no difference whatever in satiric purpose or victim. The difference is to be found in the creative imagination, in the literary inventiveness, in short, in the fictional element which is . . . indispensable to the satirists's art.

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101. Rosenheim, pp. 104-5.

### CHAPTER III

#### ARBUTHNOT'S POSITION IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE

In any attempt to establish Dr. Arbuthnot's position in a hierarchy of early eighteenth-century writers, there is a strong tendency to indulge in speculation of the what-might-have-been and if-only-he-had variety. The evidence of Arbuthnot's literary talent is so obvious, that the wishful thinker can only conclude that the world is poorer because he did not have either the driving sense of purpose that animated Swift, or the need for money that drove lesser writers to leave voluminous bodies of work to bore posterity. With either incentive, he would have practiced enough to perfect his art. He would have had to develop his "hints," he would have had to finish manuscripts, and, possibly, he would have developed a sense of ownership for his work that not only would have made attribution problems less troublesome, but would have prevented his work from being submerged so completely in that of his friends. But, in this speculation, I am assuming that adding a driving sense of purpose or a need for money to Arbuthnot's personality and talent would only have been an addition.



This is a dangerous assumption. The Arbuthnot personality might have become bitter; the talent warped under either of these circumstances, and what he wrote would have been entirely different. But had he written more along the same lines of what he did write, he would not today be in a subordinate position. As matters now stand, however, unless someone discovers a cache of manuscripts sealed between old and new wall structures, or lying in neglected heaps in a deteriorating out-building, Arbuthnot will always be known as a "minor" writer of his period. He will be honored for his friendships, geniality and wit, but pointed out as a curiosity because, by accident it seems, or with much supposed help from Swift, he produced one great satire, The History of John Bull.

From a close study of all the work available that is attributed to Arbuthnot, as well as analysis of his major work, I can say only that the signs of an undeveloped major talent are present in his writing. Had the talent been developed and controlled, Arbuthnot very probably would have equalled Swift, and over-shadowed Pope, Gay, Defoe, and all the others as a prose satirist. Had that potential been fully developed, and Swift's work come to us as it is, chances are that Arbuthnot's popular appeal would have been greater than Swift's. He would

have made as great an appeal to the intellect as Swift, but he would have done it more charmingly, amusingly, more with an appearance of "the common touch" that Swift either could or would do. (Fortunately, we can assume that Arbuthnot would never have exhibited quite so common a touch as Defoe.) Arbuthnot had not the anger that Swift threatened to "let . . . break out in some manner that will not please them, at the End of a Pen . . ." <sup>102</sup> and that rages in controlled artistry throughout his works. If Arbuthnot's philosophic humor had flowed through as many works in equally controlled artistry, coupled with his sharp awareness of the paradox of man's ideals in juxtaposition with his behavior, and with his unflagging inventiveness, his wide knowledge, his skill with language, what might he not have produced? As Beattie said, ". . . when he combined jocularly and a provoking criticism, no one in the company could rival him," <sup>103</sup> and Pope provides several small incidents to support Beattie's comment. For example, Arbuthnot commented on a pretentiously parsimonious man, "Sir John Butler had a pair of black worsted stockings, which his maid darned so often with silk that they became at last

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102. Swift, Correspondence, II, 36.

103. Beattie, p. 393.

a pair of silk stockings."<sup>104</sup> In Pope's letter to Caryll, dated December 12, 1720, after the South Seas bubble broke, Pope says,

I am much pleased with a thought of Doctor Arbuthnot, who says the Government and the South Sea Company have only locked up the money of the people upon conviction of their lunacy, as is usual in the case of lunatics, and intend to restore them as much as is fit for such people, as they see them return more and more to their senses.<sup>105</sup>

In a note in Pope's correspondence, Arbuthnot is reported to have made the following comment about Gay's situation in Burlington House: "'D'ye see now,' remarked Arbuthnot in conversation, 'I went to visit him, and ordered him a poultice for his swelled face. He said Lord and Lady Burlington were very good to him, but the poor creature eat his poultice for hunger.'"<sup>106</sup>

Of all the myths currently held about the Swift-Arbuthnot relationship, one so commonly taken for granted that it is never examined is that Arbuthnot was the inferior writer, the inferior talent, who sat in loving adoration at the master's feet. The myth flows on to the effect that it was gracious of Swift to accept Arbuthnot's friendship because, after all, that is all he

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104. Pope, Complete Works, III, 154n.

