II. Criticism

Gildon begins his career as a critic in his first writings. Throughout his life Gildon was wont to stress in dedications that it is the business of the poet to praise the great and noble by panegyric and to attack vice in general terms by satire. It was flattering to the dedicatee for Gildon to explain that false panegyric always betrayed itself and that, being constructive, it was a higher form than satire, but it would be wrong to attribute this theory entirely to venality. It is rooted in the idea of the poet as lawmaker -- as rewarder and punisher in society -- an idea based especially on an exaggerated Eighteenth Century notion of how much power the poet dramatist wielded in Athenian society. Gildon strikes this note in the Preface (to Cardell Goodman, of all people) to Miscellaneous Poems (1692). Panegyric, Gildon says, "is like a Lawful and Mild Prince, that wind obedience by Love; Whilst Satyr like a Tyrant would force it by threats and servile Fear; the first is the Noblest, as well as the surest way."[1] Satire only gives "negative definitions"[2] of virtue; panegyric stimulates imitation in other people and a caution in him who is praised. A translation of Dacier's essay on the principles of satire, apparently by Gildon though credited to a "very

1. Sig. A5v.
2. Sig. A5r.

ingenious friend," begins the volume.[3] Gildon's admiration for Dacier is considerable; he regards his criticism as fundamental and treats him in his later writings as an equal of the great ancients. In his letter of praise attached to D'Urfey's Marriage Hater Match'd (1692), Gildon has to contend with comedy and is less successful and less interested than he is later in comparing the practice of the ancients and moderns. He accuses the enemies of the ancients of saying that Terence has no excellence but that of phrase and proceeds to sum up Terence's plots to prove his merit, supporting his case by reference to Horace. D'Urfey, he finds, keeps to the noble standard of classical comedy. Then, in some detail, he finds merit in each of D'Urfey's characters; this leads him to the purpose of comedy, which is to hold vice and affectation up to ridicule. Finally he reviews the origin of comedy: the satires of a Bucolic people used first as a weapon against their abuse by city dwellers, then becoming formalized and licensed for the public good, to expose general vice. The lack of success of D'Urfey's play Gildon conveniently attributes to minor faults in staging, poor acting, and an unreceptive audience.

Gildon's hand is almost certainly in the Moderator

3. P.16.

for June of the same year.[4] The number for June 9 contains an essay in defense of the stage which may be Gildon's, and the number for June 23 is an attack on Langbaine and is almost certainly his. It represents a sort of preface to Gildon's edition of the Poets. Gildon will offer "a little civil correction." Especially is he annoyed at Langbaine's 'disingenuity and porterly language to Mr. Dryden." "I have," he says, "given my self the penance of parsing your whole book" which, we are told, could not have been better designed or worse executed. Langbaine abuses the reader by promising much and giving only "title pages and dates." With a directness certainly bordering on the outside edge of civility, Gildon says, "Your characters, Sir, are too general: Your style uncertain, sometimes heavy and flat, sometimes poetick and foolish; never smooth, even or constant." Langbaine does not point out beauties and defects. Suckling, says Gildon, has the conversation of a gentleman; Waller is even and sweet; Denham, majestic and correct; Cowley, copious and full of spirit. "They each have their proper graces; and which makes every one appear that individual poet he is." Gildon praises Dryden partly, one suspects, because Langbaine is attacking him and partly because he admires some

4. I am indebted to the Library of City College, New York, for the use of a film copy of the Moderator made from an original in the Bodleian.

but by no means all of the qualities of Dryden's work. Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Jonson are considered, and Gildon is especially harsh to Shakespeare. Langbaine, he says, justifies Shakespeare's irregularity of plot because he has never read Rapin or Aristotle. One of the plays of Shakespeare which is "meanly written," we may note in passing, is Measure for Measure, which Gildon later adapted. At the end of the page Gildon fires a salvo at Langbaine himself:

> What you offer, Sir,...against Mr. Dryden his ingratitude to His Patrons, his abusing his Fellow Poets, and I know not what; is such a cast of malice, and wrote with so ill a grace, that it needs no other answer, but the lie. A man must, Sir, have a very mean opinion of Himself that consults the Vomit of a libel for his repose: for, indeed, what is a libeller, but only a baser sort of Bravo, that does more mischief with less hazard, and is consequently the more unmanly Prostitute of the Two.

The date of this, 1692, is probably too early to make it largely responsible for Gildon's obtaining the job of revising Langbaine, but it is possible that it was a factor.

Gildon's lifelong interest in the idea of a British Academy is evident in his enthusiasm for the Athenian Society, which he ranks with the Royal Society in importance. In the History of the Athenian Society Gildon has something to say on the great of ancient Greece, where worthy literary men were supported and given just praise. Literature was invented, we are told, as a social corrective. In this

sense tragedy, because better able to correct the evils of men, is in a practical way superior to epic. Gildon everywhere accepts the conventional Neo-Classical position that the greatest form is epic, but it is rarely used successfully and its message is not likely to reach many people. Comedy corrects the vices, and tragedy by examples which are more powerful than precepts stirs the minds of youth to great deeds. After Eupolis was slain in battle, Gildon says, the Greeks forbade military service for poets.[5] The other remarks on poetry in the History are less important. The Conquest of Granada is praised and Dryden called one of the best of our English poets, and -- a matter that Gildon must have regretted later -- the ladies are praised as readers and creators of literature. Gildon gives us a long list of noble learned ladies.[6] There is much evidence of learning but little criticism in the History. The theme that praise of just men is only condemned by a vulgar age is taken up again in the Post-boy rob'd of his Mail in a dedication to Captain Charles Porter. There is little other criticism in the volume. A letter from a "Mighty Affecter of Similes" does not mention the drama. A good deal of specific criticism of the theatre is included, however, in a long account of Vanbrugh's unsuccessful attempt to found a new theater. Gildon comments at some length on the laud-

5. P.9.
6. P.26.

able attempt of Vanbrugh to free the theatre from the tyranny of the patent holders. Then he devotes considerable space to the reasons for the failure of the project.[7]

With the publication of Miscellaneous Letters and Essays (1694) we come to Gildon's first important attempt at criticism. In this volume are three lengthy critical essays, "A Defense of Poetry" addressed to Walter Moyle, "Reflections on Mr. Rymer's Short View of Tragedy, and An Attempt at a Vindication of Shakespeare" addressed to Dryden, and "An Essay at a Vindication of Love in Tragedies, against Rapin and Mr. Rymer" addressed to Dennis. In the first essay[8] Gildon begins by a brief sketch of the degeneracy of the age. It is an age of scribblers, "bullies of Parnassus," without genius or learning (we should not underemphasize the coupling of "learning" with "genius" here). Poets, we are told, get little support; the great men spend more money on their whores; Maecenas and Augustus were the only great patrons (we miss here the name of Richelieu). Of the value of poetry Gildon says, "If we regard the Antiquity of its Origine, the Nobleness of its Subject, or the Beauty of its Aim, or Design (which Three Things are the Test of the Excellence of Arts and Sciences, in reference to

7. This is in the 1706 edition only; the project took place in 1705.
8. Pp.7-40.

each other) we shall easily find Poesie most ancient in its Rise, most honorable in the Subjects and Matters it adorns, and most transcendently excellent in its Usefulness and End."[9] Then Gildon discourses at length on the history of ancient poetry. There is much learning in the essay; a hundred or so authors are mentioned including Dryden, Waller and Wycherley. He attempts to divide ancient poetry into (a) religious and national, (b) eulogy and panegyric about the great, (c) other poetry designed to teach morals and instruct the young, (d) funeral lamentation, and (e) "all that delights and pleases Mankind." The latter category one suspects is an afterthought, and the essentially didactic quality of Gildon's mind is evident in the first four categories.

A more important essay is the "Reflections on Rymer's Short View."[10] Gildon begins by saying that he had waited for Dennis to answer Rymer, but Dennis not having replied he felt that Rymer ought to be answered by someone. Gildon begins ad hominem. No one, he says, has ever suggested that Shakespeare is perfect, and he reminds Rymer that he is the author of Edgar. His friends had suggested that he review Edgar, but it is so stored with opium that Gildon cannot remain awake over it.[11] Rymer, moreover, is incap-

9. P.11.
10. Pp.64-118.
11. P.68.

able of original criticism. His critical essays are so filled with Rapin, Dacier and Bossu as to be scarcely his own.[12] These honorable critics Rymer has misapplied to Shakespeare. Rymer's prologues, like Bays' in the Rehearsal, will do for any book. Gildon then launches into an attack on Rymer's critical points. Rymer's insistence on the necessity of a chorus to preserve the unities of time and place Gildon refutes from the example of Euripides' Suppliants and Racine's Hester. Nor is this in Horace. The chorus, moreover, offends against nature and probability; here Gildon refers the reader to Dennis's Impartial Critick.[13] The functions of the chorus are frequently incorporated into modern plays without the unnaturalness that a chorus would bring, as with the senators in Othello. Rymer's minutiae, on Shakespeare's vocabulary, mannerisms, etc., Gildon dismisses curtly. Shakespeare is not to be judged by these trivia but by "innate worth."[14] Rymer attacks Richelieu's taste for liking the Tragedy of Sir Thomas More, but Gildon replies by pointing out that Richelieu liked Corneille's Cid. Gildon praises Shakespeare, Jonson, Milton, Beaumont and Fletcher (tastes which except for Shakespeare Gildon keeps for years) and

12. See Francis R. Litz's study of the sources of Gildon's Complete Art of Poetry, ELH, IX(1942), 118-135.
13. Hooker, I, 11-12. Dennis paints a picture of Queen Elizabeth's handmaidens singing mournfully as the Armada lands on the coast.
14. P.87.

cites as evidence of Shakespeare's superiority to Homer that Mr. Hales of Eton demonstrated for a learned group that Shakespeare exceeds Homer in the "Topics and Commonplaces of Poetry."[15] Shall we put Shakespeare below Sternhold and Hopkins, Gildon asks, because he does not observe the rules? This is a thrust at Aristotle as much as an argument for Shakespeare. England surpasses Greece in dramatic poetry and would in epic had Dryden written epic. Shakespeare's faults are the vices of his age, although it is by no means certain, as Rymer thinks, that he did not have some learning. He was forced to include comedy scenes in Othello because of the theatrical audience of his time. The sole advantage that the Greek poet had was public support. Homer is filled with absurdities we would not tolerate today. The French like the rules because they have not the language or genius for great poetry but "A nice Observation of Rules, is a Confinement a great Genius [like Shakespeare] cannot bear."[16] English poetry, in short, "Glories in a noble irregularity."[17] Gildon uses Rapin for support here as vigorously as he uses him later on the other side. In defending Othello Gildon reveals the fundamental difficulties of the position he has assumed in this essay. His mind tends to be impressed by authority; his

15. Pp.85-86.
16. P.91.
17. Ibid.

feelings tend to be moved, however, by Shakespeare's genius. This condition prevails even sixteen years later when the pendulum has swung far the other way for Gildon and he is attacking Shakespeare as vigorously as Rymer did. Even here Gildon's defense of Othello is common-sense rather than by the rules. Finally, Gildon sees clearly the absurdity of Rymer's suggestion for a tragedy (to be written by Dryden!) about the Spanish Armada based on the Persians. The presumption of an outline for a superior drama by the author of Edgar Gildon finds intolerable. Yet Gildon in later years was to couple Rymer and Rapin as masters of criticism.

The third essay, "A Vindication of Love in Tragedies, against Rapin and Mr. Rymer,"[18] is perhaps the most important of the three. Gildon here strikes a strong blow for the moderns on an important issue. The essay begins with praise of Dennis's Impartial Critick. Then Gildon states his position with regard to the ancients: the authority of the ancients ought not to be allowed to outweigh reason, but many rules of the ancients are nothing but good sense and nature reduced to method and one can agree with these.[19] Gildon quotes from Rapin's Reflections, chiding him for such notions as that the French have a special genius which requires noble expression in tragedy and that gallantry

18. Pp.145-171.
19. P.146.

agrees with the French. The English, says Rapin, are more insular, less humane, and require blood.[20] Gildon's critical estimate of the tragedies of his own time would tend to make him agree with Rapin here but his patriotism prevents him. The objection to love on the stage, that it deviates from the practice of the ancients (except in comedy, as Rapin says), Gildon would reject by the general observation that while it is the glory of the ancients that they invented comedy and tragedy, this requires no "servile Observation of their Precepts."[21] Euripides improved on Sophocles as he in his time had on Aeschylus. Does love degrade the nobility of tragedy? This charge, Gildon admits, if true would carry great weight. He sets about proving that the epic is at least as majestic as the tragic drama and that love is everywhere evident in the epic.[22] There is much citation of examples, beginning with Achilles' love for Briseis. Majesty, Gildon goes on, is nothing but elevation of thought and expression. Is love capable of this elevation? Any passion, says Gildon, making a sweepingly positive statement, is majestic in proportion to the degree of the passion, the sentiments it inspires, the effects it causes, and the action that depends upon it, and need be only as noble as the hero and the object he in-

20. See New Rehearsal, p.53, below.
21. P.152.
22. P.155ff.

spires.[23] A hero's love is as important as his griefs. Tender scenes are the least of what love gives to tragedy (here Gildon cites All for Love and Antony and Cleopatra). Love pushes a generous mind on to greater actions and is akin to the glory which Rapin says must be a hero's sole passion. In short, a worthy love is as good as any other passion in tragic drama. It is one of the modern improvements in tragedy that love is now openly admitted to it.[24] Rapin says the moderns have less genius than the ancients, but Gildon counters with the point that a barren repetition of their virtues is not likely to please us now. Finally, Gildon moves up some historical heavy artillery: the cause of the success of the Greek tragedies was sometimes madness in the people; at other times the great emotional effect caused by the tragedies is simply evidence of a less sophisticated audience.[25] Ballads in our time frequently move the female mob to tears. Then Gildon lists the modern tragedies that he admires: some of Dryden's, the Orphan, Venice Preserv'd, and the Rival Queens and others of Lee's.[26]

Two minor pieces complete the criticism in Miscellaneous Letters and Essays, an essay on love in the verses

23. Pp.159ff.
24. P.171.
25. Pp.168-170.
26. P.170.

of Cowley and Waller[27] and a letter "For the Modern Poets against the Ancients."[28] The first includes two matters worth commenting on: Gildon suggests that along with science and medicine, love improved as man learned more; hence modern love is different from Greek love and requires a new mode of expression.[29] Also he argues that similes are not unnatural in the mouth of a lover for love is naturally extravagant and tends to cause extravagant language.[30] Gildon's letter "For the Modern Poets against the Ancients" accuses Rymer (and Rapin by implication) of a lack of patriotism in preferring the ancients. Gildon would give the ancients much honor. Homer, though no universal genius as even Virgil knew, Pindar, Sophocles and Euripides will always preserve their reputations as excellent poets.[31] But Aristotle is not now regarded as a philosopher but merely as a good critic or grammarian.[32] Gildon quotes Dryden's line "The Mountains seem to Nod their Drousie Heads" to prove that Dryden is as good in English as the Greeks were in their own noble language. The laurel goes, finally, to the moderns.

