LITERARY CONTROVERSIES AMONG RESTORATION DRAMATISTS, 1660-1685

DISSERTATION

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CHAPTER I

DRAMA AND SOCIETY IN THE RESTORATION

1.

In the Restoration the drama was popular fiction, the equivalent of the best-sellers and the movies of today. And, then as now, the consumers molded the popular fiction. The Restoration theatre audience had a philosophy of life which it demanded in its drama. There was no room in drama for individual interpretations of life; at most the dramatists might give their views in critical essays which their audience need not read. Even then, however, rather than risk antagonizing the audience, the dramatists found it wise to conform to the ruling opinion or at most to disagree with fellow professionals.

As a result of this lop-sided audience-writer relationship, modern scholars have tended to regard the Restoration dramatists as passive creatures without ideas and sensibility, who toadied obsequiously to the demands of their audience. Such a picture is easily drawn and, to a certain extent, is truly drawn. Statements like that of Dryden in the dedication to The State of Innocence (1677) were not uncommon during the Restoration: "Ambition is so far from being a vice in poets, that it is almost impossible for them to succeed without it. Imagination must be raised, by a desire of
fame, to a desire of pleasing; and they whom, in all ages, poets have endeavoured most to please, have been the beautiful and the great." To be sure, the ambition to please dominated the dramatists' motives in writing so greatly that scholars like Alexandre Beljame have good reason to write:

The author saw before him only a coterie, too exclusive not to be all-powerful, too powerful not to command obedience. Whatever way he turned, he could find no one to whom he could appeal against the verdict of Court society. There was nothing to be done but to submit with what grace he could muster. From the moment that a man adopted the career of a writer he was obliged to swear allegiance to fashionable society and make himself a courtier— or die of hunger.

But such a picture is a dangerous oversimplification, for the dramatists were often reluctant conformists, and outside of their dramas they sometimes deplored and often questioned the kind of literature that they produced to please their audience. As early as June, 1664, Dryden hinted at such dissatisfaction in the prologue to The Rival Ladies:

Such deep intrigues you're welcome to this day: But blame yourselves, not him who writ the play.

Undoubtedly the dramatists were obsequious out of necessity, at least in the plays that they wrote; but to make too much of the ignominious position of the dramatists in the Restoration has proved a temptation to many present day scholars. It is easy to cite fawning dedications and to reach glittering but only half true conclusions.

To get at what personal integrity towards their art the
dramatists possessed we must ignore in large part their mouthings to their social superiors and concentrate on what they had to say to men from whom they feared no disastrous reprisals, their fellow professionals. In this field the dramatists dealt plainly, expressing themselves vigorously and sometimes viciously.

This study proposes to examine the critical relations among the dramatists of the Restoration in an effort to determine their conception of their art. This will involve a determination of the motives lying behind the numerous controversies of the period, for in their own social milieu, the dramatists, struggling for survival, mixed genuine criticism with sheer denigration. But it is hoped that such a study will correct the mistaken notion that Restoration dramatists were mere sycophants by showing that, at least among themselves, some of them were genuine critics.

When the King came into his own again, England returned to its old ways. But there was one obvious difference: an awareness that for over a decade English society had existed without a king, that tradition had been broken and found not altogether necessary.

Charles and his court lived with this awareness never
far from their minds. But they did everything in their power to forget it by carrying on in the old tradition; in fact they seemed to want to make up for their years out of power, so excessive were many of their actions. The pyramidal conception of society returned in 1660 with the King at the apex and the nobility, gentry, and yeomanry representing descending classes beneath the court. At the court itself all of the color and corruption of the Cavalier days once again flourished. The Church of England resumed its position as the state religion with what Benjamin Whitcote called "its decent grandeur and splendour." The Houses of Parliament regained their stature, which they soon increased despite Charles' efforts to outwit them. Thus, having the proper places in which to make social impressions, spiritual confessions, and political decisions, the King and court promptly reopened the playhouses to enjoy dramatic diversions.

However, Charles soon discovered that there was a difference that he could not ignore, so persistent was its presence. The people of England gladly dismissed the Commonwealth as a failure, but at the same time they were unwilling to forget what brought the Commonwealth into existence, namely the Stuart theory of absolute and divine monarchy. "Dread Sovereign!" the speaker of the House declared to Charles upon his return in 1660, "I offer no flattering titles, but speak the words of truth. You are the desire of three kingdoms,
the strength and the stay of the tribes of the people, for
the moderating of extremities, the reconciling of differences,
the satisfying of all interests, and for the restoring the
collapsed honour of these nations." When it became evident
that Charles did not intend to fulfill these duties and that,
quite to the contrary, his purpose was the establishment of
an absolute monarchy, Parliament became an increasingly power­
ful dissenting force. As David Ogg has stated: "The central
theme in the history of Charles II's reign is the attempt to
establish a clearly defined relationship within the trinity
which consisted of crown and both houses, and was known as
the crown in parliament." Charles proved himself the master
political wit of a witty age in his relations with Parliament;
James, however, proved himself politically witless.

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The court acted as the arbiter of literary taste for the
last time during the Restoration, and its taste was based on
a philosophical outlook that is best called metaphysical
disillusion. No longer were the fashionable upper classes
eager to imitate so many of their Elizabethan forbears and
to climb after knowledge infinite; temporary and terrestrial
matters proved sufficient for them. Renaissance dignity,
already attenuated into a fragile précieuse spirit under
James I and Charles I, became libertine naturalism in the
Restoration. Montaigne and Hobbes had persuaded men to con­
cern themselves with worldly matters, and their painful
experiences at the hands of a religious government convinced
many courtiers of the philosophers' truth. Consequently the
Restoration marked the beginning of the Age of Reason. Dur­
ing the period, "reason" meant common sense; logic operating
on experience was believed capable of solving all problems.
Common sense dictated that men should enjoy life to the full
since knowledge of what lay beyond remained a mystery. Those
who dismissed religion as unreasonable, a group that included
most of the courtiers, would have seconded Rochester when he
wrote in "A Satyr against Mankind:"

Our Sphere of Action, is life's happiness
And he who thinks Beyond, thinks like an Ass.

