



A Stingless Bee: the Glorious Revolution in John Dryden's Translations of Virgil

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RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 was an unprecedented event in the history of England which led to the dethronement of King James II and the coronation of a Dutch Protestant, William of Orange, and his wife Mary, James's daughter, as new monarchs. Because the deposition of a Catholic King was conducted with general public consent, writers of that period did not consider the event worth commenting on, and hence there was a tangible air of silence and passivity around the Glorious Revolution. John Dryden, a convert Catholic, lost his title of Poet Laureate as a result of the revolution but did not entirely retire from writing. He turned to playwriting and translating Virgil, Juvenal and other classics, not only to make a living but also to be able to convey implicit messages to the new king and his reign. The aim of the present article is to analyse Dryden's allusions towards the political circumstances of post-revolutionary England, hidden between the lines of his translations of Virgil, against the background of the literary passivity in that period as one of the reasons which made Dryden decide to make political comments in an implicit and disguised manner.

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1. SILENCE AND PASSIVITY

The Glorious Revolution of 1688, also commonly known as the Bloodless Revolution, did not bear the hallmarks of a typical revolution with all its violent and military content, which had haunted England forty years earlier. This revolution was largely based on the idea of eliminating a Catholic king by means of an invitation issued to his Protestant daughter, Mary, and her Dutch husband, William of Orange, to invade England. The word “invitation” is not a misuse or misapplication in this particular case, as it clearly reflects the historical reality prior to 1688. It is sometimes assumed that William planned the invasion from the very beginning of James’s enthronement or even before he succeeded Charles II, during the exclusion crisis. Miller claims that such a presupposition “is incorrect” and he claims that “in the first two years of James’s reign William limited himself to maintaining and extending his correspondence with English politicians of all shades of opinion” and that “his direct intervention was limited to attempts to influence James’s foreign policy on particular issues” (82). William did, however, receive a green light to invade England from the Whig politician Lord Mordaunt, who already in 1686 “may have suggested to William that he would ultimately be obliged to intervene in England” (Ashley 109) and “assured him that there would be no opposition” (Miller 82). William did not act with unnecessary haste and took time to prepare himself “to act if James tried to alter the succession or threatened the nation’s religion” (82), but he did not make the final decision until April 1688. It was obviously accelerated by the anticipation that the Queen might give birth to a son, which she in fact did on 10 June the same year. On 30 June, the “invitation” that William had required was drafted and signed and eventually allowed him to initiate the intervention process and claim its legality. Miller notices that “the birth of James’s son and the assurances in the invitation emphasized the necessity and the feasibility of invasion” (90).

William now followed the next steps of the invasion process and issued a declaration to the people of England, including mostly a list of grievances which were “blamed on the King’s advisers, not on the King himself” (Miller 95). It also directly referred to the newly born Prince of Wales, who was presented as a serious threat to the Protestant future of the country and consequently its prosperity. According to Miller, it was nothing but pure propaganda, as William “had no interest in English laws and liberties” and resolved to invade England “because he feared that if he did not, he would lose all chance of bringing England’s wealth and manpower into the great struggle against France which dominated his life” (95). Whatever his reasons were, the Protestant, Dutch monarch William of Orange landed on the English shore in Torbay on 5 November 1688 fronting an army of 15 000 men. James II was consequently compelled to flee to France in December of the same year, which, in the eyes of the anti-Jacobites, was tantamount to abdication. The Bill of Rights, passed by the Parliament in February 1689, opened the way to officially declaring James’s abdication and pronouncing vacancy of the throne. Reconciling the claims of Tories, who still opted for the hereditary succession, and Whigs, who reiterated the necessity for elective monarchy, William and Mary were jointly crowned King and Queen of England in April 1689.

It is often claimed in literary disputes that context shapes content and the social context of that time can be defined by two words: silence and passivity. When compared to other decades of the century, the period of the Glorious Revolution and the early 1690s is exceptionally silent and unusually scanty in literary productions which would directly comment on the political turmoil of the time. Except for a few panegyrics glorifying William (e.g. John Guy’s *On the Happy Accession of Their Majesty King William and Queen Mary: A Pindarique Ode*, 1699), there are barely any texts discoursing on the legality of the new authority and the political theoretics behind the revolution. Steven N. Zwicker, in his invaluable *Lines of Authority*, devotes a lot of space to discuss the reasons behind this barrenness and he notes that “the standard histories of English literature (...) hardly acknowledge the events of these months” (*Lines* 174). It indeed seems quite unusual for a period of revolution (even if it does not entail regicide, genocide or at least serious military operations) to be so poorly commented on in a public literary debate, but it must have been the peculiar nature and specificity of the Glorious Revolution that affected the literary passivity, or, as Zwicker calls it, “literary silence”. This passivity resulted directly from the “passivity of the nation” (*Lines* 177) which determined the essence of the event:

