

SIGNIFICANT PARALLELS IN THE HEROES
OF JOHN DRYDEN AND LORD BYRON

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. COMMON HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS IN THE LIVES OF DRYDEN AND BYRON	1
II. A COMPARISON OF THE LITERARY PRINCIPLES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF DRYDEN AND BYRON	22
III. THE HEROIC HERO	55
IV. A COMPARISON OF THE HEROES OF DRYDEN AND BYRON	66
V. CONCLUSION	94
BIBLIOGRAPHY	97

CHAPTER I
COMMON HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS
IN THE LIVES OF DRYDEN AND BYRON

Despite changes inevitably occurring over a span of one hundred years, Restoration England--John Dryden's England--and Regency England--George Gordon, Lord Byron's England--were quite similar in some ways. "There were, in fact . . . elements in life and letters which were common to the whole period. . . . Augustans and Romantics, by their work and manifestoes, compel us to consider them as more alien to one another than they really were."¹ Dryden came to maturity before the Restoration, and Byron survived the Regency by a few years, but the major part of their literary output was created during these historical periods.

Politically and socially, the landed classes enjoyed paramount importance in the years that Byron and Dryden wrote. After Dryden's death (1700), the power of the upper classes continued, in varying degrees of importance, into Byron's lifetime. This power served to "prolong artificially the old monopoly of power by one class against the new forces of

¹H. V. B. Dyson and John Butt, Augustans and Romantics: 1689-1830 (London, 1950), p. 26.

the time."² These new forces, primarily serving to extend the power and benefits of the nation to a larger base of the population, were ushered in after Byron's death (1824). Many historians date the inception of the new policies with the Reform Bill of 1832.³ The powerful landed classes of Dryden's and Byron's times produced "a parliament of landowners, rich manufacturers, and merchants [which resulted in] . . . bias on the side of wealth and property."⁴ This aristocratic bias produced a conservatism that attempted only to maintain comfortable standards of living for the wealthy: "Demands for reform were more for the redress of grievances, or for a return to standards enjoyed in the past, than for the improvement of conditions of life."⁵ The poorer classes were important only insofar as they might be a possible source of disruption of the good life: "The attitude of the upper to the lower class in Great Britain was not merely negative. There was indeed a certain callousness, an indifference to suffering, and, in some respects, an invincible blindness."⁶

²G. M. Trevelyan, England Under the Stuarts, Vol. V of A History of England, edited by Charles Oman, 6 vols. (New York, 1904), p. 478.

³E. L. Woodward, The Age of Reform 1815-1870, Vol. XIII of The Oxford History of England, edited by G. N. Clark, 14 vols. (London 1934-1938), p. 83.

⁴Ibid., p. 26.

⁵Ibid., p. 38.

⁶Ibid., p. 18.

Dryden's life saw more radical governmental changes--from Charles I to William and Mary--than Byron's, but both ages were influenced by struggles between strong personalities for power in the government. Political figures such as Shaftesbury and military commanders such as Marlborough in Dryden's time were matched in Byron's time by men such as Castlereagh and Wellington. War with the French was a problem common to both times: Louis XIV plagued Dryden's England and Napoleon warred with Byron's.

The Restoration was notorious for its personal and public licentiousness. Regency society also accepted a free code of moral behavior, at least in the upper classes. It was a "society in which . . . irregularities of conduct were common enough, being taken for granted as prerogatives of an uninhibited upper class" ⁷ The other classes in English society, however, were beginning to register strong disapproval of people or writings flaunting conventional moral and religious values. Dryden's comedy Limberham, or The Kind Keeper was censured by the growing public disapproval of the theatre of the day. Similar puritanical sentiments in Byron's day combined to censure Cain and The Vision of Judgement.

Dryden's time was filled with revolutionary sentiments. A king had been beheaded and later, after unsuccessful

⁷Leslie A. Marchand, Byron: A Biography, 3 vols. (New York, 1957), I, 327.

experimentation with other types of rulers, his son had been recalled to the throne. Byron's time, too, was influenced by a comparable spirit: it was a

. . . time of general social unrest, when the Tories were sowing the wind to reap the whirlwind of 1832, with agitation caused by the Union, by legislation against Roman Catholics, by the economic revolution and labor unrest, by a restricted and unfair suffrage, by the spectacle of Napoleon dominating Europe and threatening to engulf England⁸

Just as there were similarities between the Romantic and the Augustan ages, so there were similarities between the lives and characters of Lord Byron and John Dryden. They experienced comparable financial, marital, and personal problems.

Neither Dryden nor Byron were strangers to upper-class society. Both writers had been presented in court circles, although Byron, unlike Dryden, was a member of the nobility. At the height of Dryden's popularity, during the years he was Poet Laureate (1668-1688), he moved in the best circles:

Whether we judge of the rank which Dryden held in society by the splendor of his titled and powerful friends, or by his connections among men of genius, we must consider him as occupying at this time, as high a station in the very foremost circle as literary reputation would gain for its owner. . . . he was honoured by Charles

⁸Samuel C. Chew, Jr., The Dramas of Lord Byron: A Critical Study (Baltimore, 1915), p. 26.

himself, the poet numbered among his friends most of the distinguished nobility.⁹

Dryden's wife was a member of the nobility and a sister of his collaborator, Sir Robert Howard. The influential John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, a minister of Charles II, patronized the poet for a time. One of Dryden's earliest and most faithful patronesses was Anne, Duchess of Monmouth, the wife of Charles II's illegitimate son.

Byron was familiar from youth with upper-class society, having inherited his title and estate when he was ten years old. His immediate family, however, had not been influential in society or politics. From 1812 until his divorce in 1816, Byron enjoyed great popularity with the titled and wealthy members of English society. Byron described his rapid reception into society: "I received every where a marked attention, was courted in all societies, made much of by Lady Jersey, had the entré at Devonshire-house, was in favour with Brummell . . . in fact, I was a lion--a ball-room bard--a hot-pressed darling!"¹⁰ Byron met the Prince Regent and was, for a time, part of the circle of the Princess of Wales.

⁹John Dryden, The Works of John Dryden, edited by Sir Walter Scott, revised and corrected by George Saintsbury, 18 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1882-1893), I, 96. Hereafter cited as Dryden.

¹⁰Thomas Medwin, Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron, edited by Ernest J. Lovell, Jr. (Princeton, 1966), p. 214.

Byron was aware that Dryden had preceded him at Trinity College, Cambridge. In his reply to Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine Byron wrote that he included some critical ideas for "some of my old classical friends who have still enough of Cambridge about them to think themselves honoured by having had John Dryden as a predecessor in their college" ¹¹ Interestingly, both poets expressed a preference for Oxford over Cambridge. Dryden wrote in an autobiographical prologue that

Oxford to him a dearer name shall be
 Than his own mother-university.
 Thebes did his green, unknowing youth engage;
 He chooses Athens in his riper age
 (Prologue to The University of Oxford). ¹²

Byron had hoped to go to Oxford when he was a boy: "Mr. H. recommends Cambridge; Lord Carlisle allows me to chuse [sic] for myself, and I must own I prefer Oxford." ¹³ Dryden's behavior at Cambridge was not "uniformly regular" because of disputes he had with the headmaster and a nobleman's son. ¹⁴ Byron told his friend Thomas Medwin that he "had a great hatred of College rules, and contempt for academical honours

¹¹George Gordon, Lord Byron, Letters and Journals, Vols. I-VI of The Works of Lord Byron, edited by Rowland E. Prothero, 13 vols. (London, 1905-1922), IV, 491. Hereafter cited as Byron, Letters and Journals.

¹²Dryden, X, 386.

¹³Byron, Letters and Journals, I, 56.

¹⁴Dryden, I, 25.

. . . . I believe they were . . . glad to get rid of me at Cambridge" ¹⁵ Neither poet seemed to relish living by school disciplinary rules.

Although Dryden and Byron were quite popular as authors in their time, both were concerned about financial matters at certain points in their careers. In his peak years as a popular dramatist, Dryden wrote two or three plays a year and was able to earn an adequate income for his large family; ¹⁶ but after the death of James II, Dryden's popularity fell, and he, an old man by then, was barely able to make a living: "The state of his circumstances rendered constant literary labour indispensable to the support of his family, although the exertion, and particularly the confinement, occasioned by his studies, considerably impaired his health." ¹⁷ He was frequently forced to write extra pieces to fulfill his contract with his publisher, Tonson. Although Byron had begun his literary career scorning poets who wrote for money

. . . when the sons of song descend to trade,
 Their bays are sere, their former laurels fade.
 Let such forego the poet's sacred name,
 Who rack their brains for lucre, not for fame:
 Still for stern Mammon may they toil in vain,

¹⁵Medwin, p. 67.

¹⁶Dryden, I, 100.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 345.

because he enjoyed living like a Lord and he had the additional expense of his estate, Newstead, which he was finally forced to sell.²⁴ During the year of the divorce scandal, when he was "accused of every monstrous vice," his personal belongings were seized to pay his debts.²⁵

Vicious attacks were launched on the characters of Dryden and Byron. Dryden's position as Poet Laureate and the success he had enjoyed aroused the envy and dislike of many people. When William and Mary came to the throne to replace the deposed James II, Dryden, as a Roman Catholic supporter of the displaced Stuarts, was in a very vulnerable position. Various forms of writing--verse, song, and prose--were utilized to assert

That Dryden had been bred a puritan and republican; that he had written an elegy on Cromwell (which one wily adversary actually reprinted); that he had been in poverty at the Restoration; that Lady Elizabeth Dryden's character was tarnished by the circumstances attending their nuptials; that Dryden had written the "Essay on Satire," in which the king was libelled; that he had been beaten by three men in Rose-alley; finally, that he was a Tory, and a tool of arbitrary power.²⁶

These miscellaneous allegations, intended to publicly discredit Dryden, succeeded to some extent in doing so. Dryden acted as if he were indifferent to criticism. He said his profession enabled him to handle name-callers:

²⁴Marchand, II, 746.

²⁵Byron, Letters and Journals, IV, 478.

²⁶Dryden, I, 215.

As for knave . . . and sycophant and rascal, and impudent, and devil and old serpent, and a thousand such good morrows, I take them to be only names of parties; and could return murderer, and cheat, and whig-napper, and sodomite; and in short, the goodly number of the seven deadly sins, with all their kindred and relations, which are names of parties too; but saints will be saints, in spite of villainy.²⁷

Byron, defending himself against charges of immorality in a letter to Murray in 1819, lists Dryden among famous writers who also might have been considered immoral.²⁸ Byron's reaction to criticism was to affect indifference, but he wrote English Bards and Scotch Reviewers in response to a severe critical attack. Don Juan is replete with attacks on those who had criticized him:

Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope;
 Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey;
 Because the first is crazed beyond all hope,
 The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthy:
 With Crabbe it may be difficult to cope,
 And Campbell's Hippocrene is somewhat drouthy:
 Thou shalt not steal from Samuel Rogers,
 nor
 Commit--flirtation with the muse of Moore
 (i, 205).²⁹

Neither poet had any trouble handling name-callers. Byron expressed his attitude toward personal attacks during the divorce scandal in a letter to Moore:

I believe I may have said this before to you, but I risk repeating it. It is nothing to bear the

²⁷Ibid., pp. 243-244.

²⁸Byron, Letters and Journals, IV, 382.

²⁹Byron, Poetry, VI, 74-75.

privations of adversity, or, more properly, ill-fortune; but my pride recoils from its indignities. However, I have no quarrel with that same pride, which will, I think, buckler me through everything. If my heart could have been broken, it would have been so years ago, and by events more afflicting than these.³⁰

Byron's unhappy marriage to Annabella Millbanke dissolved after one year and one child. Dryden's marriage lasted through many years and many children, but some of his biographers think his marriage was unhappy too. Sir Walter Scott concludes that since "on no one occasion, when a sarcasm against matrimony could be introduced, has . . . [Dryden] failed to season it with . . . bitterness," the poet must have suffered "an inward consciousness of domestic misery."³¹

Dryden and Byron seem to have enjoyed the reputation of a man of fashion during part of their lives. Byron had a name as a dandy in the years before his marriage: "the ideal of the aristocrat--even of the dandy--is perhaps the one he aimed at most consistently throughout his life"³² Byron himself seemed pleased that he could mingle in fashionable circles: "I liked the Dandies; they were always very civil to me, though in general they disliked literary people"³³ Byron was usually careful of his dress and

³⁰Byron, Letters and Journals, III, 273.

³¹Dryden, I, 78.

³²Andrew Rutherford, Byron: A Critical Study (Stanford, 1961), p. 7.

³³Byron, Letters and Journals, V, 423.

frequently starved himself in order to keep fashionably thin.³⁴ His affairs with various women, most notably Caroline Lamb, were seen as a typical pastime for a dandy of his day. Dryden, too, at the height of his popularity was considered to be a dandy: ". . . as his reputation advanced, he naturally glided into more expensive habits, and began to avail himself of the licence, as well as to partake of the pleasures, of the time."³⁵ It was said that he had a mistress, Ann Reeve, but since Dryden's life is not as well documented as Byron's, much of his personal life is unknown.

Despite a certain propensity toward dandyism, Byron and Dryden seem to have been uncomfortable in large gatherings where they were expected to meet people. Byron declined an invitation to a party in 1811 by explaining that "if I have not inflicted my society upon you according to your own Invitation, it is only because I am not a social animal" ³⁶ His letters and journals are filled with his joy at being alone:

I am very well, and neither more nor less happy than I usually am; except that I am very glad to be once more alone . . . my nature leads me to solitude, and . . . every day adds to this disposition.³⁷

³⁴Ibid., II, 328.

³⁵Dryden, I, 72-73.

³⁶Byron, Letters and Journals, II, 5.

³⁷Ibid., I, 295.

Here I am alone, instead of dining at Lord H's where I was asked,--but not inclined to go anywhere True;--"I'm myself alone." The last week has been passed in reading If I could always read, I should never feel the want of society. Do I regret it?--um!-- "Man delights not me," and only one woman--at a time.³⁸

Dryden's friend William Congreve expressed a similar opinion about Dryden shortly after his death:

He was of very easy, I may say, of very pleasing Access; but something slow, and, as it were diffident in his Advances to others. He had something in his Nature that abhorred Intrusion into any Society whatsoever. Indeed it is to be regretted, that he was rather blameable in the other Extreme: for by that means, he was Personally less known, and consequently his Character might become liable both to Misapprehensions and Misrepresentations.³⁹

Dryden and Byron impressed those who knew them well with their capacity for forming true friendships, and with their generosity to others. Congreve says that Dryden "was of a Nature exceedingly Humane and Compassionate; easily forgiving Injuries, and capable of a prompt and sincere Reconciliation with them who had offended him."⁴⁰ He adds that Dryden frequently lent money although he could not afford to do so. Dryden's letters to Mrs. Steward, an accomplished lady of a wealthy family (similar to Byron's friend the Countess of Blessington), reveals his warm affection for her and

³⁸Ibid., II, 388-389.

