

Part I Gildon as Professional Man of Letters

Chapter I

JOURNALISTIC WORK

During an active literary career of thirty-three years (1691-1724) and almost fifty publications Charles Gildon certainly wrote widely, if not always well. Having "commenced author by necessity" in a day when the professional man of letters lived scantily from his pen alone, he necessarily wrote with one eye--probably the sharper one--on the main chance. Without a patron and without office, he sought his livelihood in a literary career involving much cheap journalism and a fair amount of serious criticism. When Pope "wished the man a dinner and sat still" and Savage perhaps considered him the prototype for An Author to Let, both struck at least half-truths, for the pinch of circumstance drives men to many compromises. Probably "hack" is too severe a term for Gildon; but no man can always excel if he attempts compilation, miscellany, essay, biography, epistolary fiction, translation, religious and moral speculation, satire, tragedy, comedy, journalism, book reviewing, literary criticism, poetry, literary history, and textbook writing. Therefore, despite several works of considerable merit Gildon must first be considered as an able, versatile professional man of letters who perforce undertook many a job for bread alone.

What little is known of Gildon's early life comes chiefly from two sources, his own biographical sketch in his continuation of Gerard Langbaine's The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic

Poets,¹ and Paul Dottin's biographical essay prefixed to his edition of Gildon's Robinson Crusoe Examined and Criticized.² Since this study is not biographical, a brief review of his early life will bring us to our real concern, the beginning of his literary work. Born in Gillingham in Dorsetshire in 1665, he was the son of a Catholic whose family's Cavalier and Jacobite activities had taken most of a once-substantial estate and had driven them into retirement in Gillingham. His father died when Charles was nine; after preparation at a local school the boy was sent by relatives to France to study for the priesthood at the College des Anglois at Douai. During his five-year stay he became such a zealous student of the classics as to abandon his plans for the priesthood. At nineteen he was back in England awaiting his coming of age, when he took what was left of the family estate and went up to London to live as a wit. There he listened to Dryden at Will's, wrote some verses, was one of the young men frequenting Mrs. Aphra Behn's salon, and in general lived the fashionable London life of a young wit and rake. At some time during these early years in London he abandoned Catholicism; since he did so during the brief reign of James II, apparently he was sincere. By the time he was twenty-three he had gone through his little estate, had married a penniless girl who was to bear him several children, and had turned to letters for his

1. Gerard Langbaine, The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets (London, 1699), Appendix, pp. 174-176.

2. Paul Dottin, Robinson Crusoe Examined and Criticized: or a New Edition of Charles Gildon's Famous Pamphlet Now Published with an Introduction and Explanatory Notes Together with an Essay on Gildon's Life. (London and Paris, 1923). This work should be used with caution. Apparently M. Dottin's biographical facts are fairly accurate, but he omits many of Gildon's works and is often confused or naive regarding the real nature of a work or the circumstances of its publication. In general he takes Gildon far too seriously. This title is hereafter cited as Dottin.

bread.

Probably the earliest of his many efforts to live by the pen was his work on The Lacedemonian Mercury with Tom Brown. The nature and extent of his contributions are problematical.³ But he soon left this work for the richer fields of John Dunton's The Athenian Gazette: or Casuistical Mercury, which presently shortened its title to The Athenian Mercury. Apparently his contributions to The Lacedemonian Mercury had been of some value, for his former associates "shouted maledictions upon 'C.G.', who had been 'Brib'd to desert.'" And one number of The Lacedemonian Mercury opened with the question, "Is it worth while to bribe off Charles Gildon?"⁴ But a glance at the later discussion of the data of Gildon's History of the Athenian Society will show that he may have been working for both sides during part of the brief but bitter war between The Lacedemonian Mercury and The Athenian Mercury. Professor Boyce believes Brown would have condoned the double life until it worked to his own disadvantage. Hence, perhaps, the "shouted maledictions."