The philosophy of libertine naturalism that dominated
the thinking of the courtiers profoundly influenced the forms
taken by Restoration drama. The audience desired drama that
reflected their thinking, and consequently numerous plays that
had satisfied Elizabethan and Jacobean theatregoers were
either dropped or altered by stage companies after 1660.
Evelyn noted the new taste when he made one of his infrequent
visits to the playhouse on November 26, 1661: "I saw
Hamlet Prince of Denmark played, but now the old plays
began to disgust this refined age, since his Majestie's
being so long abroad." The dramatists soon discovered
what the audience wanted and produced two forms peculiar to
the Restoration: heroic drama and comedy of manners.

Although heroic drama flourished in its purest form for only a short time, it typified all the serious drama of the Restoration. It was highly romantic, for, in the final analysis, the audience itself was highly romantic in its thinking: any belief in the unlimited earthly powers of man suggests romanticism. While it is a truism that all dramatic appreciation, regardless of historical milieu, requires some suspension of disbelief, the Restoration audience gladly suspended most of their critical faculties in the theatre in order to revel in a world of romantic wonder. Cold and reasonable though they liked to think of themselves, the courtiers often preferred the marvellous to the rational in the theatre. Therefore rimed romances full of superhuman characters performing superhuman feats in exotic lands replaced the serious drama built upon the idea of the tragic flaw. The audience neither believed nor was interested in flaws in character unless they were social flaws to be laughed at, for flaws in character implied a lack of common sense. In serious drama the audience desired highly emotional characters and situations. Crowne described these desires when he wrote to Sedley in the dedication to the first part of Henry the Sixth (1681): "I have always observed when an Actor talks Sense, the Audience begins to sleep, but when an unnatural passion sets him a grimacing and howling as if he were in
a fit of the Stone, they immediately waken, listen, and stare, as if some rare Operator were about to Cut him. Physical action replaced psychological analysis, and the serious dramas became artificial, lacking genuine conflicts because common sense left no room for them. Instead heroic drama offered pseudo conflicts in the form of emotional situations in which a character vacillates before choosing an action that accords with or goes contrary to common sense.

The serious drama, then, presented situations far enough removed from everyday life to permit the audience to indulge themselves in sheer romance and to see themselves in the many Almanzors and Almahides of the stage. As Dryden explained to the audience in the epilogue to the second part of the most typical heroic drama, *The Conquest of Granada* (January, 1670-71):

> If love and honor now are higher raised 'Tis not the poet, but the age is praised.

Whereas the serious drama of the Restoration flattered the audience, the comedy, at least its most significant mode, offered social criticism. The paradoxical contrast between the romance of the heroic plays and the realism of the comedies of manners puzzled the dramatists just as it puzzles us. Settle, for example, in the epilogue to *Ibrahim* (March, 1675-76), wondering at the decline of heroic dramas, asked his audience how they could stomach criticism but not flattery:
There's ne're a Comick Writer but will say,  
You're all of you the Patterns of his Play:  
Yet takes your Pictures at so damn'd a light,  
Paints you so Ugly, that your Looks would fright.  
And yet their Plays are your most dear delight.  
Why in your hearts may not th' Heroicks bear?  
Those make you worse, these better than you are.  
And Flatt'rrers sure should not successless prove,  
When those that do abuse you have your Love.

The comedy of manners and to a certain extent most of the comedy of the period ridiculed deviations from the common-sense norm of behavior that the courtiers had established. He who displayed the wit and actions proper to a hedonist of the libertine naturalist philosophy represented the hero in these comedies; while he who did not display any such talent was the fop. The characters were romantic perhaps, but the criticism was realistic.

The behavior of the courtly audience in the playhouse need not be discussed here, since other scholars have already provided us with a detailed picture. The dramatists themselves often deplored the disrespect that their plays met with at the hands of an audience which demanded certain specific pleasures from the theatre, not all of them dramatic. But worse from the dramatists' standpoint was the presence in the audience of critical factions which for personal or political reasons, and often for no apparent reason at all, applauded or derided the plays. These factions
deeply distressed the dramatists whose plays, because they often had social parallels, ran the risk of being shouted off the stage. This partisanship became even more pronounced when politics absorbed the mind of the audience at the time of the Popish Plot; so much so, in fact, that Shadwell described factions competing with factions in the theatre during the performance of his controversial *The Lancashire Witches* (September, 1679). He wrote in the epistle to the reader that "...they came resolved to hiss at it right or wrong, and had gotten mercenary Fellows, who were such Fools they did not know when to hiss and this was evident to all the Audience. It was wonderfull to see men of great Quality and Gentlemen, in so mean a Combination. But to my great satisfaction they came off as meanly as I could wish. I had so numerous an assembly of the best sort of men, who stood so generously in my defense, for the three first days, that they quash'd all the vain attempts of my Enemies, the inconsiderable Party of Hissers yielded, and the Play liv'd in spight of them." Obviously the audience sometimes forgot dramatic merits in passing judgments on plays. But even before politics had encouraged the growth of factions, the dramatists were beset by what Settle called "hectours of the Pit" whose tastes it seemed impossible to please. Joyner, in the dedication to *The Roman Empress* (1671), frankly admitted to Sedley that he could not comprehend what his critics wanted:
"...for as they have sought to condemn this Play for the regular conformity to the rules of art, and reason; so they have not desisted sometimes to decry others for their unnatural incongruities, when they have been inform'd where they are." But the "hectours of the Pit" did not have to explain themselves to the dramatists; the theatre was their toy to do with as they pleased. If they wished to hiss or clap, to make love or wage wars, to behave or misbehave, the dramatists could only put up with them, or, at most, protest in a later prologue or epilogue.