Recent scholarship has noticed Gildon's shift from being a "modern" in 1694 to being an "ancient" a few years

27. Pp.209-220.
28. Pp.220-224.
29. Pp.212-213.
30. Pp.213-220.
31. P.221.
32. Ibid.

later (and thenceforth through life).[33] Gildon's changing sides does not argue a complete reversal however. Gildon's mind, as has been suggested, respected authority and learning. Behind these essays in Miscellaneous Letters and Essays is this respect for authority and learning which is so evident later. Gildon does not belittle the ancients, certainly not in the manner in which he rants at the modern drama later; he admits in the last essay discussed above that he perhaps was too hard on Rymer for patriotic reasons. This rage for a great national literature is one of the recurrent themes in Gildon's criticism. Patriotism, plus the enthusiasm of a younger and virtually unknown writer attacking an older and better known one, I think, explains the positiveness with which Gildon espouses the moderns here. His education, however, and the cast of his mind were against his continuing to hold this position.

Chorus Poetarum (1694) does not advance Gildon critically, though possibly a very general (and negligible) poem, "In Praise of Satyr," is his, nor does the Younger Brother (1696). Here Gildon feels obliged to strike at factions which rule the theatre to defend Mrs. Behn's play, which had failed. The prologue to the Roman Bride's

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33. W. H. Durham (ed). Critical Essays of the 18th Century (1700-1725), New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915, p.256; J. C. Maxwell ("Charles Gildon and the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns," RES, n.s., I[1950], 55-56) calls Gildon a "modern" in 1694.

Revenge (1697) baits the audience by saying that the author is writing especially for the fops, cits, panders, whores and bullies of the town. (The prologue was spoken by Haynes.) Then Gildon softens the effect by asking the audience to remember that it is the author's maiden effort. However, Phaeton (1698) bears on its title page "In Imitation of the Ancients" and a long critical justification for the play. The dedication is to Charles Montagu. In it Gildon seems to imply that Montagu is ready to found a British Academy like the French[34] and he strikes at Collier cautiously by saying that the play is entirely free from that immortality complained of by a late author and that this author successfully perverted the meaning of the poets he criticized.[35] Phaeton, as we have noted, is a blend of Quinault's operatic Phaeton and Euripides' Medea. Gildon did not read Euripides until the play was well under way and did not decide to revise the play according to Euripides' model until it was almost completed.[36] His purpose in the preface is to justify his plot, partly motivated, no doubt, by uneasiness about his method of composition (Thomas Cheek he credits with many suggestions for the improvement of the plot) and partly because of a sincere belief that he was writing something new, something against the mode, and something he believed necessary to the future

34. Sig. A4r.
35. Ibid.
36. Sig. b1v.

of English tragedy.[37] Gildon is not apologetic for his borrowings from Euripides; indeed, he says, the reader has a right to criticize him for not staying closer to the original. He says he followed Euripides except where both of his two close friends (Cheek and possibly Montagu) agreed that he should not. A lack of minor characters he thinks is an asset; Gildon says that he has noticed at the theatre that the audience does not pay much attention to the stage except when the major characters are on. (Here he is applying in a practical way what he was to justify theoretically later.) Gildon is aware that there are some difficulties in transposing Greek drama to the London stage,[38] but he does not go as far here as Dennis does in the Impertial Critick, which Gildon much admired. Dennis says, in substance, that climate and customs were different in ancient Greece and the modern drama must adapt itself to modern climates and customs.[39] Gildon sees specific objections to material in Medea partly because of the uninformed quality of the English audience. Medea would shock us; we would not allow her character in nature as Euripides painted her. Monsters do not afford just lessons to the poet. But the fault is not with Euripides. The modern audience simply does not realize that Euripides made

37. Sig. blr.
38. Sig. blv.
39. Sig. (b)2r.

his barbarian woman purposely savage to discourage the Greeks from marrying strangers, which Athenian religion forbade. Also, Medea, being a granddaughter of the sun, has some of the attributes of a goddess and is exempt from the rules that govern common mankind. (This accounts for the convenient chariot, which is a gift from her grandfather.) Some of Gildon's friends who read the play suggested, he tells us, that the revenge of Althea deprived her of that pity she might have got for her misfortunes. To counteract this Gildon used the pagan religion to make her act seem as involuntary as possible, which ought to have led the audience to pity her when her passions brought ruin on her and her children.

Of the theme, revenge for disappointment in love, Gildon says that this is a natural failing of women and "no unfortunate Character ought to be introduc'd on the Stage, without its Humane Frailties to justifie its Misfortunes: For unfortunate Perfection, is the Crime of Providence, and to offer at that, is an impiety a Poet ought never to be guilty of; being directly opposite to his duty of Rewarding the Innocent, and punishing the Guilty; and by that means, to establish a just notion of Providence in its most important Action, the Government of Mankind."[40] Sophocles himself is guilty of failing to follow this funda-

40. Ibid.

mental rule in Oedipus, in which the hero is punished for an accident and Gildon would refute those who find his crimes curiosity and rashness. Gildon's history is not too accurate, but his approach is historical here: it was Oedipus's religious duty, he says, to seek out the oracle. But also, the Greeks, being democratic, loved to see a monarch suffer.

An act by act defense of Gildon's play occupies considerable space at the end of the preface. This need not detain us here except to note that he cannot forgive Scaliger for preferring Seneca's abominable Medea to Sophocles's.[41] He also sums up succinctly his ideas on the difference between the ancients and the moderns and appends to this some remarks on the sublime. Since the mind grows dull with a lengthy drama, the ancients made their tragedies half as long as English ones. For diversion the ancients had the chorus (the music in Gildon's play taking the place of this). The modern tragedy is apt to be swelled out with tiresome underplot.[42] Because of English ignorance of the traditions of the theatre, we are careless about subject matter and permit battle scenes on the stage (with trumpets to keep the audience awake!). This the ancients were never so foolish as to do. The ancients also had a high regard for probability, whereas the modern playwright seeks sur-

41. Sig. (b)4v.
42. Sig. (b)3v.

prises and clever turns of fortune which seldom happen in ordinary life.[43] Not fortune, luck or chance but the natural passions of man are fit for the subject of tragedy. On the sublime we wish that Gildon had space to say more, because he does not say much about this quality in his earlier criticism. It is not, he is sure, a "tumid, puffy Stile."[44] Moderns frequently affect this, but it is not gigantic words that create the sublime. Horace says, "professus grandia turget." Gildon contrasts Statius and Virgil as examples of the false and true sublime. Virgil's style, truly majestic, is magnificent but easy. Then Gildon tells us that he has purposely roughened his verse to avoid the satiety that comes of regular cadence.[45] Gildon's enmity to the "concord of sweet sounds" of some of his contemporaries he maintains throughout his later criticism, though it must be confessed least successfully here where the example of his verse would make us question the dictum.

We might pause to examine here briefly the play itself to see if Gildon's critical views work out in practice. It is apparent that they do not, despite the moderate success of the play. One of the chief objections to the play from the point of view of a present-day reader is that he cannot

43. Ibid.
44. Sig. (b)4v.
45. Ibid.

but see Jason and Medea behind Phaeton and Althea and reading the play immediately becomes a puzzle in literary history. This, presumably, did not bother most of Gildon's audience. A more fundamental criticism is that the machinery which is supposed to indicate that Althea's passion is a curse from the gods and that she is really deserving of pity is not adequate. Gildon cannot assume, as he does, that the audience is going to accept the Greek notion of divine interference so completely that it will pity Althea rather than merely be impressed by a turn or surprise. On the credit side are a plot not too complicated and an attempt to write a plain style.

Gildon's answer to Collier appears to have been hastily tacked on to the end of the preface proper.[46] Gildon begins by saying that no man would rather see the indecencies driven from the stage than himself. Then he assembles a considerable list of inclusive fine points which in totality constitute an extremely feeble rebuttal: rough language is used in the Scriptures; much of what Collier thinks is foul language isn't considered so by others; the ladies of England do not blush at the theatre and thus Collier has implied a lack of modesty on their part. He accuses Collier of half quotations and general unfairness in his method. Gildon stoutly maintains that the stage should be moral --

46. Sig. c1r-c2r.

if clergymen have been attacked, the stage should be reformed. Yet Collier is not a fit champion for them. Gildon then promises "of this more hereafter." He ends on a familiar note: dramatic poetry advances virtue and wisdom and the supreme duty of an Englishman (next to the love of God), which is to be a patriotic citizen. The performance completely fails to come to grips with the problem; we must remember, however, that the mystery of all the replies to Collier is their feebleness.

Probably early in 1698 Gildon was commissioned to revise Langbaine's An Account of the Lives of the English Dramatic Poets. Gildon cut the book down to about five-eighths of its original length and retitled it The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets, "improv'd and continued down to this Time, by a Careful Hand." He condenses a great deal. Indeed, the object of the revision was to reduce the bulk and make it possible to print the book in a less expensive format. Frequently Gildon merely makes a precis of Langbaine's remarks but he is sensitive to Langbaine's querulous attitude and excises many of his more personal remarks and he is more critical in the formal sense. In the preface Gildon announces that he will take no notice of other essays of this nature: "I shall take no notice of Mr. Winstanley's or Mr. Phillips's, for one I

never saw, and the other I could not read."[47] Langbaine, he says, "seems every where to gratify some private pique, and seldom to regard the Merit of the Person he reflects upon. This I have every where avoided."[48] Furthermore, Langbaine has no taste in dramatic poetry and has swelled out the lives by "interlarding them with tedious copies of Verses little to the purpose in Hand."[49] Apparently Gildon received editorial assistance. He feels he must disagree with some of the opinions expressed in those parts of the work which he did not do. Where the revision differs much from Langbaine's original, however, the hand of Gildon seems very evident. It is likely that he did the major part of the revision and supervised the task.

Gildon adds twenty-eight names to the original edition, omits two, and adds eight more in an appendix, including a lengthy sketch of Charles Gildon. Cibber, Congreve, Dennis, John Dryden, Jr., Granville, Hopkins, Mrs. Manley, Motteux, Oldmixon and Vangrugh are among those added to the main section of the book. The additions to the appendix include William Philips, Plautus, and Terence. Langbaine's original attacked Dryden savagely, implying that Settle was humbled by a tyrannical laureate but that

47. Sig. A5v. He refers to William Winstanley's Lives of the Most Famous English Poets, London, 1687, and Edward Phillip's Theatrum Poetarum, or a Compleat Collection of the Poets, London, 1675.
48. Sig. A5v.
49. Ibid.

he happily lived to see time revenge him. Gildon is not an ardent defender of Dryden. He is sympathetic to Settle but at the same time appreciative of Dryden's real merits: "He is a Poet that has met with Applause often above his Merit; tho' in many of his Writings; it must be confess'd, he deserv'd the highest: But I must own, I think, his Dramatick Pieces, if we must take our Standard of their Excellence from the Ancients, the most incorrect of his Productions. There is generally indeed the sublime, but very rarely the Pathetick; for in all his Plays he has not touch'd Compassion above thrice, and that but weakly..."[50] Gildon admits that Langbaine's charge that Dryden plagiarized from the French has truth in it, but "I never found in him any Theft indeed, but what he gave a new Lustre too, when taken, ev'n from the best of the Ancients; and I may therefore believe the same of what he has taken from the French."[51] This whole account is curiously inadequate for an account by a critic who had sat in the tavern with Dryden and who later gave him a great deal of critical attention. In brief, he accuses Dryden of not following the rules, but he allows him much merit (as he later allows Shakespeare) of a not quite legitimate nature. Dryden has moving qualities, but also defects in the structure of his plays.