This is a revolution not of heroic endeavour and godly militancy but of deep impassivity and retreat, not a civil insurrection but a revolution effected by conspiracy

and secret invitation. William was blown across the channel by a Protestant wind, the nation sat passively obedient (or disobedient, as the case may have been), and James withdrew from office. (Zwicker, *Lines* 177)

As the critic explains, the revolution is distinguished because it “was hardly the result of a national effort” and, what is more, it “was affected neither by a martial hero nor a fearsome god” (178). The critic also emphasizes the fact that, at the centre of the Glorious Revolution, sits the notion of absence: “a throne that lies vacant, a king who has disappeared in the night, a people reluctant to act in defiance of or on behalf of William’s entry” (181). Such circumstances, interpreted both literally and figuratively, generated difficulties for those wanting to produce heroic literature at that time. Moreover, the new political discourse of indirect statements and veiled explanations initiated and proposed by the Convention Parliament generated a further game of understatements and masked political commentaries in public writing. As Zwicker notices,

[T]he efforts of the Convention Parliament of 1689 were largely directed toward assigning such words to the events of the Revolution as would conceal their character (...). How else might the prince of Orange have been transformed into the king of England; how else might James’s flight have been described as an act of abdication? (*Politics* 31)

This “cynical manipulation of words” (31) must have contributed to the general acceptance of using hidden allusions and undertones instead of straightforward opinions in public political debate.

All of these elements “created a troubled circumstance for literature of heroism and high principles” (Zwicker, *Lines* 180) and largely contributed to a considerable decline in producing occasional, politically-marked and naturally biased heroic poetry, which Dryden had mastered before. Even though Dryden resorted to commenting on the political reality in a new, conceded and disguised manner, he did not continue to write as many politically-oriented and openly allusive literary texts as in the case of other pivotal events of the century. Winn notices that “Dryden chose to remain rather quiet during 1689” (437), whereas Paterson goes further stating that “the last phase of Dryden’s career as a would-be heroic poet, after the Glorious Revolution which was far from glorious for him, can only be a postscript here” (235). Walter Scott calls the Glorious Revolution a “memorable catastrophe” which made Dryden exposed to “insult, calumny, and sarcasm” (297) as he resolved to defend his Catholic faith and consequently lost his position of Poet Laureate in 1689 to the satisfaction of his fiercest opponent, Thomas Shadwell. Scott also touches upon Dryden’s drastic financial situation at the time, which was worse than in 1660, with his income being solely dependent on his literary activities and his expenses to maintain his family considerably increasing (297). Being in serious financial straits and having his reputation shattered, he was forced to pursue his literary career by looking for “patronage from all quarters”. Hence, in order to remain politically and publicly engaged, “he had to carefully mask his political commentary in his work to avoid censorship and to guarantee his continued support” (Dolan 88). In the opening lines of the prologue to his play *Amphitryon* (first staged in 1690), Dryden anticipates and, in a sense, announces to his readers the character and framework of his literary output in the new political circumstances of the incoming decade:

The labouring bee, when his sharp sting is gone,
Forgets his golden work, and turns a drone:
Such is a satire, when you take away
That rage, in which his noble vigour lay. (Dryden, II. 1–4)

Winn notices that Dryden compares himself to a stingless bee, considering his satires the “golden work” of his career which came to an abrupt end together with the ascension of the new monarch and a new political environment (445). Being deprived of the possibility to use direct irony and overt “rage”, he became a “drone” losing his vigour and, what it entails, the peculiar character of his literary oeuvre.