³⁹John Dryden, The Dramatic Works of John Dryden, edited by William Congreve, 6 vols. (London, 1735), I, unpagged frontispiece. Hereafter cited as Congreve.

⁴⁰Ibid.

her family: "You have done me the honour to invite me so often, that it would look like want of respect to refuse it any longer. How can you be so good to an old decrepid man, who can entertain you with no discours that is worthy of your good sense" ⁴¹ He also wrote kindly to young writers and criticized their works for them. To one young writer, John Dennis, he wrote that his Pindaric Odes were very well done and that he had employed "sublimity of sense as well as sound." ⁴² In terms similar to those used by Congreve to describe Dryden, Thomas Medwin, who knew Byron in Pisa (1821-1822), describes Byron's relations with his friends:

His temper was quick, but he never long retained anger. Impatient of control, he was too proud to justify himself when right, or if accused, to own himself wrong; yet no man was more unopinionated, more open to conviction, and more accessible to advice, when he knew that it proceeded from friendship, or was motivated by affection or regard. ⁴³

Byron and his college classmate John Cam Hobhouse remained friends throughout Byron's life despite disagreements they occasionally had. Byron also enjoyed the company of other people he came to know well, especially Shelley, Moore, and Rogers. He encouraged other writers in their literary efforts, just as Dryden did. Established writers like Sir Walter Scott and beginners like Thomas Moore and Samuel Taylor Coleridge received encouraging comments and, in Coleridge's

⁴¹Dryden, XVIII, 141.

⁴²Ibid., p. 117.

⁴³Medwin, p. 268.

case financial assistance, from Byron. He wrote Moore that "the field of fame is wide enough for all; and if it were not, I would not willingly rob my neighbor of a rood of it."⁴⁴ Byron sent £100 to Coleridge in 1816 when he himself was almost penniless.⁴⁵ Later, believing Coleridge to be in Southey's camp, Byron became quite annoyed with him.⁴⁶ Byron was known to be generous and "throughout his life he was lavish of financial assistance, both to writers, friends in general, strangers in want, and greater, communal, causes" ⁴⁷

Both Dryden and Byron have been described as omnivorous readers. The variety of references and allusions in their works evidences the depth and breadth of their reading. The comments of their friends amplifies the impression that they were extremely well-read. Congreve says that Dryden read and retained a great deal of material:

As his Reading had been very extensive, so was he very happy in a Memory tenacious of everything that he had read His communication of it was by no means pedantic, or imposed upon the Conversation; but just such, and went so far as by the natural Turns of the Discourse in which he was engaged, it was necessarily promoted or required."⁴⁸

⁴⁴Byron, Letters and Journals, II, 257.

⁴⁵Marchand, II, 580.

⁴⁶Rutherford, p. 104.

⁴⁷G. Wilson Knight, Lord Byron: Christian Virtues (New York, 1953), p. 62.

⁴⁸Congreve, unpagged frontispiece.

Lady Blessington made a similar observation about Byron's reading when she wrote

His memory is extraordinary, for he can repeat lines from every author whose works have pleased him; and in reciting passages that have called forth his censure or ridicule, it is no less tenacious.⁴⁹

Although Dryden was considered a political conservative by his contemporaries and Byron was thought to be a liberal, they both evidenced a distrust of the masses and a tendency to prefer, for the most part, the middle course between the radical elements in the political life of their day. Dryden seemed to believe that "to be a good Whig one must have, or pretend to have, unbounded confidence in human nature in the mass."⁵⁰ He saw the Tory party as one that would help the "government save human nature from itself."⁵¹ Dryden's support of the monarch was not based on a desire to enlarge the power of the King at the expense of the people, but rather to provide them with an ultimate authority that they could depend on. In his "Vindication of The Duke of Guise," he makes several points that reveal his feelings about the nature of good rule:

⁴⁹Countess of Blessington, A Journal of Conversations with Lord Byron (Boston, 1859), pp. 148-149.

⁵⁰Louis I. Bredvold, The Intellectual Milieu of John Dryden: Studies in Some Aspects of Seventeenth-Century Thought (Ann Arbor, 1934), p. 144.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 145.

Our liberties and our religion both are safe; they are secured to us by the laws; and those laws are executed under an established government by a lawful King. The Defender of our Faith is the defender of our common freedom; to cabal, to write, to rail against this administration, are all endeavours to destroy the government; and to oppose the succession, in any private man, is a treasonable practice against the foundation of it.⁵²

Dryden continues to explain that although "the Estate of England is indeed the King's . . . it follows not, that the people are his goods and chattels on it; for then he might sell, alienate, or destroy them as he pleased: from all which he has tied himself by the liberties and privileges which he has granted us by laws."⁵³ Dryden's distrust of rule influenced by the demands of the common people was probably due to his first-hand observation of it during the Interregnum (1642-1660). Byron is also described as one who "repudiated extremes of revolution and distrusted demagogues."⁵⁴ Byron, popular in Whig circles, saw that reforms were necessary in English society, but never wished to become identified with the mob:

No one can be more sick of, or indifferent to, politics than I am, if they let me alone; but if the time comes when a part must be taken one way or the other, I shall pause before I lend myself to the views

⁵²Dryden, VII, 172.

⁵³Ibid., p. 215.

⁵⁴Knight, Byron and Shakespeare, p. 7.

of such ruffians, although I cannot but approve of a Constitutional amelioration of long abuses.⁵⁵

He wished, like Dryden, to see the existing framework of the government modified to protect the people. Medwin saw Byron as a relatively conservative person: "Though opposed to the foreign policy of England, he was no revolutionist. The best proof of his prizing the constitution of his own country, was that he wished to see it transplanted on the Continent, and over the world" ⁵⁶

Roman Catholicism appealed to Dryden and Byron because it represented authority and assurance. Dryden, a member of the Anglican church before he was converted to the Roman Catholic church in 1685, "feared the crowd, the 'dregs of democracy,' and believed that the weakness of human nature must be offset by some compelling and supreme authority in church and state."⁵⁷ His detractors said that his conversion in 1685 was the act of an opportunist since the Roman Catholic King, James II, had ascended to the throne in that year. At least one major critic of Dryden believes that his conversion was sincere and that it was a consistent development of Dryden's temper:

⁵⁵Byron, Letters and Journals, IV, 410-411.

⁵⁶Medwin, p. 269.

⁵⁷Bredvold, p. 128.

The continuity and consistency of his philosophical convictions, and their close relationship on the one hand to Dryden's native temperament, and on the other to notable tendencies in his immediate intellectual milieu, all these considerations make it appear quite improbable that his ideas were merely borrowed for the needs of the occasion. His shifts of allegiance were all changes in the same direction, toward greater conservatism.⁵⁸

Byron never did become a member of the Catholic Church, but as he matured, he began to consider accepting its tenets. In 1811 he was exploring faith and ideas and felt himself "veering toward Spinoza." He was not sure of anything and wrote "there is something Pagan in me that I cannot shake off. In short, I deny nothing, but doubt everything."⁵⁹ Byron revealed his sympathy with the Catholics, especially of Ireland, in a speech he gave in support of Roman Catholic Emancipation in the House of Lords, April 21, 1812:

. . . we are called together to deliberate, not on the God we adore, for in that we are agreed; not about the king we obey, for to him we are loyal; but how far a difference in the ceremonials of worship, how far believing not too little, but too much (the worst that can be imputed to the Catholics), how far too much devotion to their God may incapacitate our fellow-subjects from effectually serving their king.⁶⁰

He began to express a personal interest in Catholicism, and in 1822 he wrote Moore, "I am no enemy to religion, but the

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Byron, Letters and Journals, II, 73.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 431.

contrary. As a proof, I am educating my natural daughter a strict Catholic in a convent of Romagna; for I think people can never have enough of religion, if they are to have any. I incline, myself, very much to the Catholic doctrines. . . ."⁶¹ Byron defended his lack of religious orthodoxy with an attack on members of established churches in an 1823 letter: "I suspect that I am a more orthodox Christian than you are; and, whenever I see a real Christian, either in practice or in theory, (for I never yet found the man who could produce either, when put to the proof,) I am his disciple."⁶² Byron's 1821 Journal expressed some of his ideas about Christianity:

Of the Immortality of the Soul, it appears to me that there can be little doubt, if we attend for a moment to the action of the Mind. It is in perpetual activity.

.
Man is born passionate of body, but with an innate though secret tendency to the love of God in his Mainspring of Mind. But God help us all! It is at present a sad jar of atoms.

.
I have often been inclined to Materialism in philosophy but could never bear its introduction into Christianity, which appears to me essentially founded upon the Soul Believe the resurrection of the body, if you will, but not without a soul.⁶³

Byron's comments on religion seem to indicate that he, like

⁶¹Ibid., VI, 32.

⁶²Ibid., p. 182.

⁶³Ibid., V, 456-458.

Dryden, had a great desire for certainty and authority:

"It is not a matter of volition to unbelieve. Who likes to own that he has been a fool all his life,--to unlearn all that he has been taught in his youth? or can think that some of the best men that ever lived have been fools? I have often wished I had been born a Catholic."⁶⁴

⁶⁴Medwin, p. 80.

CHAPTER TWO

A COMPARISON OF THE LITERARY PRINCIPLES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF DRYDEN AND BYRON

When Byron was growing up Dryden was still accepted as a great writer by educators and literary critics. His works were published, read, and occasionally performed. Although the Augustan critical standards, as espoused by Dryden, were beginning to be attacked, many writers still defended them:

. . . the critics of the age can be broadly divided into those who were on the whole antagonistic or sympathetic towards the poetry of the Augustan age, without blurring the wide variety of opinions which existed within each of these two classes. This diversity ranged, among sympathetic critics, from the uninhibited enthusiasm of Byron to the ambiguous ironies and pseudo-philistine mockery of Peacock; and, among hostile critics, from the blandness with which Shelley, largely by implication, dismissed the whole Augustan tradition . . . to the destructive fury with which Bowles turned upon the defenders of Pope in his later pamphlets.¹

Sir Walter Scott, whom Byron respected, published his edition of Dryden's Works in 1808. General evidence of Byron's familiarity with Dryden may be gathered from the acceptance that the seventeenth and eighteenth-century writers still

¹Upali Amarasinghe, Dryden and Pope in the Early Nineteenth Century: A Study of Changing Literary Taste, 1800-1830 (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 138-139.

enjoyed in Byron's time: "Augustan prestige remained high among the literary élite until the third decade of the nineteenth century."² Byron often compared the poets of his generation unfavorably to the Augustan poets. In a reply to an article in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, sent privately to friends in 1816, he wrote,

Do you wish for invention, imagination, sublimity, character? seek them in the Rape of the Lock, the Fables of Dryden, the Ode of Saint Cecilia's Day, and Absalom and Achitophel: you will discover in these two poets only [Dryden and Pope], all for which you must ransack innumerable metres, and God only knows how many writers of the day, without finding a little of the same qualities,--with the addition, too, of wit, of which the latter have none.³

References to Dryden's merit and stature are scattered throughout Byron's works, especially when he is taunting his contemporaries. In English Bards and Scotch Reviewers he wrote,

"But hold! exclaims a friend,--"here's some neglect:
This--that--and t'other line seem incorrect."
What then? the self-same blunder Pope has got,
And careless Dryden . . .

.
Like him great DRYDEN poured the tide of song,
In stream less smooth, indeed, yet doubly strong
(ll. 97-114).⁴

²Ibid., p. 15.

³George Gordon, Lord Byron, Letters and Journals, Vols. I-VI of The Works of Lord Byron, edited by Rowland E. Prothero, 13 vols. (London, 1905-1922), IV, 489. Hereafter cited as Byron, Letters and Journals.

⁴George Gordon, Lord Byron, Poetry, Vols. I-VII of The Works of Lord Byron, edited by Ernest H. Coleridge, 13 vols. (London, 1905-1922), I, 305-306. Hereafter cited as Byron, Poetry.

Dryden is included among the greats in Don Juan,

Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope:
Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey,
(i, 205).⁵

He is also evoked in Byron's complaint about the present state of literature in the same work: "... Oh! Ye shades/ Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this?" (iii, 100).⁶ In 1806, probably in response to criticism of his Fugitive Pieces by the Reverend John Becher,⁷ he compares himself to Dryden, who also was criticized by a minister, Milbourne,

Thus Pope by Curl and Dennis was destroyed,
Thus Gray and Mason yield to furious Lloyd;
From Dryden, Milbourne tears the palm away,
And thus I fall, though meaner far than they
("Soliloquy of a Bard in the Country," ll. 77-80).⁸

Byron is hoping to ridicule his critic by comparing himself to other scorned authors whose acceptance is now beyond question.

Byron mentions his admiration for Dryden in a letter writtin 1821: "I have been turning over different Lives of the Poets. I rarely read their works, unless an occasional flight over the classical ones, Pope, Dryden, Johnson, Gray . . . (I leave the rant of the rest to the cant of the

⁵Ibid., VI, 74.

⁶Ibid., p. 177.

⁷Leslie A. Marchand, Byron: A Biography, 3 vols. (New York, 1957), I, 122.

⁸Byron, Poetry, I, 220.

day)"9 Byron refers to Dryden's Theodore and Honoria when he is invited to a dinner in Italy's Ravenna forest:

"I shall expect to see the spectre of 'Ostasio degli Onesti' (Dryden has turned him into Guido Calvalcanti . . .) come 'thundering for his prey in the midst of the festival.'"10

Although Byron does not quote Dryden's translation of Boccaccio exactly, he uses the same words Dryden used. He refers to this story in Don Juan when he mentions "Dryden's lay" in Ravenna and refers to the "spectre huntsman" (iii, 105, 106).¹¹

Medwin reported that Byron mentioned Dryden in conversation: "Except a couplet of Dryden's, 'On his own bed of torture, let him lie,/ Fit garbage for the hell-hound infamy,' I know no lines more cutting than those in 'Adonais,'"12 He also complained to Medwin that his friend and critic, Hobhouse, "denounced 'Cain' as irreligious, and . . . [is] urging me not to publish it . . . but he seems to have forgotten what poetry is in others, when he says my 'Cain' reminds him of the worst bombast of Dryden's."¹³

⁹Byron, Letters and Journals, V, 164-165.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 206-207.

¹¹Byron, Poetry, VI, 179-180.

¹²Thomas Medwin, Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron, edited by Ernest J. Lovell, Jr. (Princeton, 1966), pp. 237-238.

¹³Ibid., p. 126.

