DRYDEN'S PROSE STYLE

THESIS FOR DEGREE OF M.A.
MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE
CATHERINE ANNE OAS
1951

THESIS

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DRYDEN'S PROSE STYLE

by

Catherine Anne Cas

A THESIS

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Michigan State College of Agriculture and Applied Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

1951

THESIS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to express her sincere appreciation for the generous advice and aid given by Dr. A. J. M. Smith, under whose guidance this paper was written. She is also greatly indebted to Dr. Anders Orbeck for his kind help and cooperation.

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I. INTRODUCTION

John Dryden, who was the foremost playwright of his day and who through generations of criticism has held a not indisputable place as a poet of high rank, is now becoming more and more recognized by all good judges to be the father of modern English prose. It is the purpose of this paper to determine what Dryden did with prose and how he did it.

For the basis of my study of Dryden's prose I have used W. P. Ker's two volume edition of selected Essays, which contains the principal essays and prefaces. This omits, besides some of the lighter complimentary prefaces and dedications and several tracts on current affairs, his prose plays, his lives of Plutarch and Lucian, his characters of Polybius and Saint Evremond, and his translations of Maimbourg's History of the League, of Father Bouhours' Life of Xavier, and of Du Fresnoy's The Art of Painting.

All of these omissions are, I believe, justifiable in a study of this sort. The prose of drama, and especially of seventeenth century drama, is not the prose with which one writes a sustained piece. It is a prose of art, and not, as we shall see, the type of prose for which Dryden is known. His lives of Plutarch and Lucian and his characters

of Saint Evremond and Polybius were prefixed to copies of their works translated by various hands and were written as, and definitely are, the hackwork to which Dryden was often forced to stoop.

Dryden's two longest prose writings are his translations of the Life of Xavier and The History of the League. While a study of his style and language in translation would prove interesting, we can safely assume that Dryden's translations are not Dryden. In prefaces to his various "rendered" works, he has clearly given us his theory of translation. Although he does not cling to a servile, literal translation, he refuses to turn to the libertine way of imitation. The personality of an author, the atmosphere, the style, are to be faithfully followed by the translator:

> The sense of an author, generally speaking is to be sacred and inviolable. If the fancy of Ovid be luxuriant, 'tis his character to be so; and if I retrench it, he is no longer Ovid. It will be replied, that he receives advantage by the lopping of his superfluous branches; but I rejoin, that a translator has no such right. When a painter copies from the life, I suppose he has no privilege to alter features and lineaments, under pretence that his picture will look better: perhaps the face which he has drawn would be more exact, if the eyes or nose were altered; but 'tis his business to make it resemble the original.[1]

And Dryden says again of his prose translation of Du Fresnoy, "The prose translation of this poem is not free from poetical

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[1] W. P. Ker, Essays of John Dryden, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900, I, 242.

expressions, and I dare not promise that some of them are not fustian, or at least highly metaphorical; but this being a fault in the first digestion (that is, the original Latin), was not to be remedied in the second, viz. the translation." [1] "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting," which was prefixed to the translation, gives us an example of his prose in translation. He translates over five pages from Bellori's Lives of the Painters, and the style is certainly not his own. "In these pompous expressions, or such as these, the Italian has given you his Idea of a Painter; and though I cannot much commend the style, I must needs say, there is somewhat in the manner." [2]

Dryden's letters are not extraordinary. They are the letters of a busy man of his time concerned with his sons and their well being, his neighbors, his financial condition, and gifts of puddings and cold chicken. Although of interest to the biographer, they show no merits that his essays do not show more completely, and I have not included them in the analysis of his style.

Dryden's prose prefaces and dedications, then, form the chief basis of this analysis of his prose. It is those prefaces of which Swift said

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[1] Ibid., "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting," II, 116.

[2] Ibid., 123.

Merely writ at first for filling
To raise the volume's price a shilling

which made their author the first writer of modern English prose.

The analysis of prose style has long been one of the most frustrating but fascinating tasks of scholarship. Like human personality, literary style seems impossible to completely fathom. Even after its component parts have been discovered and classified, the whole remains--more than the sum of them and as illusive and intangible as ever. After everything has been labeled, there still remain qualities which cannot be pointed to and demonstrated and which the critic must at last be reduced to describe by the unscientific and unscholarly adjective. Style is the personality of the writer, his knowledge and background, his age and his circumstances. It is his reasons for writing and the readers for whom he writes. An author's style may be read in different ways by different critics, and a student is always in danger of reading in too much here or too little there. A complete and accurate study of style is always impossible. The hope of those who study it is always to add a little, of fact, interpretation, or approach, to the whole that is known.

It may be that I have quoted too frequently from my author. However, where he had said it, there seemed little

value in my repeating it when his words would give, not only the sense, but the flavor of the subject of this paper.

And so, to borrow the lines of my author, "I have not engaged myself to any perfect method, neither am I loaded with a full cargo. 'Tis sufficient if I bring a sample of some goods in this voyage. It will be easy for others to add more, ...for a treatise twice as large as this...could not contain all that might be said." [1]

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[1] Ibid., 124.

II. CRITICS OF DRYDEN'S PROSE

The fate of Dryden's prose with the critics has been the fate of his age in general. He suffered in the eighteenth century for his lack of correctness, as Shakespeare and Chaucer suffered in his own times. In the Romantic period, as he and Pope could not hold their own in an age attuned to Wordsworth, so his prose could not charm those used to De Quincey and Landor.

It has been Dryden's particular fortune, however, to have good critics rather than many, and to have one, at least, in every age. For it seemed that in every period there was a critic like Dryden himself, who, though knowing the rules and judgments of his era and willing to pay them lip service and often more, was still free enough to recognize what was good and praise it, whether it fit the prevailing standard or not. As Dryden in his time admired Jonson, but loved Shakespeare; so the great critics and writers who followed him admired correctness but gave him their devoted homage for the excellence of his style.

Congreve (1670-1729), the friend of his old age, in a dedication to a posthumous edition of Dryden's dramatic works, gives us the first written tribute to his prose:

> He was equally excellent in verse and prose. His prose had all the clearness imaginable, together

> with all the nobleness of expression, all the graces and ornaments proper and peculiar to it, without deviating into the language or diction of poetry. I make this observation only to distinguish his style from that of many poetical writers, who meaning to write harmoniously in prose, do in truth often write mere blank verse. [1]

Perhaps the most famous and the best of all passages on Dryden's prose style is that of Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) in his life of Dryden in The Lives of the Poets. Johnson, who himself was to add his contribution to the English prose tradition which Dryden originated, praises in his more formal, ponderous style the first master of the other sort of prose:

> Criticism, either didactick or defensive, occupies almost all his prose, except those pages which he has devoted to his patrons; but none of his prefaces were ever thought tedious. They have not the formality of a settled style, in which the first half of the sentence betrays the other. The clauses are never balanced, nor the periods modelled; every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid; the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous; what is little, is gay; what is great, is splendid. He may be thought to mention himself too frequently; but while he forces himself upon our esteem, we cannot refuse him to stand high in his own. Every thing is excused by the play of images and the spriteliness of expression. Though all is easy, nothing is feeble; though all seem careless, there is nothing harsh; and though, since his earlier works, more than a century has passed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obsolete.
>
> He who writes much, will not easily escape a manner, such a recurrence of particular modes as may be easily noted. Dryden is always another

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[1]Quoted in John Mitford, "Life of Dryden" prefixed to The Poetical Works of John Dryden, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.; Cambridge: Riverside Press, n.d., I, cxl.

> and the same, he does not exhibit a second time the same elegancies in the same form, nor appears to have any art other than that of expressing with clearness what he thinks with vigour. His style could not easily be imitated, either seriously or ludicrously; for, being always equable and always varied, it has no prominent or discriminative characters. The beauty who is totally free from disproportion of parts and features, cannot be ridiculed by an overcharged resemblance. [1]

This quotation of Johnson's may have led Edmond Malone (1741-1812) to his labors in behalf of Dryden. He was a member of Johnson's "Club," a friend of James Boswell, and one of the most careful and painstaking of eighteenth century scholars. Dryden's debt to him is tremendous. It was Malone who first laboriously collected what still seem to be almost the only biographical facts we have, and it was Malone who first attempted to sort the wheat of truth from the chaff of slander and hearsay that surrounds Dryden's personal life. Working nearly a hundred years after the writer's death, he devotedly collected the letters, the critical and the miscellaneous works [2] of Dryden and carefully tracked down every rumor, anecdote, and clue which might better justify and explain Dryden to the world. No one, I believe, has written since who has not given him the enormous credit he deserves, and his is still the standard edition of Dryden's prose.

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[1] Samuel Johnson, Lives of the Poets, edited by G. Birkbeck Hill, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905, I, 415.

[2] Edmond Malone (ed.), Critical and Miscellaneous Prose Works of John Dryden, 4 vols., London: H. Baldwin & Son, 1800.

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), the most popular of the earlier writers of the Romantic movement, was the next to champion the cause of the Restoration writer who had hardly a romantic tendency in his nature. Scott's complete edition of Dryden's works appeared in 1808, ten years after the Lyrical Ballads had become a manifesto for the romantics. At a time when poetry was defined as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" taking "its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity," Dryden's works must have felt strangely out of place, but Scott championed them strongly and well. "The prose of Dryden," he wrote, "may rank with the best in the English language." [1]

George Saintsbury, who has contributed the invaluable volume on Dryden in the English Men of Letters series, was throughout his life a zealous and excellent Dryden scholar. In 1882 he started the eleven year work of revising and correcting Scott's edition of the complete works. In his introduction to those works he pays this tribute to Dryden's modernity:

> Dryden is in every sense a modern. His list of obsolete words is insignificant, of archaic phrases more insignificant still, of obsolete constructions almost a blank. If any journalist or reviewer were to write his tomorrow's leader or his next week's article in a style absolutely modelled on Dryden, no one would notice anything strange in it except perhaps that the English was a good deal better than usual. [2]

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[1] Scott, Walter (ed.), The Works of John Dryden, revised by George Saintsbury, 18 vols., Edinburgh: W. Paterson, 1882-1893, I, 436.

[2] Ibid., viii-ix.

And in his English Men of Letters edition of Dryden, he pays the writer this highest of tributes:

> Considering what he started with, what he accomplished, and what advantages he left to his successors, he must be pronounced, without exception, the greatest craftsman in English letters, and as such he ought to be regarded with peculiar veneration by all who, in however humble a capacity, are connected with the craft. [1]

John Churton Collins, a friend of Saintsbury's, names Dryden clearly as the father of English prose:

> Of Modern English prose, of the prose, that is to say; which exchanged the old synthetic and rhetorical scheme of structure and colour for that happier temper of ease and dignity, of grace and variety, familiar to us in the style of such writers as Addison, Bolingbroke and Chesterfield, he was the first to furnish a perfect model. [2]

Another nineteenth century scholar, Richard Garnett, writes of Dryden's prefaces in, it must be remembered, the heyday of the purple passages of Pater:

> No other of our poets except Coleridge and Wordsworth has given us anything so critically valuable, but Dryden's principal service is one which they could not render; for, even if their style had equalled his--and this would be too much to say even of Wordsworth's--it could not have exerted the same wide and salutory influence. Dryden is entitled to be considered as the great reformer of English prose, the writer in whom the sound principles of the Restoration were above all others impersonated, and who above all others led the way to that clear, same, and balanced method of writing which it was the especial mission of Restoration literature to introduce. We need only compare this style with

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[1]George Saintsbury, Dryden, English Men of Letters edition, London: Macmillan & Co., 1930, 189.

[2]John Churton Collins, Essays and Studies, "John Dryden," London and New York: Macmillan & Co., 1895, 87.

> Milton's to be sensible of the enormous progress in the direction of perspicuity and general utility...the rest of the prosaists of the time are, with few exceptions, either too pedantic or too commonplace. Dryden is lucid, easy, familiar, yet he can be august and splendid on occasion. [1]

W. P. Ker's compact two volume edition of Dryden's essays is invaluable to the student for whom Malone is too often unavailable and the Scott-Saintsbury edition is to bulky. Although Ker admits that by his time it is superfluous to speak in praise of Dryden, he has this to say about his author's critical works:

> Dryden's critical writings have been less damaged by the lapse of time and have kept their original freshness better than any literary discourses which can be compared with them, even taking the next century into consideration. He has suffered much less from changes of literary fashion than Addison or Dr. Johnson. Although there are many things that are antiquated or conventional in his discussion of literary principles, although he had his share of the literary pedantries of his age, there is an inexhaustible liveliness and spirit in his essays which has given them an advantage over many more laborious and philosophical pieces of criticism. [2]

In American, Dryden had an admirer in James Russell Lowell (1819-1891) who, although he condemned him romantically as not sensitive enough to be a poet, gave his prose the praise he denied his poetry:

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[1]Richard Garnett, The Age of Dryden, London: George Bell & Sons, 1895, 149.

[2]Ker, op. cit., xiii.

> He, more than any other single writer, contributed, as well by precept as example, to give it English prose suppleness of movement and the easier air of the modern world. His own style, juicy with proverbial phrases, has that familiar dignity, so hard to attain, perhaps unattainable except by one who, like Dryden, feels that his position is assured. Charles Cotton is as easy, but not so elegant; Walton as familiar, but not so flowing; Swift as idiomatic, but not so elevated; Burke more splendid, but not so equally luminous. [1]

And Barrett Wendell said of him in 1904:

> His prose style has at last, in robustly pristine form, the cool lucidity and balance, which, swiftly becoming more and more conventional, marked subsequent style for more than a hundred years. [2]

In his excellent study of English prose style, Herbert Read clearly places Dryden as the founder of the prose tradition which is still prevalent today and which is described in Read's book:

> A tradition in prose (as in poetic) style first takes shape when a body of critical opinion crystallizes around the idiomatic structure of a language. For some time influences--personal, imitative, even social and religious--have been moulding a language; a point occurs when suddenly it is realized that these influences have resulted in an appropriateness; in a fit relation of sound, sense and conversational ease. Such a moment came in English literature in the second half of the seventeenth century, and particularly in the person of Dryden, who has been commonly recognized as the starting point

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[1] James Russell Lowell, Among My Books, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1880, I, 22.

[2] Barrett Wendell, The Temper of the Seventeenth Century in English Literature, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904, 348.

> of the main traditional style in English.....
> ...by Dryden's time the corporate sense had been born; literature had become a profession, and something like professional pride was engendered. Dryden himself was the first writer to be wholly conscious of this sense, and it is a tribute to his real greatness that he himself became its first exemplar. [1]

One of the most recent descriptions of Dryden's prose as well as one of the most unexpected comes from a modern writer of the plain tradition of English prose and one who, like Dryden, is a playwright and a professional writer. W. Somerset Maugham, in looking back on his life in The Summing Up, decides that the time spent in his youth studying the style of Swift, whose impeccable style grows monotonous, might much better have been spent in a close study of Dryden's prose:

> The prose of Dryden is delicious. It has not the perfection of Swift nor the easy elegance of Addison, but it has a springtime gaiety, a conversational ease, a blithe spontaneousness that are enchanting. Dryden was a very good poet, but it is not the general opinion that he had a lyrical quality; it is strange that it is just this that sings in his softly sparkling prose. Prose had never been written in England like that before; it has seldom been written like that since. Dryden flourished at a happy moment. He had in his bones the sonorous periods and the baroque massiveness of Jacobean language and under the influence of the nimble and well-bred felicity that he learnt from the French he turned it into an instrument that was fit not only for solemn themes but also to express the light thought of the passing moment. He was the first of the rococo artists. If Swift reminds you of a French canal Dryden recalls an English river winding its cheerful way round hills, through

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[1]Herbert Read, English Prose Style, New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1928, 205-206.

> quietly busy towns and by nestling villages, pausing now in a noble reach and then running powerfully through a woodland country. It is alive, varied, windswept; and it has the pleasant open-air smell of England. [1]

Although Dryden's prose has had the acclaim of many critics and scholars, he is also a writer's writer. That Maugham, who is one of today's most successful professional writers, recognizes Dryden, also a professional writer in his age, as a prose master goes far toward proving that, far from being a curiosity of scholars, his prose is still useable and vigorous and truly deserving of that over-used epithet, "timeless."

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[1] W. Somerset Maugham, The Summing Up, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1948, 27-28.

III. DRYDEN'S PLACE IN THE ENGLISH PROSE TRADITION

As Samuel Johnson has written, "A writer who obtains his full purpose loses himself in his own lustre. Of an opinion which is no longer doubted, the evidence ceases to be examined. Of an art universally practiced, the first teacher is forgotten."[1] Because Dryden's prose style was successful--because it was a prose with no eccentric and individualistic characteristics and a prose suitable for use by the average writer for ordinary purposes--it has been little acclaimed. To fully recognize the service Dryden performed, it is necessary to realize what prose was like before he wrote and the condition of English prose after his death.

No workable every-day prose style standard had ever been set up in England. It is true that there were great writers. Bacon, Hooker, Taylor, Browne, Milton, and others had all written great prose, but it was always an individual prose, a prose to which one can point and say, "That's Milton," or "That's Browne." And the average writer without extraordinary genius who was just beginning to come into his own professionally--the essayist, the journalist, and the hackwriter--had no pattern to follow.

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[1]Johnson, op. cit., 413.

About the middle of the Elizabethan period two general types of prose began to develop. Of the first type, Saintsbury says, "Few things are more curious than this mixture of homespun and tinsel, of slang and learning, of street repartees and elaborate coterie preciousness."[1] This style, chiefly represented by Lyly and common to most Elizabethan pamphleteers, was the closest England had come to a standard. It drew so much attention to the manner of expression that the matter often seemed secondary. The other strain of English prose was modeled on Latin and Greek and tried to follow with uninflected English the structural grammar of the inflected classical languages. Endless sentences with involved parenthesis, lengthly digressions, and careful qualifications stretched out with awkward complication; and, again, the meaning was often hopelessly lost in the attempt.

The great writers who wrote in these lines wrote good and readable prose because they were men of great genius, able to adapt to their personalities and arrange to meet their needs the ponderous structures and archaic phraseology of the time. But as the old prose masters dropped off, they left no successors, and in the hands of less gifted writers the prose became an impossible medium.

To show the tone of the best prose styles before Dryden, actual samples of the styles themselves alone are adequate.

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[1]George Saintsbury, Collected Essays and Papers of George Saintsbury-1875-1920, London and Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., III, 94.

The style of Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the outstanding "modern" of the Elizabethan age, is delightful but curious. Although Bacon may be classed among the writers of the plain style rather than the ornate, his blunt, closely packed, almost epigramatic sentences, with their tone of authority are exceedingly individual. His style could have been written by few besides Bacon and could say little besides the things that he said:

> Wisdom for a man's self is, in many branches thereof, a depraved thing. It is the wisdom of rats, that will be sure to leave a house somewhat before it fall. It is the wisdom of the fox, that thrusts out the badger, who digged and made room for him. It is the wisdom of crocodiles, that shed tears when they would devour. But that which is specially to be noted is, that those which (as Cicero says of Pompey) are sui amantes, sine rivali lovers of themselves without a rival are many times unfortunate. And whereas they have all their times sacrificed to themselves, they become in the end themselves sacrifices to the inconstancy of fortune whose wings they sought by their self-wisdom to have pinioned. [1]

The prose of Bacon's disciple, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) is naked and mathematical. We would expect Hobbes to have no patience with any frills or charm, and he gives us none. Although influenced by the tradition of medieval scholasticism in some respects, his prose foreshadows the efforts of the British Academy toward language reform. Hobbes stood alone in his age with a stark plain style

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[1]Francis Bacon, Works, "On Wisdom for a Man's Self", edited by J. Spedding, R. L. Ellis, and D. D. Heath, London: Longman & Co., 1857-1874, VI, 86.

which, although too rugged for general literary purposes, had yet the lucid, cogent quality which Dryden was to incorporate. The skeletonal structure of Hobbes' prose will be apparent in the following:

> The general use of speech, is to transfer our mental discourse, into verbal; or the train of our thoughts, into a train of words; and that for two commodities, whereof one is the registering of the consequences of our thoughts; which being apt to slip out of our memory, and put us to a new labour, may be again recalled, by such words as they were marked by. So that the first use of names is to serve for "marks" or "notes" of remembrance. Another is, when many use the same words, to signify, by their connection and order, one to another, what they conceive, or think of each matter; and also what they desire, fear, or have any other passion for. And for this use they are called "signs." Special uses of speech are these; first, to register, what by cogitation, we find to be the cause of any thing, present or past; and what we find things present or past may produce, or effect; which in sum, is acquiring of arts. Secondly, to show to others that knowledge which we have attained, which is, to counsel and teach one another. Thirdly, to make known to others our wills and purposes, that we may have the mutual help of one another. Fourthly, to please and delight ourselves and others, by playing with our words, for pleasure or ornament, innocently.[1]

Two great stylists of Elizabethan pulpit oratory, John Donne (1573-1631) and Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), must also be included in an examination of English prose style before Dryden. Andrewes is little known today by students of English prose. T. S. Eliot in his essay "Lancelot Andrewes" has rediscovered his literary value.

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[1]Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, "Of Speech," London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., n.d., 23.

"His sermons are too well built to be readily quotable; they stick too closely to the point to be entertaining. Yet they rank with the finest English prose of their time, of any time."[1] Eliot lists the most conspicuous elements of Andrewes' style as: arrangement and structure, relevant intensity, and precision in the use of words. "Andrewes takes a word and derives the world from it; squeezing and squeezing the word until it yields a full juice of meaning which we should never have supposed any word to possess."[2] He gives the following as an example of Andrewes' effort to find the exact meaning and make that meaning live. It is a passage from the bishop's exposition of the text, "That there is born unto you this day a Saviour, Which is Christ the Lord, in the City of David."

> Who is it? Three things are said of this Child by the Angel. (1) He is 'a Saviour'. (2) 'Which is Christ'. (3) 'Christ the Lord'. Three of his titles, well and orderly inferred one of another by good consequence. We cannot miss one of them; they be necessary all. Our method on earth is to begin with great; in heaven they begin with good first.
>
> First, then, 'a Saviour'; that is His name, Jesus, Soter; and in that Name his benefit, Salus, 'saving health or salvation.' Such a name as the great Orator himself saith of it, Soter, hoc quantum est? Ita magnum est ut latin uno verbo exprimi non possit. 'This name Saviour is so great as no one word can express the force of it.'
>
> But we are not so much to regard the ecce how great it is, as guadium what joy is in it; that is the point we are to speak to. And for that, men may

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[1]T. S. Eliot, For Lancelot Andrewes, "Lancelot Andrewes," London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928, 14.

[2]Ibid., 24-25.

> talk what they will, but sure there is no joy in the world to the joy of a man saved; no joy so great, no news so welcome, as to one ready to perish, in case of a lost man, to hear of one that will save him. In danger of perishing by sickness, to hear of one will make him well again; by sentence of the law, of one with a pardon to save his life; by enemies, of one that will rescue and set him in safety. Tell any of these, assure them but of a Saviour, it is the best news he ever heard in his life. There is joy in the name of a Saviour. And even this way, this Child is a Saviour too. Potest hoc facere, sed hoc non est opus Ejus. 'This He can do but this is not His work'; a farther matter there is, a greater salvation He came for. And it may be we need not any of these; we are not presently sick, in no fear of the law, in no danger of enemies. And it may be, if we were, we fancy to ourselves to be relieved some other way. But that which He came for, that saving we need all; and none but He can help us to it. We have therefore all cause to be glad for the Birth of this Saviour. [1]

And again of the wise men coming from the East:

> It was no summer progress. A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey in. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off, in solstitio brumali, 'the very dead of winter.' [2]

The prose of John Donne is far more emotional and personal. Eliot suggests that he is a little of the religious spellbinder, "the Reverend Billy Sunday of his time, the flesh-creeper, the sorcerer of emotional orgy."[3]

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[1] Ibid., 25-26.

[2] Ibid., 27.

[3] Ibid., 20.

Donne's prose lacks the singleness of purpose and the discipline that the prose of Andrewes has. It is more conceited and sonorous and less lucid and simple. The following is from a Christmas sermon which Donne delivered at St. Paul's. It shows admirably still another difference between the two men. Andrewes is God-centered; Donne is man-centered.

> My body is my prison; and I would be so obedient to the Law, as not to break prison; I would not hasten my death by starving, or macerating this body: But if this prison be burnt down by continuall feavers, or blowen down with continuall vapours, would any man be so in love with that ground upon which that prison stood, as to desire rather to stay there, than to go home? Our prisons are fallen, our bodies are dead to many former uses; Our palate dead in a tastlesnesse; Our stomach dead in an indigestiblenesse; our feete dead in a lameness, and our invention in a dulnesse, and our memory in a forgetfulnesse; and yet, as a man that should love the ground, where his prison stood, we love this clay, that was a body in the dayes of our youth, and but our prison then, when it was at best; wee abhorre the graves of our bodies; and the body, which, in the best vigour thereof, was but the grave of the soule, we over-love. [1]

John Tillotson (1630-1694) was to follow these two great preachers and to modernize their styles. He is more akin to the lucidity of Andrewes than the emotionalism of Donne. But Andrewes' prose has a medieval quality about it; Tillotson's was to join Dryden's in becoming one of the first examples of modern prose. Since Tillotson has been credited with having influenced Dryden's style, his prose will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter.

