

Chapter IV

OTHER LITERARY CIRCLES

In an age when religion, politics, and literature were closely allied, a young would-be wit could hardly keep aloof from the religious controversies of his day. Although Gildon had been reared and schooled as a Catholic, when he broke with Rome he temporarily went all the way to the fashionable opposite extreme of his day, deism. In 1693 he collected the well-known The Oracles of Reason and in 1695 brought out The Miscellaneous Works of Charles Blount. Thereafter his extremism moderated, until in 1705 he formally disavowed deism in his The Deists Manual.

One of the noisiest of English deists was Charles Blount, whose suicide in 1693 excited much comment. In characteristic fashion Gildon hastened to capitalize upon this publicity by assembling in the same year a volume entitled "The Oracles of Reason. In several letters to Mr. Hobbes and other Persons of eminent Quality and Learning. By Charles Blount, esq., Mr. Gildon and others." It consisted of preface signed by Gildon, eighteen letters, and a translation of the seventh and eighth chapters of Dr. Burnet's Archologiae Philosophicae. In this hodgepodge collection eleven of the letters were listed as written by Blount, three as by Gildon, and the others as by R. A. Richardson, Robert Yaxley, and A. N. Rogers. The title page was probably deliberately misleading, for only one letter was addressed to Hobbes, the other addressees were undistinguished, and the so-called letters

addressed to such people as "most Ingenious Major A," "the Right Honorable The Most Ingenious Strephon," and "his Friend Torismond" had obviously been lifted from other contexts to masquerade here as letters.

Gildon clearly intended this collection to publicize his own name by associating it with a fashionable controversy and better known men. First, he made the title page speak of "several letters to Mr. Hobbes and other Persons of eminent Quality and Learning. By Charles Blount esq., Mr. Gildon and others." Second, although there are only three letters "By Mr. Gildon," he made the most of the two Blount letters addressed to him by strategically placing them as the first and last items in the collection. The opening one was ostentatiously headed "A Letter to My Worthy Friend Mr. Gildon in Vindication of Dr. Burnet" and the closing one read "To his Friend Mr. Gildon Concerning the World's Age, Beginning, and End." Third, Gildon's signed preface not only stated his responsibility for the volume but also sought to capitalize upon the public interest excited by the manner of Blount's death—suicide because English law would not allow him to marry his dead wife's sister—by attacking the justice of that law on the grounds that free exercise of reason produces ample evidence that this particular English law contradicted Scripture (Levit. 18 and Deut. 25:5). Fourth, Gildon's own three slight letters upon deism addressed "To Dr. H. B. Burnet," "To Charles Blount," and "To Mr. B. Fellow of _____ College" seemed intended to associate Gildon's name with those of established men. Finally, there is nothing in the Blount letters to link them in any way with the alleged addressee; rather, their content and organization suggest that Gildon could easily have picked up chunks of Blount's writing from varied sources, attached his own names and headings, and foisted them upon the world as Blount's letters. Some of Gildon's other editorial practices suggest that

Gildon did so in order to seize upon current interest and publicize his own name. For in 1693 he was virtually an unknown with a name to make and a young family to support by his pen. Furthermore, he was fresh from trying to deceive the public with his History of the Athenian Society, which had been written under the tutelage of slippery John Dunton, a man whose irregular publishing practices have already been noted. If Gildon did thus mislead his own times with hastily manufactured letters, he has also successfully gulled later scholarship, which invariably solemnly links Gildon with Blount and accepts the letters as genuine.

In 1695 Gildon apparently used another Dunton trick to dispose of the unsold copies of The Oracles of Reason. To them he added six odd pieces of Blount's writing, a brief biographical sketch of Blount and a vindication of his death, and titled the new volume The Miscellaneous Works of Charles Blount. Everything which had appeared in 1693 as The Oracles of Reason was included as the first part of The Miscellaneous Works . . ., including the identical title page still dated 1693, the same pagination throughout, and the same printing errors. The added Blount items were Anima Mundi, complete with a title page dated 1679; Great is the Mana of the Ephesians, with its own title page dated 1695; A Just Vindication of Learning, and the Liberty of the Press, with its own title page dated 1695; and A Supposed Dialogue betwixt the late King James and King William on the Banks of the Boyne. Thus circumstantial evidence strongly indicates that Gildon took the unsold 1693 Oracles of Reason and had them bound with other unsold bits of Blount's writing to compose the 1695 volume.

What the title page promised as "an account of the Life and Death of the Author" is a disappointingly brief biographical sketch set in the framework of a conventional love letter to "the Divine Hermione" beseeching

her to requite his love lest he follow Blount's example and destroy himself. The sketch of Blount consists of only this brief, repetitious, loose collection of superlatives:

Nature gave him parts capable of Noble Sciences, and his industrious Studies bore a proportion to his Capacity: He was a generous and constant Friend, an indulgent Father, and a kind Master: His temper was open and free, his conversation pleasant; his Reflections just and modest; his Repartees close, not scurrilous; he had a great deal of Wit, and no malice: His Soul was large and noble, above the little designs of most men; an enemy to dissimulation, and never feared to own his thoughts. He was a true Englishman, and Lover of the Liberty of his Country, and declar'd it in the worst of times. He was enemy to nothing but Errour, and none were his Enemies, that knew him, but those who sacrific'd more to Harmon, than Reason: He met indeed with false Friends, that fawn'd on him alive, and villify'd him dead, such who think their Wit sufficient to atone for all their Villanies, and make amends for their want of Honesty, He had been reared in a just and adequate notion of the Deity; he had learn'd that God was the first Cause of all Things, was one, and Indivisible, was Goodness itself, Infinite and Uniform in all his Attributes; and held, that we have a true and perfect Knowledge of what is meant by Goodness, Justice, Mercy, Unity, Since else we could never know that God was Good, Just, Merciful, one, etc. This was the test of all his Doctrines, and when he met with such as opposed any of these Divine attributes, or made them oppose one another, he Rejected them as false and impious. He not only embrac'd evident Truths in his own Mind, but like a sincere Lover of Truth, endeavour'd to promote it, to disabuse the deceived, and establish a pious and just Notion of the Eternal Source of the Goodness, Wisdom, Power, Justice, and Mercy. A Noble Task, and worthy his Heroic Spirit. But the Age was too Corrupt to suffer his pious Endeavors; Avarice, Pride, Envy, and Obstinacy, had the possession of the World and therefore naturally hated their Opposer. This made them fix . . . the infamy of Atheism, on the most zealous asserter of the Glory, Honour, and Adoration of ONE GOD, and though scarce any of them pretended, to infallibility in their own views, yet were all positively certain he was in the wrong, or at least asserted it with as much assurance as Ignorance. But all this could not prevent his Thoughts of the Deity, he kept all profane Notions of God at a Distance, and prefer'd those writ by the finger of the Almighty Creator in the minds of all mankind, to the Obscure, unintelligible, and impious Doctrines, devis'd by men to serve some turn or particular Faction or Notion.

