**Dryden's Dramatic Poesy Is the Main**

**Contribution to English Literary Criticism**

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**Abstract:**

The paper aims at providing a simplified study enables the reader of English literature to understand literary criticism during the seventeenth century with a review to one of the most important critics of that period namely John Dryden or the father of English criticism as Dr. Johnson called him. Actually English criticism appears clearly with Dryden as a systematic art, and his Essay of Dramatic Poesy is the first systematic work, which serves as the corner stone to English literary criticism. The essay reveals the merits and the faults of the ancients and the moderns. Dryden through this essay presents an adequate comparative study to the drama of different nations. The research starts with an introduction in which a brief idea about the topic, then a brief survey about the life of the author which serves as a helpful mean to understand his talent, his style, and his character. Finally, a presentation about the important sides of the essay.

Key words: (dramatic poetry, Dryden, literary criticism).

**مقالة الشعر الدرامي لدرايدن هي المساهمة الرئيسية في النقد الادبي الإنكليزي**

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**المستخلص:**

الهدف من البحث هو تزويد القارئ بدراسة مبسطه تمكنه من فهم النقد للأدب الإنكليزي خلال القرن السابع عشر مع استعراض لاحد اهم النقاد لتلك الفترة وهو جون درايدن او والد النقد الإنكليزي كما أطلق عليه دكتور جونسون. في الواقع النقد الإنكليزي ظهر بصوره واضحة مع درايدن كفن منظم. ومقالته Essay of Dramatic Poesy هي اول عمل منظم والتي أصبحت كحجر أساس للنقد الإنكليزي. المقالة كشفت مميزات واخطاء الادباء القدماء والمعاصرين وكذلك قدمت دراسة مقارنه كافيه بين ادب الامم. البحث يبدا بمقدمه عن الموضوع ومن ثم دراسة مختصره عن حياه الكاتب والتي تكون كوسيله مساعده لفهم موهبه الكاتب واسلوبه وشخصيته وأخيرا عرض الجوانب المهمة للمقالة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (الشعر الدرامي، درايدن، النقد الادبي).

**Chapter One**

**1.1 Introduction**

John Dryden (1631-1700) was a poet, a dramatist and a prose writer who left no branch of literature untouched. Dryden the prolific writer of the Restoration is regarded as the founder of modern prose style and the pioneer of English criticism. (Tilak,2004:23)

Dr. Johnson an English writer was the first scholar who decorated Dryden with the medal of fatherhood of English criticism. “Dryden” he wrote “the Father of English Criticism, as the writer who first taught us to determine upon the principles the merit of composition.”1 Then critics of different generations after Johnson had approved this estimation. This does not mean that there was no criticism in England before the age of Dryden, there had been Sir Philip Sydney and Ben Jonson but those people were critics by chance. Their critical works can be hardly considered criticism because all their writings in this field are no more than occasional commentaries and expressions on the critical art, for example: Sydney’s Apology for poetry was written only to defend the poetry against Puritan attacks and Ben Johnson’s critical utterances are just jottings about many things belong to his own concerns. (ibid:33)

The main contribution to English criticism made by Dryden is his opening a new field of comparative criticism. Critics who preceded Dryden had compared the modern literature to the works of the ancients considering the later to be perfect standard, but Dryden refused such kind of comparison. His point of view was that literature was not static. It changes a long with the development of character and taste of people. He pointed out that each nation and each age has its own mentality. (Sen, 2009:178)

An Essay of Dramatic Poesy, which was written by Dryden in 1665, can be considered the cornerstone in English criticism. Though the narrow aim that seems to the reader in the very beginning of the essay and as it introduced by Dryden himself “vindicate the honour of our English writers from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them “2 . However, the real purposes are more extensive as what declared above. It makes a wide review to poetry and drama also it makes a comparison of drama in different ages and different nations. Moreover, develops the criteria that guide and evaluate the literary works especially drama and poetry. (Tilak, 2004:42)

