

STUDIES ON
VOLTAIRE AND THE
EIGHTEENTH
CENTURY

edited by Haydn Mason

=====
VOLUME CLXXVI
=====

THE VOLTAIRE FOUNDATION
at the TAYLOR INSTITUTION
OXFORD

1979

Voltaire's indebtedness to Addison in the alphabetical works¹

by

Ralph Arthur Nablow

'My first masters in y^r free and learned country', Voltaire remarked to Martin ffolkes, 'were Shakespear, Adisson, Dryden, Pope' (Best. D2890; 25 November 1743). It was, in all likelihood, Bolingbroke who introduced Voltaire to Addison's writings,² advising him to read the *Spectator* as a means of improving his English.³ Thus were sown the seeds of a lifetime admiration of Addison, as is attested by more than twenty comments in Voltaire's correspondence (from 1732 to 1773), and over thirty references, many of them quite lengthy, scattered throughout his works. His library was fairly well stocked with Addison texts, and contained, in addition to the complete *Works*, a copy of *Cato*, the *Spectator*, and the *Remarks on several parts of Italy*.⁴ To Martin Sherlock, who visited him at Ferney in April 1776, the old patriarch spoke of the good taste of Addison and the flawed genius of Shakespeare, exclaiming that the distance between taste and genius is immense.⁵

Voltaire's literary obligations to Addison have, to a limited extent, been brought to light. The small Leningrad and Cambridge notebooks contain several pieces of Addisoniana, including an early prose passage

¹ Voltaire's alphabetical works comprise the articles he wrote for the *Encyclopédie* (from 1755), his definitions for the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* (1762), the *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif* (from 1764), *La Raison par alphabet* (from 1769), the *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie* (1770-1772), and the *Opinion en alphabet* (see below, p.68, and note 12).

² in the *Discours sur la tragédie à mylord Bolingbroke* (1730) Voltaire describes Addison's tragedy *Cato* as 'la seule bien écrite d'un bout à l'autre chez votre nation, à ce que je vous ai entendu dire à vous-même'; cf. Bolingbroke's letter of 27 June 1724 to Voltaire (Best.D190).

³ cf. the following remark of a contemporary apprentice to the schoolmaster in Wandsworth: 'During his stay at the scarlet dyer in Wandsworth, I had to wait on him several times, and hear him read, in the *Spectators* chiefly' (repr. by Lanson, ed. *Lettres philosophiques* (Paris 1909), i.21).

⁴ see the Ferney catalogue in M. P. Alekseev and T. K. Kopreeva, eds., *Bibliothèque de Voltaire: catalogue des livres* (Moscow 1961), pp.1113, 1115, 1116.

⁵ see sir Gavin de Beer and A. M. Rousseau, 'Voltaire's British visitors', *Studies* (1967), xlix.183; cf. *ibid.*, p.156.

by Voltaire in English, based on one in the *Spectator* of 4 August 1711, and a transcription of an anecdote from the *Spectator* of 2 February 1712 (*Complete works of Voltaire* 81, pp. 54n4, 58n1). It is evident from Florence White's edition of the *Essay on epic poetry* (Albany 1915) that Voltaire borrowed, especially in his chapters on Virgil and Milton, quite heavily from the *Spectator*. Lanson, in his edition of the *Lettres philosophiques*, draws attention to several parallels between Voltaire and Addison; indeed a comparison of the letter on trade (no. 10) with the *Spectator* of 19 May 1711 provides strong evidence of influence. A few reminiscences of Addison in *Zadig* have been pointed out by Ascoli.⁶ Although there are no direct points of contact between *Cato* and Voltaire's Roman tragedies,⁷ considerable space is given up to discussions of the English play in Voltaire's critical writings. Finally, in addition to six specific references to Addison in the alphabetical works,⁸ several other passages give rise to the suspicion that the mind behind them is that of Addison. It is the purpose of this article to examine, with some reference to the chronology involved, Voltaire's probable indebtedness to Addison, and to discuss the ways in which this indebtedness may have been incurred.