The rest of the "life" was a short, unimpressive defense of Blount's suicide, the thesis of which is "it was a real Good he desired, and . . . the loss of it rendered his Life a Burden, and by Consequence . . . he might rationally and justly put an end to what he experimentally found an Evil. [and] Cato, Brutus, and Cassius killed themselves because of

of pride, and the world praised them. Why, therefore, blame a man who kills himself for the nobler motive of love?" Manifestly Gildon deserves credit for little more than mere assembly, and even that is neither systematic nor judicious; for he added no hitherto unpublished work, his selections from Blount were probably determined by what was ready to hand, and his account of Blount's life and vindication of his death were perfunctory at best. Even the framework of the love letter, signed "Lindamour," was probably already available from Dunton's material or from Gildon's own Post-boy robb'd of his mail collections, where Gildon had used Lindamour for a signature to letters. In brief, both the 1693 and 1695 volumes were pot-boilers which cast very little light on Blount and reflected even less credit upon Gildon.

These two quick jobs which publicly associated Gildon with the deists seem to have done his reputation no good. For at the beginning of the anonymous Animadversions on Mr. Congreve's Late Answer to Mr. Collier (1698) there was a verse satire ridiculing Gildon among several writers who had also replied to Collier.

Next, let the needy Gil--n peep abroad
 Without a Muse, but more without a God.
 The first he claims, the latter's only Nam'd
 In idle Talk--so to be doubly Dam'd

 He tells you how his Beads were from him thrown,
 Then what religion has he now? Why none.

Probably this sort of thing would not have bothered Gildon, especially since it came from someone on Collier's side. But another work in 1698, Charles Leslie's A Short and Easy Way with the Deists, so challenged Gildon that he firmly declared himself for Christianity in his The Deists Manual of 1705. In the light of Gildon's fondness for capitalizing upon public controversy, one might expect to find this book just another attempt to profit from the widespread interest in Leslie's popular work. But between 1695 and 1705

Gildon's literary efforts became more serious; also during these years his works reveal his increasingly serious convictions regarding religion and its implications for his own times. Therefore, in The Deist's Manual he produced a long (about three hundred pages), serious, careful refutation of the principal arguments of deism. Three hundred pages of heavy, fairly closely reasoned theological argument was a far cry from the hasty hackwork of Gildon's two Blount volumes, and as such it deserves more attention here.

Both the title page and the prefatory matter clearly indicated the change in Gildon's views. The title page identified the author as "C. Gildon, Gentl. Publisher of the Oracles of Reason" and indicated his theme by adding the confessional motto, "Humana est Errare." The dedicatory epistle to the "Lord Archbishop of Canterbury" continued this theme as Gildon acknowledged he had "now escaped from those Errors, which depriv'd me of that Favour with your Grace, which I might for other Reasons have hop'd . . ." and stated the book's intention to be "A Guide to others similarly deluded" and aimed especially at "the Speculative Atheists . . . and also the Practical Atheists whose pernicious Vices . . . are destructive of all Morality and Religion; and by consequence are dangerous Enemies to the Universal Good, and Happiness of Mankind, which was the aim of God in the Creation of Man." Then in preface Gildon confessed his error in having defended Charles Blount's suicide and now wished "to remove an Opinion, I have formerly too much contributed to, . . . not imagining it would have been of that ill consequence, which I am afraid it was . . ."

The book proper consisted of an elaborate introduction and six dialogues built around three personifications of different viewpoints. Christophel, the good man convinced of the Christian God and his benevolence, argues with Pleonexus, the miser, and Philalethes, the youth given to

pleasure and vice. Christophel proposes to disregard "all these controversies sprung from Men's Comments on that word of God, which we have yet to peruse without them, and from which alone, I shall convince you of the Certainty, and Excellence of the Christian Religion" (xiv). Thereafter in each of the six dialogues Christophel asserts the reasonableness of central Christian doctrines. The first discourse, "That there is a God," denies that a chance combination of atoms could have produced the world, because everywhere man turns his eye and mind he recognizes design, plan, and purpose. Hence, "there must therefore be an Eternal cause to produce them, and this necessarily existing Being or Cause I call God" (p. 43). The second discourse, "Of the attributes of God," rests upon two premises: "man cannot know all of God but he can know enough as is sufficient for the Conduct and Happiness of our Lives"; and "We arrive at the Knowledge of the Divine attributes by rising up from those we find in the Creature, to the Creator" (p. 63). But even within these limitations, man can be sure that God is one, eternal, immense (in the sense that "he is everywhere present in his own Person with Matter and Space"), spiritual, infinite, omnipotent, immutable, just, beneficent, and merciful. The third discourse, "of Providence, and the Concurrence of God in the Administration of Humane Affairs . . ." defines Providence as "The Actions of God, by which he preserves and governs all his Creatures, according to the Laws Establish'd by himself" (p. 104). Gildon asserts that God has given man a guide to happiness, right reason, which is

a true and fair copy of that Eternal Reason, or Law of Things originally writ in the divine mind. The Knowledge of which . . . is communicated to, or rather innate in, or congenial with our Minds, and, as far as it apparently discovers itself, so it is obligatory on our conscience, as some divine Law writ in our very Hearts . . . as Evident Deductions drawn from Evident Principles" (p. 115).

