

Dryden

Of Dramatic Poesy

in two volumes
volume one



JOHN DRYDEN

Of Dramatic Poesy

AND OTHER CRITICAL ESSAYS

IN TWO VOLUMES • VOLUME ONE

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
GEORGE WATSON



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EVERYMAN, I will go with thee,

and be thy guide,

In thy most need to go by thy side

JOHN DRYDEN

Born in Northamptonshire in 1631 and educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge. Settled in London in 1657 and wrote complimentary verses on the death of Cromwell and the Restoration of Charles II (1660). His first play was acted in 1663, and he wrote many heroic plays and comedies before 1681, when he turned to verse satire with *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681-2), *The Medal* (1682) and *Mac Flecknoe* (1682). Appointed Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal in 1670, he became a Catholic soon after the accession of James II in 1685, and was deprived of both posts with the Revolution of 1689. For the last decade of his life he lived in industrious retirement, translating Juvenal and Persius (1693), Virgil (1697) and the *Fables* (1700) from Homer, Ovid, Boccaccio and Chaucer. Died in 1700.

INTRODUCTION

DRYDEN's literary criticism must look odd to most who approach it for the first time. Everyone knows that Samuel Johnson called him the Father of English Criticism, and we expect to find him pioneering, in a rough and ready way, techniques which later critics have sophisticated. And this is not quite false: Dryden is effectively the first English critic, in the sense of being first in the unbroken evolution of English criticism after the false start made by Elizabethan rhetoricians in the 1570's. Our criticism stems from Dryden. He made Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets* possible, as Johnson knew, and beside Dryden earlier attempts like Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* or Ben Jonson's *Timber* look premature and irrelevant. But the word 'pioneer' summons up all the wrong images. We think of someone vigorous and audacious, a genius crudely and startlingly original, defiant of established values. Nothing Dryden ever wrote in the way of criticism is much like this, least of all his first and most familiar essays. The immense vigour of his mind is deployed to accommodate whatever there may be in his ideas that is original to accepted standards of his age. If he is sometimes a jump ahead of his readers, he usually takes care not to be any further off. At his most characteristic, he is intent upon seeming less original than he is; reverent of precedent and tactfully timorous in intellectual—though not always in personal—controversy; above all, eager to please, 'for I confess my chief endeavours are to delight the age in which I live.'¹ This is not the language of a pioneer. It is the language of a very professional poet zealous to placate his readers and his audiences. And this, at least before the Revolution of 1689, is just what Dryden's criticism is like—the studio-talk of a successful artist who knows how to give away a little, but not much, whose revelations are always likely to be self-recommendations artfully disguised, and who in debate never hesitates to evade or suppress. Of all kinds of criticism, after all, prefaces to one's

¹ 'A Defence of *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*,' p. 116, below.

own works are the most sophisticated and the least ingenuous, and the preface is Dryden's staple form of criticism. His claim to the paternity of English criticism we may concede at once, but it should not encourage us to suppose that what he did as a critic was boldly primitive, or that his successors have refined his crude ore. On the contrary, criticism grew simpler as it grew older. Addison and Johnson seem transparently innocent after Dryden. They acquired techniques of analysis, as in their accounts of *Paradise Lost*, which Dryden was probably incapable of, but the novelty lies not so much in their subtlety as in their disinterestedness. After all, they had no thought of writing epics of their own.

The notion that a poem is worth analysis for its own sake and on its own terms is very modern. Nobody in ancient, medieval, or Renaissance Europe would have understood it. During the half century that divides Dryden's death in 1700 from the advent of Johnson as a critic, such little analysis as there was sought excuses for itself in appeals to general laws. The very profession of criticism was not accepted: nearly all English comment on critics and criticism between the Restoration of 1660 and Johnson is simply hostile. Pope's youthful *Essay on Criticism* (1711), for example, sets up impossibly difficult conditions for a critic to fulfil, and denies in so many words that criticism can ever be a profession:

Let such teach others who themselves excel,
And censure freely who have written well (ll.15-16).