50. P.40.
51. Pp.40-41.

In the account of Dennis we might expect to find Gildon at his most eulogistic. He permits himself (or his publisher permits him) only three-quarters of a page, but since Dennis at this time was the author of only one play, this is perhaps more than sufficient. A Plot and No Plot is commended in terms which leave no uncertainty about some of Gildon's critical precepts at this time:

> This play is exactly regular, and discovers itself writ by a Master of the Art of the Stage, as well as by a Man of Wit; the justness, fineness, and delicacy of the Reflections, the pleasantness of the Humours, the Novelty and Distinction of the Characters, the admirable Conduct and Design of the whole, with the useful Moral of the Play, places it in the Rank of the best Comedies of this latter Age of Poetry; and tho' he himself term it low Comedy, gives us a Desire, as well as Hopes, of some more Noble Performance.[52]

The attending sketch of Dennis's life is equally flattering: "This Gentleman now Living, has made himself a Name by several Books, both in Prose and Verse, which he had published, but for none more than his Critical Observations on the so much Celebrated Prince Arthur, writ by Sir Richard Blackmore, in which he has shewed himself a perfect Critick, and Master of a great deal of Penetration and Judgment; his Remarks being beyond Controversy just, and the Faults he finds undeniably such."[53] The biographical information is scanty. How well Gildon knew Dennis at this

52. P.38.
53. Ibid.

time is unknown, but it is likely that Gildon knew many more facts about Dennis's life than he prints here and that the reticence of the sketch is a feeble attempt to disguise the personal bias.

Some of the other accounts shed some light on Gildon's critical thinking at this time. On Shakespeare Gildon is strangely silent. Langbaine praises him, putting him above Jonson, but slightly disparaging his classical learning. Gildon argues that his deficiencies in classical learning are not so great as men believe, but can only say of his plays that his historical tragedies followed history. This fact alone would damn the plays in the light of Gildon's usual critical views but he does not go on and develop the point here. Milton, Gildon says, is a "strenuous defender" of popular rights and "An Author of that Excellence of Genius and Learning, that none of any Age or Nation, I think, has excelled him."[54] But Gildon says little that is specific. He disagrees with Langbaine that Fletcher was perfectly versed in dramatic laws, though later he has qualified praise for Fletcher. The account of Cowley Gildon cuts, but does not change; this may indicate that Gildon felt the Cowley vogue had run its course. To the account of Davenant Gildon adds the story of his beautiful mother and the suggestion that Shakespeare visited the Davenant

54. P.100.

inn not only because the ale was good,[55] but he has no criticism of the poet.

In discussing Otway Gildon assumes a position which he keeps throughout his critical career: Otway, he says, has "a Tallent, very few of our English Poets have been Master of, in moving the Passions, that are, and ought to be the Aim of all Tragic Poets, Terror and Pity; and in which none equall'd him, in his two following Tragedies of The Orphan, and Venice Preserv'd."[56] Gildon adds some biographical material about Otway's love for the bottle, but it is unlikely that he knew anything of this at first hand. Langbaine's original account of Otway is favorable, as is his account of Wycherley. Langbaine would place Wycherley among the poets of the first rank and second only to Ben Jonson in comedy. Gildon raises this high level of praise: Wycherley "has excell'd all Writers in all Languages, in Comedy, and most of the Poets of the present Age in generous dealing with those he owns his friends."[57] The vexing question of how well Gildon knew Wycherley and if he were in a position to be generously dealt with will be considered in discussing Gildon's quarrel with Pope. Gildon does not

55. P.32. Alfred Harbage (Sir William Davenant, Poet Venturer. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1935, p.274) suggests that Gildon started this story. It is not in Langbaine or Winstanley, and Aubrey's Brief Lives was still in manuscript in 1699.
56. P.107.
57. P.150.

here comment on Wycherley's plays except to say that he prefers the Plain Dealer. He is brief on Mrs. Behn (except on the Younger Brother!) and strangely noncommital on Ben Jonson; here he simply condenses Langbaine's account. D'Urfey, we are told, is at least a master of farce if not of comedy; Oldmixon is treated well; Lansdowne is praised for wit, personal bravery and sweetness. Heroick Love, says Gildon, is one of the best of our modern tragedies and the She-Gallants ranks next to the Plain Dealer. Waller gets little attention (especially in view of Gildon's praise of him later); Sedley is cut down, though his reputation for wit is mentioned. But Gildon expands considerably Langbaine's account of Southerne and praises his Fatal Marriage as "extremely moving."[58] With Tate, Gildon comments on the character of the man rather than of his works: "...a Person of great Probity of Manners, Learning and good Nature ...he is guilty of Modesty, of which few in his Profession know much."[59]

There is more praise of Shakespeare in the account of Rymer than there is under the Bard's own name. Here Gildon says: "[Rymer's] Learning and Love to Poetry led him to a Consideration of those Authors, which set him up for a Critic; and it must be confess'd, that he has merited some Praise in his Preface to Rapin, and the first part of

58. P.135.
59. P.139.

this View of the Tragedies of the last Age; tho' I cannot so much as agree with those that allow most of the Errors he has found in Shakespear, just; for I'm confident it may be Evident, that not the fifth part have any Justice."[60] Congreve Gildon regards as especially good for his unripe age, but in commenting on Blackmore's notice of the Mourning Bride, Gildon says it is not as good as All for Love, the Orphan, Venice Preserv'd or the Lucius Junius Brutus of Lee. Congreve's genius, he feels, is more for comedy.

Few critical principles can be detected in Gildon's revision of Langbaine. Everywhere it is evident that the strong hand of the publisher has intervened where Gildon would have, on his own, expanded the account. The expansions are few and not usually where they ought to be. The preface, which would have been a good place for Gildon to have discoursed on the nature of the drama, is perfunctory. The plays of Otway, Congreve and Wycherley that Gildon praises here he continues to admire through his later criticism, and he praises Dennis, as we have seen, for regularity. But this is the sum of the criticism in the Lives and Characters. Gildon's admiration for Shakespeare is uncritical; his heart approves but his mind rejects, as we shall see later.

Gildon is content to let Measure for Measure (1700)

60. Pp.119-120.

pass without a critical preface, but in Love's Victim (1701) we again have a lengthy critical discourse, this time general and not specifically to apologize for the play. The dedication to Charles Montagu cries out against the vulgar taste of the town in theatrical entertainments, and the preface begins with a spirited defense of Otway, whom Gildon calls his master. Gildon lashes out at criticism of Otway in no uncertain terms, especially criticism of his style. The critics want pomp and uniformity, says Gildon; they want a swelled and sonorous style which the rules of the ancients will not defend. These critics cannot see that different passions call for different styles and that rarely is passion well expressed in "a gaudy Equipage of Epithets."[61] "Grief, Love, Rage, Anger and Despair they wou'd have express'd in the same manner, how opposite soever they are in their Nature and Effects."[62] Horace sees this differently: in tragedy the language of prose is frequently more probable than fine language. Grief, especially, needs a "plain and vulgar dress":[63] "If therefore a Tragic Poet wou'd touch the heart of the hearer with his complaints, he must divest his unfortunate Characters of that magnificent Stile, some of our modern Tragedies are only receiv'd for; in which Grief, and the Dis-

61. Sig. a2r.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.

tress'd declaim in all the Luxury and Wantoness of Expression, the Authors are master of."[64] Each passion, moreover, has its own appropriate language. For this reason, Gildon says, Boileau advises us to perpetually vary our style. Many modern plays, if examined in the light of these rules, would be revealed as deficient but not Otway's. He has molded the language to the passions, and hence his tragedies do what tragedies are supposed to do, move terror and compassion. Modern plots generally are filled with gross absurdities. Language, Gildon goes on to say, is important but propriety and nature are more important and should be the poet's chief concern. The principles of the ancient poets as defined by Aristotle and Horace are the standard of excellence in tragedy.[65] Those who would follow the criticism of Gildon's own day will beget a monster: "Pointed Wit, fine, round, well turn'd Periods, common Place sentences; calm philosophical reflections, and the like, are what they have allow'd in the height of the most violent Passions."[66] These may please a "vitiated Fancy"[67] but they cannot move the heart. Here Gildon ranks Otway by inference above Shakespeare, who created a great character in Othello but a "scurvy" one in Desdemona.[68] The charac-

64. Ibid.
65. Sig. a2v.
66. Sig. a2v-a3r.
67. Sig. a3r.
68. Ibid.

ters and their passions and manners ought to be appropriate for the geographical locale of the play. (Gildon later turns this into a prohibition against all foreign scenes.) To avoid this Gildon had made Guinoenda out of Alcestis. The reader might question if Druid-worshipping Britain stood nearer the audience of 1701 than the age of Alcestis, but the matter is self-evident to Gildon. Patriotism is the justification:

> It was the custom of the Ancient Poets of Greece (the Mother of the Drama, as well as of all other polite Learning) to Celebrate their own Country; nor is there a play of Euripides, Sophocles, or Aeschylus, that does not in its design, or in some scatter'd Sentence praise either Greece in general, or Athens in particular. And this was so confirmed a custom, that Euripides in one of his Tragedies lays a mark of Infamy on him, that praises the Manners of a Foreign Country, as if ev'n in that he had betray'd his own.[69]

But in England the poets have

> ...I know not why, bent their Thoughts, and prostituted their Inventions to give every Country Heroes but their own, as if Virtue were not of English Growth. And from this Fault in the choice our Poets, make of Foreign Heroes, they derive that general offense against the Manners, of which too many of our Authors are guilty, while they confound ours with those of the most Distant and different Climate. This the ancient Poets not only avoided by Domestic Fables but had this farther advantage from it, that the Manners of their Dramatic Persons being the same, with those of the Audience, their Examples were more moving and instructive, as is evident from a modern Example of our own, in the Earl of Essex.[70]

69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.

Finally at the end of the preface Gildon proceeds to defend his own play. He has followed the ancients, but he hopes he has reconciled their regularity with modern variety. This admission is damning; we get a fairly uncluttered plot and an attempt at an unadorned style, but the plot is not simple enough to lend the play classical force and energy and again Gildon seems to have difficulty in weaving together the material from his various sources.

Gildon does not employ the preface and dedication of A New Collection of Poems on Several Occasions (1701) for criticism, but Examen Miscellaneum, of the following year, again wages war for poetry and for the rules. The dedication, to the Duke of Schomberg, discourses at length on the poet as pronouncer and protector of the general's fame and contrasts the degenerate modern, who affects modesty and will not trumpet his own merits justly, with the more honest attitude of the Greek hero. A roll call of generals and their poets is included, and the twin stars of Maecenas and Richelieu rise again before our eyes.[71] The preface would be, says Gildon, some critical remarks on the nature of "the Smaller Poetry,"[72] but there is little to add to what the Marquis of Normanby has said: "He has in a Time, when the Town made the falsest Judgement in the World on Tragedy it self, ventur'd to stem the Tide of publick Error, and in his Essay on Poetry made them know how little

71. Sig. A6r.
72. Sig. A7v.

those Goliaths of the Stage had of true Merit in them: In the same Piece he has also laid down very just Rules for the forming of Lyric, and Elegiac Poetry; to which I know nothing, that can be added, but a short Consideration of the very Nature of Poetry it self, which is IMITATION."[73] Poetry is a form of painting, Gildon goes on, and requires a just imagery. Rhyme he would throw out as not intrinsically bad but as a necessary step to reform the taste of the age.[74] (Milton's preface to Paradise Lost he cites as support for this view.) The rest of the preface is more learned than critical. To provide an adequate preface for the maxims and reflections from classical authors which made up a good deal of the volume Gildon must comment on the sameness of vice in ancient times and today, the poet as awarder of fame and censure, the blessings of Christianity, the decline of education, the hypocrisy of the religious (particularly the church of Rome), and finally the dead desire for fame and glory, which the ancient poets kept alive and which Gildon hopes to revive.

Gildon's Patriot (1703), his last play, required considerable reworking to pass the censor. It was Gildon's, not Lee's, by the time it was ready for the stage. A good bit of the preface is an explanation of Gildon's changes in Lee's Lucius Junius Brutus. Though an admirer of Lee,

73. Ibid.
74. Sig. A8r-v.

Gildon does not hesitate to criticize Lee's lack of attention to the rules. Lee's hero is a buffoon; Lucretia's "particular, and luscious Description of her Rape"[75] in the forum is immodest; the introduction of the mob is beneath the dignity of tragedy. What Shakespeare does is of no concern here: "there is no Man so absurd, and blind, an Admirer of that great Poet, as not to know, and own that among his great Beauties, he has very considerable Faults; and it is but a poor Defence, to shelter our Errors under the Failings of Great Men, or to imitate their Defects, when we can't arrive at their Perfections, for no Name is sufficient to justify an Absurdity. But if they wou'd study Nature, as much as Shakespeare did, their Errors wou'd be less visible and more supportable."[76] Gildon has had to make more orderly Lee's action and particularly to "cut out many extravagant Thoughts and Expressions, I wish I had rooted 'em all entirely out; but I confess I left some in the Action in Complement to the Town, which has generally declar'd it self for Rant and Fustian, against Nature. I can't omit remarquing on that moving Simile, at the End of the Second Act, which I retain'd extreamly against my Judgment; for tho it would be very pathetique in the Poets Mouth, yet it is by no means Natural in Julio's, whose Mind is in too great a Distraction to have his Thoughts so much

75. Sig. A3v.
76. Ibid.

at Command to make a Simile; 'tis not in Nature; but I know it wou'd please the corrupt Judgment of the Audience, as it did...."[77] Against the criticism that he had made the hero too virtuous, Gildon says:

> The Theatre is not a Scaffold for the Execution of Scandalous Criminals fit only for Tiburn. 'Tis not the Business of the Stage according to Aristotle and Reason to punish profligate Offences, for the Punishment of these has nothing in it productive of Terror, or Compassion; so that the Modern Villains in our Plays, are mere Intruders into the Drama, and unpardonable in the Poet. The Stage goes beyond the Common Course of Political Justice, for it punishes those Crimes the Law does not reach, the involuntary Effects of our Passions, that is, those Actions we should not commit but by the Prevalence of our Passions, which therefore in some Measure may be term'd involuntary.[78]

Gildon defends his character in detail. It is interesting to note here that he has changed his mind about Sophocles' Oedipus and now says that rashness and curiosity are his tragic faults. At the close of the preface Gildon rings out for patriotism as a theme: "That reasonable Maxim perhaps of Sacrificing all private Affairs to the Publick, may sound Chimerical in a Country rent into Factions, nurst up by a prevailing private Spirit and Interest; yet I hope there is yet a generous Remnant in this Nation, who may think it Just and Noble."[79] Gildon strikes this theme also in the dedication to the Queen. The function of tragedy is

77. Sig. a4r.
78. Sig. a4r-v.
79. Sig. a4r.

to reward virtue by praise and to punish vice by exposure and public reprimand and hence it is important for the success of any realm to encourage the dramatic poet.[80] The dedication could not but have pleased Anne, if she concerned herself with it at all except to pass the matter on to the Duchess.