Gildon therefore argued that what often appears to be a lack of providence in man's affairs is really man's own weakness in pursuing his passions rather than following his God-given right reason; and that even then what seems at casual glance to be confusion will, if seen more clearly, reveal overall order. Furthermore, argued Gildon, since God rewards and punishes in the next world for virtue and vice in this one, obviously there is providence at work. In the fourth discourse, "of the Nature of the Humane Soul, and its Immortality . . ." Gildon defined soul as "that Thinking Substance within us, which we call the Soul or Mind . . ." and asserted that it, together with God-given right reason, leads man to the expectation of "a Perpetual, and Eternal State of Happiness" (p. 174). Man has a clear guide to attain this beatitude, "those Laws of Reason, which God has taught us by Natural Light, and improv'd, and enforc'd by the clearer Light of the Gospel" (p. 180). In his fifth discourse, "of The Law of Nature," Gildon attacked Hobbes's contention that in the state of nature every man's hand was against his neighbor and therefore a peaceful society required the imposition of superior force. Gildon's contrary argument runs: the true state of nature is that existing among parents, children, relatives, communities—"common Interest and Reciprocal Kindness"; the first law of nature, self-preservation, leads man to recognize that his happiness and safety depend upon others and hence his attitude towards them is one of good will; man's God-given reason makes him recognize that wise self-love requires social love, expressed as justice; finally, the natural state includes piety, which makes man recognize God as benevolent and therefore conceive of society as built upon the principles of benevolence and love, not war and force. The sixth and last discourse, "of the certainty and Reasonableness of the Christian Religion," concerned the Christian miracles and the

necessity for revelation in the form of Scripture. Gildon set up three tests for miracles: they must "be above all human Power and Force," "out of the constant Order of Nature," and "foretold by the producer of the miracle or by him in whose favor it results." The miracles of Moses and Christ fit all three, he maintained, and argued that since miracles are proof of the doctrine they support, and since the truth of the Scriptures rests upon the truth of the miracles, the truth of the miracles therefore proves the truth of revelation as contained in the Scriptures. Gildon further argued: that man had so ignored God-given right reason that only God-sent miracles could rescue him; that Christ's miracles were necessary in addition to those of Moses because the Jews had strayed far from the Decalogue; that man's God-given right reason, the teachings of Moses, and the teachings of Christ all concurred in the essential principle: "The Love of God, and of our Neighbours"; and finally, that only the permanent truth of Christianity could explain such otherwise highly improbable events as the martyrdoms, the acceptance of persecution and poverty, the prevailing of ignorance and poverty over knowledge and wealth, and the stubborn persistence of Christian teachings throughout the world over the centuries.

Apparently Gildon showed his work to Charles Leslie before it was printed, for at the end of the six discourses was "a Letter from the Author of the Short Method with the Deists and Jews," which begins, "Sir, I have read over your Papers with great Satisfaction," and Leslie's letter is dated 1704, whereas Gildon's book is dated 1705. Leslie's letter gave his official blessing to Gildon's work: "I heartily bless God, with you, and for you You have laid the true Foundation of the Being of God, against the Atheist. Of his Creation of the World, and Providence, against the asserters of Blind chance." Thereafter the letter runs on to over sixteen pages as

Leslie agrees with, amplifies, and adds to Gildon's arguments, all the while approvingly referring to passages from the discourses.

Unfortunately Leslie Stephen in his distinguished History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century has left a distinctly false impression of Gildon's book, for included in his remarks on Charles Leslie is this reference to Gildon: "amongst those who surrendered to his prowess was Gildon who put forth his recantation some years afterwards in a flabby repetition of the regular commonplaces, called 'The Deist's Manual.' The pleasure of dragging a captive infidel in triumph must have been diminished by the consciousness that he was so poor a creature" (p. 195). This comment is more remarkable for rhetoric and fine writing than for reason and fact. "The pleasure of dragging a captive infidel in triumph" is so extravagantly figurative as to have no accurate meaning in this context; and worse still, it suggests a judgment without knowledge, for there is nothing but sincere praise and genuine congratulation in Leslie's letter; there certainly was nothing to suggest intellectual captor and captive. Nor is there in the immediate context of his remarks on Leslie and Gildon any evidence that Leslie Stephen had read the Gildon work on which he commented with such glibness. And as for "Captive infidel," between the 1695 appearance of The Miscellaneous Works of Charles Blount and the 1705 Deist's Manual Gildon had already recorded his Christian principles in several dedicatory epistles, prefaces, and the contents of his intervening works. Of course Gildon's work is no profound religious or philosophical study, but for several reasons it commanded some respect in its day. First, he faced the principal objections of the deists and gave some sensible answers which exhibited considerable knowledge and reflection. Second, he succeeded quite well in doing what he intended, to show the reasonableness of basic Christian tenets when they

are seen whole in their proper relationship to one another. Third, he attempted to synthesize the concepts of deism and science into a larger Christianity, the same thing Pope later attempted in his Essay on Man. For the average reader Gildon's synthesis is the more understandable of the two, and Gildon's work contains several passages like the following, which state concisely the ideas which Pope expanded in Epistles II and III of An Essay on Man.

The Conduct of his Life is committed to every Man's own Judgment by the Charter of Free Agency; and while every Man drives on the particular Dictates of his own private Will, too often guided by Passion, and too seldom by Right Reason, it would be more, than a miracle, if there were not an Inextricable Confusion, without any Reflection at all on Providence, as being the Natural and Necessary Result of our Being. Yet, from hence, from this Bustle of Private Designs, this Hurlyburly of opposite aims, and Interests, Providence produces one common Interest, and a most Beautiful order of Government; the various Companies of Humane Societies, much more wonderful and more amazing, than that of the Planets, because the Beings directed by this, are mostly more numerous, and at the same time Free Agents, which tho' disorder'd, and irregular in Particulars, yet compose order and Harmony in the whole. Thus, tho' there cannot be greater Discord, than that in the Elementary World; than the Natural Enmity betwixt Fire and Water, Earth and Air, yet Providence draws the greatest concord out of them in the whole. In like manner, tho' the Natural jarring Interests of Mankind be great, yet is the Concord of the whole for the common Preservation as admirable and noble.

But when Reason, in the dialogue of the Trust, which Self-Love confided to it, has found that our Pleasure and Safety do not depend on us alone, but that they are in great measure, in the Power of others, it considers what is the most likely way to prevent any danger from abroad. Reason reflects that man is not a solitary Creature, that Individuals cannot singly subsist, but that a Solitude wou'd not only deprive us of all or most part of our Pleasure (a large share of which we owe to others) but also of our Security and Preservation; in short, that both our Pleasure and Safety, depend on society.