Since Dunton's Athenian Mercury occupies an interesting place in literary history, one is tempted to speculate on what and how much Gildon contributed to it. We know that he wrote The History of the Athenian Society to promote the sale of The Athenian Mercury, but did he also write parts of the journal itself? Despite Dunton's club device of a learned society, evidence

3. I have not been able to consult this journal, but Professor Benjamin Boyce, who has seen it, states that there seems to be no way of determining individual contributions.

4. Benjamin Boyce, Tom Brown of Facetious Memory (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), p. 41—hereafter cited as Boyce.

shows that the journal was really written by

. . . an organization varying in the number of its members according to the scope of the work which it had in hand, founded by Dunton and constantly referred to as one of his 'projects', and apparently wholly under his rule as its promoter and the owner of its name and rights. Gildon's claim for it of the title 'learned society' is therefore seen to be wholly invalid, for the society was organized and conducted for purely commercial purposes, its members constantly changing according to the proprietor's personal judgments as to their efficiency as collaborators. The society was, in short, simply an editorial staff, working under the name of 'learned society' for the sake of its prestige.⁵

Perhaps Gildon left Brown to become one of these collaborators. Both Dunton and Gildon were hard pushed, Gildon for money and Dunton for money and copy; hence it is likely that Gildon's pound of flesh would have been more than the History alone. Indeed Dunton states Gildon's plural capacity in so many words: "He was always very just in the Engagements where I had any concern and his performances were done as well as the Designs would admit."⁶

Even casual glances at the tables of contents of The Athenian Mercury indicate the possibilities. Literary criticism and domestic love situations are subjects which Gildon later worked extensively, and such queries as the following indicate similar interests: "Who is the best English Satyrist now living?" "Do the Modern English Dramatique writers excel most, or those of the last Age?" "When do you think the best Dramatique Professor in this Age?" Similarly the following suggest what Gildon was later to do with considerable skill in The Post-boy rob'd of his Mail and elsewhere:

5. R. S. Steeves, "The Athenian Virtuosi and the Athenian Society," MLR, VII (1912), 371—hereafter cited as Steeves.

6. Steeves, p. 368.

An intimate Friend of mine after having strong desires to, and promise of Marriage has been made to him by his Mistress, received a very unkind Letter from her]

As within this week I was travelling between Kenford and Bury St. Edmonds, I was unfortunately set upon by three Men in Disguise, who not finding their expected Booty, were so incensed as to rifle me of all my Cloathes, and were sending me home naked;

I had the Fortune to be joynd in Matrimony to a Man who had another Wife and Children by her, which discovering, brought an indictment against him, and cast him at the Old-Bailly for his Life, after which I begg'd he might be transported, which was granted.

The sketches themselves show the same narrative skill and sense of situation found in The Post-boy rob'd of his Mail (1692-1693) and elsewhere in Gildon's works. Thus there are some slight grounds for the conjecture that Gildon worked for Dunton on The Athenian Mercury.

Perhaps Gildon also worked on Dunton's The Supplement To the Fourth Volume of The Athenian Gazette: Containing An Account of the Design and Scope of the most considerable Books Newly Printed in England, and in the Foreign Journals and of the Quality of the Authors, if Known. With Impartial Remarks upon their Undertaking and Performance. The books reviewed suggest Gildon's background and interests: travels into Spain, the reflections of "The Emperor Marc Antonine," The Great Historical Dictionary, an entire course of philosophy, a new journey into Italy, The Enchanted World, a book on the election of the Pope in Rome, a mathematical dictionary, and A Practical Discourse concerning a Future Judgment. Several of the tales in Gildon's The Post-boy rob'd have Spanish and Italian settings; the Catholic Church and its priests were foremost among his shipping-boys in that same collection; and in the bulk of his works he generally shows a decided penchant for heavy learning. Almost all the titles indicate their continental publication, and most are in French. Gildon's education had been at Douai; and although he threw off the religious influences of France, he retained a

lifelong admiration for French literature and culture. Presumably his French would have been superior to that of Dunton's other assistants, and Dunton commented that "Mr. Gildon is well acquainted with the Languages"⁷

