THE RICE INSTITUTE

JAMES THOMSON'S TRAGEDIES
AND THE NEW OPPOSITION TO WALPOLE

BY

TOMMY RAY BURKETT

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

Houston, Texas
February, 1960
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.   THE OPPOSITION TO WALPOLE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.  THOMSON AND THE OPPOSITION</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. AGAMEMNON AND REACTION</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.  EDWARD AND ELEONORA AND LATER PLAYS</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

James Thomson's plays, having little to recommend them as good drama, have long been neglected even by scholars who have so thoroughly explored the background of the poet's other work. Sufficient justification for a re-examination of the plays should be seen in the fact that they were accepted with some enthusiasm by Thomson's contemporaries, and in the additional fact that they constitute a rather large portion of the poet's total output. The importance of the dramas is not limited to literary consideration, however. A body of work as large as six tragedies must add a considerable amount to our understanding of any poet; and the peculiar nature of Thomson's tragedies makes them unusually revealing. They echo and amplify the poet's philosophical ideas as expressed in the long poems, and they have the further advantage of illustrating his political ideas and attachments.

Men who have undertaken comprehensive studies of Thomson's life and works have found it necessary to make a few perfunctory remarks on his tragedies; but, for the most part, the comments have tended to dismiss them as unimportant. G. C. Macaulay and William Bayne place the dramas in context and, examining them against the backdrop of contemporary

1
tragedy, excuse their faults as those imposed by the necessity of adhering to classical rules. Similarly, Leon Morel attributes the faults of Thomson's dramas to a too great submission to tradition, commenting, "Thomson poète tragique ne montre guere ces qualities de forte personalité, d'indépendence et d'originalité qui s'affirment dans les "Saisons" et même dans la conception d'une oeuvre telle que 'La Liberte.'"  

Morel's censure is justified by Thomson's dramatic technique. In form, more than any other aspect of his poetry, Thomson had been independent and original; the more surprising, then, was his attempt to stay within the pale of accepted form when writing tragedy. Grant suggests that a remarkable strain of romanticism runs through the plays, and Bayne attempts to show a development toward romanticism and Shakespearian discipleship in Thomson's later plays. But the fact is that while romanticism appears in the dialogue, Thomson adheres closely to neo-classical rules of dramatic technique; the most notable differences between Shakespeare's Coriolanus and Thomson's last play, based on the same story, are those that smooth out irregularities and fit the story into classical form. That Thomson's play suffers from the effort only tends to prove the theory that his observation of classical rules was stultifying.

The dramas are not without apologists, however, even among severe critics. Though Macaulay suggests that their
success "owed something to the zeal of his [Thomson's] friends, and much to the excellence of the acting," he continues to observe that "the style is respectable, in spite of occasional lapses, and the blank verse is fairly good." Bayne comments that "they reach, upon the whole, a fair standard of merit;" and Douglas Grant finds that "Thomson's dramatic blank verse is generally much more fluent and harmonious than that of his poems."

I have suggested that there is sufficient justification of a literary nature for re-examining Thomson's tragedies, but there is yet another aspect of his dramatic writing that gives it primary historical importance. By examining the party background of the plays and considering the political views expressed in the dialogue, we can come to a better understanding, not only of the poet, but of an unusual episode in the history of English literature.

It is with this political aspect of the plays that I have worked most carefully. Historians and critics have written about the opposition to Walpole; and Thomson's plays have been grouped with the body of writing that was and is still known as opposition literature. But a movement that was called the "New Opposition"--a movement that involved the leading literary and political figures of the day--has never been sufficiently well investigated. Although a letter from Pope to Lyttelton strongly hints of the existence of the New Opposition, and although the correspondence of
numerous participants bears out the theory, the movement seems to have been obscured by the larger, though less effective, group out of which it grew.

Most of the writers who were numbered among the New Opposition—Thomson, Mallet, Hill, Brooke, and others—were essentially public-relations men for the party and for the Prince of Wales. Pope, however, was more directly involved as the "front" for the savant, motivator, and director of the party—Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke's guiding hand can be seen in every important action of the New Opposition during the years of its inception and determined activity. Moreover, his ideas form the political background for the opposition dramas; and there is good reason to believe that he took an active part in directing the composition or revision of a number of the plays.

Although it has been necessary to discuss at length several members of the Opposition, I have attempted to limit the scope of this study by examining in detail only that part played by James Thomson. Relying heavily on the correspondence of the major participants, I have attempted to trace the development of the Opposition and the subsequent development of the New Opposition within that group, to clarify Thomson's position as a political writer, and to evaluate his tragedies as the political documents they were considered to be by many of his contemporaries. If I have neglected to discuss the plays critically, it is because they are, in
spite of any defense, basically poor drama. As poetry, certain of the plays have merit that must be admitted; but two such subjects as poetry and politics could hardly rest as comfortably together in a study of this sort as they did when mated by such a skilled match-maker as James Thomson.
CHAPTER I

THE OPPOSITION TO WALPOLE

When Sir Robert Walpole's political opponents began to gather forces for a march on his stronghold, the most promising avenue of approach was the highroad of exalted patriotism. Fortunately, there were issues spectacular enough to hold together a group of men actually very different in background and opinion, and to conceal the fact that much of the opposition was political and personal rather than patriotic. A brief review of the political situation will serve to amplify our understanding of Thomson's relationship to the men and ideas that formed the nucleus of the Opposition. Thomson's biographers find no personal tie between the poet and any member of the original leaders of the Opposition: Bolingbroke, Pulteney, Wyndham and Shippen.

In spite of the high-sounding issues that the Opposition leaders urged against Walpole, it appears that the enmity of most of these men was founded in personal animosity. Bolingbroke, around whom the Opposition rallied, had done service as a Tory and then as a Jacobite. His disgrace and exile had been softened in 1723 to the extent that he was allowed to return to England and reclaim his estate, though it was entailed by Parliament to his brother in the event that
Bolingbroke died without children. His hatred of Walpole may very well, as Hervey tells us, be based on the minister's failure to push Parliament to a more complete restoration of Bolingbroke's "dignity" and position. At any rate, Bolingbroke approached George I with an indictment of the minister shortly after this disappointment and was again disappointed when the King refused to credit his accusations of Walpole.

William Pulteney's grievance against Walpole was connected with personal ambition also. The two Whig leaders had been closely associated, and Pulteney had retired with Walpole in 1717. Hervey tells us that Pulteney's hatred of Walpole stems from the time the Duke of Newcastle was advanced over Pulteney's head to the position of Secretary of State upon the retirement of Lord Carteret in 1724. Walpole's preferment of Newcastle embittered Pulteney, who resigned his post as Cofferer of the Household and became a leader of the Opposition in the same year. From the united efforts of Pulteney and Bolingbroke in 1726 came the Craftsman, which was to be the voice of the Opposition for the next ten years.

There were yet two other important elements that joined with Bolingbroke and Pulteney. Sir William Wyndham, the leader of the Constitutional Tories, had been introduced to political life by Lord Bolingbroke and was closely allied to him at the time the Opposition was formed. Bolingbroke's
correspondence with Wyndham reflects his affection and regard for the younger man right up to the time of the latter's death in 1740. The Constitutional Tories, moreover, were politically opposed to the ministry of Walpole, as Hassal says, "on almost every subject save that of the Succession." It was to be expected, then, that this group should fall into place with the Opposition, as did the remnants of the Jacobite party under Shippen.

Once the party lines were formed, the issues were at hand. In April, 1726, the Craftsman made its first appearance, and "corruption" was the rallying cry. Walpole had been accused and found guilty of corruption as early as 1714. The accusation, therefore, was not new in 1726; nor was it to be employed for a short duration, as it was still a major issue at the time of his fall in 1742. An investigation of the alleged corrupt practices of Walpole produced no significant results when finally conducted, probably because of the difficulty in finding willing witnesses.

There seems to have been no determined attempt to deny the corruption of members of parliament, however; and Walpole is certainly guilty of having purchased for himself the favor of George II and Queen Caroline by successful manipulation of the civil list at the time of the King's succession. W. E. Lecky warns against an unjust indictment of the minister on this count, since bribery had become an accepted practice, used widely during the reign of Charles II and consistently
thereafter. Other evidences of Walpole's extensive efforts to corrupt members of parliament in order to increase his own power can be seen in the large sums of secret service money expended during his tenure and, Rose Mary Davis suggests, in the correspondence of the Duke of Newcastle, which reveals "the extent to which the activity of a prime minister was absorbed by the trafficking in places, great and small, and in pensions."\(^\text{10}\)

One of the major issues of the Opposition in the realm of domestic policy, the "corruption" theme had ethical ramifications that the poets of the Opposition were able to relate to the writings of popular philosophers such as Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, thereby strengthening the effect of the accusations. Corruption begot a love of luxury, a love of luxury begot a dependence on the spoils of corruption, and dependence on the spoils of corruption deprived the free man of his liberty.

Two other issues were brought to the fore by the Opposition: Walpole's powerful position as prime or first minister\(^\text{11}\) and his unshakeable influence on the King. The first of these objections grew from the furor created by Walpole's suggested Excise Bill, defeated in 1733. Moving to cement his relationship with the great Whig landowners, Walpole had pushed through Parliament a reduction in the land tax. In order to make up for the decrease in revenue that resulted from lowered taxes, the minister proposed an
excise tax that would actually have served more than one purpose. As the tax would have been collected by the retail trader, the income would not have been threatened by the hazards that usually caused duties to shrink: smuggling and dishonest customs collectors. On the other hand, such a measure would effectively "make London a free port and by consequence the market of the world," according to Walpole. The Opposition, taking advantage of a popular distrust of excise, spared no effort to arouse the wrath of the populace against Walpole's new measure. The excise was falsely represented as a general tax on all commodities, and the ministry was unable to counteract the propaganda of the Opposition leaders. When the bill was finally introduced, it called for taxes on wine and tobacco only; but the Opposition, led by Pulteney in the House of Commons and Lord Chesterfield in the House of Lords, was able to argue it down completely and thus score an important popular victory.

Walpole, however, did not come out of the battle without scoring his own victory. In a shrewd political move he announced to the King his intention of resigning, and George II absolutely refused to accept the resignation. We learn from Lord Hervey the details of an intrigue that contributed to the defeat of the Excise Bill and resulted in the dismissal of two members of the royal household. Scarborough, Clinton and Chesterfield were dismissed on the basis of
their having opposed the Excise; and the striking implication of their dismissal is that insubordination in the ministry and the king's household was no longer to be tolerated. Hervey speaks of the "new maxims" of Walpole's government that grew out of the Excise Bill situation, and the maxims seem to come to one important point: the servants of the king, formerly responsible to the king and for general compliance with the principles of the party in power, were now to be absolutely responsible to the head of the ministry, who was in turn to be responsible to the king. Walpole's power had been feared and attacked before, but it was now to become more than ever a subject for discussion in Opposition propaganda. The Gentleman's Magazine in 1738 quoted Old Common Sense on the subject:

The Office of Prime Minister, as such, however executed seems not to agree with the Genius of the British Nation; the natural Modesty and Humility of an Englishman, won't suffer him to think himself, or any one else, capable of acting in so difficult a Situation, without some joined in the same Commission with him.

Evidently, Walpole was not possessed of a sufficient quantity of "natural Modesty." Leadham notes that "the protest of the lords of February 12, 1741, that Walpole had 'for many years acted as a sole or even a first minister' dates back to the enforcement of these 'new Maxims.'"

The other major issue on the domestic scene was, as has been suggested, Walpole's powerful influence over George II. Instances of this influence have been noted above, but
it may be judicious to discuss briefly the background of the situation, as there is reason to believe that Thomson made use of it in at least one of his plays.19 When George I died in 1727, Walpole, with utmost speed, hurried to be the first to address the Prince of Wales as His Majesty George II.20 The new King, who had been in opposition to his father, was not favorably disposed toward Walpole. He refused to discuss any plans with Walpole, but told him curtly to take his orders from Sir Spencer Compton. Compton was unequal to the task of heading a ministry, as soon became evident; and Walpole was received by the new King within a few days as the head of the government. Caroline's part in the reinstatement of Walpole was prophetic of the role she was to play in later years. Through subtle suggestion, she introduced the idea that Walpole was a more capable minister than Compton, and Walpole's own arrangements regarding the civil list and the settlement of the Queen's income cemented the relations between the King and Queen and their minister. It was through the Queen that Walpole was able to control George II from that time up to the point of her death in November of 1737. Walpole at one time remarked to Lord Hervey, "When I give her her lesson, she can make him propose the very thing as his own opinion which a week before he had rejected as mine."21

Walpole's interest with the Queen gave him additional advantages when the King was absent from the country, for
Caroline enjoyed sole regency at these times. In 1729, 1732, 1735, and 1736-37, George II made extended visits to Hanover, a fact that the Opposition was able to use to advantage. Since the succession of George I, British citizens had been uneasily regarding the possibility that British interests might be subordinated to those of Hanover. That Caroline was the sole regent during these periods was a source of chagrin to the Prince of Wales, whose relations with his father have an important place in the background of Thomson's plays. Frederick plays a stellar role in the drama of the Opposition, also; and his part will be discussed in detail below.

The Opposition's successful campaign against the Excise Bill bore fruit in the general elections of 1734 when Walpole's majority was substantially reduced. The Malcontent Whigs took this opportunity to withdraw from their association with Bolingbroke, the Tories, and the Jacobites. The Whigs felt, no doubt, that an opportunity of overthrowing Walpole or coming to terms with him was near at hand. Walpole's popularity increased sharply, however, when his much-maligned peace policy kept England out of a continental war for the succession of the Polish throne. Both the King and the Queen were convinced that England should enter the war; but Walpole dissuaded them, remarking to Caroline in 1734, "Madam, there are fifty thousand men slain this year in Europe and not one Englishman." When the preliminaries
for peace were signed at Vienna in October of 1735, Walpole
found himself at the height of his power in England.

He was not so fortunate in his attempts to keep England
out of war with Spain; the Opposition scored decisively in
the skirmish with Walpole over the question of the Spanish
war, and the result was utter defeat for the minister.
Striving to maintain peace, Walpole had been severely
criticized for his failure to deal more harshly with Spain
on the subject of her interference with British trade. His
peace policy was attacked as being cowardly and as resulting
in a threat to British liberty, which was founded on her
maritime strength and her commerce.

When parliament opened in January, 1738, the Opposition
found the grievances against Spain to be the most useful
weapon against the ministry. Inquiries into the injustices
perpetrated by the Spaniards revealed the case of Jenkins's
ear, which lent its title to the war that followed. Jenkins,
master of a merchant vessel, had had his ear cut off by a
Spanish captain when his vessel had been boarded by a
 guarda-costa in April, 1731. The story inflamed the country,
and popular resentment against the Spaniards reached a peak
during that year. In March, 1738, the Gentleman's Magazine
carried a list of 52 British Merchant ships that had been
taken or plundered since May, 1728, with a note to the effect
that "whether the ship was taken or plundered, the Master
and crew were used with the utmost Barbarity." In May the
House of Lords waited on the King to inform him that he should have their support in case his "powerful Instances for procuring Restitution and Reparation to your injured Subjects, and for the future security of their Trade and Navigation" should not be effective. Speaker of Commons Onslow assured the King in June that every man in the nation would be willing to go to war unless Spain could otherwise be brought to terms.

In the closing months of 1738 an agreement was worked out with the Spanish government. The terms of the agreement were attacked by the Opposition as being entirely unsatisfactory, though they had been approved by the cabinet council in January. Among other complaints, they used to good advantage the fact that no redress for the outrage of Jenkins' ear had been demanded, nor had the right of search been challenged. Although the Opposition was able to represent the terms of the agreement as prejudicial to the nation, the ministry was successful in its effort to secure parliamentary approval of the convention. The disagreement over the terms of the convention marks William Pitt's first important appearance on the political scene; he spoke "well, but very abusively" in the House of Commons on the Spanish Convention, and to his speech is attributed the reduction of Walpole's majority to twenty-eight.

The slender majority he was able to command recommended retirement to Walpole, but George II refused to accept his
resignation. In March, 1739, the situation was eased by what has come to be regarded as a mistake of the Opposition: Pulteney and Wyndham chose the moment to express dramatically their disapproval of the Spanish Convention and seceded with their parties from the House of Commons. The Opposition was not uniformly agreed on this measure, and some members refused to secede; the only notable result of the secession was the fact that Walpole was by it enabled to push his measures through without significant difficulty. War with Spain, however, was by this time inevitable; and the demands of both England and Spain were such as to preclude any possibility of peaceful settlement when the plenipotentiaries arrived in London to ratify the convention in May. An actual declaration was not made until October; but for all practical purposes, the war was a settled fact from the beginning of the summer.

From this point, the story of the great peace minister is anticlimactic. He remained at the head of the government until February, 1742, losing ground on each successive crisis; but since Thomson's last significant attack on the minister is found in Edward and Eleonora, which was published in 1739, it is not necessary to discuss at length the events following that year.