Reason, therefore, from these Considerations, making its report to Self-Love, that our Pleasures and our Security had a very great dependance on others, Self-Love produced Good Will to the preservation of those others, on whose well-being our own so absolutely depended. Thus this Good Will produc'd Beneficence, or a grateful desire to return Pleasure and Safety to them, who gave ours to us. Reason thus proceeding further, finds that to keep up this society, on which Self-Preservation depended, there was a necessity, to have certain Rights inviolable, which to invade, was to destroy our own security, in that of Society, by which our own is supported; and this begot justice,

which is a constant and perpetual Will of giving everyone his Due or Right, which being every one's Case, it beget Mutual Love, and common Justice, because every one contributing to the Safety and Pleasure of each. Every-one therefore has a particular Right, which it is the common Interest to Preserve.

Gildon's book also had some closely reasoned, well put answers to the deists and Hobbes:

Again you must own, that to prove there is no Providence, you must suppose either a want of Power, Knowledge or Will in God. But how can he want Power to govern what he had Power to make? or how can he be ignorant of what he made? or how can he want will to take care of that, the making of which was the effect of his Will? For since he thought us worth the making, he cannot but think us worth the regarding; he does therefore regard us, and that is Providence. (p. 106)

. . . another absurdity he Hobbes supposes, that is, that if he that was strongest subdued him that was weakest, and so oblig'd him to be his Dependant, or slave, the Conqueror had a Right over the Subdu'd, and his Fidelity and Service, but he gives no Reason but an Assertion, that Power is Right; which if so, then the Weaker has no longer the Right of the Conqueror, till by Strategem, or otherwise, he deliveres himself from them, tho' by the Death of his Vanquisher, the Weaker having as much Right, (viz Power) to his conqueror's Life, as he had to his Liberty. This is a pretty distinction of Right indeed, when every Man's Selfish, and Animal Passions are to be judges of it; for it Justifies all Robberies, Thefts, and Murthers that the most wicked of men can be guilty of: For if there were a time, when all things were lawful, and the Strongest shou'd by Right, take all, it is still in Force; for, what was Right once, is, and must be Right always, especially speaking of the Universal Right in the Law of Nature, which always did, and always will reach all Mankind. (p.196)

But if Mr. Hobbs's Gibberish have any meaning at all, it is this, that when Mankind was totally mad, unfurnished with Reason, Wild, and Salvage like Brute Beasts of Prey, they acted like Lunaticks, and Beasts of Prey. But that when they had, I know not how, obtained Reason, they then began to act like rational creatures. But I, and all men that ever made a serious Reflection on Mankind, finding Reason essential to the Nature of Man, can suppose no time, when they were without it, and therefore conclude that Mr. Hobbs's natural State of War, cou'd never have been in Nature. (p. 219).

Thus Gildon's The Deist's Manual was far from the hasty and despicable document which Mr. Stephen has described. Rather, it was a thorough, careful, sometimes well written book which honestly sought to refute deistic objections and to establish in the minds of thoughtful men the essential reasonableness and consistency of Christian tenets.

To round out this picture of Gildon as a hack with some pretensions to literary respectability, one should know three other documents of this early period: The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets, his small contribution to the translated Works of Lucian, and A Grammar of the English Tongue. Gerard Langbaine in 1691 had produced a rather inadequate yet successful Account of the English Dramatick Poets. Either Gildon or the booksellers saw that Langbaine's idea could be exploited further, for in November, 1698,¹ was advertised The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets. Also an Exact Account of all the Plays that were ever yet printed in the English Tongue; their Double Titles, the Places where acted, the Dates when Printed, and the Persons to whom Dedicated; with Remarks and Observations on most of the said Plays. First begun by Mr. Langbain, improv'd and continued down to this Time, by a Careful Hand. Copies of this volume bear different dates and were printed for different booksellers: some without date were printed for Thomas Leigh and William Turner; some dated 1698 were printed for these same two men; some without date were printed for Daniel Midwinter and Thomas Leigh; and some dated 1699 were printed for William Turner.² Probably these facts of publication are best explained by Mr. W. Van Lennep in an inserted loose sheet in the Harvard undated copy: "Evidently Gildon's revision and continuation of Langbaine was published in November or December of 1698, some copies being dated 1698, others being

1. Edward Arber, The Term Catalogues, III, 96.

2. Arber, III, 96, 892. Dettin, p. 19. Macdonald, p. 271. The copy of Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets at Harvard reads "Printed to the Year, 1698."

dated ahead, 1699, as was the custom with books published at the end of a year. The 1698 copies were probably the first to go on sale (Feb., 1942).³)

Although Gildon's name does not appear on the title-page, the dedicatory epistle, the preface, nor as author for any other section of the volume, he is widely accepted as the general editor and chief author of the volume.³ Perhaps Peter Motteux had some share in the undertaking, although the extent of his contribution is conjectural,⁴ and Gildon admits in the preface that he had assistants. These have not been identified, however.

The unsigned dedicatory epistle is clearly Gildon's work. Addressed to Charles Caesar of Benington in Hertfordshire, it solicits patronage and also serves as another vehicle for Gildon's favorite theme that contrary to the practice of Greece and Rome English statesmen have neglected their dramatic poets. Therefore, again repeating a favorite idea, he argues that English writers should look for encouragement to soldiers like Mr. Caesar, who "forsake the lower pleasures of Fortune and Youth for the Pursuit of Honour and Glory in the War." Thereby writers will fulfill the poet's task, which is "to celebrate the Hero's Deeds, and to transmit them in the most engaging form to Posterity, for their Honour and imitation." This is still another of Gildon's oft-repeated ideas, all of which are discussed at length

3. Arber, The Term Catalogues, III, 96. CBEL, II, 692. R. N. Cunningham, Peter Anthony Motteux (Oxford, 1933), pp. 120, 179, 180, 202. Bottin, p. 19. E. N. Hooker, The Critical Works of John Dennis (Baltimore, 1939-43), II, xlix. H. G. Paul, John Dennis (New York, 1911), p. 13, n. 1. Staring B. Wells, "An Eighteenth-Century Attribution," JEGP, XIXVIII (1939), 237-38.

4. Peter . . . Motteux (Oxford, 1933), p. 180.

in the last section of this study. Not only are the separate ideas the same as those elsewhere repeated by Gildon, but they appear here in the same combination, cite the same old examples which Gildon always uses—Maecenas of Rome and Richelieu of France—and are expressed in practically the same phrases. The preface concludes with a fairly restrained tribute to Mr. Caesar in which, as usual, Gildon protests too much that he "has kept clear of the Crime of Dedications, Flattery."

