

## I. Career

Charles Gildon was born in Gillingham in Dorset in 1665 and died in London in 1724.<sup>1</sup> Almost the only source of evidence about his early life is contained in his edition of Langbaine's An Account of the English Dramatick Poets.<sup>2</sup> He describes his family and early years as follows:

He is, as I'm inform'd, a Gentleman born at Gillingham, near Shaftsbury, in the County of Dorset. His Parents and Family were all of the Romish Persuasion, and in the time of the Civil War, doubly incur'd the Penalties of the Prevailing Side; both as engag'd in the Royal Party, and as Recusants in Religion; for which, after the Plunderings of the War, his Grandfather paid two thirds of his Estate, all the Time of that Government. His Father was of the Honourable Society of Grays-Inn, and tho' a great Zealot for the Faith he was born in, he cou'd not convey that Zeal to his Son, our Author, whom he dying, left but Nine Years of Age, having sold the best part of the Estate that our Author was born to, before he died.<sup>3</sup>

His education at Gillingham under "a very Honest and Learned Master"<sup>4</sup> Gildon describes appreciatively. He was

1. The most substantial contribution to a study of Gildon which has been made thus far is the bibliography of Gildon in the CBFL. This was done by Mr. John D'A. Briscoe as a preliminary step in what was to be a study of Gildon and an edition of his works. I am indebted to Mr. Briscoe for some valuable suggestions, especially about M. Dottin's study, which have saved me much time and effort. The preface to Robinson Crusoe Examin'd and Criticis'd (London, 1923) has a lengthy account of Gildon's life which now supplants the one in the DNB, but which is carelessly done and frequently burdened with inferences not supported by the facts.

2. The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets, London: Printed for Nicholas Cox, and William Turner...1699.

3. P. 174.

4. Ibid.

then sent to the English College at Douai

with a design of making him a Priest, if his Inclination cou'd away with that Function; which was suppos'd the best Support of a Gentleman whose Fortunes and Religion could promise him no greater Advantage. But after Five Years Study there, he found his Inclinations point him another way; and at the Age of about Nineteen he returns for England; and as soon as One and Twenty, put it into his Power of enjoying those Pleasures that Age generally pursues, he came to London, where having spent the Remainder of his Paternal Estate, betwixt Two or Three and Twenty he married. and most of the Reign of King James, he spent in reading the Controversies of that Time; being dissatisfied with several of the Tenents of the Church of Rome, that he had imbib'd with his Mother's Milk, as they say.<sup>5</sup>

The rest of the account is devoted to Gildon's dramatic productions.

If Gildon came to London when he was twenty-one, we know nothing of his career from this time until 1692, when he began to publish. It is possible that he contributed to periodicals before this date. His mind early had a pedantic cast, and we need not disbelieve that he was interested in theological controversy, but his interest in the literary circles of the town must have overshadowed this. It is possible that he had a number of literary friends, some of them prominent, before 1692; had heard Dryden hold forth at Will's; and had made the acquaintance of Mrs. Behn quite early.

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5. Ibid.

Gildon won the friendship of D'Urfey in 1692 by addressing a flattering letter to him which appeared prefaced to the Marriage Hater Match'd;<sup>6</sup> it is a defense of "Reason and the Rules of Art." The pedantic and flattering tone of this letter provoked resentment. D'Urfey was attacked in Poets Infamis, or A Poet not worth Hanging,<sup>7</sup> and the name "Charles G----n" was maliciously signed to the preface to create bad feeling between Gildon and D'Urfey. Presumably Gildon knew D'Urfey only slightly. The previous year John Dunton had begun publication of the Athenian Gazette, or Casuistical Mercury, which purported to be the organ of a learned society. Gildon has originally been part of a plan to belittle Dunton's periodical in Tom Brown's Lacedaemonian Mercury. Gildon changed sides by writing a History of the Athenian Society,<sup>8</sup> apparently on his own, and offered it to Dunton, who published it in the same format to be bound at the end of the Gazette. In June 1692 Gildon was almost certainly working for the short-lived Moderator.<sup>9</sup> The material is not signed but some of the critical utterances, especially an attack on Langbaine,

6. The Marriage-Hater Match'd, Printed by R. Bentley, in Russel-Street, Covent-Garden....1692.

7. Poets Infamis: Or, a Poet not worth Hanging. Being a Dialogue between Alexander Valentine, and Poet Prickett. London: Printed for B. C. and are to be sold by R. Baldwin....1692.

8. The History of the Athenian Society, For the Resolving all Nice and Curious Questions, London: Printed for James Dowley...n.d.

9. There is a microfilm of this at the Library of the City College of New York.

are unmistakably his. Other literary and editorial tasks fill out a crowded year: Miscellany Poems upon Several Occasions,<sup>10</sup> on the title page of which the name of the Duke of Buckingham is the most prominent, is prefaced with a substantial critical essay and a translation of Dacier's "Essay upon Satyr";<sup>11</sup> the Post-boy rob'd of his Mail, or The Pacquet Broke Open, in the press in July, is a medley of entertainments, amorous and otherwise, some of which betray Tom Brown's manner in dealing with the London scene. A second volume appeared in 1693.

In December of 1693 Gildon was friendly enough with Brown and Motteux to publish some verse in the Gentleman's Journal. He addressed Dryden in a flattering letter in May. And, an important event of his early years, he became a deist under the influence of the forceful personality of Charles Blount, a friendship which culminated in Gildon's contributing to the Oracles of Reason<sup>12</sup> a defence of Blount's apparent suicide. Gildon quickly tired of deism. In 1694 he is protesting his orthodoxy. For some years, however, he had to fight the notoriety of his defence of Blount, and it is not until 1705 that he attempts to make a full-fledged announcement of his return to the faith in the Deist's Manual, or a Rational Enquiry into The

10. London, Printed for Peter Buck...1692.

11. London, Printed for John Dunton...1692.

12. London, Printed 1693.

Christian Religion,<sup>13</sup> dedicated to the Archbishop of Canterbury. In the midst of the excitement of being a deist Gildon found time to write some major critical essays in Miscellaneous Letters and Essays on several Subjects<sup>14</sup> (1694), directed letters to Dryden, Granville, Walter Moyle, Dennis, and Congreve, and edited Chorus Poetarum, or Poems on several Occasions,<sup>15</sup> a miscellany with the illustrious names of Buckingham, Rochester, Etherege and Mrs. Behn on the title page. Gildon's friendship with Mrs. Behn, apparently begun years earlier, resulted in his rewriting and publishing, in 1696, the Younger Brother, or The Amorous Jilt,<sup>16</sup> a play which Mrs. Behn had written hastily in the presence of her admirers, with a memoir of her life. This memoir, in an expanded form, prefaced Gildon's edition of Mrs. Behn's novels, published the same year. It is possible Gildon had access to her manuscripts.<sup>17</sup>

Although the Younger Brother was a failure (which Gildon blamed on a faction, a constant complaint with him later), it was a beginning in the drama. He had been allowed to experiment with a play at the expense of someone else's

13. With some Considerations on Mr. Hobbs, Spinoza, the Oracles of Reason, Second Thoughts, &c. London, Printed for A. Roper...1705.

14. London, Printed for Benjamin Bragg...1694.

15. London, Printed for Benjamin Bragg...MDCLXIV.

16. ...Written by the late Ingenious Mrs. A. Behn. With some Account of her Life. London, Printed for J. Harris, 1696.

