

Allan Bevan

POETRY AND POLITICS IN RESTORATION ENGLAND

CRITICS FROM THE TIME OF SAMUEL JOHNSON have emphasized the topical nature of John Dryden's writings, his poems and critical essays in particular. Most of his major poems were designed to satisfy a contemporary wave of opinion, or to raise and discuss an issue very much alive at a particular time. The best known of the topical works among his writings are the political satires *Absalom and Achitophel* and *The Medal*, but he also wrote poems dealing with many specific events taking place in his own lifetime—the death of Cromwell and of Charles II, the coronation of Charles, the death of Anne Killigrew, and the deaths of many another of his acquaintances. His critical essays were topical in another way, usually being in some way related to and connected with one or more of his own creative works, frequently defending a position he had already adopted in practice: his defence of heroic plays, his analysis of tragedy, his dissertations on translation and satire. These and many more of his essays should be read in relation to his own plays, translations, and satires. Even an apparently independent critical work such as his *Defence of Dramatic Poesy* reflects clearly his dramatic practice of the moment.

It was natural that a writer such as Dryden—very much aware of the events and theories of his time—would echo his fellow Englishmen's interest in the political unrest of the period from 1678 to 1682, a time that can be described fairly accurately as the era of the Popish Plot. This was the time of *Absalom and Achitophel* and *The Medal*, and also of Dryden's "Protestant" play, *The Spanish Friar*, and the controversial *Duke of Guise*, a Tory play written in collaboration with another Tory writer, Nathaniel Lee. Even before these obviously political works, however, Dryden's interest in government was evident in his writings. The poems to Cromwell, to Charles II, and to Clarendon are less concerned with political issues than with personalities and the desire to capitalize on an event of national interest, but in the heroic plays in particular Dryden's views on good and bad government are apparent. As Professor Bredvold has pointed out, there is an undercurrent of fundamental

consistency beneath the apparent inconsistency of Dryden's political opinions as expressed throughout his life. From the beginning, his desire for a strong, stable control of the country's government seems to dominate his writings on political matters. He can thus praise the resolution of the King during the last few years of the reign of Charles II, and he can indirectly—as in *Aureng-Zebe* (1675)—attack the King for his indifference, his corruption, and his inefficiency. In the 1678-1682 period, riding the crest of Royal victory, he is as Tory as the King himself.

Some knowledge of the political situation, at least in its broadest outlines, together with a look at the contemporary versified propaganda relating to the troubled state of England's internal and external policy, helps the reader to understand and appreciate Dryden's political poems and to realize why they have survived for almost three centuries.

After the murder of Sir Edmund Bury Godfrey (still the subject of learned controversy), the startling depositions of Titus Oates and his fellow witnesses, and the discovery of treasonous letters in the possession of Edward Coleman, the Duke of York's secretary, a wave of anti-Catholicism swept over England. There was undoubtedly a Popish Plot of some kind, but how well organized it was, how dangerous it was, or how widespread it was, all seem to be among the unsolved problems of the historians. The fear engendered by the rumours of Papist power and Jesuit machinations (it was widely accepted that the Fire of London was no accident) affected all aspects of London life. Oates was loudly acclaimed as the saviour of the nation, and only the boldest dared openly to express any doubt about the honesty of his amazing revelations. One of the Whig writers (probably Christopher Ness, a serious but dull defender of Titus Oates) attacks Dryden venomously for daring to question the honour of the chief witness against the Roman Catholics:

But oh how ugly seems thy Metaphor,
Thus to cast Dirt on England's Saviour; . . .
Who saved us from that Damn'd Popish Plot,
For which thou scoffs, and doth his Scutcheon blot.

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Duke of York, who made no secret of his religious beliefs, was seen as the enemy of England, darkly plotting to overthrow the Established Church in favour of his own religion—a view that later developments reveal as being quite justified. Even the King himself, although not even Titus Oates accused him openly, was suspected (rightly enough) of being at least sympathetic to Catholicism. It was in this atmosphere of hatred, suspicion,

and fear that the much-admired two-party system of government developed in England.

