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THE POETRY OF CONTINUITY:

DRYDEN AS AN HISTORICAL POET

"Of what is past, or passing,
or to come."
W. B. Yeats
Sailing to Byzantium

by

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Chapter One

Introduction: Dryden, History, and Poetry

Dryden's life spanned a period of almost continual political crisis in England. The Civil War, the Interregnum, the Restoration, the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis, and the Glorious Revolution all involved the most basic issues of power. The problem of who would control England--Parliament or King, Puritan, Anglican, or Catholic --intruded itself into lives that in calmer times might have been non-political. For clergyman, merchant, scientist, or poet, to ignore politics was to ignore an essential reality of life. John Milton abandoned his poetic aspirations in order to write with his "left hand" in support of the republican cause. When that cause collapsed and he returned to his poetry, he wrote an epic and a tragedy that are profoundly political. Andrew Marvell almost completely relinquished poetry to spend twenty years as a member of Parliament. And Dryden's career as a poet can be viewed as a continuing struggle to understand and to express the meaning of political events.

Dryden's attempt to acquire mental control over political chaos involved not so much his adopting a rigid ideological structure as his perceiving contemporary events in terms of their historical meaning. In his roles as Poet Laureate and Royal Historiographer, he recorded and re-created contemporary history from what is considered the official Stuart point of view. But his need to find meaning in history extends beyond these years and becomes a force that characterizes and unifies his work. Dryden thinks like an historian. His poetry, along with much of his prose, reveals a deeply held belief that the way to understand ourselves and the world, the way to give meaning to our lives and to external events, and the way to order the formlessness of a continuously, chaotically changing world is to perceive, shape, and present men and events as part of larger historical structures.

Critics have recognized that history lies at the center of Dryden's poems, but by this they too often mean simply that Dryden is an occasional poet writing about historical events.[1] This definition ignores the fact that occasional poetry is perhaps the dominant form of poetry in the Restoration and does little to explain why Dryden's poetry has immediacy three hundred years after the events he celebrates. When these critics analyze the reasons for Dryden's enduring value, they turn to discussions of his

use of metaphor, his control over the couplet, or his wit. While these are all obviously essential matters, they ignore the crucial role historical thought plays in both the shaping and the aims of Dryden's poetry.

Those critics who consider Dryden's sense of historical process tend to stuff him into a pre-formed mold. One critic suggests that Dryden is a providential historian; another sees in his poetry the cyclical patterns of the classical authors; and a third defines Dryden's historical perspective as a secular belief in earthly progress.[2] It is important to remember, however, that part of Dryden's genius lies in his ability to harmonize apparently divergent modes of thought. In his poetry he draws from Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Juvenal, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Donne, Cowley, and Milton--to name only a few--and integrates these diversified influences into his own poetic practice. His historical conceptions reflect the same intellectual process. He takes freely from the historical ideas of the classical authors and of his contemporaries and imaginatively transforms them into a poetic vision of the meaning in and process of history.

This dissertation studies the ways in which historical vision controls Dryden's poetry. Simultaneously with his development as a poet, Dryden's sense of historical process and his--and man's in general--role in it underwent

profound changes. As his historical understanding grew richer, so, too, did his ability to use the poetic strategies that would best reveal the complexities of historical meaning. While the historian's voice permeates his poetry as he examines events in order to educate his audience in appropriate public and private conduct, it is equally important to realize that Dryden's sense of history determines the very structure of his poems and the meaning which emerges from that structure. Almost all of Dryden's poetry is occasional, but it inevitably transcends the conventions of that form. Generally, occasional poetry eternalizes an event by constructing an artifact--the poem--that removes the occasion being celebrated from the temporal realm into the spatial one. It immortalizes by placing the event outside of time. Dryden, though, is too concerned with making sense out of the world to settle for this kind of removal. Instead, he de-occasionalizes his occasional poetry by presenting the event as a step in an historical continuum, giving it a context in which its meaning as something more than an isolated occasion can be understood. Rather than place the occasion outside of time, he distances it temporally, enabling us to view it from the perspective which is unavailable to us when we stand in the midst of history. If a poem reveals the process of a poet's mind working out

a problem, then Dryden's poems are a record of his confrontations with public or, less often, personal events. Read as such they become a lesson, to his immediate audience and to us, in how to use historical thought to find order in the world.

A further theme in this study is Dryden himself, his sense of involvement in the crucial events storming around him and the degree to which he felt he could help control or influence those events. Any early optimism he felt about history working itself out--or being worked out--for "the best" quickly waned, and as disillusionment led to detachment, his historical vision became first ironic, then overtly critical. When history became for him, finally, a record of man's inhumanity to man, he was able to formulate a vision of tradition and virtue that contains its own order secure apart from politically motivated chaos. If human history is only change and impermanence, then continuity and the permanence it implies can be found in both a larger and a smaller sphere: in the rhythms of natural--as opposed to historical--process, and in the succession of poets, and all artists, and the continuity of their art.

While this study focuses on Dryden's poetic responses to political crises, his historical structuring penetrates all his poetry. In his public attempts at

self-definition, for example, he casts himself into historical perspective. By the time he wrote his "Prologue" to Aureng-Zebe (1676), Dryden had clearly formulated his ideas that there are distinct literary ages with particular characteristics and that a given author inevitably reflects his age. In the "Prologue" he uses these assumptions to define his own period and the previous age and to reveal discomfort at his own entrapment by historical circumstance. The speaker expresses Dryden's unhappiness with the rhyme his age chains him to and the other demands of literary "correctness" which that rhyme represents:

> And to confess a truth, (though out of time)
> Grows weary of his long-lov'd Mistris, Rhyme.
> Passion's too fierce to be in Fetters bound,
> And Nature flies him like Enchanted Ground. (7-10)[3]

The deliberate roughness of the first of these couplets, exemplifying Dryden's rebellion against "correctness," contrasts with the smoothness and speed of the second, suggesting all that Dryden could do if freed from the limitations of his metrical and historical "time." Dryden compares his work to Shakespeare's and feels overwhelmed by his own cumbersomeness: one cannot catch nature when weighted down by rhyme. While he cannot or will not "polish" his poetry to the extent his own age demands--and "polishing" implies working over for surface appearance only--he cannot step back into the unfettered

Elizabethan period and chase freely after nature: "Let him retire, betwixt two Ages cast,/ The first of this, and hindmost of the last" (21-2). For Dryden, who was always concerned with historical definition and with the relationship between the individual and his age, to have felt trapped between two periods--in essence, outside of any historical category--must have occasioned great uneasiness. Yet this very sense of being distanced from his time also enabled him to view contemporary events, people, and ideas from a perspective that those more immediately involved often lacked.

Dryden moved freely between the concerns of the historian and of the poet. In his biographical writings, especially those on Plutarch and Polybius, he discusses the responsibilities of historians in light of the essential role they play in creating a good society. In his political writings, particularly The Vindication of the Duke of Guise and the "Dedication" and "Postscript" to his translation of The History of the League, he teaches how to use past history to solve contemporary problems. In his literary criticism, he sorts out literary periods and delves into the historical development of language and of genre both as an aid to practicing writers and as a method of placing himself as a writer

into a larger literary-historical context. These contexts, as the "Prologue" to Aureng-Zebe negatively demonstrates, enabled Dryden both to explain and to understand his own practice. At times in his poetry--in Annus Mirabilis: An Historical Poem, in his use of the objective historian's voice in Absalom and Achitophel, in his apostrophe to Clio, the muse of history, in Threnodia Augustalis--Dryden overtly merges the roles of historian and poet. Elsewhere, as in his panegyrics, he more subtly manipulates the historian's methods, or he creates layers of historical structures in which to interpret contemporary events, from the weighing of past against present in To Charleton and To Congreve to the complex parodic universal history that flows as an undercurrent through The Medall.

While Dryden's ability to exploit historical thought for poetic ends is distinctively his own, his assumption that history and poetry share common concerns is characteristic of Renaissance and seventeenth-century thought. K. G. Hamilton reminds us that modes of discourse were not then as sharply distinguished as in later periods,[4] and the almost universal desire to write an epic reflects the belief that the greatest poetry is grounded in historical event. Indeed, as Aristotle had recognized, a mimetic theory of poetry--poetry viewed as an imitation of nature--promotes a confusion between the functions of

history and of poetry. If history is a factual, literally true representation of reality, what then is the sphere assigned to poetry?

It was precisely this close relationship that created a tension between poetry and history. Aristotle laid the groundwork for future debate by positing that poetry reveals a higher truth than does history. The distinction between the historian and the poet is not that one writes in prose and the other in verse. Herodotus' work put into verse would still be history. "The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history; for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular" (ix. 2-4).[5] Since the poet can imitate any one of three objects--"things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things as they ought to be" (xxv. 1)--his work both encompasses and far surpasses any possible achievement of the historian.

When classical, Renaissance, and seventeenth-century historians and poets defined their work, they consistently contrasted historical and poetic methods, aims, and value. Polybius, the Hellenic historian whom Dryden admired, is typical in his view that "higher poetic truth" is only a vaguely useful lie. Unlike the tragic

poet, the historian must not try to "thrill" his readers with "exaggerated pictures" of misfortune and misery, nor should he create "probable utterances" spoken by his historical figures.[6] Rather, the historian must

> simply record what really happened and what really was said, however commonplace. For the object of tragedy is not the same as that of history but quite the opposite. The tragic poet should thrill and charm his audience for the moment by the verisimilitude of the words he puts into his characters' mouths, but it is the task of the historian to instruct and convince for all time serious students by the truth of the facts and the speeches he narrates, since in the one case it is the probable that takes precedence, even if it be untrue, the purpose being to create illusion in spectators, in the other it is the truth, the purpose being to confer benefit on learners. (II. 56.3-16)[7]

Poetry creates illusion to provide ephemeral pleasure; history records truth to confer eternal benefit.

When the debate emerged again in the Renaissance, the attacks and defenses remained almost the same although now poets could claim, on Horace's authority, that poetry instructs as well as pleases. Indeed, Continental historiographers who were attempting to make history into an art often stressed the affinity between history and poetry: both imitate nature, both have a moral aim. In the anti-Aristotelian views of some, history <u>is</u> poetry written in non-metrical form. Yet an important evaluative distinction continued to exist: history appeals to reason and intellect; poetry, only to emotions.[8] Thus, in North's

translation of Amyot's preface to Plutarch, history "doth thinges with greater weight and gravitie, than the inventions and devises of the Poets" (11).[9] Poetry may teach, but its primary purpose is still to delight, and this frivolity interferes with the serious business of education.

The very existence of Sidney's Apology reflects the extent to which Renaissance poets felt threatened by attacks on their seriousness. Sidney combines the Aristotelian concept of poetry as a higher truth, the Platonic vision of an ideal world, and the Horatian emphasis on poetry as instruction to demonstrate his art's superiority to philosophy, on the one hand, and to history, on the other. Sidney's stated values became the underlying assumptions of Restoration and Augustan poetry. The aim of all learning is the same: "the knowledge of a man's self, in the ethic and politic consideration, with the end of well doing and not of well knowing only" (12).[10] Poetry far surpasses other discourse because, with its heightened thought, musical language, and delightful verse, it not only teaches, but moves us "with desire to be taught" and "to do that which it doth teach" (21). Philosophy confuses us with its convoluted reasoning while history bores us with its tedious enumeration of detail; neither situation is conducive to the inculcation of virtue. Since the historian is chained to literally true particulars, he

may never rise above concrete description of historical incident. He cannot inspire us with a perfect pattern to follow or to shun because he can only draw what has actually happened in a foolish world. The poet, however,

> disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in Nature (7).

Nature's "world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden" (7).

By the seventeenth-century, the limitations of historical truth had been well established. Even Bacon, whose definition of poetry suggests that it is a mere shadow of more substantial historical knowledge, assigns poetry an essential function that history cannot fulfill. Bacon clearly implies that to talk about poetry one must at least begin by thinking about it in relation to history. Poetry is "feigned history or fables" (VIII. 407).[11] Just as history can be divided into "Chronicles," "Lives," and "Relations," poetry can be discussed as "feigned Chronicles," "feigned Lives," and "feigned Relations." Even the more common sub-divisions of poetry point to its subordinate status:

> Narrative Poesy is a mere imitation of History, such as might pass for real, only that it commonly exaggerates things beyond probability. Dramatic Poesy is as History made visible. . . . Parabolical Poesy is typical History, by which ideas that are objects of the intellect are represented in forms that are objects of the sense (VIII. 440).

But if poetry is limited in one way because it concerns "individuals invented in imitation of those which are the subject of true history" (VIII. 407-8), it also has a "special relation to the dignity of human nature." The spirit of man requires "a more ample greatness, a more perfect order, and a more beautiful variety than it can anywhere (since the Fall) find in nature." The ordinary events of "real history are not of sufficient grandeur to satisfy the human mind" so poetry feigns "acts more heroical." In a passage halfway between Sidney's vision of the poet perfecting nature and Thomas Rymer's later mechanical rule of poetic justice, Bacon points to the ethical superiority of poetry:

> Since the successes and issues of actions as related in true history are far from being agreeable to the merits of virtue and vice, Poesy corrects it, exhibiting events and fortunes as according to merit and the law of providence. . . . So that this Poesy conduces not only to delight but also to magnanimity and morality. Whence it may be fairly thought to partake somewhat of a divine nature; because it raises the mind and carries it aloft, accommodating the shows of things to the desires of the mind, not (like reason to history) buckling and bowing down the mind to the nature of things. (VIII. 440-1)

Poetry fulfills man's highest aesthetic and moral needs. Refusing to compromise with an imperfect reality, it delights us with its own perfection and holds out the hope that the world which is can become the world it ought to be.

The intellectual habit of weighing the relative merits of history and poetry affected seventeenth-century critical theory, particularly in the work of commentators on the epic and the drama. While almost everyone agreed that an epic should be based on historical truth, debate centered on how closely the poet must follow history and to what extent he could alter fact to achieve his higher moral aims.[12] Epic and history were described in almost identical terms--both teach through example--but always with the implication that the epic was a better teacher because its hero could be presented as a near-perfect pattern of virtue. Comparisons between poetry and history serve as the stepping-off point for much of Rymer's criticism. In his Preface to Rapin, Rymer objects to Cowley's Davideis because the author chose as his subject "a History where he is so strictly ty'd up to the Truth" (8).[13] Sacred history may be true, but it is improbable, even impossible:

> And since many particulars in Sacred Story are neither Heroick, nor indeed consistent with the common principles of Morality, but of a singular, extraordinary, and unaccountable dispensation; and since in the principal actions all is carried on by Machine; how can these examples be propos'd for great persons to imitate? Poetry has no life, nor can have any operation without probability: it may indeed amuse the People, but moves not the Wise (8).

And Cowley, because the story was so well known, could not deviate from it. Even when Rymer moves beyond the

improbabilities of sacred history, he continues to apply his own narrow version of Aristotelianism: history is too particular to be about man in general, the universal nature of man which poetry should reveal. One motive behind Rymer's attempted critical devastation of Othello is his conviction that the characters, although they could be historically true, are unnatural. "Philosophy tells us it is a principle in the Nature of Man to be grateful." History may tell us that a man named Iago was ungrateful, but "philosophy then calls him unnatural" (163). And philosophy, "the reason and nature of things," must guide the poet.

Rymer's rule of poetic justice grows from his outrage at the moral inadequacy of historical truth. Speaking of Sophocles and Euripides in The Tragedies of the Last Age, he suggests that the tragedians

> were for teaching by examples, in a graver way, yet extremely pleasant and delightful. And, finding in History, the same end happen to the righteous and to the unjust, vertue often opprest, and wickedness on the Throne: they saw these particular yesterday-truths were imperfect and unproper to illustrate the universal and eternal truths by them intended (22).

Since history "grosly taken" can neither properly instruct nor delightfully please, "they would not trust History for their examples, but refin'd upon" it, creating "something more philosophical, and more accurate than History" (23). Rymer here seems to suggest that the creative impulse

grew from a common discomfort at the ephemeral and unpleasant nature of "yesterday-truths." Poetry provides a more durable truth than history; poetic justice corrects the imperfections of historical justice.

Given this well-established framework, then, it should not be surprising to find the history-poetry dichotomy as an underlying assumption of Dryden's critical theory. While his criticism offers few explicit comments on his view of the relationship between these two modes of discourse, he consistently defines his poetic theory through implicit contrast with ideas about historical discourse. Of particular importance to Dryden, who was always concerned with the aesthetic and moral effect of his poetry on his audience, is the distinction between the way historical and poetic examples operate on the mind. The reader of history discerns the relevant parallels intellectually; history teaches directly by appealing to the judgment. Thus, in his "Dedication to the King" of his translation of Maimbourg's History of the League, Dryden emphasizes the similarities between the troubles of France in 1584 and those of England in 1684: "of their leagues, covenants, associations, and ours; of their Calvinists and our Presbyterians; they are all of the same family . . . the features are alike in all" (Scott, XVII, 87). The lengthy "Postscript" hammers away at

parallels. The message is clear--and neatly ironic: the English Whigs, supposedly saving the country from Papists, are repeating the tactics of the French Jesuits; the King, knowing that like causes create like consequences, should act on his knowledge of the parallel to avoid the disasters that occurred in France.

In The Vindication of The Duke of Guise, a rather angry defense of his intentions in that play, Dryden reveals both the care he takes to construct historically analogous situations and the dangers of writing for an audience too eager to jump upon any possible parallel. Dryden complains that since the play was written with an explicit moral-didactic purpose, he has sacrificed art to history: "Am I tied in poetry to the strict rules of history? I have followed it in this play more closely than suited with the laws of the drama" (Scott, VII, 153). Given this sacrifice, he is especially exasperated at his attackers who over-read or mis-read the parallels suggested by the play. To the Whigs, Dryden gives a condescending lesson in how to read historical analogies:

> Your party are certainly the men whom the play attacks, and so far I will help you; the designs and actions, represented in the play, are such as you have copied from the League; for though you have wickedness enough, yet you wanted the wit to make a new contrivance. (Scott, VII, 190)

Dryden scolds the Whigs: their own evil minds make them see parallels that do not exist and allow them to be

blind to analogies that are present.[14] Dryden withdraws into the safety of his pose as the objective historian: if he has drawn a "devilish" parallel between the Whigs and the French Jesuits, "who can help it? If I draw devils like one another, the fault is in themselves for being so: I neither made their horns nor claws, nor cloven feet" (Scott, VII, 191). Yet, Dryden's pose is based on his belief that he did act as an historian in writing this play. He sacrificed the artistic freedom of manipulating his material so that he could present historical truth, the kind of truth which in this time of political crisis he felt would more effectively accomplish his purpose: "to reduce men to loyalty, by shewing the pernicious consequences of rebellion, and popular insurrections" (Scott, VII, 156-7). The very failure of this historical play to teach by example demonstrates the poets' claims that history is too impure, so restricted to factual truth that its lessons can be easily mis-read. Dryden's anger is real: he meant not "a Parallel of the men, but of the times" (Scott, VII, 145). Those who insist upon drawing analogies between Charles II and Henry III of France or between the Duke of Monmouth and the Duke of Guise miss the important parallel of situations from which the play's political meaning should grow. As Dryden himself realizes, his dependence on historical truth has prevented him from

focusing the play and from directing the audience's minds with the freedom a poet should be able to exercise.

Poetry, including the drama, instructs in a psychologically more complex and perhaps ultimately more successful manner than history. As Sidney had eloquently stated, literature delights through its imitation and teaches through its delight. Although they lack Sidney's overt exalting of the poet, Dryden's views are similar. He makes a distinction between the ends of comedy and those of tragedy and the epic. Fairly consistently in his writings, Dryden suggests that comedy is "little," with limited ends and providing an inferior kind of delight. Instruction, if an end at all, is far subordinate to pleasure among the comic dramatist's aims:

> for the business of the poet is to make you laugh: when he writes humour, he makes folly ridiculous; when wit, he moves you, if not always to laughter, yet to a pleasure that is more noble. And if he works a cure on folly, and the small imperfections in mankind, by exposing them to public view, that cure is not performed by an immediate operation. For it works first on the ill nature of the audience; they are moved to laugh by the representation of deformity; and the shame of that laughter teaches us to amend what is ridiculous in our manners.
> (Watson, I, 152)

Comedy instructs only indirectly: we laugh at the characters and then, to our shame, discover we laugh at ourselves. To avoid being ridiculous in our own eyes and the eyes of others, we correct the foibles that could provoke such laughter at our own expense.

Comedy, then, only teaches in a negative sort of way, but tragedy and the epic lead us to virtue with their heightened patterns of good and evil: "To purge the passions by example is . . . the particular instruction which belongs to tragedy" (Watson, I, 245). Pleasure is the only means that effectively leads to instruction; without it, "the instruction is but a bare and dry philosophy: a crude preparation of morals" (Watson, II, 153). The tragic or epic poet draws imitations of

> the best nature, of that which is wrought up to a nobler pitch. They present us with images more perfect than the life in any individual; and we have the pleasure to see all the scattered beauties of nature united by a happy chemistry, without its deformities or faults. . . . When we view these elevated ideas of nature, the result of that view is admiration, which is always the cause of pleasure. (Watson, II, 194)

Just as comedy works by leading us to correct in ourselves what we laugh at in others, the nobler visions of tragedy and the epic inspire us to pattern ourselves after the virtue that pleases us. "We are naturally prone to imitate what we admire; and frequent acts produce a habit" (Watson, II, 228). Examples of vice operate in a similar way: "we abhor these actions while we read them; and what we abhor we never imitate. The poet only shews them, like rocks or quicksands, to be shunned" (Watson, II, 228). Thus, unlike Rymer, Dryden can conceive of an internalized poetic justice that transcends the need for

external reward and punishment. It is not always necessary that the criminal be punished, "for we stab him in our minds for every offence which he commits; and the point which the poet is to gain on the audience is not so much in the death of an offender, as the raising an horror of his crimes" (Watson, I, 215).[15] The simple, direct statement with which Dryden begins the "Dedication" to his Aeneis carries behind it the weight of his accumulated thoughts on admiration, pleasure, instruction, and virtue:

> A heroic poem, truly such, is undoubtedly the greatest work which the soul of man is capable to perform. The design of it is to form the mind to heroic virtue by example; 'tis conveyed in verse, that it may delight while it instructs. (Watson, II, 223-4)

Dryden often expresses delight at his poetic achievement, but his poetry is never an end in itself. Each poem, through the poet's heightening, manipulation, and control, creates a world where perfection can be attained, a nobler world than the historian, bound to reality, can ever show us. The historian cannot create an Aeneas with "the beauties of a god in a human body" (Watson, II, 228), who will move us toward virtue.

While perceiving that the historian's limitations prevent him from achieving the nobler ends of the poet, Dryden still remains close to historical truth in nearly all of his poetry. This tendency is to some extent a

result of the tradition of occasional poetry in the seventeenth century and to some extent a natural consequence of Dryden's interest in history and politics and his position as Poet Laureate. But the historical root of Dryden's poetry can also be seen in another context. The central aesthetic-critical problem for Dryden--as it is also his central political and religious concern--is the need to balance restraint and freedom.[16] This balancing is apparent in his attempts to define "imitation of nature" in a way that frees the poet from the bounds of French narrowness but still provides him with a controlling outline; in his discussions of rhyme and blank verse; in his presentation of three types of translation ranging from the impossibly literal metaphrase to the loose, almost uncontrolled imitation; and in his opposition of judgment and fancy. The relationship of history--with its literally accurate representation of the world and its restricted kind of truth--to poetry--with its freer imitation and nobler, universal truths--is another aspect of this restraint-freedom opposition.

Thus, in Of Heroic Plays (1672) Dryden rejects Sir William Davenant's definition of heroic poetry because it confines the poet within the historian's boundaries. Davenant had claimed that an heroic poem ought to be "more fitted to the common actions and passions of human life;

and, in short, more like a glass of nature, showing us ourselves in our ordinary habits, and figuring a more practicable virtue to us than was done by the Ancients or Moderns" (Watson, I, 159). Dryden responds by quoting a popular passage from Petronius' Satyricon that raises the poet to his proper sphere:

> It is not real events that are to be recorded in verse, which historians can do much better. But the free spirit [of the epic poet] must plunge into allusions, into divine interventions, and strive after mythological references, so that there appears rather the prophesies of an inspired soul than the precision of a statement made by oaths before witnesses." (Watson, I, 160)

Dryden points out approvingly that Petronius "taxes Lucan, who followed too much the truth of history . . . who was, indeed, bound up by an ill-chosen and known argument, to follow truth with great exactness" (Watson, I, 160). Twenty-five years later, in his "Dedication" to the Aeneis, Dryden defends Virgil on the basis of the same principles he expounds here. Virgil had been accused of weakening his epic when he committed the historical anachronism of making Aeneas and Dido contemporaries. But, argues Dryden, Virgil can be excused, even praised, for several reasons. Unlike Lucan, Virgil wrote about the "dark Recesses of Antiquity" and so was not bound to a "known argument"; he could "feign"--create fictions--freely. Further, Virgil's "great Judgment made the Laws of Poetry,

but he never made himself a Slave to them: Chronology at best is but a Cobweb-Law, and he broke through it with his weight."[17] Virgil draws "Truth out of Fictions, after so probable a manner, with so much Beauty, and so much for the Honour of his Country" that he more than justifies any historical untruth. Dryden did feel the need to explain historical inaccuracy,[18] but he understands that poetic truth necessitates the manipulation of historical truth--as long as the poet does not alienate his audience by crass alteration of well-known historical fact.

Viewed from this perspective, the central problem of defining the concepts "natural" and "imitation" in Of Dramatic Poesy evolves from the participants' opposing views about the relative worth of historical truth and poetic truth. Lisideius praises classical and French tragedy for being "grounded upon some known history" (XVII, 35) and, so, obviously "true." Crites equally does not distinguish between factual truth and poetic truth when he argues that "the mind of man does naturally tend to, and seek after truth; and therefore the nearer any thing comes to the imitation of it, the more it pleases" (XVII, 67). This stand is consistent with, and in fact determines, his rigid adherence to the unities and his restricted notion of "imitation" that makes rhyme "unnatural" because people do not speak in rhyme.

Dryden's answer to this argument is implied throughout the essay in the greater freedom that Eugenius and Neander advocate for the poet, and it is stated explicitly years later in The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy (1679). It is "not necessary that there should be historical truth" in tragedy, but only

> that there should be a likeness of truth, something that is more than barely possible, probable being that which succeeds or happens oftener than it misses. To invent therefore a probability, and to make it wonderful, is the most difficult undertaking in the art of poetry; for that which is not wonderful is not great; and that which is not probable will not delight a reasonable audience.
>
> (Watson, I, 245)

A "likeness" to historical truth is necessary for delight, but only the poet's invention can create the "wonder" that moves his audience's emotions. Both the delight and the wonder--both the resemblance to history and the poetic imagination--are essential for the poet's goal: instruction in heroic wisdom.

Notes to Chapter One

[1]Earl Miner, in Dryden's Poetry (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1967), points to Dryden's sense of history, but his real concern is with Dryden's narrative and metaphoric techniques. William Myers, in Dryden (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1973), suggests that Dryden is the last great English poet to integrate history and poetry. Myers' historical interest centers on determining the extent of Dryden's realistic attitude toward contemporary political events. For an interesting discussion of the relation between historical and allegorical thought, see John M. Wallace, "Dryden and History: A Problem in Allegorical Reading," ELH, 36 (1969), 265-90.

[2]In Dryden's Political Poetry (Providence: Brown Univ. Press, 1972), Steven N. Zwicker argues that Dryden envisions himself as a prophet creating a sacred history for England. George DeF. Lord sees a cyclical historical process in Dryden's poetry; see "'Absalom and Achitophel' and Dryden's Political Cosmos," John Dryden, ed. Earl Miner (Athens, Ohio: Ohio Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 156-90. Earl Miner, "Dryden and the Issue of Human Progress," PQ, 40 (1961), 120-9, offers evidence for Dryden's belief in progress. A. E. Wallace Maurer, in his unp. diss., Dryden's Idea of History, University of Wisconsin, 1954, compiles a large amount of background material, but he tends to be overly rigid in classifying Dryden's historical ideas. Robert D. Hume, Dryden's Criticism (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1970), discusses Dryden's views of history in relation to his criticism. In "Dryden's Views of History," PQ, 52 (1973), 187-204, Achsah Guibbory points out that Dryden reconciles classical, Christian, and more modern views of history, and suggests that Dryden's interest in history results from his belief that great art can be created only in an age of political stability.

[3]Until the completion of the California Edition, citation of sources for Dryden's works will necessarily be somewhat chaotic. Wherever possible, I use The Works of John Dryden, ed. Edward N. Hooker, H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956-). When only a line number is given (for poetry) or a volume and page number (for prose), the source is the California Edition. Elsewhere, I use the best available edition. For the miscellaneous prose, this is generally The Works of John Dryden, 18 vols., ed. Sir Walter Scott

and George Saintsbury (London: William Paterson & Co., 1893)--referred to in the text as "Scott" with volume and page number. For the literary criticism, I use Of Dramatic Poesy and Other Critical Essays, 2 vols., ed. George Watson (New York: Dutton, 1962)--referred to as "Watson" with volume and page number. For the poetry, The Poems of John Dryden, 4 vols., ed. James Kinsley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958)--referred to as "Kinsley," followed by the line number.

[4]See K. G. Hamilton, The Two Harmonies: Poetry and Prose in the Seventeenth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963). He reiterates the point in John Dryden and the Poetry of Statement (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1969), p. 5.

[5]Aristotle, Poetics, trans. S. H. Butcher (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961). All further references cite chapter and section numbers of this edition.

[6]One way to evaluate the degree of literalness with which a particular historian regarded the concept of historical truth is by examining how restrictively or permissively he allowed probable, but not literally accurate, speeches to enter his work. This point is discussed by Wallace in "Dryden and History," p. 268.

[7]Polybius, Histories, trans. W. R. Paton, 6 vols. (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1922). All subsequent references to Polybius cite the book, section and line numbers of this edition.