Classical rules we are informed in the dedication to Libertas Triumphans (1708) have guided the poet. The reader is advised that he will not "meet the Common Road of Poems, a great many Lines, without any Plan or Design, nor Inundations of Similes, the Wantonness of injudicious Fancy, which our Modern Poets without Regard to the Subject, like Mr. Bays, are sure to clap in where they are monstrous."[81] Like the first book of the Iliad, Gildon's poem cannot admit these "calm and boyish Ornaments" since it consists mostly of "passionate Discourses."[82] The reader is further told that he will not find any "Noisy and Confus'd Descriptions of the Battle."[83] The design of a poem, Gildon says, is the surest proof of mastery, and he has taken great pains with his. These are points which Gildon has discussed time and time again in his criticism; here we see him honestly and vainglariously announcing to the world that Gildon the poet is trying to follow the dictates of Gildon the critic.

80. Sig. a1r-a2v.
81. Sig. A2v.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.

There is little space left in the preface, after all this, for the illustrious prince, later George I, but he is told that his family will be "the future Palladium of our Troy."[84] Libertas Triumphans is Gildon's major attempt as a poet. The pallid classicism of his earlier attempts at conventional modes yields here to a more forceful expression, and the seriousness of the subject prevents the worst kind of artificiality.

Two points may be noted in applying Gildon's critical theories to his own poem. Gildon advises us in Phaeton that the language has been purposely roughened to prevent that easy felicity which he believes is often untrue to the emotion the poet is trying to present.[85] The language of Libertas Triumphans is likewise plain. Gildon deliberately pays little attention to the demands of the ear for "concord of sweet sounds" or to the demand of the imagination for extended metaphor. The poem would be better, of course, if he had paid more attention to these things, though it was probably not within his power to achieve either. But Gildon is following here his constantly reiterated critical dictum on style and certainly many other poets of his age would have benefited by paying some attention to this matter. Another critical principle central to Gildon's doctrine is the importance of the design, and, as we have

84. Ibid.
85. Sig. (b)4v.

noted, Gildon in the preface gives the would-be critic just this yardstick by which to judge the poem. Unfortunately here the poem fails more than it does in the language. In such obvious matters as the personified spirits of evil which crowd the court of Tyrannus, Pelion is certainly piled on Ossa and Olympus on top of that. The plot of the poem -- with its defeated French, its victorious French, and its again defeated French -- would seem to be too complex and too much tied to history to be satisfactory for such a short work. Here one suspects simply poetic dullness on the part of the author; he desires to avoid the rhetorical and tries to avoid trusting his poetical wings generally at any great altitude. The result is too much plot and too much classical apparatus. Gildon as poet represents, it would seem, much more clearly than many other minor poets of the age whose work is sometimes redeemed slightly by extravagance of imagination or the pleasant tinkle of numbers, the bankruptcy of the naive idea that a knowledge of the rules alone can make a poet. Gildon thought, and by his own standards quite correctly, that he was avoiding the errors of his contemporaries, but he had not that faint spark of talent that makes even Dennis better as a poet.

Gildon's substantial contribution to Shakespeare criticism came as we would expect it would to a man who

wanted to be a great critic, adequately supported by patrons, and succeeded in being certainly less than great and inadequately supported even by his own hard efforts. In 1710 Curll hired Gildon to do a pirated seventh volume to Rowe's edition of Shakespeare. In this volume Gildon published a solid essay "On the Art, Rise, and Progress of the Stage, in Greece, Rome and England" and "Remarks" on both the plays and poems of Shakespeare. He included also a glossary of archaic words and individual summaries and criticisms of the plays. This pirated volume is not in the 1714 edition of Rowe's Shakespeare nor, needless to say, reprinted in Pope's edition of 1725. But the Pope-Sewell edition of 1728 includes it intact, a marriage of Pope and Gildon that is almost fantastic in view of the decade of bitterness between them.

An Advertisement to the Reader suggests that he should consider Shakespeare as a poet in the following volume and that he should not, despite the glossary, look for etymological inquiries into the diction and grammar, Shakespeare having frequently coined words which cannot be understood even in context. Gildon's commentaries are to concern themselves with his "Poetical Beauties and Errors."[86] The first essay, "On the Art, Rise and Progress of the Stage in Greece, Rome and England," is more interesting for its preliminary remarks on Shakespeare than its

86. Sig. A8r.

general criticism. As a critic of Shakespeare, Gildon has a mind, as Augustus Ralli says, "less flexible than that of Rowe or even Dennis; the gulf between theory and practice is more absolutely set. Dennis loved the classics for their spirit, but Gildon is more preoccupied with their form."[87] Gildon however is not quite consistent enough to fit exactly such a view. There are two Gildons here, as Ralli points out: "as a private reader Gildon admires Shakespeare, but as an official critic he feels bound to censure him."[88] The private reader is best exemplified in the following passage:

> For, in spite of his known and visible Errors, when I read Shakespeare, even in some of his most irregular Plays, I am surpriz'd into a Pleasure so great, that my Judgement is no longer free to see the Faults, though they are ever so gross and evident. There is such Witchery in him, that all the Rules of Art, which he does not observe, though built on an equally solid and Infallible Reason, as intirely vanish away in the Transports of those that he does not observe, as if I had never known anything of the matter. The Pleasure, I confess, is peculiar as strong; for it comes from the admirable Draughts of the Manners, visible in the Distinction of his Characters, and his surprizing Reflections and Topicks, which are often extremely heightened by the Expression and Harmony of Numbers: for in these no Man ever excell'd him, and very few ever came up to his Merit. Nor is his nice touching the Passion of Joy, the last source of this Satisfaction; for he frequently moves this in some of the most indifferent of his Plays, so strongly, that it is impossible to quell the Emotion. There is

87. A History of Shakespearean Criticism, Oxford: University Press, 1932, I, 20.
88. Ibid.

> likewise ever a Sprightliness in his Much Ado about Nothing, which is very surprizing for that Age, and what the learned BEN could not attain by all his Industry.[89]

But Shakespeare's defect is that he lacked the advantages of learning, which a perfect knowledge of the ancients would have given him. If he had known them, he would have been a dangerous rival to the great classical poets. Gildon cannot believe, however, that Shakespeare was ignorant of the Muses. Shakespeare must have known at least Ovid and Plautus and Roman history; even Jonson admits he had some Latin. He is remarkable for the age he lived in, but does not come up to the ancients in drama though he surpasses them in "Topicks or Common Places."[90] Gildon seems not to be moved by any motive of disputing any specific rival in his discussion of Shakespeare. He would "lay down such Rules of Art, as that the Reader may be able to distinguish his [Shakespeare's] Errors from his Perfections, now too much and unjustly confounded by the foolish bigotry of his blind and partial Adorers."[91] What Gildon objects to in Shakespeare is primarily his lack of regularity and propriety both in the form and in the materials of his plays. Shakespeare himself is not to be distinguished from the lesser poets of his age except through the application of the Rules. Gildon is aware of the ambiguity

89. P.v.
90. P.iv.
91. P.iii.

of the word Nature: "Nature, Nature is the great Cry against the Rules."[92] But Nature does not mean anarchy. The droll pieces of the Dutch, which obviously are not literary art, are natural. In order to make clear his standards for judging Shakespeare, Gildon must define the principles of dramatic poetry. To do this, he begins with an account of the rise of poetry from primitive times. However naive his account of the rise of poetry, which is of course extremely conventional, it must be noted that it provides poetry with a single purpose of the highest virtue and a tradition going back to time immemorial. Laws were made when injustice arose among men, and the decay of the arts brought rules of poetry.[93] These rules, however, are nothing but what can be drawn 'from the common Sentiments of Mankind; so that Men themselves, become the Rule and Measure of what these prescribe."[94] Poetry owes its rise to religious hymns of praise and thanksgiving, but it soon degenerated. Gildon here couples satire and drunken "Rallery" but elsewhere sees satire too as a social corrective and morally good.

Proceeding then to a more formal exposition of the nature of poetry, Gildon acknowledges that pleasure is a substantial part of poetry's purpose but not its entire

92. P.ix. See below, p.N-2-3, and New Rehearsal, pp.91-92 below.
93. P.xix.
94. Ibid.

purpose because everything in the world could find one person to praise it. "The Pleasant and the Profitable" (i.e., the morally profitable) "is what naturally pleases."[95] To be morally profitable the poem must be general in application, not (this applies more readily in satire) an attack on a single person or an account of a particular tragic situation. Gildon fortifies his argument by a generous quotation from the Duke of Buckinghamshire's Essay upon Poetry ending in the Duke's line, "But Falstaff seems inimitable yet."[96] Falstaff represents successfully general vice. Needless to say, Aristotle's definition of tragedy prefaces Gildon's remarks on the specific rules of tragic poetry. He goes on to repeat Aristotle with "thus a Tragedy is the Imitation of some one grave Action, but not all the Actions of a Man's Life."[97] Part of Gildon's discontent with Shakespeare is here at the root of his idea of the theory of tragedy. Anything which interferes with the presentation of this "one grave Action" is a fault; hence, tragi-comedy is ridiculous, and extravagance in language and unusualness in characters or plots tend to spoil the single effect which tragedy should have. Tragedy refines the Passions, i.e., keeps them within moderate bounds. Then Gildon goes

95. P.xxv.
96. Pp.xxvi-xxix.
97. P.xxix.

on to the parts of tragedy: the action proceeds from the Manners and Sentiments; "the Manners form, and the Sentiments explain"[98] the Action, the imitation of which is the Fable. "The Composition of all the Parts, and Incidents of this Action is the Fable. The Manners distinguish the Qualities of the Persons represented; that is, Characterize Men, denote their Inclinations either good or bad."[99] There are three other parts, of less importance, to tragedy. The Sentiments make known the thoughts and actions of the characters. The Diction and the Decoration are of minor importance. Gildon over and over in his criticism emphasizes the importance of the Fable[100] and the unimportance of the Diction.[101] Unity of time and place is essential to a good Fable, though Gildon finds few plays free from faults here, the Orphan being one of them. The remainder of the essay is an elaborate consideration, with examples, of these essential points in the construction of a tragedy. Shakespeare is frequently criticised but occasionally praised. He knew, says Gildon, the ridiculousness of our battle scenes on the stage. Shakespeare's Merry Wives of Windsor is nearly perfectly constructed. In comedy English literature is generally much better than in tragedy, Jonson being especially good: "tho' the English Stage has scarce

98. P.xxxi.
99. Ibid.
100. Pp.xxxi-xxxii.
101. P.xxxiv.

yet been acquainted with the Shadows of Tragedy, yet have we excell'd all the Ancients in Comedy."[102] Gildon dwells on the greatness of classical times and decries the England of his own day for contempt of the arts. English drama, he says, rose from the bottom of the social structure and is yet imperfect. Gildon concludes his essay by reiterating that it is intended as the framework to the standards by which he has judged Shakespeare's works.