Voltaire admired Addison as a paragon of good taste, 'peut-être celui de tous les écrivains anglais qui sut le mieux conduire le génie par le goût' ('Art dramatique', *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*). It is hardly surprising that he showed great interest in Addison's paper on taste, printed in the *Spectator* of 19 June 1712. Writing to Briasson, the publisher of the *Encyclopédie*, he referred directly to it, stating that Montesquieu, while working on his *Essai sur le goût*, had doubtless availed himself of Addison's 'excellente dissertation' (Best.D6731; 13 February 1756). The unfinished *Essai* was at this time awaiting publication in the *Encyclopédie*, and Voltaire hinted that he would like to supplement it by an article of his own. This hint produced the desired

⁶ ed. *Zadig* (Paris 1929), ii.117, 126, 136, 175; see also p.73 below.

⁷ Brutus's injunction to his son: 'Donne ton sang à Rome, et n'en exige rien' (*Brutus*, IV.vi) brings to mind Cato's remark on seeing the corpse of his son: 'Thy life is not thine own when Rome demands it' (*Cato*, IV.i), but an echo of this kind can hardly be adduced as evidence of conscious borrowing.

⁸ there are three references to Addison in the article 'Goût II' (*Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, 1771, vi), one in 'Augustin' (*Questions*, 1770, ii), one in 'Imagination I' (*Encyclopédie*, 1765, viii), and an entire subsection on *Cato* in 'Art dramatique' (*Questions*, 1770, ii).

result, and the article 'Goût I' was printed, along with Montesquieu's *Essai*, under the heading 'Goût' in the *Encyclopédie* (1757, vii).

There is nothing to indicate that Montesquieu was in any way indebted to Addison, but there is evidence that Voltaire, in writing the article 'Goût I', was guided by the Englishman's paper on taste. A comparison of the first two paragraphs of Voltaire's text with the second and third of Addison's reveals not only a similar sequence of ideas, but certain resemblances in phraseology as well.

Both authors begin by speaking in very similar terms of the metaphor of good taste:

Spectator (19 June 1712)⁹

Most languages make use of this metaphor, to express that faculty of the mind, which distinguishes all the most concealed faults and nicest perfections in writing.

'Goût I', *Encyclopédie*

Le goût, ce sens, ce don de discerner nos aliments, a produit dans toutes les langues connues la métaphore qui exprime, par le mot *goût*, le sentiment des beautés et des défauts dans tous les arts.

Unlike Addison, who restricts his perspective to that of good taste in writing, Voltaire discusses the arts in general; this notwithstanding, his indebtedness to the Englishman is clearly apparent. Both authors consider intellectual taste in relation to the sensual one: Voltaire's mention of 'une ressemblance de ce goût intellectuel, de ce goût des arts, avec le goût sensuel' echoes Addison's statement that there is 'a very great conformity between that mental taste [. . .] and that sensitive taste'. Voltaire's conviction that one must be able to 'démêler les différentes nuances' in order to appreciate artistic beauty parallels Addison's comment on the 'degrees of refinement in the intellectual faculty'. In speaking of sensual taste both authors employ the image of drinking: Voltaire's gourmet '[qui] sent et reconnoît promptement le mélange de deux liqueurs' recalls Addison's friend who 'after having tasted ten different kinds of tea [. . .] would distinguish, without seeing the colour of it, the particular sort which was offered him; and not only so, but any two kinds of them that were mixed together in an equal proportion'. This gustatory discernment finds its counterpart on the intellectual-

⁹ quotations from Addison are taken from the Hurd edition of *The Works* (London 1854-1868), 6 vols.

aesthetic plane in the connoisseur's ability to comprehend the texture of a work of art:

Spectator (19 June 1712)

A man of a fine taste in writing will discern, after the same manner, not only the general beauties and imperfections of an author, but discover the several ways of thinking and expressing himself, which diversify him from all other authors, with the several foreign infusions of thought and language.

'Goût 1', *Encyclopédie*

l'homme de goût, le connoisseur, verra d'un coup d'œil prompt le mélange de deux styles; il verra un défaut à côté d'un agrément.

That the similarities in the foregoing passages could have been coincidental is difficult to accept. Voltaire must have had Addison's text constantly in mind.