The other political personage who figures prominently in Thomson's plays is the Prince of Wales, and some knowledge of his association with the Opposition is requisite
to an understanding of the political significance of the plays. Frederick followed in his father's footsteps. George II, while Prince of Wales, had stubbornly opposed his father; and the difficulties that his own son imposed upon him were, in some measure, a repayment for his own obstinacy. The relationship between Frederick and his family is set forth by Lord Hervey:

... He had a father that abhorred him, a mother that despised him, sisters that betrayed him, a brother set up against him, and a set of servants that neglected him, and were neither of use, nor capable of being of use to him, nor desirous of being so.28

Frederick arrived in England in 1728 and was created Prince of Wales in 1729. M. H. Cable finds evidence in the correspondence of the Earl of Carlisle that Frederick was attached to the Opposition as early as that year.29 His differences with his father appear to have been based on personal complaints rather than on any patriotic objection to the measures of the ministry in power. One of the earliest disagreements was on the subject of the Prince's marriage to a Prussian princess. The alliance fell through because of unexplained delay by George II to work out an agreement; and Frederick, who was anxious for the match, resented his father's failure to complete the arrangements.

The question of an allowance for the Prince was another source of disagreement. Frederick was not allowed to keep his own servants when he was made Prince of Wales, and though the Queen assured Lord Hervey that the Prince "cost the King
£50,000 a year," the King was not willing that that sum should be granted the Prince for his independent use. Frederick and his associates sued in vain for a more advantageous settlement. Upon his marriage to Princess Augusta of Saxe-Goetha in 1736, Frederick's allowance was increased to £50,000, just half the amount that George II had been allowed when he had been Prince of Wales. The Prince was informed that apartments for him and the princess would always be provided at the place of the Queen's residence; but the Prince rightly, according to Lord Hervey, interpreted this to mean that he was to be discouraged from keeping a separate court. When the King departed for Hanover in May, 1736, the Prince took this opportunity to stand up against the Queen. Informing her that the Princess was ill, and using the illness as an excuse to disobey the King's orders to follow his mother to Richmond, he remained in London. His actions during the absence of his father were calculated to alienate him even further from his family. Especially impertinent was his "indecent behavior" during the period when the nation was fearful for the safety of the King, who was returning from Hanover in December, 1736, during a violent storm at sea.

The matter of the allowance reached a head early in 1737 when the Prince, probably urged on by Bolingbroke, allowed the Opposition to introduce a question of a settlement in the House of Commons. With the support of
Opposition leaders Pulteney and Wyndham the Prince had managed to secure a majority when Walpole persuaded the King to make an offer of settlement. The offer was refused by the Prince, but it succeeded in upsetting his majority and he was forced to accept a settlement of £50,000 a year with a jointure of the same amount payable to the Princess in the event of the Prince's death.

Ill feeling between the King and the Prince came to a climax in 1737. When Frederick belatedly announced to the Queen in July that the Princess was pregnant, the King and Queen determined that her confinement should take place at Hampton Court, and provided for it there. On the night of July 31 the Princess experienced labor pains; and the Prince, purposely flaunting the King's desires, hurried her away to St. James's in London, where, shortly after their arrival, the Princess was delivered of a daughter. Frederick's behavior on this occasion enraged the King, who looked upon the incident as a "deliberate Indignity, offered to himself, and to the Queen. . . ."32 Frederick's letters to his father on the subject of the Princess's confinement are extraordinarily conciliatory in view of their past differences. He takes great pains to excuse his actions as having been necessitated by the lack of a midwife at Hampton Court; and his attempt to plead "tenderness for the Princess" as a motive for his behavior is the more ridiculous in light of the fact that the trip to London was the occasion not
only of discomfiture but of actual danger to the Princess.

Douglas Grant has seen in the situation an intention of the Prince to declare publicly his independence of the King and to persuade the people through his letters and subsequent behavior that he had been wronged by his parents. The role of the Opposition leaders in this affair has not been sufficiently emphasized, especially as the incident signals the beginning of a concerted attack against the ministry—an attack that directly involves the poets of the Opposition, turning their patriotic sentiments to specific political purpose for the first time. The letter from George II to his son indicates that the King was not ignorant of the political implications of the event. "And until you withdraw your Regard and Confidence from those by whose Instigation and Advice you are directed and encouraged in your unwarrantable Behavior to me and to the Queen, and until you return to your Duty, you shall not reside in my Palace..." he writes. That the move was the result of a conspiracy of the Opposition leaders, inspired primarily by the direction of Bolingbroke, can be seen from the correspondence between Bolingbroke and Wyndham. Of the introduction of the Prince's financial affairs into the House of Commons, Bolingbroke wrote to Wyndham on June 9, 1737:

You say, my friend, that the affair of the Prince alarmed the minister purely because of the state of the King's health in that point of time. I believe so; but I believe likewise, that this
affair would have alarmed, and have done more than alarm him, in whatever state the king's health had been, if it had been the first measure of a scheme of conduct wisely formed, and concerted among all those that stand in opposition to the present administration.\footnote{35}

Bolingbroke goes on to suggest that Frederick's dutiful behavior toward his parents after settlement of the issue was prudent and dignified, but that "it will keep him where he is, you where you are, and Walpole where he is." The events of July and August and the subsequent behavior of the Prince can clearly be seen to have been suggested by the following passage of the same letter:

I am apt to believe that he [Walpole] would think the circumstance much more unpleasant, and have more disquietude about future events, if the prince was at this time retired to Southampton house: for instance, if he lived there, with all the economy of a private nobleman, and was surrounded with friends that might adorn the court of a prince; if his language and his conduct expressed the utmost personal duty to his parents, and yet the freedom of a British subject.

Wyndham was not slow to follow the suggestions of his advisor, and the affair of July 31 was recognized by Walpole as having been engineered by the Opposition. He wrote to the Earl of Waldegrave in August concerning the "confusion that our royall family is putt into here by the birth of a young princesse," that "it is most plain they were determin'd to bring matters to a rupture."\footnote{36}

Bolingbroke's letter of October 13, 1737, to Wyndham is rather conclusive proof of the conspiracy. He writes:

... This shall be forwarded with more precaution still; for I shall not forbear saying, in answer to
yours of the 13th of last month, things very unfit for the inspection of clerks of the post-office. . . . I have therefore waited to see what the immediate occasion or pretence of this rupture would be; for I always believed the counsellors of his royal highness would think it of great importance to render this not only plausible, but popular.

I thought that such an occasion or pretence might have been founded on the proceedings of last winter; but I saw things at a distance, and they who saw them nearer, judged otherwise. . . . But I am at a loss to find the plausibility or the popularity of the present occasion of rupture. . . . It is purely domestic; and there is nothing, as far as I can discern, to interest the publick in the cause of his royal highness. But notwithstanding this, extreme severity on the other side, and the prejudices of mankind against those who exercise this severity, may have, perhaps, that effect.

Wyndham, meanwhile, had not been slow to carry out the remainder of the plan suggested by Bolingbroke in June. Under his leadership at the time were the "boy patriots" consisting chiefly of William Pitt, George Lyttelton, and Richard and George Grenville. Lyttelton's influence over the Prince had been useful to the Opposition as early as 1734, when he persuaded Frederick to drop Dodington. Hervey speaks of Lyttelton as having been a favorite at that time, but it was not until August, 1737, that he was appointed secretary to the Prince. At Lyttelton's suggestion, Thomson and Mallet were engaged by Frederick during the same month—Mallet as undersecretary to the Prince for a salary of £200, Thomson as a pensioner—and in September William Pitt became the Prince's groom of the bedchamber.
Lyttelton's influence with the Prince was of great importance to the Opposition leaders, and Bolingbroke's letters indicate his realization of the use to which that influence could be put. In February, 1738, he writes of Walpole's animosity toward the Prince:

... But I am surprized he should so directly, and so personally, push things to extremity against one who may be his master some time or other. Since he has done so, he opens a scene that may be tragical to him, if it is well acted; and surely it may be well acted, when the principal actor is so well disposed. ... A multitude of prompters will confound the actor, and destroy all consistency of behavior and conduct; but is it impossible then to prompt by concert, and, since his confidence is well placed, to prevail on him to listen to no other prompting?

When, upon being expelled from St. James's by his father, Frederick retired to Kew during the month of September, his situation was almost exactly as Bolingbroke had suggested it should be in the letter of June 9. His voting against the government in the House of Lords on the question of the Spanish Convention in 1738 was hardly necessary as an indication that he was completely dominated by the Opposition. Moreover, the move was calculated to increase his popularity with the people, who were solidly against the terms of the convention.

The importance of the Prince, in the schemes of the Opposition, was primarily that of a figurehead and of a source of unity. Bolingbroke realized that Walpole could be overcome only by a united effort of all his opponents. He had been able to draw his forces together in the early
stages of the Opposition, but "the different characters and views of the men who must concur" had resulted in a split. In his letter of February 3, 1738, he writes to Wyndham of the earlier lack of concerted effort:

... I lamented the want of that which you now have, a centre of union, a superior authority among yourselves under whose influence men of different characters and different views will be brought to draw better together.41

He felt it to be of prime necessity, however, that the character of the Prince should be such as to draw to him not only the different factions of the Opposition, but the people as well.42 For this reason, Lyttelton was to be employed to urge the Prince to put his best foot forward:

Such a concert, conducting his conduct with wisdom, industry, firmness, and perseverance, would make his cause as powerful as you wish it, and still more popular, as you think it cannot fail of being.43

The use to which writers of Thomson's and Mallet's stature might be put in Bolingbroke's scheme is obvious. Significant, in the same manner, is the following item reprinted by Gentleman's Magazine from The Reveur, entitled "Character of a GOOD PRINCE:"

... He places his Confidence in the People, and not in an overgrown Minister, with his Chain of Hirelings, who may have different Interests from the People. He neither buys elections nor votes. ... He is as liberal of his own Privy Purse, as he is frugal of the publick Money; he expends none of it in Bribes, in secret Services, in useless Pensions, in vain Pomp and Grandeur; ... he is nor more beloved a [sic] home, than feared abroad, while he lives ... 44

That there might be no mistaken application, the writer
notes at the end of the article that "this very annual day gave birth unto the great Original." The article appeared on January 20, 1738, the anniversary of Frederick's birth.

Bolingbroke's influence on the Opposition dramas is an important one, I believe. Cable attempts to show that his "Idea of a Patriot King" was the inspiration for the political plays that appeared in 1738-39, and suggests that Bolingbroke's treatise was probably circulated in manuscript privately long before its publication in 1749.45 Walter Sichel, Bolingbroke's biographer, asserts that Alexander Pope possessed a copy of the manuscript as early as 1738, by which time Pope was closely associated with the Opposition poets.46 He was, in fact, very particularly involved in the negotiations for the presentation of the "Patriot King" dramas at the time of their composition; Professor McKillop comments:

Reports about the progress of these plays, and the question which should be first produced by Fleetwood at Drury Lane, led to a frequent interchange of letters, with Pope as the middleman.47

That "The Patriot King" was available to Thomson before 1738 cannot be positively stated; but we do know that Bolingbroke's political ideology was publicized in The Craftsman, the official document of the Opposition, and that Thomson was aware of the periodical's political significance as early as 1737.48 Moreover, it can be seen that Bolingbroke was the guiding light of the Opposition even before his return to England in July, 1738; and it is to
the development of Thomson's association with the Opposition that the next chapter will be devoted.
Although Thomson's association with the Opposition and his search for a patron develop along parallel lines, it would be doing the poet an injustice to suggest that he was drawn to one side of the political controversy for pecuniary considerations alone. There is evidence, as we shall see below, that his need for financial assistance influenced some of his actions; but his basic political beliefs as expressed by his writings show no inconsistency of attitude. Throughout the major poems and the dramas, he adheres to one line of thought—a line of thought that runs through his most strongly political plays and attracts more attention there than elsewhere only because it becomes personal and particular rather than impersonal and general. There is no indication that he ever compromised his views to please a patron, but we do know that he was galled by the necessity of seeking patronage at all. The dedications of his early works were filled with sentiments that must have disgusted him, since they were dictated by the necessity of flattering possible benefactors. In the poems, however, one can detect a considerable amount of high-level
patriotism that has no flavor of party politics. The issues were popular saws, usually such ideas as (like those expressed by Addison in *Cato*) could be applauded by both parties—patriotism, liberty, and the tirade against luxury.

*Winter*, which as originally written has seldom been discussed as a political poem, was dedicated to Sir Spencer Compton, Speaker of the House of Commons, when it was published in April, 1726. Compton was evidently chosen at Mallet's suggestion, and as far as I have been able to determine, no political motive or consideration dictated the choice. Compton's involvement with the major figures of the political controversy came later. He was favored by the Prince of Wales, the future George II, over Sir Robert Walpole; and when George I died in June, 1727, it appeared that Compton would be asked to head the ministry. Walpole quickly ingratiated himself with the new King, however, and Compton's glory was short lived. Douglas Grant suggests that Thomson's choice was directed by Compton's affluence and his importance, and he makes no mention of Compton's relationship to Walpole.¹

Because the dedication to Compton brought no immediate reward, it occasioned some interesting correspondence among Thomson and his new friends Mallet and Hill, who agreed to pen some verses on the subject of patronage to introduce the second edition of Thomson's poem. After the verses had been written, but before they had been printed, Compton belatedly
rewarded Thomson's compliments with twenty guineas. The poet was far from pleased, for he was extremely anxious to have his poem published with the verses connecting him with such well-known personages as Mallet and Hill. Rather than omit the lines altogether, he asked his friends to alter the verses in such a manner as to clear Sir Spencer of the satire; Hill obliged with a new set of verses, but Mallet's were printed as originally written, and Thomson explained to Hill that he found an excuse for doing so in the latter's own lines:

Heedless of Fortune, then look down on State,
Balanc'd, within, by Reason's conscious Weight:
Divinely proud of independent Will,
Prince of your Passions, live their Sov'reign still.2

Thomson's unfavorable opinion of the "Court-haunting, Wink-observing Bard" is reflected in his praise of Hill's disdainful lines about poets who "Learn your Pen's Duty from your Patron's Eye." Another indication of Thomson's dislike of the patronage system can be seen in a letter to Mallet written in 1729. He wrote, somewhat bitterly, complaining of the difficulties of the writer who attempts to get his livelihood by selling subscriptions:

I have heard of an Agreement among some of our modern Goths (who by the Bye are even unworthy of that Name) by which they bind Themselves not to encourage any Subscription what ever under a certain Penalty. Methinks all tolerable Authors in this Age, all who can give Honour and Entertainment to it, should, in Opposition to this and the general Discouragement they labour under, enter into an Association not to write at all; or, if they do write for their own Pleasure and that of their particular Friends, yet never to publish.3
In spite of his sentiments to the contrary, Thomson was avidly searching for a patron from the time he arrived in London until he was settled comfortably under the patronage of Lord Talbot in 1733. *Summer* was published in February, 1727, with a dedication to George Bubb Dodington, who had expressly requested the dedication. Since Thomson did not solicit Dodington's favor, no political intent can be attributed to the poet in choosing him as a dedicatee. The choice had political ramifications, however; for Dodington was ambitiously seeking governmental position and was far from being convinced that Walpole's favor could not be won by literary flattery. He had praised the minister in doggerel verse of his own composition, and there is reason to believe that he influenced Thomson to dedicate *A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton* to the minister in May, 1727. The dedication praised Walpole as

*... her most illustrious Patriot... by the wise Choice of the best of Kings... engag'd in the highest and most active Scenes of Life, balancing the Power of Europe, watching over our common Welfare, informing the whole Body of Society and Commerce and even like Heaven dispensing Happiness to the Discontented and Ungrateful...*"

That in 1727 Thomson should eulogize the minister in such terms and should attack his policies so bitterly in 1729 has been a source of confusion to scholars, who have been able only to conjecture as to the reason. Actually, the dedication to Walpole does not conflict seriously with Thomson's political views; for there is no reason to suppose that he
had at this time formed any strong opinions on Walpole's responsibility for the issues upon which he was to be attacked by the Opposition. We must remember that Thomson had been in England only since March, 1725, and that his most important political connection was Dodington, who was courting Walpole's favor at the time Newton was published. Under these circumstances it would be much more remarkable for the poet to attack the minister than thus to praise him.

Thomson's first real move toward an opposition policy can be noted in Britannia, which, according to Samuel Johnson, "established him as an adherent of the opposition." The sentiments expressed in Britannia and the facts of its publication deserve some consideration, since they are indicative of the poet's attitude at the time it was written. Leon Morel, accepting on reasonably good evidence 1727 as the date of composition of Britannia, appears to believe that the poet was actually seeking the patronage of the minister in dedicating to him the Newton poem and that the publication of Britannia was delayed while the poet waited to learn the outcome of the previous dedication. In 1942 J. E. Wells presented a well-documented thesis that most of Britannia was not written until shortly before it was published in 1729, a thesis which is certainly more consistent with Thomson's line of thought than the idea proposed by Morel.
If the anti-peace portions of *Britannia* were written December, 1728-January, 1729—and I believe Wells' evidence to be the best yet presented—then the events of the period between the publication of *Newton* and the date of composition of *Britannia* can be used to explain Thomson's change in attitude. Upon the death of George I in June, 1727, and the subsequent upheaval in government, George Bubb Dodington paid his court to Sir Spencer Compton, favorite of the new King. Walpole was aware of Dodington's visit to Sir Spencer, and the visit occasioned a bitterness against Dodington that Walpole maintained to the end of his life. It can be assumed that Dodington would no longer believe it possible to woo the minister with flattery and that any poet under his patronage would be free to follow his own inclinations in criticizing Walpole.