There were two classes of dramatists in the Restoration: the gentleman amateur and the professional. Since the playhouse was their plaything, courtiers often tried their hands at providing it with samples of dramatic fare. These courtly amateurs used their idle time during their political and amorous intrigues at Whitehall to continue the Renaissance tradition of producing literary works not for financial profit but for social prestige. Their dramas, which they ordinarily gave to the players free of charge, were written to amuse their friends, to increase their favor with the drama-loving Charles, and to set patterns for the professionals to follow. Money did not concern them: Wycherley, for example, chose to languish in debtor's jail rather than
bring himself to write a profitable play, and the Honorable Edward Howard scornfully excluded himself from the concerns of those "who do for Money write." 11

The courtiers' carefree attitude towards the theatre distressed the professionals whose fortunes were jeopardized by such competition. However, the courtiers' practice of writing plays was not new, for, as W. J. Lawrence notes: "In Caroline times the better-class theatres had been invaded by the courtier wit, who competed illegitimately with the professional dramatist by giving his plays to the players for nothing." 12 After 1660, when the theatre became the chief source of amusement for the court, the courtly invaders greatly increased in numbers. Their plays were generally popular, drawing full houses of their interested peers, and this popularity deprived the professionals of valuable days on which to earn their living. Complaints against this deprivation began early and lasted late in the period. Shadwell, in the epilogue to The Sullen Lovers (May, 1668), begged the audience to be merciful to professionals, saying:

Physicians tell us, that in every Age
Some one particular Disease does rage,
The Scurvey once, and what you call the Coint,
But Heaven be prais'd their Reign is almost out;
Yet a worse malady than both is bred,
For Poetry now reigneth in their stead:
The Itch of Writing Plays, the more's the pity,
At once has seiz'd the Town, the Court, the City.

But the invasion continued, for dramatic success seemed to one and all a way to quick success, since in the theatre an
author, whatever his talents, might display his wit to his
King, his lady, or his friends. By 1675 the competition had
become so bad that Crowne, in the epistle to The Country Wit,
wrote to Dorset:

Fame is a great Common, where every Cottager thinks
he has a right, and will rather suffer it all to lye
waste, than any part to be inclosed. Every man
thinks himself by Birth, a Wit, as every Spaniard
thinks himself a Gentleman: he has as good Eloqu
in his veins, as Persons of the greatest Dignities,
oney wants their Titles; that is to say, every Man
would be a Wit, if he had it. Yet as much value,
as they have for it in themselves, they hate no man
more, than he who abounds in that for which they
would have themselves esteemed. But enmity of poor
vulgar Heads were nothing, if Men of the first rank
of Wit, had not Feudes among themselves; 'Tis a
strange Lunacy that possesses 'em: a man that has
the largest Habitation in Fame, will yet think all
his Windows darkened, if another soars over him.

The invasion did not let up until the century was out, for
just as the literary courtiers diminished in numbers, the
political battles of the age encouraged many of the educated
middle classes to take to writing plays and poems, and, as
a result, Crowne, in the epistle to the reader of City
Politiques (1683), complained that "...our Trades and
Liberties were actually seiz'd, all Professions broke in on
us, and made themselves Free of the Company of Rhimers, with­
out any Charter from Nature." On all sides, then, the
professionals, trying to live on their earnings from the
theatre, found competition which only added to the hardships
of their already hazardous vocation.

What made this invasion of the courtiers into the drama
intolerable to the professionals was the fact that their own profits from playwriting were so scanty and unpredictable. As has been noted, a relatively small urban gentility comprised the theatre audience during the Restoration. Only rarely did any of the lower classes appear in the upper gallery. Consequently the same people filled the theatre from day to day, and only for a play of unusual popularity did they permit a run of more than a few days. Runs of ten days represented prodigious successes for professional dramatists who thought themselves fortunate to get the receipts of one third night when the sudden death of plays occurred so frequently.

Even should they write plays that ran into a third night, authors could not expect huge profits. They seldom gained more than £50, and usually had to be satisfied with £25. When one considers that a dramatist wrote about two new plays a year at most, it is clear that the professionals had to supplement their incomes to survive. Most of them probably had contracts with one of the two companies, but these seem to have been low in remuneration and, if Dryden's experience with the Theatre Royal is any criterion, often ignored by the managers. Nor did the sale of published plays help the dramatists much, since the maximum profit seldom exceeded £20 even with the added enticement of a critical essay. The professionals, therefore, resorted to
various shifts to support themselves. Dryden, of course, had his salaries as poet laureate and royal historiographer; but when he lost these posts he found it expedient to take to translating the classics. Settle secured the post of City Poet for London, arranging pageants for the Lord Mayor and other city officials; he also employed his literary talents to write puppet plays for Bartholomew Fair. Durfey made a career of selling eulogistic and commemorative poems, while Otway joined the army for a time. Shadwell, according to rumors, began to study for the legal profession at one time. Nevertheless, Oldham's description of Settle's wretched predicament typified that of most of the professional dramatists:

But Settle and the rest that write for Pence,  
Whose whole Estate's an Ounce or two of Brains,  
Should a thin House on the third Day appear,  
Must starve, or live in Tatters all the Year.  
And what can we expect that's brave and great,  
From a poor needy Wretch, that writes to eat?  
Who the Success of the next Play must wait  
For Lodging, Food and Cloaths, and whose chief Care,  
Is how to spunge for the next Meal and where.15

Nevertheless most of the professionals wrote on in the face of such adversity in the hope that a play might so catch the fancy of a courtier that he would grant his patronage and financial protection. To be allowed admittance into the glorious luxury and sparkling wit of court life, the professional was willing to endure abuse and hardship and to pen the most outrageous dedications. Thomas Wright,
whose vocation was not that of dramatist, condemned these high flown eulogies in his own dedication to *The Female Vertuoso's* (1693): "Were we to judge of Men by the Dedica-
tions of this Age, we should have as many Hero's as ever fought for the Conquest of Troy and Carthage, as many Politicians as ever sate in the Senate of Rome, and as many true Wits as ever flourish'd in the Times of Augustus: But such is the fulsome and lavish Flattery of our mercenary Writers, that it is almost become a Reproach to a Patron to be Commended..." Wycherley, probably echoing the opinion of his court friends, ridiculed the practice of the fawning dedication in the amusing epistle to the procuress "Lady" Bennett published with *The Plain Dealer* (1677).