The two opposing political parties, of course, did not develop overnight with the Popish Plot and its resultant strains on loyalties, but the names "Whig" and "Tory" and the clear demarcation that was to characterize politics in the years to follow are products of the Exclusion Bill, a bill designed to keep the Duke of York from becoming King of England after the death of his brother Charles II. Titus Oates, according to the English historian G. M. Trevelyan, named any man who questioned his evidence a "Tory"—after the Catholic bandits skulking through the Irish bog in search of Protestant victims. The newly-designated Tories retaliated by naming their opponents after the Scottish Covenanters lurking behind the heather as they hunted for a Bishop to murder. Under the influence of the mass hysteria, Tories accused Whigs of republicanism and fanaticism, and Whigs looked upon Tories as Papists and absolutists. Feelings ran high in the Houses of Parliament and throughout the country, with London (as in the days of the Civil War) the great stronghold of those who appeared to their opponents to be ready to overthrow the King. With the Earl of Shaftesbury, the acknowledged leader of the Whigs, as their idol and later as their martyr, the upright citizens of London (as the Whigs called them) or the London mob (as the Tories called them) became a formidable weapon. It was partly to counteract the pressure on the government exerted by the city that John Dryden, Nathaniel Lee, and Thomas Otway wrote their Tory propaganda.

Just as there was a two-party system in government, with a small third group led by the Trimmer, Lord Halifax, so there were two groups of writers, Whigs and Tories, with a very few trimmers who advocated moderation. Unfortunately, the verse propaganda of the Whig writers is now all but forgotten today, in spite of the fact that the arguments of the Whigs were as sound and their political views at least as convincing as those of their opponents; but Thomas Shadwell, Elkanah Settle, and Samuel Pordage, to mention three of the most prolific and popular of the Whig writers, were never slow in answering their Tory opponents. For good reasons, since this was an age of violence and there was always the danger of personal revenge, most of the political poems appeared anonymously, but there is never any doubt as to the political affiliations of the writer. In spite of the anonymity of many works, the authorship seems to have been well enough known to allow the opposing writers to feel free to make personal attacks upon their opposite numbers with malice and enthusiasm. Dryden's well-known denunciation of Shadwell as

A monstrous mass of foul corrupted matter,
As all the devils had spew'd to make the batter

(*Absalom and Achitophel*, II, 464-5)

and of the Duke of Buckingham as

A man so various, that he seem'd to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome:
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong;
Was everything by starts, and nothing long

(*Absalom and Achitophel*, 545-8)

are both relatively gentle. Shadwell's *Medal of John Bayes: A Satyr against Folly and Knavery* (1682) contains a long tirade (in many places unquotable) against Dryden, "this cherry-cheek'd Dunce of Fifty three", who, apparently to be in the fashionable mode of the time, "boasts of Vice which he did ne'er commit" and who is accused of a long list of vices and crimes: cowardice, ingratitude, dullness, plagiarism, libel, bad taste, disloyalty, malice, jealousy, scurrility, and so on. Shadwell concludes, after some four hundred lines, with

Pied thing! half wit! half fool! and for a Knave,
Few Men, than this, a better mixture have:
But thou canst add to that, Coward and Slave.

Elkanah Settle, like Shadwell a victim of Dryden's pen, in his *Absalom Senior: or Achitophel Transpros'd, A Poem* (1682) concentrates on Dryden's political changes, his anti-clericalism, and his alleged affair with the actress Ann Reeves. Dryden appears as a gifted, ambitious writer with no constancy and no moral standards of any kind. The other Whig writers ring out the same tune: Dryden is a turncoat, a dull companion who affects to be a gentleman with a gentleman's vices, a mercenary writer who sells his wares to the highest bidder, a cuckold and a whore-master, and above all a writer of treasonous attacks on the King himself.

The writers pulled no punches in their attacks on each other, the most violent Whig denunciations of course being directed against Dryden, the recognized leader of the Tories. He was particularly vulnerable to attack on the grounds of his apparent inconsistency in politics, his habit of always managing to write in support of the side in power. They make a good deal of the fact that Dryden could write a poem on Cromwell, praising that arch-enemy of the Stuarts, and still was able just two years later to write a glowing tribute to Charles and the Earl of Clarendon. A broadside appearing in 1682 with the cumbersome and ironic title *An Elegy on the Usurper O.C. By the Author of Absalom and Achitophel. Published to shew the*

loyalty and Integrity of the Poet concluded with a *Postscript* signed J.D. in which Dryden is made to admit his past and present wickedness. The reappearance of the embarrassing poem, J.D. says,

... shows my nauseous Mercenary Pen
 Would praise the vilest and the worst of Men
 Villains I praise, the Patriots accuse,
 My railing and my fawning Talents use,
 Just as they pay I flatter or abuse.

