

Joseph Addison and Richard Steele

Edited by

Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom

The Critical Heritage



JOSEPH ADDISON AND RICHARD STEELE: THE CRITICAL HERITAGE

THE CRITICAL HERITAGE SERIES

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The Critical Heritage series collects together a large body of criticism on major figures in literature. Each volume presents the contemporary responses to a particular writer, enabling the student to follow the formation of critical attitudes to the writer's work and its place within a literary tradition.

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JOSEPH ADDISON
AND
RICHARD STEELE

THE CRITICAL HERITAGE

Edited by

EDWARD A. BLOOM
AND
LILLIAN D. BLOOM



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General Editor's Preface

The reception given to a writer by his contemporaries and near-contemporaries is evidence of considerable value to the student of literature. On one side we learn a great deal about the state of criticism at large and in particular about the development of critical attitudes towards a single writer; at the same time, through private comments in letters, journals or marginalia, we gain an insight upon the tastes and literary thought of individual readers of the period. Evidence of this kind helps us to understand the writer's historical situation, the nature of his immediate reading-public, and his response to these pressures.

The separate volumes in the *Critical Heritage Series* present a record of this early criticism. Clearly, for many of the highly productive and lengthily reviewed nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, there exists an enormous body of material; and in these cases the volume editors have made a selection of the most important views significant for their intrinsic critical worth or for their representative quality—perhaps even registering incomprehension!

For earlier writers, notably pre-eighteenth century, the materials are much scarcer and the historical period has been extended, sometimes far beyond the writer's lifetime, in order to show the inception and growth of critical views which were initially slow to appear.

In each volume the documents are headed by an Introduction, discussing the material assembled and relating the early stages of the author's reception to what we have come to identify as the critical tradition. The volumes will make available much material which would otherwise be difficult of access and it is hoped that the modern reader will be thereby helped towards an informed understanding of the ways in which literature has been read and judged.

B.C.S.

For Donald F. Bond

*'A Faithful Friend is a strong Defence;
and he that hath found such an one, hath found a Treasure.'*
Spectator 68

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Preface

For more than a hundred years literary myth has coupled the names of Addison and Steele. If the one is mentioned, the other soon follows. The immediate question is why. Perhaps the answer to this gemini-like identification lies in the fact that the two greatest periodicals of the eighteenth century emerged from their joint effort, however uneven the effort was. Perhaps too the answer arises in part from a pathetic journalistic episode. Friends and political allies for so long, they became embroiled during the last years of Addison's life in a paper war that denigrated the integrity of both. For all the linking of their names, their personalities and talents differed. In their own lifetime and well into the next century their reputations moved in contrary directions. Addison's fame seemed unstoppable despite the onslaughts of John Dennis and Alexander Pope. Steele's notoriety centred in rough-and-tumble controversy, sinking - as the years passed - into virtual invisibility.

This volume highlights the separate identities of the two men. It also documents their reputations by concentrating largely upon eighteenth-century criticism. Steele, for example, is either attacked or defended for reasons largely factional. Even those who answered yea or nay to his comedies and dramatic criticism were conscious of his party commitment. The eulogies following his death were cast in a Whiggish mould, as much panegyrics upon Walpole as upon the deceased. Almost non-existent through the second half of the century, Steele re-entered the critical scene in 1836 when Coleridge and his friend Thomas Allsop spoke and wrote sympathetically of him. From that time on, those who enjoyed the polemicist and dramatist, emphasized his feeling heart, his sentimental wit and harmless peccadilloes.

Addison's glory focused on the man, the author of

'Cato', and the prose stylist. Indeed, his glory stemmed - as legend had it - from a fount of moral purity and verbal elegance, expressed without self-consciousness and seemingly as part of popular idiom. He was never forgotten during the eighteenth century, his nobility developing a patina of its own as the century advanced. His sanctification achieved its most eloquent statement in Macaulay's 1843 review of Lucy Aikin's two-volume biography. Without quarrelling with the gentleman-critic in the 'Edinburgh Review', Thackeray in 1853 trod lightly upon Victorian propriety and taste. In his 'English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century', he brought Addison and Steele together. More important, he did not depreciate one to elevate the other. On the contrary, he compared them, pointed out their particular talents, and praised both for their unique literary gifts.

The organization of this book is tripartite. The first three sections deal with Steele the man, the pamphleteer, and the dramatist. Then he and Addison meet in sections IV and V not primarily as personalities but as the authors of the 'Tatler' and 'Spectator'. The last two sections of the book deal with Addison's fame as a dramatist, then as the artist whose genius is inseparable from the human being. Within the volume the selections - a few eccentric, many more insightful - represent the history of two men's reputations from 1702 to 1853. What followed thereafter - the turns and twists, the rise and fall of these same reputations - are discussed or presented in the Introduction and Bibliography.

Introduction

I

Between 1709 and 1729 the literature which raged about Steele often made no distinction between the man and the polemicist. Even his association with the Drury Lane Theatre as governor was centred in controversy and tinged by factional loyalties. But several years before then - indeed by the spring of 1709 - he came within range of Tory consciousness as a potential menace. Consequently, every piece of writing signed by or attributed to him was interpreted as a possible handle for party use. And the Steele-Watchers, synonymous with those Tories working for Harley and St John, were very nearly right.

For five years - from May 1709 to the summer of 1714 - Steele remained an outsized target, his enemies indifferent to his literary achievement. Swift, for example, identified him as the 'Author of two tolerable Plays, (or at least of the greatest part of them) which, added to the Company he kept, and to the continual Conversation and Friendship of Mr. Addison, hath given him the Character of a Wit.'⁽¹⁾ Swiftian sarcasm in this instance was almost gentle, at least when measured against other descriptions of Steele as a scribbler, a tool of faction, a Grub Street hireling, an ingrate, a republican, and ultimately a traitor.

The constant in his life was a series of paper wars. The first, whether we end it with his expulsion from the Commons in March 1714 or the collapse of the Tory ministry some five months later, saw the publication of the great periodicals: the 'Tatler', 'Spectator', and 'Guardian'. During this same period Steele advanced in the Whig party from apprentice pamphleteer to number one propagandist. The tussle began with Mrs Manley's 'New Atalantis' which appeared on 26 May 1709, just a month and a half after the

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'Tatler' came to London. Her fiction, frankly political, praised the Tories and Anne's new favourites - Harley, Peterborough, and Mrs Masham - and offered some 'faint representations, some imperfect pieces of painting, of the heads of that party that have misled thousands'.⁽²⁾ Surely in so formidable a Whiggish assembly Steele had minor standing. Nonetheless, in her portrait of him as Monsieur le Ingrate, a blackened grotesque, she could settle personal scores and deny him, as Gazetteer and Bickerstaff, any moral credibility or political sense. The portrait was successful, setting a pattern for anti-Steele invective, a *vituperatio hominis* that reached a scatological climax in 1713-14.

Given his personality (the sinner self-canonized), his Whiggish ambitions, and his ineluctable need for money, Steele would have in time triggered off a paper war. The publication of the 'Tatler' merely hastened the first skirmish. Its party slant was anticipated even before distribution. Thus Lady Elizabeth Hervey wrote to her husband: 'This is all the news I know, except this inclosed paper, which I heard Lord Sun: comment mightily, so I have teased Mr. Hopkins till he got it for me, for tis not published, tho' it is printed, Mr. Manruing and one or two more is named for the authors of it.'⁽³⁾ From the beginning, then, the journal was linked with men blatantly Whig and within a week or two Steele was identified as Bickerstaff.

The attacks on the journal and Steele were sporadic in 1709. In October of that year Mrs Manley found the 'Tatler's' satire deficient, its blandness a cover for every weakness that sapped national 'Greatness', 'Virtue', and 'Glory'. Shortly thereafter a broadside, called 'The Character of the Tatler', was printed.⁽⁴⁾ Indebted to Mrs Manley's personalized criticism of Steele, it moved between belittling gibes at 'Abednego Umbra' and serious denunciations of the hireling propagandist. Pragmatically it devoted itself to the dispersal of the 'Tatler's' audience; it therefore sneered at and scolded the periodical for pretending literary integrity when it was a grubby adjunct of party.

Such attacks left only faint marks on the thickening skin of Steele, if only because they were so few. By August 1710, however, all that was changed. In fact, his whole world was changed. The Godolphin ministry had been dismissed; a Whig defeat in the parliamentary election scheduled for early autumn was a certainty. Harley, now Lord Treasurer, who had been derided by Bickerstaff as Hanno and Polypragmon, was ready to spend thousands of pounds to rid the political arena of Steele's journal.

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The 'Examiner' had been launched, and for the Tories it decided the rules of warfare. With its fifth number it abused the 'Tatler's' news reporting. After its campaign opened on 24-31 August 1710, it never lost sight of the man it would gladly smash at any time and in any way.

The assault, begun by Mrs Manley, was cruelly extended by the 'Examiner'. To one Whig observer, the scheme was to 'Build Scandal on Fiction, and assert boldly and abusively without Shame or Conscience'.(5) Specifically the scheme aimed to excoriate Steele in order to discredit his political writing. In a jingling ballad 'The Loyal Calves-Head-Club' (1710) he was found guilty by association and the 'Tatler' was defined as the mouth-piece of the Kit-Cats, 'Hard-mouthed Sots' and republicans all, who would 'advance *their* Canting State' by any lie or 'Plot'. Again in 1710, 'A Condoling Letter to the Tattler' speared the journalist with familiar epithets: Steele the spend-thrift, Steele the hypocrite, Steele the inmate of a sponging-house, Steele the madman whose frenzy could be neither condoned nor condoled.(6)

Under the date of 3 October 1710 the Tory 'Moderator' hinted the demise of 'the Ingenious Isaac Bickerstaffe ... much lamented by the Gentlemen of the *Kit-Kat-Club* and all true *Republican Spirits*, for his hearty Zeal to the good old Cause, his universal Learning, and particular Skill in the Laws of the Land.' The author of the 'Moderator' knew this: within the first few days of October Steele had promised Harley the death of the 'Tatler' in order to retain his post in the Stamp Office. The demise itself on 2 January was celebrated by the 'Friendly Couriere,' a discursive periodical which lasted for all of one number.(7)

The Spectatorial days between March 1711 and December 1712 were almost irenic for Steele. But even then he did not quite disappear as a target. The Tories never assumed that he could be silent for long and they questioned the non-political intention of the 'Spectator' just because he was associated with it. In early April and in response to the third number, Mr Spectator was warned - as Bickerstaff had been warned - that he was being watched, investigated and 'spied' upon.(8) Almost a year later there was a flurry of journalistic activity as Tory journalists - William Wagstaffe, Oldisforth, and Swift - hooted at Steele for reprinting Fleetwood's Whiggish Preface to his 'Four Sermons'. Mr Spectator was mocked as Dick Hotspur and a projector of republican adventures. He was laughed at as only one of a factional 'Fraternity', a 'Dealer in Words', and a purveyor of Whiggish tomfoolery.(9) Near the end of that year, in November, Steele was cudgelled in a verse pamphlet called 'The British Censor'. Despite its

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literary pose, it presented little that was new except the image of a journalistic Maecenas doling out favour and 'extorting blind Obedience'. Ironically, Steele never commanded any authority except when he wore the mask of Bickerstaff or gambled on his chances of evading martyrdom in the last year of the Queen's ministry.