[8]See Beatrice Reynolds' useful summary of the Continental historiographers in "Shifting Currents in Historical Criticism," JHI, 14 (1953), 471-92. Hamilton, The Two Harmonies, includes a number of comments that illuminate Renaissance and seventeenth-century ideas about the relationship between history and poetry. For a valuable discussion of Renaissance views on the topic, see Lily B. Campbell, Shakespeare's "Histories": Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy (San Marino, Cal.: The Huntington Library, 1947), pp. 85-105. Campbell includes an interesting description of a play called The Marriage of the Arts (1618), by Barten Holyday, which is about the love of Historia for Poeta.

[9]Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans, Englished by Sir Thomas North (1579), The Tudor Translations (London: David Nutt, 1895). All subsequent references to North cite the page numbers of this edition.

[10]Sir Philip Sidney, An Apology for Poetry, in English Critical Essays, ed. Edmund D. Jones (1922; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 1-54. All further references cite page numbers of this edition.

[11]Francis Bacon, Works, ed. James Spedding (Boston: Brown and Taggard, 1863). All subsequent references to Bacon cite the volume and page number of this edition.

[12]For a detailed discussion of epic theory, much of which reflects on the relation of the epic and history, see H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., The Theory of the Epic in England, 1650-1800, Univ. of Cal. Publications in English, Vol. 15 (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1944), especially pp. 3-62.

[13]Thomas Rymer, The Critical Works, ed. Curt A. Zimansky (1956; rpt. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971). All further references to Rymer cite page numbers of this edition.

[14]John Wallace, in "Dryden and History," emphasizes the large responsibility the seventeenth-century reader had in reading history. It was up to him to perceive the analogy and apply the example. Wallace points out that history manuals often discussed the reader's responsibility to the historical text.

[15]This quotation appears in "Heads of an Answer to Rymer," notes which Dryden wrote to himself in response to Rymer's Tragedies of the Last Age and which he never worked into an essay or published. Dryden, admittedly, often expresses a Rymer-like concept of poetic justice: see, for example, his "Preface" to All for Love. However, as I hope I have demonstrated, Dryden's ability to see that external poetic justice is unnecessary is totally consistent with his conception of the way tragedy operates on the audience's minds.

[16]Both Bernard N. Schilling, Dryden and the Conservative Myth (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1961), and Martin Price, To the Palace of Wisdom (Carbondale, Ill.: South Illinois Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 28-78, approach Dryden through the tension in his work between freedom and order.

[17]Poems, ed. Kinsley, III, 1030-1. Watson omits from his edition the long section of the "Dedication" that includes this quotation.

[18]See also the "Preface" to Don Sebastian (1690) where Dryden explains why he deviates from history in that play (Watson, II, 47-9).

Chapter Two

Seventeenth-Century Conceptions of History

The seventeenth century in England was a time of active but, to modern eyes, somewhat ill-defined thought about history. History meant political history, the actions of men in power or attempting to grasp power,[1] and the upheavals stretching from the Civil War to the Glorious Revolution made historical understanding a matter of urgency. To control the present one must understand the past. In Dryden's time, this effort focused on working out the meaning of the English Civil War and its relation to the Restoration, the central events in the seventeenth-century historical consciousness.

But the discovery of meaning in history is a complex process inevitably colored by intellectual preconceptions. An historical event viewed in isolation contains no intrinsic significance. It is the historian--or anyone employing an historical mode of thought--who discovers or creates order, and thus meaning, in events. Johan Huizinga has defined history as "an imposition of form upon the past . . . It is always the comprehension and interpretation of a meaning which we look for in the past."[2] To perceive or impose form, the seventeenth-century

historian, like those before him, had to grapple with two essential questions: who or what controls the process of history? What patterns do the larger movements of history follow? During the seventeenth century, however, new political theories, scientific theories, the pervasive Puritan conception of history, and the inherited Renaissance attempt to reconcile classical and Christian historical ideas combined to make easy answers to these essential problems impossible. While an earlier age could have settled for a religious interpretation of its political history--they might have believed simply that the Civil War was inflicted by God as punishment for English sins[3]--the emerging historical consciousness of the Restoration demanded that the event be examined from more secular points of view. If Dryden's historical thought seems inconsistent at times, if he seems confused about where to attribute causes and how to perceive historical patterns, it is because he shared with his age the insecurity that comes when an assumed mode of perception--in this case, providential history--is no longer meaningful, and new perceptions are in the painful process of emergence.

Dryden, certainly, was no original historical thinker. What is important and original is the way he uses historical thought in his poetry.[4] Dryden's

poetry reveals and is crucially affected by the changes in his own historical perspective as he grew older, more detached from the political world, and, finally, disillusioned. To understand his poetry, then, it seems useful to consider first the ways in which men thought about history in the seventeenth century. Only then can we see the extent to which ideas about history shape his poetry, his uses of these ideas, and, it is hoped, something about the relationship of the changes in his historical thought to his development as a poet.

Seventeenth-century historians faced a tension between the theocentric Augustinian view of history and the more anthropocentric classical view. In Augustine's providential history, The City of God, there is no question about the degree of man's control over his own life: God regulates all things--both eternal and temporal--by His providence. God is always the First, and essentially the only, Cause: "in a word, human kingdoms are established by divine providence" (v. 1).[5] Providential history allows for an orderliness of perception that removes the complexities of historical interpretation. Augustine's theology of history, which centers around the synchronous development of the earthly city and the heavenly city as they move towards their appointed but opposite ends,

enables him to incorporate classical history into Biblical history: both are part of a larger whole. The typology that is so basic to seventeenth-century poetry is, in effect, a mode of historical perception drawn from the unifying parallels made by Augustine. There, for example, Romulus' slaying of Remus exemplifies the internal division of the earthly city; Cain's murder of Abel signifies the division between the earthly and heavenly cities (xv. 5.) Together they embody the distinction between love of self and love of God. Every detail of history can be understood in terms of God's punishing man's sins. Rome fell not because of any weakness caused by Christianity, but because of Roman vices. When the Romans worshipped pagan gods, they were actually worshipping demons who promoted moral and spiritual corruption, internal decay, and external destruction.[6] Human history, for Augustine, is not the history of men, but the history of the ways God manifests His will on earth.

Providential history, then, contains a kind of comforting orderliness that can only be found in rigid ideologies. With its emphasis on man's closeness to God and the promise of eternal reward, it also imparts a dignity to human life. But it simultaneously undermines that dignity by insisting that man is a passive sufferer,

that his will is of little consequence in controlling his earthly life.

By the seventeenth century, pure Augustinian history was generally moderated by being synthesized with the assumptions of classical writers. Polybius, a good example and one of Dryden's favorite historians, concentrates in his Histories on weighing the relative influences of man and Fortune. The care he takes to discover causes of events emphasizes the centrality of man in his perspective. When he writes about a great Roman sea victory that was immediately followed by a destructive storm, he advises us not to place the blame on ill-Fortune. If the commanders had not sailed recklessly close to the towns in order vainly to display their power, the storm would not have hurt them (I. 37.1-37.10).[7] One must always distinguish between Fortune destroying men and men destroying themselves:

> For we are but men, and to meet with some unexpected blow is not the sufferer's fault, but that of Fortune and those who inflict it on him; but when we involve ourselves by sheer lack of judgment and with our eyes open in the depth of misfortune, everyone acknowledges that we have none to blame but ourselves (II. 7.1-7.3).

Man must always be aware of his limitations, but the exercise of judgment gives him some control over his life. Man is large in the Histories. Even when defeated, he struggles heroically.

In their efforts to harmonize Christian and classical thought, seventeenth-century historians were trying to synthesize two irrevocably opposite historical perspectives. The resulting confusions can be seen as early as Edmund Bolton's tract, Hypercritica: or A Rule of Judgment, for writing or reading our History's (1618?). Bolton recognizes that a basic task confronting the historian is to discover the causes of events, and he takes the safe middle road on the problem of who or what controls the course of history. He attacks those who, like Tacitus, leave out the "Part of heavenly Providence in the Actions of Men"; Livy is the most religious, and thus the best, of classical historians. But Christian authors can err, too, when "for their ease"--a significant phrase--they refer all causes to the "Will of God." The "most difficult duty of Historians" is to respect "as well the superior as the inferior Efficients of Operations in the World."[8] While Bolton assumes that God is the First Cause of all human events, he realizes that providential history is no longer meaningful to an age concerned with its own active role in the process of history.[9]

When historians like Sir Walter Raleigh tried to perceive a consistent pattern of causes, then, they ran into expected difficulties. While emphatically Augustinian, Raleigh's History of the World (1614?) demonstrates the

extent to which classical, man-centered views were entering into the most rigid attempts to compile a providential history. The epigraph to his History is from Cicero; the first word of the text is "God." And throughout his work, Raleigh combines piety with a shrewd insight into the effects caused by human machinations. He reveals an enormous interest in the relationship between human character and political action, for everyone from Alexander the Great to Roger Mortimer. Further, as Christopher Hill points out, Raleigh displays "an accustomed slide from first to second causes."[10] Discussing the origin of government, Raleigh writes:

> and, though, speaking humanly, the beginning of empire may be ascribed to reason and necessity, yet it was God himself that first kindled this light in the minds of men, whereby they saw that they could not live and be perserved without a ruler and conductor (I.ix.i).[11]

God is still the First Cause, but Raleigh can "speak humanly" and recognize the role that the human character and human need play in history.

The very organization of Raleigh's History best demonstrates his position. The concept of a universal history such as Raleigh's results from the belief that the entire world, both spatially and temporally (from Creation to the Last Judgment), operates under the control of a Divine Hand. But although Raleigh is trying to bring Biblical and classical history into one

vast scheme--he appends a lengthy, complex chronological chart in which he tries to synchronize the histories of numerous empires--Books I and II are essentially devoted to Old Testament history; Books III, IV, and V, to classical history. The first two books are filled with emphatic statements about God's absolute control over the lives of men and with historical details supporting that belief. When Raleigh presents classical history, however, he--unlike Augustine--does not re-interpret it providentially. Whether Raleigh expects that by this point we will read providence into the narrative, or whether he simply follows his sources--the classical historians--without taking the trouble to find Christian meaning in the events, the fact remains that explicit mention of God's providence disappears almost totally for over five hundred pages of the History. Clearly, theocentric history has lost some of its all-consuming power.

Still, the providential view of history predominates in Raleigh's work, if not in number of pages, at least in emphasis. His preface is a lengthy discussion of God's role as the author and director of "all our tragedies" in "this ridiculous world" (preface, xlii-xliii), and he briefly views English, French, and Spanish political history as examples of the ways God works His

will. An implicit undercurrent in Raleigh's work is Augustine's conception of the two cities: the things of this world ultimately make no difference. Yet Raleigh strives to understand and to explain this world and the actions of men in it. And while Augustine ends his history with a vision of the heavenly city, Raleigh concludes his own with a despairing apostrophe to Death and an image of physical earthly burial. It is "Death alone that can suddenly make man to know himself," who shows us our poverty and nakedness. "Thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, Hic jacet!" (V.vi.xii.). Raleigh seems here to understand fully Augustine's picture of the earthly city, but to have lost the hopeful vision of the heavenly one. When ultimate faith becomes lost, the inevitable next step is to de-sanctify one's vision of the world.

Raleigh's perhaps unconscious attempt to join sacred and secular, religious and political, history remains essentially unintegrated. But by the middle of the century, the Puritan vision of the relationship between God and man had made possible an historical sense that focused equally on the divine and the human. In Puritanism, man actively works out God's will. With

the overthrow of "the doctrine of passive obedience to divinely constituted authority,"[12] man became of central importance in the process of history.

A letter from Cromwell to Colonel Robert Hammond illustrates the historical theory that underlay concrete action. Cromwell questions whether the Puritans are, in fact, acting out the will of God. He wonders which gives the Army its right: the divine wish or its own power. But, he urges, "Let us look into providences"; the faith of the Saints and the success of the Army offer evidence that their actions are the proper ones.[13] In another letter, apparently trying to convince a doubtful Hammond and to justify his own position of active resistance to the Crown, Cromwell emphasizes that they must act out God's will, even if it means executing the King. Faith leads to action; success confirms faith and renews action. God and man, necessity and free will, combine to forge historical movement.

The study of history, then, becomes important because it reveals the pattern of God's will and informs man how he should act to fulfill it. When, in his History of Britain (1670), John Milton uses for historical perspective the convictions that allowed Cromwell's merging of religion and politics, he perfectly balances the idea of man's control over his own destiny with the

concept of an ultimate providence. Milton's History surveys England from the origins of Britain to the Norman Conquest, and permeating this vast space, as it does Paradise Lost, is the theme that man sins of his own free will and God punishes him for those sins. One of Milton's major concerns throughout his work is to establish the relationship between God and man; once this pattern has emerged through study of the past, we can better understand how to think about--and to act in--the present. Thus, he repeatedly emphasizes how internal, spiritual corruption courts external attack. The decay exists on all levels. When the British enjoy peace for extended periods of time, they turn their liberty into license. With eloquent indignation, Milton describes the condition of the clergy in the year 571:

> Nothing better were the clergy . . . Unlerned, Unapprehensive, yet impudent; subtle Prowlers, Pastors in Name, but indeed Wolves; intent upon all occasions, not to feed the Flock, but to pamper and well line themselves; not call'd, but seising on the Ministry as a Trade, not as a Spiritual Charge: teaching the people, not by sound Doctrine, but by evil Example . . . deadly haters of truth, broachers of lies . . . seeking after preferements and degrees in the Church more than after Heav'n (134-5).[14]

No wonder that "God hath decreed servitude on a sinful Nation, fitted by thir own vices for no conditions but servile" (198). God decrees only after "thir own vices" make His action necessary.

Implicit in Milton's History is the idea that the English, like the Hebrews, are God's chosen people. But the English, too, continually corrupt themselves. Their soldiers are undisciplined and intemperate; their kings are lustful and deceitful; their clergy are greedy and worldly. Before the Battle of Hastings, "both sides prepar'd to fight the next morning, the English from singing and drinking all night, the Normans from confession of thir sins and communion of the host" (313). The outcome of the battle is apparent before the first sword is drawn. This pattern repeats itself throughout the History: God gives man the opportunity for peace and liberty; man falls through his own corruption; God visits with divine retaliation, in the form of famine, plague, or invasion.

It was possible in the seventeenth century, however, to write a history of England that minimized God's role as either agent or actor. Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon's History of the Rebellion and the Civil Wars in England (1671) confronts directly the problems of responsibility for historical event and the relationship between events. As an Anglican Royalist, Hyde was only indirectly touched by Puritan historical conceptions, but he had a long tradition of providential history to contend with, one which his detailed analysis of human causes

proves to be at least partially inadequate. In his hundreds of pages of narrative detail, character portrait, and authorial comment, Clarendon is, in effect, moving cautiously toward a new theory of historical causation. Because he stands as the most brilliant example of the difficulty of replacing one set of preconceptions with another, Clarendon merits a somewhat extended examination.

For much of his History, Clarendon acknowledges the possibility of, but rejects as inadequate, a providential interpretation of the English Civil War. In his preface, he admits that he can perceive "the immediate finger and wrath of God . . . in these perplexities and distractions," but a closer view will reveal "natural causes and means" (I.2).[15] When he later discusses a more specific event, the collapse of the Royalists, he repeats this point. He could pass over the harsh truth "without prying too strictly into the causes of those effects, which might seem rather to be the production of Providence, and the instances of divine displeasure, than to proceed from the weakness and inadvertency of any men." But he rejects this approach, proceeding instead "with reference to things and persons, and in the examination of the grounds and oversights of counsels" (IX.2-3). As Bolton had done in Hypercritica, Clarendon rejects the providential interpretation of history as

too "easy" and ultimately unfruitful. But he suggests, in addition, that providential history skirts over the real truth of human responsibility for actions and their consequences.

Not satisfied with merely stating that individuals determine the course of history, Clarendon probes into the workings of the human mind and its relation to historical process.[16] He introduces his subject by systematizing the opposing weaknesses in men:

> We may discern the minds of men prepared, of some to do, and of others to suffer, all that hath since happened: the pride of this man, and the popularity of that; the levity of one, and the morosity of another; the excess of the court in the greatest want, and the parsimony and retention of the country in the greatest plenty; the spirit of craft and subtlety in some, and the rude and unpolished integrity of others, too much despising craft or art; like so many atoms contributing jointly to this mass of confusion now before us (I.4).

The History itself is a parade of character portraits: the character of Charles I balances that of Cromwell; the characters of the King's council counter those of the Parliamentary leaders.[17] But while Clarendon delights in examining the individual in isolation, even greater is his fascination with the way men interact to create an evil far greater than their individual capacities. Charles' weaknesses include too much optimism and too little confidence in his own judgment. Thus, he either does not act when action might arrest the disease, or he trusts

too much in the advice of counselors, who, in turn, are often merely self-serving flatterers. The weakness of an otherwise good king allows other, weaker men to acquire power and to direct the course of events. Similarly, the malignancy of the Parliamentary leaders is given room to grow by the fear and complacency of the more moderate members of Parliament. Once the rebels have gained control of Parliament, they are able to play on the ignorance of the people and gain even more support and more power. The History is filled with painful misjudgments and devastating misunderstandings. Even when men realize they have been wrong, they compound their errors instead of correcting them. In a sentence that bursts with insight, Clarendon explains how errors multiply in geometric progression:

> And whosoever considers that the nature of men, especially of men in authority, is inclined rather to commit two errors than to retract one, will not marvel that from this root of unadvisedness so many and tall branches of mischieve have proceeded. (V.153).

Weakness compounds weakness; evil multiplies evil. Finally, events gather their own momentum, moving beyond the control of the men who created them.

At times, however, Clarendon steps outside human forces in history and attributes events to divine justice. His narration of Prince Charles' escape from Scotland is

sandwiched between acknowledgements of God's hand controlling the miraculous event. In his discussion of the divisions among the rebels that seriously weakened them, he points to God's way of providing appropriate punishment. Most obvious is his explanation, or lack of it, of the Restoration. Even when Monck has gained control of England, he does not have the power to effect the Restoration. Rather, says Clarendon, "the whole machine (was) so infinitely above his strength, that it could be only moved by a divine hand" (XVI.115). The pro-Royalist sentiment which developed rapidly after Richard relinquished power is described as "such a prodigious act of Providence as he hath scarce vouchsafed to any nation, since he led his own chosen people through the Red Sea" (XVI. 77). And the Restoration itself is seen purely as an act of God, who "with miraculous expedition" ended in one month "a rebellion that had raged near twenty years" (XVI. 247). It seems almost as though Clarendon is tired of searching for natural causes or as though he attributes the causes of misery to men, of deliverance to God. There is a point at which Clarendon feels his analysis of men and the impetus they give to events no longer seems sufficient as explanation. The only real alternative available to a seventeenth-century historian, and it is an alternative which here greatly ennobles

the King, is a return to the providential view of history.

Still, Clarendon's emphasis is on man's control over his own destiny. Near the end of his History, he includes the address sent to the King by the disillusioned Levellers, who have a fanatically providential view of the events of the previous years. They confess that it is far from their intention "peevishly or presumptuously to kick against the irresistible decrees of Heaven, and vainly to attempt by any faint and infirm designs of ours to give an interruption to that overruling divine hand, which steers, guides, governs and determines the affairs of the whole world" (XV. 106). Their view, emphasizing the helpless, infant-like position of man, contrasts glaringly with Clarendon's own analysis--and it is important to remember that the Levellers were a politcally and theologically radical group. Perhaps even more revealing is Clarendon's discussion of the way one group of Royalists overcame Puritan fears of what might happen after the Restoration. To mitigate worries that the Royalists, who had been oppressed for almost twenty years, would seek revenge on their oppressors, this group drew up a protestation in which

> they declared that they looked upon their late sufferings as the effect of God's judgments upon their own particular sins, which had as much

> contributed to the miseries of the nation as any other cause had done; and they did therefore protest, and call God to witness of such their protestation, that if it should please God to restore the King, they would be so far from remembering any injuries

that they would happily live with those who had been their enemies (XVI. 205). In Clarendon's presentation of the incident, it is clear that the Royalists do not believe in this providential interpretation. Rather, they recognize that the providential view removes human responsibility: they were not oppressed by the Puritans, but punished by God. Since the Puritans were more likely to see the hand of God operating in earthly affairs, the Royalists use this approach as a weapon to break down the barrier of fear that is holding back the Restoration. The incident and Clarendon's interpretation of it reflect a growing awareness of the limitations, and possible political uses, of a conception of history that looks for causes outside the natural world.

Seventeenth-century historians' uneasiness about historical causation inevitably carried over into the related problem of what ultimate form the course of history takes. Traditionally, the two great extremes in perceiving patterns of historical movement have been the Augustinian line moving steadily upward from Creation towards the Day of Judgment and the eternally revolving

Polybean circle. More limited theories of historical movement can be incorporated into these two. The theory of progress can be seen as a secular version of the providential line or as the upward arc of the circle that will once again turn downward. Similarly, the theory that history is a process of decay can result from an inverted linear view--man has been degenerating since the original sin--or from a belief that a particular age is being carried along the downward movement of a cycle.[18]

Theoretical concepts evolved by philosophers and critics for convenience of explanation tend to lose their purity of form in actual works of history. Even Augustine's linear view of history, with his two cities moving directly toward their appointed and opposite ends, has room to incorporate a muted aspect of the cycle. Essential to the concept of typology is the idea of repetition. David prefigures Christ; the ark prefigures the Church. Christian history may be a line with all things leading to and from the birth of Christ, but points of repetition lie along the way.[19] Recent critics have suggested that even the Polybean cycle is for the most part a concept imposed on his work by later writers.[20] The one time that Polybius explicitly presents a cyclical view of history is his discussion in Book VI of "the natural transformation into each other of the different forms of

government" (VI. 4.5). He discusses the origin of monarchy, which inevitably degenerates into tyranny; aristocracy then arises, and this "by its very nature" eventually decays into oligarchy; finally, democracy develops, only to sink into mob-rule. The cycle is then complete: out of the chaos of mob rule grows the need for a king. The best constitution, then, combines the three positive forms of government--monarchy, aristocracy, democracy--to slow down the revolution of the cycle.

This presentation of the cycles of government entered directly into seventeenth-century historical conceptions. Since history was conceived of as political history, it was natural that historians would search for evidence of the inevitable transformations in their own government. Raleigh explicitly discusses this process of governmental change (I.ix.ii), and at the end of his History he echoes Polybius on the transitoriness of apparently eternal power (V.vi.xii). Samuel Daniel's Collection of the History of England (1612-1617-18) contains frequent examples of kingship becoming tyranny, leading to increased power in the hands of the nobility, and finally to popular insurrections. Milton, too, sees a continual process of improvement and corruption in government as liberty develops and then degenerates into license.

But it was only in the limited sphere of the transformation of governmental forms that there was a widely shared assumption about historical patterns. If the perception of a pattern emerging from events enables the historian to understand, and, in a sense, to control the chaos of history, then, perhaps, one reason for the rambling, overly detailed historical narratives of the period may be that historians were overwhelmed by their subject matter because they had no pattern in which to perceive or shape it. As histories became narrower in scope, shifting from the universal history of Raleigh, to the national histories of Daniel and Milton, to the period history of Clarendon, it became increasingly difficult for an historian to see an ultimate pattern of movement.[21] Samuel Daniel suggests that there is a progressive development of the proper form of kingship allied with law and justice that reaches its height with the Tudor monarchs, but his history is incomplete, ending at a low point with the death of Edward III. Clarendon ends his History with the Restoration--the very term implies completion of a cycle--and the suggestion of an uplifting divine intervention. His vision, though, does not extend beyond the immediate end of the King's return.

What does predominate in these historians, however, is a deeply held belief in the essential repetition in

history. As Daniel presents it:

> For had we the particular occurrents of all ages, and all nations, it might more stuffe, but not better our understanding. We shall find still the same correspondences to hold in the actions of men: Vertues and Vices the same, though rising and falling, according to the worth or weaknesse of Governors: the causes of the ruines, and mutations of States to be alike; and the trayne of affayres carried by precedent, in a course of Succession, under like colours (IV. 86).

Men are by nature the same: they share common desires and weaknesses, they create similar forms of government, and they suffer through similar trials. This conviction, so essential to seventeenth-century thought, both influenced the way men viewed the past and provided the primary rationale for the investigation and writing of history. Because of the sameness among men, knowledge of the past should teach us how to live in the present.

This belief in the shared nature of men is often called uniformitarianism, but another term for it--one which stresses the operative process of the historian's mind--might be "analogical."[22] If history is seen as a series of analogies between past and present, the problem for the historian is to discover the corresponding points that make the analogy valid. The meaning of past history is what it means in relation to the present.

Milton, for example, brilliantly merges rhetorical method with historical conception. He wrote his History with the failure of the English Civil War always in mind,

and his book is in essence a series of implicit and explicit attempts to understand that failure. He opens Book III with a discussion of the condition of Britain after the Romans withdrew, and he urges his readers to pay special attention,

> considering especially that the late civil broils had cast us into a condition not much unlike to what the Britains then were in, when the imperial jurisdiction departing hence left them to the sway of thir own Councils (103).

"That confused Anarchy" analogizes with "this intereign." Indeed, in the "Digression" that appears later in his History, Milton conflates the situations of the post-Roman Britains, who squander an opportunity for liberty by inviting in the Saxons, and the post-Civil War Britains with their similar failures. In both cases, those who should have led the way to liberty set "the commonwealth behinde and [their] private ends before, to doe as [their] owne profit or ambition led [them]" (319). In both cases, "ruler, priest, and people" sank into vice instead of rising to the "heroic wisdom" required to set them free. Indeed, it becomes impossible to distinguish which of the two times Milton is speaking of as he moves from analogy to identity. Both situations exemplify the same problem: "liberty hath a sharp and double edge fitt onelie to be handl'd by just and vertuous men, to bad and dissolute it becomes a mischief unwieldie

in thir own hands" (324). The historian probes the similarities to discover why parallel opportunities separated by "12 ages" led to parallel results. The climate of Britain, he concludes, "(to speake a truth not oft spok'n)" breeds men courageous in war, but it is "not over fertil of men able to govern justlie and prudently in peace" (324). Milton steps back and observes the past and the present from a single, essentially timeless perspective. By viewing the past in terms of the present, and the present in terms of the past, he is able to abstract general truths from historical particulars in order to understand and to teach about liberty and about men.

While Milton may make the most inspired use of this analogical view of the past, every seventeenth-century writer and translator of history accepted it as a "given." Standing behind their often repeated phrase, "history is philosophy teaching by example," was the assumption that significant points of contact exist between the past and the present.[23] Dryden makes his most explicit statement on this point in his Life of Plutarch (1683). History is, he writes,

> a familiarity with past Ages, and an acquaintance with all the Heroes of them. 'Tis, if you will pardon the similitude, a Prospective-Glass carrying your Soul to a vast distance, and taking in the farthest objects of Antiquity. It informs

> the understanding by the memory: It helps us to judge of what will happen by showing us the like revolutions of former times. For Mankind being the same in all ages, agitated by the same passions, and mov'd to action by the same interests, nothing can come to pass, but some President of the like nature has already been produc'd, so that having the causes before our eyes, we cannot easily be deceiv'd in the effects, if we have Judgment enough but to draw the parallel (Cal., XVII, 270-1).

The assertions in this passage do not negate Dryden's belief in the possibility of literary and scientific progress, but these are only aspects of the intellectual and cultural superstructure. Man's essential nature--his potential for good and evil, his capacity to feel joy and despair--remains fixed outside of the effects of time.[24] This distinction between the unchanging nature of man and the impermanent characteristics of a given historical period explains why Dryden can claim that "nature is the same in all places" in the midst of an essay discussing the ways in which religious, political, and linguistic changes affected the evolution of satire (Watson, II, 99). It also suggests why Dryden, in his discussion of the three types of historical writing, prefers biography to annals and narrative history. Since biography focuses on the individual, "The Pageantry of Life is taken away; you see the poor reasonable Animal, as naked as ever nature made him; are made acquainted with his passions and his follies; and find the Demy-God a Man" (Cal., XVII, 275). The naked man, stripped of the cultural

accoutrements that change with the fashion, provides a more revealing example from which we can learn.[25]

The analogical view of history had important consequences for the way the seventeenth century thought about history as an area of knowledge. The intimate relationships seen in the parallels between past and present meant that the historian had a crucial role as teacher and that men in public places had a responsibility to study the past in order better to control the present. Drawing from Cicero and Quintilian, seventeenth-century writers viewed history as an aspect of rhetoric. In De Oratore, Cicero had stated that the duty of the orator

> is to arouse a listless nation, and to curb its unbridled impetuosity. By one and the same power of eloquence the deceitful among mankind are brought to destruction, and the righteous to deliverance . . . Who can more austerely censure the wicked, or more gracefully praise men of worth? Whose invective can more forcibly subdue the power of lawless desire (II. ix. 35).[26]

Next he glorified the value of historical study and made it a primary responsibility of the orator:

> And as History, which bears witness to the passing of the ages, sheds light upon reality, gives life to recollection and guidance to human existence, and brings tidings of ancient days, whose voice, but the orator's can entrust her to immortality? (II. ix. 36)[27]

Moved by this passage, the seventeenth century--as the Renaissance had before it--tended to merge the orator and

the historian into one heroic role: the defender of law and morality who succeeds by teaching from history. Even Quintilian's more subdued view that history serves the orator by equipping him with examples did little to detract from Cicero's inspirational vision.[28]

Thomas Hobbes' preface to his translation of Thucydides (1628) suggests the extent to which history and oratory merged in the seventeenth-century mind. Hobbes praises Thucydides as a great orator and master of rhetoric, and he relates that Demosthenes copied out the historian's work eight times because of its eloquence. He goes on to tell the story that Thucydides was originally inspired to write history when, as a young man, he heard "Herodotus the historiographer reciting his history in public (for such was the fashion both of that, and many ages after)," and the "sting of emulation" young Thucydides felt drew tears from his eyes (xvii).[29] Although this episode is now considered apocryphal, the seventeenth century believed in its truth, and this belief underscores the extent to which they viewed the historian as orator.