Later in his career, after Dryden became a Roman Catholic and a staunch supporter of James II, his enemies found more ammunition for their depiction of him as a fickle, time-serving mercenary scribbler, prostituting his muse for his personal advantage. In 1689, after the abdication of James II, Shadwell published a poem, *The Address of John Dryden, Laureat, to His Highness the Prince of Orange*, in which he has Dryden appealing to the Protestant William III, explaining his past changes and asking for preferment on the grounds that he can again switch his allegiance to become the spokesman for those opposing Roman Catholicism:

Rome's Votary, the Protestants sworn Foe,
 Rome my Religion half an hour ago;
 My Roman Dagon's by thy Arm o'erthrown,
 And now my Prostituted Soul's thy own: . . .
 I'll pound my Beads to Dust, and wear no more
 Those Pagan Bracelets of the Scarlet Whore.

It is interesting to note also that his Whig opponents made much of the Dryden-Reeves relationship, affecting to be horrified by Dryden's gross sensuality in his life as well as in his poems and plays. In an age when the fashion of "keeping" was openly set by the King and openly followed by the courtiers, the wits, the fops, the actors, and other men of mode, it is strange that Dryden should have been singled out for such vilification, especially as there seems to be little evidence, outside of the scribbles of his enemies, to support the accusations that Dryden kept his actress-whore. Shadwell and Settle also both accuse the poet-laureate of being dull in company, of being "lumpish and flegmatick, or arrogant and silly" when he attempted in vain to match the sparkling conversation of the gentlemen of the time. They seem to feel that he was by nature a sort of puritan who deliberately and cold-bloodedly aped his betters by carrying on with Ann Reeves:

He boasts of Vice (which he did ne'er commit)
 Calls himself Whoremaster and Sodomite,

says Shadwell, after giving some specific and unquotable examples of Dryden's accounts of his ventures into the world of vice.

Dryden's attacks on his enemies, although no less personal, were much more effective. His air of contemptuous superiority immediately placed his victims at a disadvantage. From his Olympian heights he looks disdainfully down upon the swarm of buzzing and angry insects that noisily nibble away at his reputation as a man and as a writer. Dismissing their attacks as malicious nonsense, he immortalizes them as princes of dullness, satirists without bite or sting. Of Shadwell's attacks on him, he says,

With whate'er gall thou sett'st thyself to write,
Thy inoffensive satires never bite. (*MacFlecknoe*, 199-200)

Whereas he deals with Shadwell in one whole poem and in a corrosive part of another, he demolishes Settle with a few lines, seeing him as a failure in all aspects of the writing trade:

A double noose thou on thy neck dost pull,
For writing treason, and for writing dull;
To die for faction is a common evil,
But to be hang'd for nonsense is the devil.

(*Absalom and Achitophel*, II, 496-9)

Then he decides that to give a catalogue of Settle's many vices would be to confer unwarranted importance upon a nonentity:

I would not rake the dunghill of thy crimes,
For who would read thy life that reads thy rhymes? (504-5)

These attacks and counterattacks of Dryden, Shadwell, and Settle are all offshoots of the political controversy raging at the time—immediately after the Popish Plot had burned itself out. The poets and dramatists, although never willing to let an opportunity go by for an assault on their fellow writers, were equally frank and insulting when dealing with the political figures. It should be remembered that the Restoration period was one of violence, a period in which men's honour was to be guarded by the sword if the code of the duel allowed it (the Duke of Buckingham killed the Earl of Shrewsbury, while, rumour said, Lady Shrewsbury, dressed as a page, held the Duke's horse), or by hired ruffians with cudgels (Dryden was soundly trounced by "Black Will", hired perhaps by the King's current mistress, the Duchess of Portsmouth, for his suspected authorship of a poem by the Duke of Buckinghamshire in which the royal mistresses were severely criticized), or by knives in the hands of cutthroats (Sir John Coventry had his nose slit after his

derogatory comments in the House of Commons relating to the King). Dryden's greatest political satire, *Absalom and Achitophel*, attacks the Duke of Monmouth, the Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Shaftesbury, the Lord Mayor of London, and many other important people in a manner the author said would tickle while it hurt. It is obvious from the replies that the hurt was felt without the accompanying tickle of appreciation for the author's cleverness. Apparently Dryden's authorship was never in doubt, even though his name did not at first appear as the writer; but he must have felt secure enough, having written under the personal protection and encouragement of the King himself. In spite of the dangers inherent in personal invective, however, the Whig and Tory writers made much of the weaknesses and vices and crimes of the great men guiding, at least nominally, the affairs of state.