It must be noted, however, that the tone of *Britannia* is not openly critical of the minister himself. Examining the poem in the light of later developments, scholars have sometimes tended to exaggerate Thomson's statements in *Britannia*. As Professor McKillop has noted, the poet keeps his criticism in this poem "on a patriotic and national level." The most controversial aspect of the poem is the section indicting the government's peace policy; and this indictment, following as it does an elaborate passage praising peace, may have been written more in the spirit of admonition or even encouragement than in a spirit of
criticism. Wells suggests, that the passage praising peace and "the man divine" who gives it to us may have been written as early as 1727, but even if the following passage is interpreted as a strong statement against the administration, there is no personal attack upon the minister himself.

One further point concerning Britannia is important to Thomson's association with the Opposition. Scholars have made much of the lines praising Frederick, interpreting these lines as they did others, I believe, with reference to later events. Thomson's compliment to Frederick here is little, if anything, more than a passing recognition of an important national event; it can hardly be used as evidence that the poet had even begun to think of an alliance with the Opposition. Significant, too, is the fact that Frederick's parents are complimented in the same passage. The deletion in 1730 of the lines complimenting the parents is somewhat stronger evidence of Thomson's having moved in the direction of the patriots' party; but the indication need not be too much emphasized, since the poet dedicated Sophonisba to the Queen in the same year.

Thomson's reasons for expanding his interests to the field of dramatic writing are not known, but A. S. Collins suggests that financial considerations may have been the strongest attraction that the stage held for the poet:

The drama certainly continued to be the most profitable field for an author. Its greater profits, the copyright for publication being well paid in addition to the author's third nights,
had accounted for many an earlier author writing for the stage without particular dramatic talent, like Thomson, and even Johnson.\textsuperscript{13}

Henry A. Beers believes that Thomson wrote for the stage "in obedience to the expectation that every man of letters should try his hand at play-writing."\textsuperscript{14} I am disposed to agree with Collins rather than Beers; for Thomson disliked the necessity of depending on patronage, as we have seen, and would have been anxious to put himself on an independent footing.

\textit{Sophonisba} stands out as a strong indication of Thomson's political neutrality in 1730. The circumstances of its performance and publication, as well as the sentiments expressed in the dialogue, all tend to emphasize his lack of obligation to either side of the political controversy. The play was attended by the Prince of Wales and the Princesses Carolina and Amelia, and the Prince commanded and attended a performance for the author's benefit on the sixth night.\textsuperscript{15} Yet this mark of particular favor granted by her detested son did not dissuade the Queen from accepting the dedication of the play when it was published.

William Bayne has seen political significance in \textit{Sophonisba}, in which, he remarks, "as in most of his other dramas, Thomson adopts a political subject as the motive agency in his story."\textsuperscript{16} It may be urged that the play has political intent in suggesting that the Queen duplicate \textit{Sophonisba}'s heroism by asserting herself in favor of war
against Spain. The possibility has in its favor the dedication to Caroline, praising the queen who "commands the hearts of a People, more powerful at sea than Carthage... more flourishing in commerce than those first Merchants... more secure against conquest... and, under a Monarchy, more free than a Commonwealth itself."

A more significant consideration in deciding Thomson's intention in Sophonisba, however, is his letter to Aaron Hill, written in April, 1726. At a time when Walpole's opponents were just beginning to form an organized party, Thomson expressed to Hill the sentiments that he dramatically portrayed in the tragedy of Sophonisba some three years later:

The Excellent ones of the Earth, in the Exercise of Social Love, feel it as much to be an original Impulse, as the low World that blind Affection, they bear themselves; nor are they, in the least, conscious of that forc'd, cold Reasoning, by which it is deduc'd from so mean an Original.

How many deathless Heroes, Patriots, and Martyrs, have been so gloriously concern'd for the Good of Mankind, and so strongly actuated by Social Love, as frequently to act in direct Contradiction to that of Self?!

In this passage and others in the same letter can be seen the germ of the major ideas expressed by Thomson in all of his dramas. That the story of Sophonisba was chosen for its ease of adaptation to these sentiments seems much more likely to be true than that it was chosen for political reasons. The two possibilities are not mutually exclusive, of course; but if Sophonisba was intended to have special meaning for Queen Caroline, the meaning smacked not of
criticism, or the poet would never have presumed to ask her to accept the dedication. Here, as earlier in *Britannia*, the application is national and patriotic, not political. The unusual "bi-partisan" praise of *Sophonisba* recalls the success of an earlier political play, Addison's *Cato*, which was applauded by both political parties. Since both sides were able to see criticism of their opponents in *Cato*, it may be that *Sophonisba* was interpreted with the same ambiguity.

During the years 1730 and 1731 Thomson gives us evidence of his patriotic spirit, most notably in his letters written to Dodington from the continent. In October, 1730, he answers Dodington's suggestion that he write an epic based on the story of Timoleon with the objection that "an Author (I think) owes the Scene of an Epic Action to his own country." His letter of December 27 remarks of France that "one misses that solid magnificence of trade and sincere plenty which not only appears to be, but is, substantially, in a kingdom where industry and liberty mutually support and inspirit each other." And he continues to insist, "I shall return no worse Englishman than I came away." In November of the following year he speaks of his return to "England, for whom my veneration and love, I will be vain enough to say, increase every day even to devotion and fondness." Earlier in the same letter he had spoken of the transportation of the arts into England, remarking, "Did they but once take root there, how they might flourish
in such a generous and wealthy country." These passages are quoted as evidence of Thomson's sincere devotion to the principles of patriotism expressed in his poetry and his dramas—a devotion that needed not the prompting of patronage to become verbal. Although the letters are addressed to Dodington, who was himself becoming involved with the Opposition and more particularly with Frederick, they are patriotic rather than political.

Certain additions to the 1730 edition of *Winter* provide further material for consideration in evaluating Thomson's political position in that year. Most notable are the lines addressed to the jail committee, a group of "patriots" dedicated to the reformation of the deplorable conditions in English prisons. The lines reflect a spirit of patriotism and benevolent concern for human suffering. In effect, however, they have more significance than they appear to have. Professor McKillop has shown that the jail committee was backed by the Opposition and that Bolingbroke's *Craftsman* used the work of the committee in its diatribes against Walpole. Although Thomson's lines are not necessarily political, the possibility exists; and the passage serves at least to indicate his sympathy with one of the campaigns of the Opposition as early as 1730.

After Frederick's patronage of *Sophonisba* the first indication of his showing any interest in Thomson is seen in a letter from the poet to Lady Hertford written in Paris.
in October, 1732. "Give me leave to return you my most humble acknowledgements for the honour you did me in presenting my Book to the Prince of Wales," he writes. "I wish it had been something more worthy of You to present, and of him to read." He continues to praise the Prince in terms that are later put into the mouth of Eleonora in Edward and Eleonora:

The approbation he was pleased to give a first Imperfect Essay does not so much flatter my Vanity, as my hope, of seeing the fine arts flourish under a Prince of his so noble equal humane and generous dispositions; who knows how to unite the sovereignty of the prince with the liberty of the people, and to found his happiness and Glory on the public Good. Oh happy as a God he, who has it both in his hand and in his heart to make a people happy!

In view of Dodington's past association with the poet, it is interesting, whether or not significant, to note that these words were written in October and that since the previous March the Prince had been using Dodington as a principal agent. Professor McKillop suggests a further indication that the fortunes of Thomson and Dodington were closely allied during this period. Thomson's application for the patronage of the Prince seemed slated for success when Dodington was in favor during the years 1732-34; and when the courtier fell from grace in 1734, the poet's thriving suit to the Prince appeared to lag. But we are here concerned with Thomson's attitude rather than with that of the Prince; and the situation of the poet in 1733-34 was such that might render his developing an interest with
the Prince of less importance to him.

Thomson had embarked on the grand tour in 1730 as tutor to the son of Lord Talbot. The employment continued until the death of the son and was shortly extended by Talbot’s appointing Thomson to be Secretary of the Briefs in Chancery. Talbot was a lieutenant of Walpole’s, had voted with Walpole on the question of the Excise Bill, and had been appointed Lord Chancellor in November, 1733. Thomson’s appointment came shortly after Talbot’s, and while the Talbot family’s alliance with Walpole lasted, Thomson’s pen contributed nothing that might be construed as criticism of that minister. In 1734, however, Lord Talbot was affronted by Walpole’s failure to procure the bishopric of Gloucester for his friend Rundle; William Talbot, son of the Lord Chancellor, declared against Walpole in 1734 and made the break complete in 1735 by voting against the government. Thomson’s situation, at this juncture, is essentially the same as it had been in 1729 when he published Britannia. He is no longer pledged to silence by the inclinations of his patron; therefore, he is free to begin publishing, in 1735, his long poem Liberty.

The theory is superimposed on the facts, of course, since there is no indication that the publication of Liberty was delayed for any reason, much less that the reason may have been Talbot’s association with Walpole. And
although it is unlikely that Thomson would have published a criticism of Walpole while Talbot was technically supporting the minister, the poet's silence is probably occasioned by the fact that he was composing the work that was to appear in 1735. In view of the previous situation, however, and for the sake of consistency in examining Thomson's motives, it is worthwhile to note these facts without placing undue importance upon them. The poem itself is scarcely more abusive than Britannia or Sophonisba. Here, as in Britannia, luxury and corruption are attacked; but for the first time Thomson suggests a minister's intentional misdeeds are responsible for the corruption:

Or should the latter [Independence], to the public scene
Demanded, quit his sylvan friend a while;
Nought can his firmness shake, nothing seduce
His zeal, still active for the common-weal;
Nor stormy Tyrants, nor Corruption's tools,
Foul ministers, dark-working by the force
Of secret-sapping gold. All their vile arts,
Their shameful honours, their perfidious gifts,
He greatly scorns; and, if he must betray
His plunder'd country, or his power resign,
A moment's parley were eternal shame:
Illustrious into private life again,
From dirty levees he unstain'd ascends,
And firm in senates stands the patriot's grund,
Or draws new vigour in the peaceful shade. 25

More significant of Thomson's personal aspirations, perhaps, is the fact that the poem is dedicated to the Prince. The dedication not only signals a reopening of Thomson's suit for patronage, but also praises the Prince for those qualities that the Opposition later attempts to build up in the public eye:
To behold the noblest dispositions of the prince, and of the patriot, united: an overflowing benevolence, generosity, and candour of heart, joined to an enlightened zeal for Liberty, an intimate persuasion that on it depends the happiness and glory both of kings and people: to see these shining out in public virtues, as they have hitherto smiled in all the social lights and private accomplishments of life, is a prospect that cannot but inspire a general sentiment of satisfaction and gladness, more easy to be felt than expressed.26

Thomson was not, at this time, in the employ of the Prince; but it is only logical to suppose that the poet was handsomely rewarded for his praise of Frederick. One may further assume, from the tone of the dedication, that Thomson was looking for a more permanent alliance.

In the foregoing discussion there is no evidence whatever of Thomson's having prostituted his pen in the expression of sentiments in variance with his personal beliefs. There is, however, a strong indication that he skillfully managed the publication of his work so as to advance himself financially at every opportunity. Not once during the period between 1726 and 1735 did his work fail to advance him; not once did he suffer financially or politically from the publication of his highly patriotic poems. On the other hand, he was never inconsistent in the development of these sentiments; nor is there any substantial evidence that he ever suppressed his own beliefs for the sake of material advancement. His actions were at all times patriotic rather than political. His patrons during this period were not actively associated with the Opposition; but they were, most
of the time, in accord with the tenets of the Opposition leaders. Thomson's own beliefs appear to have developed independently of the Opposition, but along exactly similar lines. Thus, it is not surprising that he should be drawn nearer and nearer to active participation in the intrigues against Walpole.

Some months before the death of Lord Talbot made Thomson's search for a new patron a matter of necessity, the poet was engaged in writing a play that was to be the first strong assertion of his devotion to the Opposition cause. One may believe, however, that the *Agamemnon* Thomson was "whipping and spurring" to finish in the closing months of 1736 was a substantially different play from the one that was acted to party applause in 1738. The highly political nature of the play, differing as it does from the more objective patriotism of Thomson's previous work, would appear to have derived from the events of 1737. Its completion was very likely delayed by the death of Lord Talbot in February, 1737, and by Thomson's consequent loss of his sinecure. Whether or not the poet could have had the sinecure renewed has been discussed without being resolved, but the fact that he did not have it renewed is clear. Patrick Murdoch writes of the incident:

This place fell with his patron; and although the noble Lord, who succeeded to Lord Talbot in office, kept it vacant for some time, probably till Mr. Thomson should apply for it, he was so dispirited and so listless to every concern of that kind, that
he never took one step in the affair: a neglect which his best friends greatly blamed in him.  

Johnson quotes a writer in the Critical Review who asserted on the poet's "own authority . . . that it was not optional to him whether he should remain in the place after his patron's death." The Lord whom Murdoch mentions as having been appointed to the position left vacant by Talbot's death was Lord Hardwicke, one of Walpole's close associates. It seems likely that Murdoch's evidence should be reliable in this instance, as Thomson's association with the Opposition was not so open as to render him unacceptable to the administration. Walpole was notoriously unconcerned with attacks on his policy; and Thomson's only recent attack had been couched in the lines of a poem that did not achieve wide readership. The dedication of Liberty to Frederick would not likely have been used as a basis for refusing to renew the sinecure, for Frederick's associates were not yet as objectionable to the administration as they were to become later that same year. Douglas Grant suggests that "Thomson was too principled to desert the opposition for a bribe of a hundred pounds;" and while I have maintained that Thomson was not, at the time, a member of the Opposition, the corollary of Grant's idea seems near the truth—that Thomson was too principled to ally himself with the ministry for a pecuniary consideration.

Murdoch hastens to reassure us on the question of Thomson's financial situation at this period; besides "the
profits arising from his works" Thomson could depend on his publisher in time of need, as well as on sundry friends "whose hearts, he knew, were not contracted by the ample fortunes they had acquired." The biographer continues:

But his chief dependance, during this long interval, was on the protection and bounty of His Royal Highness FREDERICK Prince of Wales; who, upon the recommendation of Lord Lyttelton, then his chief favourite, settled on him a handsome allowance. And afterwards, when he was introduced to His Royal Highness, that excellent prince, who truly was what Mr. Thomson paints him, the friend of mankind and of merit, received him very graciously, and ever after honoured him with many marks of particular favour and confidence. A circumstance which does equal honour to the patron and the poet ought not here to be omitted; that my Lord Lyttelton's recommendation came altogether unsolicited, and long before Mr. Thomson was personally known to him.30

When Murdoch's statements are reviewed in the light of Lyttelton's actual position in the Prince's household, they take on new meaning. It had been decided by the Opposition leaders that the Prince was to be popularized; working through Lyttelton, now, the Opposition began to line up the talent needed for this popularization. Thomson had given earnest of his right attitude by the sentiments expressed in Liberty, and by the dedication of the poem to the Prince. Lyttelton's recommending him to Frederick was not the disinterested act that Murdoch thought it to be, though the biographer was probably correct in asserting that it was not solicited by Thomson. The "marks of particular favour and confidence" that Murdoch mentions may have added substantially
to the pension and constituted a much stronger attraction for the poet than a mere £100. But whether or not we believe, as Murdoch tells us, that Thomson's financial situation was not in "so poetical a posture" as some accounts would have it to be after the death of Talbot, we need not assume that Thomson undertook his support of the Opposition without a firm conviction that the party with which he was allying himself had right on its side.

Once the alliance was made, his pen was not idle. In September the Gentleman's Magazine published his "Ode to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales," which contains the strongest language yet used by the poet against the ministry:

While secret-leaguing nations frown around,
Ready to pour the long-expected storm;
While SHE, who wont the restless Gaul to bound,
Britannia, drooping, grows an empty form,
While on our vitals selfish parties prey,
And deep corruption eats our soul away... 31

He continues in the poem to praise Frederick as "thou friend of Liberty" and to speak of the "promis'd glories" of his reign.

The Daily Gazetteer gives further proof of Thomson's having become one of the "friends that might adorn the court of a nobleman" by a notation that the poet was initiated that month as a Freemason along with William Hawley--Frederick's gentleman usher--William Patterson and John Armstrong. 32 At the time, Thomson must have been writing--possibly revising--Agamemnon, which was ready to be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain on January 13, 1738. Having finished
the play, Thomson employed his pen in support of the Opposition's parliamentary operations. He wrote an introduction to Milton's *Areopagitica*, which was republished in January as a protest against the Licensing Act, attacked by the Opposition as an infringement on the freedom of press and speech. Walpole's opponents had opened parliament with the Spanish right-of-search question; and in March, when the affair of Jenkins' ear was before the public, a new translation of Milton's *Manifesto* showing the "Reasonableness of the Cause of this Republick against the Depredations of the Spaniards" was published with Thomson's *Britannia* appended.