'The British Censor' was bad poetry but ripping *ad hominem* criticism. In 1712, however, its victim refused to be victimized. Too many other things - exciting and potentially fruitful - were happening all about him. Arthur Maynwaring had just died and Addison stepped into his place as unofficial director of Whig propaganda, gathering together a journalistic tribe, feeding them information and a point of view, dispensing employment as rewards. Receptive to anyone's gift of rhetoric, he determined to use the former Gazetteer as 'a Brother-Scribler' and the most audible of Whig propagandists. By August 1713 and without much urging, Steele was ready to serve his party as pamphleteer and Member of Parliament. For all the duality of function, he had a single goal. As one opponent put it, 'he does not question overturning the Ministry, and doing that before the first Sessions of Parliament is over, which my Lord Wh--on and S--rs have been foil'd at, for Three Years together'.(10)

To chisel away at ministerial strength, Steele raised the Dunkirk issue in 'Guardian' 128. Tory reaction was swift and torrential. The 'Examiner' dismissed him as an 'Ingrate' and a 'contemptible Wretch', his position as a 'Lye' and a 'Libel'. And in 'The Honour and Prerogative of the Queen's Majesty Vindicated' (No. 12), Defoe heaped together epithets as so many stones to hurl against the 'traytor', 'renegade', 'counterfeit', 'bully', and 'Judas'. This merely set the tone for what was to come. And coming almost immediately was 'A Second Whigg-Letter from William Prynne to Nestor Ironside', a clumsy dramatization of Defoe's innuendo that the 'Guardian's' statement tended to sedition. (11)

The retort to such verbal gibes appeared in 'The Importance of Dunkirk Consider'd' and in a candidly partisan journal, the 'Englishman'. By the autumn and winter of 1713 the Tories engaged their best writers - disputatious and punitive - in all-out warfare against Steele. Swift, for example, produced 'The Importance of the Guardian Considered'. William Wagstaffe probably wrote 'The Character of Richard Steele', which proved to be the most popular, certainly the most devastating, anti-Steele pamphlet of the year. It went through four editions, steadily hoping to reduce 'Old Ironsides' to so low a Condition, that perhaps he may be glad to put an End to this long and Bloody War'. (12)

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As invective followed invective, Steele marched virtuously militant into 1714. Because his new pamphleteering probe against the ministry - 'The Crisis' - had been advertised for so long and he had already 'got into the Fire,' as Swift taunted him on 6 or 7 January, he could not 'easily retire'. In truth he could not retire at all, and so on 19 January he masked himself in that pamphlet as a professional liberator, warning his audience of imminent authoritarian dangers. Again the Tories rose to the bait. Mrs Manley introduced 'A Modest Enquiry into the Reasons of Joy Expressed by a Certain Sett of People, upon the Spreading of a Report of Her Majesty's Death'. Steele did not respond to it or to other pamphlets seemingly myriad. He shrugged off the scatological farce of 'A Letter from the Facetious Doctor Andrew Tripe'. He listened indifferently to mockery of 'The Publick Spirit of the Whigs', in which Swift hoped to hurl his opponent into oblivion as an insinuating 'Politician', a 'child of Obscurity', a pedant and maxim-monger 'grossly defective in Truth, in Sense, or in Grammar', and ultimately a 'CREATURE' stripped of humanity.

Steele, however, had learned experientially that he could not be vilified or jeered into insignificance. He knew that the Tory-dominated Commons would vote his expulsion and paradoxically establish both his political worth and fame. On 18 March he was found guilty of writing certain '*scandalous and seditious Libels*' designed '*to alienate the Affections of her Majesty's good Subjects, and to create Jealousies and Divisions among them*'.(13) The verdict did not dampen his party commitment. He continued to write anti-Tory pamphlets through the rest of the year and ministerial writers, such as the pseudonymous John Lacy, continued to attack him, although without their customary virulence or enthusiasm. The lacklustre quality of the paper war after March may be attributed to the visibly sinking fortunes of the Oxford-Bolingbroke government, which none saw more clearly than the Tories themselves. Swift thus wrote to Bolingbroke on 7 August: 'Your machine of four years modelling is dashed to pieces in a moment: And, as well by the choice of Regents, as by their proceedings.' By the 30th of that month, Mrs Manley complained to Oxford: 'I have nothing but a starving scene before me, new interests to make without any old merit, Lord Mal-- and all his accomplices justly enraged against me. Nothing saved out of the general wreck'.(14)

Never again was Steele politically assaulted as he was before his expulsion from the House. His 'Declaration' pamphlets created some excitement when Tory rebuttals

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appeared, but the excitement was soon dissipated. In 1719 he and Addison engaged in a contretemps over the peerage bill. But it was a quarrel far more sad than angry, productive only of the 'Plebeian' and the unfinished 'Old Whig'. The exchange of insults ended a friendship which, although strained since 1717, had for almost a generation survived the annoyances and disputes that must inevitably arise from contrary dispositions.(15)

Whatever praise Steele received during his lifetime was usually partisan or muddled by controversy. Even the two elegies written in 1729 had a political flavour, which celebrated Walpole almost as much as they did Steele. Benjamin Victor thus interrupted his lament to boast of the journalist's triumph over Harley and of his loyalty to Sir Robert.(16) Joseph Mitchell went so far as to call his elegiac stanzas 'The Monument' in the hope that the Lord Treasurer would push through a plan to memorialize Steele in the Abbey. The plan, however, came to nothing and 'The Bard, the Patriot, Soldier, and the Sage' was remembered by two inept versifiers. So different had been the literary reaction to Addison's death that Mitchell blurted out a series of rhetorical questions.

But are the *Muses* all, at once, struck dumb?
Yet unadorn'd remains the silent Tomb?
Is POPE confounded with uncommon Woe?
No more does YOUNG's high Inspiration flow?
Quite is the laurel'd EUSDEN's Lyre unstrung?
And TICKELL's Harp on rueful Willows hung?
Ungenerous Tribe!

In 1731 an anonymous 'Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Sir Richard Steele' was distributed. Thirteen years later Corbyn Morris made passing reference to a martyred Steele, 'a Gentleman endeared to the Nation by the Humanity and Politeness of his Writings', who was persecuted for the 'Crime' of patriotism.(17) By the second half of the eighteenth century, however, his reputation as a personality and pamphleteer seemed to have died with him. Like the issues which provoked them, the pamphlets were but ephemera. Once the causes and the crises had been forgotten, so too their literature and author. Paradoxically, while the great periodicals were acknowledged in the eighteenth century to be essentially Steele's, it was Addison as prose stylist who was celebrated in the second half of that century. With the emergence of a new romantic temper Coleridge and his disciple Thomas Allsop helped to resurrect the name and genius of Steele. They were adamantly certain, albeit on subjective grounds, that he

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was Addison's superior, that his essays were rendered distinctive by 'their pure humanity springing from the gentleness, the kindness of his heart'. Thackeray, as we shall see, emphasized the same qualities.

In a 'Quarterly Review' article for March 1855 (expanded three years later as one of his 'Historical and Biographical Essays') John Forster wrote of Steele to balance the record so slanted in Addison's favour by Macaulay. Less than a decade after Forster's appreciation - by 1865 - Henry R. Montgomery offered a two-volume biography that was equally sympathetic. Aitken's 'Life' in 1889 aimed to pinpoint the personality through an analysis of the public response aroused by the man in his varying occupations: military officer, tract writer, dramatist, party pamphleteer, Whig polemicist and Whig dissident, member of parliament, theatre manager, inventor. By 1899 Austin Dobson became an apologist for his subject.

And if Steele has suffered from scandal and misrepresentation [of faction], he has also suffered from his own admissions. The perfect frankness and freedom of his letters ... leave upon many, who do not sufficiently bear in mind their extremely familiar character, an ill-defined impression that he was over-uxorious, over-sentimental. But a man is not necessarily this for a few extravagant *billets-doux*. (18)

Inevitably Dobson fell back upon Berkeley's first-hand knowledge of Steele's 'love and consideration for his wife, of the generosity and benevolence of his temper, of his cheerfulness, his wit, and his good sense'. This same image, so long submerged, leaped into the first quarter of the twentieth century with only slight alteration. The weaknesses that the Victorians were forced to rationalize had by the time of Dobrée's 'Essays in Biography' been elevated into near-virtues. Sir Richard, in short, had become the lovable irresponsible, a Skimpole not gone bad, whose rashness and prodigality were motivated by joy and candid good will. Quite obviously the passage of time, the shifts of taste, the subjective standards of both his opponents and admirers have seriously dulled the tones of his portrait. But slowly through the application of modern scholarly techniques and the findings of Rae Blanchard, Bertram Goldgar, and Calhoun Winton the one-time 'wretched Trooper' is being restored to realistic focus. (19)

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II

Of Steele's four plays only 'The Lying Lover' was a theatrical failure in the eighteenth century. Opening at the Drury Lane Theatre on 2 December 1703, it had a moderately good first run. It then vanished from the stage and its author's mind. It had an unexplainable revival for four nights in the spring of 1746, after which it disappeared apparently forever. On the other hand, his remaining plays - 'The Funeral', 'The Tender Husband', and 'The Conscious Lovers' - all became a part of repertory, at least until the last few years of the century. Certainly 'The Conscious Lovers' was talked about longer and more vehemently than the others. Thus Mrs Inchbald in 1808 acknowledged that its effectiveness 'has since been much obscured by imitations which have surpassed the original; but to Steele are due the honours of originality, and of teaching an audience to think and to feel, as well as to laugh and applaud, at the representation of a comedy.' Ironically, the concept of 'the fine Gentleman', for which Steele was attacked in 1722 and 1723, did not sufficiently satisfy the moral palate of most Victorian spectators. Foreshadowing that judgment, Mrs Inchbald found in Bevil and Indiana 'a degree of languor', and in Cimbarton evidence that the dramatist 'has at times degraded his muse to comply with the degraded taste of the auditors of that period'.(20)

The fact remains that in the eighteenth century three of the plays had healthy lives, enjoying different degrees of debate or discussion. The first of them, 'The Funeral' (1701), which Steele wrote to assuage his creditors and 'to enliven his Character' after 'The Christian Hero', had its detractors and supporters. Even those who were to fault the comedy did so with a semblance of restraint: 'Tis a dangerous Matter to talk of this Play; the Town has given it such applause.' Still the author of 'A Comparison between the Two Stages' (1702) argued that the improbability of plot and a wanton reliance upon contrivance had reduced 'this so celebrated Comedy to the indignity of the vilest Farce' (see No. 16). By 1713 praise had drowned out detraction, its admirers stressing 'The Funeral's' sensitive call to the *humanitas* shared by all theatregoers. So Sir Richard Blackmore in the 'Lay-Monastery' maintained: 'Every one will own, that in this Play there are many lively Strokes of Wit and Humour; but I must confess I am more pleas'd with the fine Touches of Humanity in it, than with any other Part of the Entertainment.'(21)

More surprising than the attention given to Steele's

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first play was the durability of 'The Tender Husband'. From its first appearance in 1705 until 1794 it was acted at least 165 times in London. One of these performances was attended by Pamela, who conveyed her reaction to Lady Davers in a derogatory review-letter. Motivated as always by her sense of the expedient, Richardson's heroine was particularly offended by the first scene.