Although at this point there is an interruption of continuity in the sequence of ideas, the remainder of these articles presents several points of contact which can scarcely be fortuitous. Addison defines good taste as 'that faculty of the soul, which discerns the beauties of an author with pleasure and the imperfections with dislike'. This definition made an impact on Voltaire, who paraphrased it in the above-mentioned letter to Briasson (Best.D6731), remarking that Montesquieu, in his *Essai sur le goût*, must surely have demonstrated that 'le goût consiste à discerner par un sentiment prompt, l'excellent, le bon, le mauvais, le médiocre souvent mis l'un auprès de l'autre, dans une même page'. And again, in his article 'Goût 1', Voltaire observes that since the arts have genuine beauties, 'il y a un bon goût qui les discerne, et un mauvais goût qui les ignore'. Addison complains that the general taste in England is for 'epigram, turns of wit, and forced conceits', and aims at banishing this 'Gothic taste' and inculcating a 'natural simplicity of thought'. Similarly for Voltaire, poor taste in the arts consists in taking pleasure in 'ornements étudiés', in being insensitive to 'la belle nature', in preferring 'le burlesque au noble, le précieux et l'affecté au beau simple et naturel'. Both authors agree that the faculty of good taste must to some extent be innate, but that the greater part of humanity can improve its taste through contact with the writings of the best authors. For Addison, the reader 'naturally wears himself into the same manner of speaking and

thinking'; for Voltaire, good taste is imperceptibly generated in a nation which formerly had none, 'parce qu'on y prend peu à peu l'esprit des bons artistes'. Addison speaks of the refining value of social intercourse – an idea which leads to his assertion that writers of great genius usually appear together at certain periods of time (he gives as an example the great writers of the age of Louis XIV). Voltaire likewise comments on the inter-relationship of society and good taste, explaining that the absence of several of the arts will bring about the disappearance of them all: good taste, he declares, has been the lot only of 'quelques peuples de l'Europe'. And finally, both authors treat of the development of good taste. Addison's ideal man of taste would not only understand the mechanical rules of literary art (the unities are mentioned), but would be able to 'enter into the very spirit and soul of fine writing', so as to comprehend that which 'elevates and astonishes the fancy, and gives a greatness of mind to the reader, which few of the critics besides Longinus have considered'. Voltaire, while not expressing to the same extent the desire to probe into the nature of genius, takes up Addison's position as critic-aesthete, remarking that only after acquiring an appreciation of the elements of music, painting, or tragedy (the unities again are mentioned, among other 'difficultés surmontées') will the spectator experience a full realization of aesthetic pleasure.

Voltaire's article 'Imagination 1', commissioned by Alembert in December 1756 (Best.D7079) but not published in the *Encyclopédie* until 1765 (vol.viii), evinces traces of the influence of Addison's first paper on the imagination (*Spectator*, 21 June 1712). In his article Voltaire refers directly to the *Spectator*, disagreeing with the view that the sense of sight alone furnishes ideas to the imagination: 'Le célèbre Addison, dans ses onze essais sur l'imagination,¹⁰ dont il a enrichi les feuilles du *Spectateur*, dit d'abord que "le sens de la vue est celui qui fournit seul les idées à l'imagination". Cependant il faut avouer que les autres sens y contribuent aussi.'¹¹ This reference to Addison is followed almost immediately by a comparison of the senses of sight and touch; though Lockian in content, it appears in the works of neither Locke nor Condillac, and is probably a borrowing from the English essayist:

¹⁰ *Spectator*, 21 June to 3 July 1712.

¹¹ Voltaire's quotation is not an exact translation of the corresponding passage in the *Spectator*, which omits the re-

strictive adverb: 'It is this sense [*i.e.*, of sight] which furnishes the imagination with its ideas' (21 June 1712).

Spectator (21 June 1712)

Our sight seems designed to supply all these defects, and may be considered as a more delicate and diffusive kind of touch, that spreads itself over an infinite multitude of bodies, comprehends the largest figures and brings into our reach some of the most remote parts of the universe. It is this sense which furnishes the imagination with its ideas.

'Imagination I', *Encyclopédie*

Il est vrai que le sens de la vue fournit seul les images; et, comme c'est une espèce de *toucher* qui s'étend jusqu'aux étoiles, son immense étendue enrichit plus l'imagination que tous les autres sens ensemble.