**1.2 Dryden’s life**

It may be that Dryden is the dominant literary figure in the fourth decades of the seventeenth century, and he is also the rare phenomenon that in his work one can see all the political, religious, social, and philosophical artistic aspects. (Abrams, 1986: 1787)

John Dryden, the dramatic figure in literature during Restoration age was born in Northampton shire in England in 1631. He had read an English translation of the work of the Greek historian Polybius when he was only at the age of ten. His school life started in Westminster School. Then he continued his study under the supervision of Dr. Busby. Dryden had digested a great deal of classical education, and this type of education appeared intensively in his literary works later on. His first poem was an elegy written to the memory of the death of Lord Hastings, one of Dryden’s schoolmates. Then he made a translation to the third satire of Persius. In 1655, he joined Trinity College at Cambridge aspects, and there he wrote some insignificant verse. His practical life had begun in London in 1657 when he worked as a secretary to one of his mother’s relative Sir Gilbert Pickering who was the chamberlain to Cromwell, the Lord Protector. As an ally and a member in the Puritan party, he wrote a long poem on the death of Cromwell, which he called the Heroic Stanzas. This poem made him a well- known poet of Puritanism. (Lall,2011:1)

With the Restoration of Charles II to the throne. There was a radical change happened to Dryden. He promptly changes his direction putting himself in the winning side of the returning king. He wrote the Astrae Redux, followed by panegyric to His Sacred Majesty, two poems through them he praises King Charles and welcomes his return. In 1664, Dryden married his friend’s daughter Lady Elizabeth and this marriage was unhappy, but it awarded him a hundred pounds a year. when the plague spread in London in 1665, Dryden went to the countryside with his wife to stay in his father in law’s house at Charlton. There, he wrote Annus Mirabilis, a poem touches the horror of Great Fire in London, also it deals with some events about the war with Holland, he wrote this poem in 1667 and two years later he wrote his great masterpiece namely an Essay on Dramatic Poesy in form of a dialogue. In 1670, he was appointed as the Poet-Laureate and Historiographer Royal, the privileges of this job were two hundred pounds a year, such amount of money put Dryden in prosperous case. (Lall,1994:2)

In 1686, Dryden changed his religion to become a Roman Catholic and no one knows that sudden change was caused by self-conviction or to be with the prevailing stream of that time. Obviously, the change in religion inspired his poetic works. In this respect, he wrote a poem to defend the Roman church in 1687, he called it The Hind and the Panther. The poem brought fame to him without financial interest. Few years later, William and Mary ascended the throne and the Protestantism headed the political scene while Dryden fell to evil days because of his religious beliefs. His pension as a Poet-Laureate withdrawn and the worst of all he was suffering from seeing his rivals take his place as the Poet-Laureate, a job that he had held for more than eighteen years. As an old man, he depended on writing as the only means of living. In 1700, Dryden died and buried in Westminster Abbey. (Ibid:3)

**1.3 His character**

Dryden’s controversial character makes people think that he has no specific religious belief or political principle. His continuous change of doctrines and his rapid shifts in political loyally makes him questionable character. He always seeks to gain the friendship and care of the greats including the king. He satires his rivals and enemies in his poems and plays and such behavior brought hostilities that continued to his death, but the other side of his character was shining. He was generous, gentle, and modest. Despite this changeable character, no one denies that Dryden is not only the great poet, but also the great man of letters in his age. (Trivedi,2013:177)

Above we took a quick look on the life and the character of Dryden because we think that any writer is the product of the social, religious, historical, and political circumstances of his age so from this rapid review to the writer’s life and character we conclude that Dryden had descended from Puritan family of modest financial income. He is a genius, and he has an infinite ambition and his genius appeared in the very beginning of his life. In order to achieve all his aims and aspirations, he has to be with his interests wherever they were, so he depended on the principle of “aims justify means”. It seems that Dryden has no fixed principle. He was a changeable character. He was quite close to Cromwell and he was considered the most Well-Known poet of Puritanism, but he soon changed his skin to be with the new secular stream represented by the king Charles II.