Mr. Fainlove, alias Mrs. Lucy, undertakes the task, in hopes to live with Mr. Clerimont, in case of a divorce from his wife; or to be provided for, in case the plot does not succeed; which makes it apparent, that, to say nothing of his morality, poor Lucy has not met with a generous man in Mr. Clerimont; since, after the forfeiture of her honour, she was still to do a more infamous job, if possible, to procure for herself a provision from him.

Notwithstanding the literary sanctity surrounding the names of Addison and Steele, Pamela was 'grievously disappointed' not merely by the opening of the play but by its sordid morality throughout and its violation of 'probability'.⁽²²⁾ Her severity, oddly enough, did not foreshadow the spirit of the Victorians who in 1841 enjoyed Richard Brinsley Peake's stylized adaptation of 'The Tender Husband'.

Between 1715 and 1722 Steele became involved in yet another quarrel whose intensity almost matched the earlier political flyting. Since October 1714 he had been a licensed partner in the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. Then, from the following January, he served as governor of the theatre under a life-patent granted by the King as partial payment for his dedication to the Hanoverian cause. The appointment, like almost every other public event of his life, was both supported and denounced. According to Lady Cowper, who had followed the theatrical criticism in the 'Tatler' and 'Spectator': 'It were to be wished our Stage were Chaster, and I cannot but hope, now that it is under Mr. Steele's Direction, that it will mend.' But to Defoe the King's choice was an abomination. He singled Steele out as the person who, 'by recommending the Play-Houses,' did more 'to promote the present Madness of the Age ... than all the Agents Hell ever employed before.'⁽²³⁾ Defoe, however, was tilting against windmills, his words scattered into oblivion.

Steele's control of the theatre was not challenged until 1717, when the Duke of Newcastle was made Lord Chamberlain. From then until the winter of 1719-1720 when overt hostilities broke out, there was continuous sniping

between the governor and his managers - Cibber, Wilks, and Booth - on one side and the young, somewhat impetuous Lord Chamberlain on the other. At the centre of the crisis, complicated by political considerations, was a conflict over authority: whether the players should be ruled by Newcastle as Chamberlain of the King's Household or Steele as governor of the Royal Company of Comedians. The pamphlet war began not with a pamphlet but with Cibber's dedicatory epistle to the governor prefixed to the printed 'Ximena' (September 1719). The epistle fulsomely recognized Steele's contributions to the reformation of a one-time licentious theatre. 'Nothing but a Genius so universally rever'd could, with such Candor and Penetration, have pointed out its Faults and Misconduct; and so effectually have redeem'd its Uses and Excellence from Prejudice and Dis-favour.' As if this were insufficient, Cibber limned his friend as a forgotten martyr who spent his talent without stint on behalf of King and country. It was not long after 'Ximena' was published that Newcastle took his first formal action against the governing body of the Drury Lane. Specifically, he silenced Cibber in December.

Angered at the action taken against one of his managers, Steele did what he usually did when he felt threatened. He brought his arguments to the public, this time in a periodical begun on 2 January 1720 and in whose pages he wore the mask of Sir John Edgar. The covert intention of the 'Theatre' was to protect 'the separate ministry' of the playhouse's managerial group and to fend off through the weight of popular support any further action by the Lord Chamberlain. Certainly the periodical was widely read.(24) Still that fact did not deter Newcastle from successfully urging the revocation of Steele's Drury Lane license, his authority as governor suspended, and his salary withheld.

Seemingly the dispute had peaked, but in actuality it was exacerbated not merely by further manoeuvres of the Lord Chamberlain but also by the presence of John Dennis, still smarting over what he believed to be the Drury Lane's delayed and badly scheduled production of his play 'The Invader of his Country'. In four letters called 'The Characters and Conduct of Sir John Edgar', he offered typical *ad hominem* criticism of Steele and pointed with alarm to the dangers implicit in the idea of a 'separate ministry', which he saw as a reality productive of nothing but a self-seeking, absolutist anarchy.(25)

Whenever Dennis wrote, someone responded. So in a rather mindless pamphlet, an anonymous writer addressed himself directly to the critic: 'For lookee, Mr. Tremendous, I think it very ill done of any one to fall foul of poor Maister *Edgar*, now he is under Misfortunes; but I

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shall see him stand upon his own Legs again for all this, and make out something of a Latin Motto, that I have heard People talk of, that Ends with - *pondere virtus.*'(26) The paper war was fully launched, with the supporters of Dennis outnumbering those of Steele. A 'Sir Andrew Art-love' wrote in successive numbers of 'Applebee's Original Weekly Journal' (13-27 February 1720) three letters entitled 'A Full Consideration and Confutation of Sir John Edgar'. Even more vigorously anti-Steelean was a mock-heroic prose pamphlet, 'The Battle of the Authors lately Fought in Covent-Garden, Between Sir John Edgar, Generalissimo on one Side, and Horatius Truewit, on the other'. But the most persevering of Steele's detractors was the author of the 'Anti-Theatre' who twice-weekly masked himself as 'Sir John Falstaffe' to harass his 'Adversary ... with such Weapons as Men of Learning commonly use against one another'.

Steele swiped at his opponents off-handedly. He had neither time for nor interest in them. Instead he concentrated his energies, writing the relentless issues of the 'Theatre' and composing a pamphlet in which was spelled out 'The State of the Case between the Lord-Chamberlain of His Majesty's Household, and the Governor of the Royal Company of Comedians'. Published on 29 March, it provoked an almost immediate response. By 7-9 April the state of the case was 're-stated in Vindication of King George, and the most Noble The Duke of Newcastle'. In this tract Steele's argument is tossed aside as worthless, no more tolerable than Steele himself.

I never knew a man truly brave, make such *Thrasonic* boasts of his courage; nor a man truly virtuous, make such a noise with his honesty; nor a man truly religious, crying up his sanctity at the corner of the streets, and on the tops of houses; for these are the refuges of the *Faux-braves*, Knaves, and Hypocrites.

Within a year - again in the spring - Steele was returned to the governorship of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. The way was now open for the production in November 1722 of 'The Conscious Lovers' and a whole new debate over the merits and demerits of the fine gentleman as a comic hero, of the worth of sentimental over satiric comedy. The play, which took so long in being born, achieved instant success in its first run of eighteen successive performances. Steele and his company had for some time advertised its innovative qualities. What was new about it was less its use of pathos and decorous language than its creation of a hero who, functioning as a

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model of propriety, also amused and charmed a sophisticated audience. Bevil Jr. was, in short, the moral antithesis of the gallant who moved through the comedies of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve.

The debate over 'The Conscious Lovers' engaged both Steele and Dennis. It was actually initiated by Steele, who had often insisted that the plays of Etherege tended 'to corrupt Chastity of Manners, and introduce a wrong Taste'.(27) Without waiting to read or see Steele's drama, Dennis brought out 'A Defence of Sir Fopling Flutter' (2 November 1722; see No. 24). In that pamphlet he reasoned in terms of comic theory, arguing for the ridiculous as the quintessence of comedy and the employment of characters whose absurdities served as admonitions to viewers.

Nor did the play fare well in newspaper reviews. The 'St James's Journal' tried for neutrality but Mist's 'Weekly Journal' and the 'Freeholder's Journal' were denunciatory. Steele's followers had read and heard enough; they now rose to defend the author and his play. On 29 November Victor published 'An Epistle to Sir Richard Steele, On his Play, call'd The Conscious Lovers' (No. 26), in which he was less concerned with dramatic theory than with the annihilation of Dennis and his 'malapert Way of Detraction'. More direct than Victor about the issues was the anonymous author of 'Sir Richard Steele, and his New Comedy call'd The Conscious Lovers'. Championing the propriety of 'Virtuous Characters' and pathos in comedy, he nevertheless left himself a small way out, a tiny cavil useful for escape. If 'The Conscious Lovers' 'be not in the strictest Sense throughout a Comedy, it is an Entertainment superior to it'.

Angered as much by the success of the play as by its proponents, Dennis struck again on 24 January 1723. Whereas 'A Defence of Sir Fopling Flutter' dammed the concept of the conduct-book hero, the 'Remarks on a Play, Call'd, The Conscious Lovers' (No. 28) denied that pathos is compatible with the comic spirit. His conclusion is devastatingly direct: Steele's play, whatever mutation it might be, was no comedy. Limping after what Dennis considered to be the last word on the subject was the longest of the pamphlets written against the play. 'The Censor Censured' is an 88-page dialogue between Sir Dicky Marplot and Jack Freeman. It contributed no substance to the quarrel, but its very length attested to the sustained critical interest in Steele's final play.

Indeed, the comedy continued to attract such attention for a good part of the eighteenth century. Victor wrote once more on the contretemps, denigrating in 1761 the

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long-forgotten position of Steele's antagonist. 'The learned Mr. *Dennis*, the celebrated Critic of his time, was then in the Decline of Life; and as his Subsistence could only arise from his Attacks on Merit, the Author of ['The Conscious Lovers'] could not escape him.' (28) In the next year the 'Gentleman's Magazine' printed 'A Letter to Sir Richard Steele, on his Play of the Conscious Lovers: Written at the time of Exhibition but never before published'. Thereafter the play fell more or less into a critical limbo. It had established a mode now beyond theatrical dispute and ironically it had been surpassed by several of its imitators. In the twentieth century all of Steele's comedies have aroused academic interest: Shirley Strum Kenny, for example, has expertly edited them (1971), and John Loftis has published a sensitive description of 'Steele at Drury Lane' (1952).

