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**JONATHAN SWIFT AND  
*A DISCOURSE ON HEREDITARY RIGHT***

The 12 November 1763 issue of *Jackson's Oxford Journal* carried an advertisement seeking subscribers for an edition of Swift's works '[t]o be printed at the Clarendon Press in OXFORD'.<sup>1</sup> Edited by Swift's kinsman, Deane Swift, the collection was to include 'several Tracts Political and Historical', 'several Pieces of Wit and Humour, and other Miscellaneous Tracts', as well as '[a]bout Seventy or Eighty genuine Letters...and between Thirty and Forty Copies of Verses'. The edition would be printed in both octavo (two volumes) and duodecimo (three volumes) 'in order to oblige those Gentlemen, who would be willing to complete those Collections which they have made of the Doctor's Works in that Size'. Subscriptions were fixed at 10s. per set, with half payable up front, and could be received by booksellers in Oxford, Cambridge, London, Bath, Bristol, Worcester, Gloucester, Salisbury, Winchester, York, Shrewsbury, and Dublin.

The Oxford edition of Swift's works was never published and the advertisement, which came to light as part of research for volume one of *The History of Oxford University Press*, has been hitherto unknown to Swift scholarship.<sup>2</sup> The origins and fate of the proposed edition deserve their own separate account,<sup>3</sup> but the advertisement also provides the only documentary evidence to date supporting the attribution to Swift of *A Discourse on Hereditary Right*. It is listed, without any caveats, alongside political works that we know firmly to be Swift's (such as *An Enquiry into the Behaviour of the Queen's last Ministry* and *Some Considerations upon the Consequences hoped and feared from the Death of the Queen*). Moreover, the advertisement goes on to assert that '[w]ith Regard to the Authenticity of these Writings there cannot be the least Doubt, as [the] Original Manuscripts have been submitted

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<sup>1</sup> *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, no. 550 (12 November 1763), 3. I am grateful to Jim McLaverty for his advice and assistance in preparing this note.

<sup>2</sup> Ian Gadd, ed., *The History of Oxford University Press: Beginnings to 1780* (Oxford, 2013). The advertisement is illustrated on p. 453.

<sup>3</sup> An article is in preparation by Paddy Bullard and myself.

to the Inspection of DOCTOR KING, PRINCIPAL of ST. MARY *Hall* in *Oxford*, who is well acquainted with the Author's Hand-writing'.

*Hereditary Right* was the only political tract listed in the advertisement not to be included in the volumes published in London in 1765 as part of the so-called Hawkesworth edition, and which were reprinted by George Faulkner in Dublin. Instead, it was first published in London, on its own, by William Hay, probably in 1775, where it was attributed on the title page only to 'a celebrated clergyman'. The preface took some pains to defend the decision not to identify the author by name as that 'would beget a suspicion of it's[sic] being a spurious, manufactured Catch-penny', although Hay made thinly veiled allusions to both Yahoos and Houyhnhnms elsewhere in the pamphlet. The preface also considered the question of '*Why this Discourse was not published among his other posthumous papers?*':

The Publisher's answer is, That this question must be resolved by the Editors of those Papers, who had it in Custody in 1765; and *why they did not publish it*, was, evidently, not from a doubt of it's authenticity, but from a dread of it's affording disgust to those who could not read it, nor allow others to understand it.<sup>4</sup>

Daniel Eilon, who made a strong case for the attribution to Swift on stylistic grounds in 1985, felt that Hay's preface was 'likely only to add to the skepticism of a critical reader', and admitted that 'the circumstantial evidence against [the work's] authenticity [is] almost overwhelming'.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the Oxford advertisement casts Hay's preface in a wholly different light, and together they provide strong evidence that Jonathan Swift was indeed the author of *A Discourse on Hereditary Right*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *A Discourse on Hereditary Right. Written in the Year 1712. By a celebrated clergyman* (London, [1775]), a3r–a4v.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Eilon, 'Did Swift Write *A Discourse on Hereditary Right?*', *Modern Philology*, lxxxii (1985), 374–92 (quotations at p. 375).

<sup>6</sup> The forthcoming edition of Swift's *English Political Writings 1701–11*, edited by Bertrand Goldgar, Ian Higgins, and myself (Cambridge University Press) will consequently include *Hereditary Right*.