

## **The Literature Tendencies of the Restoration Age in the Perspectives of John Dryden and Robert Burns**

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### **Abstract**

The Restoration Age is probably one of the most interesting and important, if not one of the richest, periods in the history of English literature. Though not marked by an exuberant growth of drama as the Elizabethan Age, of poetry as the Romantic Age, or of Criticism as the modern Age, the Restoration Age remains a very important and interesting period for the student of literature because it gave birth to modern English prose and because it marks the birth of modern English criticism formulated on the classical dogma of the ancients. It is important because it witnessed the birth and growth of many important literary movements, of many new species of literature in the field of poetry and drama, because it innovated and perfected many forms of literary expression. If we make a careful perusal of the history of English literature and of the social and political trends we come to know that a change began to come over the spirit of English literature about the middle of the seventeenth century which was not due to any fluctuations in literary fashion but was deep rooted in the life of the time.

**Keywords:** Restoration Age, Romantic movement, Scottish Diaspora, Restoration drama

### **Introduction**

The Age of Renaissance was an age of expansion – spiritual and material. For the first time Englishmen realized their national solidarity. Emancipated from continental struggles, their loyalty to the queen, their pride in the country and their delight in country's past are reflected in the *Faerie Queene* and historical dramas of Marlowe and Shakespeare. But the emotional excitement and zeal could not be sustained for long and its splendid exuberance had degenerated into extravagance and violence in the early years of the seventeenth century. The drama was in more critical state than poetry.

## **Restoration Drama**

Restoration drama has been regarded as both the glory and the shame of the period. The comedies handle wit, satire and neat situation in a manner hardly surpassed elsewhere in English drama, but they are not deficient in moral decency, though very sensitive to a superficial norm in manners.

The Restoration Comedy has been termed as comedy of manners as manners, modes and conventions of the upper classes of society are reflected in it. Since at this time upper strata of society was one which was patronized by Charles II and his courtly circle of wits, the comedy written at this time, chose to depict the ethos of that class only. The comedy of manners is said to be written on the lines of the realistic comedy as written by Ben Jonson in England and Moliere in France. Moliere provided the English dramatists with ideas for plot and comic characterization.

The exponents of new empirical philosophy were Hobbes and Locke, and their principles and discoveries were definitely in favour of rationalism and realism as opposed to the element of supernatural mystery and extravagances of uncontrolled Fancy.

The age of Dryden was dominated by Hobbes, who sought to banish the old machinery of ghosts and fairies from the domain of serious literature and confine even poetic activity to the sphere of the probable and rational. But he was the first philosopher to attempt a psychological approach to the problem of the poetic or creative process. He analysed the components of the human mind itself, and explained the nature and function of the faculties requisite for poetic creation. He singles out Fancy and Judgment for special consideration.

The Restoration, thus, was a period of considerable poetic activity as well as of great critical confusion. The critics of the period were faced with rival creeds and theories which stood sharply opposed to each other; the Ancient vs the Modern; the contemporary classical French drama and the irregular or romantic Elizabethan drama; the vigorous but rough literature, Medieval and Elizabethan vs the refined products of the cultivated wits in contemporary England.

## John Dryden



John Dryden

Courtesy: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-news/5157883/Newly-discovered-painting-of-John-Dryden-the-first-Poet-Laureate.html>

John Dryden (1631-1700) was an English poet, literary critic, translator and playwright who was made Poet Laureate in 1668. He is seen as dominating the literary life of Restoration England to such a point that the period came to be known in literary circles as the Age of Dryden. In 1650 Dryden went up to Trinity College, Cambridge. Here he would have experienced a return to the religious and political ethos of his childhood: the Master of Trinity was a Puritan preacher by the name of Thomas Hill who had been a rector in Dryden's home village. Though there is little specific information on Dryden's undergraduate years, he would most certainly have followed the standard curriculum of classics, rhetoric, and mathematics. In 1654 he obtained his BA, graduating top of the list for Trinity that year. In June of the same year Dryden's father died, leaving him some land which generated a little income, but not enough to live on.<sup>[1]</sup>