III

If the 'Tatler' was suspected of being a party paper even before its distribution, the suspicion became fact shortly after 12 April 1709. Indeed, there was little that Steele could do to prevent the translation, for the Godolphin ministry, with its Junto affiliation, confronted awesome difficulties. And, good Whig that he was, he used his periodical almost immediately to support the coalition government. In the fourth number, for example, he sketched the parable of Felicia, an island in America equatable with Britain under its current leadership, astute and virtuous. Nor was this all. Before its second week ended, the journal set forth King William as its own myth figure and Marlborough as its talismanic hero. The word Whig was never mentioned but it hovered over the 'Tatler' as an aura surprisingly perceptible to every Englishman.

The Tories tracked the adventures of Isaac Bickerstaff. No one questioned his commitment to party. But how and when it would be expressed remained anyone's guess. For almost a year and a half anti-ministerial propagandists were prepared to pounce, but they were for the most part caught either unaware or with very little room in which to manoeuvre. They could not foresee in 1709 the transparent and variable fictions through which Steele set forth but never labelled his political values. They could not second-guess the topics on which he chose to be expansive or terse. What was the rationale, they wondered, by which he thought it journalistically wise to spend four essays on a five-months-old controversy between the high-flying Offspring Blackall, Bishop of

Exeter, and the Whig clergyman Benjamin Hoadly. And they must have bitten their pens in frustration when they realized that Bickerstaff in a gesture of forbearance smiled away the Sacheverell incident, the most volatile in the first decade of the century, as a prank designed to amuse bored ladies who, during the trial, devoured 'many cold Chickens ... for the Good of the Country.' (29)

Prior to the fall of the Godolphin ministry, the shots fired at the 'Tatler' were random. As we have seen, Mrs Manley objected to what she regarded as its flaccid satire, 'The Character of the Tatler' to 'Seignior *Chalybo*; Captain *S---*, that mighty Wit, who surpasses all Mens Understanding, and knows Nobody, even not himself'. Such criticism could frighten only its authors, not Steele. When the ministry changed, however, Isaac Bickerstaff was stalked with furious vigour. The 'Examiner' in its fifth number moved against the 'Tatler', concentrating on its news coverage generally and its report of the battle of Balguer for specific annihilation. With the innuendo, 'We had lately News of a great Action in *Spain*, where for Years the War has been carry'd on very calmly', the Tory persona accused the journal of fabricating current events or overplaying their importance to conceal the undeniable reality of a vanquished ministry. The 'Examiner' for 24-31 August was not yet finished with its Whig rival. Putting aside insinuation for mock-aesthetic seriousness, the Tory paper set up parallel columns in which statements describing the Spanish battle were drawn from the 'Tatler' and the 'Gazette'. The columnar structure had a dual purpose: to suggest first that Bickerstaff and the Gazetteer shared privileged information for their unique profit; and secondly, to prove that there was no creative difference between the periodical and the newspaper. Nor could there be since they were aborted from a single malodorous identity and shared a nonsensical pomposity. Thus, said the 'Examiner's' persona, they 'move together in an amicable Way, Hand in Hand, and like the *Two Kings in the Rehearsal*, smell to the same *Nosegay*' (see No. 32).

As long as the 'Tatler' continued to be printed, it was an object of attack and some slight praise. The 'Examiner' pursued a hit-and-run course, and it attracted a host of lesser 'executioners'. Among the many accusations which 'A Condoling Letter to the Tattler' (No. 33) hurled at Bickerstaff in September 1710 was his arrogant assumption of journalistic power, his 'Crime of Usurpation' in appropriating the role of censor for himself. If the abuse in the summer and autumn of 1710 was politically motivated, so too was the applause. The Whiggish Lord Cowper in 'A Letter to Isaac Bickerstaff' (No. 34)

stressed the 'Tatler's' wit (and implicitly its statesmanship) which were manifested 'not by Argument, but Example, by numerous Sketches and some finish'd Pieces drawn with irresistible Strength and Beauty'. Similarly, in 'A Character of Don Sachieverellio' - somewhat belatedly - the anonymous pamphleteer urged that the 'Tatler's' talent in exposing social hypocrisy be extended to that of political fraud disguised as religious principle.

Only after the periodical printed its last sheet on 2 January 1711 was there an attempt to divorce its Whiggism from the literary genius which informed it. By May of that same year John Gay, sensitive to the 'Tatler's' political alliances, wrote of the courage with which it 'ventured to tell the Town that they were a parcel of fops, fools, and coquettes; but in such a manner as even pleased them, and made them more than half inclined to believe that [Bickerstaff] spoke truth'. (30) Two years later, Henry Felton was prepared to recommend the 'Tatler' as a pedagogical tool which orders the little things of 'common Life with so much Judgment, in such agreeable, such lively and elegant Language', that one learns not only manners but an easy style in writing. (31)

Some time in the spring of 1729, when Steele was mortally ill, Joseph Mitchell compared Socrates' Athenian disciples with Bickerstaff. The latter fortuitously '*by the Help of Printing, was saved the Fatigue of travelling abroad in bad Weather*'. His facility in staying warm and dry did not alter the truth that '*His Penny-papers some time supplied the Place of the Ancient Cart, with great Honour: People bought the best Instruction and Entertainment, on easy Terms*'. (32) Despite such a tribute, too fulsome to be credible, the 'Tatler's' reputation from 1711 onwards was eclipsed by that of the 'Spectator', which - like the earlier journal - was thought to be largely the handiwork of Steele. Not that Addison's association with the Spectatorial venture was kept secret. John Gay was sufficiently aware of it to hope that the 'known Temper and prudence' of the one would prevent 'the other from ever lashing out into Party, and rendering that Wit, which is at present a common good, odious and ungrateful to the better half of the Nation'. (33)

What was unknown, of course, was the extent of Addison's involvement. Steele announced it finally in 'Spectator' 555 but his credibility was challengeable. Only with Tickell's edition of 'The Works' in 1721 did the identity of the Addisonian essays become fixed. Not unexpectedly, Steele had often been made the scapegoat for pieces written by his collaborator. And this applied to essays as much apolitical as political. So it was that

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William Wagstaffe, a serious doctor and a Tory droll, parodied the 'Spectator's' ballad criticism. Almost at the end of his guffaws, he addressed the last of his jeers in Latin verse not to Addison but to Steele, who liked to pose as the gentleman from Llangunnor.

Tu, Taffi, aeternum vives, tua munera Cambri
Nunc etiam celebrant, quotiesq; revolvitur Annus
Te memorant, Patrium Gens tota tuetur Honorem,
Et cingunt viridi redolentia tempora Porro.(34)

The greatness of the 'Spectator' was first predicted by Gay, who was himself awed by its early numbers, by the journal's fusion of irrepressible spontaneity and real wisdom. 'We had,' he wrote in 'The Present State of Wit', 'no manner of notion how a diurnal paper could be continued in the spirit and style of our present 'Spectators': but, to our no small surprise, we find them still rising upon us, and can only wonder from whence so prodigious a run of Wit and Learning can proceed.' The time was not yet right for such prophecy. More familiar rather were the observations of Tory pamphlets like 'A Spy upon the Spectator' (No. 37) and 'The Spectator Inspected', both scribbled and printed in 1711. The latter pamphlet, particularly, out-examined the 'Examiner' in the vitriol it spewed against the journal.

What is more odious in England than the Name or Memory of an Usurper or Tyrant? What can be a greater Usurpation, upon the Magistracy and Government of the chief City of the best constituted Nation in the Universe, than for a fantastical, splenetick discontented Wretch to assume to himself the Authority of a Censor, to expose every thing that disagrees with the humour which happens to be uppermost, while he is writing for his daily bread? What can be a greater Tyranny upon the Subject, than to have a constant Spy upon their actions, to publish, in a false light, family conversations, harmless mirth, and other trivial incidents, which would never be thought faults, if they were not by his Talent improv'd into such; and that sometimes to such a degree as to be made occasions of withdrawing Parents affections from their Children, and Childrens obedience from their Parents? What can be more supine and indolent in any Government, than to suffer an itinerant scrap to be cry'd every day, about the streets, for the propagation of Loosness and Libertinism?

Such a flailing assault, hysterical in its charges of the 'Spectator's' immorality, urged the government to take the last necessary step and suppress the paper by official action.

The government fortunately restrained itself, and the first series ended with number 555 on 6 December 1712. The Tories hoped, in fact, that the periodical would be forgotten as soon as any out-dated paper. Their hopes, however, were futile. The 'Spectator' was revived, its second series beginning in June 1714. Almost immediately thereafter 'A Letter from Will Honeycomb' advised the 'Examiner' to be watchful of its natural enemy, to use 'the *Rod for the Fool's Back*' when the Fool 'dares again to affront his Superiors'.(35) Even after 20 December 1714, when the 'Spectator' was no more, a Tory pamphleteer assumed the right to the last word. In 'A Letter to the late Author of the Spectator' he equated the paper and faction, sarcastically announcing his pleasure 'to see these TWO Gentlemen well rewarded, and all others that have been honest in the WORK of Times'.

By 1716 Blackmore's 'Essay upon Wit' (No. 40) favourably judged the 'Tatler' and 'Spectator' on literary merit alone and set the tone for what was to come. Some disaffected notes were sounded, but they made their little squeak and were heard no more.(36) During the last forty years of the eighteenth century and on through most of the nineteenth the 'Spectator' had a near-unassailable aesthetic worth and a certain utility as well. Its essays were made to function as a series of lectures on rhetoric and conduct, with Addison the moralist and prose stylist to be emulated. If Steele stood full centre on the Spectatorial stage between 1711 and 1714, he soon thereafter yielded his place to the 'Gentleman' responding to the 'Muse CLIO'.(37) But no matter who received star billing, the 'Spectator' was a work not merely to be read but to be carried about ostentatiously. And why? asked Jane Austen with mock rhetorical indignation: 'the substance of its papers so often consisting in the statement of improbable circumstances, unnatural characters, and topics of conversation, which no longer concern anyone living; and their language, too, frequently so coarse as to give no very favourable idea of the age that could endure it.'(38)

IV

Addison spent most of a relatively short life yearning for praise and avoiding controversy. In 1713 he received

the accolades he needed but paid dearly for them during the storm blown up by the production of 'Cato'. The history of his dramatic contributions is quintessentially the history of that one play. Whatever else may be said about it, the tragedy was the most successful and talked-about theatre event of Queen Anne's reign. The explanation for its renown lies less in its intrinsic value than in what its many viewers saw as political meaning.