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[1]Donne, John, Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, edited by John Haywood, London: Nonesuch Press; New York: Random House, Inc., 1936, 282.

Sir Thomas Browne, John Milton, and Jeremy Taylor, were the three great prose masters in the era preceding Dryden. These three are the stylists of the heavy, elaborate "organ-tone" prose which Dryden was unconsciously to replace.

The prose of Browne's (1605-1682) Religio Medici, with its carefully built sentences and its splendid cadences is perhaps everything that Dryden tried not to make his prose. From it, Dryden may well have got the title of his religious poem, but he took very little else:

> There are wonders in true affection: it is a body of Enigmas, mysteries and riddles; wherein two so become one as, they both become two. I love my friend before my self, and yet methinks I do not love him enough: some few months hence my multiplied affection will make me believe I have not loved him at all. When I am from him, I am dead till I be with him; when I am with him, I am not satisfied, but would still be nearer him. United Souls are not satisfied with imbraces, but desire to be truly each other; which being impossible, their desires are infinite, and proceed without a possibility of satisfaction. Another misery there is in affection, that whom we truly love like our own selves, we forget their looks, nor can our memory retain the Idea of their faces; and it is no wonder, for they are our selves, and our affection makes their looks our own. This noble affection falls not on vulgar and common constitutions, but on such as are mark'd for virtue: he that can love his friend with this noble ardour, will in a competent degree affect all. Now, if we can bring our affection to look beyond the body, and cast an eye upon the soul, we have found the true object, not only of friendship, but Charity; and the greatest happiness that we can bequeath the soul, is that we all do place our last felicity, Salvation;

> which though it be not in our power to bestow, it is in our charity and pious invocation to desire, if not procure and further. [1]

And for a sample of Milton's irregularly elegant "poet's prose" at its most eloquent and classical best:

> Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine master, and was a shape most glorious to look on: but when he ascended, and his apostles after him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealth with the good Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as dare appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall do, till her Master's second coming; he shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mold them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection. Suffer not these licensing prohibitions to stand at every place of opportunity forbidding and disturbing them that continue seeking, that continue to do our obsequies to the torn body of our martyred saint. We boast our light; but if we look not wisely on the sun itself, it smites us into darkness. [2]

Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667) was called by Saintsbury "perhaps the greatest ancient master of the florid and ornate style of English Prose." Like Browne and Milton, his writing is poetic in diction and harmony and his sentences are elongated and complex.

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[1] Thomas Browne, Works, edited by Geoffrey Keynes, London: Faber & Gwyer, Ltd., 1928, I, 82.

[2] John Milton, Areopagitica and Other Tracts, London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1900, 52-53.

> As our life is very short, so it is very miserable; and therefore it is well it is short. God in pity to mankind, lest his burden should be insupportable and his nature an intolerable load, hath reduced our state of misery to an abbreviation; and the greater our misery is, the less while it is like to last; the sorrows of a mans spirit being like ponderous weights, which by the greatness of their burden make a swifter motion, and descend into the grave to rest and ease our wearied limbs; for then only we shall sleep quietly, when those fetters are knocked off, which not only bound our souls in prison, but also ate the flesh till the very bones opened the secret garments of their carti lages, discovering their nakedness and sorrow. Here is no place to sit down in, but you must rise as soon as you are set, for we have gnats in our chambers, and worms in our gardens, and spiders and flies in the palaces of the greatest kings. How few men in the world are prosperous! What an infinite number of slaves and beggars, of persecuted and oppressed people, fill all corners of the earth with groans, and heaven itself with weeping prayers and sad remembrances! [1]

Few of these predecessors of Dryden were complete masters of even their peculiarly personal medium and practically none of the styles were versatile enough to be used in more than one way. In almost all of them, the writing is too artificial and eccentric or too cramped and inelegant.

One man, however, Abraham Cowley (1618-1667), must be given credit for anticipating Dryden and giving a brief sample of what was to come. Cowley wrote little prose and seems to have achieved small credit for that

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[1]Jeremy Taylor, Works, edited by Reginald Heber, London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1856, III, 284-285.

which he did write. However, in some of his prose work, he began on a small scale what Dryden was to build into a prose tradition--the art of writing prose in the language of well-bred and modern conversation. Dryden tells us that Cowley's authority is almost sacred to him [1] and later calls him "the darling of my youth" [2] but I have been unable to find a comment of his on Cowley's prose. This quotation, however, from Cowley's preface to his poems published in 1656, although it shows his stronger tendency to conceits, has much of the informal but assured tone of the prose which Dryden was to write later:

> At my return lately into England, I met by great accident (for such I account it to be, that any Copy of it should be extant any where so long, unless at his house who printed it) a Book entituled, The Iron Age, and published under my name, during the time of my absence. I wondred very much how one who could be so foolish to write so ill Verses, should yet be so Wise to set them forth as another Mans rather than his own; though perhaps he might have made a better choice, and not fathered the Bastard upon such a person, whose stock of Reputation is, I fear, little enough for maintenance of his own, numerous Legitimate Off-spring of that kinde. It would have been much less injurious, if it had pleased the Author to put forth some of my Writings under his own name, rather than his own under mine: He had been in that a more pardonable Plagiary, and had done less wrong by robbery, then he does by such a Bounty; for no body can be justified by the Imputation even of anothers

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[1] Ker, op. cit., "Of Heroic Plays," I, 154.

[2] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 108.

> Merit; and our own coarse Cloathes are like to become us better, then those of another mans, though never so rich: but these, to say the truth, were so beggarly, that I my self was ashamed to wear them. [1]

In general, however, long heavy sentences, involved with qualifications and encumbered with quotations and conceits; trailing clauses and awkward phrases; inversions, parentheses and faulty structure; clumsy classicisms and inelegant vulgarisms made the old prose in the hands of the average writer impossible at the time when Dryden first started to write. By 1700, when he died, the language was shaped into a sound, dignified, but colloquial standard for Addison, Steele and the other Queen Anne men to follow. By following this standard, they were to fix it securely as the traditional prose style for everyday purposes.

The Augustan age was peculiarly suited to the further development of this type of prose. The change at the Revolution in 1688 meant that the court with its entourage was no longer the dominent literary audience. Literary England in the early eighteenth century was London, with its varied interests of politics, society, and business. And the new audience was composed not

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[1] Abraham Cowley, Essays and other Prose Writings, edited by Alfred B. Gough, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915, 1.

only of the nobility and young wits of the town, but also of the new statesmen, the wealthy merchants and the rising professional men. The growing middle class, enriched by the growth of commerce and speculation, was gaining in self respect and independence--and was beginning to read. It was now possible for a man to support himself by writing pamphlets, essays, and books and the time when an author had to rely on a patron was dying. The upper middle class was ready for a simple and easy form of reading material, and Richard Steele (1672-1729) provided this form in The Tatler, which was started in 1709. It was succeeded in 1711 by The Spectator to which Joseph Addison (1672-1719) was the main contributor. These two men took the middle class under their wing and educated them in the proprieties and niceties of the time. The average reader of the day, who was not himself acquainted with the classical languages, got his neo-classicism in second-hand form from the essays of these periodicals and others.

Addison's prose is polished, harmonious, and classically dignified. It is the more even of the two, and, although the more correct, is certainly the duller. It is clearly in the Dryden tradition, however, and, since it was more easily imitated than Dryden's style, it did much to reinforce the new standard:

> I consider a human soul without education like marble in the quarry, which shows none of its inherent beauties, till the skill of the polisher fetches out the colours, makes the surface shine, and discovers every ornamental cloud, spot, and vein that runs through the body of it. Education, after the same manner, when it works upon a noble mind, draws out to view every latent virtue and perfection, which without such helps are never to make their appearance.
>
> If my reader will give me leave to change the allusion so soon upon him, I shall make use of the same instance to illustrate the force of education, which Aristotle has brought to explain his doctrine of substantial forms, when he tells us that a statue lies hid in a block of marble; and that the art of the statuary only clears away the superfluous matter and removes the rubbish. The figure is in the stone, the sculptor only finds it. What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to a human soul. [1]

The warmth and colloquial ease of Dryden are more apparent in the essays of Steele, who was more original and spontaneous than his collaborator:

> Of all the impertinent wishes which we hear expressed in conversation, there is not one more unworthy of a gentleman or a man of liberal education than that of wishing oneself younger. I have observed this wish is usually made upon sight of some object which gives the idea of a past action, that it is no dishonour to us that we cannot now repeat; or else on what was in itself shameful when we performed it. It is a certain sign of a foolish or a dissolute mind if we want our youth again only for the strength of bones and sinews which we once were masters of. [2]

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[1] A. Chalmers (ed.), The British Essayists, "Spectator No. 215," Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1866, VII, 336.

[2] Ibid., "Spectator No. 153," VII, 34.

Swift even more than Addison and Steele wrote for the newly enlarged public. The latter men depended on the upper middle class for their success; Swift wrote for all the reading audience. His choice of language, style, and illustration was constantly directed to reach the most ordinary reader.

"Dryden was Addison's master," writes Saintsbury, "and there can be little doubt that he acted in the same capacity, though in a different fashion, to ungrateful 'cousin Swift'." [1] Where Addison elaborated and "corrected" Dryden's prose, Swift tightened and pared it. Swift's naturalness and lack of affectation remind one of Dryden; Addison was more formal. But Dryden has little of Swift's terseness. There are unnecessary words in Dryden and easy luxuriant clauses. Swift's style is stripped of all unnecessary appendages. Dryden is undoubtedly England's greatest verse satirist. Swift is her greatest prose satirist, and Addison, for all his gentlemanly manners, is a master of subtle irony. Addison might be said to have given manners to the satiric element in Dryden; Swift, on the other hand, turned Dryden's dignified aloof style of mockery into bitter and brutal venom:

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[1] George Saintsbury, A History of English Prose Rhythm, London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1912, 289.

> As to learning, government, arts, manufactures, and the like, my master confessed he could find little or no resemblance between the Yahoos of that country and those in ours; for he only meant to observe what parity there was in our natures. He had heard, indeed, some curious Houyhnhnms observe, that in most herds there was a sort of ruling Yahoo, (as amongst us there is generally some leading or principal stag in a park,) who was always more deformed in body and mischievous in disposition than any of the rest; that this leader had usually a favourite as like himself as he could get, whose employment was to lick his master's feet and posteriors and drive the females to his kennel; for which he was now and then rewarded with a piece of ass's flesh. This favourite is hated by the whole herd, and therefore, to protect himself, keeps always near the person of his leader. He usually continues in office till a worse can be found; but the very moment he is discarded, his successor, at the head of all the Yahoos in that district, young and old, male and female, come in a body, and discharge their excrements upon him from head to foot. But how far this might be applicable to our courts, and favourites, and ministers of state, my master said I could best determine.
>
> I durst make no return to this malicious insinuation, which debased human understanding below the sagacity of a common hound, who has judgment enough to distinguish and follow the cry of the ablest dog in the pack, without being ever mistaken. [1]

Swift is not always so vitrolic, however. The following, in which he is making fun of Dryden's numerous dedications of the Aeneis, has more the tone of that master's:

> I confess to have been somewhat liberal in the business of titles, having observed the humour of multiplying them to bear great vogue among certain writers whom I exceedingly reverence. And indeed it seems notunreasonable that books,

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[1]Jonathan Swift, Selected Works, edited by D. Laing Purves, Edinburgh: William P. Nimmo, 1872, 203-204.

> the children of the brain, should have the honour to be christened with variety of names, as well as other infants of quality. Our famous Dryden has ventured to proceed a point farther, endeavouring to introduce also a multiplicity of godfathers; which is an improvement of much more advantage upon a very obvious account. It is a pity this admirable invention has not been better cultivated, so as to grow by this time into general imitation, when such an authority serves it for a precedent. Nor have my endeavours been wanting to second so useful an example; but it seems there is an unhappy expense usually annexed to the calling of a godfather, which was clearly out of my head, as it is very reasonable to believe. Where the pinch lay, I cannot certainly affirm; but having employed a world of thoughts and pains to split my treatise into forty sections, and having entreated forty lords of my acquaintance that they would do me the honour to stand, they all made it a matter of conscience, and sent me their excuses. [1]

Daniel Defoe (1659-1731) wrote even more for the mass of common readers than did Swift. A journalist of Grub Street, he was a man of little education and had not been bred in the neo-classical idea of the gentleman. Uninterested in belles lettres, he wrote for the day, and for the greatest interest of the greatest number of the day. Of all the great writers of the Augustan age, Defoe is almost the only one that can be termed an unpolished writer. The perfect strength and simplicity of Swift were definitely studied. The same qualities in Defoe, although less perfect, appear to be

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[1] Ibid., "Introduction to A Tale of a Tub," 60.

completely natural. Minto in his English Men of Letters edition quotes Defoe's definition of a good writer, taken from a prospectus for a new weekly, The Universal Spectator, which was being started by his son-in-law. It will be noticed that the idea of correctness and propriety does not enter in. Defoe gives us a journalist's, not a stylist's, definition:

> Now whatever may be the lot of this paper, be that as common fame shall direct, yet without entering into the enquiry who writes better, or who writes worse, I shall lay down one specific, by which you that read shall impartially determine who are, or are not, to be called good writers. In a word, the character of a good writer, wherever he is to be found, is this, viz., that he writes so as to please and serve at the same time.
>
> If he writes to please, and not to serve, he is a flatterer and a hypocrite; if to serve and not to please, he turns cynic and satirist. The first deals in smooth falsehood, the last in rough scandal; the last may do some good, though little; the first does no good, and may do mischief, not a little; the last provokes your rage, the first provokes your pride; and in a word either of them is hurtful rather than useful. But the writer that strives to be useful, writes to serve you, and at the same time, by an imperceptible art, draws you on to be pleased also. He represents truth with plainness, virtue with praise; he even reprehends with a softness that carries the force of a satire without the salt of it; and he insensibly screws himself into your good opinion, that as his writings merit your regard, so they fail not to obtain it.
>
> This is part of the character by which I define a good writer; I say 'tis but part of it, for it is not a half sheet that would contain the full description; a large volume would hardly suffice. His fame requires, indeed, a very good writer to give it due praise; and for that reason (and a good reason too) I go no farther with it. [1]

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[1]Quoted in William Minto, Daniel Defoe, English Men of Letters edition, New York: Harper & Bros., 1926, 129.

From the ornate rhythms of Milton, Browne and Taylor to the well-bred conversation of Addison and Steele and the simple vitality of Swift and Defoe is a huge step indeed. The element that was largely responsible for this change was the prose of John Dryden.

IV. SOURCES OF DRYDEN'S PROSE STYLE AND INFLUENCES ON IT

The influences that go into the development and molding of a prose style are diverse and subtle. Indeed all the direct and indirect sources of a prose style can never be discovered. And in a writer like Dryden, whose personality and temperament were so typically those of his time, the elements that influence his prose style must include those tendencies current in the England of his age as well as his varied individual interests.

The restoration in 1660 brought a return to normalcy after the tumult and exhaustion of the revolution. A spirit of order, sobriety and clearness took the place of the chaos of the Commonwealth years. The individualism of the former age gave way to a desire for uniformity and regularity, and reason took the place of emotion in the personality of the age.

This desire for order and uniformity showed itself in the changing attitude toward language. Men now had time to concentrate on how ideas were said rather than on the ideas themselves. The "new science" of Bacon and the Royal Society insisted on a plainer style adaptable to the new philosophy. The pulpit, aroused by religious controversy and to the necessity of reaching the people,

called for reform from the fantastic conceits and ornate language of the pre-Restoration preachers. The court, now restored to its former interest in the arts and refinement, needed a well-bred and dignified, but lively style suited to the "idea of a gentleman." After the insularity of the Puritan regime, society was becoming continentally minded and the expatriated Englishmen returning from France brought with them the ideas of the Golden Age of French literature.

That Dryden was influenced by all of these tendencies cannot be denied. A literary man living in the London of the time with his diversified interests could not escape them.

The New Science

The continual insistence of the new science for a plainer style starts with the originator of the new science himself. Francis Bacon, although the writer of a prose very different from that advocated by the scientists, shows near the beginning of the Magna Instauration an attitude toward language which is essentially the same as that advocated by his followers:

> It being part of my design to set everything forth, as far as it may be, plainly and perspicuously (for nakedness of the mind is still, as nakedness of the body once was, the companion

> of innocence and simplicity) let me first explain the order and plan of the work. [1]

John Wilkins, who later became one of the founders of the Royal Society, in his Ecclesiastes, or a Discourse Concerning the Gift of Preaching (1646) again raised a plea for a plain style. This was followed by Hobbes' Leviathan (1651) and Robert Boyle's Considerations Touching the Style of the Holy Scriptures (written about 1653, published 1663). Again and again the new scientists criticised the traditional philosophy for being concerned only with words having no concrete actuality and representing only figments of the imagination. Figurative language and the more subtle effects of imaginative expression had no place in the new philosophy. All this led to the pressure for a direct unadorned style, concrete in idea and clear and economical in expression.

There seems to be much controversy among scholars about Dryden's place in the Royal Society which was chartered in 1662. His first biographer, Andrew Keppis, in the Biographia Brittannica[2] published in 1793, gives him full credit for being a member in faith as well as

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[1] Quoted in Richard F. Jones, "Science and English Prose in the Third Quarter of the Seventeenth Century," PMLA, XLV, 977.

[2] Cited in Claude Lloyd, "John Dryden and the Royal Society," PMLA, XLV, 967.

in name of this organization of the new science, and most of his other biographers, including Scott and Malone, follow Keppis' lead. Bredvold in an article on the question has this to say:

> There can be no doubt of Dryden's real appreciation of the new science. ...He was interested in the Royal Society, understood its spirit, and recognized that he was like-minded with it. [1]

Claude Lloyd, however, in an article published in the Publications of the Modern Language Society in 1930 states that Dryden's interest in science has been much over-rated and offers substantial proofs in support of this thesis. Oxford, not Cambridge, was the center of the scientific movement under the leadership of John Wilkins, Warden of Wadham College; and Dryden was a Cambridge man. "During his sojourn there the Cambridge Platonists were developing what was felt to be the philosophical equivalent of the scientific activities at Oxford; but there seems to have been no encouragement of "natural" philosophy or little interest in it." [2]

Lloyd refutes the claim of scholars that Dryden was elected to the Society before he had won any notice by his writings and on the basis of his interest in science

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[1]Louis I. Bredvold, "Dryden, Hobbes and the Royal Society," Mod. Phil., XXV, 435,438.

[2]Lloyd, op. cit., 970.

alone by citing "Heroic Stanzas," published twice in 1659; "Astraea Redux," 1660; Dryden's tribute "To my Honor'd Friend Sir Robert Howard, on his Excellent Poems," 1660; his second poem to the king on his coronation in 1661; and a poem presented to Clarendon, as Lord Chancellor, on New Year's 1662. "It is likely, therefore," writes Lloyd, "that Dryden's reputation as a poet was his main recommendation to the scientists who sought a cosmopolitan following." [1]

Lloyd then goes on to prove by citations from Thomas Birch's History [2] that Dryden, who was elected November 19, 1662 and admitted November 26, 1662 under the provisions of the first charter, was, under the stricter organization of the second charter adopted in April, 1663, continually in arrears. On February 26, 1666, Dryden was one of eight commoners (including Waller) who was, by resolution of the assembly, to receive a notice of his dues and be asked to pay the same. "Some of the delinquents apparently sent word that they preferred to be dropped from the society rather than pay their arrears; for at the July 4 meeting, it was ordered, 'that the Lord Lucas, Sir John Denham, Dr. Scarburgh, Mr. Dryden, and

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[1] Ibid., 971.

[2] Thomas Birch, The History of the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge..., London: 1756. (cited in Lloyd)

Mr. Vermuyden be left out of the account of the arrears'."[1]

And in the report of a committee appointed to audit the treasurer's accounts, November 16, 1667, Dryden is found creditor by the following item:

> By arrears of such persons, as have been omitted by order of the council dated October 29, 1666, viz:
>
> | | l. | s. |
> |---|---|---|
> | Lord Lucas | 9 | 2 |
> | Sir John Denham | 14 | 15 |
> | Dr. Scarburgh | 11 | 18 |
> | Mr. Dryden | 9 | 19 |
> | Mr. Vermuyden | 11 | 15 |
> | Mr. Schroter | 9 | 15 [2] |

Lloyd then does the following bit of arithmetic:

> From the time of Dryden's admission, November 26, 1662, until the date named in the order for collecting arrears, December 23, 1665, his name had been on the roster of the Society for three years and twenty-seven days. His dues of one shilling a week for this period and his admission fee of forty shillings would amount to a little less than ten pounds. It appears, therefore, from the treasurer's charge of nine pounds and nineteen shillings against him that he had paid neither weekly dues nor admission fee. Sprat's History, which appeared toward the end of 1667, carries a list of the members of the Society, and in this list Dryden's name does not appear. 3

Mr. Lloyd's fourth proof is that at a time when the wits of the day were beginning to find the virtuosi a convenient object for satire, Dryden's own numerous

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[1]Lloyd, op. cit., 974.

[2]Ibid., 975 (cited as "Birch II, 213").

[3]Ibid., 975.

satirists never raised that cry against him. Nor did Dryden ever defend science and the Royal Society against any of their critics, although in "Mac Flecknoe" he does not neglect Shadwell's play, The Virtuoso, in other respects. Lloyd concludes:

> Dryden, it is clear, did not associate himself with the Society; and few, if any, outside the Society itself knew that he had ever had any connection with it. There is little need, therefore, to attempt to reconcile Dryden's "scientific" beliefs with those of the scientists of his day.[1]

An even more convincing argument that Dryden did not adhere to the principles of the new science appears in his own writings, especially in his poetry, but also in his prose. In his use of figures and images, Dryden seems to prefer the old science, although he does not exclude the teachings of the new when they can be made into a colorful figure. His adherence to the classical and scholastic also marks him as a not-too-zealous follower of Bacon, if indeed a follower at all. On the other hand, "Annus Mirabilus" and the preface justifying its use of technical language follow the scientists' attitude toward the use of technical terms.

We may assume, therefore, that, although Dryden once "dabbled" in the new science, he never took up its

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[1] Ibid., 976.

cause to proclaim. The influence of science on the writings of Dryden has been over-emphasized by some scholars. Since the new scientific ideas were an important part of the age, Dryden could not have failed to assimilate some of them. However, he showed them no particular partiality. He used the gifts of the new science as they suited him and mixed them impartially with many of the things the science itself despised.

Movements toward a British Academy

With one of the fruits of the new scientific age, however, Dryden was more closely and enthusiastically connected. The English language was beginning to come into its own. Latin was more and more being replaced by English, and, after the Restoration, classes in the reading and writing of English, as well as other subjects, were slowly fighting their way into the traditional Latin grammar schools. Dryden himself indirectly commends this practice in the "Preface to Sylvae in 1685:

> There are many who understand Greek and Latin and yet are ignorant of their mother-tongue. The proprieties and delicacies of the English are known to few; 'tis impossible even for a good wit to understand and practice them, without the help of a liberal education, long reading, and digesting of those few good authors we have amongst us, the knowing of men and manners, the freedom of conversation with the best company of both sexes; and, in short, without wearing off the rust which he contracted while he was laying in a stock of learning. Thus difficult it is to understand the purity of English, and

> critically to discern not only good writers from bad, and a proper style from a corrupt, but also to distinguish that which is pure in a good author, from that which is vicious and corrupt in him. [1]

And again, in 1697, when condemning Cowley for his violent metaphors and impure language, Dryden writes:

> But at the same time I must excuse him; for through the iniquity of the times he was forced to travel, at an age when, instead of learning foreign languages, he should have studied the beauties of his mother-tongue, which, like all other speeches, is to be cultivated early, or we shall never write it with any kind of elegance. [2]

With this new emphasis on English, the rationalistic spirit of the age turned on the language and found it disorganized, unsystematic and incorrect, which was exactly the way Dryden found it:

> In the age of that poet Aeschylus , the Greek tongue was arrived to its full perfection; they had then amongst them an exact standard of writing and of speaking: the English language is not capable of such a certainty; and we are at present so far from it, that we are wanting in the very foundation of it, a perfect grammar. [3]

Early treatises on English grammar had been written, to be sure, but these works had been generally written for foreigners learning the language or for students seeking a basis for the study of Latin grammar. In 1653, John Wallis, using the inductive principles of

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[1] Ker, op. cit., I, 253.

