

# Dryden on satire essay sample

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The following handout is an abridged version of John Dryden's A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire (1693). You must read this document carefully.

There has been a long dispute among the modern critics, whether the Romans derived their satire from the Grecians, or first invented it themselves. Julius Scaliger, and Heinsius, are of the first opinion; Casaubon, Rigaltius, Dacier, and the publisher of the Dauphin's Juvenal, maintain the latter. If we take satire in the general signification of the word, as it is used in all modern languages, for an invective, it is certain that it is almost as old as verse; and though hymns, which are praises of God, may be allowed to have been before it, yet the defamation of others was not long after it. After God had cursed Adam and Eve in Paradise, the husband and wife excused themselves, by laying the blame on one another; and gave a beginning to those conjugal dialogues in prose, which the poets have perfected in verse. The third chapter of Job is one of the first instances of this poem in holy Scripture; unless we will take it higher, from the latter end of the second where his wife advises him to curse his Maker.

This original, I confess, is not much to the honor of satire; but here it was nature, and that depraved; when it became art, it bore better fruit. Only we have learnt thus much already, that scoffs and revilings are of the growth of all nations; and, consequently, that neither the Greek poets borrowed from other people their art of railing, neither needed the Romans to take it from them. But, considering satire as a species of poetry, here the war begins amongst the critics. Scaliger the father will have it descend from Greece to Rome; and derives the word satire from satyrus, that mixed kind of animal,

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or, as the ancients thought him, rural god, made up betwixt a man and a goat; with a human head, hooked nose, pouting lips, a bunch, or struma, under the chin, pricked ears, and upright horns; the body shagged with hair, especially from the waist, and ending in a goat, with the legs and feet of that creature.

But Casaubon, and his followers, with reason, condemn this derivation; and prove, that from satyrus, the word satira, as it signifies a poem, cannot possibly descend. For satira is not properly a substantive, but an adjective; to which the word lanx (in English, a charger, or large platter) is understood; so that the Greek poem made according to the manners of a satyr, and expressing his qualities, must properly be called satyrical, and not satire. And thus far 'tis allowed that the Grecians had such poems; but that they were wholly different in specie from that to which the Romans gave the name of satire.

This is what I have to say in general of satire: only, as Dacier has observed before me, we may take notice, that the word satire is of more general signification in Latin, than in French, or English. For amongst the Romans it was not only used for those discourses which decried vice, or exposed folly, but for others also, where virtue was recommended. But in our modern languages we apply it only to invective poems, where the very name of satire is formidable to those persons who would appear to the world what they are not in themselves; for in English to say satire, is to mean reflection, as we use that word in the worst sense; or as the French call it, more properly, *médiance*. In the criticism of spelling, it ought to be with *i* and not

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

In a word, that former sort of satire, which is known in England by the name of lampoon, is a dangerous sort of weapon, and for the most part unlawful. We have no moral right on the reputation of other men. 'Tis taking from them what we cannot restore to them. There are only two reasons for which we may be permitted to write lampoons; and I will not promise that they can always justify us. The first is revenge, when we have been affronted in the same nature, or have been any ways notoriously abused, and can make ourselves no other reparation. And yet to know, that, in Christian charity, all offenses are to be forgiven, as we expect the like pardon for those which we daily commit against Almighty God. And this consideration has often made me tremble when I was saying our Saviour\*s prayer; for the plain condition of the forgiveness which we beg is the pardoning of others the offenses which they have done to us; for which reason I have many times avoided the commission of that fault, even when I have been notoriously provoked.

Let not this, my lord, pass for vanity in me; for it is truth. More libels have been written against me than almost any man now living; and I had reason on my side, to have defended my own innocence. I speak not of my poetry, which I have wholly given up to the critics: let them use it as they please; posterity, perhaps, may be more favorable to me; for interest and passion

will lie buried in another age, and partiality and prejudice be forgotten. I speak of my morals, which have been sufficiently aspersed; that only sort of reputation ought to be dear to every honest man, and is to me. But let the world witness for me, that I have been often wanting to myself in that particular; I have seldom answered any scurrilous lampoon, when it was in my power to have exposed my enemies; and, being naturally vindictive, have suffered in silence, and possessed my soul in quiet.