Some patrons responded to the verbal caresses of the dramatists. Newcastle, Dorset, Mulgrave, and Rochester seemed to have been willing to reward an obsequious servant with money. Dryden also enjoyed Mulgrave's hospitality on his estate, while Shadwell often caroused with the court wits. However, the rewards for flattery, except in rare cases, seem to have been slight, £5 to £10 being the average figure. Of course, an author's good standing with a courtier no doubt increased the chances of one of his plays being selected for a court performance with its profit to the acting company of £20; however, the dramatist himself seems to have received no special reward on such occasions.
unless from the company. It was for such windfalls of good fortune that the professional dramatists worked and fought.

vi

By necessity, the professional dramatists of the Restoration played the roles of sycophants. Since their livelihood depended on their popularity with the upper class theatre-goers, they did everything to please, even if in doing so they had to deny some of their own ideas on the art of the drama. Shadwell, for example, after the failure of *The Miser* in January, 1671-72, found it profitable to give up his loyalty to the theories of Jonson and to mix portions of intrigue and sex with his humors. Dryden started his career with the assumption that the dramatist's duty was to please the audience, and his critical theories sometimes contradict his practices as a result. So absolutely did the courtiers rule over the theatre that most dramatists found that the best way to proceed in their careers was to submit plays to powerful nobles before giving them to one of the theatres. Durfey described this humiliating method of gaining favor in the epistle "To the Extreme Witty, and Judicious Gentleman, Sir Critick-Cat-Call" which he published with *The Banditti* in 1686. He remarked that "'Tis a great Weakness in any Author that writes to this paynent Age of Wits (and
wou'd-be-Wits) to build upon his own Judgment tho' never so good, any work that he has not first communicated to the Censuring and Infallible Party. Laureats themselves have sometimes Miscarry'd by being Guilty of this Obstinacy..."

But, knowing that the audience ruled, Durfey threw himself at their mercy regardless of what effect they had on his dramatic productions: "In former times a Play of Humour, or with a good Plot wou'd certainly please, but now a Poet must find out a third way, and adapt his Scenes and Story to the Genius of the Critick, if he'll have it pass...."

The audience got what it wanted from the dramatists. What the audience wanted may be broken into six main elements: action and plenty of it; variety of mood and action; romance or sexual intrigue; bombast or verbal wit; spectacle; and topicality. Provided that dramatists combined these elements, they stood a chance of not having their plays hissed off the stage. The absolute control that the upper classes had on the theatre, then, helps to explain the forms that the serious and the comic drama took in the Restoration.

But, no matter what they did, the professional dramatists during the Restoration occupied precarious rungs in society. Flattery and obedience had little lasting effects on the courtiers who found the theatre an amusing diversion but generally forgot those whose existence depended on it. "A Consolatory Epistle," written around 1684 and addressed
to the notorious libel-monger Captain Julian revealed that at that late date many of the professionals who had enjoyed some success in the 1670's now endured penury:

Otway can hardly Guts from Goal preserve,
For tho he's very fat he's like to starve.
And Sing-Song Durfey (plac'd beneath Abuses)
Lives by his Impudence not by the Muses.
Poor Crown too has his third Days mixt with Gall,
He lives so ill, he hardly lives at all.
Shadwel, and Settle, who pretend to Reason,
Tho paid so well for scribling Doggrel Treason,
Must now expect a very barren Season.
But chiefly he that writ his Recantation,
For Villain thrives best in his own Vocation.
Nay Lee in Bedlam now sees better days,
Than when applauded for his Bombast Plays.17

Except for Dryden, who still had his pension, Julian alone managed to make a living from poetry.

vii

The small size of the audience, the existence of only two small theatres, the short life expectancy of plays, and the constant need of patronage, all created a situation that inevitably bred a brisk and sometimes bitter competition among the professional dramatists. Many claimants eager for the bays crowded into the courts of Apollo, but that venerable god, who often bore a striking resemblance to a court wit, seldom found a worthy representative from among the professionals, who, he declared, pandered too often to the wrong public tastes and engaged in unseemly squabbles among themselves. Yet the professionals had to pander and
squabble -- or starve.

Scarcely had the playhouses reopened in 1660 than the dramatists began to hurl barbs at each other. Sir Robert Howard, some time before 1665 in the prologue to The Vestal Virgin, loftily condemned such behavior as ungentlemanly:

Some craftier Poets at each other hit,  
Knowing grave Rudeness has been took for Wit;  
This does a wretched dearth of Wit betray,  
When things of Kind on one another prey.

Nevertheless by 1668 even the courtier writers for the stage had cast aside decorum, a fact that Sedley observed sadly in the prologue to The Mulberry-Garden:

New Poets (like fresh Beauties come to Town)  
Have all that are decay'd to cry 'em down,  
All that are envious, or that have writ ill:  
For Wits and Heroes fain wou'd, dying, kill.

The situation worsened as an increasing number of poets chose to compete for fame and fortune in the theatre. Prologues, epilogues, epistles, dedications, and even plays inveighed against rivals. Anonymous pamphlets and lampoons filled with vituperations were published or passed around in manuscript. The violent competition became so fixed a part of the theatre, however, that it seems to have been accepted by many as normal. At least Mrs. Behn understood and excused the censorious attacks so common among her fellow professionals, for she wrote in the preface to The Lucky Chance (1687):
The Poets I heartily excuse, since there is a sort of Self-Interest in their Malice, which I shou'd rather call a witty Way they have in this Age of Railing at every thing they find with a pain successful, and never to shew good Nature and speak well of any thing; but when they are sure 'tis damn'd, then they afford it that worse Scandal, their Pity.