Evidently Gildon also wrote the preface of the volume, for its style is the same as that of the dedicatory epistle. After disclaiming any obligation to other collections, the preface attacks Langbaine's 1691 work because he was

everywhere so partial that he destroys the character of Critick and Historian at once, whose object ought always to be Truth, whereas Mr. Langbain seems everywhere to gratify some private Figue, and seldom to regard the merit of the person he reflects upon Mr. Langbain is still farther generally mistaken in his Censures as a Critick, he seems to have known nothing of the Matter, to have had little or no Taste of Dramatick Poetry: and a Stranger to our Stage would from his recommendation make a very odd and ridiculous Collection of our English Plays

In conclusion Gildon states that "other hands" have "assisted" him in the compilation.

Like Langbaine's volume, the contents of Gildon's book are chiefly biographic and bibliographic. But in other respects they differ. Although arranged for ready reference rather than as a critical history of English dramatic writing, Gildon's separate listings generally include more material than Langbaine's. Gildon's items list many more titles in accurate form, add more descriptive comments, frequently give possible sources, often note the reception of the plays, usually include more biographical information, and more frequently pass critical judgments. Even when he uses only Langbaine's material, Gildon customarily makes substantial changes in the

wording. In general, his items are fuller, better organized, written in more finished style, and pronounce their judgments with considerably more vigor. Gildon omits completely the following figures of Langbaine's work: Lodwick Barrey, Fulke Lord Brook, Richard Head, Lady Pembroke, and Thomas St. Cerf. He corrects Langbaine's "Astrea" Behn to "Aphra" Behn, and he adds items for the following: Nicholas Breton, Ruben Bourn, Colley Cibber, William Congreve, John Dennis, Thomas Dilke, Thomas Dogget, John Dryden, Jr., Edward Filmer, Robert Gould, Joseph Harris, Joseph Haines, Henry Higden, Charles Hopkins, John Jones, Mrs. Delariviere Manley, Peter Motteux, John Oldmixon, Thomas Scot, Captain Vanbrugh, and Robert Wilson. He also adds an appendix of biographical sketches for Charles Gildon, Fulke Greville (Lord Brook), the Countess of Pembroke, William Phillips, Mrs. Mary Pix, Flautus, Thomas Shadwell, James Shirley, Terence, Mrs. Catherine Trotter, and William Walker. In addition to these changes he corrects many of Langbaine's mistakes in first names and brings several spellings closer to modern form. For all these reasons Gildon's work is usually more valuable than Langbaine's.

Three items are of minor importance as literary history. Gildon's account of John Dennis is "the first and one of the best biographies of Dennis Dennis himself supplied much of the material for this sketch of his life giving what is probably an accurate, though a meager, account of the first forty years of the critic's life."⁵ Second, in this

5. H. G. Paul, John Dennis (New York, 1911), p. 1, n. 1, and p. 13. E. H. Hooker, op. cit., II, xlix) also speaks very favorably of this early sketch of Dennis.

volume "there first appeared in print any imputation concerning Shakespeare and the Davenants," a repetition of the Restoration story that Shakespeare was the real father of William Davenant. This gossip from Gildon later appeared in Hearne in 1709, in Giles Jacob in 1719, in Spence's anecdotes, and in Chetwood's General History of the Stage in 1749.⁶ Third, the sketch of Gildon in the appendix is so full of insignificant details, so out of proportion to the man's real stature, so obviously written in Gildon's own style, and so ingeniously compliments at the same time it avoids the appearance of extravagant compliment that we must conclude the sketch to be autobiography.

This volume has been so widely used, cited, and quoted by scholars of late seventeenth century literature that it has achieved a certain eminence as a reference work. Apparently few have questioned its facts, and many have quoted snippets of its judgments. But unless Gildon's practices here differed sharply from his previous ones, this work should be considered a reliable reference only when supported by other evidence. It has, however, value as a good source of information for Gildon's critical tenets and their specific application, and as such it will be used in later chapters. Just as Gildon the critic is somewhat more admirable than Gildon the hack, so is this volume more respectable than most of Gildon's earlier work.

The second of these miscellaneous literary chores was Gildon's translation of two dialogues in Sam Briscoe's Lucian project. Briscoe had secured Dryden to write the accompanying life because of his fame and experience with

6. Alfred Harbage, Sir William Davenant (Philadelphia, 1935), p. 274.

translation.⁷ But Briscoe, not Dryden, chose the translators,⁸ who were a less distinguished lot⁹ than the men who had translated Plutarch's Lives for Tonson. The entire project was done in an irregular fashion. Although volumes I, III, and IV are dated 1711 and volume II is dated 1710, the work had been done much earlier. Except for the first two dialogues "the customary order of the works of Lucian is completely changed, as if the task had been assigned by the choice of translators and set up as it came in."¹⁰ Notices had appeared in Peter Motteux's Gentleman's Journal in June, 1693, and March, 1694, saying that the translation was about to appear.¹¹ An unsigned preface to the second volume, which appeared in 1710, states that Dryden's life of Lucian "was writ by Mr. Dryden near fifteen years ago, for so long has the book been doing," a statement which Professor Craig says is the basis for Malone's dating Dryden's Life as 1696.¹² Probably the life was

7. In 1690 Dryden had contributed translations to Ovid's Epistles, done "by several hands"; in 1683 he wrote the accompanying life for Jacob Tonson's famous prose translation of Plutarch's Lives; for Sylvae (1685) he had translated bits from Lucretius, Theocritus, and Horace; in 1693 he had done translations of Juvenal and Persius; and in 1697 he published his distinguished translation of the Aeneid.

8. Hardin Craig, "Dryden's Lucian," Classical Philology (XVI, 1921), p. 158.

9. Hardin Craig (op. cit., pp. 155-162) lists these as the translators "in the order of their appearance in the book": T. Ferne, Walter Hoyle, Sir Henry Sheers, Andrew Baden, Charles Blount, Tom Brown, J. Drake, Sylvester Cob, Charles Gildon, "Mr." Cashen, "Mr." Vernon, "Captain" Sprag, Samuel Hill, S. Atkinson, Henry Blount, William Ayloffe, John Philips, Laurence Echard, Christopher Echard, John Savage, John Digby, Hugh Hare, J. Washington, Nahum Tate, and James Tyrrell.