Anything, though never so little, which a man speaks of himself, in my opinion, is still too much; and therefore I will waive this subject, and proceed to give the second reason which may justify a poet when he writes against a particular person; and that is, when he is become a public nuisance. All those, whom Horace in his Satires, and Persius and Juvenal have mentioned in theirs, with a brand of infamy, are wholly such. 'Tis an action of virtue to make examples of vicious men. They may and ought to be upbraided with their crimes and follies; both for their own amendment, if they are not yet incorrigible, and for the terror of others, to hinder them from falling into those enormities which they see are so severely punished in the persons of others. The first reason was only an excuse for revenge; but this second is absolutely of a poet's office to perform; but how few lampooners are there now living, who are capable of this duty! When they come in my way, 'tis impossible sometimes to avoid reading them. But, good God! how remote they are, in common justice, from the choice of such persons as are proper subject of satire! And how little wit they bring for the support of their injustice!

The weaker sex is their most ordinary theme; and the best and fairest are sure to be the most severely handled. Amongst men, those who are prosperously unjust are entitled to a panegyric; but afflicted virtue is insolently stabbed with all manner of reproaches. No decency is considered, no fulsomeness omitted; no venom is wanting, as far as dullness can supply it. For there is a perpetual dearth of wit; a barrenness of good sense and entertainment. The neglect of the readers will soon put an end to this sort of scribbling. There can be no pleasantry where there is no wit; no impression can be made where there is no truth for the foundation. To conclude: they are like the fruits of the earth in this unnatural season; the corn which held up its head is spoiled with rankness; but the greater part of the harvest is laid along, and little of good income and wholesome nourishment is received into the barns.

Thus I have treated, in a new method, the comparison betwixt Horace, Juvenal, and Persius; somewhat of their particular manner belonging to all of them is yet remaining to be considered. Persius was grave, and particularly opposed his gravity to lewdness, which was the predominant vice in Nero's court, at the time when he published his satires, which was before that emperor fell into the excess of cruelty. Horace was a mild admonisher, a court-satirist, fit for the gentle times of Augustus, and more fit, for the reasons which I have already given. Juvenal was as proper for his times, as they for theirs; his was an age that deserved a more severe chastisement; vices were more gross and open, more flagitious, more encouraged by the example of a tyrant, and more protected by his authority. Therefore,

wheresoever Juvenal mentions Nero, he means Domitian, whom he dares not attack in his own person, but scourges him by proxy.

Heinsius urges in praise of Horace, that, according to the ancient art and law of satire, it should be nearer to comedy than tragedy; not declaiming against vice, but only laughing at it. Neither Persius nor Juvenal were ignorant of this, for they had both studied Horace. And the thing itself is plainly true. But as they had read Horace, they had likewise read Lucilius, of whom Persius says *secuit urbem; . . . et genuinum fregit in illis*: meaning Mutius and Lupus; and Juvenal also mentions him in these words: *Ense velut stricto, quoties Lucilius ardens infremuit*, etc. So that they thought the imitation of Lucilius was more proper to their purpose than that of Horace. "They changed satire" (says Holyday), "but they changed it for the better; for the business being to reform great vices, chastisement goes further than admonition; whereas a perpetual grin, like that of Horace, does rather anger than amend a man."

Thus far that learned critic, Barten Holyday, whose interpretation and illustrations of Juvenal are as excellent as the verse of his translation and his English are lame and pitiful.[1] For 'tis not enough to give us the meaning of a poet, which I acknowledge him to have performed most faithfully, but he must also imitate his genius and his numbers, as far as the English will come up to the elegance of the original. In few words, 'tis only for a poet to translate a poem. Holyday and Stapylton had not enough considered this, when they attempted Juvenal: but I forbear reflections; only I beg leave to take notice of this sentence, where Holyday says, "a perpetual grin, like that of Horace, rather angers than amends a man." [2] I cannot give him up the

manner of Horace in low satire so easily. Let the chastisement of Juvenal be never so necessary for his new kind of satire; let him declaim as wittily and sharply as he pleases; yet still the nicest and most delicate touches of satire consist in fine raillery.