In his "Remarks on the Plays of Shakespeare"[103] Gildon is the "official" critic, but there are hints that Shakespeare's "witchery" breaks through. When it does, Gildon is in the position of admiring Shakespeare but not approving the methods by which Shakespeare provokes such admiration. He takes up the plays in the order in which they appear in Rowe's edition, but a more conventional one would perhaps serve better here. Of the great tragedies, Gildon selects Hamlet, for all its faults, "in Conduct and Design"[104] as Shakespeare's masterpiece. However -- a frequent note in Gildon's criticism of Shakespeare -- many of the best scenes of the play have no business in it. Gildon does not agree with Rowe that it surpasses Electra. Shakespeare's plan is capable of being made greater but "a great deal of it must be thrown away, and some of the Dar-

102. P.lix.
103. Pp.257-244.
104. P.397.

ling Trifles of the Million, as all the comic parts entirely."[105] Hamlet's speeches are great; especially is the power of tragedy evident in "I have heard that guilty creatures, sitting at a play...," (an unusual place in this soliloquy to begin one's appreciation). This speech moves Gildon to comment on the tyrants of antiquity who were afraid of being softened by the drama and to tell how Electra saved Athens from destruction. The speech to the players reveals Shakespeare's whole knowledge of the drama and is just as useful for those who judge the stage as for those who act on it. Gildon's application of Hamlet's advice is to suggest that there are actresses, especially on the stage of his own time, whose charm leads them to underestimate "the Decorum of the Representation," but "in this particular nobody can excel Mrs. Barry, whom I have frequently observ'd change her Colour, and discover a Concern that equal'd Nature; this is no Flattery to her but barely Justice."[106] Gildon likes, though not without qualifications, the scene between Hamlet and his mother, the scene where the ghost enters, and the scene before it "which as I have been assur'd he wrote in a Charnel House in the midst of the night."[107] The moral reflections of the gravedigger's scene impress him, but have no business in the

105. Ibid.
106. P.403.
107. P.404.

play -- "what ever can be left out has no Business in a Play."[108]

Gildon finds Lear a fitting tragic character as he is neither too virtuous nor too evil, but he should not have died nor should have Cordelia, and "therefore Mr. Tate has very justly alter'd that particular, which must disgust the Reader and Audience to have Vertue and Piety meet so unjust a Reward."[109] We could accept Lear's death since his faults of choler and obstinacy justify it somewhat, but we have been aroused to such indignation by the deaths of the king and Kent that we are lost. Strangely enough, Gildon says nothing about the plot of Lear, though he sums it up at some length. Othello, he finds, justifies Rymer's strictures.[110] From this point on Gildon is to cite Rymer admiringly and frequently. It can be argued, he says, that such a play could benefit mankind by helping to bring about a better understanding between the races of the earth, which would, of course, be desirable. But the thought of a white woman being married to a Negro is too shocking: "If Othello had been made deformed, and not over young but no Black, it had removed most of the Absurdities."[111] This is Gildon's fundamental objection to the play; his other comments are trivial and sometimes at variance with Rymer:

108. Ibid.
109. P.406.
110. P.410.
111. Ibid.

he excuses the cannibals as being "as probable and as moving, as the Cyclops and Harpyes of Virgil."[112] In Antony and Cleopatra Gildon finds, as indeed many of us do, "Scenes strangely broken."[113] But the description impresses him, especially "The Barge she sate in, like a burnish'd Throne."[114] Gildon prints with this for comparison Dryden's similar description in All for Love, leaving the "Decision of the Victory to the impartial Reader."[115] But he does not really come to grips with the play, nor does he with Macbeth. There are fewer "Topicks and Lines"[116] to comment on, the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are too monstrous, but the witches are wonderfully drawn like the spirits in the Tempest, which Gildon likes about as much as any play of Shakespeare's. Here he finds unity of action and time, the single action being the restoration of Prospero to his duchy, the time running about three hours.[117] If the storm scene were omitted, the unity of place would be excellent. Gildon takes both Dryden and Davenant to task for making Shakespeare's play worse, rather than better. "The Pretenders to alter this Poet shou'd never meddle with him unless they cou'd mend his Fable and Conduct, since they can never give us the Manners,

112. P.412.
113. P.413.
114. Pp.414-415.
115. P.414.
116. P.394.
117. Pp.259-260.

Sentiments, Passions, and Diction finer and more perfect than they find them in the Original."[118] Julius Caesar is defective chiefly because the main character dies too early.[119] In comedy, Gildon prefers the Merry Wives of Windsor because it conforms to Aristotelian rules.[120] Measure for Measure has a great theme and the happy ending is not to be criticised because many Greek tragedies end the same way.[121] Gildon here speaks with an intimate knowledge of the play, having reworked it himself. Much in the histories impresses Gildon, but critically they are impossible for him to contend with as they are neither tragedy nor comedy and their defects are so basic as to virtually eliminate them from the canon of dramatic production.

Though dogmatically enforcing his rules, Gildon regards himself as a defender of Shakespeare and frequently finds in Shakespeare's own lines evidence that he understood the absurdities of Elizabethan dramatic conventions. Mostly he finds noble sentiments nobly expressed, skill in drawing characters, and that "witchery" referred to above. One suspects that if Gildon and the critics like him of his age were not in thrall to the "witchery," they would not find Shakespeare's other virtues quite so easily.

Gildon's "Remarks on the Poems of Shakespeare" is

118. P.261.
119. P.377.
120. P.281.
121. P.293.

slight.[122] He ascribes "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love" to Shakespeare and attacks "The Passionate Pilgrim" as being "a medly of Shakespeare's thrown into a Heap without any Distinction."[123] Gildon prints the Earl of Winchelsea's translation of Bion's "Lament for Adonis" so that the reader may contrast the ancients with Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis." The chief critical comments on the nature of lyric poetry are furnished by the Duke of Buckinghamshire, from whose essay Gildon quotes a substantial passage.

Gildon's Life of Betterton, which came the same year as the Shakespeare volume, is not so much a biography as a long and extremely detailed essay on dramatic art and the technique of the theatre. Betterton had appeared in Gildon's plays and Gildon's acquaintance with the theatre, if we are to judge from his casual remarks about actors and acting and his interest in the financial and administrative problems of dramatic companies long after his retirement from the stage, was intimate and practical as well as theoretical. The Life of Betterton is dedicated to Steele, whose example Gildon feels is commendable and as likely to raise the general level of the drama as Gildon's rule book which follows. In the preface Gildon defends himself by admitting that he has borrowed many of his rules from the

122. Pp.445-464.
123. P.449.

French, indeed as the French did from Quintilian and other authors. The French, he goes on to say, have improved the ancients in that they have restored what had been lost through the alterations of time and have fortified the ancient rules with observations to make them more adaptable to modern situations. Gildon gets through the biographical part of his book in less than eleven pages, and part of this is devoted to printing the agreement between the companies of 1681. The stage is set for Gildon's dissertation on the theatre by the concluding paragraphs of the Life proper where Gildon assures us that he knew Betterton well (of this there can be no doubt) and in the closing years of his life frequently visited him at his country place in Reading where Betterton held forth on the theatre.

After the scanty facts about Betterton's career, the critical discourse begins. Betterton, Gildon and others sit down in the "agreeable Shade" and Gildon leads off with a three-page question devoted to the neglect of the drama and the evidence of this in the corruption of a people. The rest of the book is supposed to be Betterton's own views, inspired by Gildon's questions, on all sorts of matters connected with the theatre. Gildon says in the preface that he is the first to attempt a work of this sort and that he has exhausted the matter. The first of these

observations is reasonably correct, and there is no doubt about the second. Gildon envisions a type of theatre manager almost as powerful, if not as aesthetically convincing, as Edward Gordon Craig's. This manager or actor-manager's chief function should be to fuse all the various elements that go to make a dramatic production into a unity. Gildon has elsewhere discussed facets of this idea. It is related to the notion of classical unity and subordination of detail by which he criticizes both Shakespeare and actresses who rely on charm rather than the essential business of properly reading lines and imitating emotions. A high ideal indeed is set up for the actor. He ought to know history, moral philosophy and rhetoric and ought not to be a stranger to painting and sculpture (mostly "to know what is fit, and to express it").[124] His body should be moderate in size and he should be well trained. The reputations of actors and especially of actresses should be perfect. Here Gildon could find a fine contrast in two great ladies of his own plays, Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Bracegirdle.

The neglect of the training of actors and actresses has contributed a great deal to the present low state of affairs in the theatre, says Betterton through Gildon's pen, reminiscing of his early days under Davenant. The young actor today thinks he has mastered his art too soon.

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124. P.139.

Betterton tells how he and Mrs. Barry would take great pains to study the plays and "that her Acting has given success to such Plays as to read would turn a Man's Stomach."[125] The argument for actors with unsullied reputations would seem to be somewhat inconsistent. It may be offensive to hear pious things uttered on the stage by an actress who is a prostitute, but one would suggest that if this thought intrudes, the real criticism is that she is a poor actress. Harrington's Oceana is cited as recommending a regulation of the theatre audiences in terms of morals as well as the dramatic production.

The various aspects of dramatic presentation are taken up fairly systematically and at length, proper attention being paid to classical precedents. Gildon implies that it is possible to express a great deal of complicated emotion without words, by gesture and music, as the mimes did in classical times. The dumb show in Hamlet serves as the example to show "the Play as a silent Action."[126] The proper acting techniques are absolutely essential to the highest type of drama, are useful in oratory as well, and have a philosophical basis:

> ACTION indeed has a natural Excellence in it, superior to all other Qualities; Action is Motion, and Motion is the Support of Nature, which without it would again sink into the sluggish Mass of Chaos. Motion in the various and regular Dances of the Planets surprises

125. P.16.
126. P.23.

> and delights: Life is Motion, and when that ceases, the Humane Body so beautiful, nay, so divine when enlivened by Motion, becomes a dead and putrid Coarse, from which all turn their Eyes. The Eye is caught by anything in Motion, but passes over the sluggish and motionless things as not pleasing the Objects of its View.
>
> This Natural Power of Motion or Action is the Reason that the Attention of the Audience is fixt by an irregular or even fantastic Action on the Stage of the most indifferent Player; and supine and drowsy, when the best Actor speaks without the Addition of Action.[127]

The intent of this, rather than the logic, indicates the easy assurance that Gildon has that truth and right and reason are on his side in critical matters and explains partially his scorn of those who do not follow the rules and his sometimes surprised impatience with them. The proper speech techniques then receive attention, again with much classical buttressing. Demosthenes is discussed; the power of some orators to turn mobs in ancient Rome is commented on, with citations from the Advancement of Learning. Mastery of acting and delivery make up the actor's art. Slightly under fifty pages are devoted to a detailed investigation of acting and slightly more than this to the art of speaking.

Gildon attempts to reduce every type of personality and every shade of emotion to a standard gesture or facial expression. "A Patriot, a Prince, a Beggar, Clown, &c must each have their Propriety, and Distinction in Action as

127. Pp.25-26.

well as Words and Language."[128] This does not in any way simplify the actor's art, however, as Gildon does not believe in simplified character types patterned on "humours," though the physiological and psychological do enter into the picture. What he asks for is not far from realism, though it is a realism based on the premise that men of the same temperament, from the same walks of life, in similar situations, will react the same way. The actor, therefore, must know every shade of human emotion and must project himself into his characters, acquainting himself with the available historical material if necessary. Gildon admits parenthetically that a good deal depends on the material the poet has given the actor "but a good Player will help out an indifferent Poet."[129] The "incomparable" Mrs. Barry is cited as the example of excellence in acting, with Mrs. Bradshaw her only rival. The details Gildon gives are sometimes minute:

> Thus we find a rolling Eye that is quick and inconstant in its Motion, argues a quick but light Wit; a hot and choleric Complexion, with an inconstant and impatient Mind; and in a Woman it gives a strong Proof of Wantonness and Immodesty. Heavy dull Eyes a dull Mind, and a Difficulty of Conception...[130]
>
> Eyes enflam'd and fiery are the genuine Effect of Choler and Anger...

128. P.30.
129. P.39.
130. P.41.

> Thus the Voice, when loud, discovers Wrath and Indignation of Mind, and a small trembling Voice proceeds from Fear.
>
> In like manner, to use no Actions or Gestures in Discourse, is a Sign of a heavy and slow Disposition, as too much Gesticulation proceeds from Lightness; and a Mean betwixt both is the Effect of Wisdom and Gravity and if it be not too Quick, it denotes Magnanimity. Some are perpetually fiddling about their Cloaths, so that they scarce are dress'd till they go to Bed, which is an Argument of a childish and empty Mind.[131]

The philosophical basis for this is emphasized: "Every Passion or Emotion of the Mind has from Nature its proper and peculiar Countenance, Sound and Gesture; and the whole Body of Man, all his Looks, and every Sound of his Voice, like Strings on an Instrument, receive their Sounds from the various Impulse of the Passions."[132] Pliny and Horace, and especially Quintilian, supply the material for much of this, Quintilian being quoted at some length. Practicing in front of a mirror is recommended to the aspiring young actor, but he must bear in mind that what he sees on the right is really on the left, and he may thus get in ill habits of gesture. Gildon goes to Greece and Rome for most of his examples, yet he turns to Hamlet's "Hecuba" speech to sum up how the proper acting technique will "amaze indeed the very Faculty of Eyes and Ears" and to the instructions to the players to introduce his discussion of the

131. P.42.
132. P.43.

proper voice technique. Hamlet's advice to speak "trippingly on the Tongue" Gildon quotes at length and says: "If we should consider and weight these Directions well, I am persuaded they are sufficient to instruct a young Player in all the Beauties of Utterance, and correct all the Errors he might, for want of the Art of Speaking, have incurr'd. By pronouncing it Trippingly on the Tongue, he means a clear and disembarrass'd Pronunciation, such as is agreeable to Nature and the Subject on which he speaks."[133]

Violent passion, Gildon argues, does not necessarily mean violent speaking, and Goodman playing the mad Alexander the Great in Lee's Rival Queens is commended for giving the role all the force it required yet "made not half the Noise, as some who succeeded him; who were sure to bellow it out in such a manner, that their Voice would fail them before the End."[134] The explication on this speech of Shakespeare is almost as full as the extensive commentary on the Duke of Buckinghamshire's essay in the later Laws of Poetry. A long list of the kinds of defects the voice is subject to is drawn from Julius Pollux's Onomastics, which Gildon says has been given to him in a paper by a friend. The defects range from "Rude...like unbroken Colts" to "Dusucous, that which is not heard without Difficulty."[135]