But its meaning remains as clouded today as in 1713. Certainly when it was first conceived, it was apolitical. Addison had completed a rough draft of the four acts before he left Magdalen in 1699. Working on these off and on during his grand tour, he was able to show them to Colley Cibber and Steele by 1703 or the year after. Both men encouraged him to finish the drama but this took even longer than its inception and intermittent polishing. The dramatic project was never a secret so that sometime between 1704 and 1713 a 'Mr Webster of Christ Church, Oxon' versified a college plea:

*And thou, O Addison, no more detain
The free-born Cato, struggling in his chain;
'Tis liberty he loves; disclose thy vast design,
And let us see that every Muse is thine.*(39)

Only in the spring of 1713, undoubtedly upon the prodding of some Whigs who anticipated the fall of the Harley-St John ministry, did Addison write a last act for 'Cato' with remarkable speed. Steele, relying on his memory, noted that 'the fifth Act was written in less than a Week's time'.(40)

The debate over 'Cato' concerns authorial purpose, whether or not it was intended to be a party play. For more than two centuries some have argued against its political impetus. On the other hand, there are those who use Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's critique of the play before production to argue that several of the lines on liberty were deliberately superimposed on the dialogue and given a Whiggish colouration.(41) What cannot be denied is that Addison rarely did anything without first taking his sights on practical considerations. If he added lines extolling the necessity of political freedom, he had in mind his party's consistent attacks on Tory 'tyranny'. If 'the love part was flung in after' the play was first conceived, it was 'to comply with the popular taste'.(42)

However much Addison yielded to expedience in the final presentation of 'Cato', he also wrote a drama which was a paean to political liberty and hardly served the

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needs of one faction over another. He himself wished to squash the idea of its partisanship. He therefore approached Pope, whose friends at that time cut across party lines; he desired, wrote Pope, 'to have my sincere opinion of it, and left it with me for three or four days. I gave him my opinion sincerely, which was that "I thought he had better not act it, and that he would get reputation enough only by printing it." This I said as thinking the lines well writ, but the piece not theatrical enough.' So matters stood for a short time while people like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu pushed for production and Steele promised to pack the theatre with a congenial first-night audience. Addison apparently responded to their pressure but almost immediately upon completing 'Cato', he returned to Pope and asked him 'to show it to Lord Bolingbroke and Lord Oxford, and to assure them that he never in the least designed it as a party-play'.(43)

Addison, in short, contrived it both ways, satisfying Whigs and Tories alike. Steele's friends applauded every line in which the word 'liberty' was mentioned. At the same time several of the Queen's ministers were ostentatiously present at the first performance on 14 April. The incident, an exercise in factional manoeuvring, was described to John Caryll by Pope. 'I believe,' he wrote, 'you have heard that after all the applauses of the opposite faction, my Lord Bullingbrooke sent for Booth who played Cato, into the box, between one of the acts and presented him with 50 guineas; in acknowledgment (as he expressed it) for his defending the cause of liberty so well against a *perpetuall dictator*: the Whigs are unwilling to be distanced this way, as 'tis said, and therefore design a present to the said Cato very speedily.' Addison carried it off. He pleased the Whigs and gave no offense to the Tories. But he never achieved what Cibber later claimed for the play, specifically its capacity to turn two factions into a patriotic whole.(44)

The political ambiguity of the play startled and attracted theatrical audiences; it also provoked a paper war as pamphleteers strove to fix its meaning, according to party allegiance. In its issue of 27 April-1 May 1713 the 'Examiner', never naive about Addisonian loyalty, muted its real suspicions and instead loudly applauded 'the Excellent Author of CATO, who has convinc'd us, in so happy a Manner, that the Affections may be moved, and the Passions actuated, by a Distress arising from a Principle of Honour as well as Love' (No. 45). This piece in its turn provoked the 'Flying Post' (30 April-2 May) to derogate the bland magnanimity of the 'Examiner' and to insist that 'Cato' was a political allegory whose lessons

were sanctioned by every true-blue Whiggish Englishman (No. 46).

Although the party lines were drawn, they soon became blurred by a succession of pamphleteers anxious to discuss the tragedy as a tragedy. George Sewell, oddly enough a member of the Tory stable of hacks, at some time prior to June 1713 presented a plodding series of 'Observations upon Cato' (No. 48). His eulogy was followed by one perhaps even more eulogistic, Charles Gildon's 'Cato Examined' (No. 47). Neither pamphlet is important in itself but together they prompted Dennis, prodded a bit further by the bookseller Lintot, to finish his splenetic but insightful 'Remarks upon Cato' (No. 49) by 19 June. He saw them printed before mid-July. He thought the tragedy a composite of 'Faults and Absurdities', its seeming profundity only the product of 'Artifices'. That it had become a *succès d'estime* infuriated him. Rage, however, did not cloud his vision and so exactly did he detail 'Cato's' inadequacies that Johnson could write some sixty-eight years later: Dennis 'found and shewed many faults: he shewed them indeed with anger, but he found them with acuteness, such as ought to rescue his criticism from oblivion.' (45)

But in 1713 there were those who would make the 'sower undistinguishing' critic a scapegoat, his carcass thrown to scavengers. In 'The Narrative of Dr. Robert Norris, concerning the Strange and Deplorable Frenzy of Mr. John Denn--', a rudimentary fiction presented a staring, raving critic, sputtering 'between his Teeth the Word 'Cator', or 'Cato', or some such thing'. As disorderly as the man himself was his room, on whose walls were 'pinned a great many Sheets of a Tragedy called 'Cato', with notes on the Margin with his own Hand. The Words *Absurd*, *Monstrous*, *Execrable*, were everywhere written in such large Characters' that they were visible to the attending physician without his spectacles. As the raucous narrative concluded, the lunatic critic is left a lonely figure, abandoned by all with sense and even by his money-grubbing genius Bernard Lintot.

Surrounding the criticism of 'Cato' were the factional responses to the play. They divided upon the identification of the dramatis personae and their living equivalents. To the Whigs Marlborough and Cato were one in that they embodied the concepts of liberty, courage, and fortitude in adversity. Indeed, Addison's political colleagues made even more specific equations: Juba represented the Emperor of Germany, Syphax Prince Eugene; the villainous Lucius and Sempronius personified Oxford and Bolingbroke. The Tories, on the other hand, were content to prove only

that there was a resemblance between the tyrannical Caesar and the grasping Marlborough, who manoeuvred in vain to become Captain General for life. Typical of these interpretations were the Whiggish 'Key or Explanation to the History, and Play of Cato' and the Tory 'Comparison Between Cato and Caesar'. Cleverest of all was the sardonic 'Mr. Addison turn'd Tory: Or, The Scene Inverted: Wherein It is made [to] appear that the Whigs have misunderstood that Celebrated Author in his applauded Tragedy, Call'd Cato, And that the Duke of M——'s Character, in endeavouring to be a General for Life, bears a much greater Resemblance to that of Caesar and Syphax, than the Heroe of his Play.'

Certainly the paper war did not hinder the theatrical success of 'Cato'. After its initial run that began on 14 April 1713 at the Drury Lane, it was brought to Oxford University, where both the dramatist and the tragedy were audibly revered by a student group with literary and political aspirations. In its first season (1712-13) the tragedy was presented in London some twenty times. In the next two seasons it was staged less frequently but frequently enough and always before large audiences.(46) The 1715-16 season saw six performances; but a new argument exploded when 'Cato' vied first with the printed version of Deschamps's 'Caton d'Utique' and in late spring with John Ozell's translation acted on a London stage. The controversy between the two 'Catos' was hinted even prior to the theatrical competition. The French play had been printed in Paris early in 1715; almost immediately it circulated in London and was read in the fashionable end of town. Having been given a copy, the persona of the 'Grumbler' (No. 50), thus, found that he had not reached the conclusion of the third act 'when his Patience began to fall, and his Expectations sank to nothing'. He did not wish so much to deprecate the French effort as he wanted to exalt the English: the former is 'as much beneath Criticism, as the *English* 'Cato' is above it.' Upon publication of Ozell's translation and its opening at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre on 14 May 1716, the argument over the merits of the two plays was carried forward by an indefatigable George Sewell, who in his 'Vindication' answered the censorious author of 'A Parallel betwixt [Ozell's "Cato of Utica"] and the Tragedy of Cato written by Mr. Addison'. The debate was won easily by Sewell, if only because he had the advantage of defending the better play.(47)

After 1713 'Cato' became a repertory piece, its popularity during the first half of the century remarkable. It was performed every season until that of 1750; the

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1730s in particular witnessed a stunning proliferation of revivals. The applause continued but so also did the muttering. In the 'Criticks' (24 March 1718) the tragedy was regarded as inferior to 'The Campaign', Addison's 'most notable Production'. Ironically the doubts which were provoked about 'Cato' in 1718 and 1719 originated in moralistic anxiety. Ambrose Philips, writing in the 'Free-Thinker' on 11 April 1718, demanded that a dramatic and epic fable should effect national improvement. With this single criterion fixed in his mind, he had necessarily to condemn Addison's tragedy. 'I leave every judicious and candid Spectator to determine, whether the setting Self-Murder in that dazzling Light, it appears in upon the Stage, in the Person of Cato, does not tend ... to abate our Horror for it.' According to Philips, 'Cato' sapped English pluck and undermined a code of morality responsible for his country's glory.