Dryden's assumptions about the role of the historian, which remain remarkably consistent throughout his career, reflect the commonplace seventeenth-century beliefs. In his Life of Plutarch, he calls historians mankind's "greatest Benefactors" because "they . . .

teach us wisdome by the surest ways, (setting before us what we ought to shun or to pursue, by the examples of the most famous Men whom they Record, and by the experience of their Faults and Vertues)" (Cal., XVII, 239). In his Character of Polybius (1692), Dryden cites Polybius on the noble function of historians, who must be men knowledgeable in political affairs and who should apply themselves seriously, "fully persuaded that they [undertake] a work of the greatest moment, of the greatest excellency, and the most necessary for mankind" (Scott, XVIII, 49). Polybius is just such an historian:

> It is wonderful to consider with how much care and application he instructs, counsels, warns, admonishes, and advises, whensoever he can find a fit occasion. He performs all these sometimes in the nature of a common parent of mankind; and sometimes also limits his instructions to particular nations (Scott, XVIII, 31).

And just as Polybius advises as our "common parent," his Histories is "a perpetual monument of his public love" (Scott, XVIII, 34). As all great historians must, he teaches us standards of private and public behavior, the way to virtue, and the importance of truth.[30]

Dryden's emphasis on Polybius' moral didacticism suggests the extent to which the poet felt they shared a common goal. Dryden's poetry is almost always concerned with moving his audience to some kind of mental action, whether it be to approve of a play, a king, or a religion,

and he recognized a similar aim in the historians he felt close to. The study of history is essential because used wisely it contributes to the political stability that must necessarily precede any development of science and art, any fulfillment of the higher cultural and spiritual needs of society and of the individual. Like Milton, Dryden knew that any poet who is involved in society--and for both of them a great poet must be so involved--must contribute during times of political turmoil to create a climate where art can thrive. But the need for political stability extends beyond merely personal advantage. For Dryden--as it was for Milton in radically different terms--a just, strong government based on the rule of law, strengthened by mutual trust between King and Parliament, and between King and people, is an end in itself. Given a stable political foundation, all levels of individual and social well-being would naturally develop. The historian's lessons and the poet's moral ideals become inseparably involved.

In their pointing to the lessons of history, seventeenth-century historians ranged from such practical matters as military strategy and civic responsibility, to the morality that should underlie politics, to general truths about the nature of man. But at whatever level their historical truths aimed, the writers repeatedly

emphasized that their goal was to teach, and they shaped their works to accomplish this purpose. Hobbes proclaims that "the principal and proper work of history [is] to instruct and enable men, by the knowledge of actions past, to bear themselves prudently in the present and providently towards the future" (vii). Daniel frequently moves from particular examples to generalizations about the hazards of a king's surrounding himself with flatterers or the dangerous consequences of trying to seize absolute power. Indeed, Daniel dedicates his work to Sir Robert Carr because Carr, "being now a publick person, and thereby ingaged in the State of England . . . may here learne, by the observance of affaires past (for that, Reason is strengthened by the success of example), to judge the righter of things present" and to become an example of integrity and just service to King and kingdom (IV. 77-8). Clarendon similarly emphasizes that he is providing, especially in his character portraits, positive and negative examples for men to live by. He ends his character of Lord Capell, who was executed with other Royalists shortly after the King was murdered, with the highest praise an historian can bestow:

> In a word, he was a man that whoever shall after him deserve best in that nation, shall never think himself undervalued, when he shall hear that his courage, virtue, and fidelity is laid in the balance with, and compared to, that of the lord Capell (XI. 267).

Capell becomes an ideal for other men to strive towards: faced with similar situations, they should want to act with such virtue that their names can be balanced with his.

Even a providential historian like Raleigh emphasizes that the study of history teaches us how to live. Raleigh devotes the first section of his History to a detailed explanation of Scripture, which he feels is necessary because everything in Scripture is there for our instruction. Since it is

> the end and scope of all history, to teach by example of times past such wisdom as may guide our desires and actions, we should not marvel though the chronicles of the kings of Juda and Israel, being written by men inspired with the Spirit of God, instruct us chiefly in that which is most requisite for us to know, as the means to attain unto true felicity both here and hereafter, propounding examples which illustrate this infallible rule, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (II. xxi. vi).

The Christian and classical impulses merge so totally here as to be almost inseparable. While the opening lines could come from any classical historian, the source of the examples is Scripture, and Raleigh expresses his concern with both this and the next life. For all of these writers, the theoretical end of historical study remains the same although the specific form that end takes, and the particular means of achieving it, may vary from writer to writer.

The seventeenth century was a time of rapidly developing political sophistication. Given the esteem in which history was held as a field of knowledge and the mental habit of using history as a means to an end--as a guide for public and private conduct--it was natural that the rapidly proliferating group of political writers would turn to history both as the basis of, and to gain support for, their theories. The analogical view of history led to more or less systematic study of historical political systems and their application to seventeenth-century England.[31] Thus, when Sir Robert Filmer, in Patriarcha (1642?; published 1680), wants to prove that absolute monarchy is natural and human liberty, unnatural, he attempts to support his view by showing that it is consistent with "the doctrine and history of the Holy Scriptures, the constant practice of all ancient monarchies, and the very principles of the law of nature" (I. 53).[32] Filmer "proves" from Scripture that the concept of kingship is a natural outgrowth of the power and position of the patriarch-father, of which Adam was the first, and he turns to Roman history to demonstrate how republican governments degenerate. Finally, he examines English history to show that the orderly succession of kings has resulted in his nation's endurance, and that Parliaments are only a privilege

granted by the king. Filmer's favorite words are "natural" and "unnatural": absolute monarchy is "natural"; Parliament and civil wars are "unnatural." And it is from his peculiar reading of history that he culls support for these conclusions.

On the left of the political spectrum, republican political theorists routinely examined history--especially Roman history--to learn how to create a republic and to establish a factual-historical basis for their views. An interesting example is Henry Neville's Plato Redivivus (2nd ed., 1681), a "dialogue" among an English Gentleman, a Physician, and a Noble Venetian. Neville's tract is deeply rooted in the belief that political thought must be carefully deduced from historical precedent. The epigraph on the title page exalts the role of the political historian through its partial denial and partial suggestion of supernatural knowledge: "I am no prophet, but know about times past and, a priest of the mysteries, sing of many examples for you" (61).[33] On a more mundane level, Neville prefaces his dialogue with a list of "Political Discourses and Histories worth reading," and the epistle from the publisher to the reader notes that "whosoever sets himself to study politics must do it by reading history, and observing in it the several turns and revolutions of government" (68). Neville, even more

blatantly than Filmer, interprets the Old Testament as political history. The other participants wholly agree with the Noble Venetian's view that the books of Moses "seem to be penned on purpose to inform us how he, by God's command," led his people out of Egypt "and in the way made them a government" (84). Neville spices his dialogue with examples from Greek, Roman, and Venetian history, and he proceeds through English history to demonstrate that the government is in a state of decay because the foundation it was built upon--property--has now been shaken.

As befits his exalted conception of the historian, however, Neville transcends narrow political proselytizing to reach the more important question of the relationship between politics and morality. In a meaningful parenthesis, the English Gentleman asserts that "(nothing is more certain than that politic defeats breed moral ones, as our nation is a pregnant example)" (87). And after examining history to discover the reason for the decay of governments, he repeats his sorrowful conclusion. The English are not yet ripe for

> any great reform. Not only because we are a very debauched people; I do not only mean that we are given to whoring, drinking, gaming and idleness; but chiefly that we have a politic debauch, which is a neglect of all things that concern the public welfare, and a setting up our own private interest against it (196).

As Milton had also suggested in his work, Neville concludes from his examination of history that political morality--placing "public welfare" before "private interest"--is the real basis for stability in government. History reveals that "a politic debauch" eats away at the structure of government. The statement with which Neville ends his tract perfectly ties together his conception of the political historian, politics, and morality: "If prudence be present, no divine power is absent" (200; "nullum numen abest, si sit prudentia"). The question of providential guidance becomes unnecessary; the historian reveals examples from the past which teach us the prudence that is essential to unite politics and morality.

That Neville's examination of history led him from matters of practical politics to those of transcendent morality was not unusual. The seventeenth century viewed the past as a backward extension of itself, a vast realm of experience which would reward inquiry with insight into the laws of nature. In the mid-sixteenth century, Jean Bodin had written, "Indeed, in history the best part of universal law lies hidden" (8).[34] A century later, Sir William Temple applied this belief when, in "Of Heroic Virtue," he searched through history in his attempt to discover the essential sameness in human nature that trivializes apparent differences.[35] Milton believed

that his function as historian was to reveal universal truths. His voice is prophetic: "imploring divine assistance, that it may redound to his glory, and the good of the British nation, I now begin" (3). His revealed truths about man's nature extend from his vanity to his tyrannical inclinations to his general immorality. The exhortation with which Milton closes his History combines the political function of historical inquiry with its grander moral purpose:

> If these were the Causes of such misery and thraldom to those our Ancestors, with what better close can be concluded, then here in fit season to remember this Age in the midst of her security, to fear from like Vices without amendment the Revolution of like Calamities (316).

Because human nature is essentially the same, because past times analogize with our own, we should discover in history truths about ourselves: individual truths, national truths, human truths. These discoveries, in turn, should affect the way we act, the way we live, as individuals and as a nation.

To the seventeenth-century mind, written history serves yet another crucial purpose: it freezes time and, thus, immortalizes actions, men, and nations. Historians had before them Herodotus' explanation for his history of the Graeco-Persian war:

> What Herodotus the Halicarnessian has learnt by inquiry is here set forth: in order that so the memory of the past may not be blotted out from among men by time, and that great and marvellous deeds done by Greeks and foreigners and especially the reason why they warred against each other may not lack renown.[36]

Sir Walter Raleigh states this classical view with simple eloquence: a written history "hath triumphed over time" (preface, v). Or, as Thomas North translates Amyot's preface to Plutarch's Lives: history

> is the surest, safest, and durablest monument that men can leave of their doings in this world, to consecrate their names to immortalitye. For there is neither picture, nor image of marble, nor arch of triumph, nor piller, nor sumptuous sepulchre, that can match the durablenes of an eloquent history.[37]

Clarendon's character portraits are, in fact, such monuments to the dead. He composes each portrait immediately after his subject's death not only because the character can be summed up now that the life is completed, but also because he is erecting a monument.

The English continually deplored the lack of a great national historical work because they were aware that nations not immortalized in histories have, in a sense, never existed. In the preface to his translation of Sallust (1608), Thomas Heywood emphasizes that only the Greeks, Romans, and Hebrews "survive for us" because they are the only ones whose histories were made permanent by being recorded.[38] Samuel Daniel expresses a commonplace

when he says he has compiled his history for "the honour of our Country" (IV. 76); England, as a glorious nation, deserves to be immortalized. And Edmund Bolton is so overwhelmed by the power of the historian to transcend the process of time that he calls "the putting into Books, for immortal Remembrance, the Acts of famous Men . . . so sacred a business" that the historical books of the Bible should be our guide (94).

The fact that histories do immortalize the past should, in turn, have practical effects for the present. It should influence the way men, particularly those in power, act. Clarendon's characters can take the form of eternal monuments marking evil, and few can desire immortalization as an emblem of evil. As Bodin describes it, fear of infamy is so great that we can see the "welts and lacerations" on the souls of tyrants because of their inward suffering (10). Being eternalized in history is a reward for the good and a punishment for the wicked, a secular replacement of the after-life that should be equally influential on our actions in this world:

> This, then, is the greatest benefit of historical books, that some men, at least, can be incited to virtue and others can be frightened away from vice. Although the good are praiseworthy in themselves, even if they are acclaimed by no one, nevertheless it is proper that both living and

> dead, in addition to other rewards offered to excellence, should attain due meed of praise, which many people think is the only real reward (Bodin, 9).

"The wicked" will discover that "they themselves and the name of their race will suffer eternal disgrace," and about this they must have "the bitterest sense of grief" (9). Every public figure, then, must be aware that a written history conquers time. If he can assume that an historian writes the truth--as every historian at least has claimed to do[39]--then his only choice is to live his life in the way in which he wants to be remembered. His role in history becomes the meaning of his life.

Notes to Chapter Two

[1]See G. R. Elton, Political History: Principles and Practice (New York: Basic Books, 1970), pp. 3-4, for a full definition of political history. Elton points out that twentieth-century historians rarely write pure political history.

[2]Johan Huizinga, "A Definition of the Concept of History," trans. D. R.Cousin, in Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer, ed. Raymond Klibansky and H. J. Paton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 5. The problem of the historian's limited vision and the way he imposes form upon the past is a central concern in E. H. Carr, What Is History? (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967).

[3]See, for example, Sir Walter Raleigh's providential view of English history in the preface to his History of the World (1614?). By the middle of the century, such an explanation was no longer acceptable. The most useful general discussions of changing attitudes toward history are Karl Lowith, Meaning in History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949) and R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946). A more limited, but still wide-ranging, study is J. B. Bury, The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Growth and Origin (1932; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1955).

For Renaissance and seventeenth-century ideas of history, see George H. Nadel, "Philosophy of History Before Historicism," in Studies in the Philosophy of History: Selected Essays from History and Theory, ed. George Nadel (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 49-73; Beatrice Reynolds, "Shifting Currents in Historical Criticism," JHI, 14 (1953), 471-92; William Raleigh Trimble, "Early Tudor Historiography, 1485-1548," JHI, 11 (1950), 30-41; F. Smith Fussner, The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought, 1580-1640 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962); Fussner, Tudor History and the Historians (New York: Basic Books, 1970); Henry Ansgar Kelly, Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); James William Johnson, The Formation of English Neoclassical Thought (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); and Part I: "History, Historiography, and Politics," of Lily B. Campbell's valuable Shakespeare's "Histories": Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1947).

[4]Dryden was, of course, the first English critic to apply an historical perspective to literary criticism. His innovations as an historical thinker lie in his application of historical thought as an organizing principle in criticism and poetry.

[5]Augustine, The City of God, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Random House, 1950). All subsequent references to Augustine cite the book and section numbers of this edition. For discussions of the providential view of history, see C. A. Patrides, The Grand Design of God (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), and Herschel Baker, The Wars of Truth (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 12-25. Among the numerous studies of Augustine, a provocative discussion of his view of history can be found in G. L. Keyes, Christian Faith and the Interpretation of History (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966). Also see note 3, above. The works cited there include discussions of the Christian view of history.

[6]In Augustinian history, God's providence can manifest itself to prevent sins that might occur in the future. To explain why the virgins were raped during the sack of Rome, Augustine writes that they were either "already puffed up by the circumstance that they were still virgins," or they "might have been so puffed up had they not been exposed to the violence of the enemy, lost their chastity, but rather gained humility: the former were saved from pride already cherished, the latter from pride that would shortly have grown upon them" (I.28).

A very useful discussion of the reactions to the sack of Rome that Augustine was working against can be found in Theordor E. Mommsen, "St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress: The Background of The City of God," in Medieval and Renaissance Studies, ed. Eugene F. Rice, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959), pp. 265-98. Mommsen points out that Augustine was not just answering the pagans and newly converted Christians who blamed the destruction on the city's worship of the Christian God. He was also concerned with Christians who interpreted the sack as heralding the end of the world. In addition, Augustine was countering a developing Christian materialism--what Mommsen calls "the Christian idea of progress"--which believed in an earthly, instead of a heavenly, reward.

[7]Polybius, Histories, trans. W. R. Paton, 6 vols. (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1922). All subsequent references to Polybius cite the book, section, and line numbers of this edition.

One noteworthy fact is the number of authors of Renaissance artes historicae--tracts giving instructions on how to write history--who cite Polybius as the greatest of classical historians. Casaubon's 1609 translation of Polybius into Latin further increased his popularity, and Dryden wrote a Character of Polybius. As will be discussed later, Polybius' theory of the cycle of constitutions played a key role in English political theory. See Reynolds, "Shifting Currents in Historical Criticism," and Nadel,"Philosophy of History Before Historicism," for further discussion of Polybius' influence. The other favorite classical historians included Thucydides, Livy, and Tacitus, but Polybius seems to be the Virgil of the historians.

[8]Edmund Bolton, Hypercritica, in Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, ed. J. E. Spingarn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), I, 84-5. All subsequent references to Bolton cite this edition of his work.

[9]Throughout his efforts to systematize knowledge, Francis Bacon struggled with the problem of how to understand God's role in the historical process. He finally resolved it in De Augmentis (1623) by separating theology--"information derived from revelation" as opposed to "information derived from the sense"--from areas of human learning (VIII, 407-9). Because the ways of God cannot be scientifically discovered, Bacon essentially banishes them from what he calls his "small Globe of the Intellectual World" (VI, 412). References are to Works, ed. James Spedding (Boston: Brown and Taggard, 1863). For discussions of Bacon's views on history, see Leonard F. Dean, "Sir Francis Bacon's Theory of Civil History Writing," ELH, 8 (1941), 161-83, and George H. Nadel, "History as Psychology in Francis Bacon's Theory of History," History and Theory, 5 (1966), 275-87.

[10]Christopher Hill, Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 152. For his discussion of Raleigh, see pp. 131-224. Although Hill somewhat overstates his case, he provides an essential counter-argument to the standard view of Raleigh as a typical providential historian. Hill's central thesis, see p. 187, is that Raleigh "strained as hard as he dared within the strait-jacket in which historical thought had been strapped for over a thousand years."

[11]Sir Walter Raleigh, Works (1829; rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, n.d.), II-VII. All subsequent references to Raleigh cite the book, chapter, and section numbers of this edition. "Speaking humanly" is a favorite Raleigh phrase--at times he sets it off even farther by enclosing it in parentheses--and the phrase nicely emphasizes the dual nature of his perspective. See, for example, his discussion of David's military strategy in his war against the Syrians, II. xvii. vi.

[12]The phrase is Christopher Hill's in God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution (New York: Dial Press, 1970), p. 237. See pp. 217-50 for his fine discussion of Puritan historical conceptions.

[13]Oliver Cromwell, The Writings and Speeches, ed. William C. Abbott (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937), I. See pp. 696ff. for the letters referred to; they are dated 6 Nov. 1648 and 28 Nov. 1648.

[14]John Milton, The History of Britain, ed. George Philip Krapp, in Works, ed. Frank Allen Patterson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931-40), X. All subsequent references to Milton cite the page number of this edition. Comments on Milton's ideas about historical writing can be found in C. H. Firth, "Milton as an Historian," Proceedings of the British Academy, 3 (1907-8), 227-53; Joseph Allen Bryant, Jr., "Milton and the Art of History: A Study of Two Influences on A Brief History of Moscovia," PQ, 29 (1950), 15-30; and J. Milton French, "Milton as an Historian," PMLA, 50 (1935), 469-79. For a discussion of the Puritan influence on historical writing, particularly on biography, see William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), pp. 100 ff. An excellent study of Puritanism and its relation to Milton, with numerous comments concerning the Puritan conception of history, is Arthur E. Barker, Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, 1641-1660 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1942).

[15]Clarendon, The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, Begun in the Year 1641, ed. W. Dunn Macray, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888). All further references to Clarendon cite the book and section numbers of this edition. The most complete study of Clarendon is B. H. G. Wormald, Clarendon: Politics, Historiography and Religion, 1640-1660 (Cambridge: University Press, 1964). Wormald, noting the paradox in Clarendon's sense of providence and of the importance

of the individual, suggests a possible connection to Clarendon's Contemplations and Reflections upon the Psalms of David, which he was working on at the same time he wrote the original version of the History. For a complete account of the complicated compositional background of the History, see C. H. Firth, "Clarendon's History of the Rebellion," The English Historical Review, 19 (1904), 26-54, 246-62, 464-83. Firth, however, complains that Clarendon places too much emphasis upon the power of the individual. Firth, in turn, is answered by H. R. Trevor-Roper, who argues that Clarendon perfectly understood that "the study of politics is in fact always also the study of politicians." See "Clarendon and the Great Rebellion," in Historical Essays (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), pp. 244-8.

[16]Samuel Daniel's Collection of the History of England (1612-1617-18), organized around the lives and reigns of England's kings, suggests a human-centered theory of historical causation. Daniel's biographical approach is merely a "given," however; unlike Clarendon, he attempts no theoretical justification of his procedure. Furthermore, Daniel's approach is based on the static Elizabethan metaphor of the king as the head of the body politic, not on a dynamic theory of interaction such as Clarendon's. See Samuel Daniel, The Complete Works in Verse and Prose, ed. Rev. Alexander B. Grosart (1896; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), IV and V. All references to Daniel will cite the volume and page numbers of this edition.

[17]I use the term "character" here in a formal sense: the art of literary portraiture that in England developed in the seventeenth century. As the study of history became the study of men, characters played an increasingly important part in historical writing. A good discussion of the uses of characters can be found in David Nicol Smith's introduction to his Characters from the Histories and Memoirs of the Seventeenth Century (1918; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963). Smith also points out the important influence which Tacitus had on the seventeenth-century use of the character in historical writing.

[18]For discussions of patterns of historical movement, see Frank E. Manuel, Shapes of Philosophical History (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), and Herbert Weisinger, "Ideas of History During the Renaissance," JHI, 6 (1945), 415-35. In addition, see the works cited in notes 3 and 5 above.

[19]See Manuel, pp. 7 ff., for a more detailed discussion of this subject.

[20]Arguments against the traditional view that classical historians perceive and present a cyclical movement of history can be found in Arnaldo Momigliano, "Time in Ancient Historiography," History and the Concept of Time. History and Theory, Beiheft 6 (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1966), pp. 1-23; and Chester G. Starr, "Historical and Philosophical Time," History and the Concept of Time, pp. 24-35.

The sense of cyclical recurrence does enter into the ending of the Histories, and it casts its shadow back over the entire work. At the moment of greatest triumph for the developing Empire, while Scipio and Polybius watch Carthage in flames, Scipio grasps his friend's hand: "'A glorious moment, Polybius, but I have a dread foreboding that some day the same doom will be pronounced upon my own country'" (xxxviii. 21.1). For Renaissance and seventeenth-century England, Rome exemplified the perfect historical cycle: it had a dated beginning, a height, a long continuum, and a traceable fall. See Manuel, pp. 52-3.

[21]One exception to the generally narrowing scope of historical writing in the seventeenth century is Bossuet's Discours sur L'Histoire Universelle (Paris, 1681). By this date, his Augustinian--universal, providential--history was somewhat of an anachronism.

Late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century writers who theorized about historical patterns generally tried to reconcile the cyclical and providential-linear views. A Frenchman, Louis LeRoy, in Of the Interchangeable Course, or Variety of Things in the Whole World (Paris, 1577; London, 1594), justifies cyclical visicissitudes by making them part of God's larger plan to alternate periods of heur and malheur to chastise us for our sins. In his Apology or Declaration of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World (1627), George Hakewill similarly posits "a kinde of circular progresse" in all things: "they have their birth, their growth, their flourishing, their failing, their fading, and within a while after their resurrection, and reflourishing againe." By "progresse," Hakewill means "movement," and this circular movement is guided by the hand of God. See Manuel, pp. 50-63, for further discussion of LeRoy. Hakewill is quoted from the 3rd edition (1635) in R. F. Jones, Ancients and Moderns, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1961), pp. 30-1. Jones discusses Hakewill at length on pp. 29-37.

[22]Frederick A. Pottle has recently suggested that Saussure's terms, "synchrony" and "diachrony," be used to define conceptions of history. He calls eighteenth-century historical thought synchronical because the point of view of the present was applied to the past. Institutions were not seen as evolving and changing in time, but were perceived from a distance as static forms. This point certainly also applies to much of seventeenth-century historical thought. See "Synchrony and Diachrony: A Plea for the Use in Literary Studies of Saussure's Concepts and Terminology," in Literary Theory and Structure, Essays in Honor of William K. Wimsatt, ed. Frank Brady, John Palmer and Martin Price (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 3-21.

[23]The seventeenth century drew this assumption from their reading of classical historians and rhetoricians. Lucian, for example, in How to Write History, cites Thucydides on the usefulness of historical writing: "that if ever again men find themselves in a like situation they may be able . . . from a consideration of the records of the past to handle rightly what now confronts them." See Lucian, VI, trans. K. Kilburn, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 57-9.42.

[24]The extent of Dryden's belief in "progress" no longer requires debate. Miner, Hume, and to a lesser extent Guibbory (see note 2 of Chapter One, above) all point to indisputable aspects of this belief. But it is important to distinguish this belief in progress from Dryden's firm conviction in the sameness of human nature, a conviction which he shared with his age and which underlies many of his views of history and poetry. Dryden was apparently unable to see that historical changes can deeply affect man's nature. In this respect he contrasts with Shelley, for example, who in his Defense of Poetry claims that a great poet like Homer, Dante, or Milton alters the very essence of our being.

[25]Dryden's emphasis on biography further suggests that his interest in history centers on the effect of the individual on the historical process. Whatever his personal religious faith and despite his occasional stated belief that there is an ultimate providential guidance, Dryden shared with his age a tendency to acknowledge God as the First Cause and then to remove Him from the field of discussion. Since God's ways cannot be known, Dryden would have agreed with Clarendon, it is neither intellectually

nor practically fruitful to center historical discussion on Him. So Dryden writes: "God, tis true with his divine Providence, over-rules and guides all actions to the secret end he has ordain'd them; but in the way of humane causes, a wise Man may easily discern, that there is a natural connection betwixt them" (Cal., XVII, 271). The key word here is "natural": "humane causes" remain the same because human beings remain the same; the "connection" between events caused by humans is, then, "natural"--unchanging, fixed outside of time. Thus, Dryden commends Polybius for rejecting miraculous explanations of events and instead searching into the "natural causes of those actions he describes." To say simply that a hero is a hero because he is "favoured of God" ignores the primary duty of an historian: it is to operate "without any consideration of morality, which ought to be the beginning and end of all our actions" (Scott, XVIII, 43). Indeed, in his overzealous interpretation, Dryden concludes that Polybius "denies all power to fortune" (Scott, XVIII, 45).

[26]Cicero, De Oratore, trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 2 vols. All subsequent references to De Oratore cite book, chapter, and section numbers of this edition.

[27]This passage is quoted consistently by Renaissance and seventeenth-century historians and deserves to be given in its original Latin: "Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis, qua voce alia, nisi oratoris, immortalitati commendatur?"

[28]Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, trans. H. E. Butler, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 4 vols., XII. iv. 1-2.

[29]Thomas Hobbes, The English Works, ed. Sir William Molesworth (1843; rpt. Germany: Scientia Verlag Alen, 1966), VIII. All subsequent references to Hobbes' translation cite the page numbers of this edition.

[30]A similar comment occurs in The Life of Plutarch where Dryden praises the biographer-historian for "the desire he had to imprint his Precepts in the Souls of his Readers; and to lodge Morality in Families, nay even to exalt it to the Thrones of Soveraign Princes, and to make it the Rule and measure of their Government" (Cal., XVII,

249). Dryden's editors point out that this passage, like much of the Life, is lifted from a source, "S.G.S." But Dryden's departure from his source is significant. While S.G.S. speaks of Plutarch's desire to implant intellectual wisdom, Dryden enlarges this concept to "Morality." The relevant passage from S.G.S. is quoted in Cal., XVII, 456.

[31]The best study of the relationship between English legal and governmental concepts and the development of English historiography is J.G.A. Pocock, The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law (1957; rpt. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1967).

[32]Sir Robert Filmer, Patriarcha, A Defense of the Natural Power of Kings Against the Unnatural Liberty of the People, ed. Peter Laslett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949). All subsequent references to Filmer cite the chapter and page numbers of this edition.

[33]Henry Neville, Plato Redivivus or, A Dialogue Concerning Government, in Two English Republican Tracts, ed. Caroline Robbins (Cambridge: University Press, 1969). The original Latin of this epigraph is "Non ego sum vates, sed prisci conscius aevi, /Pluribus exemplis haec tibi mysta cano." All subsequent references to Neville cite the page number of this edition.

A detailed study of the seventeenth-century republican political theorists' use of classical history is Zera S. Fink, The Classical Republicans, 2nd ed. (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1962). Caroline Robbins' introduction to her edition of Neville also includes a useful discussion of the subject.

[34]Jean Bodin, Method for the Easy Comprehension of History (1566), trans. Beatrice Reynolds (New York: Octagon Books, 1966). All subsequent references to Bodin cite the page number of this edition. For the significance of Bodin in English historical thought, see Reynold's introduction to her edition, and Leonard F. Dean, "Bodin's Methodus in England before 1625," SP, 39 (1942), 160-6.

As far back as 1531, Thomas Elyot had defined "history" in a way that, in a more subdued form, still held true 150 years later: "First it is to be noted that it is a Greek name, and cometh of a word or verb in Greek, historeo, which doth signify to know, to see, to ensearch, to enquire, to hear, to learn, to tell, or expound unto other." After listing the numerous areas of

knowledge opened up by historical study, he enthusiastically concludes, "There is no doctrine, be it either divine or human, that is not either all expressed in history or at least mixed with history." Quoted from The Book Named the Governor, in Fussner, Tudor History, p. 259.

[35]In Sir William Temple, Five Miscellaneous Essays, ed. Samuel Holt Monk (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963). "An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning" similarly depends upon historical inquiry as its method. Temple probes into the history of learning to discover why, given the essential sameness of human nature, the ancients were "giants" while the moderns are "dwarfs." For a discussion of the Ancients-Moderns debate as essentially a dispute about the uses of the past, see Joseph M. Levine, "Ancients, Moderns, and History: The Continuity of English Historical Writing in the Later Seventeenth Century," in Paul J. Korshin, ed., Studies in Change and Revolution: Aspects of English Intellectual History, 1640-1800 (Menston, Yorkshire: The Scolar Press, 1972), pp. 43-75.

[36]Herodotus, vol. 1, trans. A. D. Godley, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), I. 1. The reference is to book and section number.

[37]Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans, Englished by Sir Thomas North (1579), The Tudor Translations (London: David Nutt, 1895), p. 9.

[38]Sallust's Histories, trans. Thomas Heywood (1608), The Tudor Translations, Second Series (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924), pp. 5-6.

[39]The question of truth in historical writing is a complex one and not especially relevant to this study. It is sufficient here to point out that every historian emphasized the necessity of total truth. The problem is discussed in connection with the relationship between poetry and history in Chapter One.