What else could have been expected of the professionals? Ambitious young men, fresh from the rural seclusion of the universities, they saw the theatre as a quick way to social success. Faced with the unattractive alternatives of taking jobs in commerce or of accepting minor posts in the household of some noble, both of which choices meant exclusion from the glittering court, they no doubt thought it a worthwhile risk to try their hands at playwriting, for in the theatre the court amused itself and sometimes deigned to pay for its amusement in patronage. In the theatre reputations could be made overnight and with good luck a dramatist could become lionized by his social superiors and gain entrance into the precincts of the wonderful world of nobility. To ambitious youths, gifted with some literary talents and denied other avenues for such success, indeed the gamble seemed worthwhile.

Trimmers though they may have been, however, the professional dramatists of the Restoration had definite ideas on their art. Few of them were willing sycophants. Consequently many of the barbs that they threw at one another
during the various controversies came from firmly established critical positions on the drama. Scholars have generally dismissed these controversies as mere ill-bred displays of envy and jealousy on the part of uncritical writers. However, this study will attempt to separate the elements that composed the controversies among Restoration dramatists between the years 1660-85 in an effort to show that, in many cases, honest criticism was at work. It will approach the problem chronologically and handle it descriptively. In doing so it will be necessary to indulge in some guesswork, for often evidence is lacking or resources are unavailable to me. But it is hoped that such a re-examination of their controversies will contribute to a better understanding of Restoration dramatists.
CHAPTER II

EARLY CONTROVERSIES

1.

This chapter will deal with controversies occurring early in the Restoration and will, as a result, involve several artistic issues. Because there were few professionals writing by 1670, the combatants in these early controversies were usually courtiers, and though the courtiers were concerned about the future of English drama, they were unwilling either to waste too much time on literary problems or to run the risk of making fools of themselves in public by writing a bad play or expressing an unpopular literary opinion. Consequently it was a professional dramatist - John Dryden - who sustained many of the earlier controversies by inciting various courtiers to oppose his literary opinions. Because he had gained a certain measure of financial independence by 1670, Dryden could dare to engage courtiers in public exchanges of opinions.

11.

During the early years of the Restoration, the Howards of Berkshire, a family rich in literary ancestry, became the favorite butts for numerous writers. 1 Four of the family members fell victims to literary enemies who, in number if
not in animosity, were unequalled throughout the period. An anonymous poem, probably written in the 1660's, lamented the decline of the family's honor in these words:

The house of the Howards
Is now growing towards
Their wonted declining.²

The various roles played by the four brothers in the controversies of the time contributed to this decline. Yet, since the Howards practiced their talents early in the Restoration, they did not have to endure the criticism of the professionals.

Two of the Howards avoided extended embarrassment by soon giving up playwriting. Colonel Henry Howard seems to have written only one play, The United Kingdoms, which, according to "The Key to the Rehearsal" (1704), was hissed off the stage by a faction headed by the Duke of Buckingham shortly after the reopening of the theatres. Unfortunately only rumors of The United Kingdoms have come down to us. However, "The Key" asserted that in The Rehearsal Buckingham and his cohorts hit several of the ludicrous devices that Colonel Henry used in his ill-fated play.³ The Rehearsal also ridiculed the dramatic efforts of the youngest of the Howard brothers, James. Another lampoon entitled "The Session of the Poets, to the Tune of Cook Laurel," probably written by one or more of the court wits between 1665 and 1669, mocked the mannerisms of James:
James Howard being call'd for out the Throng,
Booted and spur'd to the Bar did advance,
Where singing a damn'd nonsensical Song,
The Youth and his Muse were sent into France.  

Although in his two extant plays James made no reply to these barbs, no doubt, it is significant that he gave up playwriting after *All Mistaken* (September, 1667). It is quite likely that, rather than suffer such criticism, he chose to busy himself in France.

However, Sir Robert and the Honorable Edward Howard represent most fully the literary fate that befell the Howard family in the Restoration. To write poetry at that time was a venial sin committed by a multitude of courtiers; but to write criticisms of poetry, particularly in a dogmatic vein, was a crime that demanded punishment. Both Sir Robert and the Honorable Edward Howard incriminated themselves on this score, and both were verbally punished for it.

After a notable military career in the Civil War, Sir Robert Howard busied himself with poetry and politics in the Restoration. In 1661 he contributed a quarter share to the building of a new Theatre Royal in Bridges Street, and by doing so he gained a powerful voice in the affairs of that theatre. He also became one of the first new dramatists, his comedy *The Surprisal* being performed in April, 1662, followed by three plays within the next three years. His *Four New Plays* was published in 1665 and *The Duke of Lerma*
in 1668, both with long critical prefaces the opinions in which involved Howard in a celebrated dispute with John Dryden.

In taking issue with Sir Robert Howard, Dryden represented the first professional dramatist in the Restoration who dared to oppose in print the opinions of an influential courtier. Dryden could do this because, with his first plays, he had gained the favor of courtiers other than his first patron, Sir Robert. Nevertheless, Dryden too spent some years in obsequious service to his first patron. In 1660 Dryden's commendatory poem published with Howard's volume entitled Poems lavished praise on the poetic skills of his future brother-in-law:

So firm a strength, and yet withal so sweet,
Did never but in Samson's riddle meet.
'Tis strange each line so great a weight should bear,
And yet no sign of toil, nor sweat appear.