Although Gildon's contributions to the Athenian Mercury remain problematical, we do know that he wrote The History of the Athenian Society, probably in 1692. Dunton twice attributes the work to Gildon: "'The Athenian Mercury' began at length to be so well approved, that Mr. Gildon . . . thought it worth while to write 'A History of the Athenian Society' which contained the just merits of that cause."⁸ No one has challenged these statements, and later scholars (Leslie Stephen, Paul Dottin, H. S. Steeves, R. P. McCutcheon, R. J. Allen, Benjamin Boyce, and George Sherburn) have accepted Gildon's authorship. Although there is disagreement regarding its date,⁹ it seems to have appeared sometime during February, March, or April of 1692. First, the Harvard copy is dated 1692. Second, advertisements in the Athenian Mercury for April 30, 1692, indicate that the History was already in print. Third, the Lacedaemonian Mercury for May 9, 1692, devotes three columns to a scathing review of a "recent" History of the Athenian Society.¹⁰ Fourth, the first issue of Dunton's The Compleat Library (May, 1692)¹¹ mentions

7. John Dunton, The Life and Errors of John Dunton, Citizen of London (London, 1818), I, 181.

8. Ibid., I, 191, 181.

9. R. J. Allen (Clubs of Augustan London, Cambridge, Mass., 1933, p. 190) dates it April 1, 1693. Benjamin Boyce (p. 41) places the date earlier than May 9 of 1692. Paul Dottin (p. 7) and H. S. Steeves (pp. 363-64) give 1691, but neither offers any evidence. It is not listed in the Stationer's Register.

10. Boyce, p. 41.

11. CDL, II, 675.

The Young Students Library as an "earlier work" whereas the 1692 Harvard copy of the History mentions it as "soon forthcoming."¹² A fifth argument for dating the History in the first four months of 1692 is the running battle waged from February 1, 1692, to May 30, 1692, between Dunton's Athenian Gazette and Tom Brown's Lacedaemonian Mercury. Gildon's plea for government suppression of a competitor (p. 9) and a heated reference to Lacedaemonian imitators (p. 30) are both aimed at Brown's attempt to beat Dunton at his own game of queries and answers. And when one considers the real purpose of the History—to give authenticity to Dunton's "learned society"—it seems clear that Dunton was using Gildon's History as a tactic in his war against Brown. Therefore, since Dunton's struggle with Brown ran from February 1, 1692, to May 30, 1692; since the review of the "recent" History came out May 9; and since the advertisements in the Athenian Mercury on April 30 indicate that the History was already in print; apparently it appeared sometime in February, March, or April of 1692. Dunton's steady advertising of it, his later statements that Gildon wrote it for him, and its subsequent binding with The Athenian Mercury suggest that the History was published by Dunton as a part of his war with Tom Brown.

The work came from the press of James Dowley as an anonymous publication complete with its own title-page and pagination. Thus it could appear to be an authentic description of an actual "Athenian Society," but it was printed in such a way as later to be bound conveniently with the half-sheet folio pages of The Athenian Mercury.¹³ Following "The Epistle Dedicatory,

12. Although the Stationer's Register (III, 393) lists The Young Students Library for October 12, 1691, Dunton commonly registered things early and then withheld publication until they could be well advertised in his other publications. The evidence suggests he did so here.

13. Stoeves, p. 365. Allen, p. 190.

To the Gentlemen of the Athenian Society" and before the History itself are several poems praising the Society as a bringer of knowledge to banish ignorance from England. Most labor the parallel to ancient Athens, almost as if their authors—Nahum Tate, Peter Motteux, D. P. (for Daniel Defoe, then plain Daniel Foe)¹⁴—wrote by instruction.