A still stranger piece is one which appeared in 'The Occasional Paper' for 1719. Here Addison's tragedy is placed within a widening attack upon the stage as a force 'calculated and design'd to fill the Mind with false Notions of Honour, and wrong Sentiments of Things; to corrupt the Imagination, to fire the Passions of unexperienc'd Youth, to wear out Impressions of Virtue, and to dispose, by Degrees, to every Evil.' Whoever was responsible for this statement found 'Cato' morally sound. And yet that quality was its source of danger:

Being produc'd but very rarely, it only serves to do Mischief; by drawing in the better and soberer Part of the Town, to those Diversions, which, in the common Course of them, are the most pernicious things in the World. And for my own Part I can't help wishing, that either all Dramatick Entertainments were like 'Cato', and those of that sort; or else that there were none such: for then I hope in a little Time there would be none at all: Every thing of this kind, when ill applied, makes those publick Representations greater Instruments of Mischief.(48)

It is a relief to turn from the spectre of Jeremy Collier and the eccentricity of such criticism to Voltaire on 'Cato'. He viewed it historically, recognizing wherein it excelled or failed and why. 'The first *English* Writer,' he declared, 'who compos'd a regular Tragedy, and infus'd a spirit of elegance thro' every part of it, was the illustrious Mr. Addison.' Not blindly adulatory, Voltaire accounted for the offensive love scenes as the author's desire to satisfy dramatic convention and the

voracious amatory interests of those ladies who frequented the theatres; 'and from an endeavour to please quite ruin'd a master-piece of its kind'.(49)

'Cato' remained persuasive throughout the century, whether it was seen in a theatre or read in a closet. There were some twenty-six English editions in that period and the Continent was not far behind its island neighbour. The Italians issued four translations, the Germans two, the Dutch three, the Poles one, the French five. In 1764 an English-Latin version appeared, with the love scenes omitted. For some people it continued the call to freedom during political crisis. During the troubled summer of Forty-Five, Horace Walpole confessed to George Montagu on 1 August that he was 'laying in scraps of 'Cato', against it may be necessary to take leave of one's correspondents à la Romaine, and before the play itself is suppressed by a *lettre de cachet* to the booksellers.' Almost two generations earlier 'Cato' began its long history of reassuring large audiences. From 1713 until 1797 it was staged 234 times. But by the time of the Regency it had become what Pope said it always was: a closet drama. And not even the Victorian adoration of its author could make it anything else. Surprising, however, was the courage of William Steere who, perhaps remembering the burlesques of 'Cato' by Gay and Fielding, published in 1860 'Billing's Gate: A Tragedy', a daring parody of Addison's drama whose moral loftiness sometimes overreached its own blank verse.(50)

V

In his own lifetime Addison very nearly escaped the mockery and attack that provided an ambience for Steele's ambition. Early in his career - in 1705 when he was more or less a political novice visibly dependent on patronage - his 'Remarks on Italy' was mocked in a 'Table of all the accurate Remarks and surprising Discoveries of the most learned and ingenious Mr. Addison in his Book of Travels'. The pamphlet coldly tabulated the many platitudinous or infelicitous statements presented in the Addisonian work, so that the 'Remarks on Italy' appeared to be a swollen mass of clichés ineptly and hypocritically concealed by pretentious prose. But the jeers were unheard by Addison, who in that same year heard only the extravagant praise of 'The Campaign' and its promise of lucrative employment.

Certainly the poem was motivated in part by political expedience; in fact necessity would be a more precise term. But Defoe exaggerated the case when in 'The Double

Welcome' he crudely intimated the impetus for Addison's Virgilian song: 'Maecenas has his modern Fancy strung,/ And fix'd his pension, first, or he had never sung.' The hyperbole of Defoe's accusation was matched or perhaps surpassed by the encomia of William Harrison, Le Clerc, Blackmore, and later by Cobden, all of whom noted the poet's 'epic' strength.

When You display undaunted *Churchill's* Soul
Teaching the furious Tempest where to roll;
Dealing destruction round the dreadful Plain,
Unmov'd - except with Pity for the Slain;
On whose commands Defeat and Death depends,
Whose every Standard Victory attends.(51)

In his own day, Addison was celebrated as the 'great Bard, of sweetest strains,/Who sung the Hero on the deathless plains'.(52)

Just about everything he wrote between 1705 and 1719 seemed to be touched with literary glory. If any of it offended his contemporaries or chastised too loudly some of 'the wittiest men of the age', it was Steele who bore the brunt of the complaint, who was 'traduced and calumniated'.(53) Addison himself seemed to stand above critical reproach. Even his failures either had their vocal admirers or were quickly re-evaluated. On 14 September 1710, for example, he surrendered to the urging of Arthur Maynwaring, who 'could not suffer [the 'Examiner's'] insolence to pass, without animadversion'. Addison undertook, somewhat reluctantly, to issue the 'Whig-Examiner' as a rebuttal to the Tory periodical. From the start he candidly asserted that his paper was both defensive and righteous, designed 'to give all persons a rehearing, who have suffered under any unjust sentence of the "Examiner"'. As that author has hitherto proceeded, his paper would have been more properly entitled the "Executioner". At least, his examination is like that which is made by the rack and wheel.'(54)

But for all its vigorous intention, the journal could not endure: it lacked the excitement of new ideas; it had the defeatist tone of a doomed cause. The Whig command, desperate in its journalistic need, capitulated to the fact that the most poised and elegant writer in its stable wanted the editorial belligerence necessary for party journalism in a crisis year. He was therefore relieved of his assignment, one that both Maynwaring and Oldmixon took up when they published the 'Medley' from 5 October 1710 to 6 August 1711. The 'Whig-Examiner', unable to make headway in its argument with the opposition, died after only

five numbers. Still Gay, remarkably fair-minded in his judgment of partisan writing, could assert that the 'Whig-Examiner' was done 'with so much fire, and in so excellent a style, as put the Tories in no small pain for their favourite hero'.(55) The endorsement undoubtedly pleased Addison, but as a political realist he knew his journal was beyond salvage in a paper war that demanded blatant irony and invective, scurrilous heat and fibre.

Another qualified failure was 'The Drummer', whose initial run of only three nights in March 1716 was an unexpected disappointment. Steele confessed that despite his own partiality it 'made no great Figure on the Stage, tho exquisitely well acted'. And when he brought out a second edition of the comedy in 1722, he went no further than to recommend it 'as a Closet-piece, to recreate an intelligent Mind in a vacant Hour'.(56) Steele, however, was deceptively circumspect. He knew that the comedy had been revived in February 1722 for seven successful nights. The author of the 'Freeholder's Journal', a first-nighter at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, isolated the source of the play's sudden glory. The taste for sentimental drama having been carefully nurtured in theory and performance, 'The Drummer' was applauded by a newly educated audience as 'so chaste a play ... without any prophane Wit, or ambiguous Obscenity'.(57) As the century advanced, the moral emphasis of the theatre advanced with it. Consequently, the 'piece', which began so dismally, was acted about ninety-five times between 1729 and 1790.

Addison himself had few doubts about his literary immortality. He therefore 'bequeathed' his writings to James Craggs the younger but allowed the onerous task of editing to fall upon Thomas Tickell. 'I have,' wrote Addison to Craggs, 'left the care of them to one, whom, by the experience of some years, I know well qualified to answer my intentions.'(58) These arrangements planned and executed, Addison devoted himself to choosing and 'collecting' his works for publication. He revised 'The Campaign' and several of the 'Spectator' essays. His own effort was scrupulous, his editor devoted to his mission. By 1721 Tickell brought out a handsomely printed four-volume edition of his patron's poetry and prose. Two years later Addison was given four pages in 'The Poetical Register', which acknowledged that in his 'Writings ... there appears an uncommon Beauty; an Elegance of Style; an Improvement of Diction; a Strength of Reason; an Excellency of Wit; and a Nobleness and Sublimity of Thought, equall'd by few, if any of our Modern Poets.'

Virtually every public event that moulded the last decade of Addison's life was celebrated in print. An

occasional dissident voice was heard, Mrs Manley's a little shriller than most. It is also probably true that Pope circulated the Atticus lines before 1719.(59) Although Addison must have admired the brilliant satire, he could not help being hurt by the exposure of flaws that, while exaggerated, he himself had either to admit or bury beyond consciousness. Still the reactions of Mrs Manley and Pope were the exception rather than the rule. What his contemporaries saw and what too many modern critics gloss over is his political integrity. Swift, for example, congratulated Addison on becoming Secretary of State. His letter of 9 July 1717 avoided any suggestion of mere studied civility.

I examine my Heart, and can find no other Reason why I write to you now, beside that great Love and Esteem I have always had for you. I have nothing to ask you either for any Friend, or for my self. When I conversed among Ministers I boasted of your Acquaintance, but I feel no Vanity from being known to a Secretary of State. I am only a little concerned to see you stand single, for it is a prodigious singularity in any Court to owe ones Rise entirely to Merit.(60)

As an adept politician, Addison made compromises, but only where principle was not involved. He rejected the possibility of ever being a 'renegade', as his friend Steele became, most overtly in his 'Letter to the Earl of O——d, concerning the Bill of Peerage'. And again unlike Steele, he preferred to give up 'an employment rather than hold it under the Tories, which by a little compliance he might have done'.(61) He abhorred the thought of bribery and adamantly refused a 'token of esteem' from the South Sea Company. He may have encouraged young poets to write of his accomplishments but on the other hand they were avid for place and all very much obligated to him for good will and offices. If he presided over a 'little senate', then the senators were voluntarily prepared to abide by the rules of the assembly.

When Addison had no choice but to accept in 1714 his appointment as secretary to Sunderland, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Laurence Eusden transformed his patron's disappointment through fulsome verse into a triumph.

Boldly a tributary Verse I bring,
Your Lawrels shade me, when to you I sing.(62)

In 1716 he married Charlotte, Countess of Warwick.

Customarily ignored by poets and statesmen, she now received several congratulatory epistles. How she reacted to them is difficult to tell since they complimented her not for herself but for the mate she selected. Tickell wrote one of these epithalamia and so did Leonard Welsted (No. 57). The latter, particularly, paid no heed to the new bride except as a vicarious source of praise for her husband.

Not *Edward's* Star, emboss'd with Silver Rays,
Can vie in Glory with thy Consort's Bays;
His Country's Pride does Homage to thy Charms,
And every Merit Crowds into thy Arms.(63)

The following year Addison became Secretary of State for the Southern Department and Nicholas Amhurst, a tumultuous and Whiggish Oxonian, rose to the occasion. His poem was an unabashed paean.

From *Isis'* Laurel'd Banks, the Muse reveals
A Joy which ev'ry honest *Briton* feels,
Who sees his Country's and his KING's Commands
Intrusted to your unpolluted Hands.

As the adulation became more and more 'nervous', Addison became the saviour of his country and perhaps as significantly of his university, where 'No longer are the Muses Learned Seats,/The Schools of Treason, and Seditious Heats'.(64)

His death in June produced a flutter of elegies in prose and verse. Giles Jacob wrote 'Memoirs of the Life of the Rt. Hon. Joseph Addison, Esq;'. Allan Ramsay composed 'Richy and Sandy' (No. 59), Cobden 'A Poem', Amhurst 'Upon the Death of Mr. Addison'. All these were printed in 1719 or 1720 but not before the 'Weekly Medley' for 4 July began a long column of biographical fact with the statement: 'Methinks I can never pay sufficient Veneration to the Ashes of Mr. Addison.' Edward Young addressed his pastoral elegy (1719) to Thomas Tickell as if the protégé-editor had inherited the dead man's genius and spirit.