And again, this comparison is followed directly by another set of corresponding passages; Voltaire's statement: 'Il y a deux sortes d'imagination; l'une, qui consiste à retenir une simple impression des objets; l'autre, qui arrange ces images reçues et les combine en mille manières' recalls Addison's division of the pleasures of the imagination into two kinds, primary pleasures 'which entirely proceed from such objects as are before our eyes', and secondary pleasures 'which flow from the ideas of visible objects'. This series of resemblances corroborates the evidence of influence.

Among the articles Voltaire promised Panckoucke for his proposed supplement to the *Encyclopédie* was one on the Jews, introduced by the remark: 'on peut proposer des idées très curieuses sur leur histoire sans trop éffaroucher' (29 September 1769; see Best.D15929 and commentary). This statement probably alludes to the article 'Juifs III (De la dispersion des Juifs)' of Voltaire's manuscript collection *Opinion en alphabet* (1768-1769),¹² first published by the Kehl editors in their *Dictionnaire philosophique*. One could conjecture that Voltaire refrained from publishing this article himself because he considered it simply as a piece of working material; indeed most of 'Juifs III' was taken verbatim and without acknowledgment from the chevalier de Jaucourt's article of the same title in the *Encyclopédie* (1765, ix.24-25). And, in turn, almost one half of Jaucourt's article follows so closely, both in ideas and word-

¹² Jeanne R. Monty advances the very convincing hypothesis that the major part of the *Opinion en alphabet* dates from 1768-1769; see 'Voltaire's debt to the

Encyclopédie in the *Opinion en alphabet, Literature and history in the age of ideas*, ed. Charles G. S. Williams (Ohio 1975), p.164.

ing, Addison's *Spectator* of 27 September 1712 that it is obvious that Jaucourt was borrowing wholesale from Addison, probably by means of a French translation.¹³ From the fact that a significant portion of Voltaire's text bears a striking resemblance to that of Addison, that all points of contact between Voltaire and Addison also appear in Jaucourt, and that many such between Voltaire and Jaucourt are not to be found in the English text, one may deduce that in writing his article 'Juifs III' Voltaire reproduced Addison's *Spectator* through the intermediary of the *Encyclopédie*. Whether Voltaire was aware of the relationship between Jaucourt and Addison is impossible to know; he may have recognized it, and used the French text for the sake of expediency. In the following textual comparison the corresponding passage in Jaucourt need not be cited as it presents a text identical to Voltaire's save the occasional stylistic variant of a minor character and of no significance.

Spectator (27 September 1712)

The Jews are looked upon by many to be as numerous at present, as they were formerly in the land of Canaan.

This is wonderful, considering the dreadful slaughter made of them under some of the Roman emperors [. . .] and the innumerable massacres and persecutions they have undergone in Turkey, as well as in all Christian nations of the world [. . .]

Their firm adherence to their religion, is no less remarkable than their numbers and dispersion, especially considering it as persecuted or contemned over the face of the whole earth. This is likewise the more remarkable, if we consider the frequent apostasies of this people, when they lived under their kings in the Land of Promise, and within sight of their temple.

¹³ the French translation of the *Spectator* had begun to appear in 1714.

'Juifs III', *Opinion*

Il est vrai que quand on pense au carnage qui s'en fit sous quelques empereurs romains, et à ceux qui ont été répétés tant de fois dans tous les Etats chrétiens, on est étonné que non seulement ce peuple subsiste encore, mais qu'il ne soit pas moins nombreux aujourd'hui qu'il le fut autrefois. Leur nombre doit être attribué à leur exemption de porter les armes, à leur ardeur pour le mariage, à leur coutume de le contracter de bonne heure dans leurs familles, à leur loi de divorce, à leur genre de vie sobre et réglée, à leurs abstinences, à leur travail, et à leurs exercices.

Leur ferme attachement à la loi mosaïque n'est pas moins remarquable, surtout si l'on considère leurs fréquentes apostasies lorsqu'ils

If in the next place we examine, what may be the natural reasons for these three particulars which we find in the Jews, and which are not to be found in any other religion or people, I can, in the first place, attribute their numbers to nothing but their constant employment, their abstinence, their exemption from wars, and, above all, their frequent marriages; for they look on celibacy as an accursed state, and generally are married before twenty, as hoping the Messiah may descend from them.

vivaient sous le gouvernement de leurs rois, de leurs juges, et à l'aspect de leur temple.