Despite the fluctuation in his character, but he was gentle, generous, and modest and the reason behind his instability is his needs for money that support his works. Even in his marriage, he chose a wealthy Lady like Elizabeth Howard.

But his real and stable belief appeared in his final years when he changed his religion to catholic. He refused to adhere the protestant King William and he sacrificed his job as the Poet-Laureate with its accompany pension of two hundred pounds a year only to save his belief. He depended on literature as the only means of living. Despite all of this, Dryden remains the master of his age, and the dominant literary figure of Restoration period.

**Chapter Two**

**2.1 Essay of Dramatic Poesy**

The great plague spread in London in 1665 and caused in closing all theatres. Being prevented from practicing any literary employment, Dryden had retired to the country where he had a lot of time to write this long essay. (Dutton,1986; 33)

An Essay of Dramatic Poesy is a systematic work in English literary criticism written by Dryden during the time between June 1665 and December 1666. The Essay published in 1667 and a revised edition of it emerged in 1684. (Lall,1994: 35)

The Essay of Dramatic Poesy was formulated in the form of imaginary dialogue between four scholars of Dryden’s friends who are given borrowed classical names including Dryden himself who takes the name of “Neander”. They discuss different subjects related to drama and make comparisons for drama in different periods. This long essay has many talk tour, the most interesting part of it is Dryden’s defence of the merit of using rhyme in drama also his praise of Shakespeare. (Trivedi,2013: 191)

The main topic of discussion in this essay is specific genre namely drama, and each participant advocate drama of one nation, classical drama, modern French drama, modern English drama. The participants also refer to Italian drama and Spanish drama. The speakers in this conversation start their speech by approving the definition of drama as “a just and lively image of human nature representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind.”3 Although the objection made by one of the speaker that this definition is so wide and not perfect, but finally all the speakers accept the definition. (Lall,1994:36)

There are four speakers in this imaginary conversation and all the participants have been given borrowed classical names, as Dryden says, so as not to hurt their literary reputation as a result, of his unwitting miss presentation made by him to their points of views. The place and time of supposed meeting is a short trip by small boat over the river Thames on a memorable day on the 3rd June, which marks with the great victory of English fleet, under the leadership of the Duke of York, on Dutch fleet. The Four speakers have been identified as follow: Crites is Sir Robert Howard, Eugenius is Lord Buckhurst, Lisideius is Charles Sedley, and Neander is Dryden himself. (ibid:37)

The use of the dialogue form by Dryden gives him enough space to present different critical points of view rather than the use of a long dogmatic point of view of one critic. So Crites advocates the ancients, Eugenius defends the moderns, Lisideius points out the superiority of the French, and Neander advocates the English. (JR,1963: 65)

**Crites: Defence of the Ancients**

Crites starts his speech defending the ancients saying First, the real reason behind the nomination of the ancients dramatists to be superior to the moderns dramatists is simply the fact that moderns imitate the ancients. The moderns admit that the ancients are the acknowledged models. Secondly, it should be taken into consideration that each age has its mentality, its own tendency to certain branch of knowledge. So the mentality of the moderns is for the study of natural sciences like medicine, anatomy, astronomy and in these fields of study, the moderns excel the medieval scholars and they made great progress which were more than what have been done over centuries from Aristotle to their own times. The same thing is for the ancients, their genius is for drama and in this branch of poetry they reach the real perfection. The moderns excel the medieval philosophers, and the ancients, excel them in drama. (Tilak,2004:53)

Thirdly, dramatic poetry was the most prominent and respectable branch of knowledge. The Ancient encouraged the poet to excel in this field. The poets were rewarded and honoured in public. There were periodical competitions with judges to evaluate and reward the poets according to their merit, also there were many records showing how were the poets like Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus crowned, rewarded, and honored. Such rivalry surly encourage the dramatic production, Says Crites “Evaluation is the spur of wit: and sometimes envy, sometimes admiration quickens our endeavours.”4 But we can’t find such healthy rivalry in the modern times. (ibid:54)