133. P.83.
134. P.84.
135. P.90.

The virtues of the voice include "the alluring, that abounds in delicate Modulating, and harmonious Warblings"[136] and "The sounding or canorous, fit to sing with Musical Instruments."[137] The art of pronunciation includes the virtues of Purity, "a certain Healthfulness of Voice," Perspicuity, "a certain articulate Expression of all the Syllables," Ornament, "The cultivating and Clearness of the Voice," and Hability or Aptitude, "a pleasing Variety of Pronunciation, according to the Diversity of the Subject, and in a constant Equality."[138] Again we are taken to Cicero and Demosthenes for additional evidence, and Gildon analyzes passages from classical and English poets and discusses the proper delivery for each. Hotspur, Lear, Othello and Antony provide examples of character well enough represented by their speeches to give Gildon good material. He attempts to indicate the manner in which some less tractable material should be read: he reprints a large passage from his dedication (to the Earl of Peterborough) to the Shakespeare volume on how the great Earl sacrificed much to the public weal and adds the following commentary: "Should this be spoke in a low and languishing Voice, it would be flat, cold, and insipid, and altogether beneath the Honour of the Hero; but let them be spoke with that noble Accent, and be animated with a lofty Tone of Voice, agreeable to the

136. P.92.
137. P.93.
138. Pp.93-96.

Hero's Spirit and Magnificence, then they will not appear wholly unworthy of the Subject."[139]

The subsidiary arts of dancing and music occupy Gildon through the rest of the essay. Dancing is especially useful, we are told, in giving actors that grace of body which is necessary to their art; music "discovers a wonderful Power; a Power not to be resisted; but I am afraid, that Power acts more on the Body, than the Mind."[140] Henry Purcell is discussed and St. Evremond cited to justify music, provided that it does not interfere with the dramatic representation, a qualification Gildon frequently makes in criticism but did not observe in practice. We get Gildon's opinion on foreign opera but not at the length we would expect. Finally a list of the plays in which Betterton "made some considerable Figure" completes the account. Gildon with more than usual modesty does not mention his own plays.

It is impossible to determine how much of The Life of Betterton is Gildon's and how much is Betterton's. The fact that the discourses are put in the mouth of Betterton need not reassure us, of course, but Betterton as actor, manager and playwright was certainly capable of a great deal of theorizing on the theatre. The rigid classical ideas of the book make us suspect that it is principally Gildon's.

139. P.122.
140. P.157.

Also, once Gildon finishes his brief account of Betterton's life and introduces the framework of the dialogue (if anything with so few questions and such long answers can be called a dialogue), the discourse is well organized and utterly unlike the reflections of an actor upon his art. Yet the book could not have been written without the example of Betterton. Betterton was, to a degree, the actor-manager that Gildon envisioned. It seems reasonable to assume that Gildon knew him and of him intimately and is to a large extent merely idealizing what Betterton had done and wanted to do and adjusting it, of course, to his own critical principles.

At the end of 1710 Brightland's Grammar appeared. In this Gildon had little chance for criticism and the work is certainly not entirely his. But in the discussion of poetry his hand is apparent. The ideas coincide exactly with his critical theories, though considerations of space have forced him to be less argumentative than usual. Here is a typical passage.

> For the Learned must not fancy, that to write a Verse, or conclude a Rhime, gives the Title of Poet; no, he must understand the Nature of his Subject thoroughly; and let his Copy of Verses or Poem be never so short, he must form a Design, or Plan, by which every Verse shall be directed to a certain End, and each have a just Dependance on the other; for only this can produce the Beauty of Order and Harmony, and satisfy a rational Mind. For to jumble a Company of Verses together without any Design, let them be never so smooth and flowing, is an

> Undertaking of no Value, and incapable of any thing Great and Noble. A Blockhead with a good Ear, and a tolerable Knowledge of the Language, may do these, but nothing but a Poet the other.[141]

Gildon goes on to stress the importance of design, to tell us that a versifyer and a poet are two different things, and to recommend to the young a rigid application to the classics, by means of translation if necessary. The rules for the various poetic forms are too brief here to be of much consequence. The book appeared under decent enough auspices: Brightland was well known, Steele wrote a brief, humorous preface as "Isaac Bickerstaff," and the Poet-Laureate of England, Mr. Tate, wrote a congratulatory ode to Brightland. That Gildon's part in the book was important enough for it to be ascribed to him is evident from a 1718 advertisement in the Evening Post, where Gildon is called the "Author of Isaac Bickerstaff's English Grammar" in an announcement of the forthcoming Complete Art of Poetry.[142] The project itself would have won Gildon's respect. Brightland was an ardent partisan of an "English" education and perhaps the most important phase of Gildon's thinking after his strong classicism is his emphasis on English things, especially concerning education.

In 1714 Gildon's critical career reached its flower,

141. Sig. N3r.
142. R. H. Griffith, "Isaac Bickerstaff's Grammar," N. & Q., CXCXV (1949), 365. (Evening Post, August 16-19, 1718).

as has been indicated, in the New Rehearsal, or Bays the Younger. This work represents not so much the maturity of his ideas but their best literary presentation. The ideas in the New Rehearsal are also in the Shakespeare volume of 1710. They are little changed in the Complete Art of Poetry (1718). The change is minute enough to make it practicable to discuss the later criticism before proceeding to the New Rehearsal.

Gildon begins Canons, or The Vision (1717), his poem in praise of the Duke of Chandos' estate, with a critical defence of the poem which he says is necessary because the poem is so unlike anything else produced in the age. After this beginning, we hope to get a theory of a different kind of topographical poetry, but we are soon aware that the difference Gildon refers to is something much more ordinary. He is trying to follow the rules. Modern poetry is correct and "nervous" in its diction and at the most the product of grammar and the lowest parts of rhetoric (which treats of tropes and figures). Modern poetry is smooth versification and quaint expressions. Gildon blames this, as he has before, partly on the inferior education of the young, citing Milton for support. He also blames the ladies

> who have a very considerable hand in dispensing Reputation, and with whom a soft tender sentence is an uncontrollable Proof of a happy Genius, worthy their Applause, and to these I may add the Beaux and the rest of our Sex, who make a Figure in the Visiting Days and Assemblies

> of the FAIR and the GAY. Yet by such as these must the most Learned, Great, and Sublime Genius stand or fall in his interest, at least, with the Town.[143]

We are again reminded of the lack of patrons and the names of Maecenas and Richelieu (it would be refreshing if Gildon thought up a different brace of patrons) are held up as examples to the great. Just a few such who had not "bow'd the Knee to Baal"[144] would reform England. The Homeric rhapsodists commit even in late classical times the error of concentrating on "beauties," but the great editors of Homer knew that the whole design was the important thing. Gildon makes an analogy with painting to stress the importance of design. What would Titian's pictures be, he asks, with just his color? Carnavan, the dedicatee, is mentioned only briefly in the preface.

Canons is a much more open and extended plee for patronage than Gildon had yet done or a major writer would condescend to do. He invites the noble lord to be England's Maecenas:

> Be thou Maecenas, and thou'lt soon inspire,
> The British Bards with more than Mantuan Fire.
> For, let thy Smiles their gracious Influence shed
> Ev'n on Humble, my devoted Head,
> Spight of the Boyls of Fortune, Envy, Rage,
> And all th' Oppressions of a barbarous Age,
> My soaring Muse shall spread her daring Wings,
> And equal MILTON, when of Thee she Sings.[145]

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143. P.v.
144. P.vi.
145. P.3.

Rejecting the "nauseous Follies of the Age"[146] Gildon goes back to the greater glories of mankind's pastoral beginnings and then singles out Chandos as the man who is already engaged in restoring this happy estate:

> What David wish'd in vain, to him is given,
> His favourite Hands have raised a *PILE to Heaven.[147]

The footnote appended notes his lordship's rebuilding of a parish church. The Muses and other celestial beings which inhabit the rest of the poem do their ascents and descents over the Earl's estate, but Gildon pays no attention to its specific beauties. Probably he knew or cared little about them; Chandos' reputation as a man of fabulous wealth shines brighter in his eyes than Canons. The great of ancient Greece and Rome and of Anglo-Saxon England receive their attention. Of his own age, the poet says:

> Twice in One Age the Patriots have prevail'd,
> Twice in One Age the Friends of Slavery fail'd.
> Immortal GEORGE now Rules the Favour'd State,
> Ordain'd to fix its happiness by Fate:
> Heav'ns true Viceregent, he supports its Cause,
> And makes his Rule of Government, the Laws.[148]

This is as close to a political statement as the poem gets. We have been told at the beginning of the poem that

> The Heroes Deeds. i.e., Chandos' patronage
> the gen'rous Muse inspire,
> And warm the POETS breast with kindred Fire;[149]

146. P.5.
147. P.9.
148. P.15.
149. P.1.

And we are told at the end of the poem what the poet will do in return for the patron, which includes preserving his fame down the centuries:

> For POETS of their PATRONS have these Odds,
> These POETS make, but POETS make them Gods.

We leave the Muses, "in one inchanting Sound," singing "Io CANONS! Io BRIDGES!"[150] The reader is less enchanted. Even considering the tone of most early Eighteenth Century dedications, Gildon's grandiose plea for patronage cannot be made attractive. We do see in this poem, however, Gildon's critical principles degraded, but not altered, by necessity.

In the Complete Art of Poetry[151] (1718) Gildon attempts both 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. Volume I consists of Dialogues on the history of poetry, the necessity of rules, the manner of composition, and on tragedy, comedy and the epic. The preface attacks Locke for not giving a sufficiently high place to poetry in his scheme of things, and says again what Gildon has said so

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150. P.26.

151. In a recently published anthology, the editor, H. A. Needham (Taste and Criticism in the Eighteenth Century, London: Harrap, [1952], p.195), calls the Complete Art of Poetry "a clear statement of neo-classical critical doctrine" and notes that Gildon opposes any idea of liberty of genius.

often, that the design is the most important thing in a poem. Gildon this time acknowledges his sources, but not sufficiently, as we shall see: "Whatever I have found of use to my Design in Aristotle chiefly (in Horace), Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Boileau, Rapin, Dacier, Gerard Vossius's Poetical Institutions, the late Duke of Buckinghamshire's most excellent Essay on Poetry, Mr. Dennis, or any other I have made bold with so that my Reader will have the satisfaction of great and illustrious instructors...."[152] It is important to note this statement because of the careless use that Gildon really makes of his sources. It is sufficient for the moment to say that he sometimes cites authority and at other times incorporates material into his work without acknowledgement. At the beginning of the work Gildon attempts to establish the kind of dialogue that he has handled successfully in the New Rehearsal. We have Laudon (Laud don, meaning "down" or "hill"), a great patron, Eusebia, "who is not ashamed of being religious even in so abandoned an Age";[153] Madame La Mode, who has charm and merit; Isachar La Mode, her husband, who is transported by everything which pleases his wife; and Tyro, a young poet. Isachar represents the uncritical man, whose bad taste comes from natural causes (i.e., his English environment). Tyro is "a meer Rimester,

152. Sig. a6r.
153. P.vii.

or at most, a good Versifyer."[154] Unlike Sawny Dapper, this young poet is not satisfied with so "worthless an Accomplishment"[155] as smooth verse. Finally, there is Manilia, a woman who has "no small Force of unassisted Nature"[156] to help her inclination to the Muses. Gildon does not, however, pursue this idea of the dialogue with any success. The characters are not sufficiently differentiated; the speeches get longer and longer, and one soon forgets that anyone but Gildon is talking.

Dialogue I, "Of the Nature, Use, Excellence, Rise and Progress of Poetry," is little more than an elaborate expansion of Gildon's essay of similar title prefixed to the additional volume to Rowe's Shakespeare, plus a great deal of moralizing. Gildon has now decided that it is not sufficient to stress the glories of the classical age, but also necessary to equate these glories -- created by pagans -- with the Christian virtues. After an elaborate and Platonic argument against the poets, the conclusion is reached that poetry is morally good and superior to solely intellectual methods of arriving at the truth: "Poetry spreads to All, and sheds its benign Influence upon All; it teaches by Example, which strike all Capacities. I learn from them, if not the Definitions of Virtue, yet what

154. P.ix.
155. Ibid.
156. Ibid.

is of more Consequence: That to be happy, we must not depart from it...."[157] The speaker here takes the view that a woman is incapable by education if not by intellect of understanding subtle theological arguments. Poetry, however influences the heart and thus has widespread influence. Poetry, says Gildon, consists of eloquence, music and painting.[158] Jordaens of Antwerp's Descent from the Cross transfixes us, says Gildon, with the sword of sorrow; music as is well known has the power of healing the sick; eloquence often quells the violence of the mob. All of these things combine in poetry.[159] The universality of poetry in all ages and all nations Gildon borrows partly from Sir William Temple. He repeats his estimates of the English poets: Sidney, Spenser, Waller, and Milton are the important ones.