According to Zwicker,

[B]y the close of the century, disguise was at once political cover, an acknowledgement of the profoundly contingent character of political experience, and an effort to negotiate the difficult currents of language and meaning at a time when their relation had undergone a radical change. It is a set of such crosscurrents that we can feel in the debates of the Convention Parliament, in Dryden's complex and brooding translation of Virgil's political epic, and in the delicate and enigmatic lyrics from *Fables*. (*Politics* 8)

Indeed, except for writing plays and fables, in the 1690s, Dryden devoted himself to the monumental challenge of translating Virgil into English. Even though a translation belongs to that category of literary activities which does not allow much space to express one's personal beliefs, Dryden took the opportunity to "recast the invasion, to mediate his understanding of the revolution, to accommodate both himself and the events of 1688/89 to larger frame" (Zwicker, *Lines* 198). The translating work provided him with a unique chance to comment on the post-revolutionary political intricacies and, at the same time, seem politically distant, "stingless" and moderate due to the nature of translation, which, by definition should not include the translator's bias. He did, however, take advantage of the work to portray his own political views and "mask his commentary behind historical documents" (Dolan 107). Winn notices that "Dryden recognized that Virgil was a political poet, even when writing about beekeeping or herding flocks" (480) and he knew he could have used it to support the new regime, but instead he consistently chose to advocate the Stuarts and discredit William III. Dryden's translation of Virgil is not only "a meditation of the language and culture of Virgil's poetry, but it is also a set of reflections on English politics in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution" (Zwicker, *Politics* 177).

An interesting example of covert criticism directed at the new King is spotted by Winn (480) in Dryden's translation of Virgil's *Georgics*:

Where Fraud and Rapine, Right and Wrong confound;
Where impious Arms from ev'ry part resound,
And monstrous Crimes in ev'ry Shape are crown'd.
The peaceful Peasant to the Wars is prest;
The Fields lye fallow in inglorious Rest.
The Plain no Pasture to the Flock affords,
The crooked Scythes are streightned into Swords. (Virgil, 678–84)

Even though Virgil wrote the poem to encourage agriculture and help rebuild the Roman economy after a period of civil war, its political undertone perfectly fits the post-revolutionary English reality of the 1690s. Dolan claims that, in the *Georgics*, Dryden "asserts poetic authority in the absence of a legitimate monarch" (130). It also illustrates the state of chaos triggered by "Fraud", "Rapine", "impious Arms" and "monstrous Crimes". Winn notices that, although the passage is a direct translation of Virgil's words, the phrase "peaceful Peasant" and the verb "crown'd" are Dryden's additions which "can turn the impersonal 'monstrous Crimes into' a version of King William" (480). By implying that the "monstrous Crimes", which are the source of chaos, war and social instability, are now "crowned", Dryden implicitly puts the blame on William III and Mary who violated the lineal succession and the divine right of kings and consequently caused legal turmoil and disorder in the state. In the translation of the *Georgics*, Dryden chooses to highlight two aspects: firstly, the Glorious Revolution was an act of violation and usurpation, and the word "Rapine" serves as a verbal illustration of William's invasion and, secondly, it was an attack aimed at the Catholic part of English society and supporters of James II carried out by "impious Arms". Moreover, the usage of the adjective "inglorious" in this highly politicised fragment might evoke direct associations and be read as the translator's denial of the "glorious" revolution. The passage proves Dryden's technique of implicit criticism, which he applied after the revolution and utilized in his plays and translation as the reference to William and the Glorious Revolution, is not presented in the form of clear-cut parallels but is hidden behind Virgil's words which, being slightly embellished with Dryden's lexical extensions, generate a more current meaning.

In his translation of *The First Pastoral*. OR *Tityrus* and *Meliboeus*, Dryden takes the opportunity to comment on the notion of expulsion from homeland that affected all Jacobites (either literally or figuratively) as a result of the Glorious Revolution and refer to his own sense of loss and absence:

A Race of Men from all the World dis-join'd.
O must the wretched Exiles ever mourn,
Nor after length of rowl'ing Years return?
Are we condem'd by Fates unjust Decree,
No more our Houses and our Homes to see?
Or shall we mount again the Rural Throne,
And rule the Country Kingdoms, once our own!
Did we for these Barbarians plant and sow,
On these, on these, our happy Fields bestow?
Good Heav'n, what dire Effects from Civil Discord flow! (Virgil, 90–99)