Chapter Three

Astraea Redux: The Limits of Action

Astraea Redux, A POEM On the Happy Restoration and Return Of His Sacred Majesty Charles the Second, was Dryden's first attempt at an imaginative definition of historical meaning. Although it is sometimes compared to the Heroique Stanzas--in a tradition dating back to contemporary attacks on Dryden's apparent political inconsistency--that earlier poem is a panegyric to Cromwell, not an examination of his meaning in history; as such, it should be read with To His Sacred Majesty, Dryden's panegyric to Charles II on his coronation. While the Heroique Stanzas is organized chronologically, and while Dryden discusses Cromwell's significance for England and Europe, the poem begins not from the question, "what is Cromwell's meaning in the larger context of history?" but from "how can I best celebrate Cromwell?" Certainly, the seventeenth century considered biography as a type of history, and Dryden inevitably saw that panegyric must include some historical texture. Yet the surprisingly narrow historical context in which Dryden perceives

Cromwell suggests that the Restoration first awakened the poet's interest in the complexities of historical forces. One need only consider how Dryden, changes in political attitudes aside, would have written about Cromwell's death if the event had occurred ten years later.

The effect of the Restoration on the English imagination was heightened by the events of the two preceding years. Cromwell died on 3 September 1658. After his ineffectual son, Richard, was forced out of power in May 1659, the control of government shifted back and forth for almost a year between Parliament--the Rump--and various military leaders. Essentially, then, there was no government. There were sporadic violent mutinies by unpaid members of the army, rebellious uprisings by those out of power, rumors, and fear. Pepys' Diary for the opening months of 1660 reflects his uneasiness about political events, an anxiety that only subsided when it became clear that cautious General Monck would support a Restoration. The avalanche of pamphlets attacking and supporting various political options suggests the sense of desperation created by the governmental chaos.[1] In everyone's mind was fear of another civil war.

Against this background, it is clear that the return of Charles II could be celebrated as a restoration

of order as well as of monarchy. The numerous poets who commemorated Charles' return to England consistently contrasted the dark of the last twenty years with the light of the present moment. Typical are the pieces in Britannia Rediviva, a collection of over one hundred poems written by members of Oxford. On the simplest level is verse like Thomas Smith's, which has at least the virtue of brevity:

> After twelve years of dark, and restless Night,
> When Terrours raign, and walking Fiends affright;
> When Storms and Tempests rage, and every Cloud
> Of Lawless Fury ends in showrs of Blood;
> When giddy Wild-fires wander to and fro,
> And mislead those that know not where to goe:
> When our beheaded Nation seems no more
> But Charles his Ghost, besmeared in his Gore:
> We see a Morning, but indeed so bright,
> We seem to slumber yet, and dream of Light:
> When we can be awake and shall perceive,
> That Kings can once again in England live:
> Wee'l sleep no more, but rise, and work and sing,
> God keep us Loyall, and GOD SAVE THE KING.[2]

Smith builds his poem on the awakening from the dark, tempestuous night of England past--a scene of horror peopled by the ghost of the murdered Charles I--into the peaceful, healthful day of England present--a scene that allows the return of the living king, Charles II. Smith concerns himself with conditions, not causes. England has changed; now Charles can return.

For some, though, and Dryden among them, the joy at a promised return to traditional normalcy after a period

of chaotic innovation was tempered by questions. Why, after eighteen years of personal and national suffering, has the Restoration occurred now? Why, if the Restoration --the return to what was--has occurred, did the nation have to endure this suffering? For the seventeenth-century poet, to think about these questions meant to imagine English history in terms of Biblical and mythical history. And to answer these questions would be to view the Restoration in its full significance, to see it as a meaningful event not only in the history of England, but in the history of man.

As every reader of Dryden is forced to admit, Astraea Redux at times appears to be an overly complicated poem, unnecessarily dense and even confused. To invest an event with enduring significance is difficult at best. But Dryden, further, had no settled assumptions about historical causation from which he might proceed. The causes for and the meaning of the Restoration become entangled in the poem. To be able to define the control of historical process would clarify the event's significance, and Dryden struggles with that definition throughout his poem. Additionally, Dryden is clearly ambivalent about the event itself. Charles has been restored to power, but, Dryden saw, there are alternate readings of that fact. Has Charles been restored

to power? or, restored to power?[3] The first reading emphasizes the king's--and man's--passivity but suggests an ultimate benevolence in the working out of history. The second reading creates for Charles a more appropriately heroic role but contains within it intimations of the problems that power inevitably creates, as events in England and as the poem itself demonstrate. To reconcile these alternate readings--to reconcile alternate perceptions of historical causation--is Dryden's problem in the poem.

The historical structure through which Dryden controls the larger movements of the poem creates an orderly external process. The poem is in three sections: past (ll. 1-249), present (ll. 250-291), and future (ll. 292-323). Each part begins with a "now" that throws the audience into the midst of events; Dryden speaks as the public orator involving his listeners in the eternal currency of history. To invest the events with mythic significance, Dryden simultaneously describes them in contemporary terms and in terms of the Astraea myth from Book I of the Metamorphoses. In Ovid's presentation of the Four Ages, the lowest point in steadily decaying human history is symbolized when Astraea, Justice, flees from the earth. When Virgil wants to herald the rebirth of the Golden Age in his 4th Eclogue,

he begins by announcing Astraea's return. The English had a well-established tradition of political interpretation of this myth that dated from Elizabeth's reign when she was praised by the poets as Virgo, the constellation into which Astraea metamorphosed after her flight. This tradition combined with the common reading of Virgil's Eclogue as a prophesy of the birth of Christ to give a rich political-religious texture to the myth. When Virgil used the Golden Age myth in Book VI of the Aeneid, he provided yet another strand--the hero shaping history--for later poets to use.

The Golden Age myth, then, is at once ahistorical and historical, outside and within human time. In Ovid, the Golden Age is outside of human history, a paradisical state in which there can be no history because there is eternal bliss. In Judeo-Christian terms, this is the Edenic state; there is no human history until after the Fall. But the Virgilian interpretation of the Augustan Golden Age carried the myth into human time. As human history revolves, a tempered Golden Age reappears.[4] Thus, as the title and epigraph of Astraea Redux suggest, the poem's basic fiction is that the Restoration begins a new time for England, a materially rich and spiritually renovated Golden Age. Yet Dryden so skillfully merges historical truth, historical and poetic analogy, and

imaginative vision that the fiction in his poem becomes a kind of inevitable fact. The light of day does follow the dark of night; suffering does inevitably lead to renewal. Charles has suffered; England has suffered; both, then, will be reborn. But Dryden does not present his vision as an a priori conclusion. He does not impose the myth onto the events of the Restoration; rather, he struggles to discover exactly what "renewal" means, what this new Golden Age will be, in terms of seventeenth-century human history. The questions he asks are difficult ones about sin, guilt, and suffering, about human weakness and human strength. Because he leads us with him through his struggles, we feel with him, at the end, that the occasion can, finally, be truly celebrated.

The lengthy first section of the poem, centering on England's recent past, emphasizes man's precarious role in history. Passive verbs predominate, as the opening lines establish: "Now with a general Peace the World was blest,/ While Ours, a World divided from the rest,/ A dreadful Quiet felt" (ll. 1-3). Peace and terror are imposed from without; the atmosphere is controlled by an unknowable force. Dryden's reference to the "Ambitious Swede," Charles X--he is tactfully left unnamed in a poem to Charles II--symbolizes the paradox of man's role in history. The Swede's actions result

in chaos--"like restless Billowes tost,/ On this hand gaining what on that he lost" (ll. 9-10)--but his death bequeaths peace to his "now guideless Kingdome." Indeed, in this first paragraph, all human action is so excessive that it breeds only massive disorder. It is precisely this unnecessary action--the Civil War and the Interregnum --that has created suffering for England and for Charles. To emphasize the enormity of human attempts to control history, Dryden elevates them to all-encompassing personification: "Madness the Pulpit, Faction seiz'd the Throne" (l. 22). If power should mean the ability to control, misplaced power--as Charles X had demonstrated--leaves man helpless:

> The Rabble now such Freedom did enjoy,
> As Winds at Sea that use it to destroy:
> Blind as the Cyclops, and as wild as he,
> They own'd a lawless salvage Libertie,
> Like that our painted Ancestours so priz'd
> Ere Empires Arts their Breasts had Civiliz'd.
> (ll. 43-48)

Dryden's analogies define historical situations by transforming them into other realms. The three images --natural excess, mythic excess, and excess from ancient British history--describe in rapid succession various aspects of the havoc-wreaking rabble: their mindlessness, their blindness, their pre-civilized savagry.

Into the midst of this storm enters the Christ-like figure of Charles II. As a passive sufferer who yet effected universal change, Christ, in addition to his other attributes, exemplifies here the paradox of the passive force. The lines that introduce Charles, gentler and calmer than any that have come before, suggest this power in the exiled king:

> How Great were then Our Charles his Woes, who thus
> Was forc'd to suffer for Himself and us!
> He toss'd by Fate, and hurried up and down,
> Heir to his Fathers Sorrows, with his Crown,
> Could tast no sweets of youths desired Age,
> But found his life too true a Pilgrimage.
> Unconquer'd yet in that forlorne Estate
> His Manly Courage overcame his Fate. (11. 49-56)

The passive verbs and the image of Charles as one who inherited misery from his father and assumed the weight of the nation's suffering give way in the final line to an explosive assertion of the power of the human will. It is, in fact, precisely this suffering, this ability to accept suffering, that creates Charles' strength. As Dryden will suggest on a different level in the poem's next paragraph, excess breeds reaction. The dialectic manifests itself in the individual as well as in historical process: "Since struck with rayes of prosp'rous fortune blind/ We light alone in dark afflictions find" (11. 95-6). The conflict of extremes is a necessary condition of human life--as it is of Dryden's

poetry; only through contrast do we learn to see and to act. Dryden must both "regret and bless" Charles' suffering, for Fortune's "blowes not shook but riveted his Throne" (l. 104). The Restoration is, for Charles, a passive act--"restored" is a passive verb--but his passive suffering has enabled him to learn the proper use of action and of power.

In the second paragraph, Dryden turns from the suffering that chaos breeds to the process of recovery in the nation--as a unity and as a collection of individuals. Dryden makes immediately clear that England has recovered. In a brief shift to the present tense, the orator steps forward to encourage his English audience and to warn foreigners who scorn English self-destructiveness:

> Tremble ye Nations who secure before
> Laught at those Arms that 'gainst our selves we bore;
> Rous'd by the lash of his own stubborn tail
> Our Lyon now will forraign Foes assail. (ll. 115-18)

But to celebrate recovery, one must first understand how and why it occurred; only understanding can prevent the recurrence of the devastating past.

In Astraea Redux, Dryden perceives a dialectic of history working itself out because events reach a point at which reaction must inevitably follow. The analogies through which he explains this process are natural: in the body (the crisis point of a disease), and in the natural world (the rhythm of frost and thaw). But

the crisis point of disease can result in death, and a too rapid thaw leads to "raging floods." The Restoration was, in fact, not a violent wrenching of opposites, but a gradual, peaceful process. There is, then, an artful force at work that moderates this violence, and that force is Providence. Heaven had determined a "prefixed hour" for the return of monarchy. Booth's attempt at a Royalist military victory failed because neither the means nor the time was right. Only Monck, the agent of Providence and master of gradual change, could effect the Restoration. As Monck had slowly shifted from republican to Royalist, so he knows how to create such change in the nation, how to effect "this turning Scene" (l. 153).[5]

There are two types of change, the gross and the delicate. Nature, with its violent thaws creating destruction before the spring, exemplifies one kind. Art exemplifies the other:

> Yet as wise Artists mix their colours so
> That by degrees they from each other go,
> Black steals unheeded from the neighb'ring white
> Without offending the well cous'ned sight. (ll. 125-8)

One touch from the skillful Artist's hand can alter the world:

> To see small clues draw vastest weights along,
> Not in their bulk but in their order strong.
> Thus Pencils can by one slight touch restore
> Smiles to that changed face that wept before.
> (ll. 155-8)

The analogies suggest a contrast between the violent working of uncontrolled events and the artful control of Providence. As the providentially guided man, Monck has the skill to know precisely when gently to manipulate events; he is the physician who lets the disease run its course until the precise moment when it is time to intervene, to apply his skill and moderate natural process.

And yet, as Dryden recognizes, these providentially ordered events are not sufficient to explain the outpouring of joy at Charles' Restoration. Providence can control events, but it does not create change in the minds of men. Like the nation, individuals achieve recovery through a reaction to excess, but--unmoderated by Providence--the process for them is more violent. Dryden compares the hypocrisy of the Puritans to the infidelity of the Turks. Each group tries to deceive itself into believing that it is not committing a sinful act. As the Turks warn their souls to flee before drinking from "forbidden bowls," so the Puritans "when their black crimes they went about/ First timely charm'd their useless conscience out" (ll. 189-90). More irreligious than Turkish barbarity, their false religion replaces substance with shadow, meaning with noise. The result in those who are not completely blinded is, finally, guilt. As naive lovers are deceived into

jealousy, so this suffering ultimately strengthens their joy. The nation has been deceived into false religion, but the excess breeds contempt:

> A vertuous shame within us to beget,
> For by example most we sinn'd before,
> And glass-like, clearness mixt with frailty bore.
> But since reform'd by what we did amiss,
> We by our suff'rings learn to prize our bliss.
> (11. 206-10)

The nation, like Charles, has been strengthened by suffering. But since their actions have helped create the suffering, they--unlike their Christ-like King--have had to move through reaction to guilt to joy.

Dryden ends the long first part of his poem with Charles crossing the water from Holland to England. He begins the second part--the present--at the moment of Charles' arrival, the moment of active reconciliation of King and people. As their separation--exemplified by the focus on Charles in paragraph one and on the nation in paragraph two--ends, Dryden shifts to direct address to Charles, now the leader and symbol of England. In his role of historian-orator, Dryden turns from praise of Charles' strength of character to advice, based on this already established praise, about how Charles must conduct himself in office.[6] Charles has transformed from passive sufferer to active king. He must, then, recognize the necessary limitations upon men's actions:

> Your Pow're to Justice doth submit your Cause,
> Your Goodness only is above the Laws;
> Whose rigid letter while pronounc'd by you
> Is softer made. (ll. 266-9)

While these lines, as several critics have noted, suggest that Dryden accepted Charles as a constitutional, not an absolute, monarch,[7] more important is the context in which he couches his tactfully worded statement. As the Gospel was perceived as a less harsh version of Mosaic law, so Charles, a Christ-like figure, must administer his law firmly but gently. Power must "submit" because, as events have shown, it too easily breeds disorder.

As Dryden prepares for the final, celebratory vision of the poem, he increasingly invests each historical detail with religious and mythic significance. The whiteness of the cliffs at Dover, where Charles lands, suggests the "penitence and sorrow" of a fallen and redeemed nation. It additionally looks back to the white emerging from the black in the artist's carefully modulated painting--a metaphor of providentially guided historical change--and forward to the mythical-historical conclusion of the poem. The coincidence that Charles was born in May and returned in May becomes an occasion to merge political restoration, natural restoration--the spring--and religious redemption. The processes of guilt and recovery, suffering and recovery, and excess and recovery

become part of the natural, cyclical rhythm of inevitable rebirth. Most significantly, Charles, in his first act as monarch, is the active, benevolent agent of renewal: "How shall I speak of that triumphant Day/ When you renew'd the expiring pomp of May!" (ll. 284-5). The historical fact--the return of May Day celebrations after the grim Interregnum--expands to a statement about the national joy, and, finally, to its own celebration about the proper, renewing use of power.[8]

The vision of the future that ends Astraea Redux is freer from complex analogies and images than any other part of the poem. The view of England's Golden Age is presented as a simple statement of inevitable historical fact. Further, the spatial division that marked the step from past to present (blank space in the original text) does not exist here. Present and future merge, as the present tense verb of this section's opening line suggests: "And now times whiter Series is begun" (l. 292). The clouds, the storm with which the poem opened, have passed, as the "factious Souls" of the poem's first part are "weary'd into peace." Charles' "Blest Example," the image of the King that has been building in the poem, replaces the cursed example of the Puritans (l. 207).

Dryden's vision moves from England's international domination to her internal peace, from an active, just

nation to an active, benevolent King. Dryden envisions at once the ahistorical Ovidian Golden Age established by the return of Justice--the Justice that has returned with Charles and that prevents the abuse of power--and the historical Augustan Golden Age of military, economic, and artistic dominance. It is, too, the return to English monarchical tradition as exemplified by Elizabeth, the Renaissance Astraea. Dryden's poem, as is usual with him, ends softly. As conflicts are resolved, he can lower his voice. He has not only celebrated the return of Justice, but taught us why she fled and how she finally was restored. Celebration is proper now; past excess has been resolved into order. Dryden has presented to England an explanation of the past she must not repeat and a vision of the future she can achieve, and he has created for Charles an image in which the King should see himself and through which he should act.

Notes to Chapter Three

[1]The best index of the hysteria is the hundreds of political pamphlets for the years 1658-1660 that are included in the Thomason Collection. For a thorough background to the Restoration, see Godfrey Davies, The Restoration of Charles II, 1658-1660 (San Marino, Cal.: The Huntington Library, 1955).

[2]Britannia Rediviva (Oxford, 1660), sig. Cc. The poems in the collection generally present the typical Royalist view of the Restoration, with Heaven redeeming England through Charles-Christ. It is noteworthy how often the authors point to the beheading of Charles I as the ultimate sin. Dryden's more moderate poem, of course, does not mention the execution. Also see Thomas Mayhew's poem, "Upon the Joyfull and Welcome Return of His Sacred Majestie" (London, 1660), which makes a clumsy attempt at historical structure.

[3]As Godfrey Davies suggests, there was persistent fear among some Englishmen about what kinds of religious and political actions Charles would take when he returned. For months before the Restoration, Royalist propaganda attempted to create a moderate, conciliatory image of Charles II. Dryden's poem might be seen as expressing these fears and the resulting images of moderation. See Godfrey Davies, "Charles II in 1660," in Essays on the Later Stuarts (San Marino, Cal.: The Huntington Library, 1958), pp. 1-39. A good example of these Royalist propaganda pamphlets is A Character of Charles the Second, Written by an Impartial Hand, and exposed to PUBLICK VIEW for Information of the PEOPLE. The author, who has been identified as Samuel Tuke, defends Charles against attacks on his religious beliefs, his judgment, and his virtue.

[4]For background discussion of conceptions of the Golden Age, see Harry Levin, The Myth of The Golden Age in the Renaissance (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969). The most thorough study of Elizabeth and the Astraea myth is Frances A. Yates, "Queen Eliabeth as Astraea," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 10 (1947), 27-82. The Restoration was commonly imaged as a new Golden Age. See, for examples, The Earl of Manchester's Speech to His Majesty (London, 1660), which

contrasts Cromwell's "Rod of Iron" with Charles' "Golden Scepter"; John Evelyn's A Panegyric to Charles II (London, 1661), with its sense of a coming political Golden Age; and Abraham Cowley's "Ode Upon his Majestie's Restoration and Return," which envisions the new Golden Age in Christian terms of paradise regained.

Donne brilliantly exploits the Astraea myth in his Anniversaries, as Marjorie Nicolson points out in The Breaking of the Circle, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 92-7.

[5]As the poems in Britannia Rediviva illustrate, the English consistently viewed Monck as a Providential agent. A comment by Aurelian Cook in his Titus Britannicus: An Essay of History Royal: In the Life & Reign of His Late Sacred Majesty, Charles II (London, 1685), sig. b_2, sums it up: the "Restoration was the alone work of Providence and the General."

[6]See Isabel Rivers, The Poetry of Conservatism, 1660-1745: A Study of Poets and Public Affairs from Jonson to Pope (Cambridge: Rivers Press, 1973), pp. 145 ff.

[7]See Alan Roper, Dryden's Poetic Kingdoms (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1965), pp. 62-74; and Isabel Rivers, The Poetry of Conservatism, pp. 146 ff.

[8]In addition to its unquestionable reference to the historical interval following Charles' return, Dryden's phrase, "Pomp of May," might also incorporate an elaborate syntactic pun. During the seventeenth century, the modal auxiliary "may" was undergoing change in its semantic value, and Dryden's phrase possibly reflects both the dying and surviving meanings of the word. The antecedent of "may" in Old English, "magan," meant "to have the capacity to," with "physical power" a prominent aspect of "capacity." Later, in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries, two new meanings became associated with "may": eventuality or possibility ("maybe"), and permission. By 1600, the earliest meaning, that of "have the physical power to," had disappeared; by 1700, even the general "have the capacity to" sense of the auxiliary was lost. Given this syntactic history, the phrase "Pomp of May" almost mimics the historical problem of royal power in England. At the time of the Restoration, the king is in effect given permission to rule. The "May" suggests, too, Charles' capacity to rule well. See Elizabeth Closs Traugott, The History of English Syntax:

A Transformational Approach to the History of English Sentence Structure. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1972), passim. See her chart on p. 198.

It might also be pointed out that line 52 of the poem, quoted earlier, contains a similar metaphorical pun. In the midst of lines 43-56, where Dryden has been employing the image of wind and sea to represent political turbulence in England, he refers to Charles as "heir" to his father's sorrows, the passive recipient of historical burdens. But in this context, we should also see "heir-air" in its active sense; "air" receives but also transmits and even creates turbulence. The "heir," now passively returned to the throne, can be a source of power too. See pp. 86-87, above.

Chapter Four

Annus Mirabilis: The Harmonious Universe

While narrating the second battle between the British and the Dutch in Annus Mirabilis, Dryden describes the mental and emotional condition of the English sailors:

> But sharp remembrance on the English part,
> And shame of being match'd by such a foe,
> Rouze conscious vertue up in every heart,
> And seeming to be stronger makes them so.
> (ll. 757-60)

These lines epitomize the psychology of the poem. The subject of Annus Mirabilis is English heroism in the face of overwhelming odds: the human enemy of the Second Dutch War and the supernatural enemy of the Great Fire of London. Dryden's purpose in writing is to restore English confidence--to create "conscious vertue"--in themselves, in their King, and in their national destiny. The real subject of the poem, then, is the audience for whom Dryden writes: it is their trials and victories that he records and their heroism that he creates. Dryden trusts in the power of the word: stating or showing that a people are "stronger," helping them discover and believe in their heroic virtue, does indeed make that virtue real.

As Edward Niles Hooker has pointed out, Dryden is countering anti-Royalist propaganda which exploited English disaster to promote republican ends.[1] Because the English have restored the Stuarts to the throne, God punishes them with a visitation of the plague and destruction by fire. Or, perhaps, the fire was started by Papists, a more mundane threat, but one equally sure to terrify the English. Dryden's problem, then, is to present and interpret recent historical events in such a way that they take on a distinctively pro-Royalist air, and, beyond that, to present them in such a way that the English can take pride in themselves as a nation. Although the analogy seems rather outrageous at first, the historical-moral impetus for Dryden's writing Annus Mirabilis does not differ greatly from that which prompted Augustine to write The City of God. The terror of the Roman Christians after their city was sacked by the Goths, the belief that their God, if he even existed, had deserted them and that the end of the world was near,[2] is certainly comparable to the feelings of those in London who saw plague and fire in rapid succession devastate their city. As one observer wrote of the fire, "you would have thought for five days that it had been Doomsday, from the fire, and cries and howlings of the people."[3] Augustine is trying to restore confidence in

a God; Dryden, in a nation. Despite this distinction and the resulting widely separated planes on which they operate, the two arrive at similar solutions to their problems: they cast these apparently destructive events into the perspective of God's larger purpose.

Annus Mirabilis clearly demonstrates that Dryden is attempting to interpret events in the most positive way possible within the limits of historical accuracy. The very idea of dedicating the poem to the City of London instead of, for example, to the King, suggests that Dryden hopes to re-build London's spiritual self-image, just as King and people will re-build the city physically after the fire. His "Dedication" sets the tone for the poem. A skillfully eloquent "pep talk," it holds up the city as a pattern of "true Loyalty, invincible Courage and unshaken Constancy" (p. 42). As in all dedications, the author must establish a relationship with those he addresses, and here Dryden tempers historical honesty with overtones of his subject-audience's heroic virtue--as he does throughout the poem--in order to gain their confidence and to create the atmosphere in which the poem should be read. Dryden flatters the people of London: they are perhaps the first "Metropolis of any Nation" to have "a work of this nature" presented to them because they are the first to deserve it. The epigraph from

Virgil with its reference to the burning of Troy suggests an heroic historical analogy in all its aspects: the greatness of the city, the extent of its suffering, the valor of its people. Their afflictions have been enormous --"an expensive, though necessary, War, a consuming Pestilence, and a more consuming Fire"--but Dryden interprets them with providential optimism: they "are not more the effects of God's displeasure (frequent examples of them having been in the Reign of the most excellent Princes) then occasions for the manifesting of your Christian and Civil virtues" (p. 43). Just as the phoenix rises from its ashes, the people of London after the fire "built your selves an immortal Monument on your own ruines" (p. 43). Dryden's poem is also a monument to the City and to the mutual love between King and people, the love that enables them to emerge strengthened from trials at the hands of men and of God.

As Dryden recognizes, his poem should in fact be an epic, the highest form of poetry and the one that most fully honors the nation that is its subject. For practical and theoretical reasons--the necessity of completing the poem quickly, his own poetic skill at the time, the contemporary nature of the events--he could not write an epic. Instead, as he proudly announces in his title, Annus Mirabilis is An Historical Poem, a species

of heroic poetry, but one more closely tied to historical truth and, thus, lacking epic unity. Dryden turns his selection of genre into a further compliment: the actions are historically true, not the fictionalized history of epic, but they are in fact "as much Heroick, as any Poem can contain" (p. 44). History alone sufficiently reveals English greatness. Critics have taken Dryden's comment (in his "Account of the ensuing Poem," p. 44) that "the Action is not properly one" as an admission that the poem lacks unity.[4] But what the poet means is that his poem lacks the unity of an epic. Unruly historical truth prevents such formal order, and, as a comparison of the poem with a more prosaic account of the incidents reveals, Annus Mirabilis is astonishingly accurate.[5] The poem, however, does have a thematic unity which expands into the unity of a comprehensive vision and which, in turn, is reinforced by more formal elements, in particular, the carefully interwoven images.

In structure and in detail, Annus Mirabilis has the unity of a providential history. All things happen under the eye and, to a large extent, under the control of God. Events that occurred in little more than a year--from the Battle of Lowestoft in June 1665 to the Great Fire of September 1666--become part of a providential vision comprehending much of the history

of the world. Dryden achieves this all-encompassing effect partly through analogy to classical and Biblical history, partly by narrative reference to earlier English history, and partly by metaphoric control of imagery that, for example, depicts the Great Fire as Cromwell and the rebels usurping the throne.[6] Manipulation of verb tenses contributes to the effect. The poem begins with one of the very few past perfect tenses used in the poem: "In thriving Arts long time had Holland grown,/ Crouching at home, and cruel when abroad" (ll. 1-2). The lines have an "in the beginning" overtone to them (one which Dryden would utilize to satiric effect in the opening of Absalom and Achitophel) that explicitly refers to the underlying causes of the Anglo-Dutch Wars and implicitly suggests, perhaps because of the generality of the diction, all beginnings. The next verbs that appear are in the past tense, and these quickly modulate into the present tense to provide narrative immediacy. The poem ends, of course, with a prophesy and, thus, in the grammatical future. The verb tenses themselves, then, progress deliberately through time, manifesting and symbolizing the temporal comprehensiveness of the poem.[7]

Just as Christ stands in the center of Christian providential history, with Creation at one extreme and the Day of Judgment at the other, so, precisely in the

middle of Annus Mirabilis (stanzas 151-4 in a poem of 304 stanzas) stands a description of a resurrection. When the ship London was destroyed in battle, the City replaced it by building the Loyal London as a gift for Charles II, and Dryden gives a detailed account of the raising of the ship.[8] This resurrection occurs on an admittedly mundane level; indeed, one of the problems in the poem is the too-apparent distance between Dryden's heroic presentation and the poverty of reality--the heroic often verges tenuously on the mock heroic. Yet this resurrection is undeniably there. While Dryden describes it primarily in classical terms--the ship is "(The Phoenix daughter of the vanish'd old)" (l. 602)--the rising of the phoenix is invariably a type of the resurrection of Christ. Furthermore, the center of the poem looks toward the ending, with the destructive Doomsday-like fire followed in turn by the rebirth of the City. And just as it is the City's love for the King that has led to their building a new ship to replace the old, it is the King's love for the City that prompts this greater resurrection.

Dryden's is a classicized, seventeenth-century version of providential history. Man is not merely a passive figure buffeted around by a mysterious God, nor does he live a virtuous life in hope of an eternal reward. Instead, the wisdom and virtue of individual leaders are

important determinants in the course of history. Albermarle and Rupert are men without whom the English might have been defeated. Their goodness and courage diffuses itself through their men, and Albermarle briefly steals center stage with an heroic monologue (ll. 397-404). Nor does Dryden present them as God's appointed; rather, Charles creates them "Chiefs" (l. 185). Charles, as is appropriate in the royalist hierarchy, combines the attributes of God and man. In the section of the poem dealing with the Anglo-Dutch War, he is a human king with divine qualities, thoughtful, honorable, and merciful. In the Great Fire section, he at times takes on a God-like identity. As Charles feeds and protects those left destitute by the fire, Dryden calls him "The Father of the people" (l. 1141) and states that "God's Annointed God's own place suppli'd" (l. 1143). Yet, he also humbly prostrates himself as he prays that God snuff out the raging fire.

Another aspect of this transformation of providential history appears in the harmony among God, man, and nature--"nature" here meaning both external nature and its larger implications of what is "natural." Dryden establishes this theme in the second stanza of the poem with a simile suggesting the original sin of the Dutch: "Trade, which like bloud should circularly flow,/ Stop'd

in their Channels, found its freedom lost" (11.5-6). Dutch greed upsets the order of nature: blockage of the circulation of trade disrupts political health as surely as blocked circulation of blood destroys the body. The war itself, then, seems an inevitable part of the natural order: "What peace can be where both to one pretend?" (1. 21), or, "Behold two Nations then, ingag'd so far,/ That each sev'n years the fit must shake each Land" (11. 25-6). During the Second Dutch War, God clearly supports the English, who are attempting to correct the imbalance created by the Dutch. Thus, nature cooperates with English needs. As the ships leave for battle, "A breeze from Westward waits their sails to fill,/ And rests, in those high beds, his downy wings" (11. 711-12). Whether the sea is rough or gentle seems dependent upon what will be most helpful to secure an English victory:

> The foe approach'd: and one, for his bold sin,
> Was sunk, (as he that touch'd the Ark was slain;)
> The wild waves master'd him, and suck'd him in,
> And smiling Eddies dimpled on the Main.
> (11. 373-6)

In this image of total sympathy, Dryden makes explicit the providential connection between the sacredness of the English and the cooperation of nature.