Swift does not even admit as much as that—even poets, in his view, presume too far when they try to justify their own works, and *The Tale of a Tub* (1704) includes a sneer at his elderly cousin Dryden, who 'has often said to me in confidence that the world would never have suspected him to be so great a poet, if he had not assured them so frequently in his prefaces that it was impossible they could either doubt or forget it' (sect. v). And we have solid, if rather neglected, evidence in *The Rehearsal* (1672), a contemporary travesty of Dryden's work as a playwright, that cultivated opinion in Restoration London denied the poet the right to be a critic too. Like American New Critics between the two World Wars, almost all Englishmen before Johnson believed that a poem or a play is, or ought to be,

self-sufficient, and that the poet is somehow cheating unprofessionally in writing an explanation of what he is doing. This is the philistine joke that underlies some of the boisterous fun of *The Rehearsal*, where Buckingham and others ridicule Dryden ('Bayes') as a young and ambitious dramatist. Bayes, when he is told the audience will not be able to follow his play, explains: 'I have printed above a hundred sheets of paper to insinuate the plot into the boxes.'¹ According to the accepted view of Dryden's day, the poet who explains himself condemns himself, and Dryden's decision to supply the run of his own works with critical prefaces was both novel and defiant.² It was by this practice that he fathered English criticism, for what we now call criticism—the analysis of the works of other men—takes its rise from the justification of one's own.

In European terms, the true pioneer is not Dryden but Corneille, and it was Corneille's example in providing his own plays with critical prefaces that encouraged Dryden to do the same. The very word that Dryden uses for a critical analysis, *examen*, derives from Corneille, whose three-volume *Théâtre* of 1660 is a clearly original experiment. It was original of Corneille to collect his plays at all. It was startling to head each volume with a *discours* or theoretical treatise, followed by an *examen* of all the plays contained in the volume, sub-divided by play-titles. The order is as follows:

Vol. I: Discours de l'utilité et des parties du poème dramatique, Examen des poèmes [8 plays] contenus en cette première partie;

Vol. II: Discours de la tragédie, Examen des poèmes [8 plays] contenus en cette seconde partie;

Vol. III: Discours des trois unités; Examen des poèmes [7 plays] contenus en ce troisième volume.

Strictly speaking, then, *examen* is something of an abstraction for Corneille—'analysis' rather than 'an analysis'; though modern

¹ *The Rehearsal*, ed. Edward Arber (1869), p. 39 (Act I). This may refer to the 'Connection of the *Indian Emperor* to the *Indian Queen*,' which precedes the prologue in the quarto of Dryden's *Indian Emperor* (1667). Dryden explains there that his sequel is set in sixteenth-century Mexico, and describes the intervening action.

² For some occasional precursors, cf. preface to *The Tempest*, p. 133n., below.

editors have obscured this usage by dividing Corneille's analyses, as a matter of convenience, into twenty-three play prefaces. Dryden's debt, apart from the general example, is twofold: Corneille showed him in his third *discours* how the pseudo-Aristotelian unities of action, time, and place, insisted upon by the French Academy and by most learned opinion, could be liberalized into practical aids to the popular dramatist; and, in the *examens*, he showed by example how any given play could be analysed according to these rules. Justification-by-analysis is Corneille's object—he is, of course, analysing his own plays; and fifteen of Dryden's are furnished with such analyses in the form of prefaces.¹ Those who ask why Dryden should have spent almost the first twenty years (1664-81) of his critical career upon the drama have their answer here. His success as a playwright never equalled his later triumphs as a satirist and a translator. But dramatic criticism was the only kind of descriptive criticism he knew. All else he was, in principle, forced to invent for himself, and the whole temper of Dryden's mind, as we have seen, was timid of innovation. His object in his plays and poems was to please, his object in his criticism was to prepare an audience for his plays and poems. This leaves his early criticism, at least, strangely without direction: 'He is the best English writer,' it has been said, 'to create no world, no quality, no values of his own.'² There are occasional, and minor, acts of defiance, in his middle years, and his quiet, obstinate opposition to Protestantism and William III in the last decade of his life suggests a hardening of the will: but, on the whole, the record is one of accomplished intellectual diplomacy. This is not to deny that Dryden is an original critic. But his originality, in his early years at least, is of the kind admired by M. Jean Cocteau: it consists in an unsuccessful desire to behave like everyone else.

One cardinal difference, however, divides Corneille's prefaces from Dryden. Corneille (1606-84) wrote his in 1660, at the age of fifty-four, his career as a dramatist almost over. Dryden wrote his first preface, to *The Rival Ladies* (1664), only four

¹ Others of his plays appeared with prefaces of little or no critical interest, and such prefaces are not included in this edition. They are usually mere appeals to patronage, whereas the fifteen, as well as being dedicatory letters to noble patrons, are made to serve some critical purpose besides.