17. George Woodcock, The Incomparable Astrea, London: Boardman, 1948, p11ff.

reputation. The future must have looked promising, although the group gathered about Mrs. Behn was going out of fashion. In 1697 with the Roman Bride's Revenge,<sup>18</sup> the theme of which is the overwhelming importance of the national weal, Gildon made a full-fledged dramatic debut. He tells us "As it was writ in a Month, so it had the Fate of those untimely Births, as hasty a Death."<sup>19</sup> This same year Gildon was chosen to edit the second volume of Rochester's Familiar Letters,<sup>20</sup> Tom Brown having edited Volume I. Brown addresses two letters to Gildon in Volume II, the intimate man-about-town nature of which indicates they were friends despite the History of the Athenian Society incident. Congreve had contributed a poem to Miscellany Poems. An unsigned letter to Congreve here seems to be by Gildon. It is in a tone of fairly close friendship, advising Congreve that he is sick and to give his regards to all his friends at Will's.

Phaeton, or The Fatal Divorce,<sup>21</sup> Gildon's first successful play, a blend of Quinault's opera and Euripides'

18. London, Printed for John Sturton, 1697.

19. Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets, 2d. cit., p.176.

20. Familiar Letters: Written by the Right Honourable John late Earl of Rochester and several other Persons of Honour ...London: Printed for W. Onley, for Sam. Briscoe...1697.

21. A Tragedy. As it was acted at the Theatre Royal. in Imitation of the Ancients. With some Reflections on a Book call'd, a Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage, London, Printed for Abel Roper...1698.

Medea, is avowedly an imitation of the ancients. It was produced at the Theatre Royal in 1698. It has a substantial critical preface which includes an answer to Collier's Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage. Collier's work was advertised in the Post Boy, issue of April 16-18 and in the Flying Post, issue of April 19-21. Gildon's Phaeton is announced in the issue of April 28-30. Gildon's reply, hastily tacked on to the end of the preface, is the first of the many answers. It was, as we shall see, a poor reply, like the rest of the replies to Collier. In the preface Gildon thanks Thomas Cheek for critical help. The songs to Phaeton were published separately later in the year,<sup>22</sup> and Chorus Poetarum was re-issued. Gildon's condensation and revision of Langbaine appeared in '98 also.

Now reasonably well launched on a dramatic career, Gildon followed Phaeton with Measure for Measure, or Beauty the Best Advocate,<sup>23</sup> played at Lincoln's Inn Fields in February 1700 with Betterton and Mrs. Bracegirdle in the cast and Daniel Purcell's music. Gildon used both Davenant's and Shakespeare's plays in his own adaptation. In many ways it is the most pleasing of his dramatic works. The play was presumably a modest success. Gildon's version was

22. The Songs in Phaeton. By J. Heptinstall, for Samuel Scott, 1698.

23. London, Printed for D. Brown...1700.

used at a benefit at the Haymarket, April 26, 1706, and as late as 1764 the copyright was still valuable.<sup>24</sup> A much more original attempt than Phaeton was Love's Victim, or The Queen of Wales,<sup>25</sup> produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1701 with a great cast, including Betterton, Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle and Mrs. Porter. The debt here is still to Euripides, but for better or for worse Gildon makes the material his own. In the preface Gildon gets a chance to do something for which he rarely had opportunity, to deprecate the applause of the town. Gildon probably knew Betterton well enough at this time to profit from his suggestions, and Halifax may have contributed literary ideas as well as patronage to the play.<sup>26</sup> This is the high point of Gildon's theatrical career -- a successful play and a critical preface defending it by the rules must have come as close to his ideal of literary success as it would be possible to come. Work on two more miscellanies crowned Gildon's literary production for 1701. One, generally called "Gildon's Miscellany," was issued under two title pages, first as A New Collection of Poems on Several Occasions<sup>27</sup> and then as A New Miscellany of Original Poems on

24. There is a copyright assignment of one-twelfth of a share in the play to Thomas Lownds dated October 16, 1764 (B. M. Add. MS. 38730, Lot 136, f.104b).

25. Printed by M. Bennet, for Richard Parker...1701?

26. See Preface, sig. A2r.

27. London, Printed for Peter Buck...1701 (From Case, Item No. 223).



Several Occasions;<sup>28</sup> Dryden's name heading the title page of the first edition and Dorset's of the second were calculated to make it sell. At the end of the year Lintot paid Gildon £5/7s/6d to do Examen Miscellaneum.<sup>29</sup> As M. Dottin points out, Pope only got five pounds for the first version of The Rape of the Lock.<sup>30</sup> The volume appeared in 1702, with an Epistle Dedicatory to the Duke of Schomberg, a favorite with Anne.

In April 1702 Gildon was paid the compliment of imitation and plagiarism in A Comparison between the Two Stages.<sup>31</sup> As the year ended he burst into the literary scene again with a play, The Patriot, or The Italian Con-

28. London, Printed for Peter Buck...1701.

29. London, Printed for B. L. and Sold by John Chantry... 1702. See Nichols' Literary Anecdotes, London, 1812-1815, VIII, 293.

30. Dottin, op.cit., p.12.

31. The Flying-Post for April 11-14, 1702, announced the publication of A Comparison between the Two Stages. G. Thorn-Drury as long ago as 1925 ("A Comparison between the Two Stages...1702," RES. I[1925],96) stated positively that the book could not be by Gildon and Mr. Staring B. Wells has added a great deal of evidence against Gildon's authorship since ("An Eighteenth Century Attribution," JEGP, XXXVIII [1939], 233-246). Wells notes that the work is not ascribed to Gildon before Reed's edition of Dodsley's Old Plays, 1790, I, xcix (Wells, p.233n). Wells has also discovered an MS. note in the British Museum copy of the work which may antedate Reed's revision of Dodsley and Baker's Biographica Dramatica. The uncritical acceptance of Gildon's authorship of A Comparison leads to errors of both fact and conjecture in M. Dottin's account of Gildon's life (op.cit.)..

spiracy.<sup>32</sup> Gildon's admiration for "fiery Lee" and for that protector of the poets, Lucius Junius Brutus, encouraged him to attempt an adaptation of Lee's play of 1680. Lee's play had been forbidden by the Lord Chamberlain because some remarks on the effeminacy and immorality of Tarquin had been interpreted as a reflection on Charles II, a case of any shoe fitting fairly well. Gildon suppressed "all reflections on monarchy," but the Master of the Revels still would not permit the play. Gildon then shifted the scene from Athens to Rome and made Cosmo di Medici the hero.<sup>33</sup> With the aid of Daniel Purcell's airs, a prologue by Dennis and an epilogue by Farquhar, the play was fairly successful. Gildon dedicated it to the Queen, and the Duke of Leeds commended it to her.<sup>34</sup> But the Queen referred the

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32. The bibliographical history of this play may have some connection yet unnoticed with Gildon's publishing career. The two copies under the title The Patriot which I have seen have the title page in different type. This was probably to correct a misprint, the original printing having "Mr. Rogers" instead of "Mrs. Rogers" among the dramatic personae. The dedication is signed in the first state. But Baker-Reed-Jones (Biographica Dramatica, London, 1912, II, 338) record an edition under the title of The Italian Patriot, or, The Florentine Conspiracy, in which the bookseller in the Preface alleges that he was cheated of his share of the profits although he paid part of the copy money and asserts that there is one-third more in his edition (which he styles "the true original," indicating certainly that it appeared later). I have not been able to see a copy of this and do not know if one is extant. The imprint of The Patriot reads: London, Printed for William Davis...1703.

33. Gildon explains the details of the change in the Preface.

34. Historical Manuscripts Commission, VIIIth Report, Duke of Marlborough MSS., Appendix, p.51.

matter to the Duchess of Marlborough, saying that the Duke had asked her to give something to the poet and wanting to know how much would be proper. We do not know how much, if anything, Gildon finally received. As with the Roman Bride's Revenge, the public good is the theme.