Although the poet's sympathy toward the Opposition has never been questioned, and although his plays have always been recognized as Opposition dramas, the inferences of Murdoch and the secrecy of the "patriots" have tended to deceive modern biographers in their conception of the relationship between Thomson and Frederick. Thomson's position was not that of a poet flattering his patron; nor was it any longer that of the patriot expressing his sentiments on subjects of national concern. Before the end of 1737 Thomson was knowingly allied, through Lyttelton and Frederick, to a party that was making its first well-planned, concerted attack on Walpole's government. He had, with Mallet and possibly with other writers, a specific assignment in the move to overthrow the minister; and the works he produced during the next few years show how ably he performed that assignment.
CHAPTER III

AGAMEMNON AND REACTION

Thomson announced his intention of writing another tragedy several years before Agamemnon finally reached the stage. In a letter to Dodington dated October, 1730, he wrote from the continent:

At my times of leisure abroad, I think of attempting another Tragedy, and on a story more addressed to common passions than that of Sophonisba. People now-a-days must have something like themselves, and a public-spirited monster can never concern them.¹

By the next time we hear of the proposed play it is in the composition stage, as Thomson informs George Ross in November, 1736:

I am whipping and spurring to finish a Tragedy for You this Winter; but am still at some Distance from the Goal, which makes me fear being Distanc'd.²

The letter to Ross indicates that Thomson had made considerable progress on the drama, or at least that he believed there was some possibility of his finishing it before the end of the theatre season. Thomas Rundle's letter, written to Mrs. Sandys (December, 1736-January, 1737), informs us that Thomson was "brining another untoward Heroine on the stage ..."³ and reveals the subject of the play:

His present story is the death of Agamemnon. An adulthress, who murthers her husband, is but an
odd example to be presented before, and admonish the beauties of Great Britain. However, if he will be advised, it shall not be a shocking, though it cannot be a noble story.

Thomson was evidently "Distanc'd," for his play did not appear during that winter. Talbot's death, occurring in February following the letter to Ross in November, may have been the occasion for Thomson's failure to finish the tragedy; but one would suppose that it was well on the way to completion if he had worked on it with diligence. It is surprising, therefore, to have him write to Ross more than a year later, "Having been entirely in the Country, of late, finishing my Play, I did not receive Your's till some Days ago. . ." and he similarly excuses himself for having failed to answer two previous letters from his sister.

If Thomson had put Agamemnon aside at the time of Talbot's death, there would have been little reason for expediting its completion. New plays were seldom produced early in the season; and his was ready for the Licenser on January 14, a relatively early date in a season that had been interrupted by the closing of the theatres because of the Queen's death in November, 1737. From the standpoint of time, therefore, one may not argue that the delay in the completion of Agamemnon was occasioned by the necessity of revising the play in order to fit it into the political controversy. We may conclude only that there was sufficient
time for Thomson to work on such a revision after he became closely associated with the Opposition; and we may infer from his letters to Ross and his sister that he had, at least, been busily employed on the play for some time immediately before he submitted it to the Lord Chamberlain. It must also be admitted that there is nothing in either of the only two letters concerning the subject of the play to indicate that it was revised. Thomson's letter to Dodington was too early to have any real significance; and Rundle's description of the plot, although different in the politically important detail of the actual murderer of the king, is probably based on the Bishop's knowledge of past treatments of the subject.

External details, then, will support only negatively a theory that Thomson re-wrote portions of *Agamemnon* to make it a political treatise after his entering the ranks of the Opposition: (1) before 1736, the year in which we first hear that he has been working on the play, his most vehement attack on Walpole was the relatively mild and brief mention of "foul ministers" in *Liberty*; (2) the events of 1737 give Thomson better motivation for an all-out attack on the minister than a private patriotic regard for the welfare of his country; and (3) he did a considerable amount of work on the tragedy just before it was turned over to the Licenser. The internal evidence of the play's being a party document is conclusive, as I think I shall be able to show in the discussion of details in which the play parallels the
contemporary political situation. The decidedly political nature of the play is, therefore, a persuasive indication that its sentiments reflect Thomson's alliance with the Opposition in 1737.

Although Fleetwood submitted the manuscript to the Lord Chamberlain on January 14 stating, "I intend to have it performed this season, and as soon as possibly I can," Thomson's letter to Ross implies that he did not expect it to come to the stage until sometime in March. As it happened, the play was not performed until April 6. It is not likely that the delay was the result of the Licenser's having held up approval, for nothing in the manuscript was questioned except the last six lines of the prologue. The prologue was written by David Mallet, and the offensive lines were duly omitted from the performances but were printed in the first edition and were identified by quotation marks:

"As such our fair Attempt, we hope to see
"Our Judges, --here at least, --from Influence free;
"One Place, --unbiass'd yet by Party-Rage--,
"Where only Honour votes, --the British Stage.
"We ask for Justice, for Indulgence sue:
"Our last best Licence must proceed from you.

The Lord Chamberlain was evidently more sensitive to criticism than was Walpole.

D. C. Tovey pointed out several of the politically significant passages in Agamemnon, remarking that "the real interest of Thomson's 'Agamemnon' is its political purpose." Bayne calls Tovey's assertion "astonishing," and admits
only a "certain amount of innuendo . . . inferred in the character of Egisthus as reflecting Walpole." He continues to declare that "in other respects the parallel is nought." Although Tovey remarked only a few of the political allusions with which the play abounds, I should have thought his comparisons obvious enough to be very convincing. Upon a careful examination of the drama, other parallels can be added to those noted by Tovey.

The story, although not chosen with the same care that Thomson later used in the choice of Edward and Eleonora's plot, is at least suited to the contemporary situation in some respects. Agamemnon has been fighting the Trojans for ten years and has left his kingdom, during this period, to the regency of Queen Clytemnestra. In the Aeschylean tragedy Clytemnestra is totally evil and not only kills Agamemnon herself, but later boasts of having done it with her own hands. Seneca allows Egisthus, Clytemnestra's paramour, to be also her accomplice in the crime; but here, too, the Queen is basically evil. In Thomson's version, as in the Odyssey, Egisthus is the primary villain. Thomson makes him not only Clytemnestra's counselor and paramour, but the sole murderer of the King. The alteration was necessary for two obvious reasons: Egisthus represented Walpole and was therefore to be made as villainous as possible; and the Queen must not be severely criticized, not only because of the danger involved, but also because she had died the
previous November.

Agamemnon's lengthy stay in Troy lent itself to Thomson's purpose since it corresponded to the King's frequent and sometimes extended journeys to Hanover. George II had returned from his most recent visit in January, 1737. Aeschylus allows Clytemnestra merely to suggest the relationship between Cassandra and Agamemnon as one of her motives for murdering him, but Thomson has Egisthus arouse Clytemnestra's jealousy by falsely assuring her that Agamemnon is intimate with Cassandra. The "other woman" angle has its real-life counterpart in the relationship between George II and his Hanoverian mistress, to whom the frequent trips to Hanover are at least partially attributable. Egisthus' influence over the Queen is an open allusion to Walpole's influence over and actual use of Caroline. Melisander represents Lord Bolingbroke.

His abduction can be compared to Bolingbroke's exile; and it is perhaps significant, as Tovey suggests, that Melisander found company in the Muses when he was marooned. In the final act, Orestes, the heir to the throne, is consigned to the care of Melisander, who presents him to the senate to preclude Egisthus' usurpation of the throne. Bolingbroke's championship of the Prince of Wales might be seen in the circumstance by contemporary audiences, and that such a comparison was invited is suggested by the fact that Thomson alters the source in this instance. In both the
Aeschylean and the Senecan versions, Orestes was sent away at the end of the play.

Tovey suggested that Arcas, the only other character of any importance in the drama, represents Sir William Wyndham and possibly other enemies of Walpole as well. Supporting his identification, Tovey cites Wyndham's "famous declamation" of 1734 as the source of Arcas' indictment of Egisthus. I have been unable to find any striking similarity between Arcas' speech and any particular speech of Wyndham's, but there is other and better evidence to support the comparison. In the drama it is Arcas who remains steadfast and loyal to the King and to Melisander during the absence of the two men. He is unable to present any active resistance to the all-powerful Egisthus, but he does maintain

A Band of generous Youth, whom native Virtue,
Unbroken yet by Avarice and Meanness
Fits for our purpose...

Upon the return of the King and Melisander, these young men are the only ones in the kingdom to whom the King can turn for support. The parallel to Wyndham's "boy patriots" is the more convincing because of the devoted friendship between Wyndham and Bolingbroke, a friendship that is symbolized by that of Melisander and Arcas.

The identification of characters in the drama would be weak evidence of its being a political allegory if the similarities could be seen in only one or even a few characters; since a counterpart can be found for every
major figure, the evidence is somewhat more convincing. The theory is further strengthened by the dialogue, in which the issues of the Opposition are urged against the ministry with a particularity not seen before in Thomson's work. When Egisthus greets Agamemnon at his first meeting with the King, he expresses his regret at not having been able to participate in the war against Troy and earn for himself some of the glory that now falls to the lot of the returning warriors. Agamemnon opens the Opposition case against Walpole with his answering speech:

... But know, Egisthus, that ruling a free People well in Peace, Without or yielding or usurping Power; Maintaining firm the Honour of the Laws, Yet sometimes softening their too rigid Doom, As Mercy may require; steering the State, Thro' factious Storms, or the more dangerous Calms Of Peace, by long Continuance grown corrupt; Besides the fair Career which Fortune opens, To the mild Glories of protected Arts, To Bounty, to Beneficence, to Deeds That give the Gods themselves their brightest Beams; Yes, know, that these are, in true Glory, equal, If not superior, to deluding Conquest: Nor less demand they Conduct, Courage, Care, And persevering Toil. (I-v)

Since Agamemnon is affecting a civility toward Egisthus that he does not feel, the speech has not the air of a specific reproach; but the references to the usurpation of power, the "factious storms," "dangerous calms of peace," and corruption would have meaning for the party-packed audience. Walpole is even more obviously the target of Agamemnon's insinuation about the "mild Glories of protected
Arts," for the minister was famous for his lack of interest in the arts.

Egisthus counters Agamemnon's declaration by insisting that the "persevering Toil" is thankless and

... instead of Praise
And due Reward, meets oftner Scorn, Reproach,
Fierce Opposition to the clearest Measures. ...(I-v)

This reference to "Opposition" serves to introduce Melisander into the conversation, as Agamemnon remarks that he left Melisander to ease Egisthus of half the toil. To the King's inquiry about the wisdom, justice and faithfulness of the character who represents Bolingbroke, Egisthus replies:

... Sir, I own
He wore a specious Mask---  

(I-v)

and after Agamemnon's indignant interruption, he continues:

... A certain stubborn Virtue,
I would say Affectation of blunt virtue,
Beneath whose outside Froth, fermenting, lay
Pride, Envy, Faction, Turbulence of Soul,
And Democratic Views, in some sort, made him
A secret Traitor, equally unfit
Or to obey or rule.  

(A-v)

Agamemnon defends Melisander in terms that would tend to soothe the wounded pride of a Bolingbroke whose accusation of Walpole to George II in 1733 had been coldly ignored:

I know he would not patiently look on,
And suffer ill Designs to gather Strength,
Awaiting gentle Seasons; yes, I know,
He had a troublesome old-fashion'd way
Of shocking courtly Ears with horrid Truth.
But he was no civil Ruffian ....
Is none of those dust licking, reptile, close,
Insinuating, speckled, smooth Court-Serpents,
That make it so unsafe, chiefly for Kings,
To walk this weedy World. ...  

(I-v)
Egisthus indignantly agrees to furnish proof of Melisander's misdeeds, but insists that it cannot be to his face, since he has been banished from the kingdom. Melisander had, in fact, been abducted by Egisthus' hirelings and left to perish on a desert island. Unknown to Egisthus, Melisander had been miraculously rescued from the island by the very ship that brought Agamemnon back to Mycenae; and the faithful counselor had informed the King of the evil ambition of Egisthus.

When Melisander and Arcas are reunited, the resulting scene is one that could hardly be rivaled by the public airing of a secret conversation between their real-life models, Bolingbroke and Wyndham. After greetings and reminiscences Melisander asks Arcas if he knows anything of Egisthus' evil intentions. Arcas, reinforcing previous references in the play to the corruption theme, admits that he has long observed the villain and regrets that

... now his ill Designs are too too plain,
To all Mycenae plain; and who, indeed,
Who can have good ones, that corrupts a People?

(III-i)

Melisander is not unwilling to suggest that the King himself should have been more careful in placing his confidence:

And, on my Soul, methinks, that Agamemnon Deserves some touch of Blame. To put the Power, The Power of blessing or oppressing Millions, Of doing or great Good or equal Mischief, Even into doubtful Hands, is worse than careless.

(III-i)
No less direct is this criticism of George II for his in¬judicious choice of a minister than is the criticism of his absence from the kingdom when Agamemnon remarks to Arcas in the next scene:

... In my own Dominions,
I am a Stranger, Arcas. Ten full Years,
Or even one Day, is Absence for a King,
Without some mighty Reason, much too long. (III-ii)

The audience is invited to compare Agamemnon's reason with that of George II when the Greek King continues:

For me, a just and memorable War,
Whose Actions future Times perhaps may sing,
My own, my Brother's, and my People's Honour,
With that of common Greece, must plead my Pardon.

(III-ii)

Agamemnon then announces his intention to concentrate on "the Works of Peace" and asks Arcas if the task of quelling "Injustice, Riot, factious Rage, Dark-working blind Cabals and bold Disorder" is going to be necessary. Arcas' words are calculated not only to insinuate against Egisthus, but to praise the heroic and noble aspects of war as well:

You, doubtless, from the rugged School of War,
Have brought sound manly Hearts, and generous Spirits:
While we, alas! we rot in weedy Peace,
In slothful Riot, Luxury, Profusion,
And every Meanness to repair that Waste.-- (III-ii)

Of Egisthus, Arcas remarks, "There is no Vice a Stranger to his Heart;" and the magnitude of Walpole's power is hinted at later when Arcas tells Agamemnon:

... He scales the dazzling Height,
And almost grasps with impious Hands your Sceptre.

(III-ii)
The report details the methods by which Egisthus won his power, and the parallel here is remarkable:

At first Egisthus, popular and fair,
All Smiles and Softness, as if each Man's Friend,
By hidden Ways proceeded, mining Virtue:
He Pride, he Pomp, he Luxury diffus'd;
He taught them Wants, beyond their private Means:
And strait, in Bounty's pleasing Chains involv'd,
They grew his Slaves. Who cannot live on little,
Or as his various Fortune shall permit,
Stands in the Market ready to be sold. (III-ii)

When parliament was pressing for the removal from office of Walpole in 1741, the Duke of Argyle stated the case against the minister in the House of Lords; and he might almost have borrowed Arcas' speech. The London Magazine, in its "Proceedings of the Political Club," reported Argyle's accusations:

Is he not suspected of having solely ingrossed the ear of his sovereign, and excluded from his master's presence, as well as confidence, every man that disdains being a slave to him? Is he not suspected of having ingrossed the sole disposal of all the favours of the crown, and the sole direction of all the offices of the kingdom: Is he not suspected of having endeavoured to destroy the independency of parliament, and the freedom of elections, by making an abject submission to his will and direction the sole title to the obtaining of any favour from the crown, or the holding of any post which the crown can take away?12

We can well believe Davies' report of the enthusiasm with which the members of the Opposition applauded Agamemnon's admission of his mistake in trusting Egisthus:13

... the most fruitful Source
Of every Evil—O that I, in Thunder,
Could sound it o'er the listening Earth to Kings!—
Is Delegating Power to wicked Hands. (III-ii)
It is at this point that the King asks Arcas if there are any men worthy enough to "rescue their King and Country from impending Fate," and Arcas informs him of the "boy patriots" of the drama. This powerful scene ends the third act; and the political allegory collapses in acts four and five. Aaron Hill criticized *Agamemnon* extensively in a letter to Pope in November, 1738. He remarked that the "spirit" of the play falls off "on a sudden, and leaves the fourth and fifth acts, in particular, much too cold for their place, and their purpose." Benjamin Victor also felt the last two acts to be defective and noted that while the first three acts were acted on the first night "with the loudest, and most universal applause, the two following acts, (particularly the last) were as deservedly hissed and cat-call'd. . . ." Douglas Grant attributes the faults of acts four and five to the fact that Thomson's scheme of political allegory could not be reconciled to the story in the last half of the drama. It is fairly certain, at least, that the lack of political significance in the last two acts would account for the different attitude expressed toward that portion of the tragedy by the opening night audience. We can imagine the members of the Opposition cheering especially the second and third acts of the play and finding little to merit their applause in acts four and five.

An interesting mistake of Victor's is brought to light by comparing the first edition of *Agamemnon* with the manu-
script copy submitted by Fleetwood to the Licenser. Victor tells us, in his letter to Wood

The hero, Agamemnon, dies in the fourth act,—and in the fifth, which you know, is the act for catastrophe, and should be fullest of business, you are chiefly entertain'd with the prophetic strains of Cassandra, whom Agamemnon brought with him from Troy; and the distresses of young lovers, children to the departed heroes. . . . But a club of wits, with Mr. Pope at the head of them, met at the theatre the next morning, and cut, and slash'd, like dexterous surgeons—the lovers are no more—and they have brought a fine scene, that finish'd the fourth act, into the fifth.16

Victor remembers imperfectly in his statement about Agamemnon's having died in act four, for in the Licenser's manuscript Agamemnon's death occurs in the fifth act. It is not at all plausible that Thomson originally wrote the play as it was handed to the Licenser on January 14, subsequently rewrote it placing the death of the hero in the fourth act, and finally allowed it to be revised by a "club of wits" so that the scene was shifted back to its original and obviously better position. Victor's other comparisons are fairly correct, however: Cassandra's extensive dialogue with the chorus of Trojan Prisoners is moved from act five in the Larpent manuscript to act four in the first edition, and the story of Hemon and Electra is entirely omitted from the play as published.