Dolan says that, according to the editors of the California Dryden, the translator “added wretched exiles and changed Virgil’s singular pronouns to plurals inviting comparisons to the exiled monarch and his wife” (128–129). The fragment seems to be Dryden’s expression of grief and mourning over all those who lost their “property or position because of their inability to take oaths of allegiance to William and Mary” (129). Dryden places himself among all Jacobites reiterating his need to be their voice in a public debate. By asking the question “Are we condemn’d by Fates unjust Decree/No more our Houses and our Homes to see?”, Dryden makes it clear that England under William and Mary is no longer his country, neither other Catholics’ supporting the Jacobean just cause. He emphasizes the sense of homelessness and banishment from his own homeland triggered and precipitated by the expulsion of a legal monarch. Such interpretation is only confirmed when he calls those who think alike to “mount again the Rural Throne” to regain the Kingdom which was “once” their own by removing the “Barbarians”. In the same pastoral, Dryden again uses the beekeeping imagery to reflect upon the personal element and his fate as a writer:

Behold yon bord'ring Fence of Sallow Trees
Is fraught with Flow'rs, the Flow'rs are fraught with Bees:
The buisie Bees with a soft murm'ring Strain
Invite to gentle sleep the lab'ring Swain. (Virgil, 71–74)

In the above passage, Dryden yet again implies that the 1690s were a decade of his debilitated political activity represented in his literature. Instead of pursuing the life of a “buisie Bee” which he had led before the revolution, he now perceives himself a “lab'ring Swain” that is gradually falling into “gentle sleep”. Dolan recapitulates on the above fragment claiming that “Dryden does not demonstrate hope that he will ever return to a place where he can enjoy labor like the bees and the repose of the country life” (128). For the writer, the Glorious Revolution and its consequences are tantamount to the sense of loss, absence and emptiness and give a pause for reflection over the good old past.

Another example of Dryden’s translation with implicit criticism of Williamites and their politics pinpointed by Winn (487–488) comes at the very beginning of Virgil’s masterpiece and Dryden’s monumental rendering challenge of *Aeneis*:

Arms, and the Man I sing, who, forc'd by Fate,
And haughty *Juno's* unrelenting Hate;
Expelled and exil'd, left the *Trojan* Shoar:
Long Labors, both by Sea and Land, he bore;
And in the doubtful War, before he won
The *Latian* Realm, and built the destin'd Town:
His banish'd gods restor'd to Rites Divine,
And setl'd sure Succession in his Line:
From whence the Race of *Alban* Fathers come,
And the long Glories of majestic *Rome*. (Virgil, I. 1–10)

The fact that the Virgilian hero is forced to leave Troy “by Fate” gives Dryden a unique opportunity to allude to the figure of James II. Winn notices that Dryden deliberately strengthens the image by adding two other participles “expelled” and “exil’d” that draw upon the expulsion of the King from his legal office. What is more, while Aeneas only “brings his household gods into Latium” (Winn 488), Dryden goes further in his translation to accentuate his hope for his “banished gods” to be “restor’d” to “Rites Divine” and once more stress the necessity and indispensability of a “Succession” which is in its proper “Line” to secure national stability and prosperity. Although the element of a hero forced by fate to leave his motherland seemed to be a ready-made occasion for Dryden to draw parallels to James II, he clearly resolved to reinforce his disagreement and frustration with the banishment of a legally and divinely-appointed monarch, and this kingly vacancy and absence lie at the very core and nature of the Glorious Revolution.

Zwicker notices that “Roman history afforded general analogies with English politics” (*Politics* 182) and that there is a tangible “interplay between Rome and England (...) in which Rome at once conceals and expresses England” (177). Dryden clearly realized that, by adding some “daring particulars”, he can achieve his ultimate goal: to discredit the nature of the revolution and remain concealed behind historical, ancient figures. These objectives seem to be fulfilled in a fragment of the *Dedication of Aeneid*:

The last Tarquin was expell’d justly, for overt acts of tyranny and maladministration, for such are the conditions of an elective kingdom: and I meddle not with others, being, for my own opinion, of Montaigne’s principles, that an honest man ought to be contented with that form of government, and with those fundamental constitutions of it, which he receiv’d from his ancestors, and under which himself was born. (Virgil 229)

Being a vehement Tory, the writer again juxtaposes elective monarchy with tyranny and such conflation must have been “an insult to William III and his supporters” especially because the “satiric literature of the 1690s had made current identifications of William and Mary with Tarquin and Tullia” (Zwicker, *Politics* 183). In the above passage, Dryden willingly takes advantage of the fact that the legendary King of Rome—Lucius Tarquinius Superbus—was actually expelled as a result of an uprising and transforms it to the English ground giving a concealed warning to the present King that what happened during the Glorious Revolution might actually turn against him in the future. He confirms and reiterates his implicit statement when he starts deliberating over historical continuity and its inviolable sanctity in the form of “fundamental constitutions” which we inherit from our ancestors. For Dryden, the Glorious Revolution was largely based on the brazen attack on the sanctity of historical continuity embodied in the figure of James II—the only legal successor to the throne of England after Charles’s death in 1685. Remembering that the one who invaded and violated the traditional model of authority was not born in England only strengthens the analogy between the historical narration of Dryden’s *Dedication* and his covert criticism of the revolution, which he perceived as being based on invasion, conquest and election—the concepts which undermine the foundation of firm, effective and continuous authority.