With 1703 Gildon's career takes a different course. The success of the Patriot was apparently not sufficient to encourage him to continue dramatic writing nor had his poetical miscellanies been sufficiently lucrative to encourage him to venture into that field again. Criticism, in which he had already made a considerable start, now dominated his range of interests, but political writing, verse translation and the writing and editing of fiction helped to provide him with a precarious living. The two surest roads to literary success, omitting the improbable advent of a wealthy patron, were outstanding literary excellence and alignment with a political party. No young writer quite abandons the idea of the first, and Gildon's critical interests, which led him into a quarrel with Pope, gave him an opportunity for the second. The decade from 1700 to 1710 is scantier in literary production for Gildon than the preceding one. As early as 1694 he had grown important enough to be attacked; in the preface to Chorus Poetarum we find him defending not his literary theories but his character. It is possible that deism injured his literary career,

or it is possible that a dissolute life did. The best evidence for this, unfortunately, is the strong moral tone of his later writings. The difference in spirit between two works very similar in form, the Post-boy rob'd of his Mail (1692) and the Post-Man Robb'd of his Mail (1719), reveals this change in attitude, but concerning the cause of it we can only conjecture.<sup>35</sup>

In 1703 Gildon wrote the preface for Ovidius Britannicus<sup>36</sup> by David Crawford, the Royal Historiographer of Scotland. He must have been occupied, between 1700 and 1705, in minor editorial jobs of which we have no record or in collaborating on books in which we have not yet identified his hand. John Dunton, who had welcomed Gildon's support in the days of the Athenian Society, mentions Gildon favorably in his Life and Errors:

Mr. Gildon is well acquainted with the Languages, and writes with a peculiar Briskness, which common Hackers can't boast of, in regard, they want the Life and Spirit, and the same Liberty, and Extent of Genius. He was always very just in his Engagements where I had any Concern, and his Performances were done as well as the Designs wou'd admit. He writ the History of the Athenian Society, which contain'd the just Merits of that cause.<sup>37</sup>

35. Dottin, op.cit., p.23.

36: Ovidius Britannicus. or, Love Epistles in Imitation of Ovid... by David Crawford, Gent....London, Printed for John Chantry...1703.

37. John Dunton, Life and Errors, London, Printed for S. Malthus, 1705, p.241 (sig. R4r). Also, 1818, I, 181.

This passage reads as if it were written to bolster up the reputation of a man who needed it, but Dunton is in the most erratic phase of his career by 1705. He may be here merely defending Gildon on old scores long since forgotten.

Gildon officially gets into the Whig fold in 1705-6, when the debate on whether or not to invite the Electress Sophia of Hanover to England waxed hot in parliament. The Whigs played their hands carefully, forcing the Tories to bring up for debate what they had advantageously used as rumor, and defeated them. Gildon played a minor role in this business. His pamphlet, the material and inspiration for which must have been provided by the Whigs, is entitled A Review of Her Royal Highness the Princess Sophie's Letter to the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, and that of Sir Rowland Gwynne to the Right Honourable the Earl of Stamford: or, A Jacobite Plot against the Protestant Succession discovered....<sup>38</sup> This appeared in February 1706. M. Dottin implies that Gildon's participation in this was naive and that he did not realize the consequences of his act and that the dedication to the Queen is "touchingly ingenuous."<sup>39</sup> This is hard to believe. To be sure, Gildon's pamphlet comes hard on the heels (as so

<sup>38</sup>. London, Printed for the Author, and sold by Benj. Bragge, n.d.

<sup>39</sup>. Dottin, op.cit., p.23.

many of his writings do) of the event discussed. In November 1705 Lord Haversham "hurled the Tory defiance."<sup>40</sup> The debate on the subject of the church being in danger under Anne was held December 7 and immediately following this the parliament asked the Queen to punish the writers of "Scandalous and seditious reports."<sup>41</sup> It is hard to see how Gildon could have been unaware of the importance of the issue involved. Indeed, if the pamphlet were published in February, it is at the end of almost a year of agitation on the subject and after furious debate in Parliament. Gildon did not realize, of course, that the consequences would be the Queen's Bench.

Gildon's tract concerns itself especially with the Tory proposal to invite the Electress Sophia to England so that she would be available if the Queen died; otherwise the pretender would have a chance to seize the throne. The chief result of this proposal was to annoy the Queen; she came to regard the Tory instigators of this proposal as insolent. The tone of the Gildon pamphlet is that of a Tory partisan arguing the merits of the invitation to Sophia. In an extravagant dedication to the Queen Gildon urges that patriotism is his only motive. Sophia is to come to England

40. I. S. Leadam, The History of England from the Accession of Anne to the Death of George II, London: Longmans Green, 1921 [Political History of England, ed. Hunt & Poole, IX], p.69.

41. Ibid., p.71.

and learn English ways, and to advance the cause of this Gildon proposes to answer certain libels which have appeared and provide evidence of support for the proposal from high authority. The letters which Gildon will reprint and discuss, he maintains, have already been printed in Germany and have escaped notice. He will be, he says, as reasonable and unprejudiced in his presentation of the material as possible. What follows is conventional enough in the light of the controversy, but it is cleverly presented. The letter of the Princess Sophia that Gildon reviews is dated November 3, 1705, was to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and suggests that she wants to be in England at the Queen's death. The other letter, dated January 12, 1706, is from Gwynne to the Earl of Stamford. This expresses suspicion of the loyalty of the Queen with regard to the Protestant succession, a suspicion often entertained in parliament, and urged that this action of the Electress would baffle the Jacobites. The Whigs came in for some moderate criticism. This is obviously to support the notion that the work is a piece of Tory propaganda, though Gildon is somewhat independent politically throughout his career. The success of the work was instantaneous: "March 8, a Complaint was made to the House of Commons of a printed Pamphlet entitled, A Letter from Sir Rowland Gwynne to the Right Honourable Earl of Stamford which was read at

the Table, and some of the most remarkable passages are as follows..."<sup>42</sup> [thirteen pages of extracts follow]. After the reading of the pamphlet in Commons it was decided that it was a "scandalous, false and malicious Libel, tending to create a Misunderstanding between her Majesty, upon the Princess Sophia, and upon the Proceedings of both Houses of Parliament."<sup>43</sup> On the eleventh the Commons agreed to petition the Queen to find the author of the work and on the twelfth the petition was presented to her, urging that the author be punished "according to the utmost Rigour of the Law."<sup>44</sup> This the Queen agreed to do. On June 8 Harley issued the warrant: "Charles Gildon to be apprehended for being concern'd in publishing a seditious Libel."<sup>45</sup> On the fourteenth the keeper of Newgate was advised to receive the accused, who had confessed his guilt. Then Harley wrote the English ambassador at Hanover that the culprit had been found:

I do not know what Sir Rowland Gwyn does at Hamburg, but one Charles Gildon who has printed a book to justify Sir Rowland Gwyn's letter, and impudently dedicated it to the Queen, is committed to Newgate. He was the person who reprinted Sir Rowland Gwyn's letter: he takes the writing of the book on himself, but it may be he will be obliged

42. The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons from the Restoration to the Present Time, London, 1742-1744, III, 456.

43. Ibid., p.469.

44. Ibid.

45. P. R. O. State Papers, dom. Anne, Entry Book, 77.



to produce the true author or authors ere long.<sup>46</sup>

So far as we know, Gildon did not produce the "true author." It is not likely, as M. Dottin conjectures, that Gildon did not know whom to denounce or that he was afraid to denounce the guilty parties. My own conjecture is that Gildon was duped to the extent that he did not realize the possible repercussions of the affair (the Queen's Bench) but that he believed in the political soundness of what he had advocated. His political views, like his literary ones, are trimmed frequently to take advantage of the winds of fashion, but there is a larger consistency to them, and the view put forward in this all too successful book would have seemed reasonable to him without the letters and without the subduing effect of Newgate.