A few years later, a more independent Dryden found little to commend in Howard's poetry. The hyperbolic element natural in eulogy partly explains so sharp a shift in Dryden's estimate of Howard's talents; however, it must also be remembered that, at the time of the earlier piece, Dryden depended greatly on the generosity of Sir Robert. An examination of the dedications that Dryden wrote to his first plays reveals his gradual progress in gaining the favor of certain courtiers. Two of his first three plays appeared in print without dedications at a time when dedications indicated a
writer's current favor at court. Dryden dedicated his third play, *The Rival Ladies* (1664), to Roger Boyle, the Earl of Orrery, a close friend of Howard. However, the dedication of his fourth play, *The Indian Emperor* (1667), to the Duchess of Monmouth denoted some increase in Dryden's prestige at court, and, although *Secret Love* (1668) had no protector, Dryden dedicated *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, published later in the same year, to Buckhurst, one of the most influential courtiers. It seems, then, that by the end of 1668, Dryden had gained some backing at court and no longer needed to rely upon the support of Sir Robert Howard; consequently, in his "Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy," published towards the end of 1668 with the second edition of *The Indian Emperor*, Dryden felt free to censure Howard's literary talents and personality.

Dryden's claim that Howard started the controversy is true in a formal sense only, for, although Howard was the first to disagree with an already published opinion, Dryden's dedication to *The Rival Ladies* (1668) clearly replied to opinions that Howard must have expressed in conversation. In this dedication Dryden upheld the advantages of the use of rhyme in drama, and it was around this idea that both men built their later arguments. Dryden, finding little rhyme in Elizabethan and Jacobean plays, suggested that English writers were falling behind writers of other countries, that they were
no longer progressing. He asked, why had English writers failed to employ rhyme when it had proved so useful in foreign literatures?

Although he did not yet fully commit himself in favor of rhyme, only defending here its occasional use, Dryden was already moving towards the argument that he advanced full-blown in An Essay of Dramatic Poesy. He defended the naturalness of rhyme in drama in these words:

This is that which makes them say, rhyme is not natural, it being only so, when the poet either makes a vicious choice of words, or places them, for rhyme sake, so unnaturally as no man would in ordinary speaking; but when it is so judiciously ordered, that the first word in the verse seems to beget the second, and that the next, till that becomes the last word in the line, which, in the negligence of prose, would be so; it must then be granted, rhyme has all the advantages of prose, besides its own.

One of the advantages that rhyme added to a play was that it set off repartee, always an important element in a play for Dryden:

Then, in the quickness of repartees (which in discursive scenes fall very often), it has so particular a grace, and is so aptly suited to them, that the sudden smartness of the answer, and the sweetness of the rhyme, set off the beauty of each other.

But rhyme had a still greater value: it helped the poet to control his fancy and to write sensible poetry. That Dryden referred to Howard in this passage seems probable:

This last consideration has already answered an objection which some have made, that rhyme is only an embroidery of sense, to make that, which is ordinary
in itself, pass for excellent with less examination. But certainly, that, which most regulates the fancy, and gives the judgment its busiest employment, is like to bring forth the richest and clearest thoughts.

By using rhyme, then, Dryden believed that modern poets could avoid the obscure fustian he found in varying degrees in the works of Cleveland, Donne, Shakespeare, Fletcher, and even Jonson, and to write with the natural clarity of Denham and Waller.

In 1665 Howard published his own ideas on drama in the preface to *Four New Plays*. He defended the English tradition of poetry and maintained that English plays surpassed all modern plays. Dryden did not disagree with him on this latter score; however, Dryden had argued that English drama could be improved by the inclusion of the best of the dramatic concepts that had been practiced by the ancients and by modern French dramatists. Howard, on the other hand, had little use for classical drama and still less for drama that followed classical rules. He suggested, for example, that the admirers of Terence and Plautus would be less zealous were the plays of the two Romans put upon a modern stage. In Howard's opinion Jonson excelled both, especially in his plots. Nor were French plays any better than the classical ones, most of them reproducing without reason the same faults:

So that it appears a fault to chuse such Subjects for the Stage, but much greater to affect that Method which those Subjects enforce; and therefore the French seem much mistaken, who without the necessity sometimes commit the Error.
Howard strongly disapproved of the mixed dramatic form called tragicomedy so popular in England. Nevertheless he argued that, even with this unfortunate defect, the best of English plays had never been equalled.

...yet I shall as candidly acknowledge, That our best Poets have differed from other Nations (though not so happily) in usually mingling and interweaving Mirth and Sadness through the whole Course of their Plays, Ben Johnson only excepted, who keeps himself entire to one Argument; and I confess I am now convinc'd in my own Judgment, That it is most proper to keep the Audience in one entire disposition both of Concern and Attention; for when Scenes of so different Natures immediately succeed one another, 'tis probable the Audience may not so suddenly recollect themselves, as to start into an enjoyment of the Mirth, or into a concern for the Sadness: Yet I dispute not but the variety of this World may afford pursuing Accidents of such different Natures; but yet though possible in themselves to be, they may not be so proper to be Presented....

These considerations led Howard into the problem of the proper verse for tragedy. But first he described those qualities ideally desired in tragic drama: "...an entire Connexion being the natural Beauty of all Plays, and Language the Ornament to dress them in, which in serious Subjects ought to be great and easie, like a high-Born Person that expresses Greatness without pride or affectation." He then proceeded to assert that, as well as being proper to the subject of tragedy, the verse must be proper to the illusion that tragedy seeks to create.

...a Poem being a premeditated form of Thoughts upon design'd Occasions, ought not to be unfurnish'd of any harmony in Words or Sound: The other is presented
as the present Effect of Accidents not thought of; so that 'tis impossible it should be equally proper to both these, unless it were possible that all Persons were born so much more than Poets, that Verses were not compos'd by them, but already made in them. Some may object, That this Argument is trivial, because whatever is shew'd, 'tis known still to be but a Play: but such may as well excuse an ill Scene, that is not naturally painted, because they know 'tis only a Scene, and not really a City or Country.