The History proper is divided into three sections. Part I (pp. 1-10) is extravagant praise of the Athenian Society, bolstered and padded by ostentatious learning. Gilden makes much of a supposed parallel with the Royal Society and claims humility before a task deserving another Sprat because of the great design of the Athenian Society:

not only to improve Knowledge in Divinity and Philosophy in all their parts, as well as Philology in all its latitude, but also to commend this improvement to the Publick, in the best method, that can be found out for Instruction . . . England has the glory of giving rise to two of the noblest Designs, that the Wit of Man is capable of inventing, and they are the Royal Society, for the experimental improvement of Natural Knowledge, and the Athenian Society for communicating not only that, but all other sciences to all men, as well as to both Sexes

He urges the superiority of the Society's learning by arguing that the Greek philosophers valued knowledge only to satisfy their own pride, the Romans used learning only for power, and medieval Catholicism allowed its learning to degenerate into futile scholastic pettifoggings; only the Athenian Society loves learning for its own sake and exists only for "communicating . . . all sciences to all men, as well as to both Sexes." Then he details other advantages the world owes to the design of the Society: the promotion of

¹⁴. Steeves (p. 365), George Sherburn (A Literary History of England, New York, 1948, p. 816), and Dunton identify D. P. as Daniel Defoe.

printing, the revenue to the post, an improvement to learning, the solution of knotty points for the learned, the freedom from embarrassment in asking for information, and the chance to ask for further explanation of inadequate answers. He dangles the old quack bait of quick and easy knowledge:

Had we the good fortune to have all the Arts and Sciences, and all the fine thoughts of all those great men that have writ, they would be so voluminous that many a man of Sense would labour under, as great a difficulty as before, both for time to peruse and Money to purchase them: But this difficulty is quite removed, by the Athenian Society, for one hour a week is all the time, that is required to peruse them, and Two pence weekly sufficient to purchase those Papers, in which, every one may find the Marrow of what great Authors have writ on any curious subject, with the improvement of many ingenious and learned men upon it. (p. 4).

"The Second Part of the HISTORY of the Athenian Society" (pp. 10-20) discusses the questions to be answered, describes the varied membership of the Society, praises the many aspects of the actual answers, and makes the absurd claim that the work of the Athenian Society will "civilise more now, in a few years, than Athens itself did of old during the ages it flourished" (p. 10). Then follows the membership of the society: a divine, a philosopher, a physician, a poet, a mathematician, a lawyer, an Italian, a Spaniard, a Frenchman, and a Dutchman. A few of these—the divine, the mathematician, and the physician—become the subjects of short sketches closer to characters than to studies of individuals. This description of the "Athenian Society" attempted to give authority to the answers by including many nationalities and professions and by a steady insistence upon the learning and character of the group. But there is considerable evidence that the membership of the "Society" was not as Gildon described it:

In the preface to the first volume of the Gazette, after referring to the difficulty of carrying on the query project with only one assistant (for we are told by Dunton that the first two Gazettes were written by himself and Sault unaided) the writer continues "This inconvenience we have now taken care to remedy, and as we gave the Publick notice in some former Advertisements, engaged such persons in the affair, that what would have been Impar onus to any one or two, may now be despatched with much more ease and accuracy." . . . In addition to this, testimony as to the number of members in the society is offered in the Young Students Library, which the society published in 1692, in the engraved frontispiece of which there were represented the members, twelve in number, seated before a table. A diaphanous curtain lowered before their faces, however, effectually baffles any attempt at identification of the majority of them . . . In Dunton's Life and Errors, on the other hand, which was written, we may remember, eight years after the Gazette had ceased to exist, we find an absolute contradiction of all Dunton's previous attempts and intimations. After referring to the accession of Wesley as the third member of the society, he says: "With this new addition we found ourselves to be masters of the whole design, and thereupon we neither lessened nor increased our number." But evidence of the falsity of the society's pretensions on this point is found even during its actual existence. In the "Preface to the Reader" of Elkanah Settle's New Athenian Comedy, published in 1693, Settle refers . . . to the frontispiece to The Young Students Library: "Tis true our generous Athenians have lately vouchsafed to give us some small lineaments of theirs in miniature . . . But there, alas, they are pleased to wrap their faces in Mosaic veils, very magisterially intimating that they are persons that daily converse so near with Divinity, that their shining faces are too dazzling for humane view, and therefore no less kindly than modestly, thus like Bays his Morning pictured in a Cloud. I confess Mr. Engraver has made a pretty jolly company of 'em: But there indeed the painter is a little too poetical; and our overnumerous Society shall be examined, for the supply of that defect, you must consider that the veiled Faces are by way of Faggots to fill up the Troop: and in that fair Convention of divine Enthusiasts you must not take 'em all for the Boanerges of Wit, the Organs of Thunder, but like Guns in a fireship, a Fire of painted wooden Teels to make up the Show."¹⁵