Gildon stood before the Queen's Bench on June 15, with the violent Dr. Drake, who had just fired off a salvo against church and state in his Mercurius Politicus.<sup>47</sup> On the 18th Gildon wrote to Harley's secretary, Erasmus Lewis, asking that bail be accepted:

June 18. The Press Yard. --I would willingly have my conduct unquestionable to Mr. Secretary; and lest my ignorance in these affairs should betray me to any method dis-

46. P. R. O. State Papers Foreign, Entry Book, June 18, 1706, quoted by Dottin, op.cit., p.24.

47. Narcissus Luttrell, A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs, Oxford, 1857, VI, 51.

agreeable to him, I desire to know whether you will be pleased to take my bail...as Mr. Stevens has satisfied Mr. Barrett, having two very substantial men, one worth five or six thousand pounds, the other besides his trade in the bookselling, has a place of 50 a year for his life. I desire your answer by my wife, that I may have my liberty today.<sup>48</sup>

Gildon was found guilty on February 12, 1707, with sentence deferred. He applied to the Whigs for aid, and Sir Richard Steele wrote to the Queen for a noli prosequi. This has been preserved in a first draft, among Steele's papers:

Charles Gildon. --Has by an unhappy mistake, and not out of any malicious design against the Government, been concerned in publishing a pamphlet called "Sir Rowland Gwynn's Letter, etc."; that he has had a liberal education and fortune; that he expects this term a sentence more terrible than death for his offense; that he is under the greatest sorrow and contrition, and will hereafter always abhor and avoid all licence in his speech and writing; and therefore prays that Her Majesty will grant him a noli prosequi.<sup>49</sup>

This was endorsed by Harley: "Received May 2, 1707. Read May 4, 1707. He to apply again after sentence." Perhaps already the softening effects of Whig intervention had been felt; Gildon was fined £100 but not imprisoned. In November we find no less a personage than Mainwaring, the recently

<sup>48</sup>. Historical Manuscripts Commission, MSS. Portland, VIII, 232.

<sup>49</sup>. B. M. Add. MS. 5145. This was first pointed out by George A. Aitken, The Life of Richard Steele, London, 1889, I, 152. Printed in Historical Manuscripts Commission, MSS. Portland, VIII, 349.

appointed Auditor of Imprests, intervening for Gildon:

Charles Gildon. --Was fined £100. for being concerned in publishing Sir Rowland Gwynne's letter to the Earl of Stamford, which he is wholly incapable of paying. Prays that it may be remitted.<sup>50</sup>

This is endorsed by Harley as having been received from Mainwaring on the 27th. We do not know the final outcome of this request, but presumably it was granted, and an important chapter in Gildon's political education was closed.

The last page of Gildon's unlucky work lists some books then in preparation by the author. The shadow of Newgate changed Gildon's mind about political writing for a time, but the titles are interesting in the light of his subsequent career: The Rehearsal Transpos'd, or The Revolution Principles set in a True Light; The Political Looking-Glass; The Favourites Oracle, Consisting of Bold Truths, or Easy Impossibilities, by which this Nation may infallibly, in a little Time, be made Rich, Powerful and Happy, in an End of her Factions. security of her Church, and improvement of her Trade, &c. None of these ever appeared, but we may be sure that the subjects did. The Political Looking-Glass could have been intended as fiction, with a thin glaze of coffee house politics to lend immediacy to it. The Favourites Oracle is equally undecipherable, except that one is reminded of Dennis and Gil-

<sup>50</sup>. Historical Manuscripts Commission, MSS. Portland, VIII, 353.

don's later projects and of Gildon's lifelong interest in reform.

Gildon's reputation, perhaps already low, did not suffer from his "seditious libel." He found publishers in the next few years for a variety of enterprises. In 1707 he is mentioned as "the ingenious Mr. Gildon" by "Philaret, a Member of Athens" in the preface to the Athenian Sport, or Two Thousand Paradoxes Merrily Argued.<sup>51</sup> In 1708 he published in two volumes an adaptation of Apuleius called the New Metamorphosis, or The Pleasant Transformation,<sup>52</sup> and Threnodia Virginea, or The Apotheosis, a Poem occasion'd by the much Lamented Death of Mrs. Hester Buckworth<sup>53</sup>. Libertas Triumphans,<sup>54</sup> a lengthy eulogy of Marlborough, published in July, may indicate that Gildon was

51. This does not seem to be by Gildon. The title page reads "by a Member of the Athenian Society" and Gildon nowhere claims to have been a member. The imprint is: London, B. Bragg...1707.

52. According to a MS. note in David Laing's copy, Gildon seems to have promised a continuation which never appeared. "Accordingly," says Laing, "in the second edition of the Golden Ass (in two volumes, 1724), the Golden Spy is added at the end of it." (Helkett & Laing, Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature...ed. by Dr. James Kennedy...Edinburgh, 1926-1934, II, 390). It is not easy to explain why Gildon was concerned so many years after the event with a continuation promised in 1708 or 1709, but the 1724 edition of the New Metamorphosis does reprint the Golden Spy. I have not seen a copy of the New Metamorphosis.

53. London, Printed for John Lawrence...1708. I am indebted to Dr. L. I. Lutwack for transcribing the title page of this from the Harvard Library copy and for summarizing the Preface for me.

54. London, Printed for Tho. Bullock...1708.

seeking a minor party role. The work, a folio volume of some twenty pages, is dedicated to the Electoral Prince of Hanover, later George I, who is "The Honour of Germany, the Desire and Hopes of Britain, the Blessing of the Present Age, and the Admiration of the Future."<sup>55</sup> The poem is not a good one, but it is equal to some of the minor efforts of greater poets of the age. Gildon is careful to praise Peterborough almost as much as the subject of the poem. In 1709 Gildon issued the Golden Spy, or A Political Journal of the British Nights Entertainments.<sup>56</sup> This the publisher regarded as a good enough risk to attempt, in 1710, serial publication, which was abandoned, however, after two issues.<sup>57</sup> The epistle dedicates the work "to the author of a Tale of a Tub." It is signed "The Bookseller" with the explanation that the author failed to send a dedication. This is possible of course, but curious in the case of a struggling author who used his dedications frequently for pleas for patronage. A possible solution to the matter is in Swift's Remarks upon a Book, entitled, "The Rights of the Christian Church" (1703). Swift is comparing the powerful enemies the church had earlier in the person of such writers as Hobbes and Spinoza with the lesser crew of deists, such as "Toland, Asgil, Coward, Gildon, this author

55. Sig. A2r.

56. London, Printed for J. Woodward...MDCCLX.

57. CBEL, II, 575.

of the 'Rights,' and some others."<sup>58</sup> Since Gildon had renounced deism recently, it is possible he wished to make a gesture toward Swift without calling too much attention to the newness of his return to the faith; another explanation is that Gildon regarded the Golden Spy as hack work and did not care to have either his name on it or the stamp of his manner in the preface. This would seem to be unlikely; there is a good deal of didactic material in the book which is unmistakably Gildon's. The Golden Spy relates the tales told by a handful of gold coins. The idea of the "spy" who reveals the intimate secrets of the great is of course not new in 1700. Gildon had some contact about this time with Mrs. Manley, and Midgely, who was connected with the very popular Turkish Spy (1687), contributed to one of the miscellanies. Between the groups of stories or "nights" -- there is an attempt to group the stories into six "nights" -- the coins discuss religion, politics and London life. Some of the sketches of London life would be more at home in the works of Tom Brown; Gildon is still under his influence in his treatment of the London scene. In the Sixth Night, "Of Peace and War," we get the most serious political and moral statement in the book. Gildon gives us a debate between a conservative Whig and a "new cut" Whig. The "new cut" Whig wants an immediate invasion of France by a great army and

<sup>58</sup>. Prose Works, ed. Temple Scott, London: Bell, 1900-1909, III, 87.

attacks the effeminate reign of Charles II and England's failure to settle things once and for all on the continent as the great sources of England's weakness. The conservative Whig says that this is all treasonable. He wants France to concede some territory, reduce armaments, yield Calais to England -- all this with the especial purpose of allowing England to reduce armaments and thereby remove the necessity of maintaining a large standing army: "Since the Parliament denied it [the standing army] to the Best of Kings, I dare believe the Best of Queens will never seek it."<sup>59</sup> This statement is followed by a long, Falstaffian attack on war which concludes with the thought that there is nothing wrong with peace for anyone except the soldier.