Elsewhere the providential implications are more submerged as Dryden emphasizes imagistically the identity between man and nature that underlies universal harmony.

The poem abounds in similes linking man and nature, but at least in the first part of the poem Dryden nowhere modulates them so effectively as in his description of Rupert's ships coming to rescue Albermarle, who is badly outnumbered by the Dutch. In a series of six stanzas (107-12), Dryden presents three natural similes, each emphasizing the point of view of one of the three groups in the scene. Rupert's fleet had been misled into dividing from Albermarle's, but hearing the guns, the Prince hastens to return:

> Then, as an Eagle, (who with pious care,
> Was beating widely on the wing for prey)
> To her now silent Eiry does repair,
> And finds her callow Infants forc'd away;
>
> Stung with her love she stoops upon the plain,
> The broken air loud whistling as she flies:
> She stops, and listens, and shoots forth again,
> And guides her pinions by her young ones cries:
>
> With such kind passion hastes the Prince to fight,
> And spreads his flying canvass to the sound:
> Him, whom no danger, were he there, could fright,
> Now, absent, every little noise can wound.
> (ll. 425-36)

In these three stanzas--grammatically and imagistically they are one extended stanza--Dryden projects Rupert's terror, love, and rage onto the image of the mother eagle. "Kind passion"--the protective instinct that lashes out at those who threaten the defenseless ones for whom we are responsible--is a natural response for man and animal. Thus, when Dryden images Albermarle's

point of view, he emphasizes this very helplessness of the outnumbered sailors:

> As, in a drought, the thirsty creatures cry,
> And gape upon the gather'd clowds for rain,
> And first the Martlet meets it in the sky,
> And, with wet wings, joys all the feather'd train,
>
> With such glad hearts did our dispairing men
> Salute th'appearance of the Princes Fleet:
> And each ambitiously would claim the Ken
> That with first eyes did distant safety meet.
> (ll. 437-44)

The birds--Albermarle's besieged men--become a more defenseless breed, gentle victims of natural misfortune. Rupert, in their eyes, becomes the restoring rain that brings new life. When Dryden presents the Dutch perspective of Rupert's approach, he modulates the image once again:

> The Dutch, who came like greedy Hinds before,
> To reap the harvest their ripe ears did yield,
> Now look like those, when rowling thunders roar,
> And sheets of Lightning blast the standing field.
> (ll. 445-8)

Rupert again becomes a fiercer aspect of nature. Building on the rain from the previous stanza, Dryden presents Rupert, in Dutch eyes, as terrible, devastating lightning destroying the Dutch for their vicious greed. In this group of stanzas, then, the English are presented as both a bold variety and a dependent variety of bird, who will work harmoniously as a fierce, yet gentle natural-national force to defeat the unnaturally avaricious and contentious hinds. The two views of rain project the innocence and

guilt of those on whom the storm falls. And the thunder and lightning of the final lines tighten the connection to the "real" battle; they lead effectively back to the historical narration by recalling us to the roar of the ships' cannons and the flash of deadly fire.

Dryden's "Apostrophe to the Royal Society" is central to his presentation of natural order as an aspect of God's providence. On one level, science unlocks the secrets of navigation that will make England the great mercantile nation she should be.[9] Science, epitomized by the Royal Society, thus aids God, Who in the context of the poem makes the English His chosen people. Under English leadership, as opposed to the unnatural Dutch, there will be universal political harmony. On a more general level, science discovers the laws of nature, and since natural law reveals God, science brings us closer to Him:

> This I fore-tel, from your auspicious care,
> Who great in search of God and Nature grow:
> Who best your wise Creator's praise declare,
> Since best to praise his works is best to know.
> (11. 657-60)

The Royal Society beholds "the Law,/ And rule of beings in your Makers mind" and transforms these "rich Idea's . . . To fit the levell'd use of humane kind" (11. 661-4). Science, then, is a kind of mediator between God and nature, bringing man to greater knowledge of both. The

"Apostrophe" thus draws together three of the poem's thematic strands: the patriotic, the natural, and the providential. All, though, are intricately interwoven throughout the poem, for God's providence encompasses the universe.

Dryden's depiction of the Great Fire, however, temporarily disrupts the vision of harmony among God, nature, and England that permeates the first section of the poem. The fire is punishment for sin, but not, as the republicans would have us believe, for restoring Charles to the throne. The sin itself remains vague--Dryden's aim is not to accuse--but there are suggestions. As Dryden closes his account of the sea battles, he implies that the English victory over the Dutch helps to amend for their aiding these same people, in Queen Elizabeth's time, in a rebellion against Philip, the lawful Spanish king. Dryden makes his point emphatically: "England, which first, by leading them astray,/ Hatch'd up Rebellion to destroy her King" (ll. 791-2). And lest we miss the reference, Dryden supplies us with a note to pinpoint it. In the narrative transition from the Anglo-Dutch War to the Great Fire, Dryden makes a further suggestion of cause that is at once more specific and more general. As the English destroy the Dutch ships:

> Our greedy Sea-men rummage every hold,
> Smile on the booty of each wealthier Chest:
> And, as the Priests who with their gods make bold,
> Take what they like, and sacrifice the rest.
> (11. 829-32)

Like false priests, the English sailors serve themselves instead of a higher cause. They delight in their greed, and greed, as the Dutch have demonstrated, is a sin of excess. Dryden expands from his description of this event to speak of the English nation. In the voice of the didactic historian, with the same loving authority he would later commend in Polybius, he implies that the pride of the English exposed them to the blows of Fortune:

> Swell'd with our late successes on the Foe,
> Which France and Holland wanted power to cross:
> We urge an unseen Fate to lay us low,
> And feed their envious eyes with English loss.
> (11. 837-40)

"Swell'd" is always a negative word for Dryden and the Augustans: bubbles invariably burst. This stanza, with its implications of the classical tension between man and Fortune, is sandwiched between two stanzas emphasizing the related unknowability of God's ways. Our joys, "sent from Heav'n, like Lightning make no stay" (11. 833-4). Still morally inflamed, but now speaking as the providential historian, Dryden reminds us that "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away." God's ways are ultimately unknowable--thus the impossibility of specifying a precise reason for the fire--and this very mystery should make us

thankful for what we have and keep us from despair at what we lose:

> Each Element his dread command obeys,
> Who makes or ruines with a smile or frown;
> Who as by one he did our Nation raise,
> So now he with another pulls us down.
> (11. 841-4)

These transitional stanzas link the two parts of the poem narratively by suggesting a possible direct connection between the sea battles and the fire. More importantly, they reinforce the unifying providential vision that encompasses the poem. As Dryden reminds us elsewhere, we are but humans and thus ultimately without control.[10] We can only live actively virtuous lives, in victory as in defeat, and have faith that the all-powerful God will reward us with a relatively fruitful earthly existence. Dryden's God does always eventually temper His justice with mercy.

The English, however, whether through greed or rebellion, have somehow upset the natural order, and the fire both punishes them for and purges them of their sin. Appropriately then, Dryden depicts the fire in images of unnaturalness.[11] In its outbreak, the fire disrupts the dark silence of night. The unnatural light from the fire blots out the natural darkness of night as its noise, together with the screams of the people, displaces silence. Dryden presents the growth of the fire with

perverse images of a hideous birth. A wind from the east--Dryden predictably calls it a "Belgian" (Dutch) wind (l. 917)--feeds the flames: nature now cooperates with England's enemies. Images of unnaturalness tumble on top of one another: political--"As when some dire Usurper Heav'n provides,/ To scourge his Country with a lawless sway" (ll. 849-50); civil--"Now, like some rich or mighty Murderer, Too great for prison, which he breaks with gold" (ll. 873-4); sexual--the fire's "inrag'd desire" (l. 886) and "wanton fury" (l. 920). The fire convulses all levels of nature--"The waken'd Tydes began again to roar,/ And wond'ring Fish in shining waters gaze" (ll. 923-4). The nightmarish scene releases evil spirits to celebrate in the flaming streets--"The Ghosts of Traitors, from the Bridge descend,/ With bold Fanatick Spectres to rejoyce" (ll. 889-90). Dryden deliberately overwhelms us by his implicit contrast with the natural harmony in the earlier section of the poem: this contrast expresses the central reality of human existence.

The fire becomes an army deliberately and effectively attacking the city, and at this moment of greatest despair, the hero--Charles II--enters. Dryden's introduction of the King--"Now day appears, and with the day the King" (l. 949)--emphasizes the identification of

King with day and sun--both are natural light--just as later, James relieves his weary brother at night and, like the moon, borrows his reflected beams. Charles is both an active hero and a Christ-like sufferer, but Dryden also reminds us of his tender parental care for his subjects. When we read that "shrieks of subjects pierce his tender breast" (l. 952), we think back to the image of mothers wailing over their infants lost in the blaze (ll. 903-4) and to the image of Rupert as the tenderly heroic mother eagle. The light of the King battles the blaze of the fire, but while human leadership like Rupert's and Albermarle's was enough for victory over a human enemy, not even the King, highest in the hierarchy of men, can actively overcome a fire sent as a judgment from God.

Throughout the poem, Dryden has been emphasizing the mutual love between King and subjects. Every reference to Charles is somehow linked with his care for his subjects and the manifestations of that care, whether active--preparing for war, repairing ships, fighting the fire, caring for the homeless--or passive--balancing the arguments for and against going to war, weeping at the flames devastating the City. The people of London in turn expend much of their energy in supporting their side of the relationship, the "passive aptness" (l. 564)

that is the subjects' appropriate stance. In the hierarchy of the poem, Charles' relation to God is analogous to the people's relation to their King, and only when Charles realizes this, when he prays with "passive aptness," will God end the fire. Dryden has prepared us for this scene earlier in the poem when Charles helps to repair the fleet after a destructive battle: "God and Kings work, when they their work survey,/ And passive aptness in all subjects find" (ll. 563-4). Here, the first "and" suggests that the King is very much like a God, but the fire humbles all before it as it burns away pride and excess. The King is, like "all subjects," very much a man in his relationship to God, and, thus, it is Charles' prayer, not his active heroism, that has effect against the fire. The prayer suggests Charles' complex relationship to God and man--it is this complexity that makes him an interesting figure in the poem--as the King first emphasizes his God-like attributes and then realizes that in the eyes of God he is but a man. Charles prays for God to temper justice with mercy, the same mercy which he had learned from God and which he had exercised after his Restoration. In a Christian-heroic gesture, he offers to take the entire judgment upon himself, to sacrifice himself to save his people. Finally, though, with a realization that only the truly great can

have, Charles expresses his own ultimate smallness:

> We all have sinn'd, and thou has laid us low,
> As humble Earth from whence at first we came:
> Like flying shades before the clowds we show,
> And shrink like Parchment in consuming flame.
> (11. 1061-4)

The repeated "we" emphasizes Charles' oneness with the people of London. All are insubstantial "flying shades" and fragile "Parchment." Charles' is a true Christian humility, a total understanding of his place in the universe and an ability to admit that understanding. Even now, though, the prayer has only partial effect: God sends a Cherub--Christian epic machinery--to save the war weapons, allowing for future English victories. Only later does mercy totally melt His wrath.

The end of the fire brings reassertion of the natural order. In a passage striking for its gentleness, particularly in contrast with the violent, unnatural fury which has preceded it, Dryden expresses the meaning of nature's rebirth:

> As when sharp frosts had long constrain'd the earth,
> A kindly thaw unlocks it with mild rain:
> And first the tender blade peeps up to birth,
> And straight the green fields laugh with promis'd grain:
>
> By such degrees, the spreading gladness grew
> In every heart, which fear had froze before.
> (11. 1133-8)

Dryden is the genius of what he calls "elocution," finding the word perfect in its context and reverberating

with meaning. Here, the harsh words of the first and last of these six lines contrast with the softness of each word in the middle lines. The past tense enveloping the present tense emphasizes this tender resurrection of the present within the framework of the brutal past. The close identification of nature and man that the poem as a whole presents makes this passage more than a simile. It is both the literal rebirth of spring and a symbol of all rebirths and restorations.

Dryden's achievement in Annus Mirabilis rests in his ability to see contemporary events simultaneously as meaningful parts of a continuing historical process and as representative of the immediate and eternal order of the universe.[12] His vision, in other words, is at once both horizontal and vertical. The English are like the Hebrews, blessed by God but provoking His wrath; the Dutch and English are like Carthage and Rome; the fire is like the rebels who would kill a king. The pattern of triumph, loss, and rebirth repeats itself throughout history, whether it finds its central symbol in the phoenix or in Christ. Every human event reveals the will of God, just as knowledge of the natural world brings us closer to Him. Dryden's deeply religious sense harmoniously merges belief in Christian virtue and the ultimate goodness of a God Who constantly tests that virtue, with a classical,

specifically Virgilian, conviction of the oneness of man and nature.[13] In both perspectives, man is small, and thus, paradoxically, only awareness of his limitations can make him truly great.

Consistently in his description of the fire, Dryden recalls to us the victories against the Dutch. His narrative and imagistic echoes--and they, like all echoes, distort what they repeat--place the naval successes in new perspective, bursting the bubble of swollen pride and forcing us to look at ourselves once again. When King and subjects are repairing ships for a return to battle, Dryden compares them to "labouring Bees on a long Summers day" (l. 574). The extended simile that follows analogizes between men and bees as ordered, productive societies with each member busily completing his proper tasks. But when the image reappears in the context of the fire, its implications differ strikingly. As the people of London are awakened by the fire,

> So weary Bees in little Cells repose:
> But if night-robbers lift the well-stor'd Hive,
> An humming through their waxen City grows,
> And out upon each others wings they drive.
> (ll. 909-12)

The bees become overwrought victims panicked in their helplessness; their ordered society collapses into frantic, blind activity. The attempts to battle the fire become,

in turn, reflections of this chaos. Now they are working not to restore ships, but to prevent destruction of their city, and their resources are as limited as the sting of a bee.

In a somewhat different way, Dryden implicitly compares those who exploit the fire for material gain with the sailors who looted burning Dutch ships (stanzas 204-8). The wealthy offer to pay the poor for help in removing their valuables from the flaming city:

> The rich grow suppliant, and the poor grow proud:
> Those offer mighty gain, and these ask more.
> So void of pity is th'ignoble crowd,
> When others ruine may increase their store.
> (ll. 997-1000)

In the previous stanza, Dryden had called the fire "Hydra-like" (l. 993), and so the "Hydra-headed mob" implied here has much in common with the destructive fire.[14] Their relationship to the looting English sailors becomes clearer in the following stanzas as Dryden analogizes the English mob that invades burning homes and grabs what the owners have left to those who scavenge ship-wrecked vessels. The looting English sailors have exemplified the sin of greed, and they, at least, are acting against an enemy during war. The behavior of the English mob acting against their own countrymen in a time of shared tragedy is, then, an especially vicious form of greed, emphasizing the breakdown in society. It also

reflects back on the looting sailors and suggests a fuller meaning for what could otherwise be excused as simply war-time activity.

There are other narrative and imagistic links between the two sections of the poem. As previously mentioned, the King's ineffectualness in overcoming the fire contrasts with his own, Rupert's, and Albermarle's success in the Dutch War, and an unnatural, hostile nature emphasizes the cooperative natural harmony of the poem's first section. Dryden uses imagery of sea battles in describing the fire to heighten further the connections. A line like, "One mighty Squadron, with a side wind sped" (l. 941), apparently belongs in the first part of the poem, but in context actually describes the fire attacking the narrow side-streets of the City. The second part of the poem, then, constantly forces us to reevaluate the meaning of events in the first part. What had seemed durable--social cohesion, harmony, and triumph--appears again in its true fragility.

Dryden, though, does not rely solely on the more or less subliminal effects of imagery to carry his vision. Behind the imagery lies a mind that is assimilating the historical material, and Dryden projects that mind through the voice of a patriotic but objective historian.[15] The speaker never forgets his relationship and responsibility

to the audience that is also his subject; the voice becomes a vehicle by which that audience can recognize both their heroism and their limitations. The poem continues the voice which Dryden establishes in his "Dedication" to the people of London. At strategic points, the speaker reminds his audience of their common identity--"our King," "we have conquered" (ll. 37, 1209, underlining mine)--or he steps forward to address the people with personal directness--"Have you not seen," "This I fore-tel" (ll. 341, 657). But while the speaker is one of the English people, there are special powers inherent in his poetic art and historical vision which set him apart. In stanzas 172-6, for example, he confers immortality on the English naval leaders by individually naming and characterizing them. He takes care, though, never to name any of the Dutch; they are condemned to eternal anonymity.

Dryden's problem is to have his speaker convincingly combine factual truth--which is necessary for the audience to have confidence in him as an historian--with imaginative interpretation--which is essential to raise the audience to heroic virtue. The skill with which he accomplishes this can be seen in the juxtaposed accounts of the deaths of the English hero, Lawson, and of the unnamed Dutch leader. Lawson's death is presented in such a way that it suggests a complex of meanings:

> But since it was decreed, Auspicious King,
> In Britain's right that thou should'st wed the Main,
> Heav'n, as a gage, would cast some precious thing
> And therefore doom'd that Lawson should be slain.
>
> Lawson amongst the formost met his fate,
> Whom Sea-green Syrens from the Rocks lament:
> Thus as an off'ring for the Grecian State,
> He first was kill'd who first to Battel went.
> (ll. 77-84)

The fact of Lawson's death is interpreted in the context of the annual Venetian ceremony during which the Duke of Venice "sacrificed" a gold ring to the sea as a symbol of the marriage of Venice and the waters.[16] Lawson--who actually died from his wounds some days after the battle--is presented as a necessary sacrifice in what is now an English ceremony. In a direct address to the King, Lawson's death becomes a symbol of English victory and, thus, of English marriage to the sea. The marriage means both that the sea and the English will enjoy a sympathetic cooperation and that the English in relation to other nations will dominate the sea. Building upon this, Dryden offers, as he often does, two further, "ultimate" interpretations: the providential and the classical. In one, Lawson is doomed by Heaven for a higher cause; in the other, he is mythologized as a classical sacrifice. The factual death becomes an occasion of solemn celebration imbued with political, religious, and cosmic significance. The next stanza records the death of the Dutch

admiral, Obdam, who was killed when his ship exploded:

> Their Chief blown up, in air, not waves expir'd,
> To which his pride presum'd to give the Law:
> The Dutch confess'd Heav'n present, and retir'd,
> And all was Britain the wide Ocean saw.
> (ll. 85-8)

Obdam remains significantly unnamed; the Dutch do not deserve, and so do not receive, the glory of immortality. His death is no marriage to the sea but an ignoble dissolution in the air, fitting punishment for the pride of one who thought he could rule the waters instead of living in cooperative harmony with them. The providential meaning of the event is so clear--God supports the just cause of the English--that even the Dutch understand it and withdraw in terror.

Yet the speaker never slouches into a partisan posture. He balances his role as English historian with his role as the "parent of mankind."[17] He reminds his audience that they are living in a particular place, at a particular time, under a particular king and that they should be justifiably proud of this historical situation. But they are also human, and they must see themselves in this larger context, with all the limitations of what it means to be a man. The most eloquent expression of this perspective occurs when the speaker pauses to generalize and moralize after his narration of an inconclusive battle:

> Go, Mortals, now, and vex your selves in vain
> For wealth, which so uncertainly must come:
> When what was brought so far, and with such pain,
> Was onely kept to lose it nearer home.
> (ll. 125-8)

Human existence is frail: the emphasis is on "Mortals." The speaker continues the theme in the following stanzas as he expands from loss of wealth to loss of life, with images of those who wait for the son, husband, and father who will never return home from the sea. In his ascent to yet higher levels of generalization, the speaker steps back to view his subject in cosmic perspective:

> Such are the proud designs of human kind,
> And so we suffer Shipwrack every where!
> Alas, what Port can such a Pilot find,
> Who in the night of Fate must blindly steer!
>
> The undistinguish'd seeds of good and ill
> Heav'n, in his bosom, from our knowledge hides;
> And draws them in contempt of human skill,
> Which oft, for friends, mistaken foes provides.
> (ll. 137-44)

Dryden again balances classical fate against Christian providence (although the shipwrecked pilot of the first of these stanzas looks suspiciously like a figure from a seventeenth-century emblem book). Whether we see ourselves as lost in "the night of Fate" or in the mysterious ways of God, we remain lost. When the speaker prepares for the transition from victory at sea to destruction by fire, he reminds us of this inescapable fact (ll. 797-800). The English suffer by fire not so much because they are

English as because they are human.

One of Dryden's strengths is his ability to perceive and accept human weakness while maintaining his belief in human potential. The result is a controlled optimism, and his poetry frequently reflects this hope by ending with a prophesy of the restoration of order. Dryden's statement that "Polybius was of the best sort of prophets, who predict from natural causes those events which must naturally proceed from them" (Scott, XVIII, 46) applies as well to his own poetic method. The visions which conclude his poems are presented within the context--grow naturally from the context--of the historical patterns he establishes within the poems. The prophesies present natural steps in the process of history; they are graspable realities. And Dryden's faith in the self-fulfilling prophesy encourages him to believe that his tangible presentation of a possible future will help to make that future real.

Annus Mirabilis establishes the method that Dryden will follow in his later poetry. Its conclusion both projects the historical future and resolves the internal tensions the poem has generated.[18] These two functions are inseparable, however, because the prophesy is not that of the inspired seer but that of the historian who can foretell the future on the basis of the past--the

past that has been imaginatively recorded in the poem. In Annus Mirabilis, Dryden has re-created the past in terms of a series of tensions between victory and defeat, virtue and sin, the natural and the unnatural, human strength and human frailty. The prophesy resolves these internal poetic tensions while imagining a near future which will historically resolve the political and moral tensions plaguing England and Europe. As the poem had begun by presenting the Dutch as disrupters of the natural order of trade, and thus of political harmony, so it ends with the projected restoration of economic and political order under English leadership. The English have come through their ordeal by fire and emerge, like the phoenix, renewed and reborn. The personified City--a unified being, as the "Dedication" suggests it is--rises from its ashes:

> Already, Labouring with a mighty fate,
> She shakes the rubbish from her mounting brow,
> And seems to have renew'd her Charters date,
> Which Heav'n will to the death of time allow.
>
> More great then humane, now, and more August,
> New deifi'd she from her fires does rise:
> Her widening sheets on new foundations trust,
> And, opening, into larger parts she flies.
> (ll. 1173-80)

Dryden reinforces the powerful image of the City giving birth to itself with words emphasizing the physical and spiritual improvement gained by passage through the ordeal. The lines are packed with comparatives--"More great," "more August," "widening," "larger"--and with declarations

of the "new," with its implications of progress and hope. The City will endure, Dryden quietly reminds us, until "the death of time." The Great Fire has been like, but it is not, this ultimate finality.

While it may seem disappointing that the poem resolves itself into a prophesy of London as the center of the mercantile world--a conclusion too little to contain the vision that much of the poem possesses--the ending does return us to the political foundation from which the poem originally arose, a foundation now buttressed by an increased understanding of what "politics" stands for in Dryden's universe. Political order results from and, thus, symbolizes a nation at peace with nature, itself, and God. The English survive, strengthened, because of mutual love and respect between King and people, a love that manifests itself in the virtuous action that is appropriate and "natural" for each individual's position in the social order. The political-economic harmony with which the poem ends is merely what the historian can predict on the basis of the past. In the context of the poem, however, it is an order symbolizing the restoration of peace among God, man, and nature. The poem ends softly--"A constant Trade-wind will securely blow,/ And gently lay us on the Spicy shore" (ll. 1215-6). The English have returned to the sea, but now they sail

on peaceful missions. The Thames flows through a London that has actively renewed itself, into the waters that unite England with the rest of the world. The wind is "constant"; nature, motherly once again, will "gently lay us" down at our destination. Whatever the immediate occasion that led Dryden to write Annus Mirabilis, he transcends it with a vision imbuing historical event with meaning that defines man's place in the universe.

Notes to Chapter Four

[1]Edward Niles Hooker, "The Purpose of Dryden's Annus Mirabilis," HLQ, 10 (1946), 49-67.

[2]See Chapter Two, n.6, p. 70, above.

[3]Quoted from an anonymous source in David Ogg, England in the Reign of Charles II (2nd ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), Vol. I, p. 304.

[4]See, for example, the two best recent analyses of the poem, to both of which I am indebted. Earl Miner, in Dryden's Poetry (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), p. 9, accepts Dryden's statement that the poem lacks unity of action but argues that "it possesses unity of poetic language and effect" as well as a "structural control of the two major parts." Alan Roper, in Dryden's Poetic Kingdoms (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 80, complains that the poem lacks narrative unity. Thus, Roper quickly passes over the opening two-thirds of the poem, concentrating in his discussion on the account of the fire without coming to terms with the poem's larger unity.

[5]Ogg's discussion of the Second Anglo-Dutch War, Vol. I, pp. 283-321, provides a useful text to compare with Dryden's account. It is important to recognize that Dryden was in the country when he wrote the poem and dependent upon sources which were partially inaccurate and perhaps biased. Thus, his knowledge of events, particularly of the sea battles, was in some ways not as accurate as that of later historians.

[6]For an excellent analysis of the ways Dryden presents the fire as an analogy of Cromwell and the Civil War, see Roper, pp. 81-7.

[7]There are obviously smaller shifts in tense within the poem. For example, when Dryden wants to present a history of the French role in the war, he moves back to the past perfect because he returns to beginning causes. Shifts between simple past and present are used for both temporal distinctions and rhetorical effect. The general progression of tenses, however, clearly moves from past perfect to future.

[8]Michael McKeon, in a book published after this chapter was completed, also perceives Annus Mirabilis as a providential history, with the raising of the Loyal London as the poem's central passage. See Politics and Poetry in Restoration England (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 162-5.

[9]For a discussion of the "Apostrophe to the Royal Society" in relation to the poem's theme of international trade, see the commentary in the California Edition, I, pp. 256-67.

[10]Miner, p. 16, makes a related point in a secular context when he speaks of the "tragic potential" inherent in the world of Annus Mirabilis.

[11]This theme of a political sin that upsets the order of nature may help to account for the rather large number of allusions to Macbeth in the poem. Nature and the supernatural seem to conspire against Macbeth, who murders the king and tries unlawfully to replace him. Dryden's allusions are primarily to the supernatural and apparently supernatural elements in the play. See stanzas 71, 78, 185, 223, and 248.

[12]In this respect, Dryden's poem might fruitfully be compared to Edmund Waller's Instructions to a Painter (1665), a poem which--as echoes in Annus Mirabilis suggest --Dryden probably knew. Waller's subject is much more limited than Dryden's: the poem is a celebration of the English victory at Lowestoft in 1665, the first of the three sea battles in Dryden's poem. Waller lacks the historical vision that characterizes Dryden's work and Instructions often bogs down in its own details. He does not conceive of the sea victory as part of a larger historical structure, but merely as an event to be celebrated for its own sake.

[13]The "Digression concerning Shipping and Navigation" (stanzas 155ff.), while a progress piece, can also be read in terms of the relationship between man and nature. Man learns from nature and utilizes nature in his effort to master the sea. The "Digression," in fact, suggests the hierarchical order of nature and man as it progresses from nature to the combination of science and art that imitates nature for man's use.

[14]See Roper, pp. 83-5, for the political connotations of the "Hydra" analogy.

[15]Miner, pp. 3-35, speaks of the "public voice" in Annus Mirabilis but seems to consider this voice as Dryden's own, rather than as belonging to a speaker who is created for this poem. One of the peculiarities of Dryden criticism is that, while we consistently discuss the various "persona" in Pope's poetry, we often ignore such figures in Dryden's poetry, from which Pope learned so much. We perhaps forget about voices in Dryden because he seems to be so honest and open, he seems to be telling us so much in his prose writing, that we cannot conceive of his striking a pose in his poetry.

[16]For more on this ceremony, see Cal., I, 283n.

[17]Dryden makes this comment about Polybius. See p. 57, below.

[18]The best study of poetic conclusions is Barbara Herrnstein Smith's stimulating Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

Chapter Five

History and Irony: Dryden and the Exclusion Crisis

During the first part of the 1680's, Dryden thought more specifically about historical meaning--about the relationship of the past and the present--than at any other time in his career. Ward suggests that from 1680 to 1688, "it is almost as if Dryden laid aside his role of poet and assumed that of historiographer royal."[1] His prose works of that period include His Majesties Declaration Defended (1681), in which he discusses the historical necessity of the King's dissolving Parliament; the Vindication of the Duke of Guise (1682-1683), with its lecture on discerning accurate historical parallels; the Life of Plutarch (1683), where he sets forth his most explicit statements about the historian's role and the practical and moral value of understanding history; and his translation of Maimbourg's History of the League (1684), itself the history of a period seen as a parallel to Dryden's own. The poems, of course, include Absalom and Achitophel (1681), where Dryden defines the proper reading of contemporary events by placing them in the context of the universal history of man; and The Medall (1682), in which

he exposes the Whigs' immorality by presenting them as creating their own perverse universal history. Satire, significantly, is the poetic genre most closely tied to the reality of historical detail.

"The Epilogue Spoken to the King . . . at Oxford," presented only days before Charles magisterially dissolved the Oxford Parliament in March 1681, suggests the direction in which Dryden's thought and his poetry were moving. His aim in that poem is to move his audience--both the King and the members of Parliament attending the performance--towards reconciliation by showing the merits of moderation and the hazards of discord. Standing apart from his audience, the narrator gently urges them to comprehend his own spatial and temporal perspective. Dryden plays on the theater metaphor that was natural for the occasion as he reminds King and Parliament that because of their presence, Oxford now contains Great Britain and that "Oxford is now the publick Theater; /And you both Audience are, and Actors here" (11. 7-8). "The gazing World" watches to see what scene this audience of actors will unfold. However, instead of discussing the immediate situation, the speaker emphasizes that the present is most importantly a link between past and future:

> From hence you may look back on Civil Rage,
> And view the ruines of the former Age.
> Here a New World its glories may unfold,
> And here be sav'd the remnants of the Old.
> (ll. 19-22)

The images are visual, but the meaning is temporal as well. The task of the present is "Past ills to heal, and future to prevent" (l. 24). The "now" has meaning only as a point in the historical continuum, and it is the actions that men take at this point which determine the shape of the next. They are, then, wise to look back at the previous point to see how that determined their own.