The remainder of the second part discusses in ample detail the excellence of the answers on divinity, the removal of vulgar errors and superstitions, and the attention paid to inquiries from women.

"The Third Part of the History of the ATHENIAN SOCIETY" (pp. 28-36) is obviously planned to advertise forthcoming Dunton publications. Gildon will

15. Steeves, p. 367.

"anticipate their [the Society's] future Endeavors, or at least give the World a Prospect of those beneficial Efforts it will soon be blest with, from the matchless Industry and Learning of the Athenian Society" (p. 28). First they will compile¹⁶ The Young Students Library, which will contain "the Substance and Pith of all that's valuable in most of the best Books printed in England, and in the foreign Journals from the year 65 context indicates this to be 1665 to this present time; to which will be added an introduction to the use of Books, in a New Essay upon all sorts of Learning" After a heated reference to the Lacedaemonians, who presume to attempt an imitation of the Society's plan, the work concludes with several unsigned letters praising the History and two others signed R. S. and C. B. R. S. is Richard Sault, the mathematician, whose letter protests against the extravagant praise he received in an earlier part of the History.¹⁷ In view of the deliberately misleading nature of the entire work one wonders if Gildon himself wrote the letter signed C. B., for in later works he fabricated initials to serve his own purposes. Certainly the letter is intended to leave the impression that the History has the blessing of the Society itself.

The work contains some interesting asides. Here five years before Defoe's An Essay on Projects is a vigorous plea for the education of women: "Women have as nice a sense of things, as good judgments too, as most men . . ." (p. 26); although English women are uneducated and therefore seen trifling, his experience with educated women in France "whose apprehensions

16. This is clearly advance advertising, for The Young Students Library had been listed under John Dunton for October 12, 1691 (Stationers Register, III, 393.)

17. Steeves, p. 366.

are more quick, and discourse upon any Subject, or in any Science . . ."

(p. 26) convinces him that "our English Women would not be inferior to them in any qualification of the Mind, if they were but blessed with as happy an Education: Nay, I am apt to think, they would as far surpass the French Ladies in Knowledge, as in Beauty" (p. 27). Other comments point the direction of Gildon's later criticism. He defends the serious purpose of literature in a passage perhaps aimed at "facetious" Tom Brown:

I am sure the Wits will think it high time for me to dismiss these grave, and sublimer subjects, and to come nearer the Provinces, for I am sensible that Theology, and Philosophy require too much of Thought, and too much of Judgment, to be Entertainment agreeable to their airy Genius, which relishes nothing but a Trifling Jest, a Quibble, or at most a Pleasant Banter, as they call it. These Gentlemen are so wholly possessed with the spirit of Caisty, that they think all things dull that are solid . . . (p. 23).

He defends virtue as a subject for poetry:

Nay, Virtue is so far from not being the proper subject of Poetry, that nothing else, indeed, is: For, if we believe the best of Poets and Critics, and examine the Rules laid down by them for both Dramatic and Epic poessie, we shall find, that the Aim and end of the first, is to reward virtue, and punish Vice; and the business of the latter is, not only to draw its characters truly virtuous, but to make them successful . . . So I conclude that that Poet, who pretends to write without this Aim, is either ignorant in his Art, or guilty of perverting its Secred Laws (p. 24).