The Earl of Shaftesbury, as the most important Whig statesman, was inevitably the chief victim of Dryden, Lee, Otway, and the anonymous tribe of Tory scribblers. Even when other victims were selected—Titus Oates and his fellow witnesses in the Popish Plot, for example—they were usually seen as dependent upon and inferior to the arch enemy of the crown, Shaftesbury. It is unfortunate for Shaftesbury's reputation that the Tory writers were so much more effective than their Whig opponents; of course, malicious satire always appeals more to readers than does a eulogistic portrait of a high-minded, unselfish, patriotic statesman. Of all the many satiric reproductions of Shaftesbury, Dryden's *Achitophel* and Otway's Antonio in *Venice Preserv'd* (1682) are the best known. Otway's portrait presents Shaftesbury as a masochistic frequenter of the house of the "famed Grecian courtesan called Aquilana". As a member of the Venetian Senate, Antonio is apparently as impotent as he is as a lover. Aquilana, with a brutal frankness that pleases him greatly, tells him that he is "an old, silly, impertinent, impotent, solicitous coxcomb, crazy in your head, and lazy in your body, love to be meddling with everything, and if you had no money, you are good for nothing." (*Venice Preserv'd*, III, i.)

The Tory writers united in their accusations that Shaftesbury had aggravated the turmoil created by the Popish Plot in order to further his own ambitious ends. Otway's Antonio is shown rehearsing a speech he plans to deliver to the Senate:

Most reverend Senators,

That there is a plot, surely by this time, no man that hath eyes or understanding in his head will presume to doubt, 'tis as plain as the light in the cucumber—no—hold there—cucumber does not come in yet—'tis as plain as the light in the sun, or as the man in the moon, even at noonday; it is indeed a pumpkin-plot, which, just as it was mellow, we have gathered, and now we have gathered it, prepared and dressed it, shall we throw it like a pickled cucumber out of the window? no: that is not like a bloody, horrid, execrable, damnable and audacious plot, but it is, as I may say so, a

saucy plot and we all know, most reverend fathers, that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for a gander: therefore, I say, as those bloodthirsty ganders of the conspiracy would have destroyed us geese of the Senate, let us make haste to destroy them, so I humbly move for hanging—ha! hurry durry—I think this will do, tho' I was something out, at first, about the sun and the cucumber (V, i).

There is, I should say, no resemblance between the confused nonsense of Senator Antonio and the careful, effective speeches of Shaftesbury himself. Otway's dramatic representation of the eminent statesman is designed to ridicule by any method, even through deliberate misrepresentation.

Dryden's introduction of the chief villain of *Absalom and Achitophel* is a clever blend of censure and praise, much more effective than Otway's gross and inaccurate caricature of his victim. In his characterization Dryden boldly admits to the ability of Shaftesbury as a "daring pilot in extremity" and as a judge above reproach:

In Israel's courts ne'er sat an Abbethdin
With more discerning eyes, or hands more clean;
Unbrib'd, unsought, the wretched to redress;
Swift of dispatch, and easy of access. (188-191)

Dryden turns his praise to very good account as he deploras the great waste of abilities that could have been used to foster the national good, but which have been selfishly and ambitiously employed to win personal power. There is an elusive hint of regret in Dryden's lines describing the diabolically clever Achitophel using his undeniable powers to effect evil rather than good. The "false Achitophel" is presented as he has unfortunately become:

For close designs and crooked counsels fit;
Sagacious, bold and turbulent of wit;
Restless, unfix'd in principles and place;
In pow'r unpleas'd, impatient of disgrace. (152-5)

.....