This, my lord, is your particular talent, to which even Juvenal could not arrive. 'Tis not reading, 'tis not imitation of an author, which can produce this fineness; it must be inborn; it must proceed from a genius, and particular way of thinking, which is not to be taught; and therefore not to be imitated by him who has it not from nature. How easy is it to call rogue and villain, and that wittily! But how hard to make a man appear a fool, a blockhead, or a knave, without using any of those opprobrious terms! To spare the grossness of the names, and to do the thing yet more severely, is to draw a full face, and to make the nose and cheeks stand out, and yet not to employ any depth of shadowing. This is the mystery of that noble trade, which yet no master can teach to his apprentice; he may give the rules, but the scholar is never the nearer in his practice. Neither is it true that this fineness of raillery is offensive. A witty man is tickled while he is hurt in this manner, and a fool feels it not.

The occasion of an offense may possibly be given, but he cannot take it. If it be granted, that in effect this way does more mischief; that a man is secretly wounded, and though he be not sensible himself yet the malicious world will find it out for him; yet there is still a vast difference betwixt the slovenly butchering of a man, and the fineness of a stroke that separates the head from the body, and leaves it standing in its place. A man may be capable, as



Jack Ketch\*s wife said of his servant, of a plain piece of work, a bare hanging; but to make a malefactor die sweetly was only belonging to her husband.[3] I wish I could apply it to myself, if the reader would be kind enough to think it belongs to me. The character of Zimri in my Absalom is, in my opinion, worth the whole poem: it is not bloody, but it is ridiculous enough; and he, for whom it was intended, was too witty to resent it as an injury.[4] If I had railed, I might have suffered for it justly; but I managed my own work happily, perhaps more dexterously. I avoided the mention of great crimes, and applied myself to the representing of blindsides, and little extravagancies; to which, the wittier a man is, he is generally the more obnoxious [exposed, vulnerable]. It succeeded as I wished; the jest went round, and he laughed at it in his turn who began the frolic.

'Tis but necessary, that after so much has been said of satire some definition of it should be given. Heinsius, in his dissertations on Horace, makes it for me, in these words: " Satire is a kind of poetry, without a series of action, invented for the purging of our minds; in which human vices, ignorance, and errors, and all things besides, which are produced from them in every man, are severely reprehended; partly dramatically, partly simply, and sometimes in both kinds of speaking; but, for the most part, figuratively, and occultly; consisting in a low familiar way, chiefly in a sharp and pungent manner of speech; but partly, also, in a facetious and civil way of jesting; by which either hatred or laughter, or indignation, is moved." Where I cannot but observe, that this obscure and perplexed definition, or rather description, of satire, is wholly accommodated to the Horatian way; and excluding the works of Juvenal and Persius, as foreign from that kind of poem.

The clause in the beginning of it, without a series of action, distinguishes satire properly from stage-plays, which are all of one action, and one continued series of action. The end or scope of satire is to purge the passions; so far it is common to the satires of Juvenal and Persius. The rest which follows is also belonging to all three; till he comes upon us, with the excluding clause, consisting in a low familiar way of speech, which is the proper character of Horace; and from which the other two, their honor be it spoken, are far distant. But how come lowness of style, and the familiarity of words, to be so much the propriety of satire, that without them a poet can be no more a satirist, than without risibility he can be a man? Is the fault of Horace to be made the virtue and standing rule of this poem? Is the grande sophos of Persius, and the sublimity of Juvenal, to be circumscribed with the meanness of words and vulgarity of expression? If Horace refused the pains of numbers, and the loftiness of figures, are they bound to follow so ill a precedent?