Dryden’s emphasis on the importance of historical continuity and lineal succession is easily noticeable in yet another passage from *The Dedication*:

Aeneas cou’d not pretend to be Priam’s Heir in a Lineal Succession: For Anchises the Heroe’s Father, was only of the second Branch of the Royal Family: And Helenus, a Son of Priam, was yet surviving, and might lawfully claim before him. It may be Virgil mentions him on that Account. Neither has he forgotten Priamus, in the Fifth of his Aeneis, the Son of Polites, youngest Son to Priam; who was slain by Pyrrhus, in the Second Book. Aeneas had only Married Creusa, Priam’s Daughter, and by her could have no Title, while many of the Male issue were remaining. In this case, the Poet gave him the next Title, which is, that of an Elective King. (Virgil 233)

Dryden’s aim is not to draw clear-cut parallels, e.g. between Aeneas or Augustus and William III, but “to present ancient figures in a language that would argue the circumstances of William’s kingship” (Zwicker, *Politics* 184). It is the legitimacy of William’s royal authority that Dryden undermines, not his personal traits or behaviours. Through Virgil, who is discoursing on the nature of Roman titles and concluding that elective authority relies on the will of the

people, Dryden scorns “the legitimacy of William’s rule” and sends another warning to those who “claimed for the Dutchman the sanctity and rights of lineal descent that they had in fact sanctioned revolution and usurpation” (185). Yet once more, the translator discusses the very essence and core of the revolution which violated his concept of authority: “lineal succession cannot be altered where there is an heir; William’s invasion ought to be recognized as conquest” (166), and it is not directly William whom he blames for the conquest but the English politicians and elites who invited the foreign invasion and the people of England who gave their silent and passive consent to this legal infringement. That kind of a concealed, conceptual and theorizing message is what differs Dryden’s post-revolutionary productions from his earlier heroic poems, panegyrics and satires which conspicuously point at particular rulers and figures in English politics and to mention only Shaftesbury in *Absalom and Achitophel* would be highly insufficient. In his translations, Dryden draws upon the model of authority, which he consistently defended and continues to defend, and this model is embodied in the figure of James II—a still-living king banished as a result of an illegal overthrow.

Zwicker, in his book, concentrates on a number of passages from *Aeneid*, where Dryden’s translation was deliberately extended or reshaped to match the political reality of the 1690s in England. But there is one special fragment that the critic also scrutinizes, in which Dryden ultimately stamps and reiterates his personal view on the nature of the Glorious Revolution and the consequences it entails:

Then they, who Brothers better Claim disown,
Expel their Parents, and Usurp the Throne;
Defraud their Clients, and to Lucre sold,
Sit brooding on unprofitable Gold:
Who dare not give, and ev’n refuse to lend
To their poor Kindred, or a wanting Friend:
Vast is the Throng of these. (Virgil, III. 824–830)

Here, Dryden apparently sharpens his criticism towards the revolution and mounts from the earlier explored aspect of violated succession to highlight the familiar side of the event. Not only does he again underline that the revolution was actually an act of usurpation, but he also touches upon the more intimate subject of Queen Mary expelling her own father. Generally, the beginning of the stanza with “the disclaiming of a brother’s right, the expulsion of parents” (Zwicker, *Politics* 202) reflects upon the royal family who, by ascending the throne through the violation of the divine right and breaching legal succession, also proved to be callous and disrespectful of the family bonds they used to have. Both William and Mary are portrayed as “brooding on unprofitable Gold” and unwilling to give or lend to “their poor Kindred” who must be understood as James II—banished and expelled not only as a king, but also a family member, a father-in-law, his daughter’s father, and father of the nation, in Dryden’s eyes.