Howard willingly granted that rhyme aided in controlling fancy and in setting off repartee, but he maintained that both points were irrelevant to the problem of creating an illusion of nature. In Howard's opinion, Dryden had mistaken the whole problem, "...for the dispute is not which way a Man may write best in, but which is most proper for the Subject he writes upon." The medium that permitted the expression of the lofty ideas necessary in tragedy without seeming unnatural was blank verse. He admitted that even that verse form tested credulity, but believed that it did remain within probability at least.

It may be objected, 'Tis improbable that any should speak ex tempore as well as Beaumont and Fletcher makes them, though in Blank Verse; I do not only acknowledge that, but that 'tis also improbable any will write so well that way; but if that may be allow'd improbable, I believe it may be concluded impossible that any should speak as good Verses in Rhime as the best Poets have writ; and therefore that which seems neerest to what it intends, is ever ever to be prefer'd.

He then raised a simple mechanical difficulty: "Nor is great Thoughts more adorned by Verse, than Verse unbeautified by
mean ones; so that Verse seems not only unfit in the best use of it, but much more in the worse, when a Servant is call'd or a Door bid to be shut in Rhime."

Like Dryden, however, Howard confessed he did not follow his own precepts. Just as Dryden wrote The Rival Ladies in a mixed verse form while arguing for the use of rhyme in the play's preface, so Howard confessed that, while he believed blank verse to be the proper verse form for plays, he still wrote his plays in rhyme in order to conform to the ruling tastes -- a curious statement from one supposed to be so positive.

So much for the opening salvoes from both sides in this poetomachia. Let us pause briefly at this point to note the amusing remarks of Sir Thomas St Serfe on the Dryden-Howard controversy. In his interlude prologue to Tarugo's Wiles (October, 1667), St Serfe mocked writers who forgot the insignificance of playwriting. The prologue explained that the poet of this play had scorned both rhyme and blank verse in order to write in sensible everyday prose because he "is no Arithmetician, and so defies all numerical composition." However, anxious not to disappoint the spoiled audience, the poet had substituted for the usual rhyming tag ends of scenes a noisy rattle; on which remarkable device an actor comments, "Slife, I think this Prose Poets fancy will take; for if I be not mistaken, a Rattle will be better
understood by a great many here then the best kind of Rhyme." As a parting shot at the rhymers, St Serfe wrote in a prose epilogue: "The truth is, our Poet bids me tell you, hee'1 rather run the hazard of being thought no Wit, then garnish the corners of his sense with such canting Gingles."

Late in 1666 Dryden dedicated Annus Mirabilis to Sir Robert Howard, and in the poem's dedicatory epistle he touched on some of the points that both men had already discussed in print. This epistle had a flattering tone that sharply contrasts with that of the already outlined Essay of Dramatic Poesy; perhaps its mildness was explained in the opening sentences:

I am so many ways obliged to you, and so little able to return your favours, that, like those who owe too much, I can only live by getting farther into your debt. You have not only been careful of my fortune, which was the effect of your nobleness, but you have been solicitous of my reputation, which is that of your kindness. It is not long since I gave you the trouble of perusing a play for me, and now, instead of an acknowledgement, I have given you a greater in the correction of a poem.

In 1666 Dryden still required the support of Howard.

After explaining why he used quatrains for this poem, Dryden proceeded to examine the nature of heroic poetry, to which, we should remember, he later equated heroic drama. But to proceed from wit in the general notion of it to the proper wit of an heroic or historical poem, I judge it chiefly to consist in the delightful imagining of persons, actions, passions, or things. It is not the jerk or sting of an epigram, nor the seeming contradiction of a poor antithesis --
the delight of an ill-judging audience in a play of rhyme -- nor the jingle of a poor paronomasia, neither is it so much the morality of a grave sentence affected by Lucan, but more sparingly used by Virgil, but it is some lively and apt description, dressed in such colours of speech that it sets before your eyes the absent object as perfectly and more delightfully than nature.

The last phrase, particularly the word "more," had significance, for it revealed at what point Dryden and Howard disagreed about heroic drama. Howard demanded that heroic tragedy be as natural as possible, whereas Dryden demanded that it surpass the natural.

Dryden granted the validity of some of Howard's ideas in this epistle. For example, he conceded that naturalness was desired in dialogue:

Ovid images more often the movements and affections of the mind, either combating between two contrary passions, or extremely discomposed by one. His words therefore are the least part of his care: for he pictures nature in disorder, with which study and choice of words is inconsistent.

This is the proper wit of dialogue or discourse, and consequently of the drama, where all that is said is supposed to be the effect of sudden thought, which -- though it excludes not the quickness of wit in repartees -- yet admits not a too curious election of words, too frequent allusions, or use of tropes, or, in fine, anything that shows remoteness of thought, or labour in the writer.

The spirit of concession so apparent in the epistle to *Annum Mirabilis* lessened considerably in Dryden's next critical piece, the celebrated *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. According to Dryden himself, he began the *Essay* in 1665 as a reply to Howard's preface, but was delayed in publishing
it until 1668 by the plague. Recent scholarship has placed the Essay among the replies to Sorbiere's aspersions on English life and literature, but the success of Howard's The Duke of Lerma (February, 1667-68), with its mixing of rhyme and blank verse, also must have prompted Dryden to defend his own manner of serious drama.

An Essay contained personal acrimony; for the first time one of the controversialists ignored the standards of genteel debate. In his dedication of the piece to Dorset, Dryden wrote: "For your Lordship may easily observe, that none are very violent against it [rhyme], but those who either have not attempted it, or who have succeeded ill in their attempt." Dryden had little respect for Howard's plays, and, as the controversy continued, he had an ever-lessening respect for Howard.