Sometimes Byron mentions Dryden's works incidentally in his poems. He quotes the description of Cymon in Dryden's Cymon and Ipheigenia in the first two lines of "Verses Found in a Summerhouse at Hales-Owen,"

When Dryden's fool, "unknowing what he sought,"
His hours in whistling spent, "for want of thought,"
.¹⁴

In Hints from Horace he mentions The Conquest of Granada, whose preface Dryden had used to explain his preference for heroic couplets:

Blank verse is now, with one consent, allied
To Tragedy, and rarely quits her side.
Though mad Almanzor rhymed in Dryden's days,
No sing-song Hero rants in modern plays
(ll. 117-120).¹⁵

These casual references to Dryden's works do not suggest, of course, that Byron depended on Dryden for poetic inspiration, but rather that Byron was completely familiar with Dryden's work, as he was with the works of many other writers, and had incorporated them into his store of learning.

During the years, 1801 through 1816, when Byron might have seen them, few of Dryden's plays seem to have been produced. Aside from Otway's Venice Preserved; or a Plot Discovered, and some of Shakespeare's later plays, few seventeenth-century works were staged. Byron noted that in "England

¹⁴Byron, Poetry, III, 59.

¹⁵Ibid., I, 398.

or any other country With the exception of Shakespeare . . . not one in fifty plays of our dramatists is ever acted, however much they may be read."¹⁶ Of the plays by Dryden that did survive, many were seen in greatly adulterated or fragmented versions.

Byron may have seen at least five of Dryden's plays, or parts of them. Although there is no definite record of performance, the script of an adaptation of Dryden's Almanzor and Almahide appeared in print in 1804. It was by Benjamin Heath Malkin and was called Almahide and Hamet. Byron, sixteen at the time, was at Harrow, and according to his letters, enjoyed visiting London occasionally.¹⁷ Byron first refers to the theatre in a letter dated August 4, 1805. He and several friends went to the Haymarket theatre after a ball game and created "such a devil of a noise . . . that none of our neighbors could hear word of the drama" ¹⁸

On December 2, 1812, an adaptation of Dryden's Don Sebastian, titled The Renegade, appeared at Covent Garden Theatre and ran for eighteen performances. Reynolds, the author, also included a few scenes from Dryden's The Spanish Friar.¹⁹

¹⁶Byron, Letters and Journals, V, 338-339.

¹⁷Ibid., I, 25.

¹⁸Ibid., I, 71.

¹⁹John Genest, Some Account of the English Stage from Restoration in 1660 to 1830, 10 vols. (Bath, 1832), VIII, 373.

Byron was in England at this time, having returned from his European trip in July of 1811. The Renegade also played in Bath for six nights in April of 1813.²⁰

One play of Dryden's that it is certain Byron saw was a combination of his All for Love and Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. Byron wrote in his journal that in November, 1813, he and his friend Lewis went to see the play on opening night. He thought that it "was admirably got up, and well acted--a salad of Shakespeare and Dryden."²¹ The play was an equal mixture of Dryden and Shakespeare, with most of the third and fourth acts from Dryden.²²

Two other plays containing parts that were either written or inspired by Dryden were produced in the first half of the nineteenth century. At the Drury Lane theatre, on July 30, 1801, a production of The Tempest, that included Dryden and Davenant's additional character of Dorinda, was staged.²³ In December of 1801 an opera, Chains of the Heart, or the Slave by Choice, by Hoare, was staged at Covent Garden. One part, "where Azam enters disguised as a slave, is founded on a scene in [Dryden's] Don Sebastian."²⁴

²⁰Genest, VIII, 387.

²¹Byron, Letters and Journals, II, 319.

²²Genest, VIII, 417.

²³Ibid., VII, 507.

²⁴Ibid., p. 551.

Sir Walter Scott, whom Byron admired greatly, published his edition of John Dryden's Works in 1808. Scott's edition did not sell as well as cheaper publications (it was an expensive eighteen-volume set), but it reached the "intelligent public" enough to justify a second edition in 1821.²⁵ Byron frequently wrote that he was reading some work of Scott's and once remarked that he would "never travel without Scott's Novels. . . . they are a library in themselves--a perfect literary treasure."²⁶ Scott, who admired the Augustans as much as Byron did, "felt himself temperamentally . . . in sympathy with Dryden."²⁷ Scott wrote that he judged Byron and Robert Burns "the most genuine poetical geniuses" of his time and fifty years before it.²⁸ Scott, like Byron, has been described as a writer who appreciated two literary ages:

Scott's ability to absorb these "Romantic" tendencies of his age, without any essential loss to his sense of the more characteristic virtues of the Augustan tradition as a whole, and the poetry of Dryden in particular, makes him specially interesting as a representative and influential literary figure of the early nineteenth century. It suggests the traditional complexity of the taste of his age, and confirms that an interest in the newer "Romantic" impulses characteristic of the time did not necessarily imply a neglect of the Augustan achievement.²⁹

²⁵Amarasinghe, p. 16.

²⁶Medwin, p. 200.

²⁷Amarasinghe, p. 14.

²⁸Sir Walter Scott, The Journal of Sir Walter Scott, 2 vols. (New York, 1891), II, 112.

²⁹Amarasinghe, p. 25.

It is possible that Byron's regard for Scott led him to further value Dryden's works and standards.

Dryden left a more formal record, in his prologues, essays, and prefaces, of his critical opinions than Byron did, but Byron's letters and prefaces indicate certain of his critical sympathies. Byron has been called one of "the last true descendants of the Augustan age of English poetry."³⁰ He championed Augustan ideals in drama and poetry.

While both poets were sensitive to public opinion, Dryden was forced to be particularly so because his income depended on public acceptance of his writings. His work represents a blend of what his English audience desired and the standards he himself held:

Dryden never altered this basic belief in the intrinsic nature of literary genres and standards of decorum inherited from the experience of classical literature, and it gives the stability and coherence of a felt tradition to his criticism and practice. But on the other hand, his profoundest commitment is always and finally to a living audience, and it is this commitment which most enriches his criticism of both the past and present.³¹

Despite stylistic changes, for example from heroic couplets to blank verse for drama, Dryden maintained his admiration for classical writers and their standards.

³⁰Ibid., p. 215.

³¹John Dryden, Literary Criticism of John Dryden, edited by Arthur C. Kirsh (Lincoln, 1966), p. xv.

Dryden honored classical unities--time, place, and action--but he approved the English stage's adaptations of them. He suggested that since Aristotle had drawn rules for drama after observation of his age's plays, "if he had seen ours, he might have changed his mind."³² The "Preface to Troilus and Cressida," gives Dryden's analysis of ingredients required for a good tragedy. "Tragedy describes or paints an action, which . . . must be single." By this he means that it must show not a man's whole life, but "one single action" of the protagonist.³³ It must also have "a natural beginning, a middle, and an end,"³⁴ and concern great, rather than common men. Dryden does not insist that the events described actually have happened, but "there should be a likeness of truth, something that is more than barely possible"³⁵ The action must be represented, "not told, to distinguish dramatic poetry from epic"³⁶ The final, most important requirement is that it "rectify or purge our passions, fear and pity."³⁷

³²John Dryden, The Works of John Dryden, edited by Sir Walter Scott, revised and corrected by George Saintsbury, 18 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1882-1893), IV, 104-105. Hereafter cited as Dryden.

³³Ibid., VI, 260.

³⁴Ibid., p. 261.

³⁵Ibid., p. 262.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

Byron's three dramas most regular in form, The Two Foscari, Marino Faliero, and Sardanapalus, conform closely to the requirements set forth by Dryden. Byron wrote in his "Preface" to Sardanapalus that he had great respect for the classical unities:

The Author has in one instance attempted to preserve, and in the other to approach, the "unities;" conceiving that with any very distant departure from them, there may be poetry, but can be no drama. He is aware of the unpopularity of this notion in present English literature; but it is not a system of his own, being merely an opinion, which, not very long ago, was the law of literature throughout the world, and is still so in the more civilized parts of it.³⁸

As one critic has pointed out, there is a "close verbal reminiscence" between Byron's comments on the "civilized world" in the above Preface and the following lines from Dryden's "Essay of Dramatic Poesy:" "The universal consent of the most civilized parts of the world ought in this, as it doth in other customs, to include the rest."³⁹ In his letters and journals written during the time he was writing Sardanapalus, The Two Foscari, and Marino Faliero, he noted that his classicism was a deliberate effort:

You will remark the Unities are all strictly observed;

Mind the Unities which are my great object of research,

³⁸Byron, Poetry, V, 9.

³⁹Samuel C. Chew, Jr., The Dramas of Lord Byron: A Critical Study (Baltimore, 1915), p. 165.

. . . my dramatic simplicity is studiously
Greek⁴⁰

Byron was also very careful in his prefaces to show that he had followed what Dryden called "a likeness of truth" in his presentation of historical characters. Dryden felt that characters from history should be presented as history reported them to be.⁴¹ Byron established the historical authenticity of his Doge in the preface to Marino Faliero.

Where did Dr. Moore find that Marino Faliero begged his life? I have searched the chroniclers, and find nothing of the kind I know no justification, at any distance of time, for calumniating an historical character The length I have gone into on this subject will show the interest I have taken in it. Whether I have succeeded or not in the tragedy, I have at least transferred into our language an historical fact worthy of commemoration.⁴²

He also wrote that he had wanted to make the play turn on jealousy, but since there was "no foundation for this in historical truth," he had given it a "more historical form."⁴³ Neither Byron nor Dryden failed to appreciate some of the merits of French drama, but they were afraid that some of the English dramatic traditions that they valued might be neglected if French models were too slavishly followed. When Byron was writing Marino Faliero he indicated to Murray that

⁴⁰Byron, Letters and Journals, V, 301, 324, 347.

⁴¹Dryden, VI, 267.

⁴²Byron, Poetry, IV, 333-336.

⁴³Ibid., p. 337.

he aimed "for a different style of the drama: neither a servile following of the old drama, which is a grossly erroneous one, nor yet too French, like those who succeeded the older writers. It appears to me, that good English, and a severer approach to the rules, might combine something not dishonorable to our literature."⁴⁴ Dryden defended the modifications, not made by the French, that the English dramatists had made of the classical models of drama. He specifically objected to the long declamations popular in French dramas:

Neither, indeed, is it possible for them, in the way they take, so to express passion, as that the effects of it should appear in the concernment of an audience, their speeches being so many declamations, which tire us with the length; so that instead of persuading us to grieve for their imaginary heroes, we are concerned for our own trouble, as we are in the tedious visits of bad company; we are in pain till they are gone.⁴⁵

Dryden thought of literary rules as an effective method of achieving poetic discipline,

Judgment is indeed the master-workman in a play; but he requires many subordinate hands, many tools to his assistance. And verse I affirm to be one of these! it is a rule and line by which he keeps his building compact and even, which otherwise lawless imagination would raise either irregularly or loosely.⁴⁶

Byron, too, is said to have advised the use of rules as a matter of poetic discipline:

⁴⁴Byron, Letters and Journals, V, 243.

⁴⁵Dryden, XV, 333.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 376.

His idea was that an artistry which works consciously within certain clearly defined bounds--bounds that nature has fixed for it, as recognized in its history--is higher and nobler and its influence more wholesome, than a romantic ignorance or wanton disregard of limitations altogether.⁴⁷

Both writers were interested in the processes involved in the re-working of Elizabethan tragedies, especially Shakespeare's. They described the process in identical metaphors. To improve an older play's dramatic technique was to remove some of the "rust." Dryden said, in reference to Shakespeare, "It is true, that in his latter plays he had worn off somewhat of the rust; but the tragedy, which I have undertaken to correct, was in all probability one of his first endeavors on the stage."⁴⁸ Byron, in reference to Elizabethan dramas, said "The players retrenched, transposed, and even altered the text, to suit the audience or please themselves. Who knows how much rust they rubbed off? I am sure there is rust and base metal to spare left in the old plays."⁴⁹

Both Dryden and Byron felt that theatrical comedy, which they considered an inferior form of drama, was more difficult for them to write. Dryden authored some very popular comedies,

⁴⁷Clement Tyson Goode, Byron as Critic (New York, 1964), p. 111.

⁴⁸Dryden, VI, 255.

⁴⁹Medwin, p. 93.

such as Sir Martin Mar-All, but he wrote that he felt his was a talent unsuited for comedy: "I know I am not so fitted by nature to write comedy: I want that gaiety of humour which is required to it. My conversation is slow and dull; my humour saturnine and reserved" ⁵⁰ He hated farce, and thought it was full of "forced humours, and unnatural events." ⁵¹ He wrote that he was sorry he had written comedies which had pleased people "at so cheap a rate." ⁵² The ideal goal of comedy, to Dryden, was that it produce "divertisement and delight" and, secondly, instruction:

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. ⁵³

Byron tried to write a comedy, but he destroyed his efforts: "This afternoon I have burnt the scenes of my commenced comedy." ⁵⁴ He wrote that "a comedy . . . [is] the most difficult of compositions, more so than tragedy." ⁵⁵

⁵⁰Dryden, II, 297-298.

⁵¹Ibid., III, 241.

⁵²Ibid., p. 242.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 248-249.

⁵⁴Byron, Letters and Journals, II, 314.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 373.

Like Dryden, Byron used satire to "work a cure on folly" and express humourous ideas.

Both Dryden and Byron admired Jonson, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and the Greek and Roman writers. Although Dryden did not appreciate Jonson's "wit," he did admire his comedies: "As for Jonson . . . I think him the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had He was deeply conversant in the ancients, both Greek and Latin" ⁵⁶ Byron wrote he did not like Elizabethan comedy, "always excepting old B. Jonson, who was a Scholar and a Classic." ⁵⁷ Both poets delighted in criticizing Shakespeare, but both recognized his superiority to any of the others of his time. In his "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" Dryden's representative, Neander, says, "To begin then with Shakespeare. He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul." ⁵⁸ He also said that Shakespeare's language was obsolete, and that he was "many times flat, insipid; his comic wit degenerating into Clenches [sic], his serious swelling into bombast." ⁵⁹ Lady Blessington notes that although Byron severely

⁵⁶Dryden, XV, 346-347.

⁵⁷Byron, Letters and Journals, V, 218.

⁵⁸Dryden, XV, 344.

⁵⁹Ibid.

criticized Shakespeare, he seemed to be doing so chiefly in order to shock his listeners,

My conviction is, that, in spite of his declarations to the contrary, he admires Shakespeare as much as most of his countrymen do; but that unlike the generality of them, he sees the blemishes that the freedom of the times in which the great poet lived led him to indulge in his writings Byron was in his heart a warm admirer of Shakespeare.⁶⁰

Byron thought Beaumont and Fletcher's Prologue to Philaster one of the "best things of the kind we have."⁶¹ Dryden also praised this work: "The first play which brought . . . [them] esteem, was their Philaster" He added that "their plays are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage"⁶²

Sometimes Dryden and Byron were struck by the same comments in works they read. Byron wrote in Don Juan,

Oh, thou eternal Homer! . . .