Fourthly, the superiority of the ancient drama also comes from the faithful observance to the nature in the dramatical works. The nature was embodied so widely in the work of the ancients and such a thing may disappear from the work of the moderns or it may be presented abnormally. The dramatical rules, which the moderns depend on in their composition nowadays have been quoted from Aristotle and Horace. (Mambrol:2017)

Special indication has been given to the three Unities by Crites i.e. Unity of time, place and action. What is meant by unity of time is that the action of the play must happen within the time of twenty- four hours, which is the ordinary continuity of a day and must not exceed the duration of this time. Another important point belongs to the time is that the time of the play should be divided equally on the five acts of the play. The ancients hold on this point strongly. Then the unity of the place, which simply means that the place must be one. Since the stage is only one place and the play should appear as close as possible to the reality so the scene should go on throughout the play in the same place from which the play has started. But if the play contains many episodes or events and demands more than one place, here the place should be not far from the original place. Also in this case an imaginary or painted place can fulfil what is required. For unity of action, the play must have one complete and perfect action, which continues from the beginning to the end this what unity of action means and all the events in the play should serve the main action to be execute. Two actions of the same degree of importance may destroy the plot of the play so the play should have only one main action. Crites admits that two or more sub-plots are permitted, but all of them should serve the main action of the play. The ancients stick to these unities in their works and consider them as sacred rules, but the three unities are often violated by the moderns. (Tilak,2004:55)

Finally, Crites concludes his defence the ancients. He cites some of great classic works. He insists that there is a big difference between the moderns and the ancients declaring that the latter is so superior. Crites says we most need to reread the classical works with deep perception to facilitate some difficulties that characterized the ancients works like the dead classical language, phraseology, and the ancient customs. (Sen,2009:41)

**Eugenius’s Advocacy of the Better Performance and Excellence of the Moderns**

Eugenius is the most fans of the modern poets. As soon as Crites has finished his speech about the superiority of the ancients, Eugenius takes his turn without hesitation in this debate to defend the moderns. First, he starts his conversation saying that no one can deny the fact that the moderns have learnt several things from the ancients, but also the great continuous additions made by the moderns to the drama should not be neglected and this is the first reason to show the superiority of the moderns. The moderns are not merely imitators, their considerable contribution to the drama cannot be denied, as Eugenius points out. Secondly, he also says that the praise and the appreciation to the ancients does not mean turning a blind eye to the right of the moderns to excel. (Sen,2009:41)

Thirdly, Eugenius then talks about some deformities in the works of the ancients; one of the most faults, can be observed is the use of monologue which means a long speech delivered by a single character on the stage to inform the audience about unseen events, or what is a character’s intention. Such a thing surely makes the play tedious and uninteresting. (Ibid:43)

Fourthly, another deficiency in the works of the ancients is their failure to divide the play into acts. Eugenius says that the division of the play into five acts has been done in the time of Horace and not the Greek. The Greek wrote their plays in what called entrances not acts. (Ibid: 42)

Fifthly, one more deformity in the ancients' works is that the plot of the play is already known. The ancients always dealt with well-known stories such as those told by the poets in their epics or from folklore, so the audience already know what will happen for example if the play about Oedipus, the story is well known to all, that a man killed his father and married his mother without knowing. The play should have the elements of suspense. Finally, Eugenius says that the ancients also fail to maintain their own rules about three unities. (Lall,1994: 84)

**Lisideius as A Champion of Modern French Drama**

Now is the role of Lisideius, the defender of the French, in the beginning of his speech he sided with Eugenius about the superiority of the English of the last generation. Lisidius acknowledges that before forty years there was a good English drama and there were great dramatists like Jonson, Beaumont, and Fletcher, but the stardom of English drama started to get poorer since then. Lisideius confirms that drama of present day thrives in France not in England and the English now has no peer to Corneille of the French. (Tilak,2004:59)