² Stephen Potter, *The Muse in Chains* (1947), p. 55.

years later, when—though already thirty-two years old—he had seen only three of his plays produced, and had no major poem to his credit. Corneille's justifications are of the past, Dryden's of the future: the Englishman is the first European poet to make a habit of so preparing his critical ground in advance. His early prefaces have a youthful, apologetic quality, designed to ingratiate patron and reader. Critical intelligence is there from the beginning, but it is a withdrawn intelligence, reluctant to commit itself. Dryden does not impose ideas, he infiltrates them into the mind of the reader. Some such prudential motive must have inspired him in 1665 when, exiled in the country for eighteen months by the Plague and Fire, he conceived the idea of writing a critical dialogue setting out, in seemingly neutral form, his programme for the English theatre.

The decision was certainly an odd one, and the essay *Of Dramatic Poesy* remains an oddity, the only dialogue on literary criticism in English of any substantial importance. The very form was far from being established in England: Sir Walter Raleigh had written a political dialogue, *The Prerogative of Parliaments* (1628), not long before his execution in 1618; and Hobbes—the only modern philosopher we can be certain Dryden read—had recently produced several very academic dialogues in Latin on problems of mathematics and physics, innocent of characterization (the interlocutors are simply called 'A' and 'B'). Dryden's main technical models for writing a dialogue on the future of the drama were classical, and they fall broadly into three groups: the early Platonic dialogue, such as the *Gorgias*, in which an argumentative genius (Socrates) extracts truth like a midwife—this is Plato's own analogy, put in the mouth of Socrates in *Theaetetus*, 149—from stupid or hostile passers-by; secondly, the late Platonic dialogue, such as the *Laws*, which Plato began writing at about the time when the young Aristotle entered his Academy (367 B.C.),¹ where the early, argumentative, 'obstetric' technique gives place to elaborate exposition by a teacher to obedient pupils; and thirdly, the facetious, autobiographical dialogues of Lucian, more like real conversation than any of Plato's, but unsuited to constructive debate. We must not suppose that these possibilities presented

¹ Cf. Werner Jaeger, *Aristotle*, translated by Richard Robinson (1934), pp. 25f.

themselves clearly to the young Dryden in his father-in-law's mansion in Wiltshire: thirty years later, when he was writing the *Life of Lucian* as a publisher's commission, he passingly regretted the lack of any treatise on 'the several kinds of dialogue, and the whole art of it,' which he called 'a work long wanted and much desired, of which the Ancients have not sufficiently informed us; and I question whether any man now living can treat it accurately.'¹ And when, in defence of his dialogue against his brother-in-law, Sir Robert Howard, he invoked the traditional right of dialoguists and novelists to dissociate themselves from their own characters, he does so in terms which show he has not grasped the force of these distinctions: 'In vindication of myself,' he insisted in 'The Defence of *An Essay*' (p. 123, below), 'I must crave leave to say that my whole discourse was sceptical, according to that way of reasoning which was used by Socrates, Plato, and all the Academics of old, which Tully and the best of the Ancients followed, and which is imitated by the modest inquisitions of the Royal Society.' The last point is a fascinating red herring—Dryden had been elected to the Royal Society, then only two years old, in November, 1662, and had been put on two of its committees in 1664, one of them 'for improving the English language,' though he was dropped within two years for failure to attend its 'inquisitions.'² Whatever they were like (and one would like to think them Early Platonic rather than Late), they can hardly have been both; and 'Tully,' or Cicero, wrote dialogues in imitation of the lost dialogues of Aristotle, which are thought to have been in the late, expository, professorial manner of Plato's *Laws*. Certainly Cicero's *De oratore*, Dryden's likeliest model for *Of Dramatic Poesy*, is a dialogue of this sort: there is no real argument in it. Cicero's debate, like Dryden's, is conducted among four characters (though in Cicero a fifth character appears in the first part); it is divided, like Dryden's, into three parts; it is set, like Dryden's, in a defined place and time, nearly half a century before (91 B.C.) in the house of Cicero's old tutor Lucinius Crassus at Tusculum, a few days before his death. And Crassus

¹ Cf. vol. II, p. 212, below. The history of the dialogue is still unwritten, at least in English; cf. Rudolf Hirzel, *Der Dialog* (1895).