Thomas Davies supports Victor's anecdote of the revision of the play with his story of Thomson's tardiness in meeting his friends at a tavern after the first night performance:
When he came, they asked him the reason of his stay; he told them, that the critics had sweated him so terribly by their severe treatment of certain parts of his tragedy, that the perspiration was so violent, as to render his wig unfit to wear; and that he had spent a great deal of time among the peruke-makers in procuring a proper cover for his head.¹⁷

The criticism, as Grant implies, may have been restricted to the humorous epilogue that was shouted down by the audience on the first night. In view of the evidence in the Larpent manuscript, however, it appears that Victor's and Davies' accounts must have some foundation in fact.

That Pope supervised the revision of the play receives some support from Johnson's assertion that "Pope countenanced Agamemnon, by coming to it the first night."¹⁸ Pope's interest in the Opposition dramas has already been suggested, and his own close association with Bolingbroke gives that interest a decidedly political flavor. When we consider Pope's role in guiding the writers of the Opposition, this early instance of his aiding in the revision of a political play has peculiar significance. The Larpent manuscript supports Victor's description of the changes in Agamemnon, except for the mistake mentioned above, and those changes sharpened the play not only dramatically, but politically as well.¹⁹

In spite of Johnson's assertion that the play was "only endured, but not favored,"²⁰ there is no good reason to believe that it was unsuccessful. It played nine performances and created as much of a political furor as its
patrons could have desired. As evidence of its success, we have not only Victor's story of the praise accorded the first three acts, but statistics compiled by Frant from the London newspapers proving that it was performed for the benefit of the author on the sixth night "By Command of Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales," and that the royal couple commanded and attended the seventh performance.21 Professor McKillop quotes an article from the Gazetteer of April 28, 1738, illustrating the awareness of the ministerial organ of the nature of *Agamemnon*:

If the Party, with all their Art and Industry have been able to support a dull Play for half a Dozen Nights together, you immediately see Advertisements in all the News papers, that on such a Day will be published, such a Tragedy, or such a Comedy, as it is now acting with great Applause, at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, with a Prologue, an Epilogue, or an Epistle Dedicatory, or perhaps all three, extolling the wonderful Genius of the Author, and the Extraordinary Merit of the Piece.22

The Gazetteer article echoes the London Daily Post advertisement, April 24, 1738:

To-morrow morning, at 9 o'clock, will be published, price 1/6, "Agamemnon," a tragedy as it is now acted with great applause. . . .23

The popularity of *Agamemnon* is further attested by its success at the booksellers. According to the ledger of Henry Woodfall, Millar's printer, "No. 3000, and 100 fine" copies were printed on April 24; and just four days later he recorded 1500 additional copies printed.24 The play was printed with a simple and dignified dedication to the Princess of Wales.
I have been able to find little record of Thomson's activities between April and December of 1738. Grant suggests that he immediately began composing Edward and Eleonora after he had completed Agamemnon, but the tragedy cannot have occupied much of his time, for Pope wrote to Hill on December 8 that only two acts of it had been completed. The poet was at Richmond, as is indicated by Edward Cave's letter of August 12 to Dr. Thomas Birch; and Richard Savage invited Dr. Birch on September 1 to join him, Thomson, and Dr. Armstrong on a visit to Chiswick to see the Earl of Burlington's house and gardens. Thomson's cottage at Richmond was just across the river from Pope's Twickenham; and since we know from James Robertson's and William Taylor's accounts that the two poets frequently visited one another, such visits may have taken place during the spring and summer of 1738.

Proof that Thomson was a visitor at Twickenham at any time during the months of August or September would be welcome in support of the thesis that Bolingbroke wielded an influence over Thomson's Edward and Eleonora, for we have noted that Bolingbroke was Pope's guest there from July, 1738 to April, 1739. In November, however, Pope wrote to Hill that a month had elapsed since he had tried to reach Thomson to learn "the Time of his Tragedy;" and he reports that he has not yet been able to hear where he is, nor have any answer from him. A friend having informed him that
the play was not near completion and that Mallet's was progressing similarly slowly, Pope encouraged Hill to expedite the production of Caesar.

In order to understand Pope's interest in bringing Caesar upon the stage as quickly as possible, it is necessary to consider the changes that occurred in the Opposition during the course of 1738. Bolingbroke's presence in England gave him the opportunity to work more closely with the Patriots, though he worked primarily through his associates, fearful, probably, of harming the party by his own reputation. That he was aware of this danger is shown by a letter he wrote to Wyndham in 1739 suggesting that inestimable hurt might be done to the cause by the "bare suspicion, that a paper, designed to explain and justify the secession, and to point out the true end of it" came from him. It is not surprising, then, that we find Pope exceedingly busy during Bolingbroke's visit and that his business is minutely concerned with the affairs of the Opposition.

I have suggested that Frederick's precipitate removal of the Princess from Hampton Court to St. James's during her labor was undertaken for the purpose of bringing about a rupture with the King; and, further, I have shown that the rupture itself was suggested by Lord Bolingbroke. Once the instructions of Bolingbroke's letter of June, 1737, had been put into effect, the next steps were not outlined beyond the vague implication that the Prince was to be used as a
unifying agent and was to be controlled by the Opposition through Lyttelton. The ideas that were to be insinuated to the Prince are stated in "The Idea of a Patriot King," and although Bolingbroke's treatise was not yet formally written, we may consider the ideas expressed therein to be a formal statement of the ones that governed his actions and the actions of the Opposition party in 1737–1738. A brief review of the theories embodied in this work will give background to the discussion of the party intrigues of 1738.

Bolingbroke expresses his belief in a limited monarchy as the best form of government, insisting that a constitution is necessary and that the power of the king should be limited by that constitution only so far as is necessary to safeguard the liberties of the people. Outlining the qualifications of the patriot king, he remarks that the desire of appearing to be a patriot is important, but that great principles and great virtues are also necessary. If the prince gives indication of being a bad king, the people may at least be grateful for the indications he gives and protect themselves by keeping him out of "bad hands." If, on the other hand, the prince gives indications of becoming a patriot king, then the people must encourage him. If, because of his virtue, he finds it necessary to suffer with his people under a bad reign before his accession, then the people must consider that he is being "formed in that school out of which the greatest and best of monarchs
have come, the school of affliction."34

The first principles of monarchical government, he believes, are that the ultimate and true end of government is the good of the people and that governors are appointed with this end in mind. These principles are the "seeds of patriotism, which must be sowed as soon as possible in the mind of a prince." He must be a patriot in resolution from the first before he grows to be one in practice. Once the character of the prince is trained, he will determine to exercise his virtues in the "maintenance of liberty, and the re-establishment of a free constitution."35

Although liberty may not easily be threatened by force if the people retain their spirit and character, it may be destroyed by even a weak minister if the people grow corrupt:

The most incapable, awkward, ungracious, shocking, profligate, and timorous wretches, invested with power, and masters of the purse, will be sufficient for the work, when the people are complices in it. Luxury is rapacious; let them feed it; the more it is fed, the more profuse it will grow. Want is the consequence of profusion, venality of want, and dependance of venality. By this progression, the firstmen of a nation will become the pensioners of the least; and he who has talents, the most implicit tool to him who has none. The distemper will soon descend, not indeed to make a deposite below, and to remain there, but to pervade the whole body.36

When the situation described above exists, a patriot king must be more welcome to his people than at any other time; for only by the exercise of the power of a patriot king can a free commonwealth be established or maintained among a
corrupt people. "The utmost that private men can do, who remain untainted by the general contagion, is to keep the spirit of liberty alive in a few breasts. . . ."34

Once the patriot king begins to reign, Bolingbroke continues, he must immediately begin to govern. His course of action is set down positively, by steps: (1) he must purge his court of the evil men who have held power; (2) he must "call into the administration such men, as he can assure himself will serve on the same principles on which he intends to govern;" (3) he must restore the free constitution; (4) he must subdue faction and unite the people; and (5) he must encourage trade and commerce as the protectors of his country's freedom.38

If we apply the tenets of Bolingbroke's philosophy as expressed in "The Patriot King" to what we can discover of the intentions of the Opposition during the crucial years after Frederick's rupture with the King, some rather conclusive parallels can be seen. It must first be noted that the theories of "The Patriot King" are based on the advent of an ideal prince possessed of all the great principles and great virtues of a patriot. Only when such a prince exists can the people be expected to unite in their support of him, once he comes to the throne. Since Frederick, unfortunately, had not the qualifications of the ideal prince, it was necessary to do the best possible job with the material available. First, steps must be taken to indoctrinate Frederick to the
ways of the patriot and to make every attempt to develop in him the "seeds of the patriot." Second, the Prince must be represented to the people as the ideal ruler, in order that he might have a unified following when he became King. Third, the Prince must be "kept out of bad hands" at all costs to avoid his coming under the influence of "evil ministers" upon his accession.

Pope's correspondence with George Lyttelton in the fall of 1738 is especially revealing of the method with which the Opposition undertook the accomplishment of the above listed tasks. Lyttelton wrote to Pope in October, informing him that a visit of the Prince and his court to Lord Bathurst's gave the Prince the opportunity of making a good impression. He exhorts Pope to spend as much time as possible with the Prince, as he feels that the poet has a powerful influence over Frederick. He writes:

Be therefore as much with him as you can, Animate him to Virtue, to the Virtue least known to Princes, though most necessary for them, Love of the Publick; and think that the Morals, the Liberty, the whole Happiness of this Country depends on your Success. If that Sacred Fire, which by You and other Honest Men has been kindled in his Mind, can be Preserv'd, we may yet be safe; But if it go out, it is a Presage of Ruin, and we must be Lost.39

His next words are almost exactly like those of Bolingbroke:

For the Age is too far corrupted to Reform itself; it must be done by Those upon, or near the Throne, or not at all.40

Significant, perhaps, are the words, "or near the Throne."
In November, Pope wrote to Lyttelton that he had intended to write a letter to Lord Bathurst before the Prince's arrival, but that he had been prevented by the fact that the arrival was "too quick." He had planned to instruct Bathurst "in what manner a Great Man should treat a Prince, when Fortune gives him the Leading of one: Especially if the Prince happens to be a little Short sighted."

Continuing, Pope suggests that he would have answered for Bathurst the following questions, concerning the Prince:

What things one should make him see, and how far? What kind of Notions to give him, of the Extent, Nature & Situation of the Land about him? Above all, the Two great Arts so successfully practis'd by my Lord on other people, and so much more useful to be practis'd on a Prince; that of making him imagine, What is Highway or Common field to all his Subjects, to be His own Walks and Royalties; And that of imposing upon him What was the Work of our own hands but yesterday, for the Venerable Structure of our Ancestours.

In the remainder of the letter, Pope deals with the structure of the Opposition party. He reports a conversation between himself and Sir William Wyndham in which the latter admitted, "tho a little unwilling to own it," that the present situation of the Opposition is due to his own failure to listen to a Friend (obviously Bolingbroke) who warned him that two people (Pulteney and Carteret) would draw the party off from "the Original Principle on which it was founded." Bolingbroke had further warned that the two men were motivated by private ambition rather than public service. One can discern in the letter a tone that implies
that Wyndham has been brought to task by Bolingbroke, especially as Pope continues:

He is fully persuaded, that the Part taken by his R.H. opens an Opportunity of rectifying these Errors, & retrieving & preventing these Mischiefs: But thinks his R.H. shou'd exert his Whole Influence first to Prepare, & then to back the New Measure: who, the moment it takes place, will be the Head of the Party, and Those two Persons cease so to be that instant.42

Having thus explained the manner in which the Prince is to be kept out of "bad hands," Pope outlines the plans for forming what he calls a "New Opposition." By private application to members of both parties, the conspirators are to determine which persons are willing to join "in the pursuit of the Original Measures of the Opposition;" and Sir William was convinced that "if Sir Tho. San, himself, & any 2 or 3 old Members more, with the Phalanx of Young Members, led on such an Opposition in a Debate, they would be followed by Numbers, even at first, that these Numbers would increase every day . . . ."

In February of the same year Bolingbroke had himself written to Wyndham answering the objection that it was impossible to prevail against the man who held the purse by maintaining that "nothing can be so absurd in the mouth of men who do not submit, but continue to act against him."43 The echo of this answer is heard in Pope's instruction to Lyttelton:

That upon every important occasion, the Things resolv'd upon should be pushed by the Persons in
this Secret, how much soever the others may hang off; which will reduce them to the Dilemma, of joyning with the Court, or of following their friends with no good grace.44

We may suspect that the secession from parliament was already being planned at the time this letter was written. Secrecy was obviously important, even though the letter was written for Lyttelton's eyes alone. The air of a conspiracy is maintained throughout; and although Bolingbroke is referred to several times, his name is never mentioned.

Bolingbroke was less circumspect in his dealings with the poets of the Opposition. There is no indication that Aaron Hill was actually one of the Opposition poets or, indeed, that he was at all aware of the political implications of the play he wanted to dedicate to St. John. Pope and Bolingbroke were nonetheless delighted to discover that Caesar was well suited to the needs of the time and that Hill was amenable to having his play altered where necessary. The impression that they desired to create with the tragedy can be seen from the changes they suggested to Hill via a letter from Pope in September, 1738: (1) that when Brutus determines to murder Caesar, not knowing Caesar to be his father, all tenderness on the side of Brutus should be avoided rather than heightened; (2) that it should be shown that Cassius suspected Brutus to be Caesar's son when Cassius "exacted from Brutus the Oath of sparing neither Father, relation &c;" and (3) that Caesar's historically substantiated effort to prevent the Civil War be indicated in the play in
order to "remove the Prepossession against Caesar." Once these changes are effected, Brutus would appear to have been incited by an evil minister to murder his innocent father in a fit of righteous indignation. Pope further suggested that Hill change the title of the play, omitting all reference to Caesar's having been a patriot. Hill had already decided against the title and against certain lines in the Prologue "Which insinuated something of like purpose."

It is in Pope's next letter to Hill, written September 29, that we first learn of Thomson's occupation with a new tragedy. Pope politely refuses to write an epilogue for Hill's play, justifying his refusal by telling Hill that both Thomson and Mallet have excused him "this very Winter" on the basis of his having promised never to write another epilogue. The interest in Hill's tragedy that Pope and Bolingbroke expressed was probably due to the fact that neither Thomson's nor Mallet's play was expected to be completed in time for presentation during the current season. Pope remarks in the letter that he has "seen or heard of nor more but a first Act, yet, of each." If he had actually seen a first act of either play (and we need not rule out the possibility that he had), we could assume that the plays were indeed being written under the influence of Bolingbroke, who would certainly have read the manuscript had it come into Pope's hands.
Hill was surprised to learn that Mallet and Thomson were engaged in writing tragedies, and he generously offered to withdraw his from competition; but Pope, unable to contact either Thomson or Mallet, and discovering from a friend that neither of their plays was in any "Forwardness," insisted that Hill's play should be presented, and "the sooner the better." Caesar had been sent to Fleetwood by November 8, and in the letter informing Pope of his action, Hill undertook a long criticism of Agamemnon, with which he desired Pope to acquaint Thomson. Pope's answer is diplomatically worded, but one may determine a judicious disinclination on his part to be the middleman in a situation of this nature. This letter from Pope, dated December 8, informs us that Pope has seen Mallet, who has finished Mustapha, and has "been confirmed by Mr. Thomson as to the Retardment of his Play, of which he has written but two Acts." He assures Hill, however, that he has not been able to see Thomson in person.

Mallet, according to Pope, was willing to allow Hill's tragedy to precede his own, and he further offered to assist Hill in any possible way "as to treating with Mr. F-- (with whom he thinks you can not be too careful or explicit), or attending the Rehearsals for you, which he promises to undertake with all Diligence . . . He has heard of one person's Refusal or Unwillingness to act, and believes he can employ some proper Influence to bring him to a right Behaviour."
Mr. F— is, of course, Fleetwood; and the one Person who had refused to act in Hill's tragedy had likely been alienated by some of Hill's tactlessly offered criticism. Mallet's attitude, and even Pope's, may have been influenced by a consideration of Hill's financial difficulties, which they knew were pressing at the time. Hill appreciates Mallet's offer, "as not only kind, but a very seasonable interposition." He hints at the reason for the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the managers and players in the same letter:

I begin to suspect, that the Managers' hearts, at the theatres, are more narrowly piqu'd, than their Players'—Few men have force in their minds to love truth, that has served them, unpleasingly—

Fleetwood enters the picture as a person who must be dealt with by the leaders of the Opposition. The manager of Drury Lane would naturally be concerned over the money-making possibilities of any play that was offered to him. Since tragedies were not generally popular in the period with which we are dealing, it is understandable that Fleetwood would resent the pressure being brought to bear on him regarding the presentation of no less than four new tragedies in one season. Hill informed Pope on January 15, 1739, that according to Fleetwood "the prince has been so just, as to insist on Mr. Mallet's Tragedy, as the first to be brought on, this season." Hill was understandably hurt and disappointed by the decision; and the remainder of his letter reflects some bitterness toward the managers, though none
toward the Prince or the poets. Pope assuaged his wounded vanity somewhat by explaining what must have appeared to Hill as a betrayal of confidence. Fleetwood, Pope told Hill, had promised to produce Mallet's play first; and Mallet had subsequently told the manager that he was agreeable to having Caesar brought on first, provided that Mustapha should immediately follow it. Fleetwood thereafter avoided Mallet until the latter learned that the manager had determined to postpone Mustapha and to present instead Gustavus Vasa. Mallet appealed to the Prince through Lyttelton, who assured Frederick that Fleetwood had indeed promised Mallet that his play should be produced first. Fleetwood then agreed to do Mustapha and postpone Gustavus.