The second dialogue, "Of the Use and Necessity of Rules in Poetry," gives us Gildon's general ideas on the subject of adhering to Aristotle and the rules, with Horace as a secondary guide. Shakespeare, we are told again, pleases as he follows the rules (and, it is implied, not too frequently).[160] The poet must be master of all the parts of poetic composition:

157. Pp.30-31.
158. P.26.
159. P.28.
160. P.99.

> He must perfectly know, and form his Design; he must know, distinguish, and preserve the Manners; he must be thoroughly acquainted with all the Springs, Motions, Degrees, Mixtures, Accesses, and Recesses of every Passion, with their Opposition, and Consistence. He must be perfect in the Sentiments, and know their Propriety, and Agreeableness to the Manners, and those to the Action; he must be skill'd and practis'd in the Diction, which includes both Numbers and Expressions.[161]

This is scarcely more than a rewriting of the 1710 volume, but then he adds: "Who can do all this but a Man of a great Capacity of Soul (which we call Genius) a large and strong Imagination to receive and Form the Images of Things, and a solid Judgment to reduce them to their proper Order and Classes? And this is writing according to the Rules."[162] This must certainly have seemed a counsel of despair to the young poet. Gildon goes on to assert that no matter how strong and fertile the imagination, a lack of judgment cripples the poet so that he can never produce anything "entirely beautiful."[163] A considerable amount of space is devoted to the question of whether poets are born or made with the rather obvious conclusion (supported by Horace) that they are both. Gildon laments the fact that while few people aspire to be mathematicians, painters, and philosophers, almost everybody feels that he might be a poet and rules are therefore all the more necessary.

161. P.86.
162. Ibid.
163. P.97.

Finally, the ancients and moderns controversy is given an airing, Temple being the particular target.[164] Gildon sets out to prove that great poetry has come after the age of Aristotle and Horace, i.e., that the rules are still active and necessary. He compares Boileau and Racine to Du Bartas and Hardy and concludes that the rules made the later men better.[165] Many great poets came in the later classical period: Menander, Plautus, Terence, and Virgil as a contemporary of Horace. We may presume, Gildon says, that many more poets were lost to us when the library at Alexandria burned. He attacks Temple in making the Alexandria fire work both against and for the moderns. Large extracts from Vossius pad out this dialogue.

The final three dialogues are on "The Manner, Rules, and Art of Composing Epigrams, Pastorals, Odes, &c.," "Tragedy and Comedy," and "The Rules of the Epic or Narrative Poem." Here Gildon adds nothing new in critical ideas to what he has already writ large. He quotes copiously, borrows (as we shall see) equally copiously, and continues, as in all his criticism, to strike out against the ignorance of the age. But the freshness of the project dies out at the end of Dialogue I. The book becomes more pedantic as it continues.

Mr. Francis E. Litz has made an intensive study of

164. P.116ff.
165. P.120.

the sources of Gildon's work.[166] His conclusions are that Gildon borrowed at least half of the material for the Complete Art of Poetry, that he deliberately tried to conceal a good part of the borrowings, and that this must make highly suspicious the remainder of the book, for how are we to know whether we are citing Gildon or a yet unidentified source? In addition to sixty-two pages of acknowledged quotations, Gildon borrows -- out of a total of 303 pages -- 30 from Dacier, 21 from Sidney, 14 from Rapin (via Rymer), 6 from Vossius, and 4 from Sir William Temple. Gildon does little or nothing to try to rework this unacknowledged material, which totals 74 pages. One can say that a good deal of what is left is Gildon's in the sense that he has said it many times before. He is not an original critic; indeed, it is difficult to find a truly original critic among the Neo-Classical critics of the early Eighteenth Century. But active and prolonged use of material by a writer makes it his own. The concealment of borrowed phrases I attribute to a pedantic pride on the part of the critic and his usual haste and impatience in composition. One does not want one's book to be all quotations. Gildon makes this material his own by providing it with his personal, quarrelsome introductions and conclusions. He changes and makes more proscriptive all of his authorities.

166. Litz, loc.cit.

The Complete Art of Poetry is, in a sense, a fossilization of Gildon's critical views, but it is also an anthology of rigidly classical criticism. Part of Gildon's reason for acknowledging some sources is that the men are still living or have recently been in the public eye. Buckinghamshire, Boileau, Roscommon, Dennis, the Spectator and the Tatler are acknowledged, among others. Yet, by our standards a certain intellectual dishonesty must affix itself to Gildon's name because of the deliberate attempts in his citations to mislead the reader; it must be remembered, however, that more prominent writers did the same thing.

The Complete Art of Poetry and the Laws of Poetry have been held up by literary historians as examples of the most pedantic of all Neo-Classical literary utterances. Yet the books must have found some audience. The Complete Art of Poetry is valuable as a compendium of the rules of the most authoritarian position in Neo-Classical criticism, rules which were giving way to a more liberal interpretation which would include the poetry of Pope.

The Post-Man robb'd of his Mail (1719) does not add much criticism to the canon and nothing that is new. The preface of "Sir Roger de Whimsey" is just what we would expect after the lively and dramatic beginning of the Complete Art of Poetry, and it is not better sustained here than it was there. Sir Roger is a widower living in the country.

He talks about his library and Gildon cannot avoid laying on the humor with a heavy hand:

> I come now to my Qualifications as a Writer; you will not find in my Study many Folio's; I think, besides Don Quixote, I have none but our English Poets. I deal all in abridgments, and other Brachilogquists: In History, Justin, Lucius Florus, Valerius Maximus, Cornelius Nepos, Velleius Paterculus, Eutropius, and the like. In other Matters, I chuse such as are not long-winded: Or your Essayists, such as Montaign, La Bruyere, Rochefoucault, among the French: that is, as we have them translated. Feltham's Resolves, my Lord Bacon's Essays, those of Sir William Temple, and some others of the English. I cannot omit Fontinello, who has furnish'd my Study with two valuable Pieces, The History of Oracles, and The Plurality of Worlds.[167]

Gildon says again that reading Martial and the other epigram writers raises the taste of schoolboys. He regrets that there is not more in Volume I for the ladies. This one feels is an admission on the author's part of a lack of disposition to force himself to the lightness and tricks of fancy that the book ought to have had to sell well. We can picture him soured on life, frustrated in his desires to correct the abuses in contemporary literature, alarmed by the exciting political developments of his own time, and weighed down with physical afflictions. The best portions of the Post-Man are those devoted to criticism, but Gildon is simply continuing old wars. The attack on Sawny Dapper (Pope) is spirited but does not add anything to the New

167. P.xii.

Rehearsal.[168] There is the usual cry against the lack of patrons and the usual insistence on the rules, supported by historical and critical evidence. The age is an evil one for the writer of genuine merit:

> Never think of growing popular by Wit, good Sense, or solid Reason; there is a Burlesque Spirit that rules the Age, and a merry Buffoon is sure to carry the Prize; Tale of a Tub spreads immediately into every corner of the Nation, and the Wicked and the Godly join to propagate its Sale. You must be a confident of the leading Wits, attend the salons of ladies, get a group of friends into the pit to applaud your play.[169]

Gildon then goes on to say that he met a poet who said that he had become successful by doing everything that the Rehearsal was against (the attack on Rowe continues even in 1719). The stage is defended against "mad Enthusiasts" and divines both, with support from the Greeks. The theatre inculcates manly virtue, says Gildon, and inspires such things as Marathon. In any event, attending the theatre is better than "coxcombery, whoring and drink,"[170] a dubious recommendation one would think. There is a defense of Milton and an attack on his imitators, and numerous short critical passages but no critical essay of any length except the concluding series of letters of the book which presents in great detail a proposal for a British Academy.

168. Pp.270-273.
169. Pp.147-148.
170. P.152.

The idea of an academy modeled partly on the French one is mentioned in almost every one of Gildon's critical discussions. Richelieu is his ideal of a great patron, the public minded statesman who recognizes the necessity of protecting letters and provides the means to do it. The idea for a British Academy is apparently developed in detail in Gildon's mind in 1698 when, as has been indicated, he seems to have felt that Halifax was ready to push the scheme. There is a letter to Harley dated January 2, 1710,[171] in which Gildon reminds Harley that he has presented him with one of his grammars and then goes on to outline greater projects ahead, one of them the academy, the other the mysterious scheme already mentioned for raising revenue. Gildon would like to personally lay before Harley his detailed plan for the British Academy. The need for an academy of letters in England, Gildon says, will be demonstrated absolutely. War is no excuse, either, for putting the project off: Alfred the Great founded Oxford during a war. Money is no excuse: all that is necessary is a charter, and not a farthing from the royal pocket. Besides, wartime is a good time to reform and practice virtue. Gildon's academy is more comprehensive than the French which merely regulates the standard of the language. The British one should include History and all

171. B. M. Birch MS.4163, f. 257.

Art and Sciences, which can polish the Mind, and bring it to a useful Course of Learning."[172] But the higher purpose of the academy is to revive ancient virtues to build, not Jerusalem, but Athens in "England's green and pleasant land." England, protected by the sea, is an ideal place for a great culture to flourish. England can only do this, however, by reform in public life. The love of praise must replace the love of money in the minds and hearts of public men.[173] It is an important function of the academy to bring this about. Such a reform in manners needs great support, however; Richelieu failed to win a perpetual grant for the French Academy and its activity and influence were limited because of its dependence on current government appropriations.[174]

Gildon is very precise in his organization plans for the academy. There are to be sixty fellowships held by both nobles and commons and university men of the utmost learning, industry and judgment, and fifty beneficiary offices; ten of which must be held by dramatic poets, ten by historians, and the others by mathematicians, lyric, heroic, and satiric poets, philosophers, physicians, lawyers and musicians. Needless to say all must be native born citizens of England for "it wou'd be an Infamy too shameful,

172. P.152.
173. P.302.
174. P.309.

to have the English Language directed by Foreigners who, if they once get in, will have no room for any one but their own countrymen in a little Time."[175] With the lords and commons in parliament Gildon seeks to provide strong government support perpetually. Specific officers are named and funds proposed to defray their expenses. Gildon even plans the great seal of the academy: the Queen's picture in Minerva's habit with "Armis tutetur, moribus ornat" as motto. The choice of the beneficiary members might be determined in several different ways, we are told, but each must have produced a book or have done something for the arts and sciences.[176] All books produced by members must be passed by the academy, no censures being made without thirty or forty members, mostly beneficiary, being present. Gildon envisions the academy running a press to print its own books and being allowed to buy paper duty free.[177] Travelling scholars, he says, ought to be sent to examine the books and manuscripts of the Vatican, the emperor's library, the French king's library and other collections to transcribe valuable material, and he recommends that these travelling scholars be provided with credentials by the British ambassador or official in each area.[178]

The academy as an instrument for national glorifi-

175. Pp.310-311.
176. Pp.313-314.
177. Pp.314-315.
178. P.315.

cation and virtue emerges clearly out of Gildon's proposals. The members are to lunch and dine together in their robes (color to be decided upon later) on Sundays and holidays.[179] The poetical members will be obliged once a year to produce hymns in praise of God, or noble translations from the poetical parts of the Bible.[180] They will satirize the follies and extol in odes and eulogies those who have served their country well.[181] The profits from the sale of the academy's books will be used as prizes to inspire the members or for repairing types. Gildon even imagines having books extolling England and its virtues written in foreign languages and sold on the continent; these books would be printed abroad to evade the prohibition of the importation of books from heretical countries imposed by the Council of Trent. Some works with which the academy could engage itself are: an "exact" English Grammar ("The expressive double letters of the old Saxons to be ponder'd, whether worth Reviving, &c."),[182] a study of poetic diction, an English rhetoric and a study of prose style. Such matters as whether the ancients' or the English tongue is the most natural are preliminary to these reference works.

In its power to regulate the literary output of

179. P.316.
180. Ibid.
181. P.317.
182. P.318.

England, Gildon's academy approaches the most absolute modern state. The academy is to reward virtue by giving orations praising heroic seamen, etc., but it is also to license all orations of non-members and subject them to censorship. It is to regulate drama by insisting that plays be on English themes. No play by a man under twenty-eight years of age would be considered. Gildon has even fixed the rate of pay: 3rd and 6th day free, without any charges, and half of the profit of the 9th day, and the 8th part of each succeeding day, the rights at the death of the playwright reverting to the academy. Finally, and in view of Gildon's record this is a crowning irony, any one convicted of using flattery in a dedication is to be punished as a robber for taking money away from good men. Gildon's dream of the academy is occasionally a pretty one, with the poet laureate (salary £ 300) being crowned in church; but it is a vision of a frustrated patriot who will have no compromise with an ideal and who has no practical political sense. The British academy had been long discussed when Gildon took the matter up. His proposals are too impractical to gain support, but they indicate the breadth and depth of his classical bias. Unlike Temple, Gildon does not see the rules as a safeguard to prevent the talented writer from committing excesses; he proposes a uniformity of style and approach even among the able writers

of the age. He is the most authoritarian of all critics. The motivation for this desire to force the English writer into a mold, whatever other explanation it might have, is largely Gildon's intense and unreasonable patriotism. He wants to see England great, but after his own image of the greatness of ancient Greece. Also he feels neglected by his age and is embittered. An England with such an academy, he is sure, would have long ago recognized the merits of Charles Gildon.

Miscellanea Aurea (1720) contains as its first letter "A Voyage to the Mountains of the Moon, under the Equator, or Parnassus Reform'd, being the Apotheosis of Sir Samuel Garth," which is a critical piece with an allegorical framework. In this we get, after great pompery of muses and a display of the archetypes of great tragedy (which include Otway's Orphan), a dissertation on the rules of tragedy. Gildon adds little here to what he has said elsewhere. There is the same stress on the fable, the same playing-down of rhetoric and ornament. The sentiments must be the effects of the manners. Historical tragedy is necessarily inferior. We have often been told this. The allegorical framework does serve Gildon some purpose. The works of Rowe are searched for on Parnassus and not found. There are monkeys who sweep and keep the sewers clean; these are the imitators who had set up for poets. The little critics

who were interested only in fine language, the "garments" of poetry, are on Parnassus relegated to a position proper for people interested in garments: they are made tailors and forced to carry heavy loads of cloth.