² Cf. Evelyn's letter to Pepys (12 August 1689); Claude Lloyd, 'Dryden and the Royal Society,' *PMLA*, xlv (1930), with replies, xlv (1931); and George Watson, 'Dryden and the Scientific Image,' *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, xviii (1963).

speaks for Cicero on the art of oratory, with hardly more contradiction than Dryden's Neander. *Of Dramatic Poesy* is certainly a Ciceronian dialogue, one of a school ultimately modelled upon Plato's later works. But Dryden introduces his own characteristic element of non-commitment. Neander, 'the New Man,' represents the young Dryden poised on the brink of a playwright's career, and the other three characters have been identified with fair certainty among other young poets of the day. And yet, in spite of the essentially didactic quality of the Ciceronian dialogue, the whole discourse is sceptical. We are rewarded neither with lively argument nor with much lucid doctrine. Argument, indeed, was never further off: no fire is kindled, no thunder breaks in any of these frigid parliamentary exchanges among four young men of 1665 in a boat on the Thames. The very occasion of their expedition, the naval victory won by the English over the Dutch, seems as much a foil as an analogy: it is consciously like, in that Dryden's (or Neander's) literary programme is patriotic, an assertion of English strength in the theatre in the face of a strong continental challenge; but it is unlike, as Dryden seems half aware, in that the sound of battle is far away. The four young poets 'perceived the air break about them like the noise of distant thunder, or of swallows in a chimney: those little undulations of sound, though almost vanishing before they reached them, yet still seeming to retain somewhat of their first horror which they had betwixt the fleets' (p. 19, below). The debate is conducted amid the faintest of noises off, and it offers hardly more excitement in itself. The opening skirmish, in which alone all four characters take part, is exquisitely contrived to shift the interest from the battle to poetry, and from poetry in general to dramatic poesy in particular; but it only ends in a definition of a play which is bad, which is shown to be bad, and which is none the less accepted (p. 25, below). Our confidence in Dryden's argumentative integrity is never quite re-established. The first of the three exchanges, between Crites and Eugenius on the Ancient-Modern controversy, seems detached almost to the point of indifference, and Dryden himself, as Neander, does not enter into it, only hinting at his own conviction by giving the Moderns the last word. The second, on the superiority of Elizabethan drama over the French, is vitally important for what is embedded

in it, Neander's *examen* of Ben Jonson's *Silent Woman*, the first extended example of descriptive criticism in England, where Dryden applies Corneille's techniques of analysis to a classic of the English stage. But, as argument, Neander's case for the English is no better and no worse than that of any patriot in defence of his country. We feel he may well be right in his eulogies of Shakespeare, Jonson, and Beaumont and Fletcher, but we also feel he would say much the same if he were wrong. The third exchange, where Neander defends rhyming plays against Crites's claims for blank verse, is about a critical issue real enough for the working dramatist in Restoration England. But, rich in substance as Neander's speech is, we miss the right of reply, and Dryden's mild joke against his own loquacity at the end does not quite satisfy the reader's sense of fairness. The dialogue is stylistically too accomplished to be dull, and too original in its handling of Jonson's play ever to be neglected: but it is neither conversation, nor argument, nor explicit instruction either. What we miss, amid all the abuse of French civilization we hear from Neander, is any sense of a tradition of cultivated conversation which the French in the 1660's had already acquired. Dryden's francophobe patriotism is rooted in an unspoken sense of inferiority in an age when Paris was confidently the capital of civilized Europe and London a province merely, uncertain of its manners and still struggling to recover and adapt a theatrical tradition broken by twenty years of Puritan sanctions. One critic has suggested that no argument *could* develop in the Essay, because the Restoration gentleman was as likely to fight as to argue—as Dryden painfully discovered a dozen years later, when he was beaten up in Rose Alley in December 1679, perhaps at Rochester's behest—and that, in any real discussion among dramatists about the drama, 'the cut-and-thrust would not have been verbal only.'¹ This is surely right: Dryden himself later proved, in his 'Defence of *An Essay*,' how quickly in Restoration England argument descended into abuse.