Lyttelton's letter assuring Mallet that the situation had been resolved in his favor informs us as well that Thomson's play was not expected to be finished that year. Shortly before the opening of Mustapha, Mallet wrote to Hill implying that Thomson's play was, after all, going to be ready that season and that Fleetwood had again gone back on his word. "Tho he was engaged to Mr. Thomson near nine months ago," he wrote, "he intends to bring another play... on the stage before his." He conjectures that Thomson "intends to carry his tragedy to the other house." Thomson had indeed determined to take his tragedy to Covent Garden; and the decision was probably based on the difficulty with Fleetwood rather than on the poor quality of actresses.
available at Drury Lane, the reason suggested to Hill by Pope.

_Mustapha_ appeared at Drury Lane on February 13 and ran for fourteen nights. It was greeted with loud applause, even though Pope wrote that it was "vilely acted in the Women's parts and the Men's (except two)". Davies gives us the reason for its having been so successful:

On the first night of its exhibition were assembled all the chiefs in opposition to the court; and many speeches were applied by the audience to the supposed grievances of the times, and to persons and characters.

Thomson's tragedy, meanwhile, had either been finished or was nearing completion. Although Pope had seen only three acts of it by February 14, _Edward and Eleonora_ was ready for the Licenser on February 23. _Gustavus Vasa_ was submitted on the following day. As it happened, _Gustavus_ at Drury Lane and _Edward_ at Covent Garden were put into rehearsal sometime near the end of February; and while Drury Lane's rafters were still ringing with the party-applause of _Mustapha_, the managers of both theatres received word from the Lord Chamberlain that their next-scheduled productions would not be allowed.
CHAPTER IV

EDWARD AND ELEONORA AND LATER PLAYS

The Licensing Act had been introduced into parliament as one of a series of social reforms intended to curb crime and vice in England. In May, 1736, a bill against smugglers passed the House of Commons; and in September of the same year the "Gin Act" went into effect, raising the price of gin, through taxation, out of reach of the low-income group. When the Licensing Act came before parliament, it passed with no difficulty, though it was violently opposed in Commons by Pulteney and in the House of Lords by Chesterfield. The ineffectiveness of the opposition to the bill may be due, as Chesterfield suggested, to the administration's having pushed it into "an almost empty House at the Close of a Session." Any attempt to pass the bill off as a social reform was countered by Chesterfield in his famous speech against the measure. He declaimed:

    . . . tho it seems designed only as a Restraint on the Licentiousness of the Stage, I fear, it looks farther, and tends to a Restraint on the Liberty of the Press, a Restraint even on Liberty itself.¹

In spite of his efforts, the bill passed the Lords and received royal assent on June 21, 1737. Thomson's part in writing against the measure has already been noted.²

77
According to the Licensing Act the responsibility for determining the acceptability of plays was to rest upon the Lord Chamberlain, then the Duke of Grafton. For some months, apparently, the Lord Chamberlain performed this function himself, but early in 1738 the government provided for him two assistants. Genest writes of the new appointment:

In Feb. 1738 according to the Manuscript in B.M., or in April according to Chalmers, William Chetwynd was sworn in Licenser of the stage (under the Lord Chamberlain) with a salary of £90 a year, but that he might not be too much fatigued with reading half a dozen, or half a score plays in the course of a twelvemonth, a Deputy was allowed him with an additional salary of £200 per ann. —this deputy was Odell who in 1729 opened a theatre in G.F. 3

The Larpent Catalogue gives the date of Chetwynd's appointment as March 10; but both appointments are listed in the February, 1738, issue of Gentleman's Magazine. Whether or not the appointment of Chetwynd and Odell has any bearing on the question of Agamemnon's approval, I cannot say. The play was in the office of the Licenser more than a month before the assistants were provided; it was not performed until at least a month after they took office, and we do not know the date it was returned approved.

Even before Chetwynd and Odell came upon the scene the Lord Chamberlain's office had shown interest in the new plays. Agamemnon was the sixth new theatrical entertainment to come upon the stage after the approval of the Licensing Act, and minor deletions had been necessary in at least three of the plays. 4 James Miller's Coffee House had
required "one correction ... by Examiner," according to the Larpent Catalogue, before its presentation on January 26. Another play by Miller, Art and Nature, had "a few passages deleted by Examiner" before it came to the stage on February 16; and Agamemnon, as has been noted, lost the last six lines of its prologue at the direction of the Examiner. I have not had an opportunity to examine Miller's plays; but since they are noted for their lack of indecency, it is likely that the deletions were of passages that were objected to on political grounds.

Of the Licenser and his deputy very little is known. Chetwynd held a seat in parliament and was related to the Talbot family, with which Thomson's association has been noted. Chetwynd was also on friendly terms with Bolingbroke, according to Sichel; but I have been able to find no conclusive evidence of any relationship between the two men. Odell has received some notice from scholars on the basis of his writings; but no comment on his activities as the Licenser's deputy has been found. Disraeli's Curiosities of Literature quotes Oldys' Diary to show Odell's affiliation with Walpole. Oldys had visited Mrs. Odell to see her husband's papers after his death and among them had found some poems "mostly in favour of the ministry, and against Mr. Pope." He reports that Walpole had encouraged Odell to print one of the poems, but had subsequently asked the poet not to publish it for fear that it might "hurt his
interest with Lord Chesterfield, and some other noblemen who favoured Mr. Pope for his fine genius." The incident is interesting in that it tells of an unusual instance of Walpole's having been engaged in a literary feud of any sort. It is likely, however, that the poem was written and printed long before the events of 1737-38 gave it special significance; Walpole would hardly have been concerned over his non-existent interest with Chesterfield during those years.

At any rate, *Agamemnon* made its way to the stage through the chambers of the Licenser; and *Mustapha*, the second of the Opposition dramas, similarly succeeded. Pope and Bolingbroke were not oblivious to the danger to be faced in that quarter, however, as is evidenced by their asking Hill to change the title of his play to avoid use of the word *Patriot*. Their success in getting *Agamemnon* and *Mustapha* to the stage and their confidence in proceeding with *Edward* may have been due to the friendship between Chetwynd and Bolingbroke, if there was a friendship between the two men. If such was the case, Chetwynd was no longer able to close his eyes obligingly to the political innuendoes in the plays after the ringing success of the two previous Opposition dramas. Thomson affected surprise at the prohibition of his play; but his announcement in the April issue of the *London Magazine* smacks more of Bolingbroke's style than of Thomson's; for it purports, sarcastically, to
be a defense, while it is, in effect, itself an attack upon
the ministry:

A Tragedy, called EDWARD and ELEONORA. By Mr.
THOMSON. The Representation of this Tragedy on
the Stage has been prohibited by Authority, for
what Reason the Author knows not. He is conscious,
that he had no other Intention, but to paint
Virtue and Vice in their proper Colours; and he
hopes, that there is neither Sentiment nor Reflec-
tion introduced that does not flow naturally from
the Subject. The Characters in the Play cannot
offend those whom they may be thought to resemble:
They are virtuous. If they displease, they can
displease only those alone to whom they were
never intended to be applied. And how Moral
Reflections and Sentiments of Liberty should offend,
in a free Nation, he will not enquire. He is only
sollicitous to approve himself, to all who judge
impartially, an honest Man, and a Lover of his
Country. For his Success, he trusts to that
Candour and Indulgence, which he has already
met with from the Publick, on other Occasions.7

Algernon Sidney, as the Daily Gazetteer writer signs
himself, was not slow to take up the bait put out by
Thomson in this announcement.8 He accuses Thomson of having
had "little more in View in writing that Piece than to feed
the Prejudice of such as he hoped to find weak enough to
mistake that guilty Compliance for Dramatick Genius. . . ."
He continues to refute Thomson's contentions, remarking that
"as the Act upon which the Prohibition is founded was
previous to the Play, the Prohibition can only be attri-
buted to the Writer himself," and not to "Authority."
Although Thomson claims not to know the reason for Edward's
having been refused, Sidney notes, he himself calls attention
to the "resemblance of the characters to persons now living"
as having been the cause of its prohibition.

Sidney attacks Brooke as well as Thomson, writing of that author:

The Writer of *Gustavus Vasa* accosts the Town much in the same Manner, by submitting his Piece forsooth, to every Lover of Liberty, and assuring us, (whatever the Lord Chamberlain may think on't) that he trusts his Sentiments are Just, and no way unbecoming a FREE SUBJECT of BRITAIN to publish, or the HIGHEST POWERS to APPROVE. . . .

That the importance of the Opposition poets and their role in the Opposition was recognized by the ministry is indicated by Sidney as he continues to discuss the "Motives of their Writing:"

... it is apparent that these Gentlemen, who with such Expence of Time and Character, insist upon being esteemed the Bards of Liberty, or, in other Words, the Patriot Poets, have, in Reality, a very rational Claim to be accepted as such; it being evident that their Views, and the Methods they take to accomplish them, agree in the exactest Manner with those of the principal Leaders of the Opposition: The Intention of each is their own private Interest, and the Means made use to accomplish it is a Declaration of nothing but Love for the Publick. . . .

*Common Sense* entered the fray in the same month, before the tragedies were published, with an ironic attack upon the Licenser:

... Two very wicked Plays have been lately prohibited, but I intend to read them as soon as they are published, that I may take Occasion from thence to bestow some Praises on the Projector of the Act, as well as on the Licenser, his Deputy, and his Deputy's Deputy. 9

The *London Magazine* reprinted the article from *Common Sense*, but *Scot's Magazine* issued its own opinion in an article
that is slanted more toward literary than toward political considerations:

The late act for regulating the stage has already produced some unexpected occurrences; and at present the publick is offered proposals for printing by subscription a tragedy called Edward and Eleonora, written by Mr. Thomson, author of the Seasons, &c. At which some writers in defence of its being denied representation, seem a little displeased; while others think the author has just cause to complain of his treatment— For my own part, I am perfectly easy whether these Tragical Gentlemen are ever more allowed the use of the theatre; for, if Comedy does not next winter relieve us, I am under no small apprehension that we critics, who scorn to laugh in a deep scene, shall lose the art of smiling with success. ..

The article agrees in tone with Thomas Edwards' letter of June, 1739, to Lewis Crusius, in which Edwards criticizes the two prohibited plays as being "but indifferent performances" and suggests that had the Lord Chamberlain prohibited the plays on that basis, nothing could have been said in answer to him. He goes on to remark that Brooke's tragedy, especially, could have been saved only by party prejudice. Chetwood's discussion of the printing of Gustavus bears out Edwards' opinion:

But that Prohibition turned more to the Author's Advantage, than if it had appeared on the Stage; for as he was looked upon as a Person of Merit, and the Town had great Expectations from this Piece, he was advised to print it by Subscription, which was done accordingly in the Year 1738; and the Generosity of his Friends, and many of the Nobility, to make amends for his Disappointment, was so great, that I have heard, his Subscription amounted to above eight hundred pounds.
Accounts of the remuneration brought to the two poets by the publication of their works vary; most authorities agree that Brooke must have profited tremendously from the subscription edition of *Gustavus Vasa*, but Morel and Macaulay suggest that Thomson's fortune was not so good. I have been able to discover no real evidence of the success of *Edward*; but the number of copies printed—3500 ordinary and 1000 fine—and the fact that there were printings from three different settings of type in Thomson's lifetime would indicate that sales were fairly good.

The dedication of the play to the Princess of Wales underscores the poet's intention that the public should apply the tragedy to the contemporary situation:

... In the Character of ELEONORA I have endeavoured to represent, however faintly, a PRINCESS distinguish'd for all the Virtues that render Greatness amiable. I have aimed, particularly, to do justice to her inviolable Affection and generous Tenderness for a PRINCE, who was the Darling of a great and free People.

The prologue and epilogue are printed immediately after the dedication in the first edition; and printed on a separate page, in Gothic type, following the epilogue, is the announcement:

ADVERTISEMENT

THE Representation of this Tragedy, on the Stage, was prohibited in the Year ONE THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-NINE.

It is perhaps significant that *Edward and Eleonora* is the only one of Thomson's works that he had printed for himself.
The tragedy was sold by A. Millar, Thomson's printer, but expressly printed "for the Author."

Critics who have been willing to agree that Agamemnon was too open an attack on the ministry, and that Mustapha may have deserved prohibition, have suggested that Edward and Eleonora contains no offensive passages that might not easily be deleted. Thomson's contemporaries—those, that is, who were not directly involved in the political controversy—were unable to see any real harm in the play. Johnson remarked of Edward and Gustavus, "It is hard to discover why either play should have been obstructed." Edwards noted "but few passages in either, which can be reckoned to cast reflections by an invidious parallel, and even there it does not seem to me to be plainly designed. . . ." Genest suggested that Thomson had been improper in his allusions to the differences between the King and the Prince, but that "the Licenser should have expunged these passages and not have prohibited the whole piece." Even after Macaulay had recognized the seriousness of the parallel between the two Princes of Wales, Grant insisted that the play "reflected only incidentally upon the administration" and that had the offensive passages been deleted "the play would have been rendered inoffensive." A close examination of Edward and its relationship to contemporary politics will, I think, tend to show that there was good reason for its prohibition.
The review of the play, promised by Algernon Sidney in his article of April 28, appeared in the Daily Gazetteer on June 2, 1739. Sidney does not do the Opposition the favor of pointing out the obvious political parallels in the tragedy, but neither does he allow his readers to think he has been deceived, for he writes in the last paragraph of his review:

"It can be no Prejudice to Mr. Thomson to solve the following easy Question in his own Breast: --Whether an Intention to write a Tragedy, separate from any View of Satyr or Panegyric, produced this Play?--the solution of which, I am persuaded, will easily account for any treatment he has had, or may hereafter meet with in relation to this Piece."

Thomson, I trust, would have no difficulty in solving that question "in his own breast," for Edward and Eleonora was written as a party document at the instigation of the Opposition leaders if not actually under their direction. That Pope (and surely Bolingbroke also) saw the play at various stages of its composition is suggested by Pope's letters to Hill. Thomson was evidently not well pleased with the attempt at supervision, for he made himself unavailable to Pope while he was composing most of the tragedy. Pope and Bolingbroke were therefore forced to oversee the correction of Hill's tragedy, suiting it, probably without his knowledge, to their own needs. But if we keep those needs in mind when examining Edward and Eleonora, it becomes obvious that Thomson performed ably on his own.
The story chosen for Thomson's third drama is well suited to political allegory: the hero is a patriot prince whose father has been prejudiced against him by an evil minister. It has been seen that the Opposition, at this point, has two aims to be accomplished on the stage: (1) to create, in the minds of the people, a picture of Frederick as the patriot prince, and (2) to attack Walpole, representing him as an evil, power-hungry, family-wrecking minister. *Agamemnon, Mustapha, Gustavus, Caesar,* and *Edward* are possessed of characters designed to further these two impressions. Thomson's plays have the additional value of presenting parallels to Bolingbroke—Melisander in *Agamemnon* and Gloster in *Edward*. In these two characters rests one of the strongest indications that there was indeed a New Opposition, and that Bolingbroke was its guiding force.

That Bolingbroke is represented in *Edward* by Gloster is supported by similarities in the lives of the two men as well as by the similarities in their ideas. Bolingbroke had joined with the Pretender in the Jacobite uprising of 1715, but had betrayed his conspirators. Hervey tells us that popular opinion was that Bolingbroke had betrayed the Pretender in order to gain his pardon from the court. Whatever his motive, the circumstance provides background for the dialogue between Gloster and Edward on the subject of the Earl of Leister's rebellion:

Gloster: . . . You have already saved
Your Father from his Foes, from haughty LEISTER:
Now save him from his Ministers, from those
Who hold him captive in the worst of Chains--

Edward: You, GLOSTER, sav'ed us both.