This striking similarity almost appears to be independent of the intermediary; Voltaire's passage seems to take its words straight from Addison.

The remainder of the article 'Juifs III' exhibits, again through the medium of the *Encyclopédie*, a few traces of borrowing from the *Spectator* of 27 September 1712. Addison and Voltaire both speak of the dispersion of the Jews and of their becoming a race of wandering merchants, 'incapable of either lands or offices', or in the words of Voltaire, 'incapables de posséder aucun bien-fonds, et d'avoir aucun emploi'.

The *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, published in 1770-1772 with an enlarged edition in 1774,¹⁴ contains several Addisonian echoes. In the article 'Goût II' (*Questions*, 1771, vi) Voltaire repeats the definition of good taste he formulated earlier (see above, p.66), and again evokes the figure of the gourmet: 'En général le goût fin et sûr consiste dans le sentiment prompt d'une beauté parmi des défauts, et d'un défaut parmi des beautés. Le gourmet est celui qui discernera le mélange de deux vins.' Also included in 'Goût II' are a discussion of *Cato* and two direct references to the *Spectator*, in the second of which Voltaire lauds Addison as the most authoritative English writer on the subjects of taste, wit, and imagination.

There are, in the article 'Epopée' (*Questions*, 1771, v), three short, passages which very likely have their origin in the work of Addison.

¹⁴ composition of the *Questions* began at the latest in 1769 (see Best.D1604372, D1608772, D16115).

Voltaire observes in his subsection on Virgil: 'On a souvent dit que Virgile a emprunté beaucoup de traits d'Homère, et que même il lui est inférieur dans ses imitations' – an opinion probably suggested at least in part by statements in Addison's Milton papers: '[Virgil] seldom elevates and transports us where he does not fetch his hints from Homer', and again: 'There are a thousand shining passages in Virgil, which have been lighted up by Homer' (*Spectator*, 19 January and 29 March 1712).¹⁵ A comment of Voltaire's to the effect that stanzas from Tasso were sung by the people of Venice brings to mind a passage in Addison's *Remarks on several parts of Italy* – a work from which Voltaire quotes an anecdote in one of his letters.¹⁶

'Venice', *Remarks on Italy*

I cannot forbear mentioning a custom at Venice, which they tell me is particular to the common people of this country, of singing stanzas out of Tasso. They are set to a pretty solemn tune, and when one begins in any part of the poet, it is odds but he will be answered by somebody else that overhears him; so that sometimes you have ten or a dozen in the neighbourhood of one another, taking verse after verse, and running on with the poem as far as their memories will carry them.

In the subsection on Milton, a passage pertaining to Adam's vision of his descendants (*Paradise lost*, xi) again bears the impress of Addison:

Spectator (26 April 1712)

Virgil's hero [. . .] is entertained with a sight of all those who are to de-

'Epopée (Du Tasse)', *Questions*

Mais il faut dire ici qu'on sait par cœur ses vers en Italie. Si à Venise, dans une barque, quelqu'un récite une stance de la *Jérusalem délivrée*, la barque voisine lui répond par la stance suivante.

'Epopée (De Milton)', *Questions*

Virgile annonce les destinées des descendants d'Enée, et les triomphes

¹⁵ the Milton papers appeared in the Saturday editions of the *Spectator* from 5 January to 3 May 1712; Voltaire knew them well as is evidenced by his indebtedness to them in his *Essay on epic poetry*; see the notes on the chapters on Virgil and Milton in Florence White's edition of the *Essay* (pp.93-99, 129-143).

¹⁶ see Best.D13167 (12 February 1766) and note 2 thereon; the one Addison volume in Voltaire's present-day library at Leningrad is vol. iv of the *Remarques sur divers endroits d'Italie* (Paris 1722); though lacking marginalia, the book bears indications of having been read (see Alekseev and Kopreeva, eds. (*Bibliothèque de Voltaire, catalogue des livres*, p.109).

scend after him; but though that episode is justly admired as one of the noblest designs in the whole *Æneid*, every one must allow that this of Milton is of a much higher nature. Adam's vision is not confined to any particular tribe of mankind, but extends to the whole species.¹⁷

des Romains; Milton prédit le destin des enfants d'Adam: c'est un objet plus grand, plus intéressant pour l'humanité; c'est prendre pour son sujet l'histoire universelle.