[2] Ibid., "The Dedication of the Aeneis," II, 229.

[3] Ibid., "Preface to Troilus and Cressida," I, 202-203.

the new science, recorded the results of his own observation of actual English usage in his Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae, and the Royal Society's John Wilkins, in 1668, published An Essay Towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language in which he included a section called "Natural Grammar" with logical terms in place of the traditional terms of Latin grammar.

By far the most outstanding attempts to control, correct, and standardize the language were the efforts to establish a British Academy. It was natural that an Academy should be proposed at this time. The temper of the age was authoritarian and academic. The French Academy had been founded by Richelieu in 1635 "to labor with all possible care and diligence to give definite rules to our language, and to render it pure, eloquent, and capable of treating the arts and sciences." [1] The history of the French Academy appeared in English in 1657, and with the Restoration, Charles brought a strong French influence.

It was natural, too, that the newly-established Royal Society should father the attempt. Thomas Sprat in his History of the Royal Society, which was published in 1667 and which itself was one of the first steps in

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[1]Quoted from the statutes defining its purpose in Albert C. Baugh, A History of the English Language, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1935, 324.

the Restoration revolt against ornate prose, set forth the attitude and habits of the Society in language:

> Thus they have directed, judg'd, conjectur'd upon, and improved Experiments. But lastly, in these, and all other businesses, that have come under their care; there is one thing more, about which the Society has been most sollicitous; and that is, the manner of their Discourse: which, unless they had been very watchful to keep in due temper, the whole spirit and vigour of their Design, had been soon eaten out, by the luxury and redundance of speech. The ill effects of this superfluity of talking have already overwhelm'd most other Arts and Professions; insomuch, that when I consider the means of Happy living, and the causes of their corruption, I can hardly forbear recanting what I said before; and concluding, that eloquence ought to be banish'd out of civil Societies, as a thing fatal to Peace and good Manners. To this opinion I should wholly incline; if I did not find, that it is a Weapon, which may be easily procur'd by bad men, as good: and that, if these should onely cast it away, and those retain it; the naked Innocence of vertue, would be upon all occasions expos'd to the armed Malice of the wicked. This is the chief reason, that should now keep up the Ornaments of speaking, in any request: since they are so much degenerated from their original usefulness. They were at first, no doubt, an admirable Instrument in the hands of Wise Men: when they were onely employ'd to describe Goodness, Honesty, Obedience: in larger, fairer, and more moving Images: to represent Truth, cloth'd with Bodies; and to bring Knowledge back again to our very senses, from whence it was't first deriv'd to our understandings. But now they are generally chang'd to worse uses: They make the Fancy disgust the best things, if they come sound and unadorn'd: They are in open difiance against reason; professing, not to hold much correspondence with that; but with its Slaves, the Passions: they give the mind a motion too changeable, and bewitching, to consist with right practice. Who can behold, without

> indignation, how many mists and uncertainties, these spacious Tropes and Figures have brought on our knowledg? [1]

At a meeting of the Society on December 7, 1664, the vote of the group reads:

> It being suggest that there were persons of the Society whose genius was very proper and inclined to improve the English tongue, and particularly for philosophical purposes, it was voted that there should be a committee for improving the English language; and that they meet at Sir Peter Wyche's lodgings in Grays Inn once or twice a month, and give an account of their proceedings when called upon. The persons following or any three or more of them, were nominated to constitute the committee: Mr. Aershire, Sir Robert Atkins, Mr. Austen, Sir John Birkenhead, Dr. Clarke, Dr. Crowne, Mr. Dryden, Mr. Ellise, Mr. Evelyn, Sir John Finch, Mr. Godolphin, Mr. Henshaw, Mr. Hoskins, Mr. Neile, Sir Thomas Notte, Mr. Sprat, Mr. Southwell, Sir Samuel Tuke, Mr. Waller, Mr. Williamson, Mr. Matthew Wren. It was ordered that this committee at their first meeting choose a chairman out of their number. [2]

It was perhaps this committee to which John Evelyn referred in his letter of August 12, 1689 to Samuel Pepys, allowances being made for Evelyn's memory by the lapse of time:

> And indeed such was one designed since the restoration of Charles the Second (1665), and in order to it three or four meetings were begun at Gray's Inn, by Mr. Cowley, Dr. Sprat, Mr. Waller, the Duke of Buckingham, Matt. Clifford, Mr. Dryden, and some other promoters of it. But by the death of the incomparable Mr. Cowley,

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[1] Thomas Sprat, History of the Royal Society of London, edition 3, London: S. Chapman, 1722, 111-113.

[2] Birch, op. cit., I, 499 quoted in O. F. Emerson, "John Dryden and a British Academy," Proceedings of the British Academy, London: Oxford University Press, 1921-1923, X, 47.

> distance and inconvenience of the place, the contagion, and other circumstances intervening, it crumbled away and came to nothing. [1]

Evelyn has given us another clue to this brief and mysterious embryo of an Academy. He was unable to attend the meetings at "Peter Wyche's Lodgings," and in a letter to his host explaining the situation he has included his ambitious proposals of the work the committee was to do:

> I conceive the reason both of additions to, and the corruption of the English language, as of most other tongues, has proceeded from the same causes; namely from victories, plantations, frontiers, staples of commerce, pedantry of schools, affectation of travellers, translations, fancy and style of Court, vernility and mincing of citizens, pulpits, political remonstrances, theatres, shops, &c.
>
> The parts affected with it we find to be the accent, analogy, direct interpretation, tropes, phrases, and the like.
>
> 1. I would therefore humbly propose that there might first be compiled a Grammar...
> 2. That with this a more certain Orthography were introduced, as by leaving out superfluous letters, &c.: such as o in woomen, people; u in honour; a in reproach, ugh in though &c.
> 3. That there might be invented some new periods, and accents, besides such as our grammarians and critics use, to assist, inspirit, and modify our pronunciation of sentences...
> 4. To this might follow a Lexicon or collection of all the pure English words by themselves; then those which are derivation from others, with their prime, certain and natural signification; then, the symbolical: so as no innovation might be used or favoured, at least till there should arise some necessity of providing a new edition, and of amplifying the old upon mature advice.

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[1]John Evelyn, Diary and Correspondence, edited by William Bray, London: George Routledge & sons, Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., n.d., 685-686.

> 5. That in order to this, some were appointed to collect all the technical words...
> 6. That things difficult to be translated or expressed, and such as are as it were, incommensurable one to another: as determinations of weights and measures, coins, honours, national habits, arms, dishes, drinks, municipal constitutions of courts; old and abrogated customs, &c. were better interpreted than as yet we find them...
> 7. That a full catalogue of exotic words, such as are daily minted by our Logodaedali, were exhibited, and that it were resolved on what should be sufficient to render them current...
> 8. Previous to this it would be inquired what particular dialects, idioms, and proverbs are in use in every several county of England...
> 9. And happily it were not amiss, that we had a collection of the most quaint and courtly expressions...for we are infinitely defective as to civil addresses, excuses and forms upon sudden and unpremeditated (though ordinary) encounters...
> 10. And since there is likewise a manifest rotation and circling of words which go in and out like the mode and fashion, books should be consulted for the reduction of some of the old laid-aside words and expressions...
> 11. Something might likewise be well translated out of the best orators and poets, Greek and Latin, and even out of the modern languages; that so some judgment might be made concerning the elegancy of the style, and a laudable and unaffected imitation of the best recommended to writers.
> 12. Finally, there must be a stock of reputation gained by some public writings and compositions of the Members of this Assembly...and if the design were arrived thus far, I conceive a very small matter would dispatch the art of rhetoric, which the French proposed as one of the first things they recommended to their late academicians.[1]

Professor Emerson feels that without question this attempt of the Royal Society to start a nucleus for a

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[1] Ibid., 611.

British Academy can be attributed to John Dryden. He suggests that, since Dryden was a member of the Royal Society as early as November 26, 1662, it may be that he was the first to mention, in conversation with his fellow members, the idea of a British Academy. He further maintains that Waller was the only other name nominated who might fulfill the Academy's words of "genius...very proper and inclined to improve the English language" and shows that Waller was in arrears for dues, pleading that "he, being perpetually in Parliament, had never been able to attend the Society, either to serve them or receive any advantage thereby." [1] Waller managed, however, if we are to believe Evelyn, to attend the meetings at Gray's Inn, and Evelyn and Sprat have both been shown to be intensely interested in the problem of language. [2]

Emerson's other proofs are that Dryden had already suggested the British Academy, that he was, throughout his life an avowed believer in improving English by some such means, and that he was in other respects strongly under French influence.

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[1] Birch, op. cit., IV, 130, quoted by Emerson, op. cit., 48.

[2] Emerson himself has shown us "almost conclusive proof" that the part of Sprat's History which contained his plea for simple language "must have been written and probably printed before December, 1664." 52.

Although all these are strong arguments, I do not feel that they prove conclusively that Dryden was the one moving power behind this gesture of the Royal Society.

It is certain, however, that Dryden was intensely interested and that he never quite gave up the hope of a society to aid him in his task of standardization. In his "Dedication to the Rival Ladies" he first mentions the idea, and this is the suggestion that Emerson cites. The Rival Ladies was entered on the Stationer's Books (according to Malone) June 5, 1664 and probably published shortly after. The Royal Society's move did not come until December 7, 1664.

> I know not whether I have been so careful of the plot and language as I ought; but, for the latter, I have endeavoured to write English, as near as I could distinguish it from the tongue of pedants, and that of affected travellers. Only I am sorry, that (speaking so noble a language as we do) we have not a more certain measure of it, as they have in France, where they have an Academy erected for that purpose, and endowed with large privileges by the present king. I wish we might at length leave to borrow words from other nations, which is now a wantoness in us, not a necessity; but so long as some affect to speak them, there will not want others, who will have the boldness to write them.[1]

The quotation lamenting a perfect grammar has already been given above. Two clearer references to the

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[1] Ker, op. cit., I, 5.

Academy idea occur toward the end of Dryden's life in 1693:

> I might descend also the mechanic beauties of heroic verse; but we have yet no English Prosodia,[1] not so much as a tolerable dictionary, or a grammar; so that our language is in a manner barbarous; and what government will encourage any one, or more, who are capable of refining it, I know not: but nothing under a public expense can go through with it. And I rather fear a declination of language, than hope an advancement of it in the present age.[2]

The second 1693 passage repeats this dire warning:

> For after all, our language is both copious, significant, and majestical, and might be reduced into a more harmonious sound. But for want of public encouragement in this Iron Age, we are so far from making any progress in the improvement of our tongue, that in few years we shall speak and write as barbarously as our neighbors.[3]

Perhaps once more, at least, he had a chance to work toward the fulfillment of his dream. Wentworth Dillon, the Earl of Roscommon, evidently formed or planned a society for refining the language and fixing its standard. The date of this venture is not known. Fenton's note on Waller's poem "Upon the Earl of Roscommon's

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[1]In the "Dedication of the Aeneis" (1697) Dryden tells us, "I have long had by me the materials of an English Prosodia, containing all the mechanical rules of versification, wherein I have treated, with some exactness, of the feet, the quantities, and the pauses." Ker, II, 217. This has never been found. See R. D. Jameson, "Notes on Dryden's Lost Prosodia," Mod. Phil., XX, 241-253. Perhaps in the 1693 passage Dryden was angling for a commission for what he had already completed.

[2]Ker, op. cit., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 110.

[3]Ibid., "Dedication of Examen Poeticum," 12.

Translation of Horace" says it occurred during the last years of Roscommon's life,[1] and Roscommon died in 1684. Most of Dryden's biographers have felt that Dryden was the principal assistant in this design. Religious difficulties and Roscommon's death seem to have defeated the venture.

Thus we see that from almost the date of his first prose writing until near the end of his life, Dryden clung to the idea of a society, chartered by the government to improve and regulate the English language.

The Restoration Pulpit

The great preachers of the Restoration were also turning from the style of Donne and Taylor. An age of such intense and violent religious controversy was not an age to spin laborious theological conceits in sonorous music. And many of the prominent preachers were men who were not adverse to the new philosophy and who adopted its language with its ideas. Thomas Sprat, the famous historian of the Royal Society was at one time chaplain to Buckingham and was to become Bishop of Rochester. Also the Royal Society's was John Wilkins

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[1]Emerson, op. cit., 52.

who in 1646 in his Ecclesiastes, or a Discourse Concerning the Gift of Preaching had this to say to his fellows in the ministry of the "phrase" that should be used in preaching:

> It must be plain and naturall, not being darkned with the affection of Scholasticall harshnesse, or Rhetoricall flourishes. Obscurity in the discourse is an argument of ignorance in the minde. The greatest learning is to be seen in the greatest plainnesse... . When the notion is good, the best way to set it off, is in the most obvious plain expression... . And it will not become the Majesty of a Divine Embassage, to be garnished out with flaunting affected eloquence. How unsuitable it is to the expectation of a hungry soul, who comes unto this ordinance with a desire of spiritual comfort and instruction and there to hear onely a starched speech full of puerile worded Rhetorick? 'Tis a sign of low thoughts and designs, when a mans chief study is about the polishing of his phrase and words. Such a one speaks onely from his mouth, and not from his heart. [1]

Perhaps the most famous preacher of Dryden's time, however, at least to later ages, was John Tillotson who was to become Archbishop of Canterbury. Dryden's friend, Congreve, has been the cause of much scholarly confusion because of one sentence in his dedication to Dryden's Dramatic Works in 1717: "I have heard him [Dryden] frequently own with Pleasure, that if he had any Talent for English Prose, it was owning to his having often read the Writings of the great Archbishop Tillotson." [2]

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[1]Quoted in Jones, op. cit., 979-980.

[2]Quoted in David Nichol Smith, John Dryden, Cambridge: The University Press, 1950, 87.

The majority of critics dismiss this as a manifest and generous exaggeration. Tillotson was born in 1630; Dryden, in 1631, and at the time when Dryden was writing good prose, Tillotson had not written a great deal and was not particularly famous.

Francis Christensen, however, in an article published in 1946 [1] offers an interesting possibility. He points out, as Tilley had done, [2] that in the "Dedication of the Rival Ladies" and the early part of the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," Dryden's management of clauses is still somewhat uncertain, but that when Neander (Dryden) joins the discussion, we recognize our first master of modern English prose. Christensen suggests that, if Dryden learned to write prose from the study of Tillotson's writings, he may have happened on a copy of the preacher's sermon, "The Wisdom of Being Religious" (1664) while he was in the country writing the essay and that this may have been responsible for the change in style.

It is obvious that the style of the first part of the essay is different from that used when Neander begins to speak. We find Crites (Howard) speaking as follows:

> Is it not evident, in these last hundred years (when the study of philosophy has been the business of all the Virtuosi in Christendom), that

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[1] Francis Christensen, "John Wilkins and the Royal Society Reform of Prose Style," Modern Language Quarterly, VII, 179-187.

[2] A. A. Tilley, Cambridge History of English Literature, Cambridge: University Press; New York: Macmillan & Co., 1912, VIII, 370.

> almost a new Nature has been revealed to us?--that more errors of the school have been detected, more useful experiments in philosophy have been made, more noble secrets in optics, medicine, anatomy, astronomy, discovered, than in all those credulous and doting ages from Aristotle to us?--so true it is, that nothing spreads more fast than science, when rightly and generally cultivated.
>
> Add to this, the more than common emulation that was in those times of writing well; which though it be found in all ages and all persons that pretend to the same reputation, yet Poesy, being then in more esteem than now it is, had greater honours decreed to the professors of it, and consequently the rivalship was more high between them; they had judges ordained to decide their merit, and prizes to reward it; and historians have been diligent to record of Eschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Lycophron, and the rest of them, both who they were that vanquished in these wars of the theatre, and how often they were crowned: while the Asian kings and Grecian commonwealths scarce afforded them a nobler subject than the unmanly luxuries of a debauched court, or giddy intrigues of a factious city. [1]

And Eugenius (Buckhurst) speaks:

> I have observed in your speech, that the former part of it is convincing as to what the Moderns have profited by the rules of the Ancients; but in the latter you are careful to conceal how much they have excelled them; we own all the helps we have from them, and want neither veneration nor gratitude while we acknowledge that to overcome them we must make use of the advantages we have received from them: but to these assistances we have joined our own identity; for had we sat down with a dull imitation of them, we might then have lost somewhat of the old perfection, but never acquired any that was new. We draw not therefore after their lines, but those of Nature; and

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[1]Ker, op. cit., I, 37.

> having the life before us, besides the experience of all they knew, it is no wonder if we hit some airs and features which they have missed. I deny not what you urge of arts and sciences, that they have flourished in some ages more than others; but your instance in philosophy makes for me: for if natural causes be more known now than in the time of Aristotle, because more studied, it follows that poesy and other arts may, with the same pains, arrive still nearer to perfection; and, that granted, it will rest for you to prove that they wrought more perfect images of human life than we; which seeing in your discourse you have avoided to make good, it shall now be my task to show you some part of their defects, and some few excellencies of the Moderns. [1]

This air of polite studied argument, with its slow moving sentences, formal diction and awkwardly complex clauses is definitely not Dryden's usual style. Neander's sentences move more quickly and are more informal. His speeches seem much more direct and personal, and we seem to hear the living man when he speaks:

> As for his other argument, that by pursuing one single theme they gain an advantage to express and work up the passions, I wish any example he could bring from them would make it good; for I confess their verses are to me the coldest I have ever read. Neither, indeed, is it possible for them, in the way they take, so to express passion, as that the effects of it should appear in the concernment of the audience, their speeches being so many declamations, which tire us with the length; so that instead of persuading us to grieve for their imaginary heroes, we are concerned for our own trouble, as we are in the tedious visits of bad company: we are in pain till they are gone. When the French stage came to be reformed by Cardinal Richelieu, those long harangues were introduced, to comply

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[1] Ibid., 44.

> with the gravity of a churchman. Look upon Cinna and the Pompey; they are not so properly to be called plays, as long discourses of reason of state; and Polieucte in matters of religion is as solemn as the long stops upon our organ. Since that time it is grown into a custom, and their actors speak by the hour-glass, as our parsons do; nay, they account it the grace of their parts, and think themselves disparaged by the poet, if they may not twice or thrice in a play entertain the audience with a speech of an hundred or two hundred lines. [1]

Notice the references to everyday occurrences in the above passage, the directness of the command, "Look upon Cinna," the generally shorter structure, the lightness and the authority with which Dryden puts forth his ideas.

There are, I believe, other reasons than the influence of Tillotson, however, for Neander's sudden changing of the pace. We must remember that much of the first part of the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," especially the arguments of Crites and Eugenius, contains the stock opinions of the day which Dryden is setting up in order that, in the person of Neander, he may later refute them. The speeches are set, formal speeches proposing one or another of the traditional ideas of the time. Crites, Eugenius and Lisideius are not Dryden speaking, but Sir Robert Howard, Lord Buckhurst, and

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[1] Ibid., 71-72.

Sir Charles Sedley. When Neander speaks, he has no need to set up the technical problems to be discussed in formal systematized speeches. He can converse; they had to orate. He can talk to them individually in answer to their ideas; they had to address the group as a whole. And those who know Dryden, whether it be his prose or his poetry, know that he is never better than when he is arguing against something or someone. Rebuttal was his strongest forte and everywhere and always he rises to it and performs at his best. Perhaps Dryden deliberately kept the interesting new style for Neander. Perhaps, too, he was deliberately parodying the duller styles of the others in the earlier part of the essay. It is entirely possible, however, that his more intense interest in the things Neander was saying almost automatically led to the more enthusiastic tone and direct communication of the last part of the piece. It is important to notice that in his revision in 1684 Dryden did not structurally alter the style of the essay. Crites, Eugenius, and Lisideius speak in the same tone in the 1684 edition as they did in 1668.

That Dryden knew Tillotson has been fairly definitely established. In the preface to "Religio Laici" (1882) he says: "I have us'd the necessary Precaution, of showing this Paper before it was Publish'd to a judicious

and learned Friend, a Man indefatiguably zealous in the service of the Church and State: and whose Writings have highly deserv'd of both." [1] Smith says that this learned friend was John Tillotson, [2] who at the time was preacher at Lincoln's Inn and Canon of Saint Paul's. Dryden must have known his Rule of Faith (1666) at least by the time he wrote "Religio Laici."

David Nichol Smith believes it likely that Tillotson's writings and perhaps his preaching had drawn Dryden's attention to little niceties of style such as the ending of a sentence with an accented monosyllable or a polysyllable and the placing of the preposition. The revised edition of the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," which did not appear until 1684, had over a hundred alterations, chiefly verbal. The most frequent revision is the omission of the final preposition. Smith suggests these minor niceties as comprising the chief reason for the debt Dryden felt he owed Tillotson:

> Somehow Dryden had realized that a sentence had better not end with an unaccented monosyllable. Now I suggest that these alterations contain the clues to his professed debt to Tillotson. The style of Tillotson is clear and easy, but is free from the colloquial placing of the preposition, and I am ready to believe that it drew his attention to this and other little points affecting the turn of a phrase. But that his debt to Tillotson was greater than that--No! Dryden's prose is much more muscular than Tillotson's and rivets our attention much more strongly. It would have been wholly in keeping with the

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[1] Scott-Saintsbury, op. cit., X, 11.

[2] Smith, op. cit., 89-90.

> generosity of his nature...to have made the most of a very little. He must have known as well as we do that the 'harmony' of his prose, and its clarity, and its vivacity, were not derived from the mere workmanlike efficiency of Tillotson's. [1]

Let us examine the first two paragraphs of Tillotson's sermon, "The Wisdom of Being Religious," which it is suggested Dryden read:

> Job. xxviii And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.
>
> In this chapter Job discourseth of the secrets of nature, and the unsearchable perfections of the works of God. And the result of his discourse is this, that a perfect knowledge of Nature is no where to be found but in the Author of it; no less wisdom and understanding than that which made the World and contrived this vast and regular frame of Nature can thoroughly understand the Philosophy of it, and comprehend so vast a design: But yet there is a knowledge which is very proper to man, and lies level to humane understanding; and that is the knowledge of our Creator; and of the duty we owe to him; and the wisdom of pleasing God, by doing what he commands, and avoiding what he forbids: this Knowledge and Wisdom may be attained by man, and is sufficient to make him happy. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord that is Wisdom, and to depart from evil is Understanding.
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> These words consist of two Propositions, which are not distinct in sense, but one and the same thing variously express'd; For wisdom and understanding are synonymous words here; and though sometimes they have different notions, yet in the Poetical Books of Scripture they are most frequently used as words equivalent, and do both of them indifferently signify

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[1] Ibid., 89-90.

> either a speculative knowledge of things, or a practical skill about them, according to the exigency of the matter or thing spoken of. And so likewise the fear of the Lord, and departure from evil, are phrases of a very near sense, and like importance; and therefore we find them several times put together in Scripture: ...So that they differ only a cause and effect which by a Metonymy usual in all sorts of Authors, are frequently put one for another. [1]

Now to observe Neander's first speech in the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy." This is taken from the 1668 edition without the later grammatical changes:

> I shall grant Lisideius, without much dispute, a great part of what he has urged against us; for I acknowledge that the French contrive their plots more regularly, and observe the laws of comedy, and the decorum of the stage (to speak generally) with more exactness than the English. Farther, I deny not but he has taxed us justly in some irregularities of ours, which he has mentioned; yet, after all, I am of opinion that neither our faults nor their virtues are considerable enough to place them above us.
>
> For the lively imitation of Nature being in the definition of a play, those which best fulfil that law ought to be esteemed superior to the others. 'Tis true, those beauties of the French poesy are such as will raise perfection higher where it is, but are not sufficient to give it where it is not: they are indeed the beauties of a statue, but not of a man, because not animated with the soul of Poesy, which is imitation of humour and passions: and this Lisideius himself, or any other, however biassed to their party, cannot but acknowledge, if he will either compare the humours of our comedies, or the characters of our serious plays, with theirs. [2]

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[1] John Tillotson, Works, ed. 8, London: T. Goodwin, B. Tooke, and J. Pemberton in Fleet Street; J. Round in Exchange Alley, and J. Tonson in the Strand, 1720, 1.

[2] Ker, op. cit., I, 67.

I think it is impossible to trace any definite influence of the Tillotson passage on the second. Although it is clear that the two writers were both working toward a simplified prose style, Tillotson's writings are full of summaries and announcements of what is to come. His style is much more logical and tight, and has, we must admit, a didactic tone; while Dryden's is more flowing and has a conversational freedom. Tillotson is always careful to make his structure clear, while Dryden's longer sentences with their looser structures give the impression of a fine negligence. Although they are both examples of the more simple prose demanded by the Restoration period, the passages above are different varieties of that prose, written by different men for different reasons. Both are influenced by the tendencies of the age and are answers to the need of the time for a usable, clear standard. I am inclined to believe with Smith, however, that the actual influence of Tillotson on Dryden, if such influence existed at all, was confined largely to minor technical changes that did not affect the style as a whole.

