

The *Spectator* lets down Addison and Steele

Like the Germans as viewed by Dad's Army, the *Spectator* does not like it up 'em. That showed when I sent them an email mildly criticising a review. They failed to print it, so I will publish it here.

21 June 2010

Sir,

I thought Deborah Ross was the exemplar of the new *Spectator* literary style, and was just about prepared to settle for that. But now we have the insufferable grotesqueries of Dan Jones writing on Anne Boleyn, and what can one say? I could say that this is no way to treat the English language - especially in the *Spectator* - but that seems inadequate for what this fellow has perpetrated.

To describe Henry's queen as 'the court bike' is vulgarly anachronistic. To say she was 'shacked up with the king' who was 'thinking with his codpiece' while she was 'keeping her knickers on' and 'refusing to put out' to a 'sad clown with his pecker drooping' uses tired, inappropriate metaphors (among many such in this piece). To add that Anne 'finagled the divorce' descends into obsolete dialect. To refer to her 'hot-Prod creds' being 'puffed up' is to use desperately inappropriate modern slang.

I could go on, but another example will do to finish. At one point Jones ridiculously says "'Woah Nelly" as they say across the Pond.' Actually they don't, and what if they did?.

This is the writing of a spotty youth desperately striving to make an impression and be regarded as 'lively'. Please let's have no more of it.

Francis Bennion

I do not know Mr Jones personally, and did not intend this as a personal attack on him. It is more a judgment on the *Spectator* editor for inflicting such stuff on his readers. He should remember that he has the privilege of editing a journal whose title, in the words of the Oxford DNB, is 'one of the most famous in the annals of publishing'. He betrays the great names of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, the founders, when he admits to his pages writing that is so desperately unworthy as this.