Then many reasons presented by Lisideius to prove the highness of French upon English and others. First, the first reason that makes the French superior is the fact that they stick most to the rules borrowed from the ancients especially those of the three unities. Lisideius says that French dramatists for more than two decades had not written any drama exceeds the limit of a day or better twenty-four hours and the same thing have been done with regard to unity of action. The French plays contain only one action from the beginning to the end. The French also made their action ended at the same spot from which has begun. Moreover, they never go beyond boundaries also they do not change their events from city to another. (Sen,2005:45)

Secondly, regarding Tragi-comedy works, in contrast with English style in drama, which mixes tragedy and comedy and such a thing create a case of absurdity, the French never mingles joy with sadness in one play. Lisideius here insists that misery and happiness are two opposites and should not combine in one work. (Lall,1994:56)

Thirdly, for the plot of tragedy like the ancients, the French tragedies are written on the base of well-known historical stories, but with a big difference. The French process the historical story with some modifications for dramatic purpose. They mix the truth with fiction, historical events with events from their own creation, and they make what may be called poetic justice which means virtue is rewarded, and evil is punished. By such modification made by the French the two aims of the drama are achieved i.e. delight and instruction. Lisideius also says that the English even Shakespeare don’t modify their historical plays. They represent the events of forty or thirty years in two and a half hours, there by the works appear ridiculous. (Sen,2005:46)

Fourthly, in respect to the use of one prominent character by the French. In his response to an objection that had been made against the French dramatists by a critic called Thomas sprat, who says that the French dramatists concentrate only on one character and one character’s welfare. Lisideius says it is true that the French dramatists make one character as the hero and the heart of the play, but they don’t neglect the other characters. Each character has its own importance in the play. He gives example from Corneille’s works, which give important roles to each character to make the plot quiet intelligible. (Ibid: 47)

Fifthly, the device of dramatic narration of the French dramatists is used with great skill better than dramatic narration of English dramatists. The French present their narration in an interesting way, also they don’t represent death and blood shed on the stage instead they narrate them. (Tilak,2004: 61)

**Neander’s Praise of Modern English Drama**

Now comes the turn of Neander or the “new man” which is the name that hides Dryden’s real character to speak and defend the English. First, Neander accepts the speech of Lisideius when he said that the French strongly maintain their plots and observe the dramatic rules faithfully, but all this does not give them the right to out- perform the English. Neander resembles the French drama like a beautiful lifeless statue in contrast to the English drama that possesses a high vitality and contains humor and passion, two important elements which are lost from the French drama and even from the plays of Corneille, their greater dramatist. (Tilak,2004: 62)

Secondly, the non- mixing of the huomer and serious in French drama is no longer a virtue to praise for because they break this rule frequently and their Moliere or the younger Corneille as they call him imitates the English and writes many tragi-comedies. (Ibid:63)

Thirdly, about the difference between Neander and Lisideius in using one main plot, Neander sees that there is no harm in using multiple sub-plots to be developed with the central plot but they should appear in a harmonious manner and this will add variety and pleasure to the dramatic work. (Lall,1994:89)

Fourthly, the lengthy talk used by actors in French plays may be enjoyed by some viewers, but not by all the viewers. The French audience by their nature are cheery. They go to the theatre for the purpose of refinement, in contrast with the English who are sullen and they go to the theatre for entertainment. (Sen,2005: 51)

Fifthly, Neander agrees with Lisideius in the matter of not representing the scenes of clatter on the stage and if the play contains or demands such scenes in one of its parts, it must be narrated and not represented. The English plays are full of duels and battles scenes while these scenes are completely absent from the French plays. Neander sees that the use of such scenes should be used moderately. (Lall,1994:90)