Let him walk afoot, with his pad in his hand, for his own pleasure; but let not them be accounted no poets, who choose to mount, and show their horsemanship. Holyday is not afraid to say, that there was never such a fall, as from his odes to his satires, and that he, injuriously to himself, untuned his harp. The majestic way of Persius and Juvenal was new when they began it, but 'tis old to us; and what poems have not, with time, received an alteration in their fashion? "Which alteration," says Holyday, "is to aftertimes as good a warrant as the first." Has not Virgil changed the manners of Homer's heroes in his *Æneis*?

Certainly he has, and for the better: for Virgil\*s age was more civilized and better bred, and he writ according to the politeness of Rome, under the reign of Augustus Cæsar, not to the rudeness of Agememnon\*s age, or the time of Homer. Why should we offer to confine free spirits to one form, when we cannot so much as confine our bodies to one fashion of apparel? Would not Donne\*s Satires, which abound with so much wit, appear more charming, if he had taken care of his words, and of his numbers? But he followed Horace so very close that of necessity he must fall with him; and I may safely say it of this present age, that if we are not so great wits, as Donne, yet certainly we are better poets.

But I have said enough, and it may be too much, on this subject. Will your lordship be pleased to prolong my audience, only so far, till I tell you my own trivial thoughts, how a modern satire should be made? I will not deviate in the least from the precepts and examples of the ancients, who were always our best masters. I will only illustrate them, and discover some of the hidden beauties in their designs, that we thereby may form our own in imitation of them. Will you please but to observe, that Persius, the least in dignity of all the three, has notwithstanding been the first who has discovered to us this important secret, in the designing of a perfect satire; that it ought only to treat of one subject; to be confined to one particular theme; or at least, to one principally. If other vices occur in the management of the chief, they should only be transiently lashed, and not be insisted on, so as to make the design double.

As in a play of the English fashion, which we call a tragi-comedy, there is to be but one main design; and though there be an underplot, or second walk of comical characters and adventures, yet they are subservient to the chief fable, carried along under it, and helping to it; so that the drama may not seem a monster with two heads. Thus, the Copernican system of the planets makes the moon to be moved by the motion of the earth, and carried about her orb, as a dependent of hers. Mascardi, in his discourse of the Doppia Fayola, or double tale in plays, gives an instance of it in the famous pastoral of Guarini, called *Il Pastor Fido*; where Corsica and the Satyr are the under parts; yet we may observe, that Corsica is brought into the body of the plot, and made subservient to it. 'Tis certain that the divine wit of Horace was not ignorant of this rule, that a play, though it consists of many parts, must yet be one in the action, and must drive on the accomplishment of one design; for he gives this very precept, *sit quodvis simplex duntaxat et unum*; yet he seems not much to mind it in his satires, many of them consisting of more arguments than one; and the second without dependence on the first.

Casaubon has observed this before me, in his preference of Persius to Horace; and will have his own beloved author to be the first who found out and introduced this method of confining himself to one subject. I know it may be urged in defense of Horace that this unity is not necessary; because the very word *satura* signifies a dish plentifully stored with all variety of fruit and grains. Yet Juvenal, who calls his poems a *farrago*, which is a word of the same signification with *satura*, has chosen to follow the same method of Persius, and not of Horace; and Boileau, whose example alone is a sufficient authority, has wholly confined himself in all his satires, to this unity of

design. That variety, which is not to be found in any one satire, is, at least, in many, written on several occasions. And if variety be of absolute necessity in every one of them, according to the etymology of the word, yet it may arise naturally from one subject, as it is diversely treated, in the several subordinate branches of it, all relating to the chief. It may be illustrated accordingly with variety of examples in the subdivisions of it, and with as many precepts as there are members of it; which, altogether, may complete that olla, or hotchpotch, which is properly a satire.

Under this unity of theme, or subject, is comprehended another rule for perfecting the design of true satire. The poet is bound, and that ex officio, to give his reader some one precept of moral virtue, and to caution him against some one particular vice or folly. Other virtues, subordinate to the first, may be recommended under that chief head; and other vices or follies may be scourged, besides that which he principally intends. But he is chiefly to inculcate one virtue, and insist on that. Thus Juvenal, in every satire excepting the first, ties himself to one principal instructive point, or to the shunning of moral evil. Even in the sixth, which seems only an arraignment of the whole sex of womankind, there is a latent admonition to avoid ill women, by showing how very few, who are virtuous and good, are to be found amongst them. But this, though the wittiest of all his satires, has yet the least of truth or instruction in it. He has run himself into his old declamatory way, and almost forgotten that he was not setting up for a moral poet.