The caprices of chance do not sufficiently account for such similarities; the assumption of borrowing is indeed reasonable.

Three miscellaneous passages in the *Questions* are to be noted. The influence of Addison's paper on instinct (*Spectator*, 19 July 1711) may be operative in Voltaire's article on the same subject.¹⁸ Both authors concede the incomprehensibility of instinct and attribute it to a divine cause. 'Oui, sans doute, c'est quelque chose de divin', exclaims Voltaire, echoing Addison's explanation of instinct as 'the immediate direction of Providence'. Of special interest is the duplication of one illustrative detail:

Spectator (19 July 1711)

Tully has observed, that a lamb no sooner falls from its mother, but immediately, and of its own accord, applies itself to the teat.

'Instinct', *Questions*

Dès qu'un veau, un agneau est né, il court à la mamelle de sa mère.¹⁹

Addison's recounting of the Persian fable of the drop of water that was swallowed by an oyster and became a famous pearl (*Spectator*, 5 February 1712) served as an intermediary between its source in Sadi and its restatement in chapter xiv of *Zadig* (see Ascoli, ed., ii.116-17); its reappearance in the article 'Bibliothèque' (*Questions*, 1770, iii), encapsulates in a striking way the longer English version:

kind of animal; cf. Cicero, *De Natura deorum* (ii.51): 'quod quum ex utero elapsum excidit, in iis animantibus, quae lacte aluntur, omnis fere cibus matrum lactescere incipit: eaque, quae paullo ante nata sunt, sine magistro, duce natura, mammas appetunt, earumque ubertate saturantur.'

¹⁷ cf. the *Spectator* of 5 January 1712.

¹⁸ 'Instinct', *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, 1774 (quarto *Œuvres*, xxiii); according to the Kehl editors (xli.359) this article was printed in 1771.

¹⁹ the French text bears a closer resemblance to the English than it does to the Latin, which makes no mention of the

Spectator (5 February 1712)

A drop of water fell out of a cloud into the sea, and finding itself lost in such an immensity of fluid matter, broke out into the following reflection: 'Alas! what an inconsiderable creature am I in this prodigious ocean of waters; my existence is of no concern to the universe, I am reduced to a kind of nothing, and am less than the least of the works of God.'

It so happened, that an oyster, which lay in the neighbourhood of this drop, chanced to gape and swallow it up in the midst of this his humble soliloquy. The drop, says the fable, lay a great while hardening in the shell, until by degrees it was ripened into a pearl, which falling into the hands of a diver, after a long series of adventures, is at present that famous pearl which is fixed on the top of the Persian diadem.

'Bibliothèque', *Questions*

Il [un homme tenté d'imprimer] se compare à la goutte d'eau qui se plaignait d'être confondue et ignorée dans l'Océan: un génie eut pitié d'elle; il la fit avaler par une huître; elle devint la plus belle perle de l'Orient, et fut le principal ornement du trône du Grand Mogol.²⁰

The episode of self-immolation in *Zadig* (chap. xi), carried further in 'Brachmanes' (*Questions*, 1770, iii), was probably suggested by the, *Lettres persanes* (see Ascoli, ii.87); however, an analogous passage in the *Freeholder* of 2 January 1716 is, in spite of its brevity, of interest as a possible reminiscence on the part of Voltaire: 'In the East Indies, a widow, who has any regard to her character, throws herself into the flames of her husband's funeral pile, to show, forsooth, that she is faithful and loyal to the memory of her deceased lord.' The Voltairean anecdote is here contained in germ.

Second only to the *Spectator* in its impact on the alphabetical works is *Cato*, the influence of which takes the form of direct references and

²⁰ Voltaire may have consulted a French translation; cf. *Le Spectateur* (Paris 1755), i.554, where Addison's phrases 'finding

itself lost' and 'which is fixed on the top of' are rendered by 'confondue' and 'qui orne' respectively.

critical discussion. The articles 'Goût II' and 'Art dramatique (D'Addison)'²¹ treat of its insipid love passages and general lack of warmth, but also of its elegance and nobility of diction, its rationality and conformity to the rules, and its eschewal of the type of low passages to be found in Shakespeare. Forming part of the latter article is Voltaire's French version of Cato's soliloquy on the immortality of the soul (v.i). Of particular interest is an allusion to *Cato* in the article 'Augustin' (*Questions*, 1770, ii) – an illustration of the way in which six lines of Addison's play were very closely transformed into Voltairean prose:

Cato, I.iv

The glowing dames of Zama's
 royal court
 Have faces flusht with more
 exalted charms;
 The sun, that rolls his chariot
 o'er their heads,
 Works up more fire and colour
 in their cheeks:
 Were you with these, my prince,
 you'd soon forget
 The pale, unripened beauties
 of the north.