Sixthly, then Neander’s appreciation to Shakespeare and some English dramatists, two important things about the English drama are strongly confirmed by Dryden. The first is there are many English plays so regular just like the plays of French, but they contain a variety of plots and characters. The second thing is the irregular English plays like those of Beaumont and Fletcher are more vital than the French and overwhelmed by the elements of masculinity. The credit of Shakespeare and Fletcher is filled with plays that follow the classic rules, but Ben Johnson is one of the most playwrights who bound to the rules perfectly, and his Silent Woman may be the most perfect play even more than any play of the French. Here Eugenius asks Neander to present some important characteristics about Ben Jonson before examining "The Silent Woman". This request makes Neander to show some remarks about Shakespeare, Beaumont, and Fletcher. For Shakespeare, Dryden remarks: “He Shakespeare was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, gives him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacle of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found here there. I cannot say he is everywhere a like; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat, insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches. His serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great, when some great occasion is presented to him; no man can say he ever had a fit subject for his wit, and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of poets” 5 (Tilak,2004: 66)

According to the above remark about Shakespeare, here Dryden ceases to be classic, and is free in his appreciation to Shakespeare. A few years ago George Watson claimed that Dryden as a critic to Shakespeare had been in a big bind as Watson said “On the one hand’ he said, Dryden ‘was held fast by deeply instinctive affection for his Elizabethan masters; on the other, he knew the force of the neo-classical fashion and ached to be respectable.”6 That is to say that Dryden much impressed by Shakespeare, who violated the neoclassical rules, and such rules Dryden believes and sticks to them, and many critics also note the conflict inside the mind of Dryden as Watson noted before, but it is important to remember that the neoclassical dogma in England is too pliable to accept Shakespeare. More over along the seventeenth century, Shakespeare remains the highest writer and no one dare to criticize him save Rymer who made a serious attack and this attack comes accidently when Rymer criticized the tragedy of some dramatists who violated the Greek rules. Dryden reaction to this attack was very characteristic as it is shown in the following part of letter addressed to John Dennis in March, 1694 “Shakespeare had a genius for tragedy; and we know, in spite of Mr. R----, that genius alone is a greater virtue (if I may so call it) than all other qualifications ‘put together. You see what success this learned critic has found in the world, after his blaspheming of Shakespeare. Almost all the faults which he has discovered are truly there; yet who will read Mr. Rymer or not read Shakespeare?”7. From above comment Dryden concluded that all the faults that observed by Mr. Rymer do not really matter. (Dahiya,1991:9)

After his appreciation to Shakespeare, then Neander comes to evaluate Ben Johnson, Neander says that Ben Johnson is the well-educated writer who had good judgment and well controlling of reason. His plays are well- written, so it is difficult to add something to them or delete any from them. He has a good knowledge of the works of Latin and Greek, and he can borrow from them freely, and if we make a comparison between Ben Jonson and Shakespeare the former was the more correct poet, but the later was the greater wit. (Lall,1994:92)

Then Neander begins to test a play written by Ben Johnson called "The Silent Woman" as a rule abiding example. First regarding unity of time, a time of performing on the stage in the play is a proximately three and a half hours, and the action fit that amount of time. So the play according to the ancients' standards in meeting with the requirements of unity of time. For unity of place, the play is so regular because all the events take place in only two houses and after the act one the rest of the events return to perform in one of these two houses. The action of the play is only one,so the play is fully committed the classics rules. The play has a lot of characters who called Morose lies in his ugly noise. Then the other speakers raise an objection about the humour and they consider it abnormally imposed, but Neander justifies this saying that such ugly noise is very natural for a man who are old, lonely and ill tempered. Then Neander adds there are different humours presented by different characters and each one has his or her way in humour. (Tilak,2004:67)

Then Lisideius try to answer Neander, but Crites change the conversation to another subject, now the speech shifts to the use of rhyme and blank verse. To answer a question about which is better to use in the play rhyme or blank verse. Crites sees that rhyme verse is used by both the ancients and the English and many English writers like Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Ben Johnson used this kind of verse in their works, so there is no need to search the origin of this use. Crites says that the argument in this subject just like the controversy about recent plague that spread in England, some people say that the disease is caused by the native air, while other people say that the infection came from Holland and the task of people is to fight the disease not to seek its origin, so the argument about the origin is futile. (Sen,2005:57)