 To vie with thee would be about as vain
 As for a brook to cope with Ocean's flood--
 . . . (vii, 80).⁶³

But he also noted in the same work Horace's comment that "Homer sometimes sleeps" (iii, 98).⁶⁴ In a similar manner

⁶⁰Countess of Blessington, A Journal of Conversations with Lord Byron (Boston, 1859), pp. 337-338.

⁶¹Byron, Letters and Journals, II, 152.

⁶²Dryden, XV, 345-346.

⁶³Byron, Poetry, VI, 327.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 177.

Dryden praised Homer and then noted Horace's comment that "Homer nods sometimes."⁶⁵ Dryden and Byron were familiar with Juvenal, Lucretius, Virgil, Homer, Horace, and other of the classical writers. They also honored skilled writers of more recent ages, such as Chaucer and Boccaccio.

Dryden was noted, as was Byron, for his efforts to use past models as guides for modern works:

. . . Juvenal had written that Virgil's poetry put Homer's palm in doubt, and Dryden . . . adapts the remark to Chaucer's entrance into the company of the masters. Here we have a handsome instance of the readiness and even eagerness with which English classicism at its best could accept great figures of the native tradition and award them rank with the greatest figures in its literary pantheon At its best English classicism is alert to discern through veils of style and place and time the classic form.⁶⁶

Charges that they had plagiarized their materials and ideas nettled both writers. Byron is reported to have discussed this point with Lady Blessington:

"But," said Byron, "who is the author that is not, intentionally or unintentionally, a plagiarist? Many more, I am persuaded, are the latter than the former; for if one has read much, it is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid adopting, not only the thoughts, but the expressions of others, which, after they have been some time stored in our minds, appear to us to come forth ready formed, like Minerva from the brain of Jupiter, and we fancy them our own progeny, instead of being those by adoption" ⁶⁷

⁶⁵Dryden, V, 112.

⁶⁶Arthur W. Hoffman, John Dryden's Imagery (Gainesville, Florida, 1962), p. 140.

⁶⁷Countess of Blessington, p. 342.

Medwin reports that Byron complained he was "taxed with being a plagiarist" when he was "least conscious of being one."⁶⁸ On another occasion he told Medwin he thought entirely original ideas were very rare: "'How difficult it is,' said he, 'to say any thing new!'"⁶⁹ Dryden's Preface to The Mock Astrologer, or An Evening's Love, reveals his irritation at being called a plagiarist:

There is another crime with which I am charged, at which I am much less concerned, because it does not relate to my manners, . . . but only to my reputation as a poet: a name of which I assure the reader I am nothing proud; and therefore cannot be very solicitous to defend it. I am taxed with stealing all my plays, and that by some, who should be the last men from whom I would steal any part of them.⁷⁰

Dryden says that whenever he has found a story he has liked he has not hesitated to take it and "build it up, and . . . make it proper for the English stage."⁷¹ He cites Virgil, Terence, Tasso, and Shakespeare as writers who have taken stories from other writers. Dryden writes that his critics do not understand the nature of a poem or

. . . the work of a poet: . . . the story is the least part of either: I mean the foundation of it, before it is modelled by the art of him who writes it; who forms it with more care, by exposing only the beautiful parts of it to view, than a skilful lapidary sets a jewel.⁷²

⁶⁸Medwin, p. 140.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 199.

⁷⁰Dryden, III, 249-250.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 250.

⁷²Ibid., p. 252.

Dryden and Byron, prolific writers, displayed their skill, ingenuity, and talent in several similar genres: plays, satires, and lyrical verses. As young authors, they first received popular acclaim for thrilling stories of daring adventures in strange lands. Dryden's The Indian Queen (written with Sir Robert Howard), The Indian Emperor, Tyrannic Love, and Almanzor and Almahide; or, the Conquest of Granada, owed a part of their success to their exotic scenery. The unusual settings were to give

the public of the seventeenth century . . . settings of rich gorgeous loveliness, full of a strangeness that should reave them away from the drabness of contemporary conditions. In this wise, the Oriental settings given to many a tragedy may be taken as indicating a desire to escape from conventional surroundings to a world of unrestrained bustle and turmoil and impossible romance.⁷³

The rest of their popularity was due to characters who were "warped out of their national characteristics and made to live in . . . the world of heroic ardour and of dauntless courage."⁷⁴ Byron's oriental tales, The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos, The Corsair, and Lara, were also set in splendid foreign locales and their heroes were also energetic, noble, and brave. The public loved these verse tales, especially The Corsair: "Murray printed seven editions and sold

⁷³Allardyce Nicoll, Restoration Drama, Vol. I of A History of English Drama: 1660-1900 (Cambridge, 1952), p. 131.

⁷⁴Ibid.

twenty-five thousand copies in little over one month. This phenomenal popularity was caused by the fine descriptive passages"75 Byron and Dryden seemed to have satisfied a similar public taste that transcended any particular form and may today be found in prose fiction.⁷⁶ Dryden moved from rhymed heroic tragedies to blank-verse tragedies modeled along classical patterns. All for Love, an adaptation of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra, is the most famous of these later works, but he also wrote Cleomenes: The Spartan Hero, The Duke of Guise, Don Sebastian, and Aureng-Zebe. Although Byron sometimes ignored the classical unities, as he did in Manfred, Werner, Heaven and Earth, and Cain, he consciously sought to follow them in The Two Foscari, Marino Faliero, and Sardanapalus. One critic has pointed out that Byron's style sometimes follows Dryden's quite closely: "The total complex of Sardanapalus in relation to All for Love lends countenance to an argument for formal imitation."⁷⁷ These similarities, involving the observance of the unities and the nature of the leading characters, suggest that Byron's classicism is "a peculiar kind of classicism, that of the

⁷⁵Marchand, Byron: A Biography, II, 433.

⁷⁶Peter L. Thorslev, Jr., The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes (Minneapolis, 1962), p. 147.

⁷⁷M. G. Cooke, "The Restoration Ethos of Byron's Classical Plays," Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, LXXIX (December, 1964), 576.

Restoration And if we still must think of Byron as being, in drama, a Janus of the romantic period, we may at least question how ancient and how authentic is the classical mask with which one face confronts us."⁷⁸ All of Byron's dramas, regardless of form, involve heroic elements common to Dryden's: "The theme of love versus honor, fundamental skepticism, female stoicism, individualism bordering on the anarchic"⁷⁹ Byron's Cain and Heaven and Earth reflect the interest in man's first days according to the Bible that may be seen in Dryden's The State of Innocence, an adaptation of John Milton's Paradise Lost.

The seeming ease and great zest with which Dryden and Byron satirize other writers and society in general suggests that satire must have been their favorite literary form. A "serious moral purpose" seems to underlie the satire of both poets:

[It] was a poetry that would castigate the errors of the age with stringent wit, would point out deviations from good sense and good taste in brilliant balanced couplets, and would attack the corruptions and injustices in society with Juvenalian fierceness⁸⁰

Dryden's literary and political satires--Absalom and Achitophel, The Medal, and Mac Flecknoe--are paralleled by Byron's--

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 578.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Leslie A. Marchand, Byron's Poetry: A Critical Introduction (Boston, 1965), p. 9.

A Vision of Judgement, The Age of Bronze, The Curse of Minerva, The Blues, and Don Juan. In Mac Flecknoe Dryden raised his critic and rival Thomas Shadwell to heights of mock-greatness as heir to the King of Dullness; while in A Vision of Judgement Byron lifted Robert Southey, his critic and foe, up to heaven to testify on behalf of his own works despite the vigorous protests of the suffering angels. Dullness was the chief failing other poets were taxed with in Dryden's satires:

He never was a poet of God's making;
 The midwife laid her hand on his thick skull,
 With this prophetic blessing--Be thou dull;
 . . . (Absalom and Achitophel, Part II, ll. 475-477);⁸¹

and in Byron's:

Nor less new schools of Poetry arise,
 Where dull pretenders grapple for the prize:
 O'er Taste awhile these Pseudo-bards prevail;
 Each country Book-club bows the knee to Baal
 (English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, ll. 135-138).⁸²

Both Dryden and Byron accused their victims of writing complete nonsense:

Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he,
 Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
 The rest to some faint meaning make pretense,
 But Shadwell never deviates into sense;
 Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,
 Strike through, and make a lucid interval;
 But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,

⁸¹Dryden, IX, 364.

⁸²Byron, Poetry, II, 308.

His rising fogs prevail upon the day
(Dryden's Mac Flecknoe, ll. 17-24).⁸³

Well wert thou doomed the last of all thy race!
Well might triumphant Genii bear thee hence,
Illustrious conqueror of common sense!
(Byron's English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, ll. 218-220).⁸⁴

Frequently both poets would ridicule the physical appearance of those they satirized, as in Byron's dedication to Don Juan when he tells the Lake poets "Your bays may hide the baldness of your brows," (8, l. 49)⁸⁵ or in Dryden's Mac Flecknoe when he describes Shadwell: "His brows thick fogs, instead of glories grace,/ And lambent dullness played around his face" (ll. 110-111).⁸⁶ Byron's taunt to the critic Jeffrey, "Whatever blessing awaits a genuine Scot,/ In double portion swells thy glorious lot," (English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, ll. 530-531),⁸⁷ seems to echo Dryden's claim that Shadwell, new King of Dullness, received "double portion of his father's art" (Mac Flecknoe, l. 217).⁸⁸

Political satire was used by Dryden and Byron to attack individual politicians and the government as a whole. Faction

⁸³Dryden, X, 440-441.

⁸⁴Byron, Poetry, I, 314.

⁸⁵Ibid., VI, 5.

⁸⁶Dryden, X, 451.

⁸⁷Byron, Poetry, I, 339.

⁸⁸Dryden, X, 459.

and division in the land distressed both writers:

Then in the Senates of your sinking state
 Show me the man whose councils may have weight.
 Vain is each voice where tones could once command;
 E'en factions cease to charm a factious land:
 . . . (Byron's The Curse of Minerva, ll. 273-276).⁸⁹

If true succession from our isle should fail,
 And crowds profane, with impious arms, prevail,
 Not thou, nor those thy factious arts engage,
 Shall reap the harvest of rebellious rage

.
 The swelling poison of the several sects,
 Which, wanting vent, the nation's health infects,
 Shall burst its bag, and, fighting out their way,
 The various venoms on each other prey
 (Dryden's The Medal, ll. 289-297).⁹⁰

Unpopular politicians were compared to eunuchs by Byron and Dryden: Castlereagh was an "intellectual eunuch" (Don Juan, Dedication, ll) and Shaftesbury had an "eunuch face" (The Medal, l. 23).⁹² Insincere preachers drew scorn too, as Dryden criticized their political involvement and Byron attacked their hypocrisy:

. . . that venom still remains,
 And the poxed nation feels thee in their brains.
 What else inspires the tongues, and swells the breasts,
 Of all thy bellowing renegado priests,
 That preach up thee for God, dispense thy laws,
 And with thy stum ferment their fainting cause;
 To make the formidable cripple great?
 (The Medal, ll. 265-272).⁹³

⁸⁹Byron, Poetry, I, 472-473.

⁹⁰Dryden, IX, 457.

⁹¹Byron, Poetry, VI, 7.

⁹²Dryden, IX, 439.

⁹³Ibid., pp. 454-455.

Oh for a forty-parson power to chant
 Thy praise, Hypocrisy! Oh for a hymn
 Loud as the virtues thou dost loudly vaunt,
 Not practise! Oh for trump of Cherubim!
 (Don Juan, x, 34).⁹⁴

Their humor is a little less vicious when they warn against
 having an intellectual wife:

'T is pity learned virgins ever wed
 With persons of no sort of education,
 Or gentlemen, who, though well born and bred,
 Grow tired of scientific conversation:
 I don't choose to say much upon this head,
 I'm a plain man, and in a single station,
 But--Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual,
 Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck'd you all?
 (Don Juan, i, 22).⁹⁵

But of all plagues, the greatest is untold;
 The book-learned wife, in Greek and Latin bold;
 The critic-dame, who at her table sits,
 Homer and Virgil quotes and weighs their wits,
 And pities Dido's agonizing fits.
 She has so far the ascendant of the board,
 The prating pedant puts not in one word;
 The man of law is nonplussed in his suit,
 Nay, every other female tongue is mute
 (Translation of the Sixth Satire of Juvenal, ll. 560-
 569).⁹⁶

An affinity between the spirit evidenced in Dryden's sat-
 ires and in Byron's has been noted by one of Byron's critics
 in reference to The Age of Bronze:

The aim now is not so much the clever witticism at-
 tained by means of zeugma and other Popean devices;
 it is rather the propounding of bold and bitter truth
 with sharpened irony in balanced and telling phrases.

⁹⁴Byron, Poetry, VI, 410.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 201.

⁹⁶Dryden, XIII, 172-173.

At its best the poem suggests the swing and power of "great Dryden" rather than the neat packaging of Pope.⁹⁷

Dryden and Byron could write quite lyrically and beautifully of love and life if they wished. Occasionally, Dryden's verse carries a note of sadness and regret that has been noted also in some of Byron's poetry: "It is a sentimental (and frequently sweetly lyrical) dwelling upon beauty of person or feeling or experience in the past, tempered with the sad reflection that it is irrevocably gone though it had been evanescently beautiful."⁹⁸ Dryden's song from The Indian Emperor expresses this reflective mood:

Ah fading joy! how quickly art thou past!
 Yet we thy ruin haste.
 As if the cares of Humane Life were few,
 We seek our new:
 And follow fate, that does too fast pursue
 (IV, iii, 1-3).⁹⁹

Byron's "And Thou Art Dead, As Young and Fair" speaks of his regret that one young and beautiful has died:

And thou art dead, as young and fair
 As aught of mortal birth;
 And form so soft, and charms so rare,
 Too soon returned to Earth!¹⁰⁰

Sometimes in describing beauty, they notice similar attributes, such as a woman's lovely hair:

⁹⁷Marchand, Byron's Poetry, p. 36.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 18.

⁹⁹Dryden, II, 380.

¹⁰⁰Byron, Poetry, III, 41.

From the bright vision's head
 A careless veil of lawn was loosely spread:
 From her white temples fell her shaded hair,
 Like cloudy sunshine, not too brown nor fair
 ("Song from The Conquest of Granada," 1, III, 1, 208-
 214).¹⁰¹

One shade the more, one ray the less,
 Had half impaired the nameless grace
 Which waves in every raven tress
 Or softly lightens o'er her face
 ("She Walks in Beauty," ll. 7-10).¹⁰²

Dryden's "To the Memory of Mr. Oldham" and Byron's "Monody on the Death of the Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan" are tributes to the talents of fellow-artists. The romantic sweep and vitality of Dryden's "Alexander's Feast" is matched by Byron's "The Destruction of Sennacherib."