Gloster: I did my Duty;
Even while I join'd with LEISTER, I did my Duty--
I hope I did--He who contends for Freedom,
Can ne'er be deem'd his Sovereign's Foe:

(I-i)

He continues, in phrases similar to those employed by
Bolingbroke in "The Patriot King," to say that the true enemy
of his sovereign and of his country is the "Wretch that
tempts him to subvert" freedom. The implication of the
reference to Edward's father and his ministers is clear,
I believe, as are the implications of the lines spoken by
Gloster immediately preceding those quoted above. He
describes England as

... drain'd by ten thousand Arts
of ministerial Rapine, endless Taxes,
... Besides, who know what evil Counsellors, again,
Are gather'd round the Throne. In Times like these,
Disturb'd, and lowring with unsettled Freedom,
One step to lawless Power, one old Attempt
Renew'd, the least Infringement of our Charters,
Would hurl the giddy Nation into Tempest. (I-i)

In this same discourse Gloster delivers another tirade
against evil ministers and again urges his prince to under-
take the duties of a patriot king:

... Tho' your Cause be holy,
Believe me, 'tis a much more pious Office,
To save your Father's old and broken Years,
His mild and easy Temper, from the Snares
Of low, corrupt insinuating Traitors:
A nobler Office far! on the firm Base
Of well-proportion'd Liberty, to build
The common Quiet, Happiness and Glory,
Of King and People, England's rising Grandeur. . .
To you, my Prince, this Task, or right, belongs.
Has not the Royal Heir far juster Claim
To share his Father's inmost Heart and Counsels,
Than Aliens to his Int'rest, those, who make
A Property, a Market of his Honour? (I-i)

Edward allows himself to be convinced that it is best
to give up the Crusade and return to England, but his
resolution is prevented by the "accident" that forms the
basis of the story. He is stabbed with a poisoned dagger
by a messenger of peace from Selim, the Sultan against whose
forces Edward's are fighting. Gloster, meanwhile, alone with
Theald while Edward is talking with the messenger, delivers
Bolingbroke's reasons for being interested in Frederick:

EDWARD has great, has amiable Virtues,
That Virtue chiefly which befits a Prince:
He loves the People he must one day rule:
.......
Now will I tell thee, THEALD, whence I stopp
To wear the gaudy Chains of Court-Attendance,
At these grey Years; that should in calm Retirement
Pass the soft Evening of a bustling Life,
And plume my parting Soul for better Worlds.
Amidst his many Virtues, youthful EDWARD
Is lofty, warm, and absolute of Temper:
I therefore seek to moderate his Heat,
To guide his fiery Virtues, that, misled,
By dazzling Power and flattering Sycophants,
Might finish what his Father's weaker Measures
Have try'd in vain. (I-iii)

Here is Frederick represented as a prince who "loves the
people he must one day rule," and his very faults are ones
that might endear him to his subjects--indeed, are "fiery
Virtues."

The accident that threatens Edward's life in the tragedy
is the occasion for putting into dialogue many of the theories
of "The Patriot King." Daraxa, the captive consort of Selim, reveals to Gloster, Theald, and Eleonora the only known antidote to the poison—"To find some Person, that, with friendly Lip, May draw the Poison forth . . . ." Certain death, however, is the lot of the generous person who attempts the deed. Eleonora immediately insists that she be allowed to sacrifice her life for that of her husband. Gloster objects that Edward will never allow such a sacrifice, and Theald urges:

.... but sure the Life of Thousands,  
The mingled Cause at once of Heaven and Earth,  
Should o'er the best the dearest Life prevail. (II-i)

His reasoning is that upon Edward depends the fate of England; Eleonora, on hearing of the dreadful accident, had remarked:

England has no more a Prince, in whom she plac'd  
Her Glory, her Delight, her only Hope. . . . (I-v)

Here are the echoes of Bolingbroke's theory that the only hope for a country that has been overcome by corruption lies in the advent of a patriot king.

When the remedy suggested by Daraxa is proposed to Edward, he exhibits a virtuous regard for the private rights of his people:

.... Talk not of Low Condition,  
And of my publick Rank: when Life or Death  
Becomes the Question, all Distinctions vanish;  
On the same Level stand, in This the Sons  
Of equal Nature all. (II-ii)

Gloster's impassioned plea for Edward to live for "England's
promis'd Glory" can easily be seen to be an inspirational message from Bolingbroke to Frederick through the medium of Thomson's pen:

O save our Country, EDWARD! save a Nation,
The Chosen Land, the last Retreat of Freedom,
Amidst a broken World! -- Cast back thy View,
And trace from farthest Times her old Renown.

(Thomson has done this himself in the long poem Liberty.)

Think of the Blood that, to maintain her Rights,
And nurse her sheltering Laws, has flow'd in Battle,
Or on the Patriot's Scaffold. Think what Cares,
What Vigilance, what Toils, what bright Contention,
In councils, Camps, and well-disputed Senates,
It cost our generous Ancestors, to raise
A matchless Plan of Freedom: whence we shine,
Even in the jealous Eye of Hostile Nations,
The happiest of Mankind. (II-ii)

Having traced the development of freedom and the Constitution (A matchless Plan of Freedom), Gloster expresses his fear for the safety of these blessings that have been so dearly won; and his discussion of the threat to freedom, as well as the method by which it is to be protected or re-established, comes directly from the pages of "The Patriot King:"

--Then see all This,
This Virtue, Wisdom, Toil and Blood of Ages
Behold it ready to be lost for ever.
Behold us almost broken to the Yoke,
Robb'd of our antient Spirit, sunk in Baseness,
At home corrupted, and despis'd abroad.
Behold our Wealth consum'd, those Treasures squander'd,
That might protect and nourish wholesome Peace,
Or urge a glorious War; on Wretches squander'd,
A venal Crew that plunder and disgrace us. (II-ii)

The references to the political situation in England are unmistakable. "Despis'd abroad" calls the audience to
remember the insults offered the nation by Spain's insistence on the right to search merchant vessels; and readers are further reminded that the wealth being spent by Walpole to corrupt the parliament might be used in a "glorious War" against Spain. Having thus outlined the situation, Gloster drives home his argument with Bolingbroke's theory that only a patriot king can rescue a country from such conditions as these:

In this important, this decisive Hour,
On Thee, and Thee alone, our weeping Country
Turns her distressful Eye; to Thee she calls,
And with a helpless Parent's piercing Voice.
Wilt thou not live for Her: for Her subdue
A graceful Pride, I own, but still a Pride,
That more becomes thy Courage and thy Youth
Than Birth and publick Station? Nay, for Her,
Say, wouldst thou not resign the dearest Passions?

(Il-ii)

Eleonora adds her voice to that of Gloster in the following scene when she urges him to let her

... preserve a Life, in which is wrapt
The Life of Thousands. ...  

(Il-iii)

And she further asks him to consider how unimportant is her life when compared to

... All Ranks, all Ages,
All Arts, all Virtues, all a State comprises?
These have a higher Claim to thy Protection.
Live then for them.--O make a great Effort!
What none but Heroes can, bid the soft Passions
The Private stoop to Those that grasp a Publick.
Live to possess the Pleasure of a God,
To bless a People trusted to thy Care.
Life to fulfill thy long Career of Glory,
But just begun ... ... ... ...  

(Il-iv)
The combined efforts of Eleonora and Gloster are unable to prevail over Edward's refusal to allow his princess to make the sacrifice; but when he succumbs to the first stage of the poison's action—a deep "resistless sleep"—Eleonora sucks the poison from his wound. When he awakes and discovers what has occurred, he falls into such a lethargy of mourning that Gloster must again arouse him to his duty. The old counselor has had news of the death of the King, and he imparts to Edward the knowledge that he is now King of England. Edward eulogizes his father, excusing him for his weak submission to evil ministers:

Alas! my Royal Father is no more!
The gentlest of Mankind, the most abus'd!
Of gracious Nature, a fit Soil for Virtues,
'Til there his Creatures sow'd their flattering Lies,
And made him—-No, not all their cursed Arts
Could ever make him insolent or cruel.
O my deluded Father. Little Joy
Had'st thou in Life, led from thy real Good
And genuine Glory, from thy People's Love,
That noblest Aim of Kings, by smiling Traitors.
Is there a Curse on human Kind so fell,
So pestilent, at once, to Prince and People,
As the base servile Vermin of a Court,
Corrupt, corrupting Ministers and Favourites? (Iv-vii)

Gloster takes advantage of the mood to remind the new King:

And thy dejected Country calls upon thee
To save Her, raise Her, to restore her Honour. (IV-ii)

The passage serves to point up not only the direct relation of the play to "The Patriot King," but to emphasize the carefulness with which the plans of the New Opposition were laid.

The reasoning behind the Licencer's permitting Agamemnon and Mustapha and then forbidding Gustavus and Edward has long
been considered something of a mystery. It could be urged that the plays that were so offensive as to bring about the Licensing Act were comedies and farces and that the Licenser simply failed to look for offensive passages in tragic plays. He caught the reference to the Licensing Act itself in Agamemnon's prologue; but that, after all, was a direct statement, disguised by no sort of allegory. This theory falls down, however, when we recall that Agamemnon was greeted as a party-inspired attack on the ministry and therefore should have served as a warning to the Licenser to check Mustapha more closely. Mustapha's successful escape also discourages the theory that examination of the plays was a hap-hazardly performed function before it was taken over by Chetwynd and Odell in February or March of 1738. Agamemnon had been submitted in January and might have gotten through in the confusion of getting the office organized, but Mustapha had not that advantage. Professor McKillop suggests that the Licenser allowed Agamemnon because he did not want to call attention to its political significance by "bringing in a bill of particulars." If this was the case, the Lord Chamberlain must have realized that the strategy had failed when the public immediately made the associations he had declined to point out. One other remote possibility is the complicity of Chetwynd in the scheme of the Opposition. If the Licenser was indeed a friend of Bolingbroke's, he might have been willing to overlook the political implications of the plays
until Mustapha caused such a stir that he was forced, for his own protection, to perform his job. This theory is interesting conjecture, but it is based only on the knowledge of Chetwynd's connection with the now "anti-Walpole" Talbot family and his reported friendship with Bolingbroke.

Although I can offer little more than conjectured explanations for the failure of the Licenser to intercept Agamemnon and Mustapha, the reasons for his having stopped Edward and Eleonora clearly fall into three categories: (1) the previous success of the Opposition dramas in stirring up public opinion; (2) the newly re-united and strengthened Opposition, built around the figurehead of Frederick as patriot prince; and (3) the crises that were developing in the ministry and its foreign policy.

It is not necessary, I think, to comment on the first of these categories, as I have already discussed in a previous chapter the reaction to Agamemnon. Walpole would probably have been concerned, as Bolingbroke predicted in his October, 1737, letter to Wyndham, over indications of a stronger, more influential Opposition. A conversation between Walpole and the Queen, reported by Hervey, reveals his increased concern over the part Frederick was playing in the Opposition. The Prince's having actually voted with the Opposition on the question of the Spanish Convention made the matter still more serious. Walpole was always somewhat fearful of Bolingbroke, and the knowledge that
Bolingbroke was in England alerted the minister to possible changes in the Opposition's plan of attack. The secession of the Opposition from Parliament on March 9 indicated to Sir Robert that the party was determined to take positive action, and he would therefore be anxious to prevent its drawing additional members to its side.

In the third category of reasons for the Licenser's having clamped down on tragedies praising Frederick as the patriot prince must be counted the dangerous situation then developing with Spain and the resulting threat to Walpole's position in the government. In the journals for the opening months of 1739 we find numerous articles denouncing the Spanish Convention and expressing dissatisfaction with the ministry's action in accepting it. Lecky says the "outrage was fierce and loud," and Leadam tells us that "Lampoons and caricatures of ministers and the convention filled the town." William Pitt's speech against the convention succeeded in reducing the minister's majority to 28 just two weeks before the Licenser announced his decision against the plays.

The implications of these events leave little room for doubt that the action against Edward and Gustavus constituted an attempt of the administration to prevent the further inflammation of public opinion. In the past, Walpole had been oblivious, or nearly so, to attack from the poets of the Opposition; but his own authority was endangered now.
This new, concerted effort of his political opponents was having its damaging effect. He recognized, though the King did not, the threat that the Opposition was able to pose with its new figurehead, disguised and presented to the public as a prospective patriot king.

1739 was the climactic year for the literary Opposition to Walpole, and possibly for the political Opposition as well. War was declared in October; and though the minister remained at the head of the government until 1742, his power was on the decline. He introduced a bill for the general register of seamen in February of 1740, and the Opposition used the bill against him by denouncing it as an attempt to enslave the people. In October both Emperor Charles VI and Anne of Russia died, and the resulting upset in continental relations caused the collapse of Walpole's carefully constructed program for preventing French aggression. The minister was able to thwart an attack on his foreign and domestic policy the following February; but his power was steadily declining, and by December the Opposition was just sixteen votes short of a majority. Walpole's majority was reduced to three votes in January of 1742 when Pulteney delivered his famous attack against the minister. In February Sir Robert's long administration came to an end, and he was created Earl of Orford on February 9.

Once the policy of the Licenser's office was determinedly set against the dramas of the Opposition, Thomson's
importance to the political organization decreased. Bolingbroke retired to France in April, 1739, after having been told by Pulteney that "his very name and presence in England did hurt." He continued to correspond with Wyndham, but his leadership in affairs of the Opposition does not appear to have been active during the years immediately following the banning of the political plays. Thomson, however, had been well enough indoctrinated in the theories of "The Patriot King" that they continued to appear in his work. In 1740 the dramatist was commissioned with Mallet to write a masque celebrating the birthdate of Princess Augusta and the accession of the Hanoverians to the throne. Together, the two Opposition dramatists produced *Alfred*, a work which was drawn to the specifications of Bolingbroke's treatise on "The Patriot King."

There are evidences of meetings between the Opposition leaders and the poets during the year 1740; and Lyttelton's continued friendship with Thomson has been thought to be the reason for the poet's losing his pension when Lyttelton fell from the Prince's favor in 1748. A gathering of the writers of the Opposition may be indicated by Lyttelton's letter to Mallet in the early months of 1740. He asks Mallet to come to his house on Sunday, informing him that "Ld. Barrington, Hammond, Mitchel, & Thomson" will be there. James Hammond, who was in the employ of Frederick, wrote to Mallet on October 5, 1740, concerning the representation of the masque
on the public stage. The letter is important for its indication that the Prince was still actively interested in the drama of the Opposition, and for the further indication that he met with the poets to discuss these matters.

Alfred was produced privately at Cliveden, the Prince's country residence, on August 1, 1740; and in spite of the indication from Hammond's letter that the poets intended to produce the play publicly during the 1740-41 season, it did not actually reach the Drury Lane stage until 1745. The Larpent manuscript of the masque has an endorsement by Fleetwood dated February 9, 1740, requesting the Lord Chamberlain's approval for an early showing; but Fleetwood was using the old style date. There would have been no reason for having the masque approved before its private showing in August, 1740; on the other hand, if the intention was to have the play produced during the 1740-41 season, it would normally have been submitted early in 1741. We may safely assume, therefore, that in the meeting of the Prince and his supporters, the resolution was made to produce the masque and that it was subsequently submitted to the Licenser the following February.

There is no apparent reason for the delay of four years in bringing the masque to the stage. A curious interchange of letters between Hill and Mallet sheds some light on the problem. Hill's addiction to writing critical letters on the writings of his contemporaries led him to send to
Mallet rather detailed comments on *Alfred* on December 8 and December 23, 1741. In the earlier letter he remarks that the masque is "with the Licenser," a fact which, if true, would argue that the production of the play was being delayed by the Licenser's indecision. In answer to Hill's letter of June 13, 1742, asking what happened to *Alfred*, however, Mallet writes that the play has long been licensed. "Why," he continues, "it it [sic] was not acted last winter, I would tell you without reserve; were it not that I must then descend into some wretched detail of Mr. Fleetwood's management."34

*Alfred* had little of the politician about him, but he was a patriot king in the best Bolingbroke tradition. The masque is based on the tradition that Alfred the Great wandered in the woods of Athelney for a period of time after his defeat at the hands of the Danes. In the masque, Alfred is subjected to this time of affliction in order that his virtues may be strengthened and that he may be prepared to rule benevolently; thus, Thomson dramatizes Bolingbroke's idea that the patriot king who suffers adversity before he comes to power is better prepared to exercise his power for the good of the people. Alfred is aware of his duty toward his subjects, and he scorns suicide as a means of escape from difficulty. With Bolingbroke, he believes that "A monarch holds/ His life in trust for others." (I-ii)
The only distinctive political reference that I am able to find in the play was on the "corruption" theme. A hermit, who is given the task of revealing to Alfred the glories of his future reign, tells his own story to the King, remarking that the future has been revealed to him by spirits "friendly to this isle:"

I liv'd thro' future ages; felt the virtue,
The great, the glorious passions that will fire
Distant posterity; when guardian laws
Are by the patriot, in the glowing senate,
Won from corruption; when th' impatient arm
Of liberty, invincible, shall scourge
The tyrants of mankind. . . . (I-v)

There is, in this passage, none of the invective against "foul ministers" that is to be found in the two preceding plays; Thomson appears to have returned to a patriotic theme rather than a political one—the criticism implied here being less specific even than that he uttered in the quoted passages of Liberty. The tone is relaxed—almost as though the hermit's prediction had come to pass, and as though the patriot king had already succeeded in restoring the constitution to a free people.