Returning to London during The Protectorate, Dryden obtained work with Cromwell's Secretary of State, John Thurloe. This appointment may have been the result of influence exercised on his behalf by his cousin the Lord Chamberlain, Sir Gilbert Pickering. At Cromwell's funeral on 23 November 1658 Dryden processed with the Puritan poets John Milton and Andrew Marvell. Shortly thereafter he published his first important poem, *Heroic Stanzas* (1658), a eulogy on Cromwell's death which is cautious and prudent in its emotional display.

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In 1660 Dryden celebrated the Restoration of the monarchy and the return of Charles II with *Astraea Redux*, an authentic royalist panegyric. In this work the interregnum is illustrated as a time of anarchy, and Charles is seen as the restorer of peace and order.

### **Dryden's Satire**

Dryden's greatest achievements were in satiric verse: the mock-heroic *Mac Flecknoe*, a more personal product of his Laureate years, was a lampoon circulated in manuscript and an attack on the playwright Thomas Shadwell. Dryden's main goal in the work is to "satirize Shadwell, ostensibly for his offenses against literature but more immediately we may suppose for his habitual badgering of him on the stage and in print."<sup>[2]</sup> It is not a belittling form of satire, but rather one which makes his object great in ways which are unexpected, transferring the ridiculous into poetry.<sup>[3]</sup>

This line of satire continued with *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) and *The Medal* (1682). His other major works from this period are the religious poems *Religio Laici* (1682), written from the position of a member of the Church of England; his 1683 edition of *Plutarch's Lives Translated From the Greek by Several Hands* in which he introduced the word biography to English readers; and *The Hind and the Panther*, (1687) which celebrates his conversion to Roman Catholicism.

### **Absalom and Achitophel**

The first point that we should note is that in the "Preface" Dryden calls 'Absalom and Achitophel', 'A Poem'. The choice of the term is significant. 'Mac Flecknoe' and 'The Medal' are both designated 'Satyres'.

Dryden appears to be making a distinction between the term 'poem' and 'satire' similar to that made by Aristotle between 'poetry' and 'history'. A 'poem' is possibly better, because more universal, more elevated, than a 'satire', which is too particularly related to historical circumstances, and Dryden is therefore freed, by his choice of term, to make a more inclusive commentary on human affairs<sup>[4]</sup>. He is able in this way to amalgamate the activities of the poet and the satirist in a poem which, while drawing its inspiration from particular men and the vicissitudes of their political careers, yet rises above its sources and benefits from the characteristic effects of satire without being restricted to them<sup>[5]</sup>. In Aristotle's words, it becomes 'more philosophic and of graver import', and it draws only on the satiric, but also on

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various other literary modes – epic elegiac, panegyric, allegoric and incorporates several kinds or styles of presentation dramatic speeches, sections of narrative, passages of rhetorical argument and formal portraits or ‘characters’.

In his preface Dryden disclaimed the role of inventor and claimed that of historian, ‘Were I the Inventor, who am only the Historian... This disclaimer, however, is merely part of the thin pretend that the poem is sheer Jewish history based on Second Samuel. It is a gesture of modesty over the designedly evident fact of the invention exhibited in the combination of the two histories. Moreover, the use of Jewish history emphasizes the valuative aspect of the history that is drawn from a sacred book. The whole Judaeo-Christian tradition has operated to transmute the history of the Jews into a moral order.