There were other works of Gildon's at the booksellers at this time. The History of the Athenian Society was re-issued, and the Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton appeared in 1710.<sup>60</sup> The Life reveals (or Gildon wished to pretend to) an intimate acquaintanceship with Betterton. The information on Betterton's life is scanty; most of the book is an elaborate dialogue (many of the speeches run for pages) in which Betterton explains his comprehensive theory of the role of the actor-manager. Finally, two major critical documents of Gildon's appeared in 1710, the "Essay on the Art, Rise and Progress of the Stage in Greece, Rome and

<sup>59</sup>. Sig. 215v.

<sup>60</sup>. London, Printed for Robert Gosling...1710.

England" and "Remarks on the Plays of Shakespeare." Both of these, with a shorter and less important "Remarks on the Poems of Shakespear," appeared in a piratical seventh volume published by Curll to Rowe's edition of Shakespeare.<sup>61</sup> At the beginning of April 1710 Gildon obtained employment with John Brightland and Charles Povey as the editor of the British Mercury, a paper published by the Sun Fire Insurance Company, and as the compiler and part author of an English grammar.<sup>62</sup> Gildon was also employed as clerk of the company at £ 80 per annum. Gildon's French was apparently not good enough for him to translate regularly for the paper, the document concerning his clerkship notes.<sup>63</sup> Professor Griffith conjectures that this particular task may have given Pope the material to accuse Gildon of venality. Yet Pope by the date of the Epistle to Arbuthnot must have had many examples as good as this of Gildon's acceptance of money for editorial and literary work. The Grammar was published in November or December,

61. The Works of Mr. William Shakespear, Volume the Seventh. London, Printed for E. Curll...M DCC X. The ascription of this volume to Gildon was made as long ago as 1861 in N. & Q., 2nd ser., p.349. The dedication is signed "S. N." I am indebted to Dr. Giles Dawson of the Folger Shakespeare Library for the suggestion that this is simply "[Charle]S [Gildo]N." Dr. Dawson has noted also that in the New York Public Library copy of this volume the name of Charles Gildon is printed in full at the end of the dedication, presumably for presentation purposes.

62. See R. H. Griffith, "Isaac Bickerstaff's Grammar," N. & Q., CXCV (1949), 362-365.

63. Ibid., p.363.



1710. The Grammar was probably planned before Gildon was employed by Brightland; there is evidence of Gildon's hand in the writing as well as the editing of it, however. The passages on "Tragedy" in the "Rhetorick" are little more than a dry summation of Gildon's ideas as expressed in the "Art, Rise and Progress of the Stage." Though hack work, this employment need not have been uncongenial to Gildon.

Shortly after the Grammar appeared, Gildon made a bid for patronage by leaving a copy for Harley and then addressing to him a letter<sup>64</sup> which is almost a paraphrase of passages from Gildon's prefaces. Two special projects are mentioned in this letter: a proposal for an academy of letters and science modeled on the French, which Gildon elaborates on in great detail later, and a proposal for increasing the revenue of the crown by some £ 50,000 a year. No more information is available on this latter intriguing offer; Dennis, whom Gildon knew and admired, proposed a new tax for the protection and encouragement of merchant shipping in 1706. In 1711 the translation of Lucian<sup>65</sup> which bears Dryden's name appeared, with two contributions by Gildon. One of these at least, the Patriae Laudatio, against foreign manners, must have appealed to him. The translations are accurate but unimaginative and more literal than was the

64. B. M. Birch MS. 4163, f.256.

65. The Works of Lucian, translated from the Greek by several eminent Hands... London, 1710-1711, 4v. Gildon's translations are in Volume II, pp.62-68.

fashion.

In 1713 Gildon and Swift crossed swords. Swift contemptuously groups Gildon with Tindal and Toland as "freethinkers" in Mr. Collin's Discourse of Freethinking.<sup>66</sup> It must have annoyed Gildon to be placed with the deists, atheists, and freethinkers in 1713, and undoubtedly this had some effect on the force with which he extolled patriotism and morality in his prefaces and elsewhere. He capitalized on another book when he burst into print with Les Soupirs de la Grand Bretagne, or The Groans of Great Britain,<sup>67</sup> identified as Gildon's recently by Professor John Robert Moorc.<sup>68</sup> It is alleged on the title page of the work that it is the second part of the Groans of Europe, also 1713, by Jean Dumont, Baron of Carlscreon. The Groans of Europe was circulated by the Whigs. Gildon's work maintains an independent and critical Whig attitude, but whether it was commissioned by the party or merely was Gildon's bid for favor from the party is not easily determined. Les Soupirs de la Grand Bretagne is a general satire, "isolationist" with regard to the Treaty of Utrecht, for the ancients both because of their literature (Euripides is mentioned) and because of their love of

66. Prose Works, op.cit., III, 180.

67. Being the Second Part to the Groans of Europe, London, Printed for John Baker...1713.

68. "The Groans of Great Britain: an Unassigned Tract by Charles Gildon." PBSA, XL (1946), 22-31.

liberty, against the neglect of men of letters, anti-papist, critical of the English clergy, and while Whiggish, not very friendly to either party. Between Whig and Tory the choice is clear, theoretically at least:

The Tory Principle is as silly, as dishonest, and full of Contradiction to the Law and the Gospel that of the Whigs is founded on the Word of God, from Genesis to the end of Revelations, and upon the Laws and Constitution of this Nation, from its first Foundation to this Time.<sup>69</sup>

Both parties are filled with corrupt men, the Whigs especially being money-grabbers, and fools predominate everywhere. In a comparison between English and French appreciation of literature, Gildon notes that A Tale of a Tub sells well in England but not the works of Milton. Generally, England is in a bad way: "We have the Luxury of Rome in its Decay, yet even that is clumsy and barbarous, we have no Elegance in Luxury, and our Vices are more gross and clumsy."<sup>70</sup> The author at the end gloomily regrets that we did not burn our histories and romances of chivalry which "betray some honest, simple Natures, to fancy those Chimeras of Liberty, Love of our Country, and the like, which renders them unfit for Business."<sup>71</sup> In this pamphlet Gildon conspicuously displays a facet of his personality which he had exhibited before and which must have

69. Sig. M3r.

70. Sig. Mlv-2r.

71. Ibid.

been a great deterrent to his progress as a political writer. He had strongly held ideas, and he is not quick to change them with the fashions. His political and critical ideas were now formed; they were occasionally modified and trimmed to meet the fashion but never enough for Gildon's good, and the rest of his life Gildon devoted to a repetitious and tiresome restatement of ideas which he had fixed in their main details in his mind shortly after 1710.