Influence of the Court

The return of Charles II to the throne in 1660 brought with it the return of the refinement, wit, and

gaiety of the court tradition. With an elevated and cultivated court life, came readers and patrons for the literary men of the age.

That the court circles, together with other literary gentlemen, provided the chief audience for Dryden's prose is evident. Almost all his works were accompanied by a prose dedication to one of the nobility, and many of his prefaces, which were certainly not written for the mob, contain clues that show us for whom he wrote:

> The Court, which is the best and surest judge of writing, has generally allowed of verse; and in the town it has found favourers of wit and quality. [1]

> But he [Holyday] wrote for fame, and wrote to scholars: we write only for the pleasure and entertainment of those gentlemen and ladies, who, though they are not scholars, are not ignorant: persons of understanding and good sense, who, not having been conversant in the original, or at least not having made Latin verse so much their business as to be critics in it, would be glad to find if the wit of our two great authors [Juvenal] and Horace be answerable to their fame and reputation in the world. [2]

And this quotation from the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" shows us that he considered he had two audiences:

> If by the people you understand the multitude,... 'tis no matter what they think; they are sometimes in the right, sometimes in the wrong:

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[1] Ibid., "Epistle Dedicatory to the Essay of Dramatic Poesy," I, 24.

[2] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 111.

> their judgment is a mere lottery. Est ubi plebs recte plutat, est ubi peccat. Horace says it of the vulgar, judging poesy. But if you mean the mixed audience of the populace and the noblesse, I dare confidently affirm that a great part of the latter sort are already favourable to verse; and that no serious plays written since the King's return have been more kindly received by them than The Siege of Rhodes, the Mustapha, The Indian Queen, and the Indian Emperor. [1]

Obviously it was not for the general people that the logical and fairly technical prose prefaces justifying his works were written. There is no "writing down" in Dryden's prefaces as there is in the plays which he "gave to the people."

In many other parts of his prose Dryden shows the direct influence of the court in his discussions of the refinement of the language and the age and in his dislike for pedantry and dull scholarship as opposed to the lighter "well-bred" learning of the gentleman.

> Only it has been persecuted by some like pedants, with violence of words, and managed by others like gentlemen, with candour and civility. [2]

And again, of pedants:

> But of all people, as they are the most ill-mannered, so they are the worst judges. Even of words, which are their province, they seldom know more than the grammatical construction, unless they are born with a poetical genius, which is a rare portion amongst them. [3]

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[1] Ibid., "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," I, 100.

[2] Ibid., "Epistle Dedicatory to the Essay of Dramatic Poesy," 26.

[3] Ibid., "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting," II, 148.

Of the conversation of the great, Dryden has this to say:

> I have always acknowledged the wit of our predecessors, with all the veneration which becomes me; but, I am sure, their wit was not that of gentlemen: there was ever somewhat that was ill-bred and clownish in it, and which confessed the conversation of the Authors. And this leads me to the last and greatest advantage of our writing, which proceeds from conversation. In the age wherein those poets lived, there was less of gallantry than in ours; neither did they keep the best company of theirs. ...I cannot find that any of them had been conversant in courts, except Ben Johnson; and his genius lay not so much that way, as to make an improvement by it. Greatness was not then so easy of access, nor conversation so free, as now it is. I cannot, therefore, conceive it any insolence to affirm, that, by the knowledge and pattern of their wit who writ before us, and by the advantage of our conversation, the discourse and raillery of our comedies excel what has been written by them. [1]

It was not Dryden's habit, as it was that of many of his contemporaries, to underline words prolifically for emphasis, and to me his underlining of "conversation" in the above passage means a great deal. The most distinguishing characteristic of Dryden's prose style is its easy, flowing air of well-bred conversation. When we consider the paragraph above and remember Dryden's comment previously quoted from his "Preface to Sylvae" urging "the freedom of habitudes and conversation with the best company of both sexes," we can say that he himself may have felt that was his writing's outstanding quality--a quality which he deliberately nurtured and emphasized. And for this "free conversation with the great"

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[1] Ibid., "Defence of the Epilogue," I, 174-175.

Dryden is in debt to the court of Charles II and to the gentlemen-about-town who gathered afternoons to spend the time at Will's.

French Influences

The Restoration brought a swing to the continental after the insularity of the years of strife. It was natural that the new age should turn to the example of French literature and the instruction of the French critics for its standards and knowledge. At this time France was in the Golden age of its literature. Under Richelieu the French Academy had been founded and seemed to be succeeding in its task of purification and correction. Charles brought many of the French modes and habits with him, and French was replacing Latin as the language of diplomacy.

This invasion of French culture brought with it the principles of French criticism, and French criticism was based on system and correctness and, above all, on classical rules. Dryden never refutes the general doctrines of the ancients and he may be classified as of the Gallic school in the way in which he bases his essays on the classical doctrines. When the rules fit his private judgment, he finds them very convenient to use as argument and he can pay them due respect:

> To inform our judgments and to reform our tastes, rules were invented, that by them we might discern when Nature was imitated, and how nearly. [1]

> ...for without rules there can be no art, any more than there can be a house without a door to conduct you in it. [2]

But when a rule stands in the way of what he wants to say and what his common sense tells him is true, he has no trouble forgetting it, or justifying his way out of it:

> ...better that a mechanic rule were stretched or broken, than that a great beauty were omitted. [3]

or humbly excusing himself for breaking it:

> If this can neither be defended nor excused, let it be pardoned at least, because it is acknowledged; and so much the more easily, as being a fault which is never committed without some pleasure to the reader. [4]

or dramatically blowing it away:

> Why should we offer to confine free spirits to one form, when we cannot so much as confine our bodies to one fashion of apparel? [5]

Of the more meticulous correctness of the French school of criticism, he is less respectful:

> I shall never subject my characters to the French Standard, where love and honour are to be weighed by drachms and scruples. [6]

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[1] Ibid., "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting," II, 134.

[2] Ibid., 138.

[3] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," 158.

[4] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," 114.

[5] Ibid., 102.

[6] Ibid., "An Essay of Heroic Plays," I, 157.

or

> I should not have troubled myself thus far with French poets, but that I find our Chedreux critics wholly form their judgments by them. But for my part, I desire to be tried by the laws of my own country; for it seems unjust to me, that the French should prescribe here, till they have conquered. [1]

A more specific consideration of the influence of French culture on Dryden's period may be found in the attitude toward the use of French words. The Restoration period has often been rather hastily assumed to be an age particularly apt to introduce new words from the French. Dryden's own use of French words and his ideas on them will be discussed in a later chapter, but in this more general discussion the findings of Professor Jesperson on this matter are immediately relevant.

In 1905, Jesperson made a study of one thousand words borrowed from French, classifying them by the half-century to which the earliest quotation in the New English Dictionary belongs. The results of his findings are listed below:

Half-century	No. of Words	Half-century	No. of Words
before 1050	2	1451-1500	76
1051-1100	2	1501-1550	84
1101-1150	1	1551-1600	91
1151-1200	15	1601-1650	69
1201-1250	64	1651-1700	34
1251-1300	127	1701-1750	34
1301-1350	120	1751-1800	16
1351-1400	180	1801-1850	23
1401-1450	70	1851-1900	2

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to All for Love," 195.

He concludes, "The common assumption that the age of Dryden was particularly apt to introduce new words from the French is very far from being correct." [1] The half-century in which Dryden wrote shows an outstanding drop in the importation of new French words. The logical conclusion is that, despite, or perhaps because of, the strong example of French literature and the French Academy, English writers were becoming more aware of English as an adequate literary language itself and were refusing to follow the lead of their more "correct" neighbors in diction as in other language elements.

Although, as we have seen, Dryden long held the dream of an Academy for Britain, he seems to have had little respect for the French idas of purity and correctness. Perhaps, however, an amount of British patriotism entered in her, for despite all his grumbling and complaining, Dryden always "stuck up" for his language and his time. He says of the French:

> Their language is not strung with sinews, like our English; it has the nimbleness of a greyhound, but not the bulk and body of a mastiff. Our men and our verses overbear them by their weight; and Pondere, non numero, is the British motto. The French have set up purity for the standard of their language; and a masculine vigour is that of ours. [2]

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[1] Otto Jesperson, Growth and Structure of the English Language, ed. 4, New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1923, 95.

[2] Ker, op. cit., "Dedication of the Aeneis," II, 218.

> Let the French and Italians value themselves on their regularity; strength and elevation are our standard. I said before, and I repeat it, that the affected purity of the French has unsinewed their heroic verse. [1]

There is little that is peculiarly French in the details of Dryden's prose; however, for the general arrangement of the material and the composition of the whole he is in debt to several Frenchmen.

Ker traces the ancestors of his prose to Chapelain's Poetique, the dialogues and essays of Sarrasin, the prefaces of Scudery and the discourses and Examens of Corneille.

> In all these different authors, and in others, there was to be found, with different faculties, the same common quality of clearness in exposition and argument, which even without genius may be pleasing, and with genius is the most valuable auxiliary, as in the essays of Dryden and Corneille. [2]

In comparing Dryden with Corneille, Ker points out that both began writing before the styles of their day were clearly set, both saw the progress of "correct" ideas and felt obliged to conform to them, both had come to understandings with themselves about the meaning and authority of the rules of Poetry, and both had an original love of freedom. The problem of the two men, then, was the same: to reconcile their personal

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[1] Ibid., 229.

[2] Ibid., I, xxviii.

opinions and the leading ideas of their time--to follow tradition and yet be free. And Ker suggests that Dryden must have got from Corneille, "if not the original impulse to write freely about his literary opinions, at any rate a quickening of interest in critical discussion which left its effects on all his later writings."[1]

Saintsbury, however, is not willing to agree with Ker. Writing in his History of English Criticism, he says, "It is not till Saint Evremond, perhaps even till Fenelon, that I can find in France the indescribable omne tulit punctum as in him. And both are his inferiors."[2]

Saint Evremond, the other great critic of the time, lived in England from 1662 to 1665 and from 1670 until his death in 1703. He is referred to three times in Dryden's critical writings, but never by name. In all cases the French writer is advocating something which Dryden is attacking, and Dryden, out of respect, lists him only as "another critic whom I will not name." Saint Evremond was an older man than Dryden. He was fifty-two when he came to England, and an established critic. It is quite possible that his influence affected Dryden's style as well as his ideas. Mildred

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[1]Ibid., xix.

[2]George Saintsbury, A History of English Criticism, New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1912, 114.

Martin, in her unpublished dissertation,[1] comes to the conclusion that, of the French writers, Dryden owed most to Saint Evremond.

That Montaigne was his teacher, Dryden himself admits:

> ...the nature of a preface is rambling, never wholly out of the way, nor in it. This I have learned from the practice of honest Montaigne...[2]

And Montaigne was the only French writer who Dryden mentions as an influence on his style.

Latin Influences

As for his background in the classical languages, Dryden, who was a king's scholar, was instructed at Westminster School by Dr. Busby, to whom Dryden forty-two years later inscribed his "Fifth Satire" of Persius:

> ...to whom I am not only obliged myself for the best part of my own education and that of my two sons; but also have received from him the first and truest taste of Persius.[3]

That at Westminster Dryden got the "best part" of his education in the classical languages, most of his biographers seem to believe. At Trinity College, which he entered in 1650, Dryden widened his acquaintance

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[1]Mildred Alice Martin, Influences on Dryden's Prose Style, unpublished dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana: 1940, 142.

[2]Ker, op. cit., "Preface to the Fables," II, 255.

[3]Quoted in Mark Van Doren, John Dryden: A Study of his Poetry, New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1946, 5.

with the Latin poets. Van Doren says, "His opinions of them were likely to be the traditional opinions that Scaliger's brilliant criticism had made standard. But he employed them for purposes quite his own." [1]

Dryden was not a scholar. His writings are full of careless errors and false facts that a scrupulous student would catch. In his life of Dryden, Johnson says:

> It is not to be supposed, that his skill in the ancient languages was deficient, compared with that of common students; but his scholastick acquisitions seem not proportionate to his opportunities and abilities. He could not, like Milton or Cowley, have made his name illustrious merely by his learning. He mentions but few books, and those such as lie in the beaten track of regular study; from which if ever he departs, he is in danger of losing himself in unknown regions. ...his studies were desultory and fortuitous than constant and systematical. [2]

It is plain that the author himself had a higher opinion of his linguistic skills than his biographers. In the prefaces to his own translations, Dryden often condemns those translators who translate from languages in which they are not fully competent:

> No man is capable of translating poetry, who, besides a genius to that art, is not a master both of his author's language, and of his own... [3]

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[1] Ibid., 9.

[2] Johnson, op. cit., 398.

[3] Ker, op. cit., "Preface to the Translation of Ovid's Epistles," I, 241.

And Dryden, who was constantly plagued by criticism and who often anticipates it by justifying himself in advance, was not likely to have written such a statement unless he felt it applied to him.

Dryden's often quoted confession from the "Dedication of Troilus and Cressida," that at times he had to translate an idea into Latin in order to decide on the correct way to express it in English, receives little credulity from those who know his prose. Jesperson puts the feeling of Dryden's readers well when he says, "I am afraid that Dryden would never have become the famous writer he is, had he employed this practice as often as he would have us imagine." [1] Dryden was not so careful of his grammar and so wasteful of his time as to have gone through this practice often in his prose. Nor do his prose sentences, as a rule, read like a Latin translation.

As for specific authors, he knew the greatest of both the Latin and Greek poets. Virgil was his favorite. Horace, Ovid (from whom he might have acquired some of the swiftness of his gait), Lucretius (who might have influenced his reasoned verse), Seneca, Lucan, Statius,

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[1] Jesperson, op. cit., 130.

Juvenal, and Persius were all ancients whom he knew well. Dryden has done translations of eight of these ancients: Ovid, Theocritus, Lucretius, Horace, Juvenal, Persius, Virgil, and Homer. Lucretius was done with singular success. "His passages from the second and third books of the De Rerum Natura," writes Van Doren, "must be numbered among the most convincing speciments of ratiocinative poetry in any language. The spirit of the Roman has invaded and actually moved the Englishman; for a time he is another person." [1] His Juvenal was also very successful. It is still probably the standard verse translation of the great satirist. Saintsbury says:

> The vigorous stamp of Dryden's verse is... admirably suited to represent the original, and the chief fault noticeable in it--a fault not uncommon with Dryden in translating--is an occasional lapse into an unpoetical vernacular, with the object, doubtless, of representing the text more vividly to English readers. [2]

The most considerable task of translation which Dryden undertook was the Works of Virgil, which he completed in 1697 and which is still the best verse translation of that poet.

Undoubtedly these classical authors influenced his poetry much more than his prose structure. Many of his

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[1] Van Doren, op. cit., 97.

[2] Saintsbury, Dryden, op. cit., 145.

poetic images and figurative expressions come from them, and in his prose we find frequent quotations and illusions which helped him form a basis on which to take off and expound or which supplied him with authority to justify his reason.

Dryden's prose, however, compared with that of his contemporaries and the writers who immediately preceded them, is remarkably free from classicisms and Latin diction. The same cannot be said of his poetry, but, as is discussed later, he made the sharp neo-classic distinction between words appropriate to poetry and those correct for prose. He often expresses the idea that for prose purposes English is fully sufficient:

> Our language is noble, full, and significant; and I know not why he who is master of it may not clothe ordinary things in it as decently as the Latin, if he uses the same diligence in his choice of words. [1]

The Man Himself

The characteristics of a man's prose are due most significantly of all to the personality of the writer himself and the conditions surrounding him through which all other influences must filter.

Dryden's purpose in turning to prose was, at least at the beginning of his career, strictly utilitarian.

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[1] Ker, op. cit., "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," 104.

He wrote poetry, plays and translations in an age when literary and personal controversy was at its highest, and he used the "other harmony" only to express his thoughts on poetry and to explain and justify his theories. There is almost nothing on prose writing in his essays except when, speaking of poetry, he speaks of things that are also true of prose or when he explains how poetry is more than prose.

It is because Dryden used prose only as an instrument to express his thoughts that his style has some of the admirable characteristics it has. Not being interested in prose as an art, he was less apt to polish it with elaborate and elegant decoration and complicated construction. Saintsbury suggests that accident had favored him in a reverse way to that in which it had favored Guez de Balzac (1597-1654), the reformer of French prose:

> Balzac had nothing to say, and therefore was extremely careful and exquisite in his manner of saying it. Dryden had a great deal to say, and said it in the plain, straight-forward fashion which was of all things most likely to be useful for the formation of a workman-like prose style in English. [1]

Are we to suppose, then, that because Dryden had something to say and said it directly, his style would of necessity be what it was? We may assume, perhaps,

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[1]Saintsbury, Dryden, op. cit., 123.

that consciously Dryden was not very interested in his prose style as a work of art. But unconsciously, or in his bones, he had a strong sense of language and a taste for what was natural and right.

Then, too, Dryden possessed an unusual amount of intellectual curiousity and had an unusually broad background. He knew a little about almost everything; we could almost say he tried, or at least considered, everything once. And his age, with the dawning of the new science, with the extremely controversial religious ideas, with its continental standards of criticism, and its fund of knowledge from both classical and earlier English sources, included almost everything. From this hodge-podge of miscellaneous and conflicting ideas, Dryden, with the help of his reason and commonsense, chose that which best served his immediate purposes and his catholic taste. He had a logical and supple mind, and in an age of almost insane fanaticism, he kept his sanity and sense of proportion.

Never a pedant, Dryden, for all his talk of "correctness" was not apt to be careful in what he called "the negligence of prose." He contradicts himself frequently, apparently so earnest about the immediate point at hand that he forgets what he has said before, and his use of language is not always consistent. He frequently digresses--a fault which his natural orderliness always

seems to feel obliged to point out and apologize for.

That most of his writing was done in haste, we have ample proof. He tells us, and we believe him, that "thoughts, such as they are, come crowding in so fast upon me, that my only difficulty is to choose or to reject, to run them into verse, or to give them the other harmony of prose," [1] and he speaks in other places of the heat of writing:

> I find I have launched out farther than I intended in the beginning of this preface; and that, in the heat of writing, I have touched at something, which I thought to have avoided. [2]

The heat seems to have been applied from other directions than inspiration alone:

> I have tired myself, and have been summoned by the press to send away this Dedication; otherwise I had exposed some other faults, which are daily committed by out English poets; which, with care and observation, might be amended. [3]

This lack of revision occurs often in Dryden's writing, and from the writing itself we can see it to be true.

> He [Mr. Walter Moyle] had also furnished me, according to my request, with all the particular passages in Aristotle and Horace which are used by them to explain the art of Poetry by that of Painting; which, if ever I have time to retouch this essay, shall be inserted in their places. [4]

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[1] Ker, op. cit., "Preface to the Fables," II, 249.

[2] Ibid., "Preface to an Evening's Love," I, 141.

[3] Ibid., "Dedication of Examen Poeticum," II, 12.

[4] Ibid., "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting," 138.

"The Parallel of Poetry and Painting," the essay in which the last passage occurs, was "begun and ended in twelve mornings" [1] and comprises thirty-eight pages, including a fair amount of research, in Ker's edition.

Dryden characteristically excuses his lack of revision and, with his usual ability, finds arguments for it. In the first quotation he is speaking of poetry, but we can definitely assume his attitude applied even more to his prose:

> As for the more material faults of writing which are properly mine, though I see many of them, I want leisure to amend them. 'Tis enough for those who make one poem the business of their lives, to leave that correct: yet, excepting Virgil, I never met with any which was so in any language. [2]

> A work may be over-wrought, as well as under-wrought; too much labour often takes away the spirit by adding to the polishing, so that there remains nothing but a dull correctness, a piece without any considerable faults, but with few beauties; for when the spirits are drawn off, there is nothing but a caput mortuum. [3]

> To conclude, I am sensible that I have written this too hastily and too loosely; I fear I have been tedious, and, which is worse, it comes out from the first draught, and uncorrected. This I grant is no excuse; for it may be reasonably urged, why did he not write with more leisure, or if he had it not, (which was certainly my case,) why did he attempt to write on so nice a subject? The objection is unanswerable; but, in part of recompense, let

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[1] Ibid., 153.

[2] Ibid., "Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy," I, 110.

[3] Ibid., "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting," II, 152.

> me assure the reader, that, in hasty productions, he is sure to meet with an author's present sense, which cooler thoughts would possibly have disguised. There is undoubtedly more of spirit, though not of judgment, in these incorrect essays; and consequently, though my hazard be the greater, yet the reader's pleasure is not the less. [1]

And Dryden again was right. The over a hundred corrections in the 1684 revision of his "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," although almost all make his prose more correct, detract from the flavor of the style itself. Although his air of colloquial negligence and his language irregularities in a writer of less genius would be disastrous, they become in Dryden the elements that give his prose the feeling of good conversation. If Dryden had felt inclined to take more pains in the writing of his prose, if he had had more time to write and had followed the rule of revision, his style would not have had the life, the vigor, and the strength that have made it one of the greatest in the tradition of English prose.

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to Sylvae," I, 269.

V. ANALYSIS OF DRYDEN'S PROSE STYLE

Dryden lived in a time when a number of critical standards new to England were coming before the attention of critics and writers. The reaction against the excesses of the later Renaissance schools of poetry originated in France under the leadership of Malherbe and Boileau, who insisted on the need for discarding the extravagant ornaments of style and for cultivating simplicity, clearness, propriety, decorum and moderation. These ideas spread to England through Royalist men of letters who had been in exile during the Commonwealth, through the influence of the court, and through the strong example of French literature itself.

England was emotionally quite ready for this new classicism. The religious and political strife of the commonwealth era had left the people with a desire for peace, conformity, and the golden mean in all things.

The desire for order, system, classification, and definition led to the development in literature of such concepts as Correctness, Refinement, Elegance, and Propriety. There was still much controversy in Dryden's time, however, as to just what was correct, refined, elegant, and proper.

Diction

As the leading literary man of the day, Dryden was naturally drawn into the controversy, and in many parts of his prose he shows us that, of all the constituents of style, he was primarily concerned with diction:

> ...let us consider in what the refinement of a language principally consists: that is, either in rejecting such old words, or phrases, which are ill sounding, or improper; or in admitting new, which are more proper, more sounding, and more significant. The reader will easily take notice, that when I speak of rejecting improper words and phrases, I mention not such as are antiquated by custom only, and, as I may say, without any fault of theirs. For in this case the refinement can be but accidental; that is, when the words and phrases, which are rejected, happen to be improper. Neither would I be understood, when I speak of impropriety of language, either wholly to accuse the last age, or to excuse the present, and least of all myself; for all writers have their imperfections and failings: but I may safely conclude in the general, that our improprieties are less frequent, and less gross than theirs. One testimony of this is undeniable, that we are the first who have observed them; and, certainly, to observe errors is a great step to the correcting of them. [1]

Those words which are "antiquated by custom," although not condemned in the above passage, are considered improper nevertheless and for a true writer's reason:

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[1] Ibid., "Defence of the Epilogue," I, 164.

> If the first end of a writer be to be understood, then, as his language grows obsolete, his thoughts must grow obscure. [1]

Dryden does not, however, object to revivals, if they are used with the moderation which seems to be his touchstone as far as language is concerned:

> ...in my opinion, obsolete words may then be laudably revived, when either they be more sounding, or more significant, than those in practice; and when their obscurity is taken away, by joining other words to them, which clear the sense; according to the rule of Horace, for the admission of new words. But in both cases a moderation is to be observed in the use of them: for unnecessary coinage, as well as unnecessary revival, runs into affectation; a fault to be avoided on either hand. [2]

I have been unable to find any examples of revivals in Dryden's prose diction; however, they are the hardest sort of diction to recognize, especially if they are successful. Dryden's prose as a whole is noticeably more current than his poetry, and he seems to have been more inclined to go a little ahead of his time in his language rather than return to the past.

Of coining, I have been more successful. He mentions a form of it previously in his "Defence of the Epilogue:

> There is yet another way of improving language which poets especially have practiced

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to the Fables," II, 266.

[2] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," 29.

> in all ages; that is, by applying received words to a new signification; ...by this graffing, as I may call it, on old words has our tongue been beautified by the three fore-mentioned poets, Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Johnson whose excellencies I can never enough admire; and in this they have been followed, especially by Sir John Suckling and Mr. Waller, who refined upon them. Neither have they, who succeeded them, been wanting in their endeavours to adorn our mother tongue: but it is not so lawful for me to praise my living contemporaries, as to admire my dead predecessors. [1]

A very successful coinage of Dryden's is the word "witticism" for which the Oxford Dictionary gives him full credit. He lit upon it while answering one of his critics who objected to his images of angels dissolving in hallelujahs which appears in The State of Innocence and Fall of Man:

> 'I have heard (says one of them) of anchovies dissolved in sauce; but never of an angel in hallelujahs.' A mighty witticism! (if you will pardon a new word,) but there is some difference between a laugher and a critic. [2]

But in the "Preface to Albion and Albanius" occurs a very clumsy attempt:

> ...the recitative part of the opera requires a more masculine beauty of expression and sound; the other, which for want of a proper English word, I must call the songish part, must abound in the softness and variety of numbers... [3]

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[1] Ibid., "Defence of the Epilogue," I, 171.