... bring
And teach me thy departed friend to sing:
A darling theme! once powerful to inspire,
And now to melt, the Muses' mournful choir:
Now, and now first, we freely dare commend
His modest worth, nor shall our praise offend.

The contribution of Tickell himself (No. 60) was an instance of belated grief. Not as delicate as Ramsay's 'Richy and Sandy' or as intellectually oriented as Cobden's pastoral, his elegy had the advantage of perspective. Written almost two years after the mourning was finished, it tempered glorification with credibility, grief with realism.

Slow comes the verse, that real woe inspires:
Grief unaffected suits but ill with art,
Or flowing numbers with a bleeding heart.

The 'Elegy' was probably Tickell at his best for, to quote Goldsmith, it 'is one of the finest in our language; there is so little new that can be said upon the death of a friend, after the complaints of Ovid and the Latin Italians in this way, that one is surprised to see so much novelty in this to strike us, and so much interest to affect.' (65)

The suspicion, even the hostility, directed against Addison in the twentieth century infrequently surfaced in either of the two preceding centuries. As we have seen, for example, there was Mrs Manley's minuscule mutter. Pope's Atticus lines were finally printed as part of the 'Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot' in 1735. Within a narrative framework, Fielding gently scoffed at Addisonian self-esteem. In Chapter 8 of 'A Journey from this World to the Next' (1743), he had his fictional narrator enter into Elysium, where he met Virgil, with Mr Addison clinging tightly to the arm of the Latin poet. Virgil began the conversation.

'Well, sir,' said he, 'how many translations have these few last years produced of my Aeneid?' I told him I believed several, but I could not possibly remember; for that I had never read any but Dr. Trapp's. 'Aye,' said he, 'that is a curious piece indeed!' I then acquainted him with the discovery made by Mr. Warburton of the Eleusinian mysteries couched in his sixth book. 'What mysteries?' said Mr. Addison. 'The Eleusinian,' answered Virgil, 'which I have disclosed in my sixth book.' - 'How!' replied Addison; 'you never mentioned a word of any such mysteries to me in all our acquaintance.' - 'I thought it was unnecessary,' cried the other, 'to a man of your infinite learning: besides, you always told me you perfectly understood my meaning.' Upon this I thought the critic looked a little out of countenance, and turned aside to a very merry spirit, one Dick Steele, who embraced him, and told him

he had been the greatest man upon earth; that he readily resigned up all the merit of his own works to him. Upon which Addison gave him a gracious smile, and, clapping him on the back with much solemnity, cried out, 'Well said, Dick!'

Fielding's mildness would not do for Joseph Warton, whose empathy with Pope permitted him to take on the poet's enemies as his own. Addison therefore was labelled villain, his malice extorting 'from POPE the famous character of Atticus, which is perhaps the finest piece of satire extant'.(66)

The verbal sneers were meagre; only Pope's achieved universality. On the other hand, the praise, loud and consistent, reached a crescendo in Macaulay's essay (No. 70). Long before 1843, the applause was shared by the prose stylist and the moralist who practised in life what he urged in words. As early as 1716 his reputation as an essayist was affirmed without question. In a letter written presumably on 3 July of that year (although not printed until 1748) William Melmoth singled out Addison as one who captured that elusive quality of creative grace: 'In a word, one may justly apply to him what Plato, in his allegorical language, says of Aristophanes; that the Graces, having searched all the world round for a temple wherein they might for ever dwell, settled at last in the breast of Mr. Addison.' Precisely forty years later Warton was compelled to admit, indeed he did 'candidly own, that in various parts of his prose-essays, are to be found many strokes of genuine and sublime poetry; many marks of a vigorous and exuberant imagination.' Free of Warton's personal animus, Vicesimus Knox (No. 66) also pinpointed a split in Addisonian genius: 'Had not a veneration for his name prevented critics from speaking their real sentiments, though Addison would, as a moral essayist, most justly have been called the Socrates, Plato, or Xenophon of his age; yet he would never have been esteemed the first of poets'.(67)

Within the last forty years of the eighteenth century and on into the next, people like Hugh Blair, Thomas Wallace, and David Irving promoted Addison as a prose writer whose style was worthy of imitation. Thus the 'Spectator', for example, became a pedagogical tool, a classic that needed to be studied in grammar schools and university study halls. In a series of lectures first offered in 1760, Blair assured his pupils at the University of Edinburgh that Addison had perfected an English prose, in which 'minute imperfections' very much like 'spots in the sun', would assist beginners to avoid

comparable mistakes. Again and again as he analysed 'Spectators' 411 to 414 he stressed the journal's lasting appeal. It is, he promised his audience, 'a book which is in the hands of every one, and which cannot be praised too highly. The good sense, and good writing, the useful morality, and the admirable vein of humour which abound in it, render it one of those standard books which have done the greatest honour to the English nation.' (68) Blair, in short, established the tradition of seriously examining the structural components, the language and the imagery that constituted the elegance and deceptive ease of Addisonian art.

Adding nothing substantive to what Blair had already said and written, Wallace in 1796 did provide a historical perspective. He argued that the essayist began a prose revolution, created the first alteration in English style since 1688, and achieved freedom from the techniques of the schoolmen: 'the forced metaphor, the dragging clause, the harsh cadence, and the abrupt close'. Although he underestimated Addison's erudition and finesse in handling the niceties of metaphysical distinction, Wallace recognized his sense of an audience that gave coherence to the sheets of the 'Spectator'. There was, he pointed out, a perfect reconciliation between subject and style on the one hand and a reader's needs and capabilities on the other. (69) Just about everyone in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who analysed Addison's prose style recognized its achievement of 'classical purity'. Nathan Drake agreed. He went one step further to maintain that by virtue of its unique yet 'elegant simplicity', it could be neither copied nor taught to others. Posterity therefore had to be content with admiration alone. (70)

If certain critics were enthusiastic about his creative talent, others marvelled not only at the wholesomeness of his literary lessons but of a life that seemingly kept pace with them. By 1759, through personal recollection, Addison took on heroic proportions: the mortal man was idealized and the dying Christian adulated. In Edward Young's opinion,

His compositions are but a noble preface; the grand work is his death: That is a work which is read in heaven: How has it join'd the final approbation of angels to the previous applause of men? How gloriously has he opened a splendid path, thro' fame immortal, into eternal peace? How has he given religion to triumph amidst the ruins of his nature? And, stronger than death, risen higher in virtue when breathing his last.

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So exuberantly pietistic was Young's appreciation of the way in which Addison died that even Richardson, never niggardly in his praise of Christian virtue, suggested caution. Responding to a manuscript version of the 'Conjectures', he wrote to Young on 18 December 1758:

Let me ask, however great and noble what you say of Mr. Addison's death is, whether it may not bear shortening? Will it not be thought laboured? And when, from the different nature of diseases, some of them utterly incapacitating, and deliriums happening often, it is not, or may not be, discouraging to surviving friends, to find wanting in the dying those tokens of resignation and true Christian piety, which Mr. Addison was graciously enabled to express so exemplarily to Lord W. (71)

For Richardson the issue was simple: no matter how intense the religious exercise, it required the restraint of probability.

Twenty-two years after publication of the 'Conjectures', Johnson, no less pious than Young, looked judiciously at the Addisonian record in order to re-assess the literary performance and the personality responsible for it (No. 67). The 'Life', printed in 1781, stood forth as the first objective portrait of the man and artist who was more to be praised than blamed. And its judgment cannot be significantly challenged after almost two centuries. There was as always something old in the 'Life' and something new, but its tone - measured and surprisingly apolitical, critical and historically sensitive - gives it a modern relevance. The 'Life' of Addison, unlike some of the other Johnsonian biographies, will never become dated, if only because the essayist has not gone the forgotten way of John Pomfret, for example, or into the oblivion of George Stepney, John Philips, and William Walsh, among others.

Along with many who preceded him, Johnson found Addison's poetry pleasant but thoroughly lacking in passion and imagination. There was consequently 'in most of his compositions a calmness and equability, deliberate and cautious, sometimes with little that delights, but seldom with any thing that offends'. 'Cato' he dismissed by way of a long and hostile excerpt from Dennis's 'Remarks' on the play. However indirectly harsh his judgment of the dramatist, Johnson was in advance of his time when he gave high marks to the aesthete-critic, understanding the delicacy required to adjust the profundity to the needs of a popular audience. 'His purpose was to infuse

literary curiosity by gentle and unsuspected conveyance into the gay, the idle, and the wealthy; he therefore presented knowledge in the most alluring form, not lofty and austere, but accessible and familiar.' What refreshes about Johnson's evaluation is less its appreciation of Addison as a 'model of the middle style', but, more importantly, its rational respect for the man. Thus 'though his station made him conspicuous, and his ability made him formidable, the character given him by his friends was never contradicted by his enemies: of those with whom interest or opinion united him, he had not only the esteem but the kindness; and of others, whom the violence of opposition drove against him, though he might lose the love, he retained the reverence.'

Johnson's moderation did not take hold. For the most part adulation abounded. Thomas Tyers in 1783 wrote 'An Historical Essay on Mr. Addison' which was admittedly a 'rhapsody' and a panegyric 'of the Addisonian School'. Even as he admired, he confessed his frustration - all too conscious of the distance between himself and his subject.

If Mr. Addison, the intended hero of this essay, had been the Plutarch of his own life (for Plutarch enters into a thousand interesting particulars and brings his hero into the closet) it must have made an entertaining volume; though the modesty and diffidence that accompanied him thro' every scene of life, would have prevented him from enlarging on a multitude of things to his own glory and the disadvantage of others. For on many occasions he chose rather to hide himself than be seen, and to practice reserve than to open his lips (pp. 3-4).

Unperturbed by the biographical elusiveness of the man, Nathan Drake in 1805 moved toward the apotheosis of Addison. He presented him as the journalist whose talent was a single-edged weapon to drive home religious, moral, and social virtue. That he could actually 'effect so much improvement, and ... acquire a kind or moral dominion over his countrymen, must be ascribed, in a great measure, to that suavity of disposition and goodness of heart so visible throughout all his compositions, and which give to his reproof and censure, his precepts and admonitions, the air of parental affection and monitory kindness.' (72)

The road paved with Addisonian glory from Drake to Macaulay ran straight and uncluttered. Steele was occasionally introduced for comparative purposes but not often enough to interfere with the ultimate transfiguration of his collaborator in the Macaulay essay (No. 70).