### **Line 1 – 45 “Pious” Times!**

In the opening lines, Dryden introduces King David, who was Israel’s monarch and the prevalence of the system of polygamy, when a king could have more than one wife, and also could have many children through sex relations with many women. Dryden ironically calls those times “the pious times”. When the priest craft was not a part of the way of life and the cursed custom of monogamy, confining to one wife, was not in vogue. No law denied the rightful use of “Concubine and Bride”. In those times, the King of Israel (a parallel to the king of England, (Charles – II) was doing a faithful service to his maker, for multiplying his Maker’s image, the Lord and had relations with many women, and also had many issues from them. In these lines, Dryden satirizes humorously the profligacy and corruption of King Charles II and his court. In this age, the moral values were kept at abeyance and loose unethical kind of sexual relations prevailed. By cursing monogamy and the virtue, the poet highlights ironically the prevalence of polygamy and vice all around, which were the order of the day.

### **Lines 46 – 83 Inconstancy and Fickleness**

Dryden makes a general observation on the character of the Englishmen in gentle and polite manner. He wishes to remind them of their inconstancy and fickleness without using any strong words. These lines illustrate the touches of fine raillery scattered throughout the poem. No king, no God could satisfy them for long because they would get made the idols of gods of different shapes and sizes by their goldsmiths and priests. These Jews were lucky

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enough like Adam in the paradise to enjoy freedom, yet they felt that liberty was denied to them, hence they began to dream of it. When they found that no race in the entire history enjoyed greater freedom than they did, they began to feel that only primitive people were really free and the true freedom was there in the wood and caves only.

### **Lines 84 – 133 Suffering of Jebusites Likened to Suffering of Catholics in England**

In this passage, Dryden refers to the Jebusites and how they suffered in their own country, Israel. According to the Jewish Bible, “Canaanite tribe who built and inhabited Jerusalem prior to its conquest by King David”. The Jebusites (now referring to Roman Catholics in English in the poem) were the old inhabitants of Jerusalem (England). But with the chosen people (Protestants) growing stronger day by day, the religion of the Jebusites or Roman Catholics was regarded as hateful. As a result, the Jebusites or Catholics were subjected to a number of hardships. Thus, weakened and despised and displeased, they were forced to submit to the government of David (Charles II). They were reduced to poverty and deprived of all positions of authority. Their taxes were doubled and many of them were deprived of their lands. All this was done through numerous laws passed against the Jebusites or Roman Catholics.

What was even more intolerable was the fact that their images and relics were disrespected and thrown into the fire like common wood. They could not bear such insults and as a result, they were compelled to do something against the government. This ultimately resulted in the Popish Plot of 1678. Here, Dryden refers to the disabilities suffered by the Jebusites (Roman Catholics). Their life became intolerable and as such they were compelled to do something against the government. The poet describes the political environment of the time in which it was easy for the anti-royalist party to raise a revolt against the King. Dryden here satirises the priests whether Catholics or Protestants.

### **Lines 133 – 149 Factions Hostile to One Another**

Popish Plot failed because of the foolishness of Titus Oates and other Whigs but it led to many evil and drastic consequences. As when the body is heated by fever, the disease which had been lying dormant finds an outlet to burst – out, similarly when political body of Israel (England) was infected by the alleged plot, many hostile factions raised their heads

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against the government. These proved to be more dangerous to the public good than original Popish plot could have been.

### **Line 150 – 229 Contradictory Character of Achitophel**

The character of Achitophel is full of contradictions. On the one hand, he is called prudent and bold and on the other hand, he is called unfixed in principles. His fiery soul is ill matched with his weak body. But by and large, he is a man of misguided enthusiasm and misdirected energy.