[2] Ibid., "The Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic License," 188.

[3] Ibid., "Preface to Albion and Albanius," 271.

The expression "as misers do their grandam gold" [1] is an echo of Dryden's own play, The Wild Gallant: "Now I think on 't, Frances has one hundred and twenty pieces of old grandam-and-aunt gold left her, that she would never let me touch." [2] And in the "Dedication of the Aeneis": "These are mob readers." [3]

That Dryden uses mob in any way tells us a great deal about his attitude toward language. "I have done my best," said Swift, "for some Years past to stop the Progress of Mobb and Banter, but have been plainly borne down by Numbers, and betrayed by those who promised to assist me." [4]

It is clear throughout Dryden's writing that he made the neo-classic distinction between words suitable to poetry and words suitable to prose. Latinisms and archaisms and the careful choic of words to fit his subject appear throughout his poetry, but are much less frequent in his prose. For:

> We have enough in England to supply our necessity; but if we will have things of magnificence and splendour, we must get them by commerce. Poetry requires ornament, and that is not to be had from our old Teuton monosyllables. [5]

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to the Fables," II, 267.

[2] Quoted in Ker, Ibid., 310.

[3] Ibid., 310.

[4] Quoted in Baugh, op. cit., 354.

[5] Ker, op. cit., "Dedication of the Aeneis," II, 234.

And again in this quotation he shows his distinction:

> Upon your first perusal of this poem, you have taken notice of some words, which I have innovated (if it be too bold for me to say refined) upon his Latin; which, as I offer not to introduce into English prose, so I hope they are neither improper, nor altogether unelegant in verse... [1]

Upon his attitude toward Latin words in poetry, Dryden is explicit in this excellent passage. His attitude toward them we may also assume to be, though less consciously, his attitude to their use in prose, for Dryden was not one to let arbitrary distinctions stand in the way of what he wanted to say:

> I will not excuse, but justify myself, for one pretended crime, with which I am liable to be charged by false critics, not only in this translation, but in many of my original poems; that I latinize too much. 'Tis true, that, when I find an English word significant and sounding, I neither borrow from the latin, nor any other language; but, when I want at home, I must seek abroad. If sounding words are not of our growth and manufacture, who shall hinder me to import them from a foreign country? I carry not out the treasure of the nation, which is never to return; but what I bring from Italy, I spend in England; here it remains, and here it circulates; for, if the coin be good, it will pass from one hand to another. I trade both with the living and the dead, for the enrichment of our native language. ...but every man cannot distinguish between pedantry and poetry;

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to Annus Mirabilus," I, 17.

> every man, therefore, is not fit to innovate. Upon the whole manner, a poet must first be certain that the word he would introduce is beautiful in the Latin, and is to consider, in the next place, whether it will agree with the English idiom: after this,he ought to take the opinion of judicious friends, such as are learned in both languages: and, lastly, since no man is infallible, let him use this licence very sparingly; for if too many foreign words are poured in upon us, it looks as if they were designed, not to assist the natives, but to conquer them. [1]

Few Latin words are actually incorporated into Dryden's prose. He uses Latin terms rather profusely, but they are always underlined and never anglicized. As he is often basing his arguments on Latin poets, so he is often using their terms and phrases: praeter expectatum, Primum Mobile, quos Libitina sacravit, ex parte, petitio principi, bona fide, prosopopoeia, Vita proba est, ense rescindendum, sermo pedestris, quantum mutatus, plebeium sapere, libertinus, species, and many others. But I do not believe that this affects the style of Dryden's prose at all.

"Wit writing" and "instance in" are examples of his use of the old scholastic idiom, which, as he often uses scholastic logic, frequently enter in. The humors and elements and the use of the circle are terms from the

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[1] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," II, 234-235.

old medieval terminology, but Dryden does not cling religiously to these:

> When an ancient word, for its sound and significance deserves to be revived, I have that reasonable veneration for antiquity to restore it. All beyond this is superstition. Words are not like landmarks, so sacred as never to be removed; customs are changed, and even statutes are silently repealed, when the reason ceases for which they were enacted. [1]

Moderation is also the keynote of Dryden's attitude toward and use of French words:

> It is obvious that we have admitted many, some of which we wanted, and therefore our language is the richer for them, as it would be by importation of bullion: others are rather ornamental than necessary; yet, by their admission, the language is become more courtly, and our thoughts are better drest.... They, who have lately written with most care, have, I believe, taken the rule of Horace for their guide; that is, not to be too hasty in receiving of words, but rather to stay till custom has made them familiar to us. For I cannot approve of their way of refining, who corrupt our English idiom by mixing it too much with French: that is a sophistication of language, not an improvement of it; a turning of English into French, rather than a refining of English by French. We meet daily with those fops, who value themselves on their travelling, and pretend they cannot express their meaning in English, because they would put off to us some French prase of the last edition; without considering, that, for aught they know, we have a better of our own. But these are not the men who are to refine us; their talent is to prescribe fashions, not words; at best, they are only serviceable to a writer so as Ennius was to Virgil. He may aurum ex

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to the Fables," 266-267.

> stercore colligere: for 'tis hard if, amongst many insignificant phrases, there happen not something worth preserving; though they themselves, like Indians, know not the value of their own commodity.[1]

As with Latin words, Dryden was more likely to use French words in his plays and poetry than in his prose. Scott says, "It will admit of question, whether any single French word has been naturalized upon the sole authority of Dryden."[2] Lowell suspects that Dryden was the first to use magnetism in its sense of moral attraction.[3] In a note for the New English Dictionary published in Modern Language Notes,[4] E. A. Hammett lists the following from a study by Alexandre Beljame,[5] as words used by Dryden antedating the first reference given in the dictionary: brunette, burlesque, cajoling, carte blanche, critique, embarass, fatique, incontestable, and parry; and Hammett himself adds cooing and dauby in the sense of sticky.

Of obviously French words, I have found Dryden to use: a propos, biassed, politic, lacqueys, verve, puny, poynant, decorum. He seems to recognize diction as not

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[1] Ibid., "Defence of the Epilogue," 170-171.

[2] Scott-Saintsbury, op. cit., I, 436.

[3] Lowell, op. cit., 75-76.

[4] E. A. Hammett, "A Note for the N.E.D.," Modern Language Notes, LIV, 449.

[5] Alexandre Beljame, Quae e Gallicis Verbis in Anglican Linguam Johannes Dryden Introduxerit, Paris: 1881.

fully naturalized: "...in every part of his diction, or (to speak English) in all his expressions."[1] Certainly Dryden did not go out of his way to include French words in his prose, as he has been accused of doing in his poetry.

It has been suggested previously that Dryden was influenced by the new science in his use of technical terms in "Annus Mirabilus." In his preface to that poem he tells us:

> We hear indeed among our poets, of the thundering of guns, the smoke, the disorder, and the slaughter, but all these are common notions. And certainly, as those who, in a logical dispute keep in general terms, would hide a fallacy; so those, who do it in any poetical description would veil their ignorance...For my own part, if I had little knowledge of the sea, yet I have thought it no shame to learn; and if I have made some few mistakes, it is only, as you can bear me witness, because I have wanted opportunity to correct them...[2]

This admiration of technical terms was short-lived, however, and there is nothing comparable to "Annus Mirabilus" in his prose. Writing thirty years later, he gives us the reason why:

> I will not give the reasons why I writ not always in the proper terms of navigation, land service, or the cant of any profession. I will only say, that Virgil has avoided these

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[1]Ker, op. cit., "Preface to Sylvae," I, 266.

[2]Ibid., "Preface to Annus Mirabilus," 13.

> proprieties, because he writ not to mariners, soldiers, astronomers, gardeners, peasants, etc. but to all in general, and in particular to men and ladies of the first quality, who have been better bred than to be too nicely knowing in the terms. In such cases, it is enough for a poet to write so plainly, that he may be understood by his readers; to avoid impropriety, and not affect to be learned in all things.[1]

Dryden seems to have felt the same about scientific language. Although he occasionally refers to the ideas of the new scientists, he rarely, if ever, uses their vocabulary. As we have seen, Dryden was not deeply learned in science and the "men and ladies of the first quality" for whom he wrote were as little versed in its terms. The general and ordinary, rather than the specific and technical, form the basis of Dryden's vocabulary.

The real flavor of Dryden's diction, then, comes from his consistent use of easy, familiar, colloquial terms. One would think that a conversational style such as his would naturally collect all the temporary idioms and peculiar colloquialisms of his period. But by his sense of what was right, it seems to have gathered neither the burrs of the too familiar nor the even uglier thistles of pedantry. Always, and almost miraculously, he steers the middle way between vulgarity and affectation. He is never a pedant; he is always a gentleman.

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[1] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," II, 236.

Words and phrases of informal conversation abound in his prose: botch, blockhead, aped, having got clear of, as good as taken, a moot point in heaven, he had an itch, like a booby, he set me right, I hope to bring off, the drift of the discourse, I could not balk 'em, on my hands, I have more business with.

Fortunately for the sparkle of his prose, he did not share Swift's attitude toward contractions. 'Twas 'tis, on't, 'em, and others are scattered throughout. The following is an interesting example of his use of 'em:

> ...and therefore set out leisurely and softly with 'em, till he had warmed 'em by degrees; and then he began to mend his pace, and to draw them along with his own impetuousness. [1]

"Wit," said Dryden, "is best conveyed to us in the most easy language; and is most to be admired when a great thought comes dressed in words so commonly received, that it is understood by the meanest apprehensions, as the best meat is most easily digested..." [2] And it is largely because of his happy choice of this language, because he had an unfailing sense of what was good and permanent, and because he endeavored "to write

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to Troilus and Cressida," I, 223.

[2] Ibid., "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," 52.

English, as near as I could distinguish it from the tongue of pedants, and that of affected travellers," that his prose is almost as readable today as it was when he first dashed it off to send to Tonson.

Almost nothing in his diction is obsolete. He uses remember for remind, adventure for what is now venture, and he writes "presented the poet" for "gave the poet a present." His from post to pillar has become our from pillar to post, and his by little and little is our little by little. He uses out of doors where we would say "gone away" or "passe". But almost all of Ker's voluminous notes are notes on the contents of the essays. Dryden's diction can easily stand the test of three hundred years' time and last far beyond that to be read without footnotes.

Figures

Saintsbury and Ker agree that if there is any flaw in Dryden's style, it is in his over-use of the conceits for which the traditional style of the first part of his century may be responsible. However, perhaps the main reason for Dryden's inability to do without figures is that he was too much a poet to be able to think without images for very long at a time.

That Dryden realized the danger, even in poetry, is evidenced by his comments in "The Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence" which prefaced his

dramatic version of Paradise Lost. He states that figures are not to be avoided, but to be used judiciously. "Boldness of the expression is not to be blamed, if it be managed by the coolness and discretion which is necessary to a poet." [1] And he warns:

> Cowley is sunk in his reputation because he could never forgive any conceit which came his way; but swept like a drag-net, great and small. There was plenty enough, but the dishes were ill sorted; whole pyramids of sweetmeats for boys and women, but little of solid meat for men. [2]

No one could complain of the figures in the passage just quoted. And although Dryden may slip occasionally and give us a long involved classical conceit, the play of images and the neat turn of words is Dryden, and much of the lightness and quickness of his style would be lost without them.

As for the sources of his figures, they are as varied as the personality and interests of the man. They come from both the old and the new sciences, from the classics and mythology, from the law courts, the trades, the court world, business, nature and the arts. His figures are always such as would be generally known. Like the words which he uses, they are never too technical and narrow for even the twentieth century reader

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[1] Ibid., I, 186.

[2] Ibid., "Preface to the Fables," II, 258.

to follow.

In one of the best essays, "The Dedication of the Spanish Friar," I have found an interesting passage which, although atypical, shows the wide range of Dryden at the peak of his imagery, and, although it is long, I would like to quote it at, as Dryden would say, the risk of being tedious:

> And though many poets may suspect themselves for the fondness and partiality of parents to their youngest children, yet I hope I may stand exempted from this rule, because I know myself too well to be ever satisfied with my own conceptions, which have seldom reached to those ideas that I had within me; and consequently, I presume I may have liberty to judge when I write more or less pardonably, as an ordinary marksman may know certainly when he shoots less wide at what he aims. Besides, the care and pains I have bestowed on this, beyond my other tragi-comedies, may reasonably make the world conclude, that either I can do nothing tolerably, or that this poem is not much amiss. Few good pictures have been finished at one sitting: neither can a true just play, which is to bear the test of ages, be produced at a heat, or by the force of fancy, without the maturity of judgment. For my own part, I have both so just a diffidence of myself, and so great a reverence for my audience, that I dare venture nothing without a strict examination; and am as much ashamed to put a loose indigested play upon the public, as I should be to offer brass money in a payment; for though it should be taken (as it is too often on the stage), yet it will be found in the second telling; and a judicious reader will discover, in his closet, that trashy stuff, whose glittering, deceived him in the action. I have often heard the stationer sighing in his shop, and wishing for those hands to take off his melancholy bargain which clapped its performance on the stage. In a play-house, everything contributes to impose upon the judgment; the lights, the scenes, the habits, and above

> all, the grace of action, which is commonly the best where there is the most need of it, surprise the audience, and cast a mist upon their understandings; not unlike the cunning of a juggler, who is always staring us in the face, and overwhelming us with gibberish, only that he may gain the opportunity of making the cleaner conveyance of his trick. But these false beauties of the stage are not more lasting than a rainbow; when the actor ceases to shine upon them, when he gilds them no longer with his reflection, they vanish in a twinkling. I have sometimes wondered, in the reading, what was become of those glaring colours which amazed me in Bussy D'Amboys upon the theatre; but when I had taken up what I supposed a fallen star, I found I had been cozened with a jelly; nothing but a cold, dull mass, which glittered no longer than it was shooting; a dwarfish thought, dressed up in gigantic words, repetition in abundance, looseness of expression and gross hyperboles; the sense of one line expanded prodigiously into ten; and, to sum up all, incorrect English, and a hideous mingle of false poetry, and true nonsense; or, at best, a scantling of wit, which lay gasping for life, and groaning beneath a heap of rubbish. [1]

From parents' fondness for their children, to marksmen, to painting, to the digestive process, to commerce, to juggling, to the sun, to theatrical sets, to dwarfs, and at last to suffocation is surely a remarkable gamut, and, for we need not be Freudian, shows a mind which was absolutely cosmopolitan in its tastes and interests. Dryden must have had a hundred images for each thing he wanted to say, and that he used the restraint he did is truly remarkable. Very probably, here too we have his haste and, what Johnson would call, his laziness, to thank.

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[1] Ibid., I, 244-246.

Dryden's images, although rarely so fantastic as to draw attention from the content, often make what would seem dull, delightful. Whether they consist of one word, such as that wonderful metaphor, "Fletcher was a limb of Shakespeare," or sprawl on for half a page, they are clear and original and make the tone of the whole familiar. Through his images we know the writer, and, while he sometimes amuses us, he never fails to please and entertain.

This is an amusing simile to modern readers:

> I am confident your Lordship is by this time of my opinion, and that you will look on those half lines hereafter as the imperfect products of a hasty Muse; like the frogs and serpents in the Nile; part of them kindled into life, and part a lump of unformed unanimated mud. [1]

And in this he changes his food:

> ...we cannot read a verse of Cleveland's without making a face at it, as if every word were a pill to swallow; he gives us many times a hard nut to break our teeth, without a kernel for our pains. [2]

Imagination seems to be connected with spaniels in Dryden's mind:

> ...for imagination in a poet is a faculty so wild and lawless, that like an high-ranging spaniel, it must have clogs tied to it, lest it outrun the judgment. [3]

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[1] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," II, 231.

[2] Ibid., "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," I, 52.

[3] Ibid., "Dedication of the Rival Ladies," 8.

> ...Wit writing...is no other than the faculty of imagination in the writer, which, like a nimble spaniel, beats over and ranges through the field of memory, till it springs the quarry it hunted after...[1]

Lazar (leper) is a word often used figuratively by Dryden and always with reference to painting:

> ...for the one [Heroic Poesy] shows nature beautified, as in the picture of a fair woman; which we all admire; the other [Burlesque] shows her deformed as in that of a Lazar.[2]

And in comparing tragedy and comedy:

> Such is a Lazar in comparison to a Venus.[3]

A Lazar and a Venus appear again in the "Preface to Tyrannic Love":

> If with much pains and some success I have drawn a deformed piece, there is as much of art and as near an imitation of Nature in a Lazar, as in a Venus.[4]

The art of Painting is one of Dryden's favorite sources of metaphor and simile. One is not surprised when, toward the end of his life, he writes "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting." He has been drawing parallels of them all his life.

His skill at making figures clarify an idea by bringing it to life is evidenced by the following passages:

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to Annus Mirabilis," 14.

[2] Ibid., 18.

[3] Ibid., "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting," II, 132.

[4] Ibid., I, 287.

> Thus Prose, though the rightful prince, yet is by common consent desposed, as too weak for the government of serious plays: and he failing, there now start up two competitors; one, the nearer in blood, which is Blank Verse; the other, more fit for the ends of government, which is Rhyme. Blank Verse is, indeed, the nearer Prose, but he is blemished with the weakness of his predecessor. Rhyme (for I will deal clearly) has somewhat of the usurper in him; but he is brave, and generous, and his dominion pleasing. For this reason of delight, the Ancients (whom I will still believe as wise as those who correct them) wrote all their tragedies in verse, though they knew it most remote from conversation. [1]

> But in general, the employment of a poet is like that of a curious gunsmith, or watchmaker: The iron or silver is not his own, but they are the least part of that which gives the value: The price lies wholly in the workmanship. And he who works dully on a story, without moving laughter in a comedy, or raising concernment in a serious play, is no more to be accounted a good poet, than a gunsmith of the Minories is to be compared with the best workman of the town. [2]

> These swallows, which we see before us on the Thames are the just resemblance of his wit: you may observe how near the water they stoop, how many proffers they make to dip, and yet how seldom they touch it; and when they do, 'tis but the surface: they skim over it but to catch a gnat, and then mount into the air and leave it. [3]

> Tis with a Poet, as with a man who designs to build, and is very exact, as he supposes, in casting up the cost beforehand; but, generally speaking, he is mistaken in his account, and reckons short of the expense he first intended.

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[1] Ibid., "Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy," 115.

[2] Ibid., "Preface to an Evening's Love," 147.

[3] Ibid., "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," 35.

> He alters his mind as the work proceeds, and will have this or that convenience more, of which he had not thought when he began. So has it happened to me; I have built a house, when I intended but a lodge; yet with better success than a certain nobleman, who, beginning with a dog-kennel, never lived to finish the palace he had contrived. [1]

Despite his great and constant use of figurative language, Dryden had no patience with puns, which he called "the fulsome clench that nauseates the Town," [2] and "the most grovelling kind of wit." [3] He criticises Jonson and Sidney for them, and even of Horace's puns he says, "I am sorry to say it, for the sake of Horace; but certain it is, he has no fine palate who can feed so heartily on garbage." [4] Puns certainly are not prevelent in Dryden's prose, but I believe that the following smells just a little like the "garbage" he condemned, although this pun emphasizes and clarifies and is very successful:

> Such is a Lazar in comparison to a Venus: both are drawn in human figures; they have faces alike, though not like faces. [5]

Dryden uses and alludes to homespun proverbs such as "he killed two birds with one stone" [6] and "the fox's

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to the Fables," II, 246.

[2] Ibid., "Preface to Troilus and Cressida," I, 221.

[3] Ibid., "Defence of the Epilogue," 173.

[4] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 95.

[5] Ibid., "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting," 132.

[6] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," 196.

quarrel to the grapes." [1] His writing is not crowded with them, however, and they do not become repetitious.

Although Dryden never copied himself enough to fall into what we might call "mannerism," he has some repetition of phrases and illustrations. He himself said of translating Virgil:

> I who inherit but a small portion of his genius, and write in a language so much inferior to the Latin, have found it very painful to vary phrases, when the same sense returns upon me. [2]

Dryden's affinity for painting and spaniels has been mentioned above. A favorite phrase seems to be "the sting of an epigram."

> ...'tis not the jerk or sting of an epigram... [3]

> ...which had more of the sting of an epigram than of the dignity and state of an heroic poem. [4]

> You shall, therefore, hear him speak in his own person, and that in the last two lines, or sting of an epigram. [5]

There is repetition, too, almost every time he speaks of the "old Teutonic monosyllables" that seem to have annoyed him so:

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[1] Ibid., "The Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence," I, 189.

[2] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," 231.

[3] Ibid., "Preface to Annus Mirabilus," I, 14.

[4] Ibid., "Of Heroic Plays," 152.

[5] Ibid., "Defence of the Epilogue," 173.

> Our original Teutonic, consisting most in monosyllables, and those encumbred with consonants... [1]
>
> ...it consists too much of monosyllables, and those, too, most commonly clogged with consonants. [2]
>
> ...unless I would make use of monosyllables only, and those clogged with consonants, which are the dead weight of our mother tongue. [3]
>
> ...that is not to be had from our old Teuton monosyllables... [4]

Out of doors is an expression which Dryden uses throughout his writings, e.g.: "As for Augustus, or his uncle Julius, claiming by descent from Aeneas, that title is already out of doors," [5] and "little follies were out of doors when oppression was to be scourged instead of avarice." [6]

Johnson complains of what he feels is Dryden's overuse of the pronoun I. Dryden, as though anticipating Johnson's criticism, often asks to be excused for speaking of himself:

> In the meantime I beg the reader's pardon, for entertaining him so long with myself: 'tis an unusual part of ill manners in all authors, and

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to Albion and Albanius," 274-275.

[2] Ibid., 278.

[3] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," II, 226.

[4] Ibid., 234

[5] Ibid., 176.

[6] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," 87.

> almost in all mankind, to trouble others with their business; and I was so sensible of it beforehand, that I had not now committed it, unless some concernments of the reader's had been interwoven with my own. [1]

And again:

> Anything, though never so little, which a man speaks of himself, in my opinion, is still too much; and I therefore will waive this subject... [2]

Actually Dryden practices what he preaches in his above comments. He talks rarely about himself. The I is prevalent because he talks to his readers rather than communes with himself. If Dryden's use of I can be called a "mannerism," it is indeed a fortunate one, because it gives his essays much of their informal tone.

Dryden's use of expressions and figurative language, then, like his choice of words, is natural and informal. He is almost never archaic, for he choses his figures, as his words, from the general, the universal, and the timeless.

Syntax

In Dryden's syntax we find more that is archaic than in either his diction or his imagery. It seems

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[1] Ibid., "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting," 117.

[2] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," 80.

most logical to center a discussion of Dryden's obsolete constructions within the sentence around his use of the various parts of speech. As we have seen, in the Restoration period English had as yet no standard or uniform grammar. What Dryden had of uniformity came from his studies under Dr. Busby of Latin grammar and from his own observation of how the language was written and spoken around him. Although Dryden seems to have been more interested in the problems of grammar than in the more purely mechanical aspects of English, to be extremely careful and meticulous was not in his make-up. His common sense and natural aptitude for logic probably served as the final authority rather than the opinions of the "dull pedants" and "foolish grammarians," as he called them. He once, in his "Defence of the Epilogue, or, An Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age," played the role of grammarian himself and discussed Ben Jonson's errors. His revision of his own "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" (1684) also shows that at least once Dryden made a deliberate effort to improve his syntax.

Mechanics. Before commencing a consideration of Dryden's syntax, perhaps it would be well to discuss in a few paragraphs, the spelling and punctuation of the time.

Ker has chosen to modernize the spelling in his edition, and wisely so. He declares that, if the original spelling had been kept, it would have represented, not Dryden's own way of spelling, but the caprices of various printers between 1664 and 1700. The spelling was most irregular, and it is possible to find authority somewhere in Dryden for most modern forms. Ker does not allow spelling which would cause an organic change in the word, however, and so we find fond for fund, interressed for interested, extasty for ecstasy, shewn and shewed for shown and showed, thrid for thread, and others.

That Dryden was not at all interested in the spelling of his prose is made obvious by the following quotation. He has been discussing the derivation of the word satire.

> In the criticism of spelling, it ought to be with i and not with y, to distinguish its true derivation from satura, not from satyrus. And if this be so, then it is false spelled throughout this book; for here it is written Satyr: which having not considered at the first, I thought it not worth correcting afterwards. But the French are more nice, and never spell it any other way than satire. [1]

"I thought it not worth correcting afterwards" certainly shows Dryden's attitude toward spelling, and toward mechanics in general, I believe.