In 1714, the year in which we find him in open war with Rowe and Pope (who had been ridiculed, along with Cibber and Swift, in Les Soupairs), Gildon found time for more fiction. Trojan Tales,<sup>72</sup> which Gildon says is little more than a "Polite Piece of Morality,"<sup>73</sup> has as its frame a polite visit of Trojan ladies to the Greek camp. The tales are all moral and exceedingly dull; the work represents a degenerate and shortened roman de longue haleine. There is no evidence that the work was a success; some of the sheets were still available in 1724. The dedication of the book is to Thomas Pelham-Holles, Lord Haughton, later Duke of Newcastle. In this Gildon reflects on the degenerate modern custom of asking permission to dedicate a book and says that he knows of a secretary of state who admonished a poet for daring to dedicate his work to the Queen.

72. Related by Ulysses, Helenus, Hector, Achilles, and Priam, London, Printed for F. Burleigh...1714.

73. Sig. A6r.

If Gildon had in mind here his own Review of Her Royal Highness the Princess Sophia's Letter -- and it is possible that he does -- his political tenacity is even more to be admired and his lack of tact and political wisdom even more to be wondered at.

Gildon's penchant for capitalizing on a vogue and his lack of hesitation about ordinary scandal-mongering are evident from the nature of his association, about May 1714, with Mrs. Mary de la Rivere Manley. In Mrs. Manley's History of her own Life and Times<sup>74</sup> (1725), in a preface by the publisher, Edmund Curll, there is the following account of what seems to have been an extremely happy resolving of a perpetual literary problem for this type of writer:

In the Year 1714, Mr. Gildon, upon a Pique, the Cause of which I cannot assign, wrote some Account of Mrs. Manley's Life, under the title of, The History of Rivella, Author of the Atalantis. Of this piece, two Sheets only were printed, when Mrs. Manley hearing it was in the Press, and suspecting it to be, what it really was, a severe Invective upon some Part of her Conduct, she sent me the following letter...<sup>75</sup>

Curll quotes the letter, which asks that he call on Mrs. Manley, and gives an account of the visit.

Mrs. Manley...requested a sight of Mr. Gildon's Papers. Such a request, I told her, I could not, by any means, grant, without asking Mr. Gildon's Consent; But, upon

74. Published from Her Original Manuscript. The Fourth Edition. With a Preface concerning the Present Publication. London, Printed for E. Curll...M.DCC.XXV.

75. P.iii.

hearing her own Story, which no Pen, but her own, can relate in the agreeable Manner wherein she delivered it, I promised to write to Mr. Gildon the next Day; and not only obtained his Consent to let Mrs. Manley see what Sheets were printed, but also brought them to an Interview, by which Means, all Resentments between them were thoroughly reconciled. Mr. Gildon was likewise, so generous, as to order a total suppression of all his Papers; and Mrs. Manley, as generously resolved to write the History of her Own Life, and Times, under the same title which Mr. Gildon had made choice of.<sup>76</sup>

This is dated September 24, 1724. Mrs. Manley's letter, which Curll quotes, does not actually mention Gildon, but there would seem to be no reason to doubt the general truth of Curll's story. No trace remains, of course, of the few sheets which were printed.

Mr. Ralph Strauss<sup>77</sup> has discovered what appears to be another version of this incident. In Richard Savage's An Author to be Lett (1720), a scurrilous attack on Curll, the following story is told:

We commenced Authors together. At my first setting out I was hired by a reverend Prebend to libel Dean Swift for infidelity. Soon after I was employed by Curll to write a Merry Tale, the Wit of which was its Obscenity. This we agreed to palm upon the World for a posthumous piece of Mr. Prior. However, a certain lady, celebrated for certain Liberties, had a curiosity to see the real Author. Curll, on my promise that if I had a Present, he should go Snacks, sent me to her. I was admitted while her Ladyship was shifting; and on my Admittance, Mrs. Abigail was ordered to withdraw. What passed between

76. P. iv.

77. The Unspeakable Curll, London: Chapman & Hall, 1927, p. 44.

us, a Point of Gallantry obliges me to conceal; but after some extraordinary civilities, I was dismiss'd with a Purse of Guineas, and a Command to write a Sequel to my Tale. Upon this I turn'd out smart in Dress, cut Curll of his share, and run out of most of my Money in printing my Work at my own Cost. But some Years after (just at the time of his starving poor Pattison), the Varlet was revenged. He arrested me for several Months Board brought me back to my old Garret, and made me drudge on in my old, Dirty Work. 'Twas in his Service that I wrote Obscenity and Profaneness, Under the names of Pope and Swift... Sometimes I was Mr. Joseph Gay, and at others Theory Burnet, or Addison. I abridged Histories and Travels, and translated from the French, what they never wrote...<sup>78</sup>

Assuming great distortion, this could be an account of Gildon's "deal" with Mrs. Manley, and the reference to translating from the French what "they never wrote" is specifically applicable to Les Soupirs de la Grand Bretagne. The period during which Curll was "starving poor Pattison" was 1726-27. Savage, of course, may have given a composite picture of both the Curll hack and the scandalous lady author and have had Gildon only remotely in mind.

With the New Rehearsal, or Says the Younger, which appeared in April 1714, Gildon reached the apogee of his critical career. He felt when he died, no doubt, that the Complete Art of Poetry (1718) and the Laws of Poetry (1721) were his legacy to posterity, but the New Rehearsal adds

78. An Author to be Lett...by their Associate and Well-wisher Iscarlot Hackney...London: Printed for Ax. Moore ...1729, pp.3-4.

the sparkle of wit to Gildon's criticism. This sparkle of wit he had not attained to before and was not to reach afterward. The division of the literary men along party lines made it possible for Gildon to become in 1714 an active ally of the Whig group at Button's. Gildon missed this chance, largely because of his inflexibility of mind. But the blistering attack on Rowe and Pope must have made his name one to be reckoned with at this moment. Later, like his "master," Dennis, he refused to alter his ideas with the times and like Dennis he suffered the loneliness of being archaic at the end.

In 1716 Aaron Hill dedicated the Fatal Vision<sup>79</sup> to Gildon and Dennis, coupling their names in a way that was certainly pleasing to Gildon. Hill's preface, however, reads as if he half expects to be attacked by these two critics. Pope, about this time, thought Mrs. Centlivre and Gildon had had a hand in the Catholick Poet, or Protestant Barnaby's Sorrowful Lamentation<sup>80</sup> (1716), now attributed to Oldmixon,<sup>81</sup> indicating that Gildon was considered a member of the Whig group at Button's. The coincidence that this book appeared on the same day as the True Character of Mr. Pope, attributed to Dennis, must have further confirmed in Pope's mind that Gildon was a

79. London, Printed for Edw. Nutt, [1716?]

80. Sherburn, op.cit., p.178.

81. CBEL, II, 877; Straus, op.cit., p.241.



member of the opposition group and financed, probably, by more powerful men and better writers, i.e., the "venal pen." Although Professor Irving refers to Gildon, Oldmixon and Mrs. Centlivre as part of "Curll's tribe,"<sup>82</sup> we do not know how intimate the members of the tribe were. In 1717 Gildon sent out into the world his last major poetic effort, Canons, or The Vision,<sup>83</sup> addressed to the Earl of Carnavan. The poem is really a twenty-six page plea for patronage, and not really a topographical poem. A critical preface defends the poem as being after the manner of the ancients. The poem is filled with elaborate mythological machinery. There is a design, as Gildon insists, but it is constructed out of odds and ends of classical bric-a-brac and directed to a sordid end. Canons must have only confirmed the suspicions of Gildon's friends of his conceit and of his enemies of the close relationship between his every piece of writing and his need for money. The Memoirs of the Life of William Wycherley<sup>84</sup> (1718) is mostly made up of a "Character of his Writings" by Lord Lansdowne and some Wycherley letters. The biographical part is but twenty-three pages

82. William Henry Irving, John Gay, Favorite of the Wits, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1940, p.153.