A comparable attitude toward life may be found in the works of Dryden and Byron that transcends consideration of genre. Both poets expressed highly idealistic sentiments and then ridiculed them, not always viciously, but with an expression of disbelief in the natural goodness of human nature and the justice of fate. An expression of the dichotomy between dream and reality is usually present in their works. This attitude in Byron has been described as a result of "Aspiration, melancholy, mockery--the history of a mind too idealistic to refrain from blowing bubbles, and too realistic

¹⁰¹Dryden, IV, 66.

¹⁰²Byron, Poetry, III, 381-382.

to refrain from pricking them."¹⁰³ A similar reaction to life has been observed in the works of Dryden:

Dryden's character presents a strange mixture of positive and negative attitudes to life. . . . he could . . . exploit this ambivalency in his poetry. He seems to have taken a pleasure in playing off opposing attitudes against each other. When his subject is serious, the positive attitude may prevail, but the negative attitude usually lurks in the background, ready to show itself at any time unexpectedly.¹⁰⁴

Dryden's works are replete with lines that reveal a positive-negative attitude toward human values: in Don Sebastian, the villain says seriously, "I like this well, 'tis wholesome wickedness" (II, i, 101)¹⁰⁵ and in the same play, Antonio, just sold into slavery, observes "I see the doctrine of non-resistance is never practised thoroughly but when a man can't help himself" (I, i, 564-566).¹⁰⁶ In The Spanish Friar, Lorenzo, a comic rake, says that he is unpopular with the women because he has saved them: "I told them I was one . . . that delivered them from ravishment; and I think in my conscience, that is their quarrel to me" (I, ii, 4-7).¹⁰⁷ Byron includes a similar observation about women in Don Juan:

¹⁰³Hoxie Neale Fairchild, The Romantic Quest (New York, 1931), p. 370.

¹⁰⁴D. W. Jefferson, "The Significance of Dryden's Heroic Plays," in Restoration Dramatists: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Earl Miner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966), p. 21.

¹⁰⁵Dryden, VII, 349.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 343.

¹⁰⁷Dryden, VI, 426-427.

Some voices of the buxom middle-aged
 Were also heard to wonder in the din
 (Widows of forty were these birds long caged)
 "Wherefore the ravishing did not begin!"
 But while the thirst for gore and plunder raged,
 There was small leisure for superfluous sin;
 But whether they escaped or no, lies hid
 In darkness--I can only hope they did
 (viii, 132).¹⁰⁸

Byron's ability to move rapidly from a sentimental tone to an ironic one is seen in Don Juan when he discusses the sweetness of life and then says

Sweet is the vintage, when the showering grapes
 In Bacchanal profusion reel to earth,
 Purple and gushing; sweet are our escapes
 From civic revelry to rural mirth;
 Sweet to the Miser are his glittering heaps,
 Sweet to the father is his first-born's birth,
 Sweet is revenge--especially to women--
 Pillage to soldiers, prize-money to seamen
 (i, 124).¹⁰⁹

At a later point in the epic, Byron again employs bathos to make fun of an immediately preceding description of Don Juan's plight. After a sentimental account of the pathetic fellow, Byron quips,

Here I must leave him, for I grow pathetic,
 Moved by the Chinese nymph of tears, green tea!
 Than whom Cassandra was not more prophetic;
 For if my pure libations exceed three,
 I feel my heart become so sympathetic,
 That I must have recourse to black Bohea:
 'T is pity wine should be so deleterious,
 For tea and coffee leave us much more serious
 (iv, 52).¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Byron, Poetry, VI, 369.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 48.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 197.

He also laughs at family loyalty when he says,

Kill a man's family, and he may brook it,
But keep your hands out of his breeches' pocket
(x, 79).¹¹¹

In The Indian Emperor one of Dryden's characters speaks of man's inability to be satisfied when he reaches his goal:

In wishing nothing, we enjoy still most;
For even our wish is, in possession, lost:
Restless, we wander to a new desire,
And burn ourselves, by blowing up the fire:
.
. . . all the happiness mankind can gain
Is not in pleasure, but in rest from pain
(IV, i, 111-118).¹¹²

In his Journal of 1821 Byron expresses his own, similar feelings about success:

Why, at the very height of desire and human pleasure,--
worldly, social, amorous, ambitious, or even avaricious,--
does there mingle a certain sense of doubt and sorrow--
a fear of what is to come--a doubt of what is--
a retrospect to the past, leading to a prognostication
of the future¹¹³

Byron also uses the idea of human doubts in the midst of pleasure and success in his poetry, as in Don Juan when he describes young Juan and Haidee's bliss,

I know not why, but in that hour to-night,
Even as they gazed, a sudden tremor came,
And swept, as 't were, across their heart's delight,
Like the wind o'er a harp-string, or a flame,
When one is shook in sound, and one in sight:
And thus some boding flashed through either frame,

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 424.

¹¹²Dryden, II, 374.

¹¹³Byron, Letters and Journals, V, 190.

And called from Juan's breast a faint low sigh,
While one new tear arose in Haidee's eye
(iv, 21).¹¹⁴

Youth is cited as a cause of man's idealism by Dryden and Byron:

Honour is but an itch in youthful blood,
Of doing acts extravagantly good;
We call that virtue, which is only heat
That reigns in youth, till age finds out the cheat
(The Indian Queen, III, i, 101-104).¹¹⁵

In thoughts like these true Wisdom may discern
Longings sublime, and aspirations high,
Which some are born with, but the most part learn
To plague themselves withal, they know not why:
'T was strange that one so young should thus concern
His brain about the action of the sky;
If you think't was Philosophy that this did,
I can't help thinking puberty assisted
(Don Juan, i, 93).¹¹⁶

Idealistic sentiments--expressions of faith in life's justice and hope of man's goodness--were seen as instruments of self-deceit by Dryden and Byron. Dryden's Aureng-Zebe, after experiencing gross injustice at the whim of his own father, sees life as a series of disappointments,

When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat;
Yet, fooled with hope, men favour the deceit;
Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay:
To-morrow's falser than the former day
(IV, i, 33-36).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴Byron, Poetry, VI, 189.

¹¹⁵Dryden, II, 250.

¹¹⁶Byron, Poetry, VI, 40.

¹¹⁷Dryden, V, 258.

In a similar manner, Byron's Conrad and Lara also betrayed by those close to them when they were young, have abandoned any hope in the reality of idealistic truths.

One critic's statement that Dryden expressed in his works a feeling of "Resentment against life, flavored by a kind of genial cynicism . . ." ¹¹⁸ might also be applied to Byron. The similarity of the genres that Byron and Dryden chose to work in might indicate more than that they were both extremely versatile writers; it might also indicate that they had a certain temperamental and philosophical affinity.

¹¹⁸Jefferson, p. 22.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HEROIC HERO

The concept of the hero, the extraordinary man, has existed for centuries, but the specific characteristics of this hero have varied from age to age: "The hero as he appears in literature bears with him the ethos of the age, the unspoken assumptions, the philosophical presuppositions in the context of which his existence becomes meaningful."¹ In the classical traditions of Greece and Rome that John Dryden and Lord Byron admired and sometimes emulated, Aristotle's guidelines formed "the norm for any discussion of heroic tradition:"

First of all the hero must be "bigger than life;" he must be above the common level, with greater powers, greater dignity, and a greater soul. He must have the qualities of an ordinary mortal so that we can see ourselves in him, but he is an idealization, a man whose capacities have been multiplied and enlarged so as to make him a giant among men he must be "better," more "virtuous," than the average man.²

This virtue does not mean "goodness," necessarily, but rather, in a sense closer to the word's original meaning, that the protagonist must have a just pride in himself and in his

¹Peter L. Thorslev, Jr., The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes, (Minneapolis, 1962), p. 19.

²Ibid., p. 186.

abilities. Hercules is perhaps the most outstanding character in the ancient heroic mold. The Hercules of Euripides, Sophocles, and later of Seneca, is "basically the same character:"

He is a warrior whose extraordinary strength is matched by his valour and fortitude. His self-assurance and self-centredness amount to inordinate pride, but are not treated as hamartia. Though his savage anger is at times almost brutal, he is capable of great devotion, is dedicated to a heroic ideal, and is regarded as a benefactor of humanity. In him the areté is pushed to the ultimate degree; yet, in defiance of justice, he is rewarded with extraordinary suffering Excessive in everything, his aspirations extend even beyond the bounds of the earth . . . yet the plays set an awareness of human limitation against this vision of infinite heroic potential.³

The heroes that followed Hercules varied in their aspirations, but remained constant in their innate, unquestioned position of superiority in comparison with other men.

Dryden's heroes, who have been described as "legitimate descendants of the earlier Herculean heroes,"⁴ conform to Aristotle's requirements most notably in that they are men of outstanding ability and talent. Dryden set forth his requirements for a hero in the Preface of his adaptation of Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida: he must be an uncommon man, great through birth or natural abilities; he must reveal his abilities through birth or natural abilities; he

³Eugene M. Waith, The Herculean Hero: in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dryden (London, 1962), p. 38.

⁴Ibid., p. 154.

must reveal his abilities through his actions (which must remain consistent with his character throughout the story), and he must be represented as history reported him to be.⁵ *
 Dryden's ideal character is neither all good nor all bad, but "a composition of qualities which are not contrary to one another in the same person," so that he may not be "supposed to consist of one particular virtue, or vice, or passion only" ⁶ A character controlled by one vice or one virtue would be unnatural:

As for a perfect character of virtue, it never was in nature, and therefore there can be no imitation of it; but there are alloys of frailty to be allowed for the chief persons, yet so that the good which is in them shall outweigh the bad, and consequently leave room for punishment on the one side, and pity on the other.⁷

Any vice assigned to a character must also be justified by some incident in the hero's past or by his present situation: "To produce a villain, without other reason than a natural inclination to villainy, is, in poetry, to produce an effect without a cause; and to make him more a villain than he has just reason to be, is to make an effect which is stronger than the cause."⁸

⁵John Dryden, The Works of John Dryden, edited by Sir Walter Scott, revised and corrected by George Saintsbury, 18 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1882-1893), VI, 262-269. Hereafter cited as Dryden.

⁶Ibid., p. 269.

⁷Ibid., p. 263.

⁸Ibid., p. 267.

Dryden has been credited with the introduction of Herculean heroes into the drama of his time:

The Herculean hero in Dryden's plays is both the sum of his predecessors and a new creation, suited to the ideals and stage conventions of a new age.

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The protagonists of these plays are prime examples of the Herculean hero's self-reliance and determination to guard his own integrity at whatever cost.⁹

Toward the latter part of Dryden's life, such heroes were not as popular as they had once been due to the increasing popularity of more sentimental dramas.¹⁰ Eugene Waith writes that "Admiration for the uncompromisingly individual warrior ceases for a time, to begin again in a somewhat different form in the Romantic movement."¹¹ He does not mention Byron's heroes in this context, however, but skips to later figures: "Heathcliff and Captain Ahab, different as they both are from Tamburlaine or Morat, are loved and feared for somewhat similar reasons. Their shocking infractions of the code of ordinary decency are similarly accepted as integral parts of their heroism"¹²

⁹Waith, p. 152.

¹⁰Allardyce Nicoll, Restoration Drama: 1660-1700, Vol. I of A History of English Drama: 1660-1900, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1952), p. 283.

¹¹Waith, p. 201.

¹²Ibid.

After the public success of Byron's works, heroes that combined more than ordinary abilities with extreme self-confidence (sometimes with a sin or vice related to an incident in their past) were more frequently known as Byronic than as Herculean, but they seem to have been related to the same literary tradition. Upali Amarasinghe believed that Byron was one poet in his age that had "succeeded in keeping alive much of the characteristic vitality and strength of the poetic tradition" of the Augustan age.¹³ Some of Byron's heroes do exhibit characteristics drawn from classical precepts:

This Aristotelian formula does indeed apply to the Romantic heroes, however, from the Gothic Villain-turned-Hero of the drama, through the Noble Outlaw (from Götz and Karl Moor to Marmion and the Corsair), and through the various Faust-figures, to Satan and Prometheus. Each of these heroes is "bigger than life"--by virtue of his intellectual powers, his personal dignity, and his capacity for feeling--and all of them are certainly activated by a very self-conscious pride, even in their suffering.¹⁴

Byron's prefaces to his dramas reveal chiefly his concern that the historical accuracy of his character portrayals be recognized, but in a letter of 1821 he discussed another aspect of character portrayal, the blending of guilt and sympathy:

¹³Upali Amarasinghe, Dryden and Pope in the Early Nineteenth Century: A Study of Changing Literary Taste, 1800-1830 (Cambridge, 1962), p. 199.

¹⁴Thorslev, p. 187.

. . . I must remark from Aristotle and Rymer, that the hero of tragedy and (I add meo periculo) a tragic poem, must be guilty, to excite "terror and pity," the end of tragic poetry. But hear not me, but my bettters. "The pity which the poet is to labour for is for the criminal. The terror is likewise in the punishment of the said criminal, who, if he be represented too great an offender, will not be pitied; if altogether innocent his punishment will be unjust." In the Greek tragedy innocence is unhappy often, and the offender escapes. I must also ask you is Achilles a good character? or is even Aeneas anything but a successful runaway?¹⁵

Although Byron does not mention it, he quotes not from the "bettters" actually named in the passage but rather from Dryden. Dryden had jotted down the outline of a critical analysis of a contemporary work, Thomas Rymer's The Tragedies of the last age considered and examined by the practice of the Ancients (1678). In this incompleated work, later labeled Heads of an Answer to Rymer, Dryden wrote:

The pity which the poet is to labour for, is for the criminal, not for those or him whom he has murdered, or who have been the occasion of the tragedy. The terror is likewise in the punishment of the same criminal, who, if he be represented too great an offender, will not be pitied; if altogether innocent, his punishment will be unjust.¹⁶

The fact that he quotes from Dryden shows beyond question that Byron was impressed by Dryden's arguments. Byron's declaration that he could "sooner pardon crimes, because

¹⁵George Gordon, Lord Byron, Letters and Journals, Vols. I-VI of The Works of Lord Byron, edited by Rowland E. Prothero, 13 vols. (London, 1905-1922), V, 284. Hereafter cited as Byron, Letters and Journals.