The reason for Dryden's growing concern with historical process was, of course, the Exclusion Crisis. More than simply a question of whether the Catholic James would be allowed to rule after his brother's death, the Crisis pitted King against Parliament in a battle over who controlled the succession, who controlled the government, and who controlled the laws. By 1679, Shaftesbury and the Whigs were a highly organized political force that had gained an increasing representation in Parliament and increasing power in the country. Fueled by the hysteria created by the Popish Plot (which they, in turn, were fueling), they turned local Parliamentary elections into national referendums on whether England would submit to a Catholic King. To the popular

imagination, this meant not just the arbitrary political power represented by the Pope and, more immediately, by Louis XIV of France, but massive reprisals by oppressed Catholics and fanatic Jesuits, who would burn London and dismember children.[2]

The conflict between King and Parliament took place on a slightly more rational level. The Whigs feared for the future of England under James' rule because they distrusted his character, his religion, and his associates, those to whom he would delegate authority when he ascended the throne. They further believed that Popery and arbitrary government were inseparable. From the Whig point of view, the only solution was to alter the succession to exclude James. However, this practical solution to an immediate problem forced them into political theory and rhetoric that resembled the arguments of the 1640's republicans. To the Whigs, Parliament was the center of power. Parliament, and thus the people who elected its members, should control not just the national purse, but national policy, the King's advisors, and even who would be the King. For the Tories, the King was, finally, the government, and the duty of the people was to obey his just and merciful rule. The conflict, with its sharp echoes of the past, aroused in everyone the spectre of another Civil War.

It was precisely this fear that, despite the tension and hysteria, led to the battle's being fought through manipulation of law instead of force of arms. The concept of and respect for law suffered as miserably during this period as any individual. The function of law is to create social, political, and economic order. But law can be easily perverted so that it binds and oppresses, so that the makers and executers of laws order them in the way that is in their own interest at a particular time. Matthew Hale, the great seventeenth-century judge, explains his age's conception of the noble function of the ancient English Common Law:

> Insomuch, that even as in the natural Body the due Temperament and Constitution does by Degrees work out those accidental Diseases which sometimes happen, and do reduce the Body to its just State and Constitution; so when at any Time through the Errors, Distempers or Iniquities of Men or Times, the Peace of the Kingdom, and right Order of Government, have received Interruption, the Common Law has wasted and wrought out those Distempers, and reduced the Kingdom to its just State and Temperament. . . .
>
> This Law is that which asserts, maintains, and, with all imaginable Care, provides for the Safety of the King's Royal Person, his Crown and Dignity, and all his just Rights, Revenues, Powers, Prerogatives and Government, as the great Foundation (under God) of the Peace, Happiness, Honour and Justice of this Kingdom; and this Law is also, that which declares and asserts the Rights and Liberties, and the Properties of the Subject; and is the just, known, and common Rule of Justice and Right between Man and Man, within this Kingdom.[3]

The law mediates between King and subject, between man and man. It protects property and liberty, and assures the

dignity of the individual.

Reality, however, inevitably undercuts such noble generalizations. A conversation between Charles and Shaftesbury that reportedly took place during the brief Oxford Parliament reveals the extent to which the idea of law had become corrupted. Shaftesbury had sent to Charles a proposal that the Duke of Monmouth, the King's illegitimate son, should be declared heir to the throne in order to ensure a Protestant succession. When Charles pointed out that the proposal contradicted law and justice, Shaftesbury answered:

> If you are restrained only by law and justice, rely on us and leave us to act. We will make laws which will give legality to a measure so necessary for the quiet of the nation.

Charles, however, was not taken in by the rhetoric that Dryden would soon immortalize. With the kind of statement that must have endeared him to his Poet-Laureate, the King replied:

> Let there be no delusion . . . I will not yield, nor will I be bullied. . . . I have law and reason and all right-thinking men on my side; I have the Church . . . and nothing will ever separate us.[4]

When "law and justice" become "only law and justice," then, clearly, all ideals of a higher order have been dissolved.

Dryden, like numerous others who wrote on both sides of the question,[5] realized that the conflict resolved

itself into the issue of what law is and to whom it applies. The abuse of the legal process--the packed juries, lying witnesses, flimsy evidence, and prejudiced judges of the Popish Plot trials and later of the Stuart counter-attack--only manifested on a popular level the degradation of law in the highest spheres of government. For Dryden, the law is immutable, just, and good. Law equals reason, and Dryden's faith in reason--because of his ultimate belief in his own reason--provides the basis for his optimism, however tempered it becomes at times, and for his hope that his own reasoned poetry can affect the way people think and act. In His Majesties Declaration Defended (1681), written as a defense of the King's dissolving Parliament and as an attack on a Whig pamphlet called A Letter from a Person of Quality, Dryden saves his most cutting sarcasm for his adversary's statement that, "there are some things so reasonable, that they are above any written Law." Dryden replies with polemic contempt:

> I love a man who deals plainly; he explicitly owns this is not Law, and yet it is reasonable; and will have its effect as if it were. See then, in the first place the written Law is laid aside: that fence is thrown open to admit reason in a larger denomination. Now that reason which is not Law, must be either Enthusiasm, or the head-strong will of a whole Nation combined. (XVII, 217)

For Dryden, the law is to be administered by the King. Law in the hands of the people means law subjected to the swaying moods of the crowd and the obliteration of absolute standards. English tradition demonstrates the historical validity of Dryden's--and the Royalists'--stand (XVII, 206). The King is great because the law makes him great, and he, in turn, governs by the law (XVII, 198).

These are the ideas which Dryden was to deal with on both a more concrete and a more universal level when he imaginatively transformed them into the vision of history that is Absalom and Achitophel. Yet, in this poem--and again in The Medall--Dryden is apparently dealing not so much with ideas as with people, and types of people, and how they pervert ideas because they misuse reason or do not think at all. Both Absalom and Achitophel and The Medall center around character portraits. This fact, on the surface, suggests that Dryden is turning away from a providential conception of history to a belief in man controlling his own destiny; secular biography becomes a significant genre of historical writing as belief in the all-controlling God fades. There is, too, a psychological need that focusing on political personalities fulfills. As Thomas Edwards suggests:

> We see that part of our life is more or less under our own control, in our 'personal' dealings with objects, people, ideas, or money, and that part of it is so far beyond any human control that it can only be entrusted to God or Fate or Natural Determinism--but between these areas lies another ground, in which we may have no role but which does look like human territory. The hopeful imagination populates this middle ground. We like our politics personified, so that leaders may have private lives to speculate about and large movements of power . . . may be ascribed [to] some of the traits of living creatures. Emerson's remark that there is no history, only biography, states our disposition--our need--to make history consist of the decisions of individual men and the personal causes of those decisions. Evidently we must believe that power is subject to human influence, that politics at its best can serve our human needs.[6]

The need is there in Dryden, in his audience, and in us. To bring in a new President or another King will somehow shove history back onto its proper path. Events do not have their own momentum; they are controlled by the human mind and will.

Dryden wrote his two great political satires from a position of greater self-assurance than he would ever again have. He was spokesman for the King, and the King had regained control over the government and over the hearts of the people. More importantly, Dryden felt confident in the rightness of his political and moral stand and in his analysis of the causes for and meaning of the Exclusion Crisis. It is significant that this was the time in his career when Dryden chose to write

satire; his choice did not depend only on his belief that public order was being threatened by enemies of the government[7] or on the realization that satire is the best poetic genre for polemic. To write great satire, one must be certain of the strength of his position. Somewhere in the layers of irony that unroll from the greatest satires, whether in the explicit voice of the narrative persona (Pope, for example) or the implicit voice of the author behind the persona (Swift), there emerges a tone of total confidence. It is this confidence in his moral stance and in his historical vision that enables Dryden to write satire and to transcend his role as mere spokesman for a political position.

As a number of critics have recognized, Dryden's decision in Absalom and Achitophel to present contemporary events through a Scriptural parallel immediately gives his reading of history the validity of an eternal, recurring truth.[8] The parallel had been used before;[9] the story of the evil advisor who would turn a son against his father-King and overthrow the state was fixed in the minds of his audience. As part of a recurrent pattern, the event seems less enormous, more controllable; and the temporal and spatial perspective would lift the fog of prejudice and enable Dryden's audience clearly to see good and evil. As important as this Biblical parallel,

perhaps more so, for creating a resonating context in which to see the Exclusion Crisis is Dryden's brilliant use of Milton.[10] Dryden turns his poem into "The Fall of Absalom" and so presents contemporary history as a re-enactment of the most decisive moment in human history, the fall of man. The rhetorical brilliance of this strategy is unquestionable; until the nineteenth-century the good and evil was immediately apparent to readers of Paradise Lost. And it is the evocation of Paradise Lost that gives the poem an intellectual depth and aesthetic richness unmatched in Dryden's other work.

Perhaps the most vital element that the Miltonic allusions bring to the ultimately inseparable intellectual and aesthetic workings of Absalom and Achitophel is the ironic structure that envelops the poem. Dryden's work, as critics sometimes forget,[11] is not heroic, but mock-heroic; it simultaneously ennobles and minimizes the dignity and importance of man. Achitophel is a great evil character, so magnificently evil that he is Satanic. Yet he is not Satan, but a puny imitation. In a poem the length of only one book of Paradise Lost, his evil act can be obliterated, as Satan's never can. Nor, as fondly as he may be presented, is Absalom an Adam. He falls quickly, in a single speech, and he falls not from love for one who has already fallen but--like Eve--

because of the blind pride that makes him grasp for the unreachable, that makes him unable to accept his actually unrestricting limitations. Dryden's creation of the behind-the-scenes workings of the plot to overthrow David-Charles reduces the Exclusion Crisis to the fruitless efforts of individual machinations. The character portraits of Zimri, Shimei, and Corah all have the same effect. Forces of evil are caricatured into images of ineffectual foolishness, slimy and fanatic greed, and vile lying. The rest of the "rebels" merit only a line or less. Dryden uses the character portrait to undercut the very reason it developed in seventeenth-century English historical writing. Instead of immortalizing the great who have affected the course of history, he emphasizes the littleness of men who believe they can rise above--or ignore--moral and national law and reshape the course of history.

This irony pervades every level of the poem. In its simplest use, it sprouts as an individual word, as when the narrator refers to Absalom's "Freinds" (l. 683), the false friends who have led him to his fall and who will use and discard him according to their interest. Nor does David escape untouched. The image of the promiscuous king with which the poem opens--typical of Dryden's meaningful humor, it leads us to total understanding of

the absurdity of Absalom's claim to the throne--remains with us as we see his heroic figure pronouncing the final speech. We see the man beneath the magnificence, and inevitably, we smile. The very subtitle of Absalom and Achitophel, A Poem, is ironic. For the seventeenth century, to call a work a "Poem" meant that it was heroic. The opening lines immediately undercut this pretension.

It is, finally, a vision of the essential irony of human existence that controls the poem and conveys its meaning; in some respects, this vision is its meaning. Irony implies multiplicity of perspective, an ability to look at a word, a person, or a situation from numerous angles. In Swift, the irony becomes a kind of madness that cannot stop examining and re-examining itself, diving into itself through thickening masses of possible meanings until all hope for a definitive truth has disappeared. In Dryden, the irony is more controlled because the narrator controls it. It is his ability to see multiple readings of history and multiple levels of meaning which convinces us that his own version is the correct one. He exposes in others the narrow vision that pinches them into a simplistic, convenient, self-serving view. In his temptation of Absalom, Achitophel draws a false parallel between David's seizing the proper moment to return from exile to kingship and the present moment

in which the illegitimate son should grab the opportunity to be king (ll. 262-7).[12] Unable to reason through the specious historical parallel, Absalom falls. Again, in the hierarchy of moral decay with which the narrator sums up the various rebel factions (ll. 495-542), he saves the worst for last, those who do not think at all:

> But far more numerous was the herd of such,
> Who think too little, and who talk too much.
> These, out of meer instinct, they knew not why,
> Ador'd their fathers God, and Property:
> And, by the same blind benefit of Fate,
> The Devil and the Jebusite did hate:
> Born to be sav'd, even in their own despight;
> Because they could not help believing right.
> (ll. 533-40)

Not to think is to be a "herd" of animals instead of a group of human beings. Action through instinct instead of reason led to the hysteria of the Popish Plot and the crisis of the Exclusion Controversy. Through this darkness shines the light of the far-seeing narrator, who is controlled, reasonable, and therefore right.

Dryden prepares us for his narrator's role in the epistle "To the Reader." There he discusses his moderation in the poem and points out that he is "only the Historian," the objective recorder of fact (II, 4). These statements are, of course, also ironic: if the grotesque portraits are only laughing at folly, then think what a more severe poet might have drawn; if the events in the poem are recorded fact, then humanity is

in a painful state. But the statements also set the tone that the narrator picks up in the poem, where he becomes the norm of reason in the perverse world of satire. In the midst of excess, he manifests his control through aesthetic and intellectual balance: the character portraits of the evil and the good, the carefully graded series of father-son relationships, and the couplets themselves. Surrounded by men who either deliberately or stupidly misuse language, the instrument of human reason, he speaks carefully and precisely: weighing the meaning of each word, presenting alternatives before reaching his conclusions, and always speaking honestly, leading his audience to truth instead of deceiving them into false trust.

Dryden saw that the central corruption of the Exclusion Crisis was the perversion of the concept of law, and so his ultimate goal is to restore "law" to its proper meaning, to have us believe in the identity of King and law with which the poem ends.[13] Corrupt and blind concepts of law permeate Absalom and Achitophel; implicitly countering them is the lost moral law of Scripture which the Biblical parallels suggest. To guide us into understanding this discrepancy, Dryden leads us through a series of controlled--by the narrator--and uncontrolled--by the rebels--misuses of "law," the word

and, inseparable from that, the thing itself.

The word "law" appears thirty times in Absalom and Achitophel, beginning with the narrator's ironic use in line 5 and ending with the vision of the final line. In its first three appearances, "law" is used ironically to mean a force that unjustly restricts. The narrator first speaks of the law that would limit sexual license:

> When Nature prompted, and no law deny'd
> Promiscuous use of Concubine and Bride. (ll. 5-6)

He next refers to Absalom's youthful faults and his father's response to them:

> Some warm excesses, which the Law forbore,
> Were constru'd Youth that purg'd by boyling o'r.
> (ll. 37-8)

In the next line, we discover that the "excess" on which the law frowns is, in fact, murder. This so easily dismissed law, then--like the law that regulates marital relationships and, thus, orderly succession--does not create unnatural restrictions. Rather, as the rebels would have us forget, the law is essential for social order; law restrains destructive excess. In the third of these early ironic uses, the narrator shifts the context to the political situation. He introduces "The Jews, a Headstrong, Moody, Murmuring Race" (l. 45) who are dissatisfied with the everything that they possess:

> These Adam-wits, too fortunately free,
> Began to dream they wanted libertie;
> And when no rule, no president was found
> Of men, by Laws less circumscrib'd and bound,
> They led their wild desires to Woods and Caves,
> And thought that all but Savages were Slaves.
> (11. 51-6)

The law which governs the tie between subject and king--or, here, in a significant analogy, God--establishes a natural, necessary order. To dream that there can be further liberty goes against tradition, reason, and God. There can be no society outside of law; the Jews revert to being savages living in caves. In their mad attempt to break the crucial ties, they cast themselves out of paradise.

"Law" tends to appear in clusters in the poem, and its next series establishes the attitude of the rebels towards this central force of order. The arch-abuser Achitophel grew tired of "lawfull Fame" (l. 201), presented himself as spokesman for the people, and "sulk'd behind the Laws" (l. 207). It is noteworthy, then, that in his long temptation speech to Absalom, Achitophel does not once refer to "law." Of course he cannot. Practiced in the art of deceit, he knows he could only use the word speciously, and even the innocent Absalom would recognize the hypocrisy. But in his second speech, when he knows he now controls the illegitimate son, Achitophel can reveal more of his true, twisted self. Thus, he

suggests to Absalom that David may "pass your doubtfull Title into Law," a blatantly self-contradictory statement. And in the final line of his speech--"They who possess the Prince, possess the Laws" (l. 476)--he exposes his assumption that laws can be freely manipulated by men to serve their own ends. Significantly, his final word is a corrupt use of "Law."[14]

When we want to measure the moral distance that Absalom falls, we can compare his conceptions of law in his first speech and in his later speech to the masses. In his reply to Achitophel's tempting offer, Absalom argues that his father is "Good, Gracious, Just, observant of the Laws" (l. 319) and that "His Lawfull Issue shall the Throne ascend" (l. 351). Even were his father "a Tyrant who, by Lawless Might" (l. 337) oppressed others, Absalom could not rebel against him. But Absalom wavers and falls. He allows himself to be talked into dissolving his double obligation as subject and as son, and his fallen language reveals the change. Once he has rejected the ties of moral law, he can deceitfully tell the masses that his father preys on them with "Arbitrary laws" (l. 701). To flesh out this scene of spiraling corruption, Dryden has shown us the rabbles' contempt for their lawful king (l. 516), Shimei's juries' perversion of law (l. 609) and his inversion of civil and religious law (ll. 610, 628),

and, finally, the existence of a law which makes it dangerous to question the honesty of Corah, the arch-perjurer (l. 666). Absalom's speech, then, marks his public entrance into a world devoid of any positive structuring force.

It becomes the narrator's task to restore meaning to a word that has been soiled by all who touch it. In the intellectual core of the poem, ll. 753-810, where he despairingly, angrily, and reasonably speaks to "foolish Israel," he tells us what law is and why we must adhere to it. Typically of Dryden, he presents the two extreme theories of kingship--the king as absolute power and the king as trustee "appointed" by the people--as he leads us effortlessly to the moderate position of constitutional kingship. In his appeal to an audience frightened of arbitrary power, he uses repetition to emphasize that law is essential for freedom and that the king, too, is bounded by law: "And Laws are vain, by which we Right enjoy,/ If Kings unquestioned can those laws destroy" (ll. 763-4). But if a king cannot tamper with law, neither, certainly, can his subjects. In his attack on "Innovation," the narrator builds up to the enormous crime of men who would corrupt the absolute standard of law:

> To change Foundations, cast the Frame anew,
> Is work for Rebels who base Ends pursue:
> At once Divine and Humane Laws controul;
> And mend the Parts by ruine of the Whole.
> (ll. 805-8)

Dryden has prepared us for the equation of "Divine and Humane Laws" by his Biblical analogy of political events and by the syntactic parallels of God and King that he has scattered through the poem.[15] The rebels, however, blindly assume that they can separate God and King: Shimei is full "Of Zeal to God, and Hatred to his King" (l. 586). To overturn human law in the name of God is a self-contradictory act. Human law and divine law are inseparable.

When David finally appears, then, he must be the embodiment of the God-like, lawful king. He arises majestically, emanating as though he were always present and only waiting for the proper moment in which to manifest himself--as Charles had done when dissolving the Oxford Parliament. It is this absence of a sense of place, of a specific location, that helps make David so overwhelming and that contributes towards raising the poem as a whole above any specific incident. While MacFleknoe and The Medall swarm with local references, the focus here remains on character and situation apart from time and place. Thus, when David speaks in his Miltonic, God-like diction, his voice fills the air. In a speech

of under a hundred lines, he refers to "law" six times, beginning with the misuse of law by the falsely named "Patriots" (ll. 965-6) and moving quickly to the assertion that "religion and the Laws" are the King's cause to uphold (ll. 969-70). In a carefully balanced couplet, he equates his own and the rebels' duty to the law: "The Law shall still direct my peacefull Sway,/ And the same Law teach Rebels to Obey" (ll. 991-2). David suffers, in fact, because he must adhere to law now, when it means justly punishing the rebels instead of--as he would prefer --mercifully pardoning them: "Oh curst Effects of necessary Law!" (l. 1003). The speech ends with an image of the invincible power of law, an image that reverses and destroys Achitophel's claim that he who holds the power controls the law. "For Lawfull Pow'r is still Superiour found,/ When long driven back, at length it stands the ground" (ll. 1024-5). The couplet, too, precisely describes David's--and Charles'--situation: apparent defeat, then sudden, overwhelming victory. Thus, the quiet vision of harmony that ends the poem fittingly resolves into oneness God, King, and Law: a "Series of new time" begins, again "the Godlike David" is "Restor'd,/ And willing Nations knew their Lawfull Lord" (ll. 1028-31).

Absalom and Achitophel is a poem about the way men pervert language, law, king, and God to serve their own

ends; the narrator's irony exposes these perversions or allows them to expose themselves. Within society (and, beyond that, in the divine order of the universe) it is law, the presence of an absolute standard, that prevents corruption from being ultimately effectual. Since law is necessary to control that corruption, an attack on law becomes the final crime encompassing all the others. This, Dryden suggests, is how we should perceive the Exclusion Crisis, as an example of prideful man blindly destroying in order to raise himself. And this, the intricate weaving of Biblical parallel, contemporary reference, and Miltonic allusion tells us, is the repeated story in the history of man.

But the mind controlling Absalom and Achitophel is too complex to permit us to rest satisfied with a neatly packaged conclusion. The poem ingrains in us the ironic perspectives that it is in part about. Just as the David who speaks in his God-like manner at the end of the poem is the same David who "Scatter'd his Maker's Image through the Land" (l. 10), so the narrator undercuts the King's pronouncement with a comment that, typically, magnifies until it diminishes. When David finishes his speech, we are immediately reminded of the absurd pretensions of it all: "He said. Th'Almighty, nodding, gave Consent;/ And Peals of Thunder shook the Firmament"

(11. 1026-7). Finally, then, the poem is not about politics or history but about the smallness of those who destroy lives and disrupt order in their vain attempts to control politics or history. We can only stand back with the narrator and share his effort to assert an intellectual control. With him we can despair and try to smile.

When Dryden wrote The Medall just months after completing Absalom and Achitophel, he again turned to the theme of false pride to express his anger at the obscene celebrations that greeted Shaftesbury's release from the Tower. The epigraph to the poem comes from the Aeneid, VI, 588-9, where Virgil describes the fate of the arrogant Salmoneus, who dared to emulate Jove. The poem itself is about a man, Shaftesbury, who thinks he is a god, and a people, the London rabble, who worship him. The medal is an emblem of this false worship, the counterfeit coin immortalizing a counterfeit deity. Dryden carries the Whig madness to its logical extreme and exposes the immoral base on which it rests by inflating the worship of Shaftesbury until it bursts from its own hot air. While he shows us the mindless clamor and directionless activity of Shaftesbury and his worshippers, he at the same time uses Biblical allusion to re-create the inverted providential history which the Whigs, with their false god, have written.

The opening lines, particularly the word "Ideots," establish the narrator's anger and contempt--or, they re-establish the tone introduced in the "Epistle to the Whigs." He quickly presents Shaftesbury as an "Idol" (l. 7), at the very least a false King, whose true palace is the Tower that graces one side of the medal (ll. 11-12). The portrait of Shaftesbury that follows, which focuses on his Satanic attraction to evil and the absence of principles that allows him continuously to change direction, reveals the true nature of the man others are blind enough to worship. Shaftesbury is, in fact, the perfect god for the mindless crowd that runs forever in extremes and that spends its days cheating and plotting:

> In Gospel phrase their Chapmen they betray:
> Their Shops are Dens, the Buyer is their Prey.
> The Knack of Trades is living on the Spoyl
> They boast, ev'n when each other they beguile.
> Customes to steal is such a trivial thing,
> That 'tis their Charter, to defraud their King.
> All hands unite of every jarring Sect;
> They cheat the Country first, and then infect.
> They, for God's Cause their Monarchs dare dethrone;
> And they'll be sure to make his Cause their own.
> (ll. 191-200)

The images accumulate to create a misshapen picture of overwhelming busy-ness. The illegal, immoral acts culminate in the attempt, in God's name, to overthrow a King.

Dryden's ironic Biblical allusions place the Whig madness in its proper perspective. They begin with

Creation (l. 19), then move through the Fall (l. 31), Sampson (l. 71), Jehu (l. 119), Manna (l. 131), Egyptian bondage (ll. 171ff.), and the parable of the Vineyard (ll. 218ff.). Thus, as the narrator traces Shaftesbury's career and the people's response to him, he builds a texture of parallels with betrayals and rebellions in Biblical history. The Whig history becomes a kind of Scriptural history, but an inverted one. Instead of the record of God's providence to man, it becomes a history of men's betrayal of each other and of their God.[16] And, again through Dryden's use of Miltonic allusion, we see the ultimate inversion: Satan-worship.

Against this perversion of sacred history the narrator angrily sets true history, the past that Shaftesbury and the Whigs should learn from. The events leading to the English Civil War parallel the present madness; if violence erupts, the outcome will be the same: "God try'd us once; our Rebel-fathers fought;/ He glutted'em with all the pow'r they sought" (ll. 127-8). The factious rebels will destroy themselves now as they did then, and the poem's final fifty lines draw a picture of the inevitable consequence of rebel victory. Dropping the fiction of Shaftesbury-as-god, the narrator addresses him as cursed Satan whose God, if he has one, will effect no providential intervention because He will not care. The

God of his "Canting Friends" must be one who rewards those "with false Religion, mad" (l. 286); His Heaven must be like Bedlam. True providence, then, is revealed in the divine justice that allowed the vicious infighting which brought down the Commonwealth. The vision of chaos and perversion with which the poem ends (ll. 287-316) is, in fact, not a vision--the narrator tells us--but a "common sense" rendering of a possible future because of the record of a parallel past. The lines reek with images of disease and decay--"decrepit Age," "Poyson," "Nations health infects"; excess--"swelling," "burst," "puft"; and noisy, ineffectual animals--"And Frogs and Toads, and all the Tadpole Train/ Will croak to Heav'n for help, from this devouring Crane" (ll. 304-5). Finally, then, the energy will dissolve itself: "And our wild Labours, wearied into Rest,/ Reclin'd us on a rightfull Monarch's Breast" (ll. 321-2). The Restoration proved the futility of civil war; the historical-political cycle must return to the moment when monarchy is re-established. History, in The Medall, becomes a record of human madness, of an inability to learn from the pain of human experience and so to break the cycle that plagues human existence.

Critics have scorned Dryden for writing The Medall, accusing him of creating an artificial fury and of beating Shaftesbury with a club when a flyswatter would

have been sufficient.[17] But Shaftesbury is more than the leader of the Whigs; he is a symbol of Whig madness, of the madness of all rebels. He is the man who sets himself up as God, and Dryden, thus, must de-idolize him and expose his worshippers. By creating and dissolving the false history of the Whigs--their own perverse reading of history--the poem magically rids the world of this Satanic, but ineffectual, evil. As Dryden understood, the situation of the Exclusion Crisis was not an isolated one; nothing is in history. Men will put themselves above law, king, and God; others will noisily follow them. There will be rebellion, chaos, and, finally, restoration--until the cycle begins again. Men must learn properly to read both providential history--the history of God and man--and human history--the history of men among themselves. Only then can they free themselves from this draining, destructive cycle of repeated, accumulated, and wasted miseries.

Notes to Chapter Five

[1]Charles E. Ward, The Life of John Dryden (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 148.

[2]For historical background, see J. R. Jones, The First Whigs: The Politics of the Exclusion Crisis, 1678-1683 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), and Sir John Pollock, The Popish Plot: A Study in the History of the Reign of Charles II, New Edition (1904; rpt. Cambridge: University Press, 1944).

[3]Matthew Hale, The History of the Common Law of England, ed. Charles M. Gray (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 30-1.

[4]This incident is reported by David Ogg, England in the Reign of Charles II, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), pp. 618-9.

[5]Volumes II and III of Poems on Affairs of State contain numerous poems by both Whigs and Tories attacking legal corruption during this period. See, for example, the four poems attacking Sir William Scroggs, Lord Chief Justice, in Volume II, pp. 281-91, and "Advice to the Painter: The Witnesses against Shaftesbury," in Volume II, pp. 494-99. In Volume III, see, for example, "The Compleat Swearing-Master," pp. 3-8; "The Medal Revers'd," pp. 61-74; and "An Ironical Encomium," pp. 217-24. Poems on Affairs of State: Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660-1714, Volume II: 1678-1681, ed. Elias F. Mengel, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965); Volume III: 1682-1685, ed. Howard H. Schless (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

[6]Thomas Edwards, Imagination and Power: A Study of Poetry on Public Themes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 4.

[7]See Dryden's explanation of the situations in which satire is justified, in A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire, Watson, II, 126-7.

[8]The list of discussions of Absalom and Achitophel is extensive. Among the more important or useful essays are: John M. Wallace, "Dryden and History: A Problem

in Allegorical Reading," ELH, 36 (1969), 265-90; Earl Miner, Dryden's Poetry, pp. 106-43; Arthur W. Hoffman, John Dryden's Imagery, pp. 72-91; George deF. Lord, "'Absalom and Achitophel' and Dryden's Political Cosmos," in Miner, Dryden: Writers and their Background, pp. 156-90; Ruth Wallerstein, "To Madness Near Allied: Shaftesbury and His Place in the Design and Thought of Absalom and Achitophel," HLQ, 6 (1943), 445-71; and Bernard Schilling, Dryden and the Conservative Myth: A Reading of Absalom and Achitophel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

[9]See R. F. Jones, "The Originality of Absalom and Achitophel," MLN, 46 (1931), 211-18.

[10]For an extensive discussion of Miltonic allusion and spirit in the poem, see Anne Davidson Ferry, Milton and the Miltonic Dryden (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 21-121.

[11]See, for example, Ian Jack, Augustan Satire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), pp. 53-76; Albert Ball, "Charles II: Dryden's Christian Hero," MP, 59 (1961), 25-35; and Morris Freedman, "Dryden's Miniature Epic," JEGP, 57 (1958), 211-19.

[12]Achitophel's drawing of false historical parallels is, Dryden suggests in his Vindication of the Duke of Guise, a typical Whig ploy.