For good reason, perhaps, *Of Dramatic Poesy* remains Dryden's only attempt at formal criticism. The rest is almost all prefatorial: Dryden recognized early that the preface fulfilled any purpose he was ever likely to have as a critic. He loved its

¹ Donald A. Davie, 'Dramatic Poetry: Dryden's Conversation Piece,' *Cambridge Journal*, v (1952).

infinite flexibility, 'rambling, never wholly out of the way, nor in it' (vol. II, p. 278, below); and he may have appreciated, too, that in its rambling way it was always to the point—Dryden's point, which is most characteristically an act of self-justification rather than a general manifesto. Writing prefaces may be a French habit, as he complains in the preface to *The Tempest* (1670) (p. 133, below), but it is the perfect instrument for a critic who, like himself, is mainly concerned with defending his place in the sun. Besides, it gave him infinite excuses for changing his mind in public, as in the flagrant change of front in favour of blank verse in the preface to *All for Love* (1678); for we do not expect the artist, in the heat of studio-talk, to expound consistent theories or remain all his life answerable to one set of positions. Dryden found it easy enough to evade the fundamental absurdity of attempting to acclimatize the heroic play to the English theatre, an absurdity which his friend St Evremond had neatly defined: 'The spirit of our religion is directly opposite to that of tragedy: the humility and patience of our saints carry too direct an opposition to those heroical virtues that are so necessary for the theatre.'¹ The incongruity is a moral one, and Dryden's dramatic criticism is about technical, not moral, issues. As the prefatorial habit grew on him, he was only once seriously frightened out of the pose of expansive ease into which, as a middle-aged dramatist, he had readily sunk. Rymer's blast against the Elizabethans, *The Tragedies of the Last Age*, shook him badly when it appeared in the autumn of 1677. It was a book he had intended to write himself;² but it was much more learned, and much more scathing, than he had thought possible. Nothing illustrates more clearly the tactical, diplomatic quality of Dryden's critical genius than the way in which he reacted to Rymer's book. On the one hand, he was held fast by deeply instinctive affection for his Elizabethan masters; on the other, he knew the force of neo-classical fashion, and ached to be respectable. The notes he scribbled in his copy of Rymer's book, which he never dared to publish, the so-called 'Heads of an Answer to Rymer', contain in outline the full force of his

¹ St Evremond (1610-1703), 'Of Ancient and Modern Tragedy,' in his posthumous *Works* (1728), II.103. Cf. vol. II, pp. 85f., below.

² Cf. 'To the Reader,' prefixed to *Of Dramatic Poesy*, p. 17 and n., below.

convictions, and even presume to attack the most sacred of all critical documents in Renaissance Europe, the *Poetics* of Aristotle, raising questions of hair-raising implications: 'Whether Aristotle has made a just definition of tragedy, of its parts, of its ends, and of its beauties; and whether he, having not seen any others but those of Sophocles, Euripides, etc., had or truly could determine what all the excellencies of tragedy are' (para. 8). Corneille had been willing to bend the rules for his own convenience—this knocks away the lower supports, it reeks of subversion. But 'The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy' (1679), his principal public reply to Rymer, is a weak dilution of his private notes: slyly forceful, occasionally, if one has learned the art of reading between Dryden's lines, in its demonstration that Greek tragedies were not much more Aristotelian than the Elizabethan, as Rymer defines 'Aristotelian'; but hardly assertive of the native tradition of drama whose champion Dryden had once been. The superiority of the Elizabethans in language and in the theme of love is only hesitatingly advanced; and when Dryden did break with Rymer, a dozen years later, he broke on personal grounds alone.

Dryden's Protestant play, *The Spanish Friar* (1681), with its contemptuous preface against the London audiences he had suffered for eighteen years, marks the end of the first half of his career as a critic—a critic of the drama. The second phase (1680–1700), where his gift for literary history fragmentarily emerges, had already begun. Dryden's historical interests first appear in force in support of his new career as a translator of the classical poets, in the preface to *Ovid's Epistles Translated* (1680). But it is just as likely that he became a translator because of his historical interests. The *examen* of *The Silent Woman*, with its accompanying account—an astonishingly accurate one—of Jonson's theory of humours, is the first hint we have that Dryden's historical sense was unusual for his age. Not many Europeans before the nineteenth century had more than a passing intuition of the assumption we all now share that past ages may have governed their behaviour on principles alien to our own. It is a central neoclassical doctrine, from the sixteenth-century Italians to Samuel Johnson, that (as Dryden obediently echoes it), 'mankind [is] the same in all ages, agitated by the same passions, and moved to