¹⁶Dryden, XV, 391.

they proceed from the passions, than . . . minor vices, that spring from selfishness and self-conceit,"¹⁷ is comparable to Dryden's belief that while his heroes may commit crimes, the crimes must not be the result of petty passions, such as cowardice, because such vices are not consistent with a heroic nature.¹⁸ Byron's comments about Napoleon reveal his desire that heroes be consistent in their defiance:

But Napoleon was his own antithesis He was a glorious tyrant, after all I blame the manner of his death; he shewed [sic] that he possessed much of the Italian character in consenting to live. There he lost himself in his dramatic character, in my estimation. He was master of his own destiny; of that, at least, his enemies could not deprive him. He should have gone off the stage like a hero: it was expected of him.¹⁹

Unlike Napoleon, Byron's heroes, like Dryden's, lived up to their Herculean ideals:

What unites all of the figures is not that familiar common denominator, the Byronic hero, but rather the fundamental humanness, in extremis, which each of these disparate figures exemplifies to Byron. Each in his own way heroically and unyieldingly battles against his destiny--through defiance, Herculean efforts of the will, and deliberate flaunting of the self-manacled man's less than human codes of conduct.²⁰

¹⁷Countess of Blessington, A Journal of Conversations with Lord Byron (Boston, 1859), p. 87.

¹⁸Dryden, VI, 269.

¹⁹Thomas Medwin, Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron, edited by Ernest J. Lovell, Jr. (Princeton, 1966), pp. 184-185.

²⁰Robert F. Gleckner, Byron and the Ruins of Paradise (Baltimore, 1967), p. 253.

Perhaps the Byronic hero may be more clearly delineated if he is seen as a further modification or development of the Herculean hero. It has been suggested that the Byronic hero originated "not in Byron's personality, but in the cultural and especially the literary milieu of the age in which he lived:"

The main point, however, is that all the elements of the Byronic Hero existed before him in the literature of the age. This hero is unique, in one sense, in the powerful fusion of . . . disparate elements into a single commanding image; but he did not spring by a miracle of parthenogenesis from Byron's mind; he is to a large extent a product of a Romantic heroic tradition which was a half-century old before he appeared.²¹

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The heroic characters of John Dryden came more than a century before Byron's heroic characters, but the similarities between them strongly suggest that Byron's characters were anticipated by those of Dryden. Some of Byron's heroes closely correspond to some of Dryden's in their striking personal appearance, strength of character, rebellious pride, and physical superiority. Dryden's most famous characters are found in his heroic tragedies: Montezuma in The Indian Queen; Montezuma and Cortez in The Indian Emperor, or the Conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards; Porphyrius in Tyrannic Love or the Royal Martyr; Almanzor in Almanzor and Almahide, or The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards; and Aureng-Zebe and Morat in Aureng-Zebe. Some of his other plays, although

²¹Thorslev, p. 12.

not classified as heroic plays, have similar characters: Gonsalvo and Rodorick in The Rival Ladies; Antony in All for Love, or the World Well Lost; Don Sebastian in Don Sebastian, and Cleomenes in Cleomenes, the Spartan Hero. Byron's heroic figures in the Oriental tales include Conrad, Lara, Selim, and the Giaour of The Corsair, Lara, The Bride of Abydos, and The Giaour, respectively. Other heroic characters of Byron are the protagonists of the tragedies Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice; Sardanapalus; The Two Foscari; Werner, or the Inheritance, and Manfred.

In The Byronic Hero, Peter Thorslev has arranged the prototypes of Byron's heroes into four main groups: the "Noble Outlaw;" Faust; Cain and Ahasuerus; and Satan and Prometheus. He demonstrates that these Romantic heroes are related, through characteristics and attitudes, with certain heroes popular in the eighteenth century:

The Child of Nature . . . all of the naive, unsophisticated, usually impulsive and somewhat aggressive types, with primitivistic or at least "close-to-nature" origins; the Heroes of Sensibility . . . the relatively well-bred and sophisticated cultivators of feelings--feelings ranging from graveyard gloom through the merely tearful to the whimsical; . . . [and] the Gothic Villain.²²

The concept of the Noble Outlaw best expresses the character from heroic tradition that is most comparable in the works of Dryden and Byron. All Noble Outlaws share certain characteristics:

²²Ibid., p. 21.

First, and perhaps most important, the Noble Outlaw is invariably fiery, passionate, and heroic; he is in the true sense bigger than the life around him In all of his appearances the Noble Outlaw personified the Romantic nostalgia for the days of personal heroism, for the age when it was still possible for a leader to dominate his group of followers by sheer physical courage, strength of will, and personal magnetism.²³

These heroes were also "natural" leaders of unquestioned authority whose commands were always obeyed by their intensely loyal followers. Just as Dryden's dictum required, there is some reason for the hero's fault or vice. "The Noble Outlaw is also largely a sympathetic character. He is figured as having been wronged either by intimate personal friends, or by society in general, and his rebellion is thus always given a plausible motive."²⁴ The last characteristic of the Noble Outlaw is the air of mystery that surrounds him because of some secret that lies hidden in his past.

According to Thorslev, it was Sir Walter Scott "who developed the Noble Outlaw to his last stage before Byron."²⁵ Interestingly, Scott's extremely popular verse romance Marion came out in 1808, the same year that his edition of Dryden's Works was published. No doubt Scott was familiar with the ballads of the border outlaws as Thorslev states, but he also was, necessarily, familiar with the dramas of

²³Ibid., pp. 68-69.

²⁴Ibid., p. 69.

²⁵Ibid., p. 77.

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Dryden that he had just spent several years editing. The hero of Marmion "has . . . all the features of the complete Noble Outlaw."²⁶ If it is true that due to Byron's great respect for Scott, "anything which influenced Scott necessarily influenced Byron, if only indirectly,"²⁷ then perhaps some of the aspects of the Noble Outlaw were prefigured by the heroes of John Dryden. Byron's heroes will be examined in succeeding chapters in the light of their relationship to the Augustan tradition. One Byronic hero-type, in particular, the Noble Outlaw, will be analyzed in relation to Dryden's heroic characters.

²⁶Ibid., p. 78.

²⁷Ibid., p. 72.

CHAPTER FOUR

COMPARISON OF THE HEROES OF DRYDEN AND BYRON

The heroes of many of the works of Dryden and Byron bear a family resemblance to each other and to the Noble Outlaw prototype. They share physical attributes, personality traits, and attitudes toward life and love. Comparable villains menace them and similar women adore them. NT

From their first appearance to their last, the most striking characteristic that these heroes share is their overwhelming strength of ego. They trust and rely only on their own powers, and are accepted as superior men by their fellow creatures. Abenamar, in The Conquest of Granada, recognizes Almanzor's superiority when he says,

What, in another, vanity would seem,
Appears but noble confidence in him;
No haughty boasting, but a manly pride;
A soul too fiery, and too great to guide:
He moves eccentric, like a wandering star,
Whose motion's just, though 'tis not regular
(1, V, ii, 34-39).¹

Almanzor reveals his own strong belief in his abilities when he says,

¹John Dryden, The Works of John Dryden, edited by Sir Walter Scott, revised and corrected by George Saintsbury, 18 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1882-1893), IV, 104-105. Hereafter cited as Dryden.

. . . I alone am king of me.
 I am as free as nature first made man,
 Ere the base laws of servitude began,
 When wild in woods the noble savage ran
 (1, I, i, 206-209).

In Don Sebastian the hero is described by one who hates him
 as

. . . a man,
 Above man's height, even towering to divinity:
 Brave, pious, generous, great, and liberal
 (I, i, 111-113).²

Similarly Cleomenes is praised as a man "Whom even his foes
 extol, his friends adore,/ And all mankind admire" (Cleomenes,
 II, ii, 85-87).³ He is also compared to a king by the mis-
 tress of his mortal enemy because she has been unable to re-
 sist falling in love with him:

Some are born kings,
 Made up of three parts fire, so full of heaven
 It sparkles at their eyes. Inferior souls
 Know them as soon as seen, by sure instinct
 To be their lords, and naturally worship
 The secret god within them
 (II, iii, 232-237).

Aureng-Zebe feels that he is innately superior to his per-
 secutor Morat, despite the fact that Morat is Emperor:

With all the assurance innocence can
 bring,
 Fearless without, because secure within,
 Armed with my courage, unconcerned I see
 This pomp; a shame to you, a pride to me.
 Shame is but where with wickedness 'tis joined;

²Dryden, VII, 327.

³Ibid., VIII, 294.

And, while no baseness in this breast I find,
I have not lost the birthright of my mind
(Aureng-Zebe, III, i, 201-207).⁴

Byron's heroes are also strongly self-confident. They may commit crimes against other people or the state, but they are always certain that what they did was the right and noble thing to do. Jacopo Foscari, in The Two Foscari, sounds somewhat like Aureng-Zebe when he speaks of the power of his mind to help him withstand the tortures he is subjected to by his inquisitors:

. . . The mind
Hath nerved me to endure the risk of death,
And torture positive, far worse than death
. . . without a groan,
Or with a cry which rather shamed my judges
Than me . . .
(III, i, 87-92).⁵

His father, forced by his position as Doge to watch his son's suffering, rejects offers of sympathy for himself:

Pitied! None
Shall ever use that base word, with which men
Cloak their soul's hoarded triumph, as a fit one
To mingle with my name; that name shall be,
As far as I have borne it, what it was
When I received it
(II, i, 146-151).

Despite his advanced age Marino Faliero, in his eighties, is superior to the younger men around him:

⁴Ibid., V, 245.

⁵George Gordon, Lord Byron, Poetry, Vols. I-VIII of The Works of Lord Byron, edited by Ernest H. Coleridge, 13 vols. (London, 1905-1922), V, 154-155. Hereafter cited as Byron, Poetry.

And Time, which has not tamed his fiery spirit,
 Nor yet enfeebled even his mortal frame,
 Which seems to be more nourished by a soul
 So quick and restless that it would consume
 Less hardy clay . . .

.
 . . . all things wear in him
 An aspect of Eternity: his thoughts,
 His feelings, passions, good or evil, all
 Have nothing of old age; and his bold brow
 Bears but the scars of mind, the thoughts of years
 (Marino Faliero, II, i, 9-21).⁶

One who saw the Giaour would "espy/ A noble soul, and lineage high," (The Giaour, 868-869)⁷ that, like Conrad's appearance, singles him out from common men. When Selim appears as a pirate, Zuleika is impressed with his authority and the air of "high command/ [that] Spake in his eye, and tone, and hand" (The Bride of Abydos, ii, 9).⁸ Even Sardanapalus, the peace-loving monarch, is blessed with godlike abilities, according to his critical follower Salemenes,

. . . In his effeminate heart
 There is a careless courage which Corruption
 Has not all quenched, and latent energies,
 Repressed by circumstance, but not destroyed--
 If born a peasant, he had been a man
 To have reached an empire
 (Sardanapalus, I, i, 9-15).⁹

Most of Dryden's characters are content to feel superior to any other being on earth, but a few reach out, as did Byron's

⁶Byron, Poetry, IV, 368.

⁷Ibid., III, 126.

⁸Ibid., III, 184.

⁹Ibid., V, 14.

hero in Manfred, to learn the secrets of eternity. Malicorne in Dryden and Lee's The Duke of Guise actually anticipates Manfred's exploration of the supernatural world by making a pact with Satan. Unlike Manfred, whose dealings with the spirits are inspired by his passion to seek out the hidden truths of life, Malicorne seeks worldly power and wealth. He, again unlike Manfred, is unable to resist the devils who come to carry his soul away to hell. Dryden's Zempoalla in The Indian Queen and Maximun in Tyrannic Love call forth the spirits to assist them in an incantation scene similar to the one at the beginning of Manfred. Generally, however, the heroes of Dryden and Byron either do not believe in the gods or do not trust them as much as they trust themselves.

Others willingly follow the commands of Dryden and Byron's heroes, for these men are natural leaders. Superior fighters themselves, their greatest asset in battle lies in their ability to compel obedience through the sheer strength of their personality. If, as was the case for Cleomenes and Sardanapalus, they lose control of their forces in the heat of battle, it is because some of their troops were composed of worthless rabble, part of the common mob. Dryden's Almanzor is not lying when he says

Born, as I am, still to command, not sue,

 I have that soul which empires first began
 (1, Conquest of Granada, IV, 11, 471-476).

His ability is apparent because whatever side he fights upon, and he changes sides frequently, wins. While Cleomenes loses control of the mob, he maintains command over his soldiers:

Fear not those mercenaries: they are mine,
Devoted to my interest, commanded by my
 nod:
They are my limbs of war, and I their soul
(II, ii, 220-222).¹⁰

Aureng-Zebe's soldiers tell him, "Know your own interest, sir; where'er you lead,/ We jointly vow to own no other head" (II, i, 17-18).

Byron's heroes are also unquestioned leaders of men.

Conrad maintained control over his pirate crew:

For well had Conrad learned to curb the crowd,
By arts that veil, and oft preserve the proud
(The Corsair, i, 539-540).¹¹

Selim, who appreciates the flowers in the palace garden, has the ability to command the diverse crew of men who follow his bidding. He describes their powers and loyalty to Zuleika when he says,

'Tis true, they are a lawless brood,
But rough in form, nor mild in mood;
And every creed, and every race,
With them hath found--may find a place:
But open speech, and ready hand,
Obedience to their Chief's command;
A soul for every enterprise,
That never sees with terror's eyes;

¹⁰Dryden, VIII, 298.

¹¹Byron, Poetry, III, 246.

Friendship for each, and faith to all,
 And vengeance vow'd for those who fall,
 Have made them fitting instruments
 For more than even my own intents
 (The Bride of Abydos, ii, 845-856).

Ulric's father Werner notices that his son is respected by his peers, but does not know he is a robber chief when he says that he is

. . . in league with the most riotous
 Of our young nobles; though, to do him justice,
 He never stoops down to their vulgar pleasures;
 Yet there's some tie between them which I can not
 Unravel. They look up to him--consult him--
 Throng about him as a leader . . .
 (Werner, IV, i, 422-427).¹²

Sardanapalus reminds his friend Salemenes that he is "the lawful king, descended from/ A race of Kings who knew no predecessors" (Sardanapalus, I, ii, 203-204). Frequently the loyalty and devotion that such leaders inspire is embodied in the person of one especially loyal retainer or friend. In Dryden's All for Love Ventidius is the model of a loyal friend. He admires Antony and seeks only to serve his welfare. Antony appreciates Ventidius's devotion, but cannot follow his advice to give up Cleopatra:

Now, on my soul, he loves me; truly
 loves me;
 He never flattered me in any vice,
 But awes me with his virtue: even this minute,
 Methinks, he has a right of chiding me.
 Lead to the temple: I'll avoid his presence;
 It checks too strong upon me
 (III, i, 33-38).¹³

¹²Ibid., V, 429.

¹³Dryden, V, 378.