83. Later reissued with apparently no change except a cancel title as The Apparition, a Poem, address'd to the Right Honourable James Earl of Carnavan... London, Printed for S. Baker...1718.

84. Memoirs of the Life of William Wycherley, Esq, With a Character of his Writings. By the Right Honourable George, Lord Lansdowne... London, Printed for E. Curll....1718.

long. Even in this small sketch, biography is watered down considerably by asides in which Gildon comments on the state of patronage, moralizes about life in general, and attacks Pope. Gildon has the facts of Wycherley's life in good order, but nothing but the statement that Gildon did wait upon him would make us suspect that he knew him personally. Wycherley was a Jacobite, Gildon says, because of King James' bounty, "a much better excuse than any Man else in the Kingdom cou'd pretend to."<sup>85</sup> Gildon's tribute to Wycherley is as good as the age had to offer: "No man ever writ with more Wit or more Applause with the Judicious, and yet no Man ever assumed less in Conversation on those uncommon Excellencies."<sup>86</sup>

In the Complete Art of Poetry<sup>87</sup> (1718) Gildon attempts for the first time to summarize his critical views and to provide examples of the correct modes of poetry; the second volume of the work is, in fact, an anthology of selections arranged by topic and contains no critical comment at all. It was this feature, very likely, that led Matthew Green later to say

...my Muse, tho' Mean,  
Draws from the spring, she finds within;  
Nor vainly buys, what Gildon sells,  
Poetic buckets from dry wells.<sup>88</sup>

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85. P.8.

86. P.22.

87. The Complete Art of Poetry, London: Printed for Charles Rivington...1718, 2v.

88. The Spleen, ed. W. H. Williams, London: Methuen, 1936, p.11.

It was Gildon's intent with this volume to supply exactly what the title promised, for Englishmen. The book is dedicated to no less august a personage than King George, and His Majesty is reminded that Gildon is the "earliest, greatest, longest and at this time I believe the only Sufferer in your Majesty's Dominions, for an unbyas'd Zeal for the Security of the Succession of the House of Hanover." <sup>89</sup>

Gildon would have us believe, in the early pages of this, that he and Dennis were good friends. He has received a letter from Dennis complaining that he is never home. We have not been offering up, Gildon says, "our moderate Libations to Bacchus, amidst our more plentiful Sacrifices to Apollo."<sup>90</sup> Then Gildon attempts to establish the kind of dialogue that he has handled successfully in the New Rehearsal. But the work is dry and what Gildon once asserted with confidence he now asserts with petulance. The hardening of Gildon's critical taste which culminated in this work is part of an increasing rigidity in his thinking and writing during the later years of his life. Further evidence of this is in the Post-Man Robb'd of his Mail<sup>91</sup> (1719). Gildon here uses the form he employed in the Post-boy rob'd of his Mail of 1692, but the content is vastly different. The 1692 volume is largely a collection of

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89. Sig. a2v.

90. P.111.

91. London, Printed for A. Bettesworth...MDCCXIX.

novella with superficial moral comments; Gildon was trying to provide a popular miscellany of fiction and curious fact with just enough "serious" material to make the book appear more important than it was. If the Post-Man were planned along these lines, which is doubtful, Gildon was not capable of going through with the plan. He is now primarily the moralist and philosopher and only superficially the writer of fiction. Many of the letters in the Post-Man are essays on abstract topics. Most of what passes for fiction is political, moral, and critical argument. The volume is dedicated to Garth, whom Gildon had known some time by this date. In the preface Gildon refers to his "misfortunes," presumably his gradually increasing blindness. The topics of the letters are many and varied. There is less fiction and more moralizing than in the Post-boy. There is a spirited attack on Pope (still as "Sawny Dapper"), and, perhaps the most important part of the work, there is an elaborate plan for a British Academy modeled on but certainly calculated to outdo the French. Gildon suggests in this a tax on printing and paper, and it is possible that he had this in mind in 1710 when he coupled the idea of an academy with a proposal to raise revenue in his letter to Harley. Gildon's plan for an academy includes complete regulation of the stage by a committee which will have the power to test plays by the rules before they are

performed.

In 1719, attacking rapidly as he had with Pope, Gildon launched into the second of his major literary quarrels. Defoe and Gildon, we might note in passing, had once appeared together in a volume. Defoe had written the "Ode to the Athenian Society" which prefaced Gildon's History. Their ways had long since parted. Defoe published Robinson Crusoe in April 1719. The book was sensationally popular, and Gildon's attack, if inspired by the financial rewards certain to fall to the critic who got his attack out first, was undoubtedly fortified and supported by a personal grudge and a gentleman-scholar's resentment of the success of the less cultivated. Gildon attacked Defoe in two pamphlets, "A Dialogue between D---- D---e, Robinson Crusoe and his Man Friday," and "An Epistle to D----- D'F-----e, The Reputed Author of Robinson Crusoe." The first pamphlet had not gone to press when the second volume of Robinson Crusoe appeared. Gildon went on to include this in a second pamphlet. The two were published together on September 28.<sup>92</sup> Gildon's volume was a success; there are at least three editions, one of them published in Dublin. Because of his blindness Gildon was now composing entirely by dictation, and the haste of composition is evi-

92. The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of D---- De F-- , of London, Hosier... London, Printed for J. Roberts ...1719.

dent in the attack. He misses obvious inconsistencies in Defoe's account, but he probably supplied Defoe was an out for the dilemma he was faced with as the book's popularity mounted. Dottin,<sup>93</sup> Wright,<sup>94</sup> Sutherland<sup>95</sup> and Baker<sup>96</sup> agree that Gildon suggested to Defoe the "allegorical" explanation which Defoe needed as people began to realize that the book was not fact. However, Defoe does not mention Gildon specifically in the Serious Reflections<sup>97</sup> (1720), in which he announces that the novel was an allegorical account of his own life and misfortunes.

A successful attack on Defoe, who was now handling the Tory propaganda, could not hurt Gildon's fortunes in 1719. In the following year Gildon's name is coupled with Dennis's as the author of A New Project for the Regulation of the Stage. This was a satire on the two men, and apparently Gildon's name is present solely to annoy Dennis.<sup>98</sup> Miscellanea Aurea, or the Golden Medley,<sup>99</sup> a miscellany long attributed to the younger Killigrew, appeared also in

93. Dottin, op.cit., p.60.

94. Thomas Wright, The Life of Daniel Defoe, London, 1830, II, 262.

95. James Sutherland, Defoe, Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1938, p.233.

96. Ernest A. Baker. History of the English Novel, London: Witherby, 1942, III, 171-172.

97. Dottin, op.cit., p.40.

98. Dottin, op.cit., p.36; Hooker, I, 510.

99. London, Printed for A. Bettesworth...MDCCXX.

1720. It is largely by Gildon.<sup>100</sup> There is the usual pot-pourri -- moralizing fiction, "translations" from foreign languages (including the Arabic!), attacks on the players, amorous intrigue in a superficially Spanish manner, and a critical piece cast in an allegorical mould directed to Garth in which Gildon reasserts his views on tragedy. When the South Sea and Mississippi bubbles shook England this same year, Gildon was ready to defend the conduct of the ministry and the directors of the company in All for the Better, or The World turn'd up-side down.<sup>101</sup> Despite a lengthy title in which the author pretends to sympathize with the victims of the market crash, the book has as its thesis the elementary proposition that speculation is gambling and that the greedy deserve to be punished. Especially are the lower classes attacked for hoping to get rich without working. Occasionally Gildon's reasoning is too fine: an ungreedy Swiss gentleman who is satisfied with a profit of 1000% is commended and the horrible fate of a gentleman who was not satisfied with 1100% is dwelt on at length. To criticize the South Sea Company is to criticize, says Gildon, the king and parliament which licensed it and borders on treason.