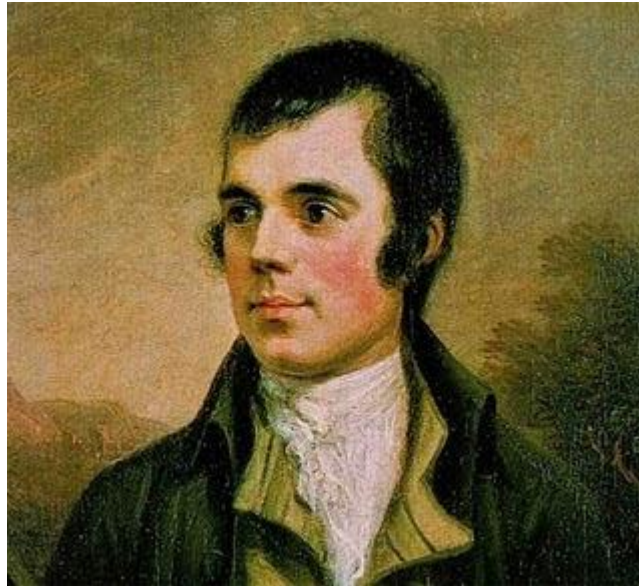
Shaftesbury was like an insolvent debtor of his physique. He was extravagant, devoid of comfort. In Platonic language he was a two-legged unfeathered animal. He was false, hateful and doomed to destruction than to rule a state. He broke the triple bond to gain power. Shaftesbury actively promoted war against Holland in March 1672 by breaking the Triple Alliance between England, Sweden and Holland.

### **Dryden's Preference for Calling Absalom and Architophel 'A Poem' and not 'A Satire'**

In his note to the reader prefixed to Absalom and Architophel, Dryden calls it “a poem” and not a satire, the term which he uses to describe MacFlecknoe and the Metal. The word “poem” in Dryden's view meant a long story verse, an epic or heroic poem or a play like an epic. The distinction between a “poem” and a “satire” was clear. A satire had specific aims and limitations proper to itself as lower genre and was not expected to have so larger a moral responsibility when he calls Absalom and Architophel a poem. Dryden also assumes the freedom to make it a general criticism of life. The poem though, occasional in its inception, goes beyond its occasion and penetrates to the elements inseparable from the human condition.

### **Robert Burns (1759 –1796)**

Robert Burns was a Scottish poet and lyricist. He is widely regarded as the national poet of Scotland and is celebrated worldwide. He is the best known of the poets who have written in the Scots language, although much of his writing is also in English and a light Scots dialect, accessible to an audience beyond Scotland. He also wrote in Standard English, and in these writings his political or civil commentary is often at its bluntest. He is



Robert Burns

Courtesy: The Painting by Alexander Nasmyth, 1787 Scottish National Portrait Gallery  
[http://www.robertburns.org.uk/burns\\_appearance.htm](http://www.robertburns.org.uk/burns_appearance.htm)

regarded as a pioneer of the Romantic movement, and after his death he became a great source of inspiration to the founders of both liberalism and socialism, and a cultural icon in Scotland and among the Scottish Diaspora around the world<sup>[6]</sup>.

Celebration of Burns' life and work became almost a national charismatic cult during the 19th and 20th centuries, and his influence has long been strong on Scottish literature. In 2009 he was chosen as the greatest Scot by the Scottish public in a vote run by Scottish television channel STV. As well as making original compositions, Burns also collected folk songs from across Scotland, often revising or adapting them. His poem (and song) "Auld Lang Syne" is often sung at Hogmanay (the last day of the year), and "Scots Wha Hae" served for a long time as an unofficial national anthem of the country. Other poems and songs of Burns that remain well known across the world today include "A Red, Red Rose"; "A Man's a Man for A' That"; "To a Louse"; "To a Mouse"; "The Battle of Sherramuir"; "Tam o' Shanter"; and "Ae Fond Kiss"<sup>[7][8]</sup>.

### **Burns and His Times**

By 1780 the mid-century poets, like Thomas Gray and William Collins, were mostly gone. A new generation of poets could now be seen rising. Among the most distinguished of these new poets were William Cowper, Robert Burns, William Blake etc. Cowper and Burns have similarities, which other do no share with each other in the same measure. These two

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mark alike a tendency to use subjective, autobiographical material and to write of rural domesticity. They can be considered among the latest flowerings in the eighteenth century of the cult of simplicity.