'Augustin', *Questions*

Ce n'est pas sans raison que Syphax
 dit à Juba, dans le *Caton* d'Addison,
 que le soleil, qui roule son char sur
 les têtes africaines, met plus de
 couleur sur leurs joues, plus de feu
 dans leurs cœurs, et que les dames
 de Zama sont très supérieures aux
 pâles beautés de l'Europe, que la
 nature n'a qu'à moitié pétries.

The textual similarities adduced above raise several questions. How did Voltaire compose his alphabetical works? Can the resemblances between him and Addison be attributed to coincidence? Are there common sources upon which both authors drew? In a revealing passage Wagnière testifies to his master's work habits, his practice of skimming through new books in search of noteworthy material, his use of marginal notes and placemarkers for future reference (as is evidenced by the books in his library), and his not infrequent reliance on his remarkable memory.²² 'La mémoire de M. de Voltaire était prodigieuse', he tells us. 'Il m'a dit cent fois: *Voyez dans tel ouvrage, dans tel volume, à peu près à telle page, s'il n'y a pas telle chose?* et il arrivait rarement qu'il se trompât,

²¹ *Questions*, 1771, vi and 1770, ii respectively.

²² Longchamp & Wagnière, *Mémoires sur Voltaire* (Paris 1826), i.53; cf. Samuel S. B. Taylor, 'Voltaire's marginalia: a preview of the forthcoming edition',

Studies (1975), cxxxv.173-176; all the Addison volumes indicated in Voltaire's Ferney catalogue, save one, are missing from the present-day library at Leningrad (see above, pp.63, 71, note 16).

quoiqu'il n'eût pas ouvert le livre depuis douze ou quinze ans.'²³ These methods of composition probably account in part for the transfer of material from Addison's writings to the alphabetical works, in the preface to two of which Voltaire admits borrowing without acknowledgment from the finest authors.²⁴ It is reasonable to suppose, moreover, that Voltaire made considerable use of the original English version of Addison, for most of the Addison texts in his library were in English, and his knowledge of the language is incontestable. The possibility that the resemblances between the authors are mere coincidences is precluded by the duplication of precise details, by distinct traces of similarity in both thought and phrase, by parallel sequences of ideological development, and by Voltaire's intimate acquaintance with at least some of Addison's writings. And although in the article 'Juifs III' Voltaire is indebted to Addison by way of the *Encyclopédie*, no common source (Bayle immediately comes to mind) seems to have been used. Voltaire obviously had respect for Addison's intellectual ability, and accepted his judgments without demur. All in all there is compelling evidence that, in his *Encyclopédie* articles, *Opinion en alphabet*, and *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, Voltaire, most often directly, on one occasion through an intermediary, made use of a certain number of concepts and expressions that occur in Addison.

²³ *loc. cit.*; Wagnière's admiration for his master at times resulted in a degree of exaggeration.

²⁴ in the 'Avertissement' to the *Opinion en alphabet* Voltaire remarks: 'Cet alphabet est extrait des ouvrages les plus estimés [...] l'auteur ne cite pas toujours les sources où il a puisé [...] il ne doit pas être soupçonné de vouloir se faire honneur du travail d'autrui, puisqu'il garde lui-même

l'anonyme'; cf. the preface to the 1765 edition of the *Dictionnaire philosophique*: 'Nous les [*i.e.*, les articles] avons tous tirés des meilleurs auteurs de l'Europe, et nous n'avons fait aucun scrupule de copier quelquefois une page d'un livre connu, quand cette page s'est trouvée nécessaire à notre collection'; on Voltaire's extensive copying from the *Encyclopédie* in the *Opinion en alphabet*, see Monty, pp.153-167.