10. Craig, pp. 153-54.

11. Craig, p. 162.

12. Craig, p. 154.

written sometime after the notice of March, 1694, but the casual statement in the unsigned preface to volume II in 1710 is doubtful evidence at best, especially in light of the irregularity of the whole project. Most likely this irregularity stemmed from Briscoe's financial troubles, for his name disappears from the term catalogues in 1696 and reappears much later as a publisher of licentious translations, letters, memoirs, and satires.¹³

Gildon's translations are in volume II, the first of the four volumes to appear; it came out in 1710 and volumes I, III and IV followed in 1711.¹⁴ Although volume II appeared before the others, its translators were undistinguished,¹⁵ and probably Gildon's associates reflect his own relative obscurity. But since the translators were chosen perhaps as early as 1692, he was still in the very early years of his literary career.

His contributions were the preface for the entire second volume and the translation of two dialogues. Although the preface is unsigned, it is undoubtedly Gildon's work and should be so recognized. It repeats in virtually the same words Gildon uses elsewhere his familiar plea for an academy supported by men of wealth and directed by men of taste, and it sets forth in almost identical wording the same ideas of translation which he was to repeat again and again. In it he complains that English translations are usually poor because "The Booksellers are here the undertakers, and are oblig'd to employ those to translate, who will do it for the least money."

13. Craig, p. 162.

14. Craig, p. 154. All four volumes were issued again in 1745 (CREL, II, 762).

15. J. Drake (3 dialogues), S. Cobb (1), Gildon (2), "Mr. Cashen" (1), "Mr. Vernon" (2), "Captain Sprag" (1), "Mr. Hill" (2), Andrew Baden (1), S. Atkinson (1), Henry Blount (2), "Captain Ayloff" (2). Four of the translations are anonymous.

His remedy is for men of informed opinion to make their influence felt: "I see no end of the Scandal, unless a Just Encouragement of Men of Judgment were fixt by which only those, who are masters not only of the Language they translate into but also of the subject each author they attempt discusses of." But such a correction can be made only "by the Establishment of an Academy of Sciences upon such a Fund, that all Valuable Books may be made to speak English with the utmost accuracy, by men, who may apply their whole study to render their authors, having complete Support while they are labouring for the Publick Service." Finally, the idea of translation--really a close paraphrase of Dryden's ideas as expressed in his "Preface on Translation" prefixed to the Second Miscellany (1685) and in his Life of Lucian (Vol. I, p. 61 of the 1711 ed.)¹⁶—is the same as Gildon expressed elsewhere:

The Translator ought chiefly to mind the Sense of the Author, the endeavour to express that with Beauty and Energy in the Speech he translates into; which he cannot miss if he be master of his subject, and of both the Languages, and use a Just application. And he is but a very superficial Hypercritic, who will cavil at the Interpretation of a Word, as not fully Expressed, provided the Sense of the Author be so. For a Verbatim Translation must always be a Wretched Performance.

The table of contents lists two translations by Gildon, "The Encomium on our Country, a proof that our Country ought to be prefer'd to all things by the Authority of Gods and Men" (pp. 62-69), and "Calumniator, that we ought not rashly to give Credit to Scandal" (pp. 69-88). One who is no student of Greek can judge the quality of Gildon's translations only by comparison. The first dialogue, "The Encomium on our country . . .,"

16. Craig, p. 150.

has also been translated for the Loeb Classical Library series by A. M. Harmon. Of the two versions Gildon's has more vigor. For example, his early lines read:

The Celebrated Proverb, that nothing is dearer than our Native Country has long been in the mouths of every one. But this is not so old and so vulgar as it is true, for there is nothing more pleasing to every man than his own Country. What is more venerable and divine than that? For one country, that brought us forth, and gave us nourishment, is the cause and Source of all that we call venerable and Divine. Many are pleas'd with and admire the large extent and splendor of Cities, and the Magnificence of their Buildings; but every man loves his Country. Nor is there any man so besotted on, or such a slave to the pleasure of Publick Shews and Spectacles, as to forget his own country, in the excellence and enchantments of any Sights that can be seen in a foreign Nation. (pp. 62-63).

Mr. Harmon's version of the same passage is:

Nothing sweeter than one's native land' is already commonplace. If nothing is sweeter, then is anything more holy and divine? Truly of all that men count holy and divine their native land is cause and teacher, in that she bears, nurtures, and educates them. To be sure, many admire cities for their size, their splendour and the magnificence of their public works, but everyone loves his own country; and even among men completely overmastered by the lust of the eye, no one is so misguided as to be forgetful of it because of the greater number of wonders in other countries.¹⁷

H. W. Fowler in a twentieth-century translation renders the same passage in this fashion:

It is a truism with no pretensions to novelty that there is nothing sweeter than one's country. Does that imply that, though there is nothing pleasanter, there may be something grander or more divine? Why, of all that men reckon grand and divine their country is the source and teacher, originating, developing, inculcating. For great and brilliant and splendidly equipped cities many men have admiration, but for their own all men have love. No man—not the most enthusiastic sightseer that ever was—is so dazzled by foreign wonders as to forget his own land.¹⁸

17. A.M. Harmon, Lucian. With an English Translation (New York, 1913), I, 210.

18. H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler (trans.), The Works of Lucian of Samosata (Oxford, 1905), IV, 23.

In this comparison with modern translations Gildon fares well, and in comparison with the work of Tate and Moyle in the same series he likewise excels. But the livelier dialogues which Tom Brown translated show a more sprightly touch.

Although Briscoe probably employed him as just another hack translator, Gildon's performance in these two dialogues shows him competent in what was then highly regarded as literary art; and his comments in the preface reflect his awareness of current conflicting theories of translation. Thus his translation is another proof of versatility and a further bit of evidence to support the argument of succeeding chapters that Gildon was much more than mere hack.