In friendship false, implacable in hate;
Resolv'd to ruin or to rule the State. (173-4)

In the Chaucer-like introduction to his villain, the evil use of Achitophel's great wit is emphasized, but Dryden's adopted air of moral superiority allows the reader to glimpse the pathos of fallen grandeur. In the action, limited though it is, Achitophel's close kinship to Satan is obvious, especially so in his cunning temptation of the gullible but essentially noble Absalom. Dryden's portrait of Shaftesbury is

no doubt an unfair one, but the distortions are those of a clever satirist: they are exaggerations rather than outright falsehoods.

Shaftesbury found his poetic defenders among the Whig propagandists who attempted to counteract the gibes of the Tory writers. The Duke of Buckingham, himself smarting from Dryden's characterization of Zimri, wrote a poem in reply to Dryden's "adulterate Poem" in which he praises both Monmouth and Shaftesbury:

Shaftesbury! A Soul that Nature did impart
To raise her Wonder in a Brain and Heart;
Or that in him produc'd, the World might know,
She others did with drooping Thought bestow.

To Elkanah Settle in *Absalom Senior: or Achitophel Transpros'd*, Shaftesbury is

Kind Patriot, who to plant us Banks of Flow'rs,
With purling Streams, cool Shades, and Summer Bow'rs,
His Ages needful Rest away does fling,
Exhausts his Autumn to adorn our Spring:
Whilst his last Hours in Toyls and Storms are hurl'd
And onely to enrich th' inheriting World.
Thus prodigally throws his Lifes short span,
To play his Countries generous Pelican.

Shadwell energetically praises Shaftesbury for loyalty, justice, zeal, patriotism, and particularly for his defence of the Protestant religion:

Methinks I see our watchful Heroe stand,
Jogging the Nodding Genius of our Land,
Which sometimes struggling with sleeps heavy yোক,
Awak'd, star'd, and look'd grim, and dreadfully he spoke.
The voice fill'd all the Land, and then did fright
The Scarlet Whore from all her works of night.

The truth about Shaftesbury probably lies somewhere between the extreme views presented by the Tories and the Whigs in their poetic outbursts.

At Shaftesbury's death there were the usual panegyric elegies, but this time sometimes side by side with jeering, satiric verses. One elegy, for example, praising the unselfish, patriotic Englishman who had in effect given his life for his country was reprinted on the same sheet with its satiric parody. The Whig poet's lines were distorted with a heavy-handed touch, completely lacking in sympathy for the exiled Earl or in reverence for the dead. Here is a sample of the elegy:

Let Fools and Knaves through their false Opticks find
Thy Spots, and be to all thy Brightness blind.

Let 'em rail on, and vent their hurtless Gall,
 Whilst Shaftsbury's Renown surmounts 'em all.

And here is the reply:

Let partial Whigs, through their false Opticks, find
 Thy Worth, and even be, like thee, half blind.
 Rail on Phanaticks, vent your envious Gall,
 Your Toney's Tapping Arts have spoil'd ye all.

The zealous Whigs were not content to defend; they too must attack the leaders of the rival party. If Shaftesbury was the arch-villain to the Tories, the Duke of York was equally diabolical to the Whigs. Settle, adapting Dryden's characterization of Achitophel to new uses, praises the Duke of York for his military exploits, as Dryden had praised Shaftesbury for his work as a judge. Then Settle deplores, as Dryden had done, the misuse of powers that could have been better employed:

Had he fixt here, Yes, Fate, had he fixt here,
 To man so sacred, and to Heaven so dear,
 What could he want that Hands, Hearts, Lives could pay,
 Or tributary Worlds beneath his Feet could lay.

The glory and respect won by the soldier-sailor brother of the King, however, has been lost by the champion of Roman Catholicism:

A long farewell to all that's Great and Brave:
 Not Cataracts more headstrong; as the Grave
 Inexorable; Sullen and Untun'd
 As Pride depos'd; scarce Lucifer dethron'd
 More Unforgiving; his enchanted Soul
 Had drank so deep of the bewitching Bowl.

The brilliant but dissipated Earl of Rochester, cursed with an ability to see and describe and suffer from the vices and corruptions of the Court life in which he fully participated, even attacked in verse Charles II himself. Of his many attacks the most widely known is the epigram, with a great many variants,

Here lies a Great and Mighty King
 Whose Promise none relies on;
 He never said a Foolish Thing,
 Nor ever did a Wise One.