Sardanapalus, in Byron's play, also has a loyal follower who urges him to give up his mistress. Salemenes is concerned that Sardanapalus's subjects may soon rise against him, and he begs his lord to lead a less luxurious life. Sardanapalus credits Salemenes with good intentions and says that he will try to change:

My brother--my best subject--better Prince
Than I am King. You should have been the monarch,
And I--I know not what, and care not; but
Think not I am insensible to all
Thine honest wisdom, and thy rough yet kind,
Though oft--reproving, sufferance of my follies
(II, i, 487-492).

Frequently there is some mystery about the past life or origins of the heroes. Among Dryden's heroes, Montezuma appears at the royal court in The Indian Queen as a "young man of unknown race" (I, i, 39),¹⁴ and it later develops that he is the rightful heir to the throne. Sebastian, a lowly slave at the beginning of Don Sebastian, is actually the missing King of Portugal. Dorax is discovered to be a renegade soldier from Sebastian's court. Almanzor's parentage is unknown until the ghost of his mother reveals that his father is a Spanish nobleman. In much the same way, Byron's Selim is revealed to be the son of the murdered rightful heir to the kingdom. Conrad, described as a man who is lonely, has a mysterious past. Werner and his son Ulric, first not even

¹⁴Ibid., II, 230.

known to each other, are later revealed to be heirs to a large estate. The air of mystery serves to set the heroes apart and thus add to their stature in the eyes of more ordinary mortals.

Dryden's and Byron's heroes are superior creatures, but they are haunted by their destiny. Their fate is usually an unfortunate one, but they resist giving in until they die. Frequently they feel singled out for misfortune and injustice; but, like Dryden's Montezuma, they are defiant:

Can there be gods to see, and suffer this?
Or does mankind make his own fate or bliss;
While very good and bad happens by chance,
Not from their orders, but their ignorance?--
But I will pull a ruin on them all,
And turn their triumph to a funeral
(The Indian Queen, II, iii, 51-56).

Byron, who mourned that Napoleon had submitted tamely to defeat, would have agreed with Montezuma when he said

Kings and their crowns have but one destiny:
Power is their life; when that expires, they die
(The Indian Emperor, V, ii, 236-237).¹⁵

Almanzor's character as a rebel is emphasized by his ability to switch from faction to faction according to his whim; the only constant interest he has is in his own honor and that of his friends. He feels sure that he is fated to a life of greatness:

. . . there is a necessity in fate,
Why still the brave bold man is fortunate:

¹⁵Ibid., II, 404.

He keeps his object ever full in sight,
 And that assurance holds him firm and right.
 True, 'tis a narrow path that leads to bliss,
 But right before there is no precipice:
 Fear makes men look aside, and then their footing miss
 (Conquest of Granada, 1, IV, ii, 456-462).

Almahide tells him early in the play that "Great souls discern not when the leap's too wide," (1, IV, iii, 452) and he repeats her simile by the end of the play,

While timorous wit goes round, or fords the shore,
 He shoots the gulf, and is already o'er;
 And, when the enthusiastic fit is spent,
 Looks back amazed at what he underwent
 (2, IV, ii, 15-18).

When a ghost intervenes in his behalf, it is obvious to Almanzor that he is protected by the fates. Sounding like Manfred, he muses on life's mysteries and says

O Heaven, how dark a riddle's thy
 decree,
 Which bounds our wills, yet seems to leave them
 free!
 Since thy foreknowledge cannot be in vain,
 Our choice must be what thou didst first ordain.
 Thus, like a captive in an isle confined,
 Man walks at large, a prisoner of the mind:
 Wills all his crimes, while Heaven the indictment
 draws,
 And, pleading guilty, justifies the laws.
 Let fate be fate; the lover and the brave
 Are ranked, at least, above the vulgar slave
 (2, IV, iii, 242-251).

Cleomenes feels that although he is a worthy person, he will not triumph over his enemies because the fates do not wish him to do so:

If they fail me,
 Theirs be the fault, for fate is theirs alone:
 My virtue, fame, and honour are my own
 (Cleomenes, III, iii, 148-150).

It is his destiny to be unlucky:

Some men are made of such a leaky
 mould,
 That their filled vessels can no fortune hold.
 Poured in, it sinks away, and leaves them dry;
 Of that susceptible make am I
 (IV, i, 246-249).

Aureng-Zebe mistakenly concludes that destiny opposed him when his father turns against him and tries to take Indamora from him: "Nature herself is changed to punish me;/ Virtue turned vice, and faith inconstancy" (Aureng-Zebe, I, i, 394-395). When his fortune is at its lowest ebb, he despairs that there is any good left in life:

When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat;
 Yet, fooled with hope, men favour the deceit;
 Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay:
 To-morrow's falser than the former day
 (IV, i, 33-36).

Sebastian, a captive in chains, defies the Emperor of Barbary and his fate:

Let fortune empty her whole quiver on me;
 I have a soul, that, like an ample shield,
 Can take in all, and verge enough for more.

 Fate was not mine,
 Nor am I fate's

 I beg no pity for this mouldering clay;
 For, if you give it burial, there it takes
 Possession of your earth;
 If burnt and scattered in the air, the winds,
 That strow my dust diffuse my royalty,
 And spread me o'er your clime: for where one
 atom
 Of mine shall light, know, there Sebastian reigns
 (Don Sebastian, I, i, 377-392).

Byron's heroes also feel the pressure of their dark destinies and they, too, react with defiance. The Giaour murders Hassan to avenge the death of Lelia, his only love, but his action brings not relief but further pain, as he confesses to the monk:

Why marvel ye, if they who lose
 This present joy, this future hope,
 No more with Sorrow meekly cope;
 In phrensy then their fate accuse;
 In madness do those fearful deeds
 That seem to add but Guilt to Woe?
 (The Giaour, ll. 1149-1154).

Selim, too, is aware of fate's power, for he tells Zuleika "Not blind to Fate, I see, where'er I rove,/ Unnumbered perils . . ." (The Bride of Abydos, ll. 898-899). Sardanapalus, fearing that it is his destiny to be overthrown as ruler, resolves to take his own life rather than submit tamely to defeat:

Fate made me what I am--may make me nothing--
 But either that or nothing must I be:
 I will not live degraded
 (Sardanapalus, I, i, 628-629).

He threatens titanic destruction to those who wish him off the throne because they think he is too weak and peaceful a ruler:

. . . if they rouse me, better
 They had conjured up stern Nimrod from his ashes,
 'The Mighty Hunter!' I will turn these realms
 To one wide desert chase of brutes, who were,
 But would no more, by their own choice, be human,
What they have found me, they belie; that which
 They yet may find me--shall defy their wish
 (I, ii, 372-378).

Marino Faliero believes that he is fated to rebel against the government of which he is the titular head: "This will I--must I--have I sworn to do, / Nor aught can turn me from my destiny" (Marino Faliero, III, ii, 496-497). When he is captured and sentenced to death for his part in the rebellion, he is still defiant as he challenges the right of his judges to try him:

I cannot plead to my inferiors, nor
 Can recognize your legal power to try me.
 Show me the law!
 (IV, i, 182-184).

He accepts his defeat as fate and hears his sentence bravely:

I would have shown no mercy, and I seek none;
 My life was staked upon a mighty hazard,
 And being lost, take what I would have taken!

 Fortune is female: from my youth her favours
 Were withheld, the fault was mine to hope
 Her former smiles again at this late hour
 (V, i, 259-269).

Werner warns his son Ulric that destiny and fate can bring fearful consequences to those who ignore conventional behavior. He has suffered greatly and is now helpless to change:

My destiny has so involved about me
 Her spider web, that I can only flutter
 Like the poor fly, but break it not. Take heed,
 Ulric . . .
 (Werner, IV, i, 307-310).

Ulric does not listen and cries "I'll be led by no man" (l. 338). Later, after his crimes have been revealed, he proposes another murder to conceal them and scorns his father's hesitation:

Let us have done with that which cankers life,
 Familiar feuds and vain recriminations
 Of things which cannot be undone. We have
 No more to learn or hide: I know no fear
 (V, ii, 468-471).

The heroes of Dryden and Byron are never deterred by their realization that fate does not favor them, they merely clench their defiant fists and oppose fate itself.

One reason, other than their perfect self-confidence, they are able to defy fate and the gods is that they are totally unafraid of death: Aureng-Zebe says, "Death, in itself, is nothing" (IV, i, 3). Sebastian says "My soul should walk with ease/ Out of its flesh" (III, i, 230-231). Montezuma says, "A glorious death in arms I'll rather prove,/ Than stay to perish tamely by my love" (The Indian Emperor, I, ii, 205-206). Sometimes the heroes welcome death as an escape from life, as does Marino Faliero, who tries to comfort his sorrowing wife by diminishing the importance of his approaching death:

The hour may be a hard one, but 'twill end.
 Have I aught else to undergo save Death?
 (V, i, 545-546).

The Giaour also has looked for death: "Yet death I have not feared to meet;/ And in the field it had been sweet" (ll. 1008-1009).

The frequency with which the heroes of Dryden and Byron invoke Hercules suggests that their creators may have had that ancient hero in mind when they drew their characters.

Dryden's Antony, whose name is derived, according to Plutarch from Anton, Son of Hercules¹⁶ swears on the name of his father Hercules more than once (All for Love, II, i, 131; III, i, 41). Cleomenes also calls upon Hercules--"Look, Hercules, thou author of my race" (V, ii, 48)--and refers to "The mansion of my great forefather, Hercules (I, i, 127). Ulric is compared to the hero too:

A stalwart, active soldier-looking
stripling,
Handsome as Hercules ere his first labour
(Werner, II, i, 255).

And Sardanapalus hears the cry of battle and "springs up like a Hercules at once" (III, i, 221).

Dryden's and Byron's heroic men all have some vice or weakness. In some characters goodness predominates and their weaknesses only serve to humanize them. Aureng-Zebe, for example, loyally supports his father because it is his duty as a son, but he is jealous of Indamora's concern for Morat. When he learns she has always been faithful to him, he apologizes rather belatedly for, as he explained earlier in the drama, "Great souls long struggle ere they own a crime" (V, i, 587). Sardanapalus is a fundamentally good, peace-loving person who hates to hurt anyone, yet he leaves his wife for the love of his mistress. His involvement with

¹⁶George H. Nettleton and Arthur E. Case, British Dramatists from Dryden to Sheridan (Boston, 1939), p. 94.

Myrrha symbolizes his tendency to glide through life attaching more importance to its pleasures than to its responsibilities. At the end of the play he repents, but realizes that he has done so too late to change his fate:

. . . If e'er we meet again, perhaps
 I may be worthier of you--and, if not,
 Remember that my faults, though not atoned for,
 Are ended. Yet, I dread thy nature will
 Grieve more above the blighted name and ashes
 Which once were mightiest in Assyria--than--
 But I grow womanish again, and must not;
 I must learn sternness now . . .
 (IV, i, 391-397).

The behavior of some characters, such as Rodorick and the Giaour, is sometimes wicked, but they are not consistently evil men. Their personalities are a combination of good and evil impulses--sometimes virtue predominates, and sometimes vice. These heroes have some redeeming virtue, usually tender love for one woman and courteous respect for all females. The chief cause of their wickedness is usually an inordinate desire for power or revenge. These villain-heroes are distinguished from complete villains, such as Maximin, the Roman tyrant, Benducar, the scheming courtier, and the despots in the Oriental tales. Dryden and Byron's complete villains are one-sided figures, drawn with little emphasis on the characters themselves aside from their function of tormenting the hero. The complete villains rant and bluster and never vary their behavior. They, as Maximin's speech illustrates, live for power:

I'll find that power o'er wills, which
 heaven ne'er found.
 Free-will's a cheat in any one but me;
 In all but kings, 'tis willing slavery;
 An unseen fate which forces the desire;
 The will of puppets danced upon a wire.
 A monarch is
 The spirit of the world in every mind;
 He may match wolves to lambs, and make it kind.
 Mine is the business of your little fates;
 And though you war, like petty wrangling states,
 You're in my hand; and, when I bid you cease,
 You shall be crushed together into peace
 (Tyrannic Love, IV, i, 248-259).¹⁷

Unlike these complete Lucifers, the villain-heroes of both writers have some reason for their wicked behavior. Rodorick, who fights the noble Gonsalvo throughout most of the Rival Ladies feels, rightly, that he has been cheated by Manuel, the brother of his true love, Julia. He stalks through the action of the drama with a sullen look, fights Manuel, and tries to kidnap Julia. When Gonsalvo gives up his claim to Julia, whom he loves, in favor of Rodorick, Rodorick spurns her as "another's leavings" (IV, iii, 213).¹⁸ Later, learning that she has always loved only him, he accepts her but threatens,

. . . what I am, I am; and what I
 will be,
 When you are mine, my pleasure shall determine.
 I will receive no law from any man
 (IV, iii, 236-238).

Finally, he does the decent thing and apologizes to Julia, thus redeeming his character from complete villainy, but he

¹⁷Dryden, III, 430.

¹⁸Ibid., II, 200.

also warns her that marriage will not change his demonic character:

Julia, you know my peevish jealousies;
I cannot promise you a better husband
Than you have had a servant.

.

And think, when I am froward,
My sullen humour punishes itself:
I'm like a day in March, sometimes o'ercast
With storms, but then the after clearness is
The greater. The worst is, where I love most,
The temper falls most heavy
(V, iii, 284-294).

Byron's Giaour and Conrad are comparable characters to Dryden's fierce Rodorick. They hate mankind in general, but are faithful to their mistresses and loyal to the men who follow their leadership. Conrad loved the power he had over others:

He cared not what he softened, but subdued;
The evil passions of his youth had made
Him value less who loved--than what obeyed
(The Corsair, ll. 552-554);

but his only concern when he is imprisoned is for his men, who are captives too: "shall I meanly fly,/ The one of all my band that would not die?" (ll. 1078-1079). His role as chief causes him to have concern for others:

Yet once almost he stopped--and nearly gave
His fate to chance, his projects to the wave:
But no--it must be--a worthy chief
May melt, but not betray to Woman's grief
(ll. 515-518).

However much Conrad loved Medora, he constantly leaves her to take part in pirate raids. Eventually, her grief and

worry over his fate caused her death, and his greatest love became the source of his greatest guilt. The Giaour, too, is consumed by guilt and remorse for the death of Lelia because he realizes that she would never have been killed if she had not had an assignation with him. He confesses to a monk that he is guilty of killing her murderer, but he grieves only for his part in her death:

Not mine the act, though I the cause.
 Yet did he but what I had done
 Had she been false to more than one.
 Faithless to him--he gave the blow;
 But true to me--I laid him low.

 His death sits lightly; but her fate
 Has made me--what thou well may'st hate.
 (The Giaour, ll. 1061-1074).