The third of Gildon's miscellaneous literary chores, A Grammar of the English Tongue, dated 1711, is frequently known as Brightland's grammar, Steele's grammar, or Bickerstaff's grammar because of Brightland's and Steele's connections with the work. It was well advertised, directly and otherwise. The first notice, which appeared in The British Mercury on May 8, 1710 (No. 19), described the volume as "Now in the Press and Speedily will be publish'd, a Grammar of the English Tongue, whatever is necessary to teach the youth of either Sex, to Speak and Write English Truly and Learnedly in a short time: and likewise for the accomodation of Elder Persons who have forgot or Never Learnt the Art of Grammar"19 This advertisement was repeated in nos. 21 and 22. But probably more effective indirect advertising came on October 7, 1710, when Steele's Tatler (No. 234) printed a long letter concerning the general ignorance of grammar. The

19. R. H. Griffith, "Isaac Bickerstaff's 'Grammar'," Notes and Queries, CLXXIV (1949), p. 362—hereafter cited as Griffith.

author, supposedly "an old man retired from all acquaintance with the town" but "still a well-wisher to my country and the commonwealth of learning . . . was startled at the picture of modern politeness . . . and grieved to see our sterling English language fallen into the hands of clippers and coiners." He attributes this sad state to "the principal defect of our English discipline . . . the initiatory part . . ." and asks, "Can anything be more absurd than to push tender wits into the intricate mazes of . . . a Latin grammar? to learn an unknown art by an unknown tongue? To carry them a dark roundabout way to let them in at a back door? Whereas by teaching them first the grammar of their mother tongue, so easy to be learned, their advance to the grammars of Latin and Greek would be gradual and easy." Since speaking and writing correctly are highly valuable skills, he "would recommend, above all things, the having a grammar of our mother-tongue first taught in the schools, which would facilitate our youths learning their Latin and Greek grammars, with spare time for arithmetic, astronomy, history, & c. that would make them pass the spring of their life with profit and pleasure, that is now miserably spent in grammatical perplexities." He adds—too conveniently to escape suspicion of a motive—that "It is our good fortune to have such a grammar, with notes, now in the press and to be published next term." The letter reads like Gildon's puffing of his own book. He had done just that with Dunton, and in this case there are several circumstances that suggest he may have done so again. First, both phrasing and ideas sound like Gildon. Second, he and Steele had been acquainted for some time: in 1706 Steele had stepped in to secure Gildon's release from prison after the latter had written for the wrong side in the controversy regarding the Princess Sophia and the succession, and in the same year as this grammar, 1710, Gildon dedicated his *Life of Betterton* to Steele. Third,

since Steele is known to have been unsystematic and often in dire straits for last-minute material, the very nature of this particular number—merely two unrelated letters introduced by an obviously hasty and very brief comment—suggests that perhaps Steele at once obliged a friend and provided himself with a quick and easy number of the Tatler. Perhaps another such puff was the favorable review in "The Works of the Learned" for November, 1710 (p. 167).²⁰ Since the grammar is dated 1711, probably the review was another piece of advance advertising, a trick Gildon had learned from Dunton and had often used.

When the book appeared in 1711, opposite the title-page were the head of Cato *The Censor* and Steele's approval of the work, entitled "The approbation of Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq." Steele's puff was humorous, but substantial:

"The following Treatise being submitted to my censure, that I may pass it with integrity, I must declare, that as grammar in general is on all hands allowed the Foundation of all Arts and Sciences, so it appears to me that this Grammar of the English Tongue has done that justice to our Language which, till now, it never obtained. The Text will improve the most ignorant, and the notes will employ the most learned. I therefore enjoin all my female correspondents to Buy, Read, and Study this Grammar, that their letters may be something less senigmatic: and on all my male correspondents likewise, who make no conscience of False Spelling and False English, I lay the same injunction, on Pain of having their Epistles exposed in their own proper Dress, in my Incubations. Isaac Bickerstaff, Censor.

Although the dedicatory epistle is signed "The Authors" it repeats familiar Gildon themes. Addressed to the Queen, it is brief and pointed:

Your majesty being Sovereign of all those People who speak the Language for which the following Grammar is made, This Performance doth naturally claim your Majesty's protection. A Grammar of the French Language was the

20. G. A. Aitken ("Some English Grammars," Walford's Antiquarian, VIII, 1885, 167-170—hereafter cited as Aitken) reports this fact. I have been unable to find a copy of the review.

First Labour of that learned Body the French Academy, That being the Foundation of all Writings; and as your Majesty's arms have been superior to those Superiority to our Arts and Sciences, which are all built on This that is now presented to Your Sacred Majesty.

The grammar itself is designed as a textbook and is therefore frankly didactic. Divided into sections of "The English Grammar," "The Art of Poetry," "Rhetoric," and "Logic; or the Art of Reasoning" the volume systematically and thoroughly presents a rather solid body of knowledge. "The English Language" deals with pronunciation, syllabification, parts of speech, tense, case, irregular troublesome verbs, sentences considered grammatically and rhetorically, agreement of verb and subject, word order, punctuation, and abbreviations. "The Art of Poetry" discusses accents and quantities, epigram, pastoral, elegy, lyric, satire, comedy, tragedy, and epic. "Rhetoric; or the Art of Persuasion" deals with approach, tone, style, and figures of speech. "Logic; or the art of Reasoning" includes: of particular ideas, of simple and compound ideas, of ideas of substances and modes, of relations, of individual, particular, and universal ideas, of the perspicuity and obscurity of ideas, of judgments, of definition, and of methods of proof. Like most textbooks, this one leans upon its predecessors. The "notes of great use to men and women of judgment and learning" are partly from Wallis's Grammatica Lingua Anglicanae (1653), George Hickes's Institutiones Grammaticae Anglo-Saxonicae (2nd edition, 1689), and the works of John Locke; and the "special disquisition" on speech offered to mature readers is actually an exact translation of Wallis.²¹

21. C. M. Parker, The Development of Textbooks in English Grammar (Ph.D. thesis, University of Texas, 1931), p. 174.

Later editions incorporated several additions to the basic grammar. In 1712 came "A Second Edition. With Improvements Making a complete System of an English Education. For the use of the Schools of Great Britain and Ireland." Here the pages increased from 180 to 264 because the "Improvements" are additional discussions on "The Arts of Poetry, Rhetorick, and Logic." (A great deal of this extended discussion of "The Art of Poetry" later found its way into Gildon's The Complete Art of Poetry in 1718.) The dedication to the Queen has been altered somewhat from the first editions and although unsigned in some copies bears Brightland's signature in others; the leaf containing the "Approbation of Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq." is sometimes wanting; and there is added a wooden commendatory poem by Nahum Tate, then poet laureate. A third edition in 1714 contained yet another reworking of the dedication to the Queen and newly added "The useful Companion: or chronological Tables of the Revolution of Easter." Thereafter later editions remained unchanged as they appeared in 1720, 1728, 1746, and 1759.²²