Finally, he makes a provocative distinction between hypocrisy and scandal:

Hypocrisie itself is better than Scandal, that being but a private and particular ill, this general, that by borrowing the Face, and outward form of Virtue (and by consequence) makes some atonement for its private ill, by giving a (seeming at least) good Example; whereas Scandal, familiarizes Vice to everyone, and makes all appearance of Virtue ridiculous (p. 19).

In attempting a final judgment of the History one cannot escape the fact that essentially the work was little more than a trick in the journalistic war of survival. Its purpose was to give to The Athenian Mercury an authority which its clamorous rivals could not boast. For

Gildon the work was probably a potboiler; for Dunton it was an extension of his club device, a dodge to advertise his Society, establish its credibility, and promote the circulation of his Athenian Mercury. Perhaps the modern censure of "a thoroughly dishonest book" may be a bit severe for the rough and tumble journalism of Dunton's day, but Gildon surely knew he was hatching a hoax. Its extravagant praise, lack of restraint, and generally false tone do him little credit.

In addition to writing the History Gildon perhaps worked on the following Dunton publications: The Young Students Library, The Compleat Library, The Ladies Mercury, The Ladies Dictionary, The Female War, and the Athenian Oracle. The first, The Young Students Library, is listed under John Dunton in the Stationer's Register for October 12, 1691 (III, 393), but it was advertised as "New Publisht" in The Athenian Mercury for June 7, 1692. Probably Dunton delayed its appearance until Gildon could give it advance puffing in the History. A folio volume composed of "Extracts and Abridgments of the most valuable Books Printed in England and in the Forreign Journals, from the year 65, to this Time," it included not only abstracts and translations from foreign journals but also such matter (perhaps filler?) as a forty-page treatise on Hebrew vowel-points and a heavy, twenty-page "Extract of a Book, Entitled, a Philosophical Essay upon Human Understanding . . . By Mr. Lock." It drew chiefly upon foreign journals, the only frequent English source being the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society.¹⁸ Although there is no evidence that Gildon had a hand in the publication, within The Young Students Library there is

18. I have relied upon R. P. McCutcheon's "John Dunton's Connection with Book Reviewing." (SI, IKV, 346-61) for my statement of contents.

considerable, obvious effort to link it with The Compleat Library and to establish the two in the public mind as parts of the same enterprise. At the end of volume two of The Compleat Library is "A Table of Authors, Books, and Treatises, whereof an Account is Given in this Second Volume of the Compleat Library, being a continuation of the Young Students Library, tending to the Further Perfection of that Undertaking." Then scattered throughout the volume are numerous other short references indicating that The Young Students Library and The Compleat Library are parts of the same design. Dunton refers to the latter as

A Third Project of mine "third" fits nicely into the sequence of The Athenian Society and the Mercury, The Young Students Library, and The Compleat Library for the promotion of Learning, was a Monthly Journal of Books printed in London and beyond Sea, which was chiefly extracted out of "The Universal Bibliothecae, and Journal des Scavans; and it first appeared under the title of "Supplement to the Athenian Mercury", but was afterwards called "The Compleat Library".¹⁹

R. P. McCutcheon has shown that "Dunton's Connection with The Athenian Mercury and The Compleat Library was that of proprietor rather than editor. He exercised control rather than composed articles himself."²⁰ If Dunton himself did not write The Young Students Library and The Compleat Library, who did? Gildon had pleased Dunton with the History, whose third part gave deliberately planned advance publicity to Dunton's forthcoming The Young Students Library. Gildon would have been a logical choice, and there is much in The Compleat Library to suggest his hand. First, the extracts and digests were chiefly from French works, for which Gildon's Roussin training would qualify him. Second, The Young Students Library receives a