105. Pope, Complete Works, VI, 276.

106. Pope, Complete Works, VII, 31n.

had to offer, and Swift could use it. The latter part of this myth is material for another study, but the first part hinges directly on the problem of Arbuthnot's position in eighteenth-century literature. As far as I can see, the two men were equal in talent and writing ability. They both were dynamic and powerful in their use of the language, and almost unlimited in their inventiveness. Their sensitiveness to the paradoxes and follies of humanity reached radar proportions. Look at the little details in Gulliver. Look at the little details in John Bull. There is a similarity in the specificity, exactitude and strength of invented detail that either is lacking in the work of the other "major" writers of the time, or not present in such abundant quality or quantity. The presence or absence of the ability to invent detail, both in quality and quantity, seems to me to be the dividing line between the "good" and the "great" satiric writers. It makes the difference between polemic and fiction, which is whether or not you have a satire within the definition of this paper. Defoe's Review papers, as Beattie pointed out, slid too quickly, too frequently into polemic to be satire. Defoe could not maintain the fiction by inventing enough details to keep a story going. Prince Mirabel is evidence that he could not even invent a story in this genre, and his use

of language resembles the use of a piano by a player whose broken fingers are encased in splints and bandages. Of course, an objection may be made to the comparison of Arbuthnot and Defoe by pointing out that the author of Moll Flanders and Robinson Crusoe is not remembered primarily for political satire. True, very true, in spite of the fact that he spent two-thirds of his life writing it. Defoe was 51 when he wrote Prince Mirabel; Arbuthnot was 44 when he wrote John Bull. Defoe had been writing material of this kind for more than thirty years. This was Arbuthnot's first attempt. Defoe, in his sixties, wrote novels in a form he did not invent, presenting conclusions that he did not make, only echoed. Arbuthnot, in his sixties, wrote medical articles in which were imbedded flashes of original thought that have been proved accurate in later research. The comparison of talent speaks for itself.

Another myth that needs closer examination is the one that says the only reason Arbuthnot's John Bull is any good is because of the help Swift gave him. I do not really believe that Arbuthnot needed much help beyond the initial encouragement to do the piece. True, they probably talked about John Bull frequently, tossing ideas back and forth, but they talked about many literary projects, as their correspondence reveals. Some of

these were eventually written, many were not. Talking about ideas and details for writing was part of their way of friendship in much the same way that dining out in company was part of their way of life. Swift probably performed some ordinary editorial duties in seeing the pamphlets through the press, but the internal evidence that Mayo found to support his attribution of the authorship of John Bull to Arbuthnot can be extended to support this contention that Swift had little or nothing to do with the actual writing of John Bull. Mayo said,

above all the racy, kindly personality . . . can be felt through the style--the genial, suffering-fools-gladly irony of the author of The Art of Political Lying,--the wit which made Dr. Johnson rank Arbuthnot above all the other wits of his day, which was yet so liesurely, so utterly different in temper from Swift's--so inexhaustibly good-natured as to draw from Lord Orrery, long after, the affectionate encomium: "His very sarcasms are good-humored . . . like flaps of the face given in jest . . . (they) raise blushes but not blackness."<sup>107</sup>

Aitken said, after reporting Arbuthnot's friends' grief-stricken reactions to news of his death, "Arbuthnot's attachment to Swift and Pope was of the most intimate nature, and those who knew them best maintained that he was their equal at least in gifts."<sup>108</sup>

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107. P. 282.

108. P. 165.

Beattie's major objection to Arbuthnot is not so much with his writing, but with the ease with which Arbuthnot did it. Beattie also objects to what I have called Arbuthnot's flashes of genius. Beattie seems to think that, if a man can express one original idea in an essay, he ought to be able to produce enough original ideas to fill the whole essay. Although highly complimentary in places, Beattie's book is larded with criticism--sometimes outspoken, sometimes implied--of Arbuthnot's mobility of mind. Considering Beattie's plodding way with material, one can sympathize with his dislike of both ease of invention and writing. Although Beattie had to concede that Arbuthnot had more talent for allegorical political satire than Defoe, Beattie's sympathy seems with Defoe--probably because Defoe was a plodder, too, although a prolific one. My major criticism of Arbuthnot in this area is that he did not stay long enough with any one subject to see what his brilliance could accomplish. Here a flash, there a flash, everywhere flash, flash, seems to summarize his life's written work.

To answer the original question proposed for this study, "Need Arbuthnot go through literary eternity forever leaning on Swift?", no, he need not, but he probably will. In spite of the paucity of Arbuthnot's

writing, his literary ability is entirely strong enough to stand alone, and for specialists in the literature of the early eighteenth century, he will emerge as a distinctly individual writer. For students of literature generally, or specialists in other eras, Arbuthnot will continue to appear inseparable from Swift.

THE END



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