Goldsmith, one of those who wrote about Steele, delineated him as self-victimized by a competitive intimacy with his friend. 'This was not owing so much to the evident superiority on the part of Addison, as to the unnatural efforts which Steele made to equal or eclipse him. This emulation destroyed that genuine flow of diction which is discoverable in all his former compositions.' A half century later, Hazlitt - very much like Coleridge - found Steele natural and innovative, preferable to a studied and contrived Addison. Hence the 'Tatler' surpassed the 'Spectator': 'it has more of the original spirit, more of the freshness and stamp of nature. The indications of character and strokes of humour are more true and frequent; the reflections that suggest themselves arise more from the occasion, and are less spun out into regular dissertations. They are more like the remarks which occur in sensible conversation, and less like a lecture.' (73)

Despite Hazlitt and his preference, which many of his contemporaries considered perverse, Addison won secular transcendence in Macaulay's prose. He moved through the pages of the 'Edinburgh Review' without flaw, his eminence increasing when he was measured against his contemporaries. Steele, for example, 'was a rake among scholars, and a scholar among rakes'. As a satirist, Addison irradiated his own supremacy:

He neither laughs out like [Voltaire] nor, like [Swift], throws a double portion of severity into his countenance while laughing inwardly; but preserves a look peculiarly his own, a look of demure serenity, disturbed only by an arch sparkle of the eye, an almost imperceptible elevation of the brow, an almost imperceptible curl of the lip. His tone is never that either of a Jack Pudding or of a Cynic. It is that of a gentleman, in whom the quickest sense of the ridiculous is constantly tempered by good nature and good breeding.

As Macaulay sketched in the details of the portrait, he himself became mesmerized by its splendour. He took pride in his opportunity to erase - to his own satisfaction - the one presumed blot on the Addisonian record. That is, he believed his tenuous proof that the slur against 'Little Dicky' was not a betrayal of friendship but merely a remark about a comedian named Henry Norris. In a letter to Macvey Napier, the critic barely restrained his jubilation: 'But I am still more pleased that the vindication of Addison from an unjust charge, which has been universally believed ever since the publication of the 'Lives

of the Poets', should thus be complete.' (74) To Macaulay Addison was a precursor of the Victorians and possibly among the best of them: practical in his idealism, kindly in his righteousness, moral in his worldliness, humble in his erudition.

Thackeray, who wrote ten years after Macaulay, did not dispute the eulogy. And yet there is a hint of ambivalence in the novelist's awe of Addison's intellect and at the same time a suspicion of the human being who 'walks about the world watching [humanity's] pretty humours, fashions, follies, flirtations, rivalries; and noting them with the most charming archness'. What disturbed Thackeray was only intimated: the essayist's detachment and an almost uncrackable good will. More to his liking, although the comparison remained unstated, was Steele, the natural man who lived among all sorts of people, enjoyed them, and was enjoyed in return. Thackeray, however, was very much the Victorian. While he could not admire Addison with Macaulay's single-mindedness, he exonerated Steele with nineteenth-century condescension:

Poor Dick Steele stumbled and got up again, and got into jail and out again, and sinned and repented; and loved and suffered; and lived and died scores of years ago. Peace be with him! Let us think gently of one who was so gentle: let us speak kindly of one whose own breast exuberated with human kindness. (75)

The Addisonian figure, whose worth increased with only slight demur for almost two centuries, had inevitably to topple. Bonamy Dobrée in 1925 began to do violence to the image, deprecating the journalist as 'the First Victorian'. Dobrée's attitude is hardly arcane. His hostility to the self-designated rectitude and complacency of the Queen merged with and fostered his rejection of Addison. The twentieth-century critic assumed the oracular stance of his modernity: 'To us, in rebellion against the Victorian view, with more faith in the human being, and much less in his ideals, approaching as we do indeed a nihilism in values, a character such as Addison's must seem unsatisfactory.'

The 'character' took on a multitude of vices, as Dobrée depicted him with unalloyed contempt. Thus the once-virtuous essayist revealed a sick need to patronize and possess; to feel safe, that is, 'superior'. His dwarfed soul was locked in an obsessive secrecy that at one and the same time hid a conscious hypocrisy and exhibited a committed prudence. What seemed at first to be admirable - Addisonian constancy - even that proved

the mark of a fossilized mind and an enfeebled but lulling prose style. Subjective and vengeful, the Dobree portrait became in fact a cartoon of villainy.

Surely the truth about the man and the artist lies somewhere between Macaulay's adoration and Dobree's venom. It is true that behind Addison's correct exterior lurked a not insignificant capacity for pique. Still he would have been less than human if he did not hit back, however covertly, at those whom he often befriended and who just as often betrayed him. Surely he must have felt distaste for the fawners who nagged at him for political doles. And he could not have been indifferent to the gossip that questioned his virility and made broad jokes about a pallid marriage that earned him a countess and the magnificent Holland House. Although the privacy he cherished was sometimes invaded by slander, he concealed whatever he knew or felt about it. His austere façade that revealed few intimate feelings is undeniably awesome and it makes certain readers uncomfortable. It is always easier to respond positively to a personality that is expansive and open - even in his vices - than to one that is withdrawn and reticent - even in his virtues.

Whatever we feel about the individual, we must or should recognize his ethos as a man of letters. His intellectual moderation expresses itself in language suggestive of easy conversation, freed - as it must be - of passion and metaphorical richness. He wrote, Johnson justly said, 'on grave subjects not formal, on light occasions not grovelling; pure without scrupulosity, and exact without apparent elaboration.... Addison never deviates from his track to snatch a grace; he seeks no ambitious ornament, and tries no hazardous innovations.' He wrote, in short, like a man who felt at peace in the middle station, able to skirt the extremes of cold intellectuality and undisciplined imagination. His was a rhetorical art whose techniques of persuasion slyly hid their brilliance and made their mark with tact and credible humility.

What should never be forgotten about Addison is that in delicately structured essays he caught the quintessence of his age as few other artists were able to do.

As a social thinker he exhibits both the weakness and enlightenment of Augustan England. Although lacking intellectual originality, he had a genius for embracing and communicating contemporary social issues, both large and small. His literary concern with the fops and their ladies was no less than his concern with England's mercantile wars and Protestant succession.

He had a sure instinct for singling out ideas that were much in men's minds and for explaining them in a style that was at once plain and relaxed. His readers identified themselves with the point of view of his essays even as he identified himself with the thinking of the public which, paradoxically, he helped formulate.(76)

Notes

- 1 'The Importance of the Guardian Considered' (1713); see No. 13.
- 2 The portrait appears in 'The New Atalantis' (2nd ed., 1709), I, 187-93. For her statement of technique, see her letter to Harley, 12 May 1710, in Hist. MSS. Com., 'The Manuscripts of his Grace the Duke of Portland' (1897), IV, 541.
- 3 'Letter-Books of John Hervey, First Earl of Bristol', ed. Sydenham H. A. Hervey (1894), I, 249.
- 4 Mrs Manley's Dedication to Henry Duke of Beaufort in vol. II of 'The New Atalantis'. For 'The Character of the Tatler', see No. 31.
- 5 John Oldmixon, 'The Life and Posthumous Works of Arthur Maynwaring' (1715), p. 159.
- 6 For 'A Condoling Letter to the Tattler', see No. 33.
- 7 'Moderator' 42. The 'Friendly Couriere' was dated 2 January.
- 8 The Preface to 'A Spy upon the Spectator' (1711); see No. 37.
- 9 See 'The Spectator', ed. Donald F. Bond (1965), No. 384 and n.2. For an account of the pamphlets pro and con see 'Political State' (June 1712), III, 452-9, and John C. Stephens, Jr, Steele and the Bishop of St Asaph's Preface, 'PMLA', LXVII (1952), 1011-23.
- 10 [William Wagstaffe?], 'The Character of Richard Steele, Esq; with some Remarks. By Toby, Abel's Kinsman' (1713); also [John Arbuthnot?], 'An Invitation to Peace' (1714) (No. 5).
- 11 'Examiner' for 14-21, 21-24 August 1713. Defoe's pamphlet was advertised in the 'Examiner' 10-14 August under the rubric 'This Day is Published'. 'A Second Whigg-Letter from William Prynne to Nestor Ironside' was being sold by the last week in September.
- 12 'An Invitation to Peace'.
- 13 The Whig account of the trial appears in 'The Case of Richard Steele, Esq;' (1714) (No. 6). It was subsequently issued as 'A Full Account of the Proceedings in the last Session of Parliament, against Richard Steele' (1714).

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- 14 'The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift', ed. Harold Williams (1963-5), II, 111. For Mrs Manley's letter, see Hist. MSS. Com. 'Portland', V, 491.
- 15 See Steele's statement of friendship for Addison in the Dedication to 'The Tender Husband' (1705).
- 16 On the Death of Sir Richard Steele, in 'Original Letters, Dramatic Pieces, and Poems' (1776), III, 28-30 (No. 8). Victor also dedicated his elegy to Walpole.
- 17 'An Essay towards Fixing the True Standards of Wit, Humour, Raillery, Satire, and Ridicule' (1744), pp. xvi-xviii.
- 18 Austin Dobson, 'A Paladin of Philanthropy' (1899), p. 109.
- 19 Bonamy Dobrée, *The First Victorian*, in 'Essays in Biography 1680-1726' (1925); Winton, 'Captain Steele' (1964), and 'Sir Richard Steele, M.P.' (1970); Goldgar, 'The Curse of Party' (1961).
- 20 'The British Theatre', XII, 5.
- 21 No. 9 (4 December 1713).
- 22 From vol. IV, Letter 15 of *Pamela* (4 vols, 1742) (No. 18).
- 23 'The Diary of Mary Countess Cowper, Lady of the Bedchamber to the Princess of Wales, 1714-1720' (1864), entry for 15 February 1715. Defoe, 'The Fears of the Pretender Turn'd into the Fears of Debauchery' (1715).
- 24 See 'The Letters of the Late Thomas Rundle ... to Mrs Barbara Sandys', introduction by James Dallaway (1789). 'The demand for [the 'Theatres'] was so great, that even his fiercest enemies bought them up, and enjoyed the author, while they persecute the man.'
- 25 Letters I and II appeared on or shortly before 5 February 1720, Letters III and IV were published not later than March 1720 (see No. 21). Steele answered Dennis in 'Theatre', 11, 12.
- 26 'An Answer to a Whimsical Pamphlet, call'd The Character of Sir John Edgar' (1720).
- 27 Welsted, Preface to 'A Prologue occasioned by the Revival of a Play of Shakespear [Measure for Measure]' (1721). See Steele's Epilogue for the same 'Revival', in which he wrote:

Else say, in Britain, why it should be heard
That Etherege to Shakespear is preferr'd;
Whilst Dorimant to crowded Audiences wenches,
Our Angelo repeat to empty benches.

From 'The Works of Leonard Welsted', ed. John Nichols (1787), pp. 76-80.