19. John Dunton, Life and Errors, I, 198-99.

20. McCutcheon, op. cit., p. 353.

disproportionate share of notices in the "News of Learning" sections of The Compleat Library, where the writer goes to great pains to remind his readers that the Compleat Library is a continuation of The Young Students Library, as if he wished his readers to associate the two as coming from the same pen. The author designations in The Compleat Library—"R. W.", "A.M.", and "A London Divine"—may well be feigned, for the man who wrote the History and later the questionable memoirs of Aphra Behn as "one of the fair sex" was certainly capable of lesser deceit. Third, Gildon's History of the Athenian Society is advertised time and again in the "News of Learning" section of The Compleat Library. Fourth, and perhaps most convincing, is the frequent advertisement of other Gildon titles. His The Post-boy rob'd of his Mail and The Ladies Dictionary (on which Gildon perhaps worked) are the only books given three notices in the "News of Learning" sections of The Compleat Library; all others get only one, except for the History, which received many more. Fifth, the timing and nature of reviews of Gildon's The Post-boy rob'd suggest that Gildon wrote them himself. R. P. McCutcheon has shown that

Dunton's editors sometimes were furnished advance sheets, or else had access to the manuscripts of books to be reviewed, since several times the reviews appeared before the books themselves were actually published. The Post-boy rob'd of His Mail was promised for publication on Thursday, September 29, 1692, and was advertised as "published" in the Mercury for October 1. The Mercury for October 4 printed a review of this, taken from the Compleat Library for July. Now the July number of the Compleat Library, no matter how late it may have been in appearing, must have been out before October 4, to be quoted in the Mercury for that day. The review of the Post-boy, therefore, must have been prepared before the actual publication.²¹

Perhaps another explanation is that Gildon, the author of The Post-boy rob'd, was also writing reviews in the Compleat Library. He would need no

21. McCutcheon, op. cit., p. 353.

advance sheets in order to write a review of his own work. The "News of Learning for December, 1692" (Compleat Library, II, 68-70) gives such an extremely detailed and favorable three-page description²² of the success of volume I and of the contents of volume II of The Post-boy rob'd as to indicate certainly a prejudiced hand and, circumstantially, Gildon himself. The second volume of The Post-boy rob'd is dated 1693, whereas the review appeared late in 1692. Was volume II dated late (Dunton sometimes changed dates in hope of additional sales) or was the review possibly written by Gildon before publication in order to stimulate sales? The tone of the review is so unreservedly favorable; the phraseology and style are so similar to Gildon's; and the review is so detailed and enticing in suggesting the entertaining, salacious contents of the second volume that one suspects publisher Dunton and author Gildon were presenting advance advertising masquerading as a review of a book already in print,²³ especially since this same "News of Learning" for February, 1693,²⁴ also announces the imminent appearance of volume II of The Post-boy rob'd.

Of course all these notices were designed to serve Dunton's interests, for he published all the titles, and hence there is the possibility that

22. "The First Volume of the Packet Broke Open, has been so well received, and has so well answered and satisfied the generality of Readers, that it has encouraged some very worthy and polite persons that were in possession of any rarities in that kind to Communicate them to the Compiler of the first Volume, to make up a Second Part; which he finding not only very Ingenious all over, and Inriched with great variety both of useful and delightful Matter, clothed with a suitable style, and seasoned everywhere with such a Relish of Wit, that adapts the whole to every genteel Palat; he thought it would be no less Grateful and Serviceable to the World, than the former, tho it came not to his hands so accidentally as that, nor was taken in the Packet of Letters broke open. This is divided into five Books." Thereafter the reviewer gives a long paragraph to each of the five books.

23. McCutcheon (op. cit.) proves that reviews in Dunton's publications were frequently just such advance advertising of titles he later published.