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100. Philip Babcock Gove, "Gildon's 'Fortunate Shipwreck' as Background for Gulliver's Travels," RFS, XVIII (1942), 470-478. Mr. Gove does not press the point of Gildon's authorship. It seems evident that Gildon wrote nearly all of the volume.

101. London, Printed and Sold by John Applebee...MDCCLXX.

Also in 1720 Gildon published the Battle of the Authors.<sup>102</sup> This continued his attack on Defoe and launched an attack on Steele on behalf of Dennis. Steele's part in holding back at Drury Lane Dennis's Invader of his Country was the cause of Gildon's resentment. The drama, we are told, can hold no future for a promising young author because of conditions in the theatre. The attack on Rowe's kind of tragedy is continued, and Giles Jacob, Settle, Cibber, Oldmixon "and a hundred other nameless Scribblers" are assaulted. The work has less of the pedantry of Gildon's other critical works. The tone is light enough to suggest that Gildon expected financial gain from it, and yet it could not but have alienated nearly everybody. Early in 1721 we find him sending the manuscript of a tragedy to Prior with the hope of interesting the Harleys in it.<sup>103</sup> The letter discourses on the nature of tragedy and on the excellence of Gildon's: "it moves the passions in so eminent a degree." The postscript is melancholy: "I would have waited on you myself, but that I have been long confined to my chamber for blindness and lameness and a very infirm health." Prior did not answer, and the lofty and literary tone of the letter is in sharp contrast to the

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102. London, Printed for J. Roberts...M.DCC. XX. On this pamphlet, see John Robert Moore, "Gildon's Attack on Steele and Defoe in The Battle of the Authors," PMLA, LXVI(1951), 534-538.

103. February, 1721. Historical Manuscripts Commission, Bath MSS., III, 496-497.



one which followed, which dealt more in the necessities of life. Gildon reminds Prior somewhat tartly that he had received better treatment from men of higher station. From this letter we can presume that Gildon received a decent gift from Buckinghamshire's widow. Prior could not but have been offended by it.<sup>104</sup> Against the lameness and blindness Prior must have placed Gildon's overwhelming vanity. Prior did not answer this letter either. The weeks that had elapsed and the unacknowledged gifts caused Gildon to lose his temper:

I understand that you and My Lord's family are all moving out of town next Saturday. I am the more surprised because I have had not one line from you about the present I sent you, or any subsequent letter to you which is a treatment I have not met with from any one but Mr. Prior; for though I have written to the greatest men in England both ecclesiastical and temporal, yet not one of them ever thought me unworthy of a civil answer, but I suppose that is not Mr. Prior's way. As a gentleman, as I may say I am both by birth and education, and I think without much vanity, I may say a scholar, I thought I had the right to an answer from another gentleman, but it seems I was mistaken, which confirms the opinion of a very intimate friend of mind, who told me that I had so long locked myself up from the world, that I had forgot the world. And yet I hope that my mistaking Mr. Prior will not be a very strong proof of his assertion, because upon my sending one of my books to one of the greatest persons in England, he not only sent me twenty guineas, but likewise ordered his chaplain to send me a very obliging answer.

104. July, 1721. Ibid., pp.506-507.

I have much more to say to you upon this head, but shall defer until you return to town. I shall trouble you with no more at present.<sup>105</sup>

The great person mentioned one suspects is Carnavan. In this last letter perhaps more than anywhere else in his writings we see Gildon's egotism and his bitterness in having been born into an age of what he thought were poor standards and the neglect of true literature by the wealthy. He does not seem to realize that his own self-respect has been lost by such an appeal; his vanity prevents him.

Gildon's last book, the Laws of Poetry<sup>106</sup> (1721), is again a summary of his critical views, though a less satisfactory one than the Complete Art of Poetry, and a final and extravagant venture into both flattery and pedantry. Gildon, in this volume, does for Buckinghamshire's Essay upon Poetry what the most elaborate of modern editions and commentaries barely do yet for Aristotle's Poetics, and with the important difference that Buckinghamshire's work is not worth such close attention. The Duke's essay, Roscommon's Essay on Translated Verse, and Lansdowne's Upon Unnatural Flights in Poetry make up the

<sup>105</sup>. Ibid., p.507.

<sup>106</sup>. As Laid down by the Duke of Buckinghamshire in his Essay on Poetry...London, Printed for J. Morley...MDCCLXXI; there is also an issue with the imprint: London, Printed for W. Hinchcliffe...and J. Walthoe, jun....MDCCLXXI.

volume. But Gildon is much more interested in Buckinghamshire's Essay than in the other two. This is Gildon's final effort. What we know of his last dark years comes from a few letters and some scattered hints in the work of his contemporaries. On August 11, 1721, Gildon wrote to Dennis,<sup>107</sup> obviously pleased to have heard from his admired master, and apologized for a remark on Wycherley to which Dennis had taken exception. Professor Hooker conjectures that Gildon's Life of Wycherley is meant here, but while a "hasty, slovenly job" it is not at all unfriendly to Wycherley. There are some critical remarks in the Laws of Poetry which might have drawn Dennis's ire. How much the men saw of each other is difficult to say. Dennis's purpose in printing this letter and another one of January 10, 1722,<sup>108</sup> in which Gildon expresses his pleasure with a recent pamphlet of Dennis's, is to disprove Pope's charge that he and Gildon were intimate enough to write in collaboration, by exhibiting to the world the servile tone of Gildon's correspondence with him. Certainly Gildon was never treated by Dennis as an equal.

Sometime in the last few years of his life Gildon managed to subscribe to Dennis's Miscellaneous Tracts, subscriptions to which were solicited in 1721 although the book did not appear until 1727. Gildon's name appears in the company

107. Hooker, II, 374. See also the Notes, pp.519-520.

108. Ibid., p.374.

of old friends like Aaron Hill, but Pope's name is also there. Gildon's death, on January 12, got some small notice from contemporaries. The occasion was treated in verse in the Universal Journal for January 15.<sup>109</sup> But it remained for the chronicler of the age, the indefatigable Abel Boyer, to write Gildon's epitaph:

On Sunday, the 12th died Mr. Charles Gildon  
a person of great literature, but of mean  
genius, who having attempted several Kinds  
of Writing, never gained much Reputation in  
any.<sup>110</sup>

This is not an unjust estimate. "Great literature" and "mean genius" is a brief but honest estimate of Gildon's career. Gildon lived on some years more, as we shall see, in the continuing war that Pope waged on his enemies, Johnson mentions him grudgingly in the Lives of the Poets,<sup>111</sup> and a resourceful political writer pillaged both the title and most of the text of Les Soupirs de la Grand Bretagne<sup>112</sup> in 1753, adding on the title page the crowning irony of a quotation from Pope. This perhaps indicates the general nature of Gildon's attacks on political corruption. Gildon felt that the rules justified only

109. Dottin, op.cit., p.43.

110. Political State of Great Britain, XXVIII, January 1923/4, pp.102-103.

111. Ed. George Birkbeck Hill, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905, I, 317 (s.v. "J. Philips").

112. The Groans of Great-Britain. With a Table of the Contents. Inscribed to all true Britons by an Englishman ...London, Printed for the Editor, and sold by M. Cooper ...1753.

general attacks in satire, and his remarks are applicable enough more than a quarter of a century later to be used by a hasty pamphleteer.