Although this work is generally known as "Brightland's Grammar," there is sufficient evidence, both external and internal, to warrant ascribing it to Gildon and relegating Brightland to the role of publisher or literary entrepreneur. The grammar was first advertised in The British Mercury (No. 19, May 8, 1710) as "Printed for J. Brightland,"²³ and Paul

22. Aitken, pp. 167-170.

23. Griffith, p. 362.

Dottin states that the volume was "begun at the request of bookseller Brightland."²⁴ Since Gildon had already successfully undertaken various jobs for the booksellers, M. Dottin's statement is quite plausible. R. H. Griffith has shown that from 1709 to 1717 Brightland was one of the managers or directors of the Sun Fire Office, publishers of The British Mercury, and that in the summer of 1710 Gildon was employed by that company as "Author and Clerk" at an annual salary of eighty pounds.²⁵ Since the book was advertised in May as "Printed for J. Brightland" and Gildon was employed by Brightland's company during the succeeding summer, probably Gildon owed his appointment to his competence and industry in his work on the grammar. Although Professor Griffith believes that "the general scheme of it [the grammar] had already been blocked out by Brightland,"²⁶ he offers no reason for his statement; whereas the dedication of the book states that the need for a proper English grammar "touched our sagacious friend Mr. Brightland with a desire of promoting the honour of his country in so necessary a point But after much pains and a great many promises from his learned friends, he found himself just where he set out But it being our good fortune to be acquainted with him, after so many disappointments, he was pleased to press us to the undertaking" ²⁷ Brightland may have

24. Dottin, p. 27.

25. Griffith, p. 363.

26. Ibid.

27. Aitken, p. 167.

seen a demand for an English grammar, but there is no evidence that he suggested even the general outlines for it; whereas for over a decade Gildon had been making passing comments on the need for just such a work as this became. Indeed, since Brightland was a bookseller rather than author, it is more likely that Gildon proposed the project to Brightland. Certainly Gildon's pet ideas crop up throughout the book, and when only a year after Brightland's death Gildon's The Compleat Art of Poetry was advertised (Evening Post, No. 1411, 16-19 August, 1718) as written "by Charles Gildon, Gent. (Author of Bickerstaff's English Grammar)" there was no contradiction.

Two sections of the work suggest Gildon as its author. First, in the 1711 edition an explanation (p. 45) that G is hard before I is illustrated by these words: "Gild, Gilder, Gildon, Surname." Of course another writer might have used this explanation, but since Gildon had at best a very minor claim to fame even in his own day, it is more likely that Gildon himself wrote the illustration. Second, the volume contains the statement (p. 103) that "The Art of Poetry" section "is but an abridgment of a larger Discourse that will be publish'd soon after it . . . a full Display of this Art in a much greater Volum." In 1718 Gildon brought out The Complete Art of Poetry, whose outlines, critical positions, key examples, and favorite phrases are the same as those of the poetry section of the grammar. By 1710 Gildon had been interested in literary theory for over a decade, and it is quite possible he had already formulated in 1710 much of what The Complete Art of Poetry became in 1718; if so, the poetry portion of the grammar may be, literally, "but an abridgment of a larger Discourse." Or, if the grammar forced Gildon to the task of systematic formulation and specific statement of his ideas, then the Complete Art of Poetry was only a framework of dialogue in which to encase the ideas, phrases, examples, and general

outlines already stated in the poetry section of the grammar. Also, although casual readers probably regarded Gildon's use of "Complete" in The Complete Art of Poetry as conceit or as insistence that he was presenting his critical principles in toto, perhaps he was really concerned with advertising and sales: perhaps he wished to link his new work with the already successful grammar and therefore advertised The Complete Art of Poetry as "Just Published in two Pocket Vols. by Charles Gildon, Gent. (Author of Bickerstaff's English Grammar)."²⁸ Of course the seven-year lag between promise and publication offers a difficulty to this explanation; but the objection can be explained away by many possibilities: Gildon's variety of interests, the nature of the subject, his own limited stature in the world of letters and consequent difficulty in finding a publisher for his serious work, or any other of the exigencies of life which beset minor talents. Therefore, since there seems to be no indication that Brightland wrote the work but there is considerable external and internal evidence to support Gildon's authorship, A Grammar of The English Tongue should be attributed to Gildon, not Brightland.

The book has triple value. To the student of literary theory it presents in brief but almost complete form as early as 1711 the same critical tenets which attracted wider attention in 1718 as The Complete Art of Poetry. To the student of Gildon it also affords another evidence of the man's versatility and at least minor talent. To the student of textbooks of English grammar it has multiple interest: it was the first text of real significance in the establishment of English grammar in secondary schools; it initiated the custom of adding to the text notes intended for adults as well as

28. The Evening Post (No. 1111, 16-19 August, 1718).

schoolboys; it first applied to English spelling rules the continental practice of formulating rules and definitions in verse; and most important of all, it undertook to put English grammar on an equal plane with Latin in a system of English education.²⁹ To the modern reader the book seems remarkably thorough, often strikingly incisive because of apt choice of telling examples, but severely limited by its method of bare statement rather than explanation. However, for an age whose pedagogy is best described by Dr. Johnson's "He whipt, and we learnt" the grammar was well suited.

The chapters of this section have shown the wide variety of literary and sub-literary activities by which Charles Gildon earned his bread. They included hack journalism with Brown and Dunton, editing miscellanies of varying literary merit for several publishers, writing suspect biographical "memoirs" at propitious moments, engaging in theological controversy, and undertaking other literary chores of biographical compilation, translation, and textbook writing. From this survey of the least important part of his literary career Gildon emerges as a facile, versatile, not always scrupulous hack whose ability made him aspire to more ambitious work but whose limitations were to keep him outside the ranks of major writers of the eighteenth century. Yet he nevertheless attempted, with some success, fiction, poetry, drama, and literary criticism. Later chapters discuss these more ambitious aspects of his career, and it is to the first of these, Gildon as writer of fiction and as poet and dramatist, that we turn in the next chapter.

29. C. M. Parker, The Development of Textbooks . . . , pp. 172-175.