24. The Compleat Library, II, 183-84.

someone other than Gildon was writing for Dunton. But it is odd that the works possibly written by Gildon receive more notices in the Compleat Library than do other works, that the tone of these notices is far more commendatory than Gildon usually received elsewhere, and that these reviews are much longer and packed with more specific detail than are those of other authors. In short, the frequency, tone, and length of the reviews suggest that Gildon was the reviewer. Also the works reviewed in the Compleat Library may well explain many of Gildon's later interests; for theology, deism, English political relations with France, the different religions of the world, and Racier's translation of Aristotle's Poetics all get detailed reviews, and all of these subjects Gildon later used, many at great length. This reviewing experience might also account for the broad but strangely miscellaneous character of the learning which Gildon later displayed at every opportunity. Most of the books reviewed in the Compleat Library were rather solid, often on the heavy side, and Gildon's later efforts exhibited the same characteristics. His strong and continued interest in Locke, Temple, and Rymer may well stem from his experience with them in the Young Student's Library and Compleat Library, where they were represented by lengthy reviews. Finally, this reviewing might also account for the critical bent later evident in the body of his work.

Therefore, all these circumstances—Gildon's work on the History of the Athenian Society, his advance advertising of the Young Student's Library in the latter part of the History, the complementary nature of the Compleat Library and the Young Students Library, the obvious use of the "News of Learning" section of the Compleat Library to praise the History, the unusually frequent advance advertisement of Gildon's works in those "News of Learning" sections, the marked difference in tone and detail between reviews

of Gildon's works and those of others, Gildon's fitness for doing the extracts of French works, the distinct parallelism of the topics treated in The Compleat Library with Gildon's later interests, and the fact that working on such a publication might lead a young writer towards the critical bent Gildon later developed—all these circumstances strongly suggest that The Young Students Library and The Compleat Library were parts of the same design and that Gildon had a hand in both.²⁵

Perhaps Gildon also had some share in three other Dunton publications—the Ladies Mercury, the Ladies Dictionary, and The Challenge, or the Female War—all clearly aimed at the growing body of woman readers whom Gildon had flattered in the History. But at present the evidence (likely possibilities, certain parallelisms of general interests, and perhaps some stylistic echoes) is far from conclusive.

Whatever the extent of Gildon's work for him, Dunton clearly valued the young man, for his comments in Life and Errors are always highly favorable. For Gildon the relationship with Dunton was formative. Probably it fostered the opportunism evident in much of Gildon's career, but it also gave him real insight into the publishing world. It extended his intellectual horizons, but also encouraged facility and speed. Certainly it gave him considerable knowledge of popular taste, and apparently it fixed him in his choice of a literary career which he was never to desert despite poverty, imprisonment, and blindness.

25. I am aware of OREL's ascription of The Compleat Library to Richard Wooley and John Dunton. Likewise I have seen R. P. McCutcheon's statement that Richard Wooley (note different spellings) was the editor. Dunton or Wooley may have been the editor; all I am suggesting is that Gildon worked on the journal.

Chapter II

MISCELLANY AND EDITING WORK

Perhaps Gildon's journalistic work with Brown and Dunton taught him that editors and publishers often fare better than writers, for he early turned to editing and assembling miscellanies. The nature of the miscellany would appeal to editors and publishers short of cash and time; and Gildon, who had already learned from Dunton to look for short and easy ways, would be quick to sense its advantages. A compiler risked little of his own reputation; he could cultivate other authors because inclusion implied compliment; well-known names meant free advertising; authors received no payments; an editor could assemble a volume swiftly; and compiler with literary ambitions could place his own name and work in good company before the public.

Probably some or all these reasons lay behind Gildon's first venture in editing, Miscellany Poems upon Several Occasions, licensed May 21, 1692. Both contents and authors represent such a cross section of contemporary taste that one suspects Gildon measured his miscellany for the market. The contents—a letter from Matthew Prior, two imitations of Horace by Congreve, a translation by Cowley, an answer to a deist by Robert Boyle, a spurious