Emphasizing for Alfred the lesson he is to learn by his trials, the hermit adjures him,

But, prince, remember, then,
The vows, the noble uses, of affliction.
Preserve the quick humanity it gives,
The pitying, social sense of human weakness:
Yet keep thy stubborn fortitude entire,
The manly heart that to another's woe
Is tender, but superior to its own. (I-v)

Alfred's answer to the hermit's instructive speech is
calculated to show that he has already learned his role; and we may gather from his recitation that he learned it in Bolingbroke's "Patriot King:"

I thank thee, father, for thy pious counsel.
And witness, thou dread power! who seest my heart;
That if not to perform my regal task,
To be the common father of my people,
Patron of honor, virtue and religion;
If not to shelter industry, to guard
His honest portion from oppressive pride,
From wasteful riot, and the sons of rapine,
Who basely ravish what they dare not earn;
If not to deal out justice, like the sun,
With equal light; if not to spread thy bounty,
The treasures trusted to me, not my own,
On all the smiling ranks of nourish'd life;
If not to raise our drooping English name,
To clothe it yet with terror; make this land
Renown'd for peaceful arts to bless mankind,
And generous war to humble proud oppressors:
If not to build on an eternal base,
On liberty and laws, the public weal:
If not for these great ends I am ordain'd,
May I ne'er idly fill the throne of England! (I-v)

The Larpent manuscript copy of Alfred differs from the first printed edition in that it contains an extra act placed between the two acts that are printed. There is nothing in the inserted act that has about it any air of politics; but one song embodies an idea of the origin of liberty. Although the idea is by no means the exclusive property of Bolingbroke, it does correspond exactly to his belief on the subject as expressed in "The Patriot King."

Note also its similarity to Gloster's speech on the same topic in the first act of Edward and Eleonora:

Fair Freedom! Sovereign boon of heaven,
Great charter, with out being given;
For which the patriot and the sage
Have plan'd have bled thro every age,
High privilege of human race!
Beyond a mortal Monarch's grace;
Who could not give, who cannot claim
What but from God immediate came. 35

Bolingbroke's reflections on the inspirational value of
a prince's private virtues can be seen in the hermit's re-
minder to Alfred that

A sovereign's great example forms a people.
The public breast is noble or is vile,
As he inspires it.

And the remarks in "The Patriot King" concerning commerce
appear in Alfred as a prediction of England's glorious
future:

I see thy commerce, Britain, grasp the world:
All nations serve thee; every foreign flood,
Subjected, pays its tribute to the Thames. (II-v)

That Thomson's own beliefs on certain of these points
were clearly expressed even before his association with the
Opposition must be admitted. He had denounced corruption in
Britannia and in Liberty; and throughout his works runs a
strain of concern for the preservation of British commerce
and trade as the primary source of her freedom. His previous
interest in such issues can be considered a proof of his
association with Bolingbroke's New Opposition; for the
similarity of sentiments must necessarily have been the
basis of his attraction to the cause and of the cause to
him.

After the completion of Alfred, Thomson continued
writing material that is consistent with the patriotic
sentiments of the Opposition, but that has little or no
flavor of politics. In 1744 he added to the *Seasons* the flattering portraits of the Opposition leaders; and it may be noted that the portraits were only of the patriots, including no one who was not a member of the coterie under Bolingbroke's direction in 1738-39.

*Tancred and Sigismunda* was performed in 1745 and was published the same year with a dedication to Frederick. In the plot of the drama there is little to connect it with the patriot king theme; several speeches, however, testify to the enduring nature of Bolingbroke's influence over Thomson. Tancred is instructed in the duties of a king by Sifredi, who sets before him the virtuous example of his predecessor:

He lov'd his People, deem'd them all his Children;
The Good exalted and depress'd the Bad.
He Spurn'd the flattering Crew, with Scorn rejected
Their smooth Advice that only means themselves,
Their Schemes to aggrandize him into Baseness:
Nor did he less disdain the secret Breath,
The whisper'd Tale, that blights a virtuous Name.
He sought alone the Good of Those for whom
He was entrusted with the sovereign Power:
Well knowing that a People in their Rights
And Industry protected; living safe
Beneath the sacred Shelter of the Laws,
Encourag'd in their Genius, Arts and Labours,
And happy each as he himself deserves,
Are ne'er ungrateful.36  (I-iv)

Sifredi recalls, in a speech about the young king, Bolingbroke's discussion on the seeds of patriotism and the necessity for early training of the patriot king:

But if the Seeds of Virtue glow within him,
I will awake a higher Sense, a Love
That grasps the Loves and Happiness of Millions  (II-viii)
And Tancred himself remembers the injunction demanding personal virtue on the part of the monarch:

There is
Can be, no Public without Private Virtue ——
(II-viii)

Benjamin Victor, writing for the Daily Post, called attention to the political flavor of a speech of the Earl of Osmond's:

I here renounce those Errors and Divisions
That have so long disturb'd our Peace, and seem'd Fermenting still, to threaten new Commotions—
By Time instructed, let us not disdain
To quit Mistakes
(II-iv)

Victor informed us, as well, of the party attitude toward Tancred and Sigismunda:

We all plainly saw by what Interest the Author of Tancred and Sigismunda was supported. A very remarkable new Lord of the Treasury was proud of appearing its Foster Father, and attended at the Publick Rehearsals; the first Night of the Performance this celebrated Person, and his Friends in the Box with him (all very lately most flaming Patriots!) were seen clapping their Hands at the following remarkable Speech...

In spite of Victor's insinuations, it is likely that the interest displayed by Thomson's friends on this occasion was due to regard for the poet rather than to political enthusiasm, for the tragedy has little to recommend it in the way of party-inspired politics. The passage quoted by Victor and those I have pointed out for their application to Frederick's situation are the only political references I have been able to find in the play.
Coriolanus, Thomson's last drama, deals not with a king or prince, but with a nobleman whose haughty pride and disdain for the common man results in his being exiled from Rome. Since in this tragedy Thomson turns from the problems that he has considered in the two political dramas and to some extent in Alfred and Tancred, I do not discuss it at length. The hero, Coriolanus, represents a negative side of the ideal ruler—one who possesses the strength and the virtue of a patriot, but who lacks the benevolent humanity that is also necessary. He is accused of the fault by Cominius, who tells him

... it would better suit
A fierce despotic Chief of barbarous Slaves,
Than the calm Dignity of one who sits
In the grave Senate of a free Republic,
To talk so high, and as it were to thrust
Plebeians from the native Rights of man. ---38

(III-iii)

and further

... who'er amidst the Sons
Of Reason, Valour, Liberty, and Virtue,
Displays distinguish'd Merit, is a Noble
Of Nature's own creating. (III-iii)

We can see, as Orville Linck suggests, that Thomson is farther from any political motive in Coriolanus than he has been in any drama since Sophonisba.39 "The thought of Coriolanus is on a much higher plane than that of partisan interest," Linck writes; and Thomson's freedom from dependence on the Prince may well have been the reason for a notable difference in tone in his last work. Although he had been writing the tragedy as early as 1742, it was still
in the process of composition when he wrote to a lady in May, 1745, that he had decided to write a new tragedy.
"... Not entirely trusting to the Broad Bottom," he wrote,
"I will try to subsist upon the narrow but sure one of Self-Independency." He was still closely associated with Lyttelton and Pitt, and the same letter indicates that they probably advised him in the writing of Coriolanus. There is nothing in the tragedy to suggest any negation of his previously expressed sentiments; and in view of his stated intention, we may assume that Coriolanus was to have been something of a declaration of independence.
NOTES

INTRODUCTION


5. p. 153. Henry A. Beers disagrees with Bayne and Grant. Explaining why romanticism did not develop along with other Shakespearean influences on the dramas of the eighteenth century, Beers writes that the genius of the new poets was lyrical or descriptive—not dramatic. They wrote plays "in obedience to the expectation that every man of letters should try his hand at playwriting." A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1910), p. 75.


7. p. 144.

8. p. 182.

CHAPTER I


2. Ibid., pp. 18-19.

3. Ibid., p. 8 and note.


7. Hervey, I, 8 and note.


11. The office of Prime Minister as it exists today had not yet been created. Walpole was the First Lord of the Treasury; but for evidence that he was referred to as "prime" or "first" minister, see p. 11 below.

12. Leadam, IX, 344.

13. Quoted Leadam, IX, 346.


18. Leadam, IX, 346.


20. Hervey, I, 30-66, gives an interesting account of the event.


24. Ibid., p. 173.

25. Ibid., pp. 311-12.


27. Leadam, IX, 361-62. Bolingbroke obviously approved the secession; and Pulteney agreed with him at first, but later thought it had been a mistake. In Coxe, II, 522-23, Bolingbroke's letter to Wyndham (July 23, 1739) refers to Pulteney's attitude toward the move, "... The step he was so fond of, and grew tired of so soon was the only one that you could take of any meaning or tendency. ..."


30. Hervey, I, 276. It should be noted that the Queen's statement does not imply that Frederick was given this amount of money as an allowance to dispose of as he saw fit.

31. Hervey, II, 121-23.

32. Gentleman's Magazine, VII (September, 1737), p. 679. The correspondence, including letters from the Prince, the Princess, the King and the Queen, was published in the Gentleman's Magazine.

33. p. 173.


35. Coxe, III, 479.

36. Ibid., 486. The source of Walpole's information probably was Hervey, who tells of having seen the Opposition leaders on their way to call on the Prince shortly after he had received the King's command to move out of St. James's Palace. See Hervey, II, 442.

37. Bolingbroke refers here to the "allowance" controversy, which he had hoped would result in a complete break between the King and the Prince.
38. Coxe, III, 494.
40. Coxe, III, 506.
41. Ibid.

42. Pope's letter to Lyttelton (November 1, 1738) shows that the leaders of the New Opposition felt it important to keep even Pulteney, whom they no longer trusted, in the group. See Alexander Pope, The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, ed. George Sherburn (5 vols.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956), IV, 142.

43. Coxe, III, 506.

44. The article appears to be almost an outline of Bolingbroke's "The Idea of a Patriot King," which is discussed below in Chapter III, pp. 65-67. That the ideas expressed in this work had been formulated for publication as early as 1738 is significant.

45. pp. 119-120.


47. James Thomson (1700-1748) Letters and Documents (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1958), p. 125, note. It is important to note, in this connection, that Bolingbroke was a guest of Pope at Twickenham during the entire period of this correspondence. He arrived in July, 1738 and departed in mid-April, 1739.


CHAPTER II

1. p. 49.

2. James Thomson (1700-1748) Letters and Documents, ed. Alan Dugald McKillop (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1958), p. 39. Future references to this work will be abbreviated "Letters and Documents."
3. *Ibid.*, p. 65. At least two other examples of Thomson's aversion to the necessity of patronage can be cited. Viscount Barrington wrote to Mallet March 18, 1744-45, of Thomson's negligence in sending out tickets for Tancred and Sigismunda. Barrington believes indolence to be the cause of Thomson's failure to elicit his patronage, but it is more likely that the poet simply refused to do so because of his dislike of the practise. (*Ibid.*, p. 178). In 1736 Thomson wrote to Hill (*Ibid.*, p. 106), "In lieu of all Patrons that have been, are, or will be, in England, I wish we had one good Act of Parliament for securing to Authors the Property of their own Works...."

4. Hervey, I, 38, quotes Dodington's couplet to Walpole: "I," he said, "To share thy adverse fate alone pretend; In power a servant, out of power a friend."


7. pp. 72-73.


14. p. 75.

15. Grant, pp. 88-89.


23. *Letters and Documents*, p. 83. Compare this speech with Eleonora's speech to Edward, quoted below, Chapter IV, p. 38.


28. IX, 9.

29. p. 167.


32. September 13, 1737.

33. For a discussion of Thomson's authorship of the introduction see George W. Whiting, "James Thomson, Editor of Areopagitica," *Notes and Queries*, CLXIV (July 1, 1933), p. 457.

34. Thomas Davies, with characteristic insight, declares the situation in his *Life of David Garrick* (2 vols.; London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1808):

Thomson and Mallet were recommended to the patronage of Frederick, Prince of Wales, who appointed them both his secretaries. The politics of St. James's and of Leicester House being very opposite, these writers were employed by the friends of the Prince to justify his conduct, and vindicate his cause, by attacking
the administration of Sir Robert Walpole. The two poets, Thomson and Mallet, did not pretend to understand political argument but were supposed capable of working up a fable in a tragedy, and in the drawing characters and giving them such language, as an audience could not fail properly to apply.

II, 31-32.

CHAPTER III

1. Letters and Documents, p. 74.
2. Ibid., p. 108.
5. Inscription on the title page of the Larpent Manuscript of Agamemnon. The manuscript is in the possession of the Huntington Library.
6. Tovey, I, lix.
8. Tovey reports an anecdote of the year 1736; during the King's absence a notice was stuck up on the gate of St. James's Palace. It read:

Lost or strayed out of this house, a man who has left a wife and six children on the parish. Whoever will give any tidings of him to the churchwardens of St. James's parish, so he may be got again, shall receive four shillings and sixpence reward. N.B. this reward will not be increased, nobody judging him to be worth a crown.

I, lix.

9. Ibid., p. lx. The comparison refers to Bolingbroke's literary activities during his exile.

10. Ibid., I, lix.


16. Ibid., I, 11.


18. IX, 20.

19. In this light it is interesting to note that according to Davies, Pope introduced Mallet to Lord Bolingbroke and not only attended the opening night of Mallet's *Mustapha*, but "at the end of the play went behind the scenes, a place which he had not visited for some years." *Life of Garrick*, II, 34.

20. IX, 19.


23. Quoted Tovey, I, lxii-lxiii (note).


29. William Taylor was asked, "Pope, as I have heard, often used to visit Thomson?" He replied, "Yes, frequently. Pope has sometimes said, Thomson, I'll walk to the end of your garden and then set off to the bottom of Kew-foot-lane and back. Pope, sir, courted Thomson, and Thomson was always admitted to Pope whether he had company or not; but Pope had a jealousy of every eminent writer; he was a viper that gnawed the file." See William Hone, *The Table Book* (2 vols.; London: Hunt and Clarke, 1827), I, 589. See also pp. 110-11.
30. Pope, IV, 145.


33. Ibid., p. 99.

34. Ibid., pp. 102-103.

35. Ibid., pp. 117-118.

36. Ibid., p. 120.

37. Ibid., p. 122.

38. Ibid., p. 130.


40. Note, in addition to Bolingbroke's suggestion that a corrupt people could not reform itself, the "Patriot King" passage (p. 85) in which he notes that the absolute power need not be in the king alone.

41. Pope, IV, 142.

42. Ibid., p. 143. Pulteney and Carteret, of course, are the "two Persons" referred to by Pope.

43. Coxe, III, 506.

44. Pope, IV, 143.

45. Ibid., pp. 126-127.

46. The title of Hill's play originally contained some reference to Caesar's patriotism. See Pope, IV, 128.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid., p. 131.

49. Ibid., p. 132.

50. Ibid., pp. 145-146.

51. Ibid., p. 151.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., p. 152.
54. Ibid., p. 158.
55. Ibid., p. 159.
56. Letters and Documents, p. 127.

57. Ibid., p. 128. I have not been able to resolve what appears to me to be something of a problem regarding this statement. Remarks by Pope and Lyttelton indicate that Thomson's play was incomplete enough as late as December that it was not expected to reach the stage during that season. One wonders, then, how Fleetwood could have been "engag'd to Mr. Thomson near nine months."

58. Pope, IV, 166. Davies praises Quin's and Milward's performances. Life of Garrick, II, 34.

59. Life of Garrick, II, 34.

60. The manager's inscription on the title page of the Larpent Manuscript, which is in the possession of the Huntington Library, reads as follows:

    The following play call'd Edward & Eleonora is designed to be perform'd at the Theatre in Covt Garden wth your permission. I am Yr Humble servt /s/ J. Rich

Feb. 23, 1738/39

Below Rich's inscription is a notation:

    Forbid to be acted by the Ld Chamberlain the 26th March. 1738.

CHAPTER IV

2. See above, Chapter II, p. 46.


The relationship was not a close one. Charles Talbot's son John married the niece of the licenser. The union produced a son, John Chetwynd Talbot.


13. p. 133.


18. IX, 20. The Countess of Hertford remarked of the furor,

Mr. Thomson's play of Edward and Eleonora has met with the same fate as Gustavus Vasa in being forbidden. I think, all the world seem in worse humour.
than ever I saw them in before; or else I look through smoked glasses—which I really believe is not the case, for I never felt my own house more peaceful than it is at this hour.

pp. 90-91.

19. Letters and Documents, p. 129.


22. p. 190.


25. Leadam quotes Hervey as authority for the following interesting information:

It was in this year, 1739, that when sounded by Lord Chesterfield upon a project for the taxation of America, he answered, "I have old England set against me, and do you think I will have new England likewise?"

p. 362.

26. II, 448.


29. p. 360.


31. Letters and Documents, p. 129.

32. Ibid., p. 131.

33. Hill, II, 147-156, 171-188.

35. The Larpent Manuscript copy of Edward, now in the possession of the Huntington Library, p. 22.


37. Letters and Documents, pp. 178-79.


40. Letters and Documents, p. 181.


Vol. 4, 1734 Vol. 11, 1741
Vol. 7, 1737 Vol. 15, 1745
Vol. 8, 1738
Vol. 9, 1739
Vol. 10, 1740


The Background of Thomson's Seasons. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1942.

"The Reception of Thomson's Liberty." Notes and Queries, CXCVIII (1953), 112-113.


"Whig Panegyric Verse, 1700-1760." PMLA, XLI (1926), 362-401.


Scurr, Helen Margaret. *Henry Brooke.* A Thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Minnesota, May, 1922.


Thomson, James. Larpent Manuscript copies of Thomson's plays.


Tovey, D. C. *The Poetical Works of James Thomson.* London: George Bell and Sons, 1897.