[13]For an excellent discussion of the debate over legal-historical interpretations that took place during the Exclusion Crisis, see J. G. A. Pocock, The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law (1957; rpt. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1967), pp. 182-228.

[14]After deftly constructing an image of David ready to attack Absalom, Achitophel warns, l. 458, that "Self-defence is Natures Eldest Law." Apart from Achitophel's fiction, of course, Absalom has nothing to defend himself against. And Achitophel has managed to turn the issue of national law governing succession and moral law governing filial obligation into a statement about pre-civilized jungle law, what one should do when the lion--the royal lion, in this case--is about to strike.

[15]The narrator's syntactic parallels emphasize the inseparability of duty to God and duty to the King. Near the opening, he says of the Jews, "No King could govern, nor no God could please" (l. 48). Again, when he refuses to discuss, and thus to immortalize, the rabble,

the narrator condemns them with a succinct expression of their lowliness: "When Kings no Titles gave, and God no Grace" (l. 580).

[16]Alan Roper recognizes that the poem opens with a scene of Shaftesbury as a false god, but he does not see that the rest of the poem builds from this opening. See "Dryden's Medal and the Divine Analogy," ELH, 29 (1962), 396-417, and Dryden's Poetic Kingdoms, pp. 87-103. David M. Vieth suggests that the poem has a concentric structure, progressing from Creation, to Shaftesbury as a kind of false Christ, to Apocalypse. See "Concept as Metaphor: Dryden's Attempted Stylistic Revolution," Language and Style, 3 (1970), 197-204.

[17]Miner, for example, in Dryden's Poetry, seems uneasy with The Medall, calling it Dryden's "one angry poem" (p. 38) and marvelling at the "outburst" with which it opens (p. 141). Ward, in The Life of John Dryden, claims the poem was "provoked by a trivial event" (p. 179).

Chapter Six

The Search for Order

Dryden did not abruptly withdraw from political life with the Revolution of 1688. The withdrawal was a gradual one, first marked by Dryden's turning inward while Charles was still king and later strengthened by his distrust of James' policies. That Dryden wrote no political-historical poetry after 1682 until Charles' death in 1685 should not be surprising; he always required a public crisis to provoke him into such writing, and Charles had the country under firm control during the final years of his reign. What reveals more is that during the crisis-ridden years of James II, Dryden wrote only one poem, The Hind and the Panther, that was even partially aimed at influencing public events.[1]

Something of Dryden's mood and interests in the mid-1680's can be seen in the poems he chose to translate for the 1685 Sylvae. Horace's "Ode 29, Book 3," with its theme of the happy man who withdraws from the cares and pressures of the world, sets the tone for these translations. Repeatedly, they return to the need of creating

one's own inner strength, of mentally (and, if possible, physically) removing oneself from the public disorder that destroys individual peace. The Horatian odes, the excerpts from Books II and III of Lucretius, and even the passages from the Aeneid, with their focus on the heroic personal relationships in the midst of war, all in one way or another return to the problem of personal survival in a world of strife.

This awareness of the ordinary individual as a victim of historical circumstance is new to Dryden's poetry. The characters in his heroic plays are, in a sense, victims of history, but they are also the makers of history; they often help spin the web in which they are caught. In a somewhat different way, the elegy "To Oldham" (1684) deals with this theme, but in that poem the victimizing force is death, not history. Still, the tone with which that poem ends, resignation but not quite reconciliation, becomes the tone which Dryden later adopts when speaking about history and the individual. In "To Oldham," Dryden tests the formulaic consolations, but the perfect alexandrine that concludes the poem--"But Fate and gloomy Night encompass thee around" (l. 25)--is an admission that consolation has failed, that the poet has given up trying to understand the inexorable force of death. History, too, in the later poetry becomes such a

force. In Absalom and Achitophel, The Medall, and the earlier poems, Dryden's concern was with the imaginative creation and presentation of the causes of historical change. Increasingly in the later poetry, what becomes important is the effect of history on the individual. While Annus Mirabilis showed belief in a providential God controlling history, and Absalom revealed the inability of evil machinations to upset the proper course of events, the later poetry suggests that Dryden can no longer feel confident that history is, in fact, controlled at all. In the three poems on public themes written from 1685 to 1688, historical process becomes increasingly less orderly, and less possible of being ordered by the poet. At the same time, the poetic structures which Dryden uses enable him to move increasingly farther from historical fact.

When Charles II died early in 1685, Dryden responded as Poet-Laureate with Threnodia Augustalis, A Funeral-Pindarique. In his Sylvae translations, Dryden had been experimenting with the combination of formality and freedom that is peculiar to the Pindaric ode. "The soul of it," he had written, "consists in the warmth and vigour of fancy, the masterly figures, and the copiousness of imagination" (Watson, II, 32). This freedom allowed him to swing between

images of Charles as "Atlas," "God's Anointed," and "A Senseless Lump of sacred Clay," while James could appear as "Hercules," "A Warlike Prince," and a fragile man praying for his brother's recovery. The boldness with which Dryden transforms his images, the rapid mythologizing and demythologizing of people and events, has led Isabel Rivers to suggest that his aim in the poem is not to persuade through reason, but to create in the reader an enthusiasm equal to the poet's own: "the whole poem is encompassed in the deliberate creation and transformation of emotion: Dryden attempts to evoke grief, to spur it on, then to control it and substitute for it a carefully elaborated sense of confidence."[2] This creation of emotion through highly-wrought imagery, metrics, and a general magniloquence is one way in which the poem operates. But working alongside of these, perhaps slightly submerged as reason always is by emotion, is the carefully designed historical structure that by now is familiar in Dryden's poetry.

Threnodia Augustalis is less an elegy for Charles II than a plea for continuity. It appeals to its audience, including James II, by creating its own continuity between brothers, between kings, and between eras of English history. The hope, a magical one, is that the order in the poem will create a similar order in

the world it ostensibly mirrors. Charles' sudden death had quickly re-awakened the old fears of James' religion and of his dealings with Louis XIV. As one historian has written, "Anti-Popery was the strongest, most widespread and most persistent ideology in the life and thought of seventeenth-century Britain."[3]

Thus, almost every aspect of Dryden's poem reflects a striving for continuity. Even the identification of Dryden on the title page as "Servant to His Late Majesty, and to the Present King" helps to establish the theme. It also suggests the authority of the poet as one who can see beyond his own and the nation's grief to the orderly progression that grief necessitates. That progression, and the crucial need for it, is immediately revealed at the end of the opening stanza: "Our Atlas fell indeed; But Hercules was near" (l. 35). Through much of the poem, we see Charles and James together, as brothers--the key to succession--as English heroes, and as successive monarchs: "As after Numa's peaceful Reign,/The Martial Ancus did the Scepter wield" (ll. 465-6).

This pattern of images reinforces the sense of continuity established by the poem's structure. After the opening stanza and the second, which presents James viewing his brother at the moment of death, the poem falls into three sections. The first, stanzas III to IX,

chronologically traces the course of Charles' illness and James', the nation's, and the King's own responses to it. It is typical of Dryden, and significant for the poem's meaning, that Charles' death is shown in stanza IX, the precise middle of the poem. All events lead up to and from this central unifying event. It is significant, too, that Dryden creates the fiction of "the Royal mind" slipping out of its earthly existence behind the protective, gentle tears, "that silent show'r," of James. The replacement of kings is immediate. The final lines of the stanza prepare for the earthly movement from Charles to James and for the heavenly movement from death to life:

> That Peace which made thy Prosperous Reign to shine,
> That Peace thou leav'st to thy Imperial Line,
> That Peace, oh happy Shade, be ever thine!
> (ll. 289-91)

The three lines of the prayer move rapidly from past to present to eternal future as the skillfully structured sentence makes the first and second "Peace's" appear to be assumed facts. The anaphoric repetition in these and the opening lines of the next stanza are an incantation for peace, freedom, and the continuance of the miraculous healing brought about by Charles' Restoration.

The next section of the poem, stanzas X-XIII, chronicles the events and achievements of Charles' reign. Dryden appeals to Clio, the muse of history; there is no

need for poetic imaginings to glorify Charles when historical truth conveys its own glory. In a series of carefully controlled abstractions, Dryden immortalizes Charles' virtues, the obstacles he overcame, and the meaning of his Restoration for art and science. As physician, Charles heals the nation's wounds; as royal gardener, he orders and cultivates his garden to create a British paradise. Stanza XIII, with its opening image of the Phoenix, moves from Charles' earthly resurrection at the Restoration to his heavenly resurrection after death. Four lines beginning with "Live," two of which emphasize that Charles' subjects must let him continue to live in their hearts, lead to his apotheosis as "our Guardian Angel." The stanza, though, does not end there; the focus must never remain exclusively on Charles. As the conclusion to the previous section, stanza IX, had ended where that section began, at Charles' death, so this section ends by circling back to its beginning in stanza X, the Restoration. That event now includes James--"Charg'd with they Self and James, a doubly Royal fraught" (l. 399)--the Restoration is a Stuart Restoration. And the terms are so general, Charles waiting peacefully for the proper moment to assert himself, that the reference includes not just the Restoration, but the Exclusion Crisis, and Charles' policy throughout his reign. The

circular structure of these sections symbolizes the perfect, eternal continuity, and the circle extends its boundaries to encompass ever more of English history.

Stanza XIV serves as a transition between the past under Charles' reign and the future under James'. The poet laments the "frail Estate of Humane things" (l. 400), but then rejects his lament because, after all, the past has been good and the future will be better. Yet the allusions which Dryden employs convey his own nervousness and a warning to his audience. Charles was Moses leading his people to the Promised Land, but "still we murmur, and Complain"; the English threaten rebellion against providential beneficence. Under that ambivalent sign, the final four stanzas turn to James, the first two using mythological allusion to heroicize his preparation for the crown, the final two envisioning the future under his rule. Yet the vision is oddly tempered; the poet can only foresee a martial glory for England. Despite its echoes of the final lines of Astraea Redux, there is little sense of the coming of a Golden Age. There is neither the prophesy of commercial power and European community that marks Annus Mirabilis nor even the ironic vision of peace and unity with which Absalom and Achitophel ends. The poet prays that heaven will open its book so that James' subjects can see his future actions and realize they can

trust him. His worries are specific ones: that Parliament will withhold money (ll. 500-1), and that there will be trouble over the Test Acts--"Faith is a Christian's and a Subject's Test" (l. 502). But when his prayer is answered, when the people can see far enough to believe in James, Dryden's own vision is limited to "A Series of Successful years,/ In Orderly Array, a Martial, manly Train" (ll. 508-9). The distance back to "times whiter Series" of Astraea is a great one.

That Dryden employs so much imagery from Astraea Redux in this later poem suggests on one level that he is paralleling the restoration of Charles II to the accession of James.[4] Indeed, Dryden consistently builds in this poem on the characters of Charles and James that he had established in his earlier works. To some extent, they are the conventional characters of the period and ones which Dryden helped to popularize. Charles is the mild king who prefers tender mercy to necessary justice; James is the honest man of his word and the valiant military leader. One way Dryden tries to achieve continuity in Threnodia is to enlarge the mythology surrounding Charles' restoration so that it also includes, and finally focuses on, James. The restoration of martial greatness under James becomes, retroactively, an aspect of the Stuart Restoration.

Dryden's allusions to his own previous poetry, as he elsewhere alludes to Homer, Virgil, Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton, reveal something more both for this poem and for his work in general. Dryden now, it appears, can see himself as part of the poetic tradition; he can incorporate references from his past poetry to add meaning to his current subject. But that Dryden uses these earlier images suggests that he felt the need to impose from without a sense of continuity that did not emerge naturally from the historical situation. Threnodia is less a revelation of historical order than an imposition of that order on refractory historical truth. The generalities of the ode enable Dryden to avoid adherence to historical particulars, and the freedom of the form allows him to draw bonds between Charles and James that mirror only an ideal reality. The images from his earlier poetry add to this effect. They create a sense of continuity, but it is a literary continuity. Historical order, for Dryden, is beginning to break down. He will soon have to create an order outside of English history.

A letter written to Etherege early in 1687 affirms the sense that Dryden was disappointed by James' actions and was removing himself from the cares of the Court. Dryden excuses his delay in answering Etherege's letter

by complaining of a pervasive lethargy: "I have made my Court to the King once in seaven moneths, have seen my Lord Chamberlain full as often."[5] The conclusion of the letter suggests another reason for his distance from the King: discomfort with James' blatantly manipulative tactics in stacking administrative and military positions with those who will blindly support him. "Oh that our Monarch wou'd encourage noble idleness by his own example, as he of blessed memory did before him for my minde misgives me, that he will not much advance his affaires by Stirring." [6] Yet there also appears to be a more personal reason for Dryden's withdrawal. A sense of melancholy and of isolation from society pervades the letter. Dryden feels tired and alone; his disillusionment is both political and personal. The self-assurance of the satirist of the early 1680's has been replaced by the questionings of a troubled man.

It was during this period that Dryden conceived and wrote his most massive and difficult poem, The Hind and the Panther. Although, in one respect, the poem is a plea for religious toleration and political peace, there can be little doubt that Dryden wrote it out of personal need, not at the request of the King to his Poet-Laureate. The preface makes clear that the subject is Dryden's own and that he was caught off guard by

James' Declaration of Indulgence shortly before the poem was completed. Dryden's conversion had been greeted with vicious attacks by his contemporaries,[7] and these, along with the controversy surrounding his Defense of the Dutchess' Paper, had provided a personal motive for him to defend both his character and his new religion. But The Hind and the Panther transcends its occasion and its immediate subject. Despite the doctrinal debate of Part II, it is not simply a poem about religion. Despite the political references of Part III, it is less about current English politics than any other of Dryden's poems on public themes.[8] In an age about which it has become a commonplace to say that the political and religious are inseparable, The Hind and the Panther poetically re-creates the intricate tanglings of these two central forces. Always present is the sense that the entanglement should not be there; politics is public, but religion should be private. It is the responsibility of the government to allow private faith and the duty of religious groups not to impose their faith on others. But this separation is an impossible ideal; the private life inevitably becomes victimized by the aggression and intolerance of the political-religious powers. Finally, the poem questions "why" as it dives beneath contemporary tension to understand the reasons for these entanglements,

this intolerance, this lust for power. It is an attempt to convey the motives that prevent men from using reason to attain peace--the debate may end with a "victory" for the Hind, but the Panther has moved no closer to tolerance--to understand why we prey on one another like beasts. We were, Dryden reminds us, created "With open hands, and with extended space/ Of arms, to satisfie a large embrace" (I. 272-3).

One question we should always ask about Dryden is why he decides upon a particular genre for each poetic occasion. In this case, the allegorical beast fable enables him to create an appearance of impersonality, of distance between himself and his subject, at a time when he and Catholicism were under attack. Further, allegory enables the poet to veil unpopular meanings during periods of political censorship, and, at least in the Panther's "Fable of the Swallows," Dryden did have to obscure his meaning--or lessen its impact--for James and his more radical advisors.[9] The beast fable also gives a universality to the subject, removing it from the world of particular men in a particular location and placing it outside of historical time. But because the characters are beasts, there is a constant air of tension, of irrational violence that could disrupt at any moment.[10] The Hind is helplessly alone, surrounded by enemies who

pass her with "a glaring eye." The Panther spends the night at the Hind's because she is afraid that others will pounce upon her in the dark. Before the evening meal, the Panther "drew in her sharpn'd paws . . . And pacify'd her tail, and lick's her frothy jaws" (II. 718, 720).

The beast fable, then, serves as a satiric context commenting upon the brutal nature of men. Dryden makes this point most blatantly in the opening of Part III where he places himself in the tradition of Aesop and Spenser and explains, "If men transact like brutes 'tis equal then/ For brutes to claim the privilege of men" (III. 14-15). But Dryden skillfully keeps off-balance our sense of relationship to the beasts. At times, particularly during the doctrinal debate of Part II, we forget that the characters are beasts, only to be rudely reminded that behind her veneer of reason lurks a panther ready to spring.[11] The effect of beasts with some human characteristics is similar to the effect of the distorted human figures in Gulliver's Travels: we can identify with their apparently higher qualities only to be horribly deflated when we realize again their basically bestial nature. (The Hind, of course, who is lovely and benign, stands above the other characters; she is not a beast.) Dryden also debases actions in the human world by paralleling them to those in the world of beasts. The lust which the

Wolf and the Fox--and, later, the Wolf and the Panther--have for one another parallels the lust that led Henry VIII to break with the Catholic Church so that he could remarry. In Dryden's interpretation, the Anglican Church originates from this bestial motive; to satisfy his lust, the "Lyon" must also wed the Panther (I. 351). Finally, then, the beast fable allows Dryden to suggest the proper hierarchy of God-man-beast while at the same time showing its hopeless disorder. After finding the origins of political rebellion in the violent, preying nature of the bestial sects, Dryden pauses to give a brief glimmer of what should be:

> Of all the tyrannies on humane kind
> The worst is that which persecutes the mind.
> Let us but weigh at what offence we strike,
> 'Tis but because we cannot think alike.
> In punishing of this, we overthrow
> The laws of nations and of nature too.
> Beasts are the subjects of tyrannick sway,
> Where still the stronger on the weaker prey.
> Man onely of a softer mold is made;
> Not for his fellows ruine, but their aid.
> Created kind, beneficent and free,
> The noble image of the Deity. (I. 239-50)

What should be a simple statement of fact becomes, in the context of the poem, an ideal vision. In the matter closest to God--religion--man throws off his human quality of reason and his God-like quality of mercy; he descends to the tyrannic use of brute force.

Part I of the poem, then, is about origins: the origins of the religious sects and the degeneration of true

religion, and the corresponding origins of political rebellion. Dryden uses the fiction he has created to place English disorder in the context of a vast, disordered universal history. As Earl Miner has pointed out, much of this first part consists of "progress pieces."[12] The character portrait of each sect conveys a picture of its grotesque birth and development, and standing with these portraits is the history of man's creation and his own degeneration, marked by Cain's murder of Abel, the first murder, and one motivated by religious differences: "And bloud began its first and loudest cry/ For diff'ring worship of the Deity" (I. 280-1). In the midst of this universal history of degeneration stands the famous personal passage in which Dryden, or the narrator, gives a kind of progress piece of his own religious development. As Philip Harth has suggested, the passage has the rhetorical function of establishing the speaker's ethos for a hostile audience.[13] Beyond that, however, as so often in Dryden, the narrator's voice serves as a norm of reason and order in an irrational, chaotic world. In a poem about deterioration, about a world in the process of moving away from all ideals, the narrator speaks as one struggling to climb upward to true light. The crucial lines convey a spiritual and moral history:

> 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.
> (I. 71-6)

In a world blinded by pride, the narrator sees into his own fallen nature. Realization of his weakness has at least stopped his personal degeneration. It is the parallel realization of its own fallen state that Dryden is trying to effect in his audience.

While the narrator provides one brief norm in the disordered world of satire, the Hind--the Catholic Church--provides a more enduring one. The debates of Part II are certainly less interesting today for their doctrinal nuances than for what they tell us about the terms in which Dryden saw the Catholic Church, the need it fulfilled for him, and the way in which that Church fits into the larger vision he creates in his poetry. If Part I reveals the origins of contemporary English disorder by tracing it back to its earliest roots in the very nature of religious sects and, by implication, in the nature of man, then Part II is a reasoned, dispassionate presentation of the issues which were creating a national hysteria. As the lovely appearance of the Hind in Part I had startled her hostile observers and made their enmity seem absurd, so the gentleness and

intelligence with which she argues her case in Part II emphasizes the irrationality of the hysterical fear of Catholicism.

The two principal attributes of the Catholic Church, for Dryden, are its authority and its tradition. Authority is essential because it means disputes can be solved peacefully, that there is an ultimate, reasonable judge that removes any need for man to resort to his baser instincts. The connection between Dryden's belief in a strong monarchy and his need for a church with final authority is often commented upon. The "dregs of democracy" and the factious sects are inseparable in his mind. In Part II, he poetically conveys this connection by often presenting religious doctrine through political imagery. Thus, the Catholic Church contains a "spiritual Royalty" (II, 525), and the Anglican pretense of authority is like "tricks of state" (II. 272). The legal and military imagery--both the law and the military normally have political ties--which weaves in and out of the debate reinforces this sense of inseparability.

Dryden's respect for the tradition of the Catholic Church is at least equally important. It is one thing to say that Dryden's need for tradition is an aspect of his conservatism;[14] it is another to define what he means by the term. Dryden's historical mode of thought and his

sense of tradition are so closely intertwined that it is impossible to say which motivated the other. But as Threnodia Augustalis has shown, Dryden, in the mid-1680's, was searching for, or trying to create, an order-bringing continuity. The succession themes that permeate his earlier poetry reflect this desire on a smaller scale. Dryden, like Milton, was searching for the pure, primitive religion; that they found it at opposite extremes of the Christian spectrum is perhaps only another indication of their difference in temperament. The bastard sects of Part I, and this includes the impure breed of Anglicanism, have no legitimate past. The Catholic Church, however, originates with Christ and its link to the present is unbroken. It is, in fact, from this very tradition that the Catholic Church derives its authority. Although Scripture may be in part unclear to us, its meaning was once definite, and the ancient roots of the Church ensure its ability to interpret correctly. Dryden uses a triplet to emphasize this interrelatedness:

> But what th'Apostles their successours taught,
> They to the next, from them to us is brought,
> Th'undoubted sense which is in scripture sought.
> (II. 361-3)

When the Panther questions why Catholic authority can be trusted, the Hind points to its unbroken continuity:

> How but by following her, reply'd the Dame,
> To whom deriv'd from sire to son they came;
> Where ev'ry age do's on another move,
> And trusts no farther than the next above;
> Where all the rounds like Jacob's ladder rise,
> The lowest hid in earth, the topmost in the skyes.
> (II. 216-21)

The image of the ladder perfectly melds the Church's temporal continuity with its spiritual authority.

As he had done in Threnodia, Dryden also creates a kind of literary continuity that echoes the poem's theme. However, while in the earlier poem he could naturally build on the images from Astraea, in The Hind and the Panther he is faced with the more difficult problem of using his own Anglican, anti-Catholic poem, Religio Laici. Dryden was actually forced by circumstances to take his Anglican poem into account; otherwise, his attackers would have done it for him. His solution is to use the terms from Religio Laici but reject their original meaning by shifting them into a different context. As Sanford Budick has pointed out, "The readjustment is so carefully managed that Dryden succeeded in creating an impression of unbroken continuity or even inherent inevitability in the development of his opinions."[15] In Religio Laici, for example, Dryden had presented the Anglican Church as the via media that steered safely between the extremes of Catholic authority and independent fanaticism (ll. 425ff.). Now the sects are those same ships that "with full sails"

run "upon the shelf" (II. 257). But now the Anglican Church is no better; it is a sterile hybrid that garbles pretense of authority with private spirit. It has become a ship that cannot even get to sea.

Religio Laici is not the only of Dryden's earlier poems that is echoed here. Budick finds in the passage on Britain's obscene trade practices (II. 556-67) an ironic reworking of the vision of global commercial unity that marked the "Digression concerning Shipping and Navigation" in Annus Mirabilis.[16] And while in this instance Dryden refers to his earlier poetry in order to reject his own vision, he elsewhere alludes to his works in order to turn what was once a defense of Tory Anglicanism back upon those for whom he was speaking. In Part I, when Dryden begins his portrait of the Panther, he worries: "How can I praise, or blame, and not offend,/ Or how divide the frailty from the friend" (I. 331-2). The words clearly echo his introduction of rebellious London in The Medall: "How shall I praise or curse to thy desert!/ Or separate thy sound from the corrupted part!" (11. 169-70). Later, in Part III (11. 306ff.), the Hind compares the Anglican apologist Stillingfleet to Shimei, Dryden's emblem of hypocritical self-interest in Absalom and Achitophel. The allusions, then, provide a kind of complex intellectual and aesthetic continuity with his

earlier poetry, a continuity that Dryden reveals to be too often lacking in politics and religion. Poetry itself becomes a norm.

In Part III of The Hind and the Panther, Dryden turns from the historical problems of origin and continuity to the psychological question of motive. His concern is with the motives both of individuals and of the political and religious groups which they constitute. If the Catholic Church is the true church, why does not everyone, or at least the Anglicans, return to it? If political peace is in everyone's interest, why is there constant threat of rebellion? And, finally--and this is a new question for Dryden, one perhaps raised now because for the first time he was a committed member of an oppressed minority--why should the individual be victimized, even destroyed, because of his beliefs?

The theme of persecution first appears at the very beginning of The Hind and the Panther. There, a distinction is made between the Hind--the immortal Church--and her young who perish for their beliefs:

> Of these a slaughtered army lay in bloud,
> Extended o'er the Caledonian wood,
> Their native walk; whose vocal bloud arose,
> And cry'd for pardon on their perjur'd foes.
> (I. 13-16)

When the Hind opens her appeal in Part III, she urges the Panther to drop her enmity because once, only recently,

"both were objects of the publick hate" (III. 37). But this appeal to their joint suffering during the Civil War and Interregnum has no effect, and the Hind spends much of Part III unravelling the Panther's psychology, stripping away her false explanations until her true motives stand revealed. The Hind quickly realizes that the Panther is envious because now that a Catholic is King, her political power and wealth are threatened:

> . . . the Matron was not slow to find
> What sort of malady had seiz'd her mind;
> Disdain, with gnawing envy, fell despight,
> And canker'd malice stood in open sight.
> Ambition, int'rest, pride without controul,
> And jealousie, the jaundice of the soul;
> Revenge, the bloudy minister of ill,
> With all the lean tormentors of the will.
> (III. 68-75)

Dryden somehow manages to make these couplets sound less angry than sad; the Hind's acute but gentle perception filters out the harshness of the language.[17] And the Hind herself still has enough hope to debate for another thousand lines in an effort to achieve friendship.

Finally she can stand no more. She has pleaded for support for James' "Declaration of Indulgence," but the Panther has rejected her plea on the grounds of "necessity." When the Panther claims that the time is just not right for toleration, that the Hind should wait patiently, the Dame's forebearance ends:

> Hold, said the Hind, 'tis needless to explain;
> You wou'd postpone me to another reign:
> Till when you are content to be unjust,
> Your past is to possess, and mine to trust.
> A fair exchange propos'd of future chance,
> For present profit and inheritance:
> Few words will serve to finish our dispute,
> Who will not now repeal wou'd presecute;
> To ripen green revenge your hopes attend,
> Wishing that happier Planet wou'd ascend:
> For shame let Conscience be your Plea no more,
> To will hereafter, proves she might before;
> But she's a Bawd to gain, and holds the Door.
> (III. 847-59)

The commercial imagery emphasizes the point; behind the envy and the vengefulness stands self-interest. The profit motive, whether for material wealth or the more intangible aspects of power, rots the fabric of goodness.

As the opening of the poem makes clear, the Hind's concern is with those who privately suffer as a consequence of this public strife. As Dryden suggests in another context: "No private person in the foes estate/ Can plead exemption from the public fate" (III. 349-50). And if the attack is not always physical, the public slander can be equally painful. In a thinly veiled personal passage, Dryden attacks "The Homicide of names" (III. 259). He has suffered because he is a Catholic, but he will resist the temptation to "pollute" his "satyr" by attacking those who are already fallen (III. 264ff.). As the passage expands, Dryden again becomes the kind of norm that he was in Part I. It is the Hind who is speaking, but the

reference is clear. Although now a victim of public scorn, Dryden still has the strength to attack the unworthy motives of his past and to reaffirm the rightness of his decision:

> If joyes hereafter must be purchas'd here
> With loss of all that mortals hold so dear,
> Then welcome infamy and publick shame,
> And, last, a long farwell to worldly fame.
> "Tis said with ease, but oh, how hardly try'd
> By haughty souls to humane honour ty'd!
> O sharp convulsive pangs of agonizing pride!
> Down then thou rebell, never more to rise,
> And what thou didst, and do'st so dearly prize,
> That fame, that darling fame, make that thy sacrifice.
> (III. 281-90)

This renunciation of the pride that fed his need for worldly fame is a rejection of the motives from which the Panther will not free herself. The public consequences of Dryden's conversion heighten his private torment.

The two fables that dominate Part III turn into narrative and visual form the themes that Dryden has been developing. The Martyn in the Panther's fable and the Buzzard in the Hind's exemplify the ignorant and self-serving men who lead the innocent to destruction in order to serve their own interests. The swallows and the doves suffer because they are true to their beliefs. The Panther's "Fable of the Swallows" envisions the destruction of the Catholic swallows through their reliance on Father Petre, James' radical Catholic advisor. Thus, through the cloak of a malicious Anglican vision, Dryden

attempts to warn James about his alliance with extremist advisors. The Martyn's, Father Petre's, vain belief in superstition and his base fear--and the gullibility of the swallows--lead to the chaos and death with which the fable ends. The Martyn's cowardly attempt to save himself fails; the destruction of the Catholics is complete.

In the "Fable of the Pigeons," with which the Hind counters, the "Plain good Man" devoid of hidden motives and his ascetic doves are envied by the greedy pigeon Anglicans. The Buzzard whom they call in--modelled on Burnet but with some characteristics of William of Orange--has all the evil motives attributed to the Panther:

> Interest in all his Actions was discern'd;
> More learn'd than Honest, more a Wit than learn'd.
> Or forc'd by Fear, or by his Profit led,
> Or both conjoyn'd, his Native clime he fled.
> (III. 1150-3)

The Buzzard is deceitful, stupid, gross, and impudent. He and the pigeons perfectly follow the recipe for Anglican narrow-mindedness which Dryden has presented earlier in the poem (III. 400ff.). The increasing venom in the pigeon camp is met with tolerance by the mild owner of the estate until he benignly undercuts their evil plans with his "Declaration of Indulgence." The fable, and the poem, ends with a vision of Catholic ascendency and with the collapse of Anglican pretensions. But there is actually a dual vision, one immediate and

definite, the other in the future and more tentative. Anglican power will melt: "Like Snows in warmth that mildly pass away,/ Dissolving in the Silence of Decay" (III. 1271-2). More violent events may occur, though. The Buzzard Burnet-William, waiting until James' death, may devour the pigeons who stupidly called for his help. Or, as happened after the Civil War--Dryden's favorite analogy--the pigeons, "Rent in Schism (for so their Fate decrees)"--may destroy themselves while "The Tyrant smiles below, and waits the falling feast" (III. 1288). The motives which cause the Anglicans' intolerance of Catholics will eventually lead to their own downfall.