Gildon then gives, in a somewhat more imaginative form than we have had it previously, exactly the critical theory that we expect from him. Descriptions must contribute to the design; both propriety and the limits of the stage forbid the representation of certain things, the envenomed robe of Medea, battle scenes, and death; the faultless character and the wholly wicked are both undesirable.[183] Love is not generally effective on the stage.[184] Also it is unfitting to show a virgin displaying passion. But love can be employed in a limited way. Married love -- as displayed by Alcestis, for instance -- is dramatically effective, and Venice Preserv'd is a great play. Immoral women are completely unforgivable in the drama, including besides Jane Shore and "The Fair Penitent," Shakespeare's Cleopatra.[185] No good judge, says Gildon, considers Seneca much of an ancient and his Phaedra doesn't count. Also, in this Greek myth, her punishment is inflicted by the gods.

Then the spirit of Otway speaks on the British Muse.

183. P.23.
184. Pp.24-25.
185. P.25.

On the strength of two plays Beaumont and Fletcher have attained Parnassus; Shakespeare, on the strength of one, the Tempest. Jonson has the laurels for comedy, with Shadwell, Wycherley, Menander, Terence and Moliere passing muster.[186] It is Milton who has taken the English Muse to its heights. Martial we find partly rejected in favor of Catullus. Martial and Plutarch move out to a pleasing place called the Valley of Epigram. Finally Gildon parades the great physicians before our eyes, led, needless to say, by Garth, but fails to tell us why they are on Parnassus at all. This essay is signed "Carlo Amontesocio" as is "The Golden Spy and The New Metamorphosis. Some of the other material touches on literature and the drama. There is an attack on the players. Gildon quotes Betterton as saying there are no better judges of a play than the managers. London, he goes on, ought to have a national theatre with "no filthy smoak" and an academy to authorize and regulate play production.[187]

The Battle of the Authors (1720) reveals Gildon taking sides in a clash between his old master, Dennis, and his onetime benefactor, Sir Richard Steele. Steele is hit hard. The dedicatory epistle announced that the author is a young man who has just fallen in love with a pretty girl and who hopes by literary success to attain her. Most of

186. P.30.
187. P.28.

this success he hopes to attain through the drama. His play could be with little change either a tragedy or a comedy: "for if I should let it pass with a little plain and easy Fornication, and Adultery, it might very well be call'd a Comedy, but if I should add a Rape, and three or four Murthers, it would certainly prove to be a very excellent Tragedy, at least as Tragedies go now; and sure none but Critics will doubt, that what pleases the present time, is always the best."[188] This is Gildon's attack on Rowe and the conditions of the drama of his time in full flower of sarcasm. There are also attacks, in the dedication, on popular acclaim as a proof of dramatic success, the enormous sums paid to foreign musicians, and the lack of patronage for the deserving, all old themes with Gildon.

The Battle of the Authors opens with a long tirade against "scribblers," a term which Gildon, as he grows older, would have had increasing difficulty in defining if he had been forced to. It frequently means merely any opposition writing, but it also means writers who do not abide by the rules. It therefore has both political and critical significance. Gildon proceeds to attack "scribblers" by investigating their history from antiquity to the present day, coming to the conclusion that "scribblers" have been with us always, but that in ancient times regulation

188. Sig. alv

and taste protected real authors.[189] England has had few champions against the poetasters: Thomas Sprat, the authors of the Rehearsal, Rymer and Dennis. Steele is attacked as "Sir John Edgar" who "like several other Writers of his Form and Capacity, who tho' they carried the Vogue of the Town for a while, have liv'd, to see their Applauded Works under Pyes, lining Trunks, wrapping up Tobacco, and several other such Uses with Contempt and Infamy."[190] Colley Cibber is the principal attendant of Sir John. Defoe is treated less roughly in our introduction to him than we might expect:

> Next came in the little D--l de F-e, with pertness, Self-conceit, and over-weaning sufficiency in his Countenance, his Attendance were few, for tho' his Ignorance was of the first Magnitude, yet his Inconstancy and his veering around to all Parties has reduc'd his Retainers to a very small Number, yet in some Measure to supply this Defect, as in our Coronations we have two persons to represent the Dukes of Acquitaine and Normandy, so he brought the several Booksellers and Printers to represent his own Works...[191]

Others present for the battle are Giles Jacobs, Settle, Oldmixon, William Pittes and "a hundred other nameless Scribblers, known only to the Booksellers and Printers."[192]

Sir John Edgar opens the proceedings by a long supplication to the goddess of ignorance whom he says he

189. Sig. B2v.
190. Sig. C1r.
191. Sig. C1r-v.
192. Sig. C1v.

has served long and well. This ignorance has been dangerous both to England and the rules of art. Defoe violently protests that he has served the cause better. Cibber presents his case, challenging "any Man to show that ever I was a Friend or an Encourager of a Poet, or an Enemy to a Worthless and Ignorant Poetaster."[193] The honors finally go to Steele, with Defoe next, then Cibber, then Theobald, Oldmixon, Welsted and Charles Johnson. The army moves, like a rabble, into battle, picking up many would-be wits on the way. The preparation for battle and the battle itself is rather crudely described. The outcome is certain: the legions of Apollo led by Truewit vanquish Sir John and his men. In a summary at the end, Gildon includes Pope, Hughes, Eusden, Tickell, Philips, Swift, Budgell and Addison among the supporters of the lost cause. A trial and the metamorphosis of the enemy into maggots complete the picture.

For Gildon the Battle of the Authors is crude and rather carefree, the second characteristic certainly a welcome one in his work. There are, however, unmistakable signs of his authorship. What we miss in the pamphlet is the elaborate attention paid to the ancients and the rules of art. We do have at the beginning the picture of classical days but the work has less of the pedantry we associate

193. Sig. C4v.

with Gildon. The independent spirit of the work could not have made Gildon any new friends.

Gildon's last book, the Laws of Poetry (1721), an elaborate almost line-by-line commentary on Buckinghamshire's Essay on Poetry, is Gildon's Complete Art of Poetry applied laboriously and exhaustively to the Duke's poem, which can scarcely bear the weight of the commentary. The fact that Gildon has to write commentary interferes with the unity of the work and makes it a reworking of the Complete Art applied to the Duke's venture into criticism. It is difficult to say how much Gildon flatters the Duke for the purpose of patronage, but that he did sincerely admire the critical principles expressed in the poem is obvious. The ideas in it coincide with his own; where he wishes to disagree, he does so freely but this never takes him into contradiction of the precepts laid down in the poem. Besides Buckinghamshire's essay, the "Essay on Translated Verse" of Roscommon and Lansdowne's "Upon Unnatural Flights in Poetry" receive Gildon's elaborate analysis, but Gildon is much more interested in the Essay on Poetry than in the other two works.

After a dedication in which Gildon says that he will not dwell too much on the Duke's virtues out of consideration for his widow and that the Duke "made not the market of his prince's favour, and his own will power, to fill his

coffers, to the prejudice of others,"[194] Gildon seeks to establish the importance of the Duke's essay: "It contains precepts as new as delicate, which extend to the whole system of poetry, and which therefore alone, without the help of Aristotle, Horace, or any other critic, ancient or modern, are sufficient to form a fine taste and a solid judgment, both which are extreamly wanted in this nation among the authors and readers of poetry."[195] Gildon has joined Roscommon's essay to the Duke's on the suggestion of a person of "great quality" intimate with the Duke. This essay, Gildon says, contains many general truths despite its more limited subject. Finally Lord Lansdowne's "Upon Unnatural Flights in Poetry" was given to him, he says, many years ago to put in a miscellany. He reprints it to make a complete system of poetic art in English in one volume for English authors. Both the precepts stated and the nobleness of the authors establish the just merits of the cause:

> The reader is here taught the necessary rules of poetry by persons of the highest dignity, breeding and fine sense, so that art can never have a more glorious triumph over pretenders than it doth here obtain, under the protection of these three illustrious names....
>
> The common clamour of ill nature, which the children of confusion make against the precept of harmony and order, must here be entirely silenc'd by the known candour of humanity of the noble authors, which is even evident in the manner of their writing; and the advantage that art has gained by them is so solid and secure that its enemies will never be able

194. Sig. A5r.
195. Sig. A7r.

to produce three such great men against it.[196]

Unfortunately the book itself is not up to so noble an aim. We should not, however, doubt the sincerity of the noble aim. It was Gildon's natural inclination certainly to exploit financially the Duke's essay in the most advantageous way possible, but it would be difficult to judge here between mercenary motives and Gildon's intense patriotism and "rage for order." To pass off the Laws of Poetry as an example of sycophancy is to greatly underestimate the intention of its author. The cultivation of the English Muse and the noble arbiter and protector of it are ideals for which Gildon proselytes all his life. That these ideas here appear in a pompous and exaggerated form does nothing to make them less important in their author's mind. But the book is a failure. Buckinghamshire's essay, while a reasonably systematic exposition of classicism which is not unreadable today, is not long enough or elaborate enough for the commentary inflicted upon it. Gildon pillages the farthest reaches of scholarship to find material and piles polysyllable on polysyllable in elaborate discussions of the basis of art. For instance, Gildon finds it necessary to gloss Buckinghamshire's line "Nature's chief master-piece is writing well" by explaining that the Duke does not mean penmanship (also a great art, we are

196. Sig. A7v-A8r.

further informed). The Duke means, Gildon says, "inditing, that is, the conveying our sentiments upon any subject to another, in which are included the invention, disposition, ratiocination, and elocution, or expression in words, with propriety, elegance or sublimity, what we have to say, according to the nature of every subject...."[197] While it is doubtful that the Duke meant all this, we may be sure that he would have been pleased if he had known he had meant it.

As there is nothing that disagrees with Gildon's own critical views in the Duke's essay, Gildon is not forced to choose between patronage and truth, and the commentary is almost an anthology of Gildon's previous critical works. There is the usual essay on the rise of the drama and the excellence generally of the Greek poets. Gildon attacks Scaliger, who, he says, "moves both our laughter and contempt in those fantastical cavils which he has given the world upon Homer."[198] Perrault, we are assured, is even worse. Boileau, however, has refuted both of them. Gildon praises Dacier and says of France: "If such enemies have arisen of the Ancients in France, where there have been such eminent instances of a good taste, it is no wonder that in England, where our taste is generally so bad, there should have been found men to appear in the same abandon'd

197. P.3.
198. P.9.

cause."[199] Farquhar is singled out as a contemptible defender of the moderns: "The first that I know, who collected the force of all their tittle tattle upon this head together, is one Farquhar, who, having written some taking Comedies, as they call them, vainly assum'd, from that success upon the stage an authority to appear as an advocate for the poets of London, against those of Athens. But what wretched stuff has he produc'd upon this occasion?"[200] Gildon has not forgotten the cavalier attitude of the author of The Recruiting Officer, who contributed a preface long ago to one of his plays. Blackmore is the only man whose literary reputation makes Gildon wish that he were on the side of the ancients. This is probably respect on Gildon's part for Blackmore's attempts at the epic form. At one point Gildon politely criticizes Roscommon's translation of Horace's "mediocribus esse poetis/ Non di, non homines, non concessere communae" into seven lines which miss an essential point, but generally he is uncritical of the noble authors. The usual English poets are praised, Chaucer, Sidney, Spenser, "the great but very irregular Genius in Shakespeare,"[201] Jonson, Waller, Denham, Milton. Otway's Orphan and Venice Preserv'd are praised, of course, and English ignorance and the lack of patronage of the arts

199. P.11.
200. Ibid.
201. P.33.

are attacked. A good deal of space is devoted to Dryden, but Gildon adds nothing to what he has said before. Dryden as well as Shakespeare made some unfortunate concessions to his age; he committed literary excesses and inspired literary excess in others. Occasionally Gildon's moralizing, pedantic tone is quickened by enthusiasm:

> In these two books of his Satires, Horace would teach us, to conquer vices, to rule our passions, to follow nature, to limit our desires, to distinguish true from false, and ideas from things; to forsake prejudice, to know thoroughly the principles and motives of all our actions, and to shun that folly which is in all men, who are bigotted to the opinions they have imbibed under their teachers....In a word, he endeavors to make us happy for ourselves....[202]

Even on minor critical points he sometimes flashes forth: "This lust of fine language, as they call it, has, like an ignis fatuus, misled our authors, wandring in the night of ignorance, into strange and monstrous absurdities...."[203] But generally the Laws of Poetry is a reshuffling of old ideas, ideas so fixed in their author's mind that even the phraseology seems familiar. The explanatory notes to Roscommon's and Lansdowne's essays are even duller. Part of the failure of the Laws of Poetry may be laid to Gildon's difficulties of composing by dictation, but the natural carelessness of his writing is nowhere more evident than here. He writes in haste, here as in earlier years, not

202. P.139.
203. P.220.

only by force of necessity, but with an impatience to have the truth known, English poetry saved, and Gildon established. He does not improve as old age settles down on him. The Laws of Poetry is Gildon's last published work and so far as we know his last literary effort save for letters. The last years of his life could not have been happy. The Laws of Poetry must have caused considerable discussion and no doubt aided Gildon's vanity, but the edition had not been sold out by March 1723.[204]

204. Advertisement in the British Journal, March 20 (Dottin, op.cit., p.40).