Since Cowper's dates (1731 – 1800) are exactly a century later than Dryden's, it seems useful to compare these last voices in the neoclassic choir (if indeed they belong there) with the tones of Dryden and Pope, the actual founders of the neoclassical tradition in English poetry. Obviously the century elapsed has grown tender; Burns and Cowper both write satires, but their satires are relatively good-humoured, perhaps a little too much good-humoured. Cowper's satire in particular lacks hardness, flash and cutting edge. Burns, like Dryden and Pope, has sympathetic generalized observations to make about man; but like Blake and Cowper, he is most aroused concerning underprivileged man. Burns and Blake show faith in progress and in the ability of man to achieve his own destiny. Like Dryden and Pope, Cowper shows a sense of man's limitations.

Like William Cowper, Burns is also known to be largely a poet of emotion. But whereas Cowper had liking for environment for its own sake, Burns loved it for the human relationship implied in it. His poem, *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, is an obvious illustration. Burns also found his local background a grim stimulus towards an escape to a larger life. In his view, this life was the just destiny of all men in a state of freedom. Burns was by no means so untaught as this quoted stanza would seem to say. But this stanza constitutes at least a declaration of poetical independence of learning. On the other hand, it is an implicit reaffirmation of the favourite dogma of the century, "Nature is nature wherever placed." The ability of "the force of Nature" to reach the heights, if unhindered, or even to reach despite hindrance, had been a cherished notion throughout the Augustan age. Burns can be said to be a complete demonstration of this idea. It may also be noted that, later in the nineteenth century, natural genius will be regarded as "spontaneity" rather than untaught. But Burns was not all for spontaneity; he always felt proud of his careful revision of his poems.

### **Burns as Scottish Poet**

The growing tendency of Scottish writers to write in English, led to an almost disappearance of the Scots literary language. Consequently, it led to the survival of Scots only as a series of regional dialects. Several historical events went into the making of English

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the more attractive option for the writers of Scotland. The Reformation, the Union of the Crowns in 1603, and the prestige and influence of the Elizabethan writers, all helped in the rise of this phenomenon. The Union of Parliaments in 1707, when the Scottish Parliament ceased to exist and Scotland ceased to be a political entity to become only the northern part of Great Britain, marked a further stage in the assimilation of Scottish culture to English. Its short run influence was, however, in the opposite direction. Feeling frustrated in their national hopes. Scotsmen turned to their literary past for consolation. As a result, the antiquarian interest in Old Scottish literature steadily grew throughout the eighteenth century<sup>[9]</sup>. At the same time, attempts were made to imitate and perpetuate, in whatever limited a way, some of the older Scottish literary traditions<sup>[10]</sup>.

### **English Speech and Poetry Form as Medium for Scottish Writers**

In the given circumstances of the eighteenth century it was inevitable that English speech and English literary forms should be looked upon as the proper medium for Scottish writer who wished to succeed in the larger world. No doubt, there was a revival of Scots verse, but it was a dialect verse used for the most part for humorous or sentimental purposes, in a patronizing, exhibitionist, or nostalgic manner. Robert Burns is said to have brought to a brilliant close the chapter in the history of the Scottish poetry that had been begun by Allan Ramsay. Burns had begun in early 1783 to keep a Commonplace Book in which he entered his poems and his comments on poetry and song.

### **Burns as a Song Writer – Singing Soul of Scotland**

To pass from Burns's poems – his epistles, satires and narratives – to his songs is to pass to something purer and more piercing and aerial, less tied to traditional tales, real persons, known legends, local incidents, and all the harsh, tough fibres of Scottish character and the oddities of country physiognomy. It is to pass from the earth to the air or the fire. For even when the matter of the songs is actually of that familiar sort, rank or homely, it has wandered wider on the lips of the people.

It is the poet who makes it universal by his treatment. He sublimates the earthly material. He captures the breath and finer spirit “of his people, which, more than all others, is inconceivable without songs.