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[1] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 66.

As for punctuation, Mildred Martin in her dissertation [1] came to the conclusion that we must hold the author, not the printer, responsible for the usage. She bases this on three points:

1. All prose of the time was punctuated with colons and semi-colons and the printers followed copy as closely as possible.

2. In errata added to some seventeenth century books, no attention was called to errors in pointing.

3. None of Dryden's changes in his revision of the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" were changes in punctuation.

McKnight, however, says that punctuation cannot be said to have been reduced to a definite system until near the end of the eighteenth century. [2] The comment of Dryden's that "the printer has enough to answer for in false pointings" [3] is well known. I do not believe, however, that the fact that Dryden did not correct punctuation in his revision means that it had his specific approval. He was not a man to be accurate, or to fuss over what must at his time have been superfluous niceties. Nor, for that matter, do I believe he was at all meticulous about the correctness of the pointings in the

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[1] Martin, op. cit., 148.

[2] George H. McKnight, Modern English in the Making, New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1928, 417.

[3] Ker, op. cit., "Preface to Sylvae," I, 262.

manuscripts he sent to the printer. The story about the dire circumstances that befell the young journalist who misplaced a comma was not circulating in his day, and Dryden must have been as unconcerned with punctuation as he was with spelling.

Nouns. The most outstanding archaic use of nouns in Dryden is his use of the his-genitive. This was an old and common use of the pronoun to give the inflection of the noun.

> In ME the es of the genitive being unaccented, was frequently written and pronounced -is, -ys. The ending was thus often identical with the pronoun his, which commonly lost its h when unstressed. Thus there was no difference in pronunciation between stonis and ston is (his), and as early as the thirteenth century the ending was sometimes written separately as though the possessive case were a contraction of a noun and the pronoun his. [1]

So we find in Dryden, "Eugenius his opinion," "Mr. Sandys his undertaking," "Horace his Art of Poetry," but "Chapman's Homer." And in the "Preface to the Fables," on one page we find "Ovid's books" and "Chaucer's stories," but "Boccace his Decameron." Although I have not made a thorough study, Dryden seems to have used the his-genitive consistently after the s ending. We have no way of knowing how he pronounced Boccace.

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[1]Baugh, op. cit., 297-298.

If he gave it the Italian ending, perhaps he also used this construction after vowels. If he pronounced the final sound as the ch in church, then it is comparable to the s sound given above.

With collective nouns, Dryden always seems to use the plural form of the verb: "the world have mistaken," "the audience are," "the company were." Kellner says that this is a frequent usage due to the subjective character of the concept of number. "Of this concession made by grammar to psychology there are instances from Old English down to our own day." [1]

The use of the gerund is frequent with Dryden. One of the corrections in his "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" is a change from "ill managing" to "ill management."

Verbs. Of verb forms, we find the clipped past participle: have chose, have writ, have spoke. Dryden uses both shew and show for the present tense, shewed for simple past, and have shewed as the participle form, but we also find used two years earlier having thus shewn. Similarly we find in addition to writ the form was written. A correction in the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" is the change to have written from have writ.

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[1]Leon Kellner, Historical Outlines of English Syntax, London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1905, 46.

Two corrections of subject-verb agreement occur in the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy": "there appears two actions in the plays" is changed to "there appear two actions" and "out of these two has been extracted the famous rules" becomes "out of these two have..." We still find a few such errors in Dryden's later prose, e.g.: "the whole fifth act, both the plot and the writing, are my own additions," and "eagerness and precipitation makes..."

"They perceived the air break" is in the essay pedantically corrected to "they perceived the air to break." This construction is not common in Dryden, however.

Dryden avoids the use of the future and conditional tenses, using *had* for *would have* frequently:

> ...I had not now committed it, unless some concernments of the reader had been interwover with my own. [1]

> ...which I had certainly avoided...if my memory had not failed me. [2]

And he uses the present for the future:

> ...and am much deceived if he ever be attacked on this side of his character again. [3]

The emphatic auxiliaries *do* and *did* for which Dryden has so often been criticised in his poetry, appear rarely in his prose.

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[1] Ker, *op. cit.*, "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting," II, 117.

[2] *Ibid.*, "Preface to the Fables," 269.

[3] *Ibid.*, "Dedication of the Aeneis," 186.

The older usage for placing the negative is evidenced in Dryden and does much to detract from his modernity. One of the changes in the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" is a change of "you behold him not" to "they suffer you not to behold him."

> ...therefore is not Tragedy to be judged by a witty man, whose taste is only confined to Comedy. [1]

Ellipses of be and do as well as the use of the negative make these archaic:

> If I flatter not myself, or if my friends have not flattered me. [2]
>
> ...perhaps it became not one of his function... [3]
>
> ...that there need no criticisms on our part... [4]
>
> ...as I offer not to introduce into English prose, so I hope they are neither improper, nor altogether inelegant... [5]

In the above, his use of the correlatives is modern. In the following example, however, he uses neither where we would use nor:

> ...there are many witty men, but few poets; neither have all poets a taste of Tragedy. [6]

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to All for Love," I, 196.

[2] Ibid., "Dedication of Examen Poeticum," II, 10.

[3] Ibid., "Preface to the Fables," 273.

[4] Ibid., "Dedication of Examen Poeticum," 4.

[5] Ibid., "Preface to Annus Mirabilus," I, 17.

[6] Ibid., "Preface to All for Love," 195-196.

And here we have a double use of neither:

> ...that neither the Greek poets borrowed from other people their art of railing, neither needed the Romans to take it from them. [1]

Then, too, Dryden often omits the negative where we would use it and inserts it when we would not think it necessary:

> ...to use 'em at every work...is, I doubt, to smell a little too strongly of the buskin. [2]
>
> Anything, though never so little, which a man speaks of himself... [3]
>
> ...though never so well deserved by particular priests... [4]

Pronouns. We can get some idea of Dryden's usage of pronouns by the usage he condemns in other writers and revises in his own. Of Jonson's:

> Thy parricide late on thy only son,
> After his mother, to make empty way
> For thy last wicked nuptials, worse than they
> That blaze that act of thy incestuous life,
> Which gained thee at once a daughter and a wife.

Dryden says, "The sense is here extremely perplexed; and I doubt the word they is false grammar." [5]

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[1] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 45.

[2] Ibid., "Preface to Troilus and Cressida," I, 224.

[3] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 80.

[4] Ibid., "Preface to the Fables," 260.

[5] Ibid., "Defence of the Epilogue," I, 167.

In the following, he catches the redundancy:

> Caesar and Crassus, if they be ill men,
> Are mighty ones--
> Such men, they do not succour more the cause, &c. [1]

In revising his "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," Dryden corrects some pronoun agreements:

> ...you have yet youth and time enough to give part of it [them] [2]

> ...so that all men being alarmed with it, and in a dreadful suspense of the event which we [they] knew was then decided... [3]

He also criticizes Jonson for this line, "Though Heaven should speak with all his wrath at once," as his being "ill syntax" with Heaven. Baugh lists his as very common usage when referring to neuter nouns in written English down to the middle of the seventeenth century. [4]

On a whole, Dryden is careful with his pronouns. His use of the his-genitive often makes his sentences redundant and clogged with pronouns. The following is a good example of this. Note too Dryden's use of the reflexive:

> ...but Lisideius, after he had acknowledged himself of Eugenius his opinion concerning the Ancients, yet told him, he had forborne, till

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[1] Ibid., 168.

[2] Ibid., "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," 34.

[3] Ibid., 28.

[4] Baugh, op. cit., 301.

> his discourse were ended, to ask him why he perferred the English plays, above those of other nations? [1]

Here is another example of a sentence overly crowded with pronouns:

> It is not for the use of some old Saxon friends, that I have taken these pains with him [Chaucer]; let them neglect my version, because they have no need of it. I made it for their sakes, who understand sense and poetry as well as they, when that poetry and sense is put into words which they understand. [2]

Dryden objects to the use of _ones_ in the plural number in Jonson. So, in his revision, he changes "amongst great ones" to "amongst great persons" and in the next sentence, to avoid repetition, "the envy of a great person" is changed to "the envy of a great one." Similarly, "good ones" becomes "good Plays," "to the most mean ones" becomes "to those which are most mean." The idea that the plural _s_ is wrong seems to affect his attitude toward the _s_ ending in other forms: "every ones" is changed to "every mans" and "ours" becomes "our plays."

In one case, he omits the "one" entirely and uses "only" as a pronoun:

> ...the action is so much one, that it is the only of the kind without episode, or underplot... [3]

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[1] Ker, _op. cit._, "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," I, 55-56.

[2] _Ibid._, "Preface to the Fables," II, 267.

[3] _Ibid._, "Preface to All for Love," I, 192.

Dryden does not often allow a sentence to end with a pronoun. He rejects "through with it" in favor of "through the work."

The very frequent use of methinks is another archaism in the use of pronouns that gives Dryden's prose a not quite so modern air.

Relatives. Who and That are used interchangeably in Dryden. However, he seems to prefer who for persons when it is not repetitious. Two changes in his "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" are from "he that" to "he who" although in one of the cases the replacing word avoids awkward repetition. "Those poets which" becomes "those poets who." On the other hand, "things...whose wit" is changed to "things...the wit of which." "That" in an unusually awkward structure, "Aethra and the Chorus have but thirty-six verses; that is not for every mile a verse," is replaced by "which."

It was not until the sixteenth century that the pronoun as a relative came into use. [1] All of these changes reflect, not only Dryden's, but his age's growing effort in stablizing its use.

One peculiar structure that is common in Dryden is the following use of that:

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[1]Baugh, op. cit., 303.

> Yet, after all, because the play was Shakespeare's and that there appeared in some places of it the admirable genius of the author, I undertook... [1]

> ...for example, Phaedra, though she loved her son-in-law with reluctancy, and that it was a curse upon her family for offending Venus, yet was though too ill a pattern for the stage. [2]

> ...I should have discovered some of those graces which Horace added to it, but that I think it will be more proper to defer that undertaking... [3]

> To conclude, though the enemies of the composer are not few, and that there is a party formed against him of his own profession, I hope... [4]

A use of <u>that</u> which seems to be for emphasis sometimes occurs:

> What he has learnt, he teaches vehemently; and what he teaches, that he practices himself. [5]

When used as a subordinate conjunction, <u>that</u> is often omitted, especially when it introduces a short clause. Evidently Dryden felt that this was not as correct as it might be, because in the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" he inserts the omissions in: "adding, [that] we had but this to desire," "you said [that] the dialogue of plays is presented," and "Lisideius told him [that] it was necessary."

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[1] Ker, <u>op. cit.</u>, "Preface to Troilus and Cressida," I, 203.

[2] <u>Ibid.</u>, 210.

[3] <u>Ibid.</u>, "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 64.

[4] <u>Ibid.</u>, "Preface to Albion and Albanius," I, 279.

[5] <u>Ibid.</u>, "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 77.

Throughout the rest of his writing Dryden is not so careful, and he uses the connective or not indiscriminately.

He uses the conjunction *as if* instead of *as though*:

> It looks as if I had desired... [1]
>
> ...as if every word were a pill... [2]

Similarly, he seems to prefer *for* in place of *because*. Often Dryden uses such mixed connectives as *and which* and *and who* when the *and* is improperly used between unparallel clauses. (See next quotation below). An awkward connective, and one unusual in Dryden, "but being these," is changed in the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" to read "since these."

Prepositions.

> "The waves and dens of beasts could not receive
> The bodies that those souls were frightened from."

Of the above quotation from Jonson, Dryden has the following to say:

> The preposition at the end of the sentence; a common fault with him, and which I have but lately observed in my own writings. [3]

This was a warped idea of Dryden's. The preposition at the end of the sentence is a genuine English idiom of

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[1] *Ibid.*, "Preface to the Fables," 271.

[2] *Ibid.*, "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," I, 52.

[3] *Ibid.*, "Defence of the Epilogue," 167-168.

long standing in the language and found very frequently in all writers of natural prose and verse. [1] However, Dryden's main labor in his 1884 revision was in correcting "faults" of this kind: "clear it up," "much better treated of," "which the moon-beams played up to," "the age you speak of," "the age I live in," "the story is built upon," "which we are subject to," "to clear it up," "seems to allude to," and others are all changed. He seems to have been unwilling to let the preposition stand even when it did not come at the end of a sentence, for we find "look upon his Sad Shepherd" changed to "read his Sad Shepherd," "looking earnestly upon him" to "earnestly regarding him," "touching upon many rules" to "observing many rules," and other like changes. On the other hand, he replaces "the play goes on" with "the play goes forward." Evidently his prejudice toward the two syllable preposition is not as strong.

Although this particular idea of Dryden's, when he remembers to put it in practice, makes his style less colloquial, it does not make it less modern. The obsolete usage of his age definitely does. Such uses of the preposition as: "the best on't it," "to accept of the command," "nothing can move our nature, but by some natural reason," "somewhat of extraordinary," "accept of those Lay-Bishops," and similar phrases seem odd to the modern reader.

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[1] Jesperson, op. cit., 130.

So too do the omissions of prepositions where we would expect them: "you gave it us," "it is not to be wondered, if," "to those who object my frequent use of drums."

In his revision, Dryden changes some of these archaisms, and always to the modern form: "borrows of" to "borrows from," "a hundred or two of verses" to "a hundred or more verses," and "enters in a mistake" to "enters by a mistake."

It must be remembered of all his corrections in the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" that Dryden took extraordinary pains in this revision. He does not seem to remember many of them when he writes later and in haste.

Articles. Dryden's use of the article is also peculiarly that of his time. He often omits it where we customarily put it, e.g.: "of opinion," "on priesthood." On the other hand we find "in the general," "the English" (in speaking of the language), and "of the which." A is commonly an before h and u.

Adjectives and adverbs. The adjective and adverb forms used by Dryden are not always the accepted forms today. In adjectives, he gives us "poetical," "specifical," and "majestical," where we would omit the ending. He speaks of the "errantest hero," "the aptest things," and "the chiefest part." He says, "ours are more quick

and fuller of spirit" where we would say "quicker and more full." We find the two last, the three last, the four last consistently, and "these kind of thoughts," "all kind of satire," "that sort of tragedies."

Flat adverbial forms abound in his writings: "false read," "exceeding great," "are like to have," "could scarce have wished," "pursuing close," "extreme elaborate," "sure they might warm themselves," "exceeding vain," are a few examples out of many. However, we also find, "sounds as ridiculously as the history of David."

Dryden uses farther in the abstract sense: "there is farther required," "they are farther of opinion," "a farther account of the poem." When our formal usage might permit farther, he uses further: "I have transgressed my bounds and gone farther than the moral led me."

To summarize Dryden's syntax, we may say that, although his occasional obsolete usage is never such that it obscures his meaning, it occasionally calls attention to itself and marks his prose as not of our era.

Sentence Structure

The structure of Dryden's sentences is loose and informal and lends to his conversational ease and spontaneousness. The presently popular periodic sentence is

definitely not a characteristic of his sentence style, and, when it is found at all, is the great exception rather than the rule. His sentences are, as a whole, much longer than would be used in any good prose style today. Perrin lists the average sentence length of professional writers today as twenty and nine-tenths words. [1]

I have counted approximately the first three hundred words in each of several essays written at various times during Dryden's life. In Table I are listed the number of sentences, the number of words in each sentence, the average number of words per sentence in the passage, and the range of sentence length. By examining the table we can discover the general tendency of sentence length in our writer.

It is obvious from even this limited survey that Dryden's sentence length, in general, becomes shorter as he acquires experience and confidence. True, the very long introductory sentences of the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" are narrative, and we would expect them to be longer, but the "Epistle Dedicatory of the Rival Ladies" is the same general type of panegyric we find in the opening passage of the "Dedication of Examen Poeticum," which contains the shortest sentences of the group.

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[1] Porter G. Perrin, Writers' Guide and Index to English, Chicago and New York: Scott Foresman & Co., 1942, 154.

TABLE I

LENGTH OF SENTENCES IN DRYDEN'S PROSE

	No. of words	No. of sentences	Words per. sent.	Average length	Range
Epistle Dedicatory to the Rival Ladies (1664)	345	4	70,117, 33,125	86.1	33-125
Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1668)	366	4	56,112, 64,134	91.5	56-134
Defence of the Essay (1668)	388	7	62,23, 31,53, 19,79,70	48.2	19-79
Defence of the Epilogue (1672)	305	7	36,48 43,65, 22,48,43	43.5	22-66
Preface to All for Love (1678)	301	7	61,41, 43,33, 53,32,38	43.0	32-61
Preface to Sylvae (1685)	320	9	52,41,47, 8,33,26, 49,38,26	35.3	8-52
Dedication of Examen Poeticum (1693)	315	14	8,23,34, 33,31,15, 13,36,17,25, 19,26,18,17	22.5	8-36
Original & Progress of Satire (1693)	294	9	37,24, 16,9, 18,69 23,27,71	32.7	9-71
Dedication of the Aeneis (1697)	331	9	19,25,10, 54,50,59, 19,51,24	34.5	10-59
Preface to the Fables (1700)	308	7	43,25, 39,45, 25,37,94	44.0	25-94

However, in Dryden, length of sentence does not mean as much as it would in writers of more complex structure. In fact, the length of his sentences might almost be said to be caused from the techniques of punctuation used, rather than by actual long construction. The mere replacing of semi-colons and colons with periods would change many of his long sentences into four or five sentence paragraphs. He has a tendency to elongate, piece by piece, as though a new idea had just come to him, and so, since the various ideas themselves are expressed in simple structure, the modern reader simply substitutes automatically where he would find a sentence break and is often little aware of the length. I doubt very much whether a person hearing Dryden's prose read would think his sentences long at all. Perhaps the 134 word sentence listed above from "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy" will illustrate this point.

> Taking then a barge which a servant of Lisideius had provided from them, they made haste to shoot the bridge, and left behind them that great fall of waters which hindered them from hearing what they desired: after which, having disengaged themselves from many vessels which rode at anchor in the Thames, and almost blocked up the passage towards Greenwich, they ordered the watermen to let fall their oars more gently; and then, every one favouring his own curiosity with a strict silence, it was not long ere they perceived the air break about them like the noise of

> distant thunder, or of swallows in a chimney: those little undulations of sound, though almost vanishing before they reached them, yet still seeming to retain somewhat of their first horror, which they had betwixt the fleets. [1]

Although the structure of the above is more complex than his later word, this passage yet serves to show one of Dryden's favorite constructions, the introductory participle. The following are typical Drydenian sentences:

> But some intervening accidents having hitherto deferred the performance of the main design, I proposed to the actors to turn the intended prologue into an entertainment by itself, as you now see it, by adding two acts more to what I had already written. [2]

> But they assuring me of their assistance in correcting my faults where I spoke improperly, I was encouraged to attempt it, that I might not be wanting in what I would, to satisfy the desires of so many gentlemen who were willing to give the world this useful work. [3]

> Having first concluded, that our poet did for the best in taking the first character of his hero from that essential virtue on which the rest depend, he proceeds to tell us that in the ten years' war of Troy he was considered as the second champion of his country, allowing Hector the first place; and this, even by the confession of Homer, who took all occasions of setting up his own countrymen the Grecians, and of undervaluing the Trojan chiefs. [4]

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[1] Ker, op. cit., "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," I, 29.

[2] Ibid., "Preface to Albion and Albanius," 278-279.

[3] Ibid., "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting," II, 116.

[4] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," 180.

The compound sentence with its two independent clauses joined by a semi-colon alone is also a pattern which Dryden uses often and well. We find it used most frequently and at its best in his later writings, although it is not entirely absent from his earlier essays.

> Their plots are single; they carry on one design, which is pushed forward by all the actors, every scene in the play contributing and moving towards it. [1]

> For this last half year I have been troubled with the disease (as I may call it) of translating; the cold prose fits of it, which are always the most tedious with me, were spent in the History of the League; the hot, which succeeded them, in this volume of Verse Miscellanies. [2]

> And here your Lordship may observe the address of Virgil; it was not for nothing that this passage was related with all these tender circumstances. Aeneas told it; Dido heard it. [3]

> Notumque furens quid femina possit; she was injured; she was revengeful; she was powerful. [4]

> The Muses have lost him, but the Commonwealth gains by it; the corruption of a poet is the generation of a statesman. [5]

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[1] Ibid., "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," I, 70.

[2] Ibid., "Preface to Sylvae," 251.

[3] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," II, 183.

[4] Ibid., 192.

[5] Ibid., "Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy," I, 119.

Dryden evidently liked the sound of the passage immediately above so well that he echoes it in his "Dedication of Examen Poeticum" twenty-five years later:

> Thus the corruption of a poet is the generation of a critic; I mean of a critic in the general acceptation of this age; for formerly they were quite another species of men. [1]

The old formal parentheticals of Clarendon and his school are gone in Dryden's prose, but he has his own--short, informal, and colloquial:

> Most of Shakespeare's plays, I mean the stories of them, are to be found in the Hecatommuthi or Hundred Novels of Cinthio. [2]

> I doubt not but the same motive has prevailed with all of us in this attempt; I mean the excellency of the moral: for the chief persons represented were famous patterns of unlawful love; and their end accordingly was unfortunate. [3]

Expressions such as "(if it may be worth knowing)," "(I may almost say)," "(if I may so call them)," and "(as they ought)" are prevalent. And we find:

> That an alteration is lately made in ours, or since the writers of the last age (in which I comprehend Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Johnson), is manifest. [4]

> From that which has been said, it may be collected, that the definition of wit (which has been so often attempted, and every unsuccessfully by many poets) is only this:... [5]

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[1] Ibid., II, 3.

[2] Ibid., "Preface to an Evening's Love," I, 146.

[3] Ibid., "Preface to All for Love," 191.

[4] Ibid., "Defence of the Epilogue," 164.

[5] Ibid., "The Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence," 190.

> Pindar is generally known to be a dark writer, to want connection (I mean as to our understanding,) to soar out of sight, and leave his reader at a gaze. [1]

Dryden's natural love of order led to a natural use of parallel construction. Three of his changes in the 1668 edition of the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" were changes to parallel structure:

> ...if some god do not prevent it, by coming down in a machine, and take [taking] the thanks of it to himself.
>
> ...one reason why comedy is [comedies are] more pleasing to us, and tragedies to them...
>
> ...besides an election of apt words, and a right disposing [disposition] of them...

Elsewhere we find:

> But, if the fictions be delightful (which they always are, if they be natural), if they be of a piece; if the beginning, the middle, and the end be in their due places, and artfully united to each other, such works can never fail of their deserved success. [2]
>
> That I admire not any comedy equally with tragedy, is, perhaps, from the sullenness of my humour; but that I detest those farces, which are now the most frequent entertainments of the stage, I am sure I have reason on my side. [3]
>
> You have not only been careful of my fortune, which was the effect of your nobleness, but you have been solicitous of my reputation, which is that of your kindness. [4]

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to the Translation of Ovid's Epistles," 240.

[2] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," II, 195.

[3] Ibid., "Preface to an Evening's Love," I, 135.

[4] Ibid., "Preface to Annus Mirabilus," 10.

> They are equally pleased in your prosperity, and would be equally concerned in your afflictions. Titus Vespasian was not more the delight of humankind. The universal Empire made him only more known and more powerful, but could not make him more beloved. [1]

It will be noted that the two quotations immediately above are examples of Dryden's panegyric writing. It is in writing of this type, and in his more systematic didactic passages like the one below that Dryden's parallelism usually occurs.

> So then the first happiness of the poet's imagination is properly invention, or finding of the thought; the second is fancy, or the variation, deriving, or moulding, of that thought, as the judgment represents it proper to the subject; the third is elocution, or the art of clothing and adorning that thought, so found and varied, in apt, significant, and sounding words: The quickness of the imagination is seen in the invention, the fertility in the fancy, and the accuracy in the expression. For the first two of these, Ovid is famous amongst the poets; for the latter, Virgil. [2]

Dryden often compares authors, and his balance and antithesis in such passages is remarkable:

> For what remains, the excellency of that poet was, as I have said, in the more manly passions; Fletcher's in the softer; Shakespeare writ better betwixt man and man; Fletcher, betwixt man and woman: consequently, the one described friendship better; the other love: yet Shakespeare taught Fletcher to write love and Juliet and Desdemona are originals. 'Tis true, the

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[1] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 15.

[2] Ibid., "Preface to Annus Mirabilus," I, 15.