Dryden and Byron used a similar phrase to express the romantic concept that one virtue, or even one supremely virtuous deed, may redeem a life of trespasses: "One act like this blots out a thousand crimes" (The Spanish Friar, V, ii, 573).¹⁹ "He left a Corsair's name to other times,/ Link'd with one virtue and a thousand crimes" (The Corsair, ll. 1863-1864).

Dorax behaves villainously because he feels that he has been insulted in the past by Sebastian's slighting of his rights. Before the end of the play, he learns that he has been wrong and is reconciled to his former ruler. His somber appearance cannot hide his repressed virtues: "That

¹⁹Ibid., VI, 520.

gloomy outside, like a rusty chest,/ Contains the shining
treasure of a soul" (Dor Sebastian, I, i, 48-49). Although
he has joined forces with Sebastian's enemies, he does not
reveal the disguised Sebastian's identity to them. He does
this not out of mercy, but out of malice and a desire for
personal revenge:

. . . I will not know
 them.
Shall I trust heaven, that heaven which I re-
 nounced,
With my revenge? Then, where's my satisfaction?
No; it must be my own, I scorn a proxy
(I, i, 271-274).

Dorax's sympathy toward women, an ever-redeeming attribute,
is revealed when he pities Almeyda, who has just been dragged
off to satisfy the Emperor's lust:

I find I'm but a half-strained villain
 yet;
But mongrel-mischievous; for my blood boiled
To view this brutal act; and my stern soul
Tugged at my arm, to draw in her defence.
Down, thou rebelling Christian in my heart!
Redeem thy fame on this Sebastian first;
Then think on other wrongs, when thine are
 righted.
But how to right them? on a slave disarmed,
Defenceless, and submitted to my rage?
A base revenge is vengeance on myself
(III, i, 321-330).

When Sebastian learns Dorax's true identity, Dorax also re-
veals the cause of his wicked behavior, his loss of honor
when Sebastian banished him:

I durst not think that I was spurned, and live;
And live to hear it boasted to my face.
All my long avarice of honour lost,
Heaped up in youth, and hoarded up for age!

Has honour's fountain then sucked back the
 stream?
 He has; and hooting boys may dry-shod pass,
 And gather pebbles from the naked ford.--
 Give me my love, my honour; give them back--
 Give me revenge, while I have breath to ask it!
 (IV, iii, 534-542).

Dorax maintains that his subsequent conduct was justified, comparing his reaction to Lucifer's reaction when he was treated unfairly by God: "Had he been tempted so, so had he fallen;/ And so, had I been favored, had I stood (IV, iii, 609-610). After he is reconciled to Sebastian, he throws himself at his feet and begs forgiveness. While such subjection is not heroic, it reveals Dorax's essentially virtuous character while also pointing up the superior force of Sebastian, the major protagonist, who also foreshadows Byron's heroes.

Loredano, in Byron's The Two Foscari, is somewhat like Dorax in that the basis for his cruel actions is grounded on what he believes to have been an injury done to him in the past by the hero. Since he sincerely believes that the old Doge Foscari has murdered his father and his uncle, all of his villainy is justified in his mind. He is never moved by suffering he considers just and reproves Barbarigo for being affected by the Foscari's plight:

Go to, you're a child,
 Infirm of feeling as of purpose, blown
 About by every breath, shook by a sigh,
 And melted by a tear--a precious judge
 For Venice! . . .
 (I, 1, 328-332).

Marina, Jacopo Foscari's wife, calls him a "cold inveterate hater!" and compares him, as Dorax compared himself, to the devil:

Ay, he may veil beneath a marble brow
 And sneering lip the pang, but he partakes it.
 A few brief words of truth shame the Devil's servants
 No less than Master; I have probed his soul
 A moment, as the Eternal Fire, ere long,
 Will reach it always. See how he shrinks from me!

 I care not for his frowns! We can but die,
 And he but live, for him the very worst
 Of destinies: each day secures him more
 His tempter's
 (III, i, 309-321).

Loredano is satisfied at the end of the play when he points to the Doge's dead body and notes that his debt has been paid: "A long and just one; Nature's debt and mine" (V, i, 370).

Morat in Dryden's Aureng-Zebe, is a noble fighter and a good leader, but his excessive ambition is a grave fault. He deceives his own father to gain his parent's kingdom; and he seeks to gain Indamora, his brother's love, despite the fact that he is married to Melesinda. Like the more virtuous heroes, he puts his faith in his own valour:

To me, the cries of fighting fields are
 charms:
 Keen be my sabre, and of proof my arms,
 I ask no other blessing of my stars:
 No prize but fame, nor mistress but the wars
 (III, i, 149-152).

When, for a brief span, he is ruler, he rationalizes his unjust behavior:

'Tis not with me as with a private man.
 Such may be swayed by honour or by love;

But monarchs only by their interest move
(III, i, 422-424).

Again, it is tender regard for a woman that saves the hero-villain. In a passage that sounds like a classic description of a Byronic hero, Indamora convinces Morat that he is basically a good person with only a few vices:

Yours is a soul irregularly great,
Which, wanting temper, yet abounds with heat,
So strong, yet so unequal pulses beat;
A sun, which does, through vapours, dimly shine;
What pity 'tis, you are not all divine!
(V, i, 91-95).

Her gentle words shame Morat, and he dies repentant and reconciled to his wife. Arbaces, in Byron's Sardanapalus, has a comparable rough, military character. Arbaces agrees to rebel against Sardanapalus, but changes his mind when he observes the King's noble behavior. While he is plotting rebellion he, like Morat, relies on his strength in arms. He complains that it is beneath him to kill such a weakling as he conceives the King to be:

And yet it almost shames me, we shall have
So little to effect. This woman's warfare
Degrades the very conqueror. To have plucked
A bold and bloody despot from his throne,
And grappled with him, clashing steel with steel,
That were heroic or to win or fall . . .
(II, i, 81-86).

When he discovers Sardanapalus's courage and power, he refuses to plot further because he would rather lose the world than his own self-esteem as an honest man. Unfortunately, fear that the King's banishment of him will mean his death drives him to rejoin the rebels.

Dryden and Byron were able to utilize man's dual capacity for good and evil in the creation of their villain-heroes. These heroes gather a certain amount of sympathy because of their gentle treatment of women and because of their brave endurance of obvious injustices.

With the exception of some of the villain-heroes, the heroes of Dryden and Byron could and would love only one woman throughout their lives. Almanzor's love for Almahide and Conrad's for Medora is typical of the single-minded devotion that all these heroes lavished on their true loves. Conrad tells Medora that he will "cease to love thee when I love Mankind:/ Yet dread not this . . . (The Corsair, ll. 405-406). Almanzor sees love as madness: "Love is that madness which all lovers have" (2, Conquest of Granada, III, iii, 144). Describing his then hopeless passion for the already married Almahide, he says that he is one ". . . who dares love, and for that love must die,/ And, knowing this, dares yet love on, am I" (2, Conquest of Granada, IV, iii, 256-257). Conrad, constantly exposed to the charms of beautiful captives, is always faithful to Medora:

Though fairest captives daily met his eye,
He shunned, nor sought, but coldly passed them by;
Though many a beauty drooped in prisoned bower,
None ever soothed his most unguarded hour
(The Corsair, ll. 289-292).

He rejects even the grateful Gulnare, whom he has just rescued from a burning palace. He tells her that there is "one

from whom he never ranged" (l. 288). Despite his rejection, she still loves him enough to murder her master in order to help Conrad escape. Lyndaraxa tries to seduce Almanzor. He tells her that he can never love another because "My love's my soul; and that from fate is free;/ 'Tis that unchanged and deathless part of me" (2, IV, i, 179-180). Dryden's Cortez, Sebastian, and Aureng-Zebe are also besieged by admiring women, ironically while they are helplessly enchained in prison cells. They refuse their freedom because its price would be desertion of their true mistresses. As Cortez tells Almeria, they have already given their love:

. . . I, the most unhappy of mankind,
 Ere I knew yours, have all my love resigned:
 'Tis my own loss I grieve, who have no more:
 You go a-begging to a bankrupt's door.
 Yet could I change, as sure I never can,
 How could you love so infamous a man?
 For love, once given from her, and placed in you,
 Would leave no ground I ever could be true
 (The Indian Emperor, IV, i, 92-99).

These temptresses and others, such as Cassandra in Cleomenes, serve as foils to demonstrate the hero's moral virtues.

Byron's works generally omit these wicked women, although Myrrha in Sardanapalus is wrongly judged by Salemenes to be a bad influence on Sardanapalus, but there is one such temptress in Don Juan. Don Juan is purchased as a slave by the lustful Gulbeyaz, the Sultan's bride, who sneaks him into her palace quarters. Like Dryden's Cassandra, she is accustomed to having her way:

Her very smile was haughty, though so sweet;
 Her very nod was not an inclination;
 There was a self-will even in her small feet,
 As though they were quite conscious of her station
 (v, 111).²⁰

Women common to both Dryden and Byron's creations are either passive, sweet, gentle souls or spirited counterparts of their lovers. The gentle Medora, the innocent Zuleika, the passionate Lelia, the noble Angiolina, and the sweetly submissive Ida are quiet women who only exist to please the heroes in Byron's works. Dryden created comparable females, such as Cydaria, Melesinda, and Bernice. In some respects, especially in her own eyes, Dryden's Cleopatra is also one of these gentle creatures, but in her fight to keep Antony she resembles her more fiery sisters. The long-suffering Melesinda is a paragon of the submissive heroine. Despite the fact that Morat, her husband, has ceased loving her and dies in the arms of Indamora, she throws herself broken-hearted on his funeral pyre. She describes her feelings when she says

Has he been kind, I could no love have
 shown:
 Each vulgar virtue would as much have done.
 My love was such, it needed no return;
 But could, though he supplied no fuel, burn.
 Rich in itself, like elemental fire,
 Whose pureness does not aliment require.
 In vain you would bereave me of my lord;
 For I will die:--Die is too base a word,

²⁰Byron, Poetry, VI, 249.

I'll seek his breast, and, kindling by his side,
Adorned with flames, I'll mount a glorious bride
(Aureng-Zebe, V, i, 625-634).

She matches perfectly Aureng-Zebe's description of an ideal wife:

But she ne'er loved who durst not venture all.
Her life and fame should my concernment be;
But she should only be afraid for me
(V, i, 529-531).

Dryden and Byron also created feminine versions of heroic temper in *Almahide*, *Indamora*, *Almeyda*, *Gulnare*, *Myrrha*, and *Marina*. These women, rarely found amongst Byron's primarily passive damsels, fight fiercely for their own honor and that of the men they love. Even though she is held captive, completely in the power of the tyrant Muley-Moluch, *Almeyda* constantly resists his attempts to make her his mistress. She marries her fellow-captive, Sebastian, with a complete, almost regal, disregard, for the inevitable consequence--Muley-Moluch's wrath. She believes herself to be the people's true queen and, at one point in the drama, seeks their support in a rabble-rousing speech which she concludes by threatening to cast herself into their midst:

No, let me rather die
 your sacrifice,
Than live his triumph.
I throw myself into my people's arms;
As you are men, compassionate my wrongs,
And, as good men, protect me
(Don Sebastian, IV, iii, 287-291).

She feels that her spirit is as great as any man's: "Oh, if I were a man, as my soul's one" (V, i, 393). One reason

for Almeyda's valor is revealed when it is discovered that she is the half-sister of her husband Sebastian. Their resemblance had been noted previously in the play: "So paired, so suited in their minds and persons/ That they were framed the tallies for each other" (V, i, 207-208). The horrible discovery of their incest causes them to part, but neither one will ever love another. Byron's Marina is also a strong, fierce woman. She scorns her husband's tormentors and rails at his father for not showing more sympathy. She is tender and protective to her husband, and later, when she understands him, to her father-in-law, but her main characteristic is one of fierce, righteous indignation. After the old Doge dies, she turns upon the rulers of her country and boldly tells them how wicked they are:

I have heard of murderers, who have interred
 Their victims; but ne'er heard, until this hour,
 Of so much splendour in hypocrisy
 O'er those they slew . . .
 (The Two Foscari, V, i, 354-357).

Women, no matter how noble, chiefly serve in the works of Dryden and Byron to provide the hero with someone to love. The central emphasis is always on the protagonist and his struggle to survive in a hostile world solely through the merits of his own superior powers. X

NT

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Emerging from the ancient models of Greece and Rome, the Herculean hero became the symbol of man's attempts to defy the gods. Dryden and Byron's noble outlaws may be seen as direct descendants of such characters. Despite the superiority of Dryden and Byron's heroes in comparison to ordinary mortals, these heroes always have some flaw. This fault in the heroes' perfection was deliberately created by Dryden and Byron in accordance with their critical ideals in order to add realism to the characters that they portrayed. The dark secret or passion common to the Byronic hero was also present in the heroes created years earlier by Dryden. The sin or flaw is always found to be justified, or at least explained, by some circumstance in the hero's life, thus enabling the audience to remain sympathetic to the protagonist. Another factor contributing to the audience's favorable opinion of the hero is his single-minded, romantic love for only one woman. The Dryden and Byron heroes may be capable of piracy, treason, or murder; but they are always deeply in love with their cherished sweethearts.

Great popular favor was engendered by these defiant heroes of Dryden and Byron in their own times. Whether the

heroes enjoyed a popular vogue because they were created in times when people felt that they needed Herculean heroes, because they represented the need people felt to try to seize some measure of control over the outcome of their own lives, or because they furnished a gaudy escape from everyday life, such heroes were admired and applauded by the English public. Neither Dryden nor Byron seemed capable of believing in the actual reality of their heroes, if their satires may be judged indicative of their temperaments; but neither Dryden nor Byron seemed willing to abandon some faith, a romantic belief, in the ultimate potential of man's ability to act in a heroic manner. This synthesis of belief in man's ability to act in an ideal fashion with the knowledge that he probably would not act in such an ideal manner permeates Dryden and Byron's works. The tension created by such opposing emotions may be seen in the heroes of both poets. Some of the heroes, such as Aureng-Zebe and the Doge Foscari, exhibit iron concepts of duty to themselves and others, but their idealized behavior is always marred by some small flaw. Other heroes, such as Morat and Conrad, despair of ever improving themselves or their world, but while they live in an uneasy truce with their society, they still retain vestiges of noble, idealistic behavior. The typical stance of "skeptical self-assertion and humanistic self-reliance"¹ of the

¹Peter L. Thorslev, Jr., The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes (Minneapolis, 1962), p. 143.

Byronic hero is also the stance of Dryden's heroes. Dryden and Byron's heroes do not necessarily expect to win all of their struggles, but they feel that it is necessary for their sense of personal integrity to battle the forces that constantly seek to dominate and destroy them. Almanzor, Dorax, Morat, Conrad, Marino Faliero, and Sardanapalus represent all of their creators' other noble outlaws because they symbolize man's ability to endure a life of confusing inequities and bravely scorn death itself.

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