Even though in his translation of Virgil, Dryden tended to add small changes or reshape words inconsiderably to match his domestic context, in the above fragment he seems to have gone too far with the alterations to express his final statement on the Glorious Revolution and the new regime: “Virgil’s brother suffered hatred, Dryden’s brother is defrauded of a claim; Virgil’s parent is beaten, Dryden’s parents are expelled; and the half line at 825, the usurpation of the throne, which focuses the first two violations, is Dryden’s invention” (Zwicker, *Politics* 202). It seems that the modifications Dryden made in his translation clearly point at his desire to ultimately expose his statement that he had been trying to conceal behind the ideals, concepts and ancient figures. The will to rebuke those responsible for the current state of national instability was escalating throughout Dryden’s literary work in the 1690s and finally reached its culmination during this decade in which he called things by their names instead of hiding them. And those names were words frequently uttered in Dryden’s translation of Virgil: invasion, conquest, usurpation and violation, but being the translator, not the author of the text, he was in a privileged position of remaining concealed by using “such language in rendering passages that in Virgil seem neutral or only obliquely political” (202).

Through the translation of Virgil, Dryden remains a consistent Tory and a supporter of the Stuarts. The work also gave him the opportunity to express his frustration and disillusionment with the passivity of Englishmen in the face of William’s invasion (or invitation). Fujimura confirms such

understanding of the hidden political undertone in Virgil: “the touch of bitterness which Dryden adds to it, as well as the personal allusions, transforms the poem into an expression of the translator’s depressed spirit” (71). Dolan claims that, without doubt, Dryden’s translation of Virgil serves as a “vehicle for political commentary” (133), and indeed it seems that Dryden is incapable of performing a literary work without feeling entitled and obliged to express his views and remain a consistent public and political writer. Winn accurately sums up the deliberations: “I do not mean to argue that Dryden’s Virgil is merely a partisan work of propaganda. (...) But I believe we must recognize that this translation, like all translations, is a product of a particular time and a particular maker” (488).

3. CONCLUSIONS

The Glorious Revolution marked a peculiar moment in the history of England, which must have been particularly difficult and challenging for Dryden, who found himself in an awkward position of struggling to define his identity as a political and public writer. Since Dryden was a vehement advocate of the Stuart dynasty and their hereditary succession, the dethronement and banishment of King James II left him with a natural necessity and willingness to reflect upon the background and aftermath of the Glorious Revolution. Fitting in the general aura of public silence and passivity surrounding the revolution and attempting to survive in the new unfavourable environment, Dryden resolved to conceal his political messages and abandon the past overt and explicit criticism used in his panegyrics or satires. Even though he realized he had become a “stingless” writer, he turned to playwriting and translations of classics not only to earn a living and maintain his family but also to take advantage of the possibility to comment on the contemporary politics, which he had pursued for years before.

Translation dominated Dryden’s life in 1690s as he

[F]ound a vehicle by which he could comment on the state of affairs in contemporary England under the guise of modernizing a classical work: a technique that afforded him the ability to plausibly deny any contemporary allusions in his writing as he cleverly masked them in the translation. (Dolan 88)

Indeed, by extending, reshaping and altering the meaning of Virgil’s verses, Dryden makes use of his translations in order to retain his voice in a general silent and passive public debate over the causes and aftermaths of the revolution and embarrass its essence. Even though Dryden seemed to have lost his natural “sting” or “rage”, so characteristic of his earlier political works, due to the general public and literary passivity and the necessity to mask his criticism, he must have come to a conclusion that even the mere possibility of using his moderately critical voice hidden between the verses of his translations of Virgil would have been significant and expected. As Zwicker recapitulates,

Dryden wanted very much to enter the public debate over the revolution, and he wanted to enter it on his own ground, in forms of which he was a master, with conventions and codes whose meaning he might shape, with a language whose resonance he might control. (Lines 182)


Undoubtedly, translations of classics, such as Virgil, provided him with such an opportunity.

Dryden perceives the Glorious Revolution both as the violation of the divine rights of kings and continuous hereditary succession, which he had advocated so strongly in his occasional poetry written under King Charles II, and as conquest or usurpation of authority in an aura of general public indifference, silence and passivity—which Dryden, who is consistently a Tory, cannot and does not want to accept. As Dolan says: “Through translation, Dryden could establish a stable poetic tradition in contrast to the nation’s disregard for their monarchical heritage while simultaneously using his translations to mask criticism of the fickleness of the English people and of their government’s disintegration” (77).

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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