> scholar had the softer soul; but the master had the kinder. Friendship is both a virtue and a passion essentially; love is a passion only in its nature, and is not a virtue but by accident: good nature makes friendship; but effeminacy love. Shakespeare had a universal mind, which comprehended all characters and passions; Fletcher a more confined and limited... [1]

In Dryden's use of parallelism and balance lies the most obvious parallel between his style in prose and his equally excellent style in poetry. Matthew Arnold has condemned Dryden's poetry simply because it is so much like good prose. He argues that the necessary qualities for a good prose are regularity, uniformity, precision, and balance. A man whose destiny it was to bring his nation to the attainment of a suitable prose style would, of necessity, give a predominating, almost an exclusive, attention to those qualities. Therefore, implies Arnold, Dryden could not write great poetry. The poetry of Dryden and Pope "is the poetry of the builders of an age of prose and reason. Though they may write in verse, though they may in a certain sense be masters of the art of versification, Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose." [2]

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to Troilus and Cressida," 227-228.

[2] Matthew Arnold, Essays in Criticism, Second Series, "The Study of Poetry," London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1913, 41-42.

There is no need to attempt to show here that Arnold was wrong. Van Doren and Eliot have sufficiently vindicated the great satirist. It is of interest here, however, to consider further Arnold's statement that the poetry of Dryden makes him, not a classic of our poetry, but a classic of our prose. It is clear why Arnold refuses to consider Dryden a classic of our poetry. Dryden's poetic criticism of life lacks the "high seriousness," the "powerful poetic application" that Arnold's "touchstone" criterion calls for. That Dryden's poetry makes him a classic of our prose is a real tribute to Dryden if we consider the point in the light of another critic's statement.

T. S. Eliot writes, "There are qualities essential to good prose which are essential to good verse as well; and we may say positively with Mr. Ezra Pound, that verse must be at least as well written as prose." [1] Eliot feels that the great originality of Dryden consists in his finding a way to say in verse what no one else has been able to say except in prose. "To have the virtues of good prose is the first and minimum requirement

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[1] T. S. Eliot, "Johnson's 'London' and 'The Vanity of Human Wishes,'" in English Critical Essays, Twentieth Century, selected by Phyllis M. Jones, World's Classics Edition, London: Oxford University Press, 1933, 304.

of good poetry," [1] and Dryden's verse is poetry partly because it has the virtues of good prose.

Dryden conformed the sentence structure of prose to the metrical pattern of the heroic couplet, and parallel structure was particularly adaptable to the five foot, ten syllable lines. It lends itself to sharp, fine distinctions, and gives a concise precision suitable for verse of statement rather than of suggestion. Dryden's use of balance in his poetry promoted that air of spruce finality so necessary to verse of ratiocination and satire. Dryden speaks in verse, as he does in his prose, and often in the same parallel structure.

The following are typical Drydenian lines:

> And for my Foes may this their Blessing be,
> To talk like Doeg and to write like Thee.

> The Bad meet Punishment, the Good, Reward.

> This general Worship is to Praise and Pray.
> One part to borrow blessings, one to pay.

As in his prose, Dryden speaks his praise in balenced structure:

> But Genius must be born; and never can be taught.
> This is your Portion; this Your Native Store;
> Heav'n that but once was Prodigal before,
> To Shakespeare gave as much; she cou'd not give him more.

> Farewel, too little and too lately known,
> Whom I began to think and call my own;

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[1] Ibid., 305.

Parallelism and balance are not as prevalent in Dryden's earlier poems. His early style shows faint glimmers of this "prosaic" element, but it is not until his mature style that we find him master of this technique. The following stanza from his "Heroick Stanzas" (1659) in memory of Cromwell gives a brief taste of what is to come:

> Our former Chiefs, like Sticklers of the War
> First sought t'inflame the Parties, then to poise:
> The Quarrel lov'd, but did the Cause abhor,
> And did not strike to hurt, but make a noise.

In "Religio Laici" (1682) Dryden modestly describes his style as deliberately prosaic, and gives us at the same time an example of it in its most balanced and "prosaic" form:

> Thus have I made my own Opinions clear:
> Yet neither Praise expect, nor Censure fear:
> And this unpolish'd, rugged verse, I chose;
> As fittest for Discourse, and nearest Prose:

It is in "The Hind and the Panther," (1687) Dryden's last great poem in heroic couplets, that we find his greatest and best use of balance. By this time we can no longer deem it "prosaic" even in quotes. Here Dryden has reached his most perfect and <u>poetic</u> use of the prosaic element. Every word is indispensible, and every word is in its natural order:

> And Mercy mixt with reason did impart;
> One to his Head, the other to his Heart:
> Reason to Rule, but Mercy to forgive:
> The first is Law, the last Prerogative.

My thoughtless youth was wing'd with vain desires,
My manhood, long misled by wandring fires,
Follow'd false lights; and when their glimps was
gone,
My Pride struck out new sparkles of her own.
Such was I, such by nature still I am,
Be thine the glory, and be mine the shame.

Without unspotted, innocent within,
She fear'd no danger, for she knew no sin.

Certainly it can be said that Dryden's prose style influenced the structure of his poetry in many ways, of which its influence in balance is only one obvious example.

It is in Dryden's more studied passages that we find this careful balance in his prose. For often he is not parallel when it is awkward not to be:

> I must crave leave to tell you, that as I have endeavoured to adorn it with noble thoughts, so much more to express those thoughts with elocuation. [1]

> ...who, when at any time he aimed at wit in the stricter sense, that is, sharpness of conceit, was forced either to borrow from the Ancients, as to my knowledge he did very much from Plautus; or, when he trusted himself alone, often fell into meanness of expression. [2]

> All reasonable men have long since concluded, that the hero of the poem ought not to be a character of perfect vertue, for then he could not, without injustice, be made unhappy; nor yet altogether wicked, because he could not then be pitied. [3]

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[1] Ker, op. cit., "Preface to Annus Mirabilus," I, 14.

[2] Ibid., "Defence of the Epilogue," 172-173.

[3] Ibid., "Preface to All for Love," 191.

Dryden's use of balance is almost the only element in his style that might be called studied. Few of the other self-conscious prose qualities are noticeable. Dryden strongly condemned inversion in blank verse:

> Is there anything in rhyme more constrained that this line in blank verse, I heaven invoke, and strong resistance make? where you see both the clauses are placed unnaturally, that is, contrary to the common way of speaking, and that without the excuse of a rhyme to cause it: yet you would think me very ridiculous, if I should accuse the stubbornness of blank verse for this, and not rather the stiffness of the poet. [1]

We would not expect, then, to find much inversion in Dryden's prose, and we do not. He does use it infrequently for variety, and more often in his later works:

> According to the falsity of the proposition was the success. [2]

> Of this opinion was that excellent person, whom I mentioned, the late Earl of Leicester, who valued Chaucer as much as Mr. Cowley despised him. [3]

> Him I follow, and what I borrow from him, am ready to acknowledge to him. [4]

The repetition of this last sentence if "I follow him" were used would be extremely awkward. This sentence,

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[1] Ibid., "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," 94-95.

[2] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 113.

[3] Ibid., "Preface to the Fables," 266.

[4] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," 178.

however, I do not believe is similarly justified:

> Obliged he was to his master for his bounty; and he repays him with good counsel. [1]

In the satirical and argumentive passages, Dryden often turns to use of the rhetorical question, and it serves his usual air of aloof superiority well.

> Now what, I beseech you, is more easy than to write a regular French play, or more difficult than write an irregular English one, like those of Shakespeare, or of Fletcher? [2]

And in this passage, of critics who are no longer what they were, he enlists a whole series:

> Are our auxiliary forces turned our enemies? are they, who at best are but wits of the second order, and whose only credit amongst readers is what they obtain by being subservient to the fame of writers, are these become rebels, of slaves, and usurpers, of subjects? or, to speak in the most honourable terms of them, are they from our seconds become principals against us? Does the ivy undermine the oak which supports its weakness? What labour would it cost them to put in a better line, than the worst of those which they expunge in a true poet? [3]

Dryden's sentences, in general, are sound and flow smoothly. Few fragments appear in the writing. Occasionally what we would today treat as a modifying clause is handled as a separate sentence:

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[1] Ibid., 174.

[2] Ibid., "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," I, 77.

[3] Ibid., "Dedication of Examen Poeticum," II, 3.

> Adding that no argument could scape some of those eternal rhymers, who watch a battle with more diligence than the ravens and birds of prey; and the worst of them surest to be first in upon the quarry: while the better able either out of modesty writ not at all, or set that due value upon their poems, as to let them be often called for and long expected. [1]

A few sentences show an awkward redundancy:

> Petronius, the greatest wit perhaps of all the Romans, yet when his envy prevailed upon his judgment to fall on Lucan, he fell himself in his attempt. [2]

> Would a man who has an ill title to an estate, but yet is in possession of it; would he bring it of his own accord to be tried at Westminster? [3]

In general, Dryden's sentence structure is admirably free from mannerisms. The schematic inversions, classical involutions, and parenthetical intricacies of the style which preceded him are gone. It, again, is like good conversation should be, infinitely varied and flowing with very rarely the studied rhetoric and formal pattern which can be analyzed and classified in a study.

Paragraph Structure

Dryden seems to follow almost no paragraph laws. He may indeed, initially or eventually, set up a

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[1] Ibid., "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," I, 30.

[2] Ibid., "Dedication of Examen Poeticum," II, 3.

[3] Ibid., "Preface to All for Love," I, 196.

main point, but he dashes away from this point whenever the mood strikes him, and it strikes him often. To examine his paragraphing habits, we may turn first to his "Parallel of Poetry and Painting," which, although prefixed to Dryden's translation of Du Fresnoy's De Arte Graphica in 1695, is not a regular preface and might therefore be expected to have a more formal organization.

Dryden's first sentence is logical enough. "It may be reasonably expected that I should say something on my own behalf, in respect to my present undertaking. First then... ." He then tells how he was approached and asked to do the translation. Then he inserts a discussion of the paintings available in England.

The next paragraph begins, "But to return from my rambling to my own undertaking of this translation." Dryden humbly discusses his inability and lack of knowledge on the subject; then justifies his use of poetic expressions.

The third paragraph contains a discussion of the two months borrowed from his work on Virgil to do the present work, a pardon for bothering the reader with a discussion of himself, a philosophical comment on mankind's ill manners, a sentence which admits his digression, a restatement of his reason for writing the

essay, and an introduction of a quotation from Bellori "which cannot be unpleasing, at least to such who are conversant in the philosophy of Plato." Approximately the next six pages are taken up with Bellori's quotation. (Evidently this was an essay in which Dryden needed some padding.)

The next paragraph starts off with a condemnation of Bellori's style, but a commendation of the matter. Plato is brought in and Italian writers in general. A "plainer" quotation from Philostratus is introduced next and this quotation finishes the paragraph.

An apt comparison of Philostratus' quote to a pilot ship begins the next paragraph, "...so Philostratus has brought me thus far on my way, and I can now sail on without him. He has begun to speak of the great relation betwixt poetry and painting, and thither the greatest part of this discourse, by my promise, was directed." Dryden then tells us that he will not cover the subject completely and that he will return to Bellori before he continues to Du Fresnoy.

The following paragraph is a fairly organized discussion of the perfection in painting and drama in which the perfection consists of following nature, not improving her.

The first part of the next paragraph applies what Dryden had said in the previous one to poetry, contains

a new major idea in the middle of it, that each subject must have a proper perfection assigned to him, and discusses Achilles as an exception to this rule, which Virgil followed.

The following paragraph is an explanation of a seeming contradiction in the idea next above. Following it, is a summary of the idea that each subject must have a proper perfection assigned to him. "I will now proceed, as I promised, to the author of this book."

But more of this seems unnecessary. The fact is clear to anyone who knows Dryden's prose; he was unusually careless in his paragraphing. Most of his more informal prefaces have much more rambling paragraphs than the "Parallel of Poetry and Painting." Indeed, Dryden seems to have made a special effort in the above to continually force himself back to what evidently did not interest him. In paragraphing, Dryden does not seem to improve; rather, in that respect, and only that, he gets worse. In the earlier prefaces, as a new writer, he seems to write more self-consciously, and therefore is more careful. In his older writings he has confidence and assurance and he rambles as and where he pleases.

Paragraph length in Dryden likewise is unsystematic. An analysis of paragraph length in seven of Dryden's

essays is shown in Table II. As will be seen, there is little or no pattern of length. "The Defence of the Essay" with its average of 3.4 sentences per paragraph is a decided extreme. This essay consists mainly of paragraphs quoted from Howard's "Preface to the Great Favourite, or, the Duke of Lerma," with paragraphs by Dryden following each quotation. It will be remembered that "The Defence of the Essay" also had unusually short sentences in relation to Dryden's average length at that time. On the other hand, the "Dedication of Examen Poeticum" which has the longest paragraphs in the group, has been seen to contain Dryden's shortest sentences.

Since Dryden's sentences tend to be long, the one sentence paragraphs in the analysis are rarely short in the modern sense of the word. Often they contain a hundred or a hundred and fifty words each.

One of the most obvious inconsistencies in the paragraphing is Dryden's usage after a quotation which he is to comment upon. At times the quoted paragraph stands alone and the comment on it forms a new paragraph. Just as frequently, however, and in the same essay, the two form a single paragraph.

Surprisingly enough, Dryden's use of transitions between paragraphs is very good: Thus, then, first, after all, to consider yet more closely, to come to a

TABLE II.

LENGTH OF PARAGRAPHS IN DRYDEN'S PROSE

	Approx. no. of pages*	No. of para-graphs	Sent-ences per pgph.	Av. no. of sent. per pgph.	Range in sent. (and words)
Epistle Dedi-catory to the Rival Ladies (1664)	8	7	4,18,4,5, 16,11,2	8.5	2(116)-18(732)
Defence of the Essay (1668)	23	48	3,4,2,3,2, 2,1,2,10,1, 1,1,2,6,4,2, 1,1,4,1,2,3, 4,1,3,5,1,5, 1,8,3,2,5,4, 9,3,1,4,15, 1,3,3,6,3,4, 2,2,7	3.4	1(33)-15(808)
Preface to All for Love (1678)	10	9	16,6,20,1, 9,16,6,4,8	9.5	1(47)-20(905)
Dedication of the Span-nish Friar (1681)	6	2	34,4	19.0	4(193)-34(1744)
Preface to Albion and Albanius (1685)	12	11	24,10,6, 9,2,8,1, 7,6,3,3,	7.2	1(38)-24(1097)
Dedication of Examen Poeticum (1693)	13	7	33,14,25, 20,15,3, 25	19.3	3(97)-33(1038)
Preface to the Fables (1700)	28	22	3,9,14,6, 18,2,8,13, 23,8,31,18, 3,17,5,20, 13,4,13,1, 3,18	11.3	1(37)-31(1194)

*Average page in Ker edition contains approximately 335 words.

conclusion, lastly, after all, here, therefore, and such other introductory phrases made his paragraphs flow smoothly together. His writing is organic, if not organized. We never leap from one paragraph to another, for he takes us with him on his wanderings.

Organization of the Composition and Tone as a Whole

Dryden, probably because he felt a need to justify himself, has clearly given us his idea of, if not what a preface was to be, at least what his prefaces were:

> ...the nature of a preface is rambling, never wholly out of the way, nor in it. [1]

> When I speak of your Lordship, 'tis never a digression, and therefore need beg no pardon for it; but take up Segrais where I left him, and shall use him less often that I have occasion for him; for his preface is a perfect piece of criticism, full and clear, and digested into an exact method; mine is loose, and, as I intended it, epistolary. [2]

> ...in this address to your Lordship, I design not a Treatise of Heroic Poetry, but write in a loose epistolary way, somewhat tending to that subject, after the example of Horace, in his First Epistle of the Second Book to Augustus Caesar, and in that to the Piso's, which we call his Art of Poetry; in both of which he observes no method that I can trace, whatever Scaliger the father, or Heinsius, may have seen, or rather think they had seen. I have taken up, laid down, and resumed as often as I pleased, the same subject; and

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[1] Ker, op. cit., "Preface to the Fables," II, 255.

[2] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," 178.

> this loose proceeding I shall use through all this prefatory Dedication. Yet all this while I have been sailing with some side-wind or other toward the point I proposed in the beginning... [1]

In the "Preface to the Fables," Dryden says, "In the meantime to follow the thread of my discourse (as thoughts according to Mr. Hobbes, have always some connexion,)... [2]

In most of Dryden's essays, he seems to have relied very strongly on Hobbes' theory. In many of them we can say, "He observes no method that I can trace." But, as in his paragraphing, he is organic, if he is not organized. He secures remarkable coherence between his ideas. We slip with him so easily that often we would never notice when he led us off the track. Dryden, however, will not let us forget it. He has the very peculiar habit of feeling guilty and reminding us of it, and by reminding, confessing also that he wrote in haste, with no detailed plan and with no revision.

> I promised to say somewhat of my Poetic licence, but have in part anticipated my discourse already. [3]

> But to return from my long rambling... [4]

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[1] Ibid., 164.

[2] Ibid., 248.

[3] Ibid., "The Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence," I, 188.

[4] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," II, 171.

> I ought to have mentioned him before, when I spoke of Donne; but by a slip of an old man's memory he was forgotten. [1]

> This is almost a digression, I confess to your Lordship; but a just indignation forced it from me. [2]

Dryden often seems to be in fear of being criticised for what he does all the time and takes pains to tell us that he has not digressed:

> What I have written on this subject will not be thought a digression by the reader, if he pleases to remember what I said in the beginning of this essay... [3]

And he shows mock horror at what he is about to do anyway:

> Here, my Lord, I must contract also; for, before I was aware, I was almost running into a long digression, to prove that there is no such absolute necessity that the time of a stage action should so exactly be confined to twenty-four hours as never to exceed them... [4]

and then he continues to get in a few proofs. Almost always he says what he wants to and apologizes after, or tells us he won't digress and then says what he wants to anyway, so that when he tells us "...I have not an opportunity to examine in this place, because

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[1] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," 105.

[2] Ibid., 81.

[3] Ibid., "An Essay of Heroic Plays," I, 154.

[4] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," II, 162.

I cannot do it without digression from my subject," [1] we conclude that he must have some other reason for remaining silent.

Perhaps the prize example of Dryden's saying one thing and doing another, or possibly changing his mind in the middle of a sentence, is this from his "Essay of Heroic Plays":

> I might now, with the usual eagerness of an author, make a particular defence of this. But the common opinion (how unjust soever) has been so much to my advantage, that I have reason to be satisfied, and to suffer with patience all that can be urged against it.
>
> For, otherwise, what can be more easy for me, than to defend the character of Almanzor, which is one great exception that is made against the play. [2]

He then goes on to vindicate Almanzor in over three pages.

Dryden's obvious lack of detailed planning and his tendency, even when he has a vague plan, to wander from it, is confessed too in his own words:

> I should now speak of the refinement of wit; but I have been so large on the former subject, that I am forced to contract myself on this. [3]

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[1] Ibid., "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting," 131.

[2] Ibid., "An Essay of Heroic Plays," I, 155.

[3] Ibid., "Defence of the Epilogue," 171.

And he informally apologizes to his reader for his length:

> I am still speaking to you, my Lord, though, in all probability, you are already out of hearing. Nothing which my meanness can produce is worthy of this long attention. [1]

> I am now drawing towards a conclusion, and suspect your Lordship is very glad of it. [2]

It is not necessary to excuse this digressive manner of Dryden's, for it is in this that much of the charm of his writing lies. He writes, not as though delivering a formal, orderly discourse, but as though he were talking to a good friend, as learned and as interested as he himself is. He does not "write down" to us and tell us what is right; he treats us as equals and merely gives us his opinions, skipping lightly from point to point. And he saw no reason for pursuing unity at the risk of other qualities.

Besides his natural affinity for this type of writing, however, we can discover other reasons for its structure. We must remember that, except for his "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," Dryden never sat down to write freely what was on his mind. He was always concerned with the particular work to which his essay was a dedication or

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[1] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 110-111.

[2] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," 235.

a preface, often a work written for profit or popular appeal which did not particularly interest him. His ostensive reason for the essay was to defend, recommend, or explain the work itself. Therefore, if Dryden wanted to express himself on other things, and his catholic mind always wanted to, he had to digress. A lack of unity was the natural result of a mind that worked as his did and that was bounded in the artificial structure of a preface.

A strange sort of unity extends throughout the works as a whole. Often Dryden promises in one essay the subject of the next, as, in conversation, he would say, "But, we'll talk about that tomorrow." He says in the "Preface of All for Love":

> The occasion is fair, and the subject would be pleasant to handle the difference of styles betwixt him [Shakespeare] and Fletcher, and wherein, and how far they are both to be imitated. But since I must not be over confident of my own performance after him, it will be prudence in me to be silent. [1]

And that subject is one of the topics in the "Preface to Troilus and Cressida" immediately following. On many subjects such as Dryden's dream of an epic, his ideas of wit, or his discussions of the imagination, fancy and judgment, we might get an organized and

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[1] Ibid., I, 201.

unified essay simply by picking out what he says in all of his essays and putting them together in one, but it would have none of the charm and vitality of the separate essays as Dryden wrote them.

It is true that Dryden's critical writings are often singularly inconsistent, even in his literary judgments. For example, in the "Preface to the Fables" he says that the Aeneis is "but a second part of the Ilias; a continuation of the same story, and the persons already formed," [1] an opinion which he vehemently attacked three years earlier in the "Dedication of the Aeneis." Dryden's inconsistencies have generally been deplored. Saintsbury says, "He sees, for the time being, only the point which he has set himself to prove, and is quite careless of the fact that he has proved something very different yesterday, and is very likely to prove something different still tomorrow." [2]

Dryden's ability to see different sides of a problem, his lack of dogmatism, and his willingness to change his mind are all virtues, not defects. As Mark Van Doren points out, "It is precisely to his unending

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[1] Ibid., II, 252.

[2] Saintsbury, Dryden, op. cit., 79.

powers of renewal that we owe that serenity and that freshness in which he never fails us." [1] Dryden himself wrote to the Earl of Mulgrave in the "Dedication of Aureng-Zebe":

> I must be changeable; and sometimes the gravest of us all are so, even upon ridiculous accidents. Our minds are perpetually wrought upon by the temperament of our bodies; which makes me suspect they are nearer allied, than either our philosophers or school-divines will allow them to be... . An ill dream, or a cloudy day, has power to change this wretched creature, who is so proud of a reasonable soul, and make him think what he thought not yesterday. [2]

Besides his innumerable takings-off on subjects that interested him, the general content of the prefaces consists of accounts of difficulties encountered, apologies, panegyrics, answers to his latest lampoons, and justifications against some imagined future criticism. Self-confident and assured though he was, Dryden's writings carry an air of being "picked on." In almost all his prefaces he seems to anticipate his critics and their criticism and to answer their imagined fault-finding.

Of his specific prefaces, "The Essay of Heroic Plays" and the "Defence of the Epilogue" are the best

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[1] Van Doren, op. cit., 29.

[2] Scott-Saintsbury, op. cit., V, 199.

organized, although much of the former is conventional and common-place. "The Defence of the Epilogue, or, an Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age" is an explanation of the superiority of the present times in wit, language, and conversation; and, having set up such a natural outline, Dryden follows it fairly well. The "Preface to Sylvae, or, the second part of Poetical Miscellanies" gives a good, coherent and fairly organized theory of translation. However, in the prefaces in which Dryden's prose style is at its best--in the "Dedication of the Spanish Friar," "Dedication of Examen Poeticum, or, the Third Miscellany," and "Preface to the Fables"--we see the free movement of the poet's mind and speech, which, while largely the quality which makes them fine, is yet the quality that leads to disorder.

"The Essay of Dramatic Poesy" is the only critical essay that Dryden wrote which contains in itself its reason for being. It is Dryden's most elaborate piece of criticism and, as Johnson says, "laboured with that diligence which he might allow himself somewhat to remit, when his name gave sanction to his position, and his awe of the public was abated, partly by custom and partly by success. [1] Since it is not a preface,

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[1]Johnson, op. cit., 431.

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[1]Johnson, op. cit., 431.

it has a structure of its own; and, although by its nature variegated with successive representations of opposite views, it has, for Dryden, a large amount of order and unity. It was written in dialogue form, however, and so still can be allowed occasionally the digressions of conversation.

On a whole, the tendency of Dryden's essays is toward unity of a natural, organic sort rather than toward an organized methodical development. They are rather a series of fairly logically connected ideas, "forced from him" by association, than the development of one major theme statement.

Rhythm in Dryden's Prose

Dryden tells us in the "Dedication to the Rival Ladies":

> Shakespeare...was the first who, to shun the pains of continual rhyming, invented that kind of writing which we call blank verse, but the French, more properly, prose mesurée; into which the English tongue so naturally slides, that, in writing prose, it is hardly to be avoided. [1]

In perhaps no writer, however, do we find less "prose mesurée" than in Dryden. It may be that he was such a master of poetic rhythm, that he knew how to avoid its parallel in prose; that, writing in

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[1]Ker, op. cit., I, 6.

both harmonies, he was more clearly aware of their differences. Then, too, his conversational tone could not be preserved in prose of too definite a cadence. Entirely unrhythmical prose is almost impossible. However, as Saintsbury says, [1] the conversational tone excludes anything more than a hint at rhythm. Emphasis is by meaning only, and well-bred conversation exacts considerable runs of unemphatic and almost unaccented syllables which can hardly be got into any rhythm, certainly not into any rhythm capable of notation in feet.