Persius is never wanting to us in some profitable doctrine, and in exposing the opposite vices to it. His kind of philosophy is one which is the stoic; and every satire is a comment on one particular dogma of that sect, unless we will except the first, which is against bad writers; and yet even there he forgets not the precepts of the Porch. In general, all virtues are everywhere to be praised and recommended to practice; and all vices to be reprehended, and made either odious or ridiculous; or else there is a fundamental error in the whole design.

I have already declared who are the only persons that are the adequate object of private satire, and who they are that may properly be exposed by name for public examples of vices and follies; and therefore I will trouble your lordship no further with them. Of the best and finest manner of satire, I have said enough in the comparison betwixt Juvenal and Horace: 'tis that sharp, well-mannered way of laughing a folly out of countenance, of which your lordship is the best master in this age. I will proceed to the versification which is most proper for it, and add somewhat to what I have said already on that subject. The sort of verse which is called burlesque, consisting of eight syllables, or four feet, is that which our excellent Hudibras has chosen. I ought to have mentioned him before, when I spoke of Donne; but by a slip of an old man's memory he was forgotten.

The worth of his poem is too well known to need my commendation, and he is above my censure. His satire is of the Varronian kind, though unmixed with prose. The choice of his numbers is suitable enough to his design, as he has managed it; but in any other hand, the shortness of his verse, and the

quick returns of rhyme, had debased the dignity of style. And besides, the double rhyme (a necessary companion of burlesque writing) is not so proper for manly satire; for it turns earnest too much to jest, and gives us a boyish kind of pleasure. It tickles awkwardly with a kind of pain, to the best sort of readers: we are pleased ungratefully, and, if I may say so, against our liking. We thank him not for giving us that unseasonable delight, when we know he could have given us a better, and more solid.

He might have left that task to others, who, not being able to put in thought, can only make us grin with the excrescence of a word of two or three syllables in the close. 'Tis, indeed, below so great a master to make use of such a little instrument. But his good sense is perpetually shining through all he writes; it affords us not the time of finding faults. We pass through the levity of his rhyme, and are immediately carried into some admirable useful thought. After all, he has chosen this kind of verse, and has written the best in it: and had he taken another, he would always have excelled; as we say of a court favorite, that whatsoever his office be, he still makes it uppermost, and most beneficial to himself.

The quickness of your imagination, my lord, has already prevented me; and you know beforehand, that I would prefer the verse often syllables, which we call the English heroic, to that of eight. This is truly my opinion. For this sort of number is more roomy; the thought can turn itself with greater ease in a larger compass. When the rhyme comes too thick upon us, it straitens the expression; we are thinking of the close, when we should be employed in adorning the thought. It makes a poet giddy with turning in a space too

narrow for his imagination; he loses many beauties, without gaining one advantage. For a burlesque rhyme I have already concluded to be none; or, if it were, 'tis more easily purchased in ten syllables than in eight. In both occasions 'tis as in a tennis-court, when the strokes of greater force are given, when we strike out and play at length. Tassoni and Boileau have left us the best examples of this way, in the *Secchia Rapita*, and the *Lutrin*; and next them Merlin Coccaius in his *Baldus*.<sup>[5]</sup> I will speak only of the two former, because the last is written in Latin verse. The *Secchia Rapita* is an Italian poem, a satire of the Varronian kind.