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No one has ever done this for England, where there is no such material to work upon. No one has done it for Ireland, where the material is far more abundant. Burns and Burns alone has done it for Scotland. He really became the singing soul of his people. Nearly two hundred songs were sent by Burns to his employers. He sent some to the unlettered engraver James Johnson for his Musical Museum in 1787. Others, in 1792, he sent for the Scottish Airs, of George Thomson. He scattered many more all around. He had freedom in the museum to virtually edit his songs, and he was then at his best. Whatever be the case, his songs are enchanting. Think of his world famous “O my luvie is like a red, red rose”. This, too, he picked up from the old stock, mended and amended, softened and sweetened, and made it a haunting piece.

Such ways of working could be shown at endless length in the case of Burns. He took whatever served him, and did what he would with it, with unfailing instinct. Also, as his manuscripts often show, he gave to it a ceaseless care and revision, which is most striking in some of the most artless-seeming and reeled-off ditties. “O saw ye home Lesley” is a piece of gallantry of his own, in honour of a real Miss Leslie Baillie, when he accompanied her, with her father, on a ride southward.

### ***The Cotter’s Saturday Night***

This poem has been considered by critics as a sort of hybrid. It is, for one thing, written in the Spenserian stanza, which Burns borrowed, not directly from Spenser, but indirectly from Beattie. It remains of purely English descent, never before used by any Scottish vernacular poet. Although said partly to have been suggested by Fergusson’s Farmer’s Ingle, and professedly descriptive of a lowly Scottish interior, and of “the sentiments and manners” of the Scottish peasants in their more hallowed relations.

### **Burns’ Style**

Burn’s poem is not, like Fergusson’s written “in their native language”. It is written, on the contrary, substantially in modern English with, here and there, a sparse sprinkling of Scottish, or Scoto English, terms. It is for this reason that it has been called a hybrid, for it mixes the English and the Scottish traits together. Much of this poem’s tone, many of its sentiments and portions of its phraseology are reminiscent of those of the English poets whom Burns knew. These poets are Milton, Gray, Pope, Thomson and Goldsmith. The poem

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comes out as a kind of medley of ideas and phrases partly borrowed from them, very much in the manner of Grey's poetry.

Burns mixes these borrowings with reflections of his own and descriptions partly in their manner but derived from his own experience. It may in fact be termed a splendidly specious adaptation rather than quite an original composition. However, in *The Cotter's Saturday Night* there is a genuine pulse of poetry under an occasionally unreal, or rather uncongenial phraseology. As Burns himself tells us, he had "greeted by his father's fireside" whilst composing it.

The workmanship of the English parts of the poem has been, quite often, underestimated. But at other times, he would turn out, in uncomfortable poetical or rhetorical diction, his utterances of revulsion and repentance. The poet's devotion though honest enough, has gone rather hectic.

However, we must not forget that no such legacy of form can be one of form alone. We know how the soul of Burns was itself an inheritance. That tone of fetal familiarity, for one thing, before which everything goes down, is deep in the Scottish character. It is a feature, it will not be too much to say, even of its religious himself Burns emerges a free-loving peasant amorist, as he does in *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, living at first by semi-polygamous country custom, full of passion, blatancy, fickleness, tenderness, fun, true and untrue sentiment, unchivlary, repentances, and domestic feeling, and if he enjoys and struggles accordingly, well, it is idle to pity him alone. We must take generations of his peasant forbears under the wing of our patronage or condonation, and praise nor does he show us every kind. But, on the whole, Burns is a far more superb figure and represents a richer type, than any which it lay within the plan or perhaps the ability of Scott to portray. Finally, in *The Cotter's Saturday Night* Burns affects for a time the slow pensive movement of his Spenserian model.