> Dryden...sets himself to attain and does attain in prose a manner in rhythm as in all other ways, now easy, now forcible, now combative, now playful, admirably suited for narrative, and as admirably for exposition or argument, but essentially conversational, and, in virtue of that very quality, expressly eschewing and almost ostentatiously abjuring the complicated fugue-solos of the generation of his youth.....
>
> ...and therefore it is that, except very rarely, it would be, though quite possible, almost superfluous to arrange Dryden's prose in quantitative rhythm. It obeys Aristotle's dictum: it is not arrythmical--very much the reverse. But, except in a very few set pieces like the great Shakespeare passage, this rhythm is kept down to almost the minimum, and where it appears it is very rarely elaborated by any device except the usual balance and antithetic emphasis. [2]

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[1] Saintsbury, History of English Prose Rhythm, op. cit., 231.

[2] Ibid., 229,232.

I have scanned the Shakespeare passage below. The divisions are Saintsbury's; the quality marks are mine.

To begin, then,|with Shakespeare.| He was the man| who of all|modern,|and perhaps|ancient poets,| had the largest|and most comprehensive|soul.| All the images|of Nature|were still|present|to him,|and he drew them,| not laboriously,|but luckily;|when he describes|any thing,| you more|than see it,|you feel it|too.| Those who accuse him|to have wanted|learning,|give him|the greater| commendation:| he was naturally|learned;|he needed not| the spectacles of books|to read|Nature;|he looked|inwards,| and found her|there.| I cannot say|he is every where| alike;|were he so,|I should do him|injury|to compare him| with the greatest|of mankind.| He is many times|flat,| insipid;|his comic|wit|degenerating|into clenches,|his serious|swelling|into bombast.| But he is always|great,| when some great|occasion|is presented|to him;|no man| can say|he ever|had a fit|subject|for his wit,|and did not|then|raise himself|as high|above the rest|of poets,|

Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi.

Notice the skillful variated rhythm of the parallels and also the use of the "old Teuton monosyllables," soul, too, there, and flat.

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[1]Ker, op. cit., "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," I, 79-80.

It must be remembered that the passage above was probably one of the most carefully prepared passages in Dryden's prose. It appears in the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" which was his most carefully written piece and it was Dryden's first tribute to his great predecessor. It is not written in the style of conversation; it has the tone of a formal eulogy. This was as rhythmatic as Dryden's prose ever got, and even it is far from the blank verse of Browne and Milton.

Development of Dryden's Prose Practice

The question of whether Dryden's prose style changes with the years is one on which students of Dryden's style have disagreed. Saintsbury, Gosse, and Tilley insist that it does; Ker, Eliot, and the two writers of unpublished dissertations before mentioned say that it does not.

Saintsbury says, of the essays after the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy":

> These prefaces and dedications, however, even where their matter is scarcely satisfactory, show an evergrowing command of prose style, and very soon the resipiscence of Dryden's judgment, and the result of his recently renewed study of the older writers. [1]

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[1]Saintsbury, Dryden, op. cit., 127.

Congreve says of Dryden, "His parts did not decline with the years, but...he was an improving writer to the last, even to near seventy years of age." [1]

Ker, however, writes differently:

> Dryden's prose remains in the "Preface to the Fables" in 1700 essentially what it was in the essay of 1668; no less 'airy and animated,' and no more stately and dignified. [2]

And Lester Cameron, in his unpublished dissertation on Dryden's prose style, concludes:

> The influences which formed the prose style of Dryden must have accomplished their work before 1664. No change of manner is evident from the time he began to publish until 1700. [3]

While it is true that Dryden's manner does not change, I cannot agree that his style does not improve. The tendencies shown in his earlier writings are improved and made more pronounced in his later. His diction, colloquial at first, becomes yet more colloquial; his syntax becomes slightly more modern; his sentences, inclined to be longer and more uniform at the beginning of his writing, become more varied in length, but generally shorter toward the end. His conceits, at times labored in his earlier writings, become more free and

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[1] Quoted in Mitford, op. cit., cxl.

[2] Ker, op. cit., I, xxvii.

[3] Lester Cameron, A Study of Dryden's Prose Style. unpublished dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1938. Quoted in Martin, op. cit., 36.

spontaneous. The tendency to ramble which appears in his early essays becomes his established form in the later.

As Dryden gains experience, confidence, and judgment, his prose becomes, in general, less self-conscious and studied, and stronger and more free. It approaches nearer and nearer to the ideal which he seems to have set for it--carelessly natural and easy, but well-bred, speech.

VI. TYPES OF PROSE AND VARIETY OF STYLE TO TYPE

Naturally, within his general style of easy informality, Dryden varies the structure of his sentences to fit his purposes, or rather, the sentences vary to suit his needs. We find samples, however small, of almost every type of writing in the essays: panegyric, character, narrative, didactic, argumentative, satiric, and invective.

The panegyric serves Dryden's uses when he compliments his patrons. A courtly profusion of compliments was characteristic of the age, but Dryden usually manages them with singular dignity. Once, however, he balked. In the "Dedication of the Spanish Friar" to Lord Haughton, whom Dryden must have respected a great deal, he says this:

> And now, my Lord, I must confess, that what I have written looks more like a Preface, than a Dedication; and truly it was thus far my design, that I might entertain you with somewhat in my own art which might be more worthy of a noble mind, than the stale exploded trick of fulsome panegyrics. 'Tis difficult to write justly on anything, but almost impossible in praise. [1]

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[1]Ker, op. cit., I, 249.

When Dryden wrote anything, though, he usually wrote it well. Saintsbury calls Dryden "one of the most accomplished flatters that ever lived," [1] and we must agree with him. Dryden's style of flattery, however, hardly sounds like him. It is much sleeker and more studied and conventional; the sentences are complex, and, although smoother, are more dull. The sweeping flow of antithesis, the long, sustained sentences ending in weak syllables or open vowels shown in the passage below are typical of Dryden's panegyric style:

> The wishes and desires of all good men, which have attended your Lordship from your first appearance in the world, are at length accomplished, in your obtaining those honours and dignities which you have so long deserved. There are no factions, though irreconcilable to one another, that are not united in their affection to you, and the respect they pay you. They are equally pleased in your prosperity, and would be equally concerned in your afflictions. Titus Vespasian was not more the delight of humankind. The universal Empire made him only more known, and more powerful, but could not make him more beloved. He had greater ability of doing good, but your inclination to it is not less; and though you could not extend your beneficence to so many persons, yet you have lost as few days as that excellent Emperor; and never had his complaint to make when you went to bed, that the sun had shone upon you in vain, when you had the opportunity of relieving some unhappy man. This, my Lord, has justly acquired you as many friends as there are persons who have the honour to be known to you. Mere acquaintance

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[1] Saintsbury, Dryden, op. cit., 7.

> you have none; you have drawn them all into a nearer line; and they who have conversed with you are for ever after inviolably yours. [1]

Much less genuine, but written in the same style, is this from the "Epistle Dedicatory of the Rival Ladies," written earlier, in 1664, which contains one of Dryden's few absurd conceits. Notice Dryden's admirable use of antithesis again. This structure was frequent in his prose of this type:

> I can only say, in general, that the souls of other men shine out at little crannies; they understand some one thing, perhaps, to admiration, while they are darkened on all the other parts; but your Lordship's soul is an entire globe of light, breaking out on every side; and, if I have only discovered one beam of it, 'tis not that the light falls unequally, but because the body, which receives it, is of unequal parts. [2]

Then, too, the prose of flattery may not seem the real Dryden to us, as it most certainly was not, because of his use of the sardonic which was so unnatural to the man. His natural self-assurance often breaks out in his complimentary style in a conversational lightness that makes one feel that Dryden too thinks he has to stoop:

> But since you are to bear this persecution, I will at least give you the encouragement

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[1] Ker, op. cit., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 15-16.

[2] Ibid., I, 5.

> of a martyr,--you could never suffer in a nobler cause.[1]

Alike in their praise but very different in their sincerity and tone are Dryden's characters of those writers whom he admires. As we have seen, it is in these more carefully prepared passages that definite rhythm is often seen. The very famous praise to Shakespeare has been given. "I admire Fletcher, but I love Shakespeare,"[2] Dryden has said, and we believe him, for the passage proves it. The following encomium on Chaucer from the "Preface to the Fables" should be almost equally famous. As will be seen, it has much the same tone of genuine tribute and careful wording. Notice the careful placing of the parallels for a rhythmic effect and the sentence endings--again generally weak syllables or open vowels. This prose flows:

> He must have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature, because, as it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his Canterbury Tales the various manners and humours (as we now call them) of the whole English nation, in his age. Not a single character has escaped him. All his pilgrims are severally distinguished from each other; and not only in their inclinations, but in their very physiognomies and persons. Baptista Porta could not have described their natures better, than by the marks which the

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to Annus Mirabilus," 10.

[2] Ibid., "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," 83.

> poet gives them. The matter and manner of their tales, and of their telling, are so suited to their different educations, humours, and callings, that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious characters are distinguished by their several sorts of gravity: their discourses are such as belong to their age, their calling and their breeding; such as are becoming of them, and of them only. Some of his persons are vicious, and some virtuous; some are unlearn'd or (as Chaucer calls them) lewd, and some are learn'd. Even the ribaldry of the low characters is different: the Reeve, the Miller, and the Cook, are several men, and distinguished from each other as much as the mincing Lady-Prioress and the broad-speaking, gap-toothed Wife of Bath. But enough of this; there is such a variety of game springing up before me, that I am distracted in my choice, and know not which to follow. 'Tis sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God's plenty. We have our forefathers and great-grand-dames all before us, as they were in Chaucer's days: their general characters are still remaining in mankind, and even in England, though they are called by other names than those|of Monks,|and Friars,|and Canons,|and Lady Abbesses,|and Nuns;|for mankind is ever the same, and nothing lost out of Nature, though everything is altered. [1]

Dryden did not write narrative prose. In a very few passages, however, he has given us a sample of how he might have written it if he had chosen that type. The following passage has long and flowing sentences. It might almost be said to be "quiet" prose. Although we do not hear the cannon he speaks

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to the Fables," II, 262-263.

of, we do hear the "depth of silence" in the city. Dryden creates this impression by his use of open vowels and nasal and liquid consonants and of long sentences with clause piled upon clause:

> It was that memorable day, in the first summer of the late war, when our navy engaged the Dutch; a day wherein the two most mighty and best appointed fleets which any age had ever seen, disputed the command of the greater half of the globe, the commerce of nations, and the riches of the universe. While these vast floating bodies, on either side, moved against each other in parallel lines, and our countrymen, under the happy conduct of his Royal Highness, went breaking, by little and little, into the line of the enemies; the noise of the cannon from both navies reached our ears about the City, so that all men being alarmed with it, and in a dreadful suspense of the event which we knew was then deciding, every one went following the sound as his fancy led him; and leaving the town almost empty, some took towards the park, some cross the river, others down it; all seeking the noise in the depth of silence. [1]

Dryden did not often take the didactic tone; he was usually too personal to maintain it for long. This passage, however, shows him at his lecturing best, unemotional, impersonal, organized and clear. The short sentences which follow the longer sentences of explanation help create the convincing tone:

> All translation, I suppose, may be reduced to these three heads.

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[1] Ibid., "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," I, 28.

> First, that of metaphrase, or turning an author word by word, and line by line, from one language into another. Thus, or near this manner, was Horace his Art of Poetry translated by Ben Johnson. The second way is that of paraphrase, or translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense; and that too is admitted to be amplified, but not altered. Such is Mr. Waller's translation of Virgil's Fourth Aeneid. The third way is that of imitation, where the translator (if now he has not lost that name) assumes the liberty, not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hints from the original, to run division on the ground-work, as he pleases. Such is Mr. Cowley's practice in turning the two Odes of Pindar, and one of Horace, into English. [1]

Argumentative writing seems to occupy most of Dryden's prose. Many critics have been able to write their criticism in the almost impersonal didactic style above. Not so with Dryden, who is always at his best in controversy. If he has no controversy or no antagonist, he sets one up to argue against. At times he seems to prove his point, not by its excellencies, but by the defects of its opposing view. The liveliest passages in his prose are those in which he tries, and finds wanting, the ideas with which he disagrees. Dryden argues with conviction. The statements are short. They begin forcibly and end hard. Often questions are used to vary the sharp endings and to add a tone of reasonableness to the style. It is rapid prose.

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to the Translation of Ovid's Epistles," 237.

Here Dryden is arguing for tragedy against comedy:

> I do not dispute the preference of Tragedy; let every man enjoy his taste: but 'tis unjust, that they, who have not the least notion of heroic writing, should therefore condemn the pleasure which others receive from it, because they cannot comprehend it. Let them please their appetites in eating what they like; but let them not force their dish on all the table. They, who would combat general authority with particular opinion, must first establish themselves a reputation of understanding better than other men. Are all the flights of Heroic Poetry to be concluded bombast, unnatural, and mere madness, because they are not affected with their excellencies? It is just as reasonable as to conclude there is no day, because a blind man cannot distinguish of light and colours. Ought they not rather, in modesty, to doubt of their own judgments, when they think this or that expression in Homer, Virgil, Tasso, or Milton's Paradise, to be too far strained, than positively to conclude that 'tis all fustian, and mere nonsense? 'Tis true, there are limits to be set betwixt the boldness and rashness of a poet; but he must understand those limits who pretends to judge as well as he who undertakes to write: and he who has no liking to the whole, ought, in reason, to be excluded from censuring of the parts. He must be a lawyer before he mounts the tribunal; and the judicature of one court, too, does not qualify a man to preside in another. He may be an excellent pleader in the Chancery, who is not fit to rule the Common Pleas. But I will presume for once to tell them, that the boldest strokes of poetry, when they are managed artfully, are those which most delight the reader.[1]

And in this passage for the epic poem against tragedy, he is arguing against the side he took above. Again he

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[1] Ibid., "The Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence," 182-183.

uses questions. Notice the sharp contrast between the first sentence, eloquent and noble with its parallel structure building up to a dramatic period, and the sentence following, short and quick with hard t's and hissing s's echoing the scorn the meaning shows. Notice too the repeated emphasis of the nouns throughout the passage:

> To raise, and afterwards to calm the passions--to purge the soul from pride, by the examples of human miseries, which befall the greatest--in few words, to expel arrogance, and introduce compassion, are the great effects of tragedy. Great, I must confess, if they were altogether as true as they are pompous. But are habits to be introduced at three hours' warning? are radical diseases so suddenly removed? A mountebank may promise such a cure, but a skilful physician will not undertake it. An epic poem is not in so much haste: it works leisurely; the changes which it makes are slow; but the cure is likely to be more perfect. The effects of tragedy, as I said, are too violent to be lasting. If it be answered that, for this reason, tragedies are often to be seen, and the dose to be repeated, this is tacitly to confess that there is more virtue in one heroic poem than in many tragedies. A man is humbled one day, and his pride returns the next. Chymical medicines are observed to relieve oftener than to cure: for 'tis the nature of spirits to make swift impressions, but not deep. Galenical decoctions, so which I may properly compare an epic poem, have more of body in them; they work by their substance and their weight. It is one reason of Aristotle's to prove that Tragedy is more noble, because it turns to a shorter compass; the whole action being circumscribed within the space of four-and-twenty hours. He might prove as well that a mushroom is to be preferred before a peach, because it shoots up in the compass of a night. A chariot may

> be driven around the pillar in less space than a large machine, because the bulk is not so great. Is the Moon a more noble planet than Saturn, because she makes her revolution in less than thirty days, and he in little less than thirty years? [1]

In the following passage, Dryden has just finished, by the power of his logic, proving that Horace is greater than Juvenal. His feelings, however, (always ultimately Dryden's last and highest authority) revolt at this, so he argues against the reasoning his judgment has set up. Here Dryden uses a string of short clauses beginning with he. Techniques such as this give his prose an air of direct simplicity, and at the same time emphasize the comparison.

> This last consideration seems to incline the balance on the side of Horace, and to give him the preference to Juvenal, not only in profit, but in pleasure. But, after all, I must confess, that the delight which Horace gives me is but languishing. Be pleased still to understand, that I speak of my own taste only: he may ravish other men; but I am too stupid and insensible to be tickled. Where he barely grins himself, and, as Scaliger says, only shows his white teeth, he cannot provoke me to any laughter. His urbanity, that is, his good manners, are to be commended, but his wit is faint; and his salt, if I may dare to say so, almost insipid. Juvenal is of a more vigorous and masculine wit; he gives me as much pleasure as I can bear; he fully satisfies my expectation; he treats his subject home: his spleen is raised, and he raises mine: I

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[1] Ibid., "Dedication of the Aeneis," II, 158.

> have the pleasure of concernment in all he says; he drives his reader along with him; and when he is at the end of his way I willingly stop with him. If he went another stage, it would be too far; it would make a journey of a progress, and turn delight into fatigue. When he gives over, it is a sign the subject is exhausted, and the wit of man can carry it no further. [1]

Dryden's can hardly be called impassioned writing, however. After all, it is his common sense that makes pleasure the highest criterion of literature. He is more apt to show his pleasure and enthousiasm than his baser and more personal emotions. In his "Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy," nevertheless, when he is angry at Sir Robert Howard who had answered the essay, the sentences are shorter and the whole tone of the style is brisker and quicker. Dryden sounds hurt:

> For I confess my chief endeavours are to delight the age in which I live. If the humour of this be for low comedy, small accidents, and raillery, I will force my genius to obey it, though with more reputation I could write in verse. I know I am not so fitted by nature to write comedy: I want that gaiety of humour which is required to it. My conversation is slow and dull; my humour saturnine and reserved: in short, I am none of those who endeavor to break jests in company, or make reparties. So that those, who decry my comedies, do me no injury, except it be in point of profit: reputation in them is the last thing to which I shall pretend. [2]

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[1] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 84.

[2] Ibid., I, 116.

In his prose as in his poetry, Dryden reigns supreme in satire. In his satiric prose, though the meaning is subtle, there is a slap in the sound as well as the meaning of every sentence. Perhaps we may here consider Dryden's own ideas of satire, which, it must be noted, are as clear and interesting to us today as though they had been in our time. This passage may also serve to show how skillfully Dryden uses parallelism in his passages of explanation:

> How easy is it to call rogue and villain, and that wittily! But how hard to make a man appear a fool, a blockhead, or a knave, without using any of those approbrious terms! To spare the grossness of the names, and to do the thing yet more severely, is to draw a full face, and to make the nose and cheeks stand out, and yet not to employ any depth of shadowing. This is the mystery of that noble trade, which yet no master can teach to his apprentice; he may give the rules, but the scholar is never the nearer in his practice. Neither is it true, that this fineness of raillery is offensive. A witty man is tickled while he is hurt in this manner, and a fool feels it not. The occasion of an offence may possibly be given, but he cannot take it. If it be granted that in effect this way does more mischief; that a man is secretly wounded, and though he be not sensible himself, yet the malicious world will find it out for him; yet there is still a vast difference betwixt the slovenly butchering of a man, and the fineness of a stroke that separates the head from the body, and leaves it standing in its place. [1]

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[1] Ibid., "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," II, 92-93.

And to sample the fineness of Dryden's stroke, let us hear him when he speaks of Milbourne, a fellow translator of Virgil. Notice that the sentences are fairly long, and so give a feeling of leisurely, scornful ease. It is almost impossible to read satiric passages from Dryden aloud without slipping into the aloof, good humored tone in which Dryden wrote them. The prose itself has an upward lift:

> I am satisfied, however, that, while he and I live together, I shall not be thought the worst poet of the age. It looks as if I had desired him underhand to write so ill against me; but upon my honest word I have not bribed him to do me this service, and am wholly guiltless of his pamphlet. 'Tis true, I should be glad if I could persuade him to continue his good offices, and write such another critique on anything of mine; for I find, by experience, he has a great stroke with the reader, when he condemns any of my poems, to make the world have a better opinion of them. He has taken some pains with my poetry; but nobody will be persuaded to take the same with his. [1]

And again, of Sir Robert Howard, in the "Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy," after Dryden has recovered from his anger in the passage quoted above:

> But these are now to be no faults; for ten days after his book is published, and that his mistakes are grown so famous, that they are come back to him, he sends his Errata to be printed, and annexed to his play; and desires, that, instead of shutting,

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[1] Ibid., "Preface to the Fables," 271.

> you would read opening, which, it seems, was the printer's fault. I wonder at his modesty, that he did not rather say it was Seneca's or mine; and that, in some authors, reserare was to shut as well as to open, as the word barach, say the learned, is both to bless and curse.
>
> Well, since it was the printer, he was a naughty man to commit the same mistake twice in six lines: I warrant you delectus verborum, for placing of words, was his mistake too, though the author forgot to tell him of it: if it were my book, I assure you I would. For those rascals ought to be the proxies of every gentleman author, and to be chastised for him, when he is not pleased to own an error. Yet since he has given the Errata, I wish he would have enlarged them only a few sheets more, and then he would have spared me the labour of an answer; for this cursed printer is so given to mistakes, that there is scarce a sentence in the preface without some false grammar, or hard sense in it; which will all be cleared upon the poet, because he is so good-natured as to lay but three errors to the printer's account, and to take the rest upon himself, who is better able to support them. But he needs not apprehend that I should strictly examine those little faults, except as I am called upon to do it: I shall return therefore to that quotation of Seneca, and answer, not to what he writes, but to what he means. [1]

With such an able weapon as his satiric blade, we would suppose Dryden would never have to resort to calling a man "a fool, a blockhead, or a knave." We We find a few passages, however, of invective, the most dangerous of moods and most rapidly out of date.

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[1] Ibid., I, 117-118.

Dryden manages it so well that this paragraph might, with very few changes, have been written today. Unlike the satiric passages quoted above, this prose has a downward trend. The use of words like most, forever, and consciences at the ends of the sentences help create this feeling. Long open sounds throughout such as those in blood, money, too, often, colours, look, golden, no, own, and blockheads combine to create the impression of heaviness.

> No government has ever been, or ever can be, wherein timeservers and blockheads will not be uppermost. The persons are only changed, but the same jugglings in State, the same hypocrisy in religion, the same self-interest and mismanagement, will remain for ever. Blood and money will be lavished in all ages, only for the preferment of new faces, with old consciences. There is too often a jaundice in the eyes of great men; they see not those whom they raise in the same colours with other men. All whom they affect look golden to them, when the gilding is only in their own distempered sight. [1]

There are no exalted passages in Dryden. He seems to have turned to the harmony of poetry for his highest strains. As Saintsbury points out, [2] we can only guess what things like the opening of "Religio Laici," the "Consideration of Life" in Aureng-zebe, the passage of the wandering fires in the "Hind and the Panter," and others would have been like in prose.

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[1] Ibid., "Dedication of Examen Poeticum," II, 2.

[2] Saintsbury, History of English Prose Rhythm, op. cit., 289.

Although Dryden's only notable prose writings are his critical essays, it is plain from the passages above that it was not limited ability that kept him from trying other prose forms. The variety shown above would have made him an excellent prose writer in whatever form he chose to write.

VII. CONCLUSION

English prose as Dryden found it was individualistic and impractical. In the hands of the great masters, it was capable of producing great literature; in the hands of the common journalists, it was an impossible tool. By 1700, when Dryden died, a general standard suitable for everyday use had been set up.

If any one man can be said to be responsible for this, that man is John Dryden. Writing as a means to an end, with a strong genius for language, he took the tendencies of his time toward a more usable prose style, filtered them with his tremendous sanity, and produced what can be called the first really modern prose.

Dryden's prose style is pliant, natural and conversational. It is clear and simple and has a certain robust strength and dignity. Reading Dryden, one is almost always conscious of the fact that he is listening to a keen and quick mind, but a mind that is working honestly and naturally, not studying and laboring over which is the "right" way the thing should be said. He brought his readers into his prose and talked with them. There are no soliloquies in Dryden.

Communication of his ideas about writing and writers was his first, and almost his only aim.

His modernity lies especially in his diction and his choice of imagery. Dryden had an unusual aptitude for choosing what was neither too pedantic nor too familiar. He took as his standard the speech of the well-bred gentleman of his time, and we can safely say that that speech is not much changed.

His sentence structure, too, broke away from the earlier sentence style which featured long, complicated sentences with many subordinate clauses, latinized structures, and heavy balance and antithesis. Dryden's sentences are shorter, less complex and less formal.

Because of his position as the dominant literary figure of his age and because his style filled a need and filled it well, his prose became the standard which was to be modified and still more perfected in the succeeding century. It is still, not only the first, but also one of the best examples of "plain talk"--of lucid, simple, conversational prose, suitable for almost every purpose.

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