'Tis written in the stanza of eight, which is their measure for heroic verse. The words are stately, the numbers smooth, the turn both of thought and words is happy. The first six lines of the stanza seem majestic and severe; but the two last turn them all into a pleasant ridicule. Boileau, if I am not much deceived, has modeled from hence his famous *Lutrin*. He had read the burlesque poetry of Scarron, with some kind of indignation, as witty as it was, and found nothing in France that was worthy of his imitation: but he copied the Italian so well that his own may pass for an original. He writes it in the French heroic verse, and calls it an heroic poem; his subject is trivial, but his verse is noble. I doubt not but he had Virgil in his eye, for we find many admirable imitations of him, and some parodies; as particularly this passage in the fourth of the *Æneids*-

Nec tibi diva parcens, generis nec Dardanus auctor,

Perfide; sed duris genuit te cautibus horrens

Caucasus; Hyrcanœque admorunt ubera tigres:<sup>[6]</sup> which he thus translates,



keeping to the words, but altering the sense-

Non, ton père à Paris, ne fut point boulanger:

Et tu n'es point du sang de Gervais, l'horloger;

Ta mère ne fut point la maitresse d'un coche:

Caucase dans ses flancs te forma d'une roche:

Une tigresse affreuse, en quelque antre écart

Te fit, avec son lait, sucer sa cruauté.

And, as Virgil in his fourth Georgic, of the bees, perpetually raises the lowness of his subject, by the loftiness of his words, and ennobles it by comparisons drawn from empires, and from monarchs-

Admiranda tibi levium spectacula rerum,

Magnanimosque duces totiusque ordine gentis

Mores et studia, et populos, et prælia dicam.[7]and again

At genus immortale manet; multosque per annos

Stat fortuna domus, et avi numeratur avorum;[8] we see Boileau pursuing him in the same flights, and scarcely yielding to his master. This, I think, my lord, to be the most beautiful and most noble kind of satire. Here is the majesty of the heroic, finely mixed with the venom of the other; and raising the delight which otherwise would be flat and vulgar, by the sublimity of the expression. I could say somewhat more of the delicacy of this and some other of his satires; but it might turn to his prejudice, if 'twere carried back to France.

I have given your lordship but this bare hint, in what verse and in what manner this sort of satire may be best managed. Had I time, I could enlarge

on the beautiful turns of words and thoughts which are as requisite in this as in heroic poetry itself of which the satire is undoubtedly a species. With these beautiful turns I confess myself to have been unacquainted, till about twenty years ago, in a conversation which I had with that noble wit of Scotland, Sir George Mackenzie, he asked me why I did not imitate in my verses the turns of Mr. Waller and Sir John Denham, of which he repeated many to me. I had often read with pleasure, and with some profit, those two fathers of our English poetry, but had not seriously enough considered those beauties which gave the last perfection to their works. Some sprinklings of this kind I had also formerly in my plays; but they were casual, and not designed.

But this hint, thus seasonably given to me, first made me sensible of my own wants, and brought me afterwards to seek for the supply of them in other English authors. I looked over the darling of my youth, the famous Cowley; there I found, instead of them, the points of wit, and quirks of epigram, even in the *Davideis*, an heroic poem, which is of an opposite nature to those puerilities; but no elegant turns, either on the word or on the thought. Then I consulted a greater genius (without offense to the manes of that noble author), I mean Milton. But as he endeavors everywhere to express Homer, whose age had not arrived to that fineness, I found in him a true sublimity, lofty thoughts, which were clothed with admirable Grecisms, and ancient words, which he had been digging from the mines of Chaucer and Spenser, and which, with all their rusticity, had somewhat of venerable in them; but I found not there neither that for which I looked.

At last I had recourse to his master, Spenser, the author of that immortal poem called the Fairy Queen; and there I met with that which I had been looking for so long in vain. Spenser had studied Virgil to as much advantage as Milton had done Homer; and amongst the rest of his excellencies had copied that. Looking farther in-to the Italian, I found Tasso had done the same; nay more, that all the sonnets in that language are on the turn of the first thought; which Mr. Walsh, in his late ingenious preface to his poems, has observed. In short, Virgil and Ovid are the two principal fountains of them in Latin poetry. And the French at this day are so fond of them, that they judge them to be the first beauties; *délicat et bien tourné* are the highest commendations which they bestow on somewhat which they think a masterpiece.

An example of the turn on words, amongst a thousand others, is that in the last book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*—

Heu! quantum scelus est, in viscera, viscera condi!