A more serious criticism and one revealing a surprising concern with the state of the nation is Rochester's "The Restoration, or The History of Insipids". In this lampoon, Charles is ironically praised for his piety, his chastity, his astute foreign

policy, and for his mercy to the Regicides and to notorious villains such as Colonel Blood, who almost succeeded in stealing the Crown Jewels from the Tower of London. Rochester, however, is not content to rely only on his irony for criticism of the King. He has a long list of specific charges against Charles: bumbling conduct of the Dutch Wars, subservience to the French in a stupid foreign policy, maintenance of expensive mistresses at the public expense, the corruption of Parliament, and many other crimes against the country. In some respects Rochester's poem, for which he was banished from Court in 1675, seems to put him in the ranks of the Whig writers, as was his friend and fellow roisterer the Duke of Buckingham.

The son of that Lord Wilmot who had accompanied the youthful Charles in his hair-raising escape after the Battle of Worcester, Rochester was a great favourite with the King, who admired the brilliant wit and the undeniable poetic ability of the young man. Living at the very centre of court life and a companion of Buckingham, Sedley, and Charles himself, Rochester was able to see all too clearly the rot at the core of the nation. His friend Robert Wolseley, attempting to excuse the bawdry in Rochester's verse, wrote "Never was his pen drawn but on the side of good sense, and usually employed, like the arms of the ancient heroes, to stop the progress of arbitrary oppression." The three stanzas that follow reveal the indignation felt by the poet as he examined the decline of England under the restored monarchy:

Cringe, Scrape no more, ye City-Fops,
 Leave off your Feasting and fine Speeches;
 Beat up your Drums, shut up your Shops,
 The Courtiers then will kiss your Breeches.
 Armed, tell the Popish Duke that rules
 You're Free-born Subjects, not French Mules.

New Upstarts, Bastards, Pimps and Whores,
 That, Locust-like, devour the Land,
 But shutting up the Exchequer Doors
 When thither our Money was trepanned,
 Have rendered Charles his Restoration,
 But a small Blessing to the Nation.

Then Charles, beware of thy Brother York
 Who to thy Government gives Law;
 If once we fall to the old Sport,
 You must again both to Breda:
 Where, spite of all that would restore you,
 Grown wise by Wrongs, we shall abhor you.

It is little wonder that he had to retire from the King's presence for a time.

No reader of Restoration political verses, it should be pointed out, should expect to find a clear and unbiassed account of the political situation of the time. The propagandists of both sides were less concerned with accuracy than with effectively attacking or defending their own writers or politicians. Indeed, as they all knew, an exaggerated portrait of an enemy or an ally made a much more striking impact upon the public than a sober account of the strength and weakness of any political figure. Moreover, the scribblers looked to the startling event—a treason trial, an execution, an abortive rebellion, an assassination, or a murder—as the topic of their verses. One must look very hard to find any poet writing about the ordinary life and work of the ordinary public figure.

John Dryden, greatest of the Restoration men of letters in almost every literary genre common at the time—criticism, satire, tragedy, heroic poetry, occasional verse, philosophical poetry—was also the greatest political propagandist in verse. From 1678 to 1682, there was a great flood of political versification; of the deluge of such poems the only ones that have survived the test of time by surmounting the barrier of forgotten topical and personal allusions are *Absalom and Achitophel* and *The Medal*. Some of Rochester's political satires would no doubt have shared the honour with Dryden's two poems had they been less obscene; the poet's utter disregard for the verbal taboos accepted even in the frank Restoration period makes some of his clever poems offensive to many readers. Lord Halifax, the Trimmer, in his prose defence of his political independence in a period when independence from party affiliation brought down the wrath of both extremes, has given us in *The Character of a Trimmer* an able, witty and penetrating account of the political scene as he saw it; but in versified political propaganda Dryden stands alone.

After looking into the works of Dryden's allies and opponents in this field, the reader comes back to Dryden's political poems with renewed respect and admiration for the poet who could fashion poems of lasting and universal interest out of such ephemeral material. Shadwell, Settle, Pordage, and even such able writers as Otway and Buckingham when they took up this bow of Ulysses, reveal themselves as second-rate practitioners of the art of combining contemporary figures, contemporary events, and contemporary political opinions to create a work possessing any intrinsic and enduring value.