### ***Holy Willie's Prayer***

The real Burns is said to be revealed in his satires and humorous poems and in the abandonment to the moment of experience. We find this abandonment celebrated in many of his best songs as well. The poem opens with a calmly expressive statement of the view that

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man's salvation or damnation is decreed by God without any reference to man's behavior. It is the very quietness and assurance of the statement that, at first, conceals its preposterousness. Then, suddenly, it reveals it when we least expect it:

O thou that in the heavens does dwell!  
Wha, as it pleases best Thyself.  
Sends one to heaven and ten to hell,  
A' for thy glory!  
And no for only guide or ill  
They've done before thee.  
I bless and praise Thy matchless might,  
When thousands Thou has left in night,  
That I am here before Thy sight  
For gifts and grace,  
A burning and a shining light  
To a' this place.

As the poem progresses in the above quoted liturgical manner, the speaker's appalling complacency and egotism, even to the speaker himself, as humility, are cumulatively revealed. Burns does not portray Holy Willie a conscious hypocrite. Thus, Holy Willie's Prayer is wholly satirical in tone. The poem can be considered a mere material chain of brilliantly relentless mockery. Burns makes this mockery serve both a general and a special purpose.

### ***The Jolly Beggars***

Like his Holy Willie's Prayer, Burns also excluded from his Kilmarnock volume his remarkable anarchist cantata, "The Jolly Beggars". In this poem, Burns assembled a group of social outcasts and put into their mouths roaring songs of social defiance and swaggering independence. In Burns, there always seemed a streak of anarchism. But in the poem, he associates it with conviviality in a characteristic way. Here are abandoned in roaring professions of antisocial independence all institutions, all conventions, anything that limits the freely chosen association of friends and lovers with one another. The attitude manifested in the poem may not be mature or complex, but it does touch a fundamental human drive.

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*The Jolly Beggars* gives a brilliant expression to man as outcast and vagabond. Complete independence of social order implies poverty, squalor, and vice, but Burns does not shrink from that prospect. He refuses to romanticize independence from society. He only bodies it forth, motivated less by doctrinaire anarchism than by sheer high spirits. Burns does not seem to have been acquainted with the old English plays, treatises and songs dealing with the fortunes of beggars, vagabonds and outlaws. But he must have read, one can legitimately presume, Gray's *The Beggar's Opera*. He decidedly knew the clever Scottish ballads *The Gaberlunzie Man* and *The Jolly Beggar*. He evidently got faint hints from *The Happy Beggars* – an excerpt from Charles Coffey's ballad opera, *The Beggars' Wedding*, *The Merry Beggars of Ramsay's Tea-Table*, *Miscellany* and the song books.

Burns's manuscripts, as well as his comments to Johnson, show his fidelity to this creed. One can connect it, on one side, with his study of Pope and Addison. On the other, it recalls that of his contemporary Blake, who preached gospel of execution, or of firm determinate outline. Burns's thrift and precision are among his greater attributes as a poet. It does not at all seem fair to read *The Jolly Beggars* immediately before passing to the humours of the middle-class toppers in *Guy Mannering*. *The Jolly Beggars* is Burns's longest, best harmonize, and most magnificent production, perfectly harmonious in its uproar. It is without even one flagging moment in its ever varying bravura.

### **Burns as a Poet Freedom**

The three poems we have discussed here are, more or less, satires. But they are not the type of satires Dryden and Pope and Johnson wrote. Burns, unlike these three, did not make any attempt to master the classics. He never thought of imitation Horace or Juvenal. In that sense of a learned poet, Burns was not a classic. And yet he practiced some of the finest qualities of classical art. Similarly, he shared a good deal with the romantics, and yet he was not a romantic in the formal sense in which Blake and Wordsworth were. Hence, he is a classic and not a classic: a romantic and not a romantic.

As is clear from these three poems, his satire is as distinctively Burnsian as anything else he wrote. He is too individualistic to be easily grouped with any literary movement or style. He does seem to be as unique as Blake was, or Byron was. But behind all the variety of

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subject and style, mode and method, there is an essence of the life and temper of his country which Burns represents, and this essence can be described as the freedom of the natural soul.

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