Crites says that the use of rhyme verse in a play is unnatural because the dialogue is the effect of sudden thought and it is difficult to any character to speak and respond in rhyme even Aristotle’s idea was the tragedies should be written in a verse so nearest to prose. Crites sees the use of rhyme should be in comedies only. Neander’s point of view is the use of rhyme is more natural effective in serious plays. He thinks that rhyming verse is “the noblest kind of modern verse”8. At the end of this argument, they reach their destination. All of them then stood for a while looking to the water under the moon light and then they depart each for his own direction. (Tilak,2004:70)

**2.2 Selective Views about Dryden**

JohnDryden may be considered the best writer who embodies the spirit and the ideal of Neo-classical period, the period that follows the Renaissance.

Doctor Johnson, an English lexicographer who authored Dictionary in English Language, which considered one of the greatest work of scholarship, attributes all the improvement completion in meter and reinforcement in language to Dryden.

No doubt that Dryden was the most prolific writer of the Restoration age. He dominated almost all genres including literary criticism. One critics says: “Dryden brought literary criticism out of the church and into coffee house”9.

T.S Eliot the great twentieth century poet and essayist confirms that Dryden wrote the first serious literary criticism.

No one denies that Dryden has enormous contribution to English literary criticism. He developed a new way in studying literature, not obsessing its moral and theological worth. He also creates a simple prose style that still be a guide to modern criticism.

Dryden makes use of variety critical perspectives from the Ancients and employs them in the English literary criticism. (Bressler,2010: 31)

William Congreve 1717on Dryden character and writings ------- He says that Dryden has a great human nature and passion. A man who quickly and sincerely forgives those who injure and offend him. He has extensive readings and strong memory helps him to retain all information. He is always ready and transparent to correct errors any author seeking advice. Dryden’s writings very voluminous and he wrote about different matters in different manners so well. (McHenry & Lougee,1974: 2)

Samuel Johnson 1779-1781-------- Although Dryden’s literature is not always free from ostentation, but his works are connected with knowledge and brilliance in depicting things. Science and mental talents helps him to portray the occasional image. A mind like Dryden’s always curious always active. A quick review of Dryden’s efforts shows that he is aware of nature and is a full of knowledge acquired. (Ibid:4)

William Wordsworth- 1805/ from a letter to Walter Scott-//-// He says that, he was very happy with this interest in Dryden, not because Dryden is one of his favorite poets. He is impressed with Dryden’s talent and genius so very much. He also says the only feature, which is essentially poetic, can be found in Dryden is his enthusiasm and intellectual impulse with an excellent ear. (Ibid:7)

Henry Hallam----1809------// The leading feature of the mind of this great poet (Dryden) is his speed accompanied with his willingness to explain any thought without loss. The pleasure that can be received from Dryden’s poetry related to his style because he seldom relies on the subject. He is just like Pope completely does not impose an inappropriate rhyme or spins out of couplet for the sharp conclusion. (Ibid:8)

**Conclusion**

To be concluded that the Essay of Dramatic Poesy takes a special rank in the history of English literary criticism. The essay is written in an easy style which relies on reason and analysis. The essay reveals Dryden's talent and his vast imagination in presenting the evaluation to English drama through the different literary ages. His native awareness, his classical embodiment, and his fluent style gives him a respected place in the field of literary criticism.

**Notes**

1Dr.Raghukul Tilak. An Essay of Dramatic Poesy, (New Delhi: Rama Brothers, 2004), p.33

2Dr.Raghkul Tilak. An Essay of Dramatic Poesy, (New Delhi: Rama Brothers, 2004), p.42

3Ramji Lall. An Essay on Dramatic Poesy, (New Delhi: Surjeet Publications), p.36

4Dr.Raghkul Tilak. An Essay of Dramatic Poesy, (New Delhi: Rama Brothers,2004), p.54

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