action by the same interests' (vol. II, p. 4, below). Dryden never dared to formulate any doctrine to the contrary. His age knew neither literary history nor literary biography—Izaak Walton's *Lives* (1640-78), for example, though certainly biographies of writers, are almost entirely innocent of critical judgments, and the literary life cannot be said to be launched in England before Joseph Warton's *Essay on Pope* (1756-82) and Johnson's *Lives* (1779-81). Dryden very narrowly escaped the honour of naturalizing the form into the English tradition. The inclination was there, but not the leisure or the industry. 'I never read any thing but for pleasure,' he confesses in the *Life of Plutarch*, but his pleasure, he adds, is history, where precept is reduced to example and 'gently slides into us, is easy and pleasant in its passage' (vol. II, pp. 4, 8, below). His three classical lives—Plutarch, Polybius, and Lucian—approach very near to the literary life by mingling biography with critical analysis. But they are not about English poets, and they are decidedly hack-work. The mass of derivative and undigested information almost buries Dryden's own perceptive asides about historiography and the nature of prose style. Literary history, too, narrowly missed Dryden as a pioneer: in his history of satire in the preface to *Juvenal* (1693), and in his history of the epic in the preface to the *Aeneis* (1697), he wrote the first extended histories in English of a literary form, if we except only Rymer's *Short View of Tragedy* (1693). But these belong to the last decade, when his critical intelligence, though wonderfully mellowed by experience and indifferent at last to literary fashion, was unable for pressure of work to take trouble with anything. And you cannot be a literary historian without taking trouble. Indeed the history of the epic in the dedication to the *Aeneis* can hardly be called Dryden's at all, so closely does it adhere to the French of Segrais; and the history of satire, though sensible and occasionally brilliant, does not entirely succeed in digesting its sources among the Dutch commentators. Dryden had the talent and instincts to create a school of English literary history, but did not. And when, half a century later, it was finally established by Joseph and Thomas Warton, it found its inspiration not in Dryden's scattered prefaces, but in the careful researches of the literary antiquaries.

Dryden's theory of translation, too, is in fragments. But there

is nothing dubious about it, and the loss is to convenience only, for this time Dryden did not change his mind. To study it all, you must pursue it from the 1680 preface to Ovid through the prefaces to Tonson's second and third miscellanies (1685, 1693), the Life of Lucian, and the prefaces to the 1697 Virgil, ending with the opening passages of the preface to the *Fables* (1700). In outline, it is all in the preface to Ovid. For twenty years after, Dryden repeats and consistently develops his theory of a half-way-house of translation called 'paraphrase,' which offends neither in literal awkwardness ('metaphrase') nor in extravagant infidelity ('imitation'). Paraphrase ideally creates works which are both versions and poems too, where the translator is 'a master both of his author's language, and of his own' (p. 271, below). These definitions amount to the most severely useful things in Dryden's criticism: his own translations succeed as examples of his precepts, and together they created the tradition in translation he hoped for. They made Pope's Homer possible. And, unlike his early dramatic criticism, the late essays on translation and literary history are frank and free. In English prose, too, Dryden had found a middle way that suited him in the example of Montaigne, the only mentor in prose style he ever acknowledged: something more restrained than the baroque elaboration of Burton and Browne, heavily outmoded after 1660, and yet more colourful than the severe precepts of the Royal Society strictly required. Thomas Sprat, in his *History of the Royal Society* (1667), had described the linguistic programme of the Society: 'to separate the knowledge of nature from the colours of rhetoric, the devices of fancy, or the delightful deceit of fables' (p. 62). Dryden accommodated himself to much of this programme, but left himself room to turn. Some past richness still lingers in the modern restraint of his mature prose, and such tropes as he admits seem all the more vigorous for their isolation. As he grew older, the cautious stiffness of the sixties and seventies fell away, and a new and exhilarating fluency came upon him—'the tattling quality of age' he calls it with mock modesty in the preface to Juvenal (vol. II, p. 85, below). By the end of his days he is full of old man's pride for his expanding powers: 'Thoughts, such as they are, come crowding in so fast upon me that my only difficulty is to choose or to reject, to run them into verse or to give them the other