Congestoque avidum pinguescere corpore corpus;

Alteriusque animantem animantis vivere leto.

An example on the turn both of thoughts and words is to be found in Catullus, in the complaint of Ariadne, when she was left by Theseus—

Tum jam nulla viro juranti fæmina credat;

Nulla viri speret sermones esse fideles;

Qui, dum aliquid cupiens animus prægestit apisci,

Nil metuunt jurare, nihil promittere parcunt:

Sed simul ac cupidæ mentis satiata libido est,

Dicta nihil metuere, nihil perjuria curant.

An extraordinary turn upon the words is that in Ovid's *Epistolæ Heroidum*, of Sappho to Phaon-

Si, nisi quæ forma poterit te digna videri,

Nulla futura tua est, nulla futura tua est.

Lastly, a turn, which I cannot say is absolutely on words, for the thought turns with them, is in the fourth *Georgic* of Virgil, where Orpheus is to receive his wife from Hell, on express condition not to look on her till she was come on earth-

Cum subita incautum dementia cepit amantem;

Ignoscenda quidem, scirent si ignoscere Manes.[9]

I will not burthen your lordship with more of them; for I write to a master who understands them better than myself. But I may safely conclude them to be great beauties. I might descend also to the mechanic beauties of heroic verse; but we have yet no English prosodia, not so much as a tolerable dictionary or a grammar; so that our language is in a manner barbarous; and what government will encourage any one, or more, who are capable of refining it, I know not: but nothing under a public expense can go through with it. And I rather fear a declination of the language, than hope an advancement of it in the present age.

I am still speaking to you, my lord, though, in all probability, you are already out of hearing. Nothing which my meanness can produce is worthy of this long attention. But I am come to the last petition of Abraham; if there be ten righteous lines, in this vast preface, spare it for their sake; and also spare the next city, because it is but a little one.

I would excuse the performance of this translation, if it were all my own; but the better, though not the greater part, being the work of some gentlemen, who have succeeded very happily in their undertaking, let their excellencies atone for my imperfections, and those of my sons. I have perused some of the satires, which are done by other hands; and they seem to me as perfect in their kind as anything I have seen in English verse. The common way which we have taken is not a literal translation, but a kind of paraphrase; or somewhat, which is yet more loose, betwixt a paraphrase and mutation. It was not possible for us, or any men, to have made it pleasant any other way. If rendering the exact sense of those authors, almost line for line, had been our business, Barton Holyday had done it already to our hands: and by the help of his learned notes and illustrations not only of Juvenal and Persius, but what yet is more obscure, his own verses, might be understood.

But he wrote for fame, and wrote to scholars; we write only for the pleasure and entertainment of those gentlemen and ladies, who, though they are not scholars, are not ignorant; persons of understanding and good sense, who, not having been conversant in the original, or at least not having made Latin verse so much their business as to be critics in it, would be glad to find if the wit of our two great authors be answerable to their fame and reputation in the world. We have, therefore, endeavored to give the public all the satisfaction we are able in this kind.

And if we are not altogether so faithful to our author, as our predecessors Holyday and Stapylton, yet we may challenge to ourselves this praise, that we shall be far more pleasing to our readers. We have followed our authors

at greater distance, though not step by step, as they have done; and oftentimes they have gone so close, that they have trod on the heels of Juvenal and Persius, and hurt them by their too near approach. A noble author would not be pursued too close by a translator. We lose his spirit, when we think to take his body. The grosser part remains with us, but the soul is flown away in some noble expression, or some delicate turn of words, or thought. Thus Holy-day, who made this way his choice, seized the meaning of Juvenal; but the poetry has always escaped him.

They who will not grant me that pleasure is one of the ends of poetry, but that it is only a means of compassing the only end, which is instruction, must yet allow, that, without the means of pleasure, the instruction is but a bare and dry philosophy; a crude preparation of morals which we may have from Aristotle and Epictetus, with more profit than from any poet. Neither Holyday nor Stapylton have imitated Juvenal in the poetical part of him, his diction and his elocution. Nor had they been poets, as neither of them were, yet, in the way they took, it was impossible for them to have succeeded in the poetic part.