The Hind and the Panther is far from an optimistic poem. The world it depicts, with the important exception of the norms--the Hind and her young, the narrator-Dryden, and at times, perhaps, James--is teeming with blindness, pride, ignorance, and evil. It is, in fact, the degenerated, disordered world which marks the satiric vision.[18] The self-assured historical prophesies that have characterized Dryden's prophetic endings have altered significantly. Astraea Redux ended with a mythic vision of a new era; Annus Mirabilis with a confident sense of providential guidance; Absalom and Achitophel concluded with its gently ironic restoration of order; and Threnodia Augustalis with a limited hope for military supremacy.

Now, however, Dryden confronts us with three possible endings. The Panther's vision presented through her fable is, despite her malice, a real alternative. The Hind can foresee a violent future beyond the immediate peace. Because Dryden has rejected all simplifying schemes for ordering history, he can no longer confidently predict any outcome. In The Hind and the Panther there is no God controlling the world of men. And human motivation is so perverted by self-interest that there can be little hope for peaceful resolutions. Only the strength of individual faith--the strength that informs the poem--can offset the nightmare of reality. When the Hind finally retires "with glorious Visions of her future state" (III. 1298), she may well be imagining the afterlife of her young, not her earthly existence in England.

Dryden's doubt in the possibility of ordered historical progression explodes in his final "official" poem, Britannia Rediviva, A Poem on the Birth of the Prince. The poem was written under impossible conditions. The country had been tolerating James' abuse of perogative because, in the absence of a male heir, it was confidently believed that his Protestant daughter, Mary, would succeed to the throne. James' age and his wife's history of unsuccessful pregnancies became a source of comfort to a

nation that saw increasing Catholic power in what had once been Anglican strongholds. When a son was born, most people were convinced that he was actually an illegitimate product of some devious trick to propagate the line of Catholic monarchs. Hysteria once again became the national mood.[19]

Dryden clearly had little trust in James and his rather stupid abuse of power, but his position as Poet-Laureate required that he celebrate the birth. The excessive use of hyperbole and the almost frantic search for appropriate analogies that characterize the poem indicate his lack of any inspiring commitment. It is, in fact, possible to read the opening of the poem as containing veiled allusions to Dryden's own disbelief in the birth of a legitimate heir. Images repeatedly suggest that the son was brought to England as the product of a plan; the hyperbole opens itself to an ironic reading;

> Or did the Mighty Trinity conspire,
> As once, in Council to Create our Sire:
> It seems as if they sent the New-Born Guest
> To wait on the Procession of their Feast;
> And on their Sacred Anniverse decree'd
> To stamp their Image on the promis'd Seed. (11. 25-30)

Apart from the obvious surface reference, these lines can also be read as an allusion to James' "secret" circle of Catholic advisors.[20] "Conspire," "Create," "sent," "decree'd," and "stamp their Image" all suggest a

sinister plot. The earlier image of the "Paraclete" bringing the "Royal Infant" to earth (ll. 19-23), and the poet's prayer--"Hail Son of Pray'rs! by holy Violence/ Drawn down from Heav'n" (ll. 35-6)--may also be ironic. It is difficult to know whether Dryden's extended conceit of the prince as Christ, whose miraculous birth will ensure the succession, simply leaves the lines open to unintended irony, or whether the irony is consciously present. Dryden is, elsewhere in the poem, more obviously trying to convince his audience to accept a legitimate birth. But suspicions exist, and one of Dryden's strengths has always been his diction, his choice of the perfect, reverberating word. He compares the Prince to "Joves Increase, who from his Brain was born" (l. 208), and refers to him as "The Pledge of Heav'n . . . dropping from above" (l. 150). The numerous footnotes explaining the allusions, unusual for Dryden, may be a device to guide his audience to a particular reading and further obscure the undercurrent of irony and doubt.

But if the irony of the images may be unintentional, or the manifestation of an unconscious doubt, the poem's structure clearly demonstrates Dryden's lack of faith in orderly historical process. Dryden's earlier public poems had all ended in prophesies, and those prophesies had become progressively less confident. In Britannia

Rediviva there is no prophesy at all. As he writes earlier in the poem:

> Tho' Poets are not Prophets, to foreknow
> What Plants will take the Blite, and what will grow,
> By tracing Heav'n his Footsteps may be found:
> Behold! how awfully He walks the round! (ll. 71-4)

These lines suggest a return to belief in providential history, but the God of Britannia is one who is constantly testing the nation's faith. While the poet can read divine signs, he cannot prophesy the future. The poem, then, ends with a praise of James that quickly becomes a warning. The King derives his power from God and must imitate him. James has been known for his justice, as Charles was for his mercy. He must remember to be just, for--as the poem concludes--"Your self our Ballance hold, the Worlds, our Isle" (l. 361). If Dryden can no longer trust his monarch, he can no longer believe in the destiny of England. The recurrent crises that have plagued the nation during his lifetime have at last worn away his belief that history somehow will work itself out--or be worked out--for the best. Dryden's conception of his own poetic role alters accordingly. No longer can he be the historian-orator who will, by addressing issues rationally and imaginatively, change the way men think and act and effect an order in the world that copies the order in his poetry.

Notes to Chapter Six

[1]Britannia Rediviva is a special case, written out of obligation because Dryden was Poet-Laureate. It will be discussed below.

[2]Isabel Rivers, The Poetry of Conservatism, p. 143. For another analysis of images in this poem, see Arthur Hoffman, "Dryden's Panegyrics and Lyrics," in Miner, ed., John Dryden: Writers and their Backgrounds, pp. 120-55.

[3]J. R. Jones, The Revolution of 1688 in England (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), p. 75.

[4]For a list of these imagistic allusions, see Volume III of the California Dryden, p. 304.

[5]The Letters of John Dryden, ed. Charles E. Ward (Durham, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), p. 26.

[6]Letters, p. 27.

[7]See Poems on Affairs of State, Volume IV: 1685-1688, ed. Galbraith M. Crump (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968). Verse attacking Dryden's conversion can be found on pp. 75-90; attacks on The Hind and the Panther are on pp. 118-50.

[8]Criticism of The Hind and the Panther too consistently views the poem only in relation to Dryden's conversion, its religious meaning, and Religio Laici. The two major essays on the poem both limit themselves for this reason. See Philip Harth, Contexts of Dryden's Thought (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), and Sanford Budick, Dryden and the Abyss of Light (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

[9]For the function of the beast fable, see John Wallace, "Dryden and History: A Problem in Allegorical Reading"; for the way allegory provides an illusion of impersonality, see Harth, Contexts of Dryden's Thought. The best analysis of the political and psychological uses of allegory is in Angus Fletcher, Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964).

[10]William Myers, in Dryden (London: Hutchinson, 1973), p. 121, recognizes the presence of this tension.

[11]See Earl Miner, Dryden's Poetry, pp. 146ff., for a discussion of discontinuous allegory.

[12]Miner, Dryden's Poetry, pp. 182-3. Miner, however, does not discuss the reasons for these structures nor their relation to the rest of the poem.

[13]Harth, Contexts of Dryden's Thought, pp. 51-4.

[14]Dryden criticism, beginning with his contemporaries, has been plagued by an obsession with political labels. As a result of this categorizing, his poetry is too often squeezed into a political mold that, actually, it consistently spills out of.

[15]Budick, Dryden and the Abyss of Light, p. 172. The surrounding pages contain an excellent discussion of the complex use of Religio Laici in the later poem.

[16]Budick, p. 175.

[17]One reason why the anger in this passage is mitigated may be the rhyming words: "mind," "sight," "controul," "soul," and "will" are all words with positive connotations. Almost every line seems to begin with venom, but to end with hope.

[18]The central discussion of the crowded, chaotic "scene of satire" is in Alvin Kernan, The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 7-14.

[19]For the background to this period, see Stuart E. Prall, The Bloodless Revolution: England, 1688 (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1972), and David Ogg, England in the Reigns of James II and William III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955).

[20]For a discussion of James' "secret conclave of Roman Catholic" advisors, see Ogg, England in the Reigns of James II and William III, pp. 142ff.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion: History as Metaphor

In the dedicatory epistle to the Duke of Ormond that opens his Fables, Dryden alludes to the distinction between poetry and prose that was a commonplace for the seventeenth-century writer. He interrupts his praise of Ormond's character and achievements to consider questions of decorum:

> If I design'd this for a Poetical Encomium, it were easy to enlarge on so copious a Subject; but confining my self to the Severity of Truth, and to what is becoming me to say, I must not only pass over many Instances of your Military Skill, but also those of your assiduous Diligence in the War. . . . (Kinsley, p. 518, ll. 141-5)

Dryden here turns the problem into a compliment to the Duke; prose restricts him to "the Severity of Truth," but that truth is inspiring in itself. Yet the companion poetic dedication, "To the Duchess of Ormond," brilliantly demonstrates what pleasing glorification and allusive depth can be achieved through poetic heightening while the poet still deviates neither from truth of character nor truth of fact. The Duke remains the Duke, an exemplary but prose-bound character; the Duchess retains her individuality but further becomes the ideal of beauty, chastity,

and goodness.

The distinction between poetry and prose extends itself to distinctions among the kinds of truth that are proper for the various poetic genres. This question of propriety was particularly important to Dryden since, at least until 1688, his primary thematic concern was the poetic presentation and interpretation of historical fact. In each poetic situation, the decision he made about genre was influenced by and further determined the form in which history would appear. The epic conventions of Annus Mirabilis reinforce the themes of man's heroism and God's providence; the satiric inversions of The Medall reduce man to an insignificant blot in the historical process; and the mock-heroic of Absalom and Achitophel is itself a metaphor of the ironic vision which sees man as at once noble and ridiculous, powerful and helpless. Late in his career as Poet-Laureate, Dryden deliberately selected genres which freed him from the restraints of historical truth. That Threnodia Augustalis is an ode meant not only that Dryden could glorify Charles, but that he had the freedom to treat history so imaginatively that uncomfortable truths could be avoided. The epistolary form of Religio Laici restricts Dryden to presentation of the immediate issues, while the beast fable of The Hind and the Panther allows him to create a mythic world

history.

When the Glorious Revolution abruptly ended his career as Poet-Laureate, Dryden--because so much of his work was in response to immediate political occasions--inevitably changed as a poet. Yet it is only if we insist that Dryden is primarily a political poet that this change seems real. If, instead, we understand that Dryden's political themes, while of unquestionable significance in themselves, might be more broadly viewed as aspects of his historical concerns, then his poetic changes become a further exploration of form--an interest that has marked his career--and an expansion of the terms in which he talked about historical meaning. Dryden's late poetry divides itself generally into two groups: the Horatian epistles which he wrote fairly regularly from 1691 to 1698, and his two startling, final works, the sprawling Fables and the compact Secular Masque. Developed from his earlier poetry--"To Charleton," "To Roscommon"--the epistles stay appropriately close to the concrete facts of external reality. The Fables and the Secular Masque, however, because of their very forms, are able to examine in its universal implications the meaning of history.[1]

The two best epistles, "To Congreve" and "To Godfrey Kneller," (both 1694) have similar structures.

Each praises its subject by recounting the history of his art--drama and painting--and by presenting him as combining, or even transcending, the finest attributes of his predecessors.[2] In each case, Dryden brings himself into the poem as part of the literary tradition. In "Kneller," it is the artist's portrait of Shakespeare that inspires the poet; in "Congreve," it is the more complex relationship between the aging poet and his young successor. "Kneller" further develops what is only implied in "Congreve": that all artists, all men, are limited by the conditions of the age in which they live. In "Kneller," also, Dryden points to the interrelatedness of political and artistic history when he discusses the Goths' destruction of art and their interruption of artistic tradition, just as, in "Congreve," he relates the cultivation of English poetry to Charles' restoration.

"To Congreve" is a moving personal poem. The relationship between Dryden and his successor projects both the sadness and pleasure the author experiences in bequeathing his poetic laurels and makes that succession into a metaphor of the larger poetic tradition. That tradition shines as an isolated beam through an age of darkness, whose dullness is so great that Congreve did not inherit his deserved post as Poet-Laureate. It is an

age in which "not I, but Poetry is curs'd" (l 47). The political analogies not only relate politics and art, but make clear that both are metaphors of the comprehensive vision of continuity that is central to Dryden's poetry: "The Father had descended for the Son;/ For only You are lineal to the Throne" (ll. 43-4). Succession--whether familial, poetic, or monarchic--is the key to ordered progression. But Fortune, too, has its place in the historical scheme. The ungrateful times have left Dryden to suffer his old age in poverty, but Fortune has blessed Congreve with both genius and wealth. Men are affected by both historical circumstance and the unanalyzable workings of an unknowable force. Dryden's poem ends with a plea that Congreve defend the old poet's name once he is dead. The poem, about succession and continuity, is itself an act of bequeathing succession, ensuring continuity. The opening lines--"Well then; the promis'd hour is come at last;/ The present Age of Wit obscures the past" (ll. 1-2)--are bursting with both obvious and muted temporal markings, and the poem freezes for eternity that "promis'd hour," that crucial historical moment when continuity is ensured, just as Threnodia, dwelling on the instant of Charles' death, had frozen in images the succession of the Stuart crown.

By the final years of his life, Dryden was able to meld into one coherent picture his comprehensive vision of the complex relationship between man and history. The translations from Homer, Ovid, Boccaccio, and Chaucer, along with Dryden's original poems, that together constitute the Fables (1700) encompass much of Western history and culture and all levels of society.[3] The tales-within-the-tales--Nestor's story of the heroic age when giant men battled centaurs (in Book XII of the Metamorphoses) and the Wife of Bath's pre-Christian fairyland setting--stretch history back even farther. But fable after fable reveals variations on a theme: the conflict between man's character and the historical circumstances in which he happens to live, the opposing forces of private desire and public duty. The fables accomplish on a grand scale what Dryden had achieved consistently through his use of classical and Christian analogy: they demonstrate his conviction that, while the surface forms of culture alter, human nature itself remains forever the same. Human beings consistently face the same moral decisions: they can be victimized by their blinding pride, ignorance of their motives, or the overwhelming passion of love; or they can triumph through devotion and simple acts of virtue. Over all the characters lurks the ambiguous figure of Fortune, which takes away as quickly as it gives--and Fortune,

in turn, is only one way of talking about the inexorable movement of time and the constant process of change, the theme that unites history and philosophy and which finds expression everywhere in the Fables.

Apart from his virtuoso performance as translator, Dryden's achievement in the Fables is his construction of its design, which, in his criticism, he had called the first and greatest task of the poet.[4] Characters, situations, and themes reverberate back and forth, and the poems which present norms of simple, virtuous living are strategically placed.[5] The opening fable, Chaucer's Palamon and Arcite, establishes the themes that the rest of the poems will develop further. Victims of historical circumstance and of their own courage, Palamon and Arcite are imprisoned together after they are defeated in battle. Their mutual violent love for the apparently unattainable Emily severs the ties of a life-long friendship and turns them into the bitterest of enemies. Fortune's wheel revolves continuously until at the moment of Arcite's triumph in arms and in love, he is mortally wounded in a freakish accident. An understandable pride has helped him to his fate--he had removed his protective armor so his lady-love could see his face--but Dryden, in an addition to Chaucer, emphasizes that "'tis the Fault of Fortune, not his own"

(III. 736). The poem ends with Theseus' great speech, expanded by Dryden, about the impermanence that is the essential attribute of nature--and of man as part of nature. Arcite has died, as we all must, and so Theseus will cooperate with Fortune--the outcome had been earlier established by divine omens--and allow Palamon and Emily to wed. The tale ends happily, as befits its romance setting--all crucial events occur in the green month of May--but elsewhere in the Fables similar problems result in more tragic conclusions. In Ovid's "Cinyras and Myrrha," in Boccaccio's "Sigismonda and Guiscardo," and in Book I of the Iliad and Ovid's treatment of the Trojan War in Book XII of the Metamorphoses, complex private emotions conflict with public responsibility, resulting in both personal and public destruction.

The concluding fable, Boccaccio's "Cymon and Iphigenia," developing the same theme, leaves us unsettled in its moral ambiguity. At first, the poem seems a tribute to the transforming power of love.[6] Dryden begins with a poeta loquitur which credits virtuous love with the creation of nobility of soul and nobility of language. With a gesture that turns the concluding fable back to the entire work's opening, Dryden praises the Dutchess of Ormond and suggests her own power: "When Beauty fires the Blood, how Love exalts the Mind" (l. 41). Cymon,

the son of a Cyrian Lord, seems a hopeless idiot and goes off into the countryside to live as a rude swain. When he spies the beautiful Iphigenia, he falls passionately in love, and the flame of passion gradually sparks his finer nature: "Through the rude Chaos thus the running Light/ Shot the first Ray that pierc'd the Native Night" (ll. 117-18). Inspired by love, he becomes educated, mannered, and courageous. Cymon's becoming civilized through the miracle of love presents in concrete form the grander power of love to effect civilization that the poeta loquitur has suggested. While earlier fables have demonstrated the destructive power of love, in its finest form it becomes a crucial positive force in human history.

But now other themes enter into the tale. Fortune begins her work as Cymon, learning that Iphigenia is already promised to a nobleman from Rhodes, wins her in a sea battle and then quickly loses her again through Fortune's favorite agent, the storm at sea. The poem, through implication and in Dryden's specific use of the analogy, becomes a parallel to the story of Helen and Paris as private passion threatens to precipitate national war. Complications mount when it is revealed that Lysymachus, the Magistrate of Rhodes, hopelessly loves the woman who will marry the brother of Iphigenia's betrothed and that the brothers will marry on the same

day. Lysymachus, then, is caught between his public power and responsibility and his private emotion. As Magistrate, he has the power to force his beloved to him while breaking the laws it is his duty to enforce. "The Man prevail'd above the Magistrate" (l. 463); he and Cymon disrupt the marriage feast and snatch away the brides in a scene deliberately reminiscent of the grotesque Centaurs' desecration of the marriage ceremony in Book XII of the Metamorphoses. The kidnappers flee with their women, and the state of Rhodes is left helpless: "The Governor, and Government are gone./ The publick Wealth to Foreign Parts convey'd" (ll. 616-7). The final lines of the tale, and of the Fables, compact history into its barest general terms:

> In safety landed on the Candian Shore,
> With generous Wines their Spirits they restore;
> There Cymon with his Rhodian Friend resides,
> Both Court, and Wed at once their willing Brides.
> A War ensues, the Cretans own their Cause,
> Stiff to defend their hospitable Laws:
> Both Parties lose by turns; and neither wins,
> 'Till Peace propounded by a Truce begins.
> The Kindred of the Slain forgive the Deed,
> But a short Exile must for Show precede;
> The Term expir'd, from Candia they remove;
> And happy each at Home, enjoys his Love.
> (ll. 629-40)

With the narrative rapidity that characterizes the Fables, Dryden glides from marriage to war to peace to exile to domestic tranquility. The consequences of love and the fruitlessness of war have been endlessly impressed upon

us, and so, by the Fables' end, generalizations are all that are necessary. The final "Love" that ends the Fables is not a simple word of affirmation, but a complex emotion with inevitable repercussions. Cymon's love has transformed not just his life, but the lives ultimately of many in his state and in Rhodes. His private emotion leads to public acts with incalculable consequences. Dryden's insight into human character and his obsession with historical forces have led him, finally, to a realization of the essential bond between human psychology and historical event.

It is significant, then, that the four poems that present ideals of human conduct all concern individuals who have managed to isolate themselves from the external world: they are neither influenced by historical circumstance nor do they allow their private needs to act upon the lives of others.[7] "To John Driden" praises a man who creates through his virtue a paradisical realm apart from the fallen world.[8] Significantly, he avoids the entanglements of love, and his favorite pursuit is the peaceful hunt. When he is called to public duty, he takes with him the same values of moderation, balance, and self-sufficiency that have made his private life an ideal pattern. But he prefers always the retired life of his own peaceful kingdom, where he justly and mercifully

administers laws to those under his jurisdiction. Dryden never allows us to forget that we are fallen and that--what is particularly important in the context of the Fables--Adam's love for Eve led to his and our fall: "O, had our Grandsire walk'd without his Wife,/ He first had sought the better Plant of Life!/ Now, both are lost" (ll. 98-100). Driden succeeds because of his virtuous independence, which is both domestic and political. His values, indeed, become a symbol of what should be England's national values: "Safe in our selves, while on our selves we stand" (l. 146). He avoids the complications of law, medicine, and politics; his strength of character enables him to create his own ideal state.

Ovid's "Baucis and Philemon" supplies a similar but simpler norm. It immediately follows Boccaccio's "Sigismonda and Guiscardo," the tragic story of lovers who are destroyed through both private envy and public policy. The conflict between father and daughter occurs on psychological, social, and political levels. The father's unhealthy love for his daughter, the problem of difference in birth, and the question of whom a prince's daughter should wed bitterly entangle with one another. The pure, uncomplicated love of the poor, aged Baucis and Philemon provides a significant contrast. Their nobility of mind, their faithfulness and virtue, brings

them divine reward. Their lives are poor and simple, but they share with John Driden a freedom from corruption by worldly values.

The final two norms of virtue, "The Character of a Good Parson," a free imitation of Chaucer, and Dryden's original "Monument of a Fair Maiden Lady," immediately precede the final "Cymon and Iphigenia." The parson, who actively avoids political temptation, and the fair maiden lady have the chastity and benevolence that characterize the virtuous, independent life. Neither wealthy nor poor, of neither noble nor low birth, they live out their lives with acts of charity and kindness. The patterns of virtue they become complete the spectrum in the Fables of those who stand self-sufficient in their goodness while others around them are falling.

The small but enduring monuments Dryden creates to them further contrast with the world in constant motion that characterizes so many of the fables. It is significant that these two eternal ideals follow the translation "Of the Pythagorean Philosophy," which, with its examination of the incessant flux that is the law of nature, stands as the philosophical center of the Fables. The magical transformations of the Metamorphoses become a metaphor for the constant change that characterizes nature and history:

> This let me further add, that Nature knows
> No stedfast Station, but, or Ebbs, or Flows:
> Ever in motion; she destroys her old,
> And casts new Figures in another Mold.
> Ev'n Times are in perpetual Flux; and run
> Like Rivers from their Fountain rowling on
> .....
> Thus in successive Course the Minutes run,
> And urge their Predecessor Minutes on,
> Still moving, ever new: For former Things
> Are set aside, like abdicated Kings:
> And every moment alters what is done,
> And innovates some Act till then unknown.
> (11. 262-7; 272-7)

From the daily changes in man's body, to the seasonal cycles, to the revolutions of nations, to the decay in ages from the Golden to the Metal, this process is unceasing. Dryden has expanded this passage from Ovid, and one of his additions has been to relate the theme more explicitly to its political-historical implications. Abrupt changes in kingship--and all the political turmoil, from the Civil War in his youth to the flight of James, that Dryden lived through and wrote about--become a metaphor for the change that is the essence of life. Time, like a political rebel, "innovates." One can no more stop inexorable historical process than he can alter the flow of a river or prevent his own bodily decay. The "Pythagorean Philosophy" is at once a tribute to the beauty of a totally interrelated and coherent universe and an expression of its frightening, unstoppable movement.

But unceasing change contains within its very nature a kind of continuity. Pythagoreas' theory of the

transmigration of souls suggests an essential permanence that transcends the outward body's decay. Further, the four elements that compose the world are eternal; they glide from one state to another but always, eventually, return to their original form. "That Forms are chang'd I grant; that nothing can/ Continue in the Figure it began" (ll. 398-9). But form is not essence. The immortal soul always can find another lodging; "Thus all Things are but alter'd, nothing dies" (l. 239).

The Fables themselves suggest this kind of continuity that transcends change: forms alter, the essence remains. The four translated authors, though culturally and historically distinct, all write of love and war and death; their characters are victimized by similar weaknesses and saved by similar strengths. The very act of translation itself creates a continuity as the translator alters the verbal surface but not the underlying meaning of an historically distant work. And Dryden's original poems weave him into the poetic tradition which the very form of the Fables establishes. The physical existence of the Fables, its transformation of a comprehensive group of ancient and modern poems into a coherent work of English literature, symbolizes the assertive power of continuity over the endless forces of change.

Dryden's final work, The Secular Masque, views the inclusive world of the Fables from the opposite, miniaturizing end of the telescope. It is an occasional poem; however, the occasion is not a political event, but natural temporal progression--the succession of a new century. The poem strips a century of history, and, by implication, all history, to its barest mythic formulation. And with its combined optimism and cynicism, it suggests what history finally means and on what terms man can live in the historical world. As the procession of the masque passes from the hunt of Diana, to the war of Mars, to the love of Venus, Momus mocks its essential meaninglessness. Like the masque, history itself is spectacle from which man should sit detached in the audience. The masque ends with weariness and hope: "'Tis well an Old Age is out,/ And time to begin a New" (ll. 96-7), but as Alan Roper points out, the final "a New" also suggests merely "again."[9] Momus' comment following Mars' braggadoccio might well be applied to all historical noise:

> The Fools are only thinner,
> With all our Cost and Care;
> But neither side a winner,
> For Things are as they were. (ll. 67-70)

The revolutions of time accomplish nothing; but, as Dryden's poetry so often demonstrates, "'Tis better to Laugh than to Cry" (l. 20).

Culminating in The Secular Masque, Dryden's poetry shows a persistent decline from his early optimistic faith in historical progress. There will be no mythic Golden Age, nor international peace, nor even national unity. If men's essential characters do not change, then neither will their public conduct. Gone, too, from Dryden's later work is his belief in the power of poetry to effect change in the public world. Almost all of the poems of his last twelve years contain an attack on the degenerate age, but the satirist has lost hope in the possibility of reform. Dryden has shifted his focus from the large world of historical events to the individual who must live in that world. Despairing finally of a national virtue, he finds virtue in the individual who can disengage himself from the world's commotion.

Against the meaningless flux of historical process, Dryden sets his vision of a universal coherence and his trust in individuals to create traditions that cut through the surrounding chaos. Dryden's analogical view of the world--his assertion that national change is like bodily change is like seasonal change--supplies a kind of spatial order when temporal meaning has been lost. And, moreover, human values endure; virtue creates its own tradition. The Pythagorean theory of the transmigration of souls becomes a metaphor for the ability of the human spirit to

somehow continue.[10]

Finally, it is the tradition of poetry that is the central concern of Dryden's later work. It is the great poets--and Dryden knowingly includes himself among them--who transcend their own historical limitations and who see beyond meaningless cultural appearance to record what is essential to human life. Dryden looks back to learn from the richness of his poetic ancestors--just as he felt that those in politics must profit from previous experience--and in his criticism and his poem "To Congreve" he passes his own wealth on to his heirs. Poetic continuity contains its own order, secure apart from historical revolutions. As important as this continuity is in itself, it is more essential because of what the poet accomplishes. As Dryden has done throughout his career, whether he is writing of Cromwell, Charleton, Charles, Driden, or an unnamed "Fair Maiden Lady," whether he is ordering and interpreting the Restoration, Popish Plot, or the end of the seventeenth century, the poet rescues from the flux, and eternalizes, the central events of human experience, the central wants of the human character. He creates his own continuity and so arrests the whirling destruction of time.

Notes to Chapter Seven

[1]The bulk of Dryden's post-1688 work is, of course, his translations, of which the Fables forms an unusual part. Dryden turned to translation both because of financial necessity and because he now had the poetic freedom he had lacked as Poet-Laureate. In addition to supplying him with income, Dryden's translations enabled him to bring into English literature, to his own satisfaction, works which are considered essential parts of the poetic tradition, and he was further able to speak through the voices of the classical authors he loved.

[2]See Earl Miner, "Dryden's Eikon Basilike: To Sir Godfrey Kneller," in Seventeenth-Century Imagery, ed. Earl Miner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 151-67.

[3]Several critics have attempted to find a unity in the Fables. Judith Sloman, "An Interpretation of Dryden's Fables," ECS, 4 (1971), 199-211, argues that Dryden's plan is "typological," and that the work's "Main action is to undermine the motives behind the violent actions of classical epic and to substitute the Christian virtues of charity and patience." Miner, in Dryden's Poetry, pp. 287-323, perceives a "unity of conception" and "a connection of the separate fables on the basis of the shared emphases of juxtaposed works" (p. 291). Myers, in Dryden, pp. 170-90, suggests that each of the Fables' three civilizations--the classical, medieval, and modern--echoes the others.

[4]See Dryden's discussion of the design of heroic poetry in the "Dedication" to his Aeneis, Watson, II, 223-4, and his praise of Homer's ability to design in "Preface to Fables Ancient and Modern," Watson, II, 275.

[5]In Dryden's Poetry, pp. 296-300, Miner suggests a list of connections between poems in the Fables. Some of these connections seem rather tenuous, however, and he here confines himself to narrative links.

[6]See Myers, Dryden, pp. 188-90, for a more affirmative reading of this poem.

[7]The "Dedication" to the Duke of Ormond and the dedicatory poem "To the Dutchess of Ormond" seem to be exceptions. The Duke and Dutchess are strong enough in character and blessed enough in Fortune to be able to spread their virtue wherever they go. The contents of the Fables reinforce their value as noble examples. However, it may be a mistake to see these two dedications as too integral a part of the work. In addition, the poem to the Dutchess serves as a preface to "Palamon and Arcite"; her relationship is to the beautiful and virtuous Emily, the inspiration for others.

[8]The best discussion of this poem is Jay Arnold Levine's "John Dryden's Epistle to John Driden," JEGP, 63 (1964), 450-74.

[9]Alan H. Roper, "Dryden's Secular Masque," MLQ, 23 (1962), 29-40. He makes this observation on p. 40.

[10]As the Fables show, Dryden thoroughly enjoys a smile at human foibles; they convey something of the ability of the human spirit to somehow carry on. Much gentle irony results from this undercutting of human pretensions in one poem with a ludicrous version of those pretensions in another. One might, for example, compare Ulysses' successful eloquence (Book XIII, Metamorphoses) with the pompous speeches of the cock ("The Cock and the Fox"). The cock's persistent speech-making gets him into trouble, but he saves himself by taking advantage of the fox's own tendency to bombast.

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