The English verse, which we call heroic, consists of no more than ten syllables; the Latin hexameter sometimes rises to seventeen; as, for example, this verse in Virgil—*Pulverulenta putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.*

Here is the difference of no less than seven syllables in a line, betwixt the English and the Latin. Now the medium of these is about fourteen syllables; because the dactyl is a more frequent foot in hexameters than the spondee.

But Holyday, without considering that he wrote with the disadvantage of four syllables less in every verse, endeavors to make one of his lines to comprehend the sense of one of Juvenal's. According to the falsity of the proposition was the success. He was forced to crowd his verse with ill-sounding monosyllables, of which our barbarous language affords him a wild plenty; and by that means he arrived at his pedantic end, which was to make a literal translation. His verses have nothing of verse in them, but only the worst part of it, the rhyme; and that, into the bargain, is far from good.

But, which is more intolerable, by cramming his ill-chosen, and worse-sounding monosyllables so close together, the very sense which he endeavors to explain is become more obscure than that of his author; so that Holyday himself cannot be understood, without as large a commentary as that which he makes on his two authors. For my own part, I can make a shift to find the meaning of Juvenal without his notes; but his translation is more difficult than his author. And I find beauties in the Latin to recompense my pains; but, in Holyday and Stapylton, my ears, in the first place, are mortally offended; and then their sense is so perplexed, that I return to the original, as the more pleasing task, as well as the more easy.

This must be said for our translation, that, if we give not the whole sense of Juvenal, yet we give the most considerable part of it; we give it, in general, so clearly, that few notes are sufficient to make us intelligible. We make our author at least appear in a poetic dress. We have actually made him more sounding, and more eloquent, than he was before in English; and have endeavored to make him speak that kind of English which he would have

spoken had he lived in England, and had written to this age. If sometimes any of us (and 'tis but seldom) make him express the customs and manners of our native country rather than of Rome, 'tis either when there was some kind of analogy betwixt their customs and ours, or when, to make him more easy to vulgar understandings, we give him those manners which are familiar to us.

But I defend not this innovation, 'tis enough if I can excuse it. For to speak sincerely, the manners of nations and ages are not to be confounded; we should either make them English, or leave them Roman. If this can neither be defended nor excused, let it be pardoned, at least, because it is acknowledged; and so much the more easily, as being a fault which is never committed without some pleasure to the reader.

[1] Holyday, an Oxford scholar, had produced translations of both Persius and Juvenal which Dryden comments on here and elsewhere.

[2] Sir Robert Stapylton's translation of the First Six Satires of Juvenal appeared in 1644, and a complete version was published three years later.

[3] Jack Ketch, the most famous public executioner.

[4] Sir Robert Stapylton's translation of the First Six Satires of Juvenal appeared in 1644, and a complete version was published three years later.

[5] Jack Ketch, the most famous public executioner of the century, whose barbarity was notorious.

[6] Zimri, in Dryden's "Absalom and Achitophel," is the second Duke of Buckingham.

[7] La Secchia Rapita (The Stolen Bucket) was declared by its author,



Alessandro Tassoni (1565-1635), to be the first modern mock-heroic piece. Boileau's *Le Lutrin* (The Reading-Desk), 1674, is the most successful French example of the mock epic.

[8] Neither a goddess mother was to thee, / Nor Dardanus, the founder of thy race. / Traitor! but bred thee, jagged with flinty cliffs, / The Caucasus, and Hyrcanian tigresses / Their dugs approached. (Translation by R. C. Singleton.)

[9] Shows of pigmy things, / That claim thy wonder, - both the high-souled chiefs, / And habits, and pursuits, and clans, and wars, / Of a whole nation duly will I sing. (Singleton.)

[10] Yet imperishable lasts / The lineage, and stands firm through many a year / The fortune of the house, and ancestors / Of ancestors are counted. (Singleton)

[11] When sudden madness seized / The heedless lover, - pardonable sure, / If Manes knew how to pardon. (Singleton.)