After placing his four characters within a fictional framework, Dryden began by offering the point of view of the moderns. Eugenius criticized the classical dramatists for following the unities too strictly, for writing bombast, and for lacking genuine passion. Lisideius opposed this view by placing the French adherents to the classical rules above English playwrights. Both Neander and Crites attacked this judgment, particularly decrying as dull and undramatic the long narrative speeches with which French plays were larded. At this juncture in the discussion, Neander, presumably
voicing Dryden's personal ideas, defended the mixing of the light and the serious in a play not only as pleasing to English audiences -- and therefore necessary -- but as functionally superior to a single tone. As he put it: "...contraries, when placed near, set off each other. A continued gravity keeps the spirit too much bent; we must refresh sometimes, as we bait in a journey, that we may go on with greater ease."

Taking up the question of the verse form proper to tragedy, Dryden first presented, through Crites, Howard's position against the use of rhyme, which Neander then refuted with convincing ease. Dryden freely admitted that the dramatists of the preceding age did not generally use rhyme, but he blamed this fact on their inferior learning, particularly in the social graces, and on their overconcern for other dramatic problems. However Dryden's chief argument in favor of the use of rhyme in tragedies depended upon his definition of a tragedy. Tragedy was not, as Howard had asserted, an imitation of nature; on the contrary, it was a representation of nature wrought up to epic proportions:

...'tis nature wrought up to an higher pitch.
The plot, the characters, the wit, the passions, the descriptions, are all exalted above the level of common converse, as high as the imagination of the poet can carry them, with proportion to verisimilitude. Tragedy, we know, is wont to image to us the minds and fortunes of noble persons, and to portray these exactly; heroic rhyme is nearest nature, as being the noblest kind of modern verse....
Furthermore, if rhyme was improper in drama, as Howard declared, then it was even more improper in epic poetry, for "The genus of them is the same, -- a just and lively image of human nature, in its actions, passions, and traverses of fortune: so is the end, -- namely for the delight and benefit of mankind."

Nor did well written rhyme result in unnatural syntax. In the hands of a good poet, emulating Waller's easy flow, rhyme could be both clear and natural. As for its being too far removed from actuality, Dryden returned to his description of tragedy and concluded that "A play ... to be like nature, is to be set above it; as statues which are placed on high are made greater than the life, that they may descend to the sight in their just proportion."

Dryden declared that repartee in rhyme, though admittedly unnatural if compared to everyday prose discourse, was no more unnatural than repartee in blank verse. Besides it had the added merit of being more delightful and thereby fulfilled better one of the chief ends of tragedy.

I acknowledge the hand of art appears in repartee, as of necessity it must in all kinds of verse. But there is also the quick and poignant brevity of it (which is an high imitation of nature in those sudden gusts of passion) to mingle with it; and this, joined with the cadency and sweetness of rhyme, leaves nothing in the soul of the hearer to desire. 'Tis an art which appears....

Dryden curtly dismissed the argument that insignificant and mean thoughts could not be naturally expressed in rhyme by
remarking that such low thoughts had no place in tragedies at all. If unavoidable, they should be expressed in broken lines or in noble words, thus elevating them into a beauty they did not merit. He cited as an example Seneca's rendition of the command "unlock the door."

In An Essay, then, Dryden filled out the details of his critical position. It became clear that he and Howard not only disagreed on minor points, but that they each held different conceptions of the drama's purposes and method. While both wanted drama to be natural, each had his own definition of the term natural. For Howard natural meant being as close to actual life as was dramatically possible without losing the effect of beauty; for Dryden it meant being as far above actual life as the limits of human credibility allowed. Yet each man, as we shall see, seemed to contradict his fundamental aesthetic position: Howard by belittling and Dryden by defending the unities.

As early as 1667, in the preface to Secret Love, Dryden had indicated a respect for the unities, saying: "For what else concerns this play, I would tell the reader, that it is regular, according to the strictest of dramatic laws; but that is a commendation which many of our poets now despise, and a beauty which our common audiences do not easily discern." Yet in An Essay, the fact that Neander questioned the usefulness of the unities suggests that Dryden was never
too sure of their efficacy. Furthermore, in An Essay Dryden had with some unfairness ranged Crites with Lisideius as a defender of the unities, a position which Howard had never favored and which he was soon to reject in print.\textsuperscript{12}

In 1668 Howard, in answer to An Essay, defined his own position in the long preface published with The Duke of Lerma. He began by declaring that he was unable to follow the latest dramatic modes:

"...I must ingenuously confess, that the manner of the Plays, which now are in most esteem, is beyond my power to perform; nor do I condemn in the least any thing of what Nature soever that please; since nothing cou'd appear to me a ruder Folly, than to censure the Satisfaction of others: I rather blame the unnecessary Understanding of some that have labour'd to give strict Rules to Things that are not Mathematical, and with such eagerness, pursuing their own seeming Reasons, that at last we are to apprehend such Argumentative Poets will grow as strict as Sancho Panco's Doctor was to our very Appetites; for in difference of Tragedy and Comedy, and of Farce it self, there can be no determination but by Taste; nor in the manner of their Composure; and who ever wou'd endeavour to like or dislike by the Rules of others, he will be as unsuccessful, as if he should try to be perswad'd into a power of believing; not what he must, but what others direct him to believe."

"...there can be no determination but by Taste;" with these words Howard had adopted a new basis of argument: for him individual taste determined all. In obedience to his own personal taste, he continued, he had freely mixed blank verse and rhyme in his play.

Again taking up the question of the proper poetic form for tragedy, Howard reiterated that Dryden had misinterpreted
the problem because of his definition of natural:

...for 'tis not the Question whether Rhime or not Rhime, be best, or most Natural for a grave and serious Subject; but what is nearest the nature of that which it presents. Now after all the endeavours of that ingenious Person, a Play will still be supposed to be a Composition of several Persons speaking ex tempore; and 'tis as certain, that good Verses are the hardest things that can be imagin'd to be so spoken; so that if any will be pleas'd to impose the Rule of measuring things to be the best, by being nearest Nature; it is granted by consequences, that which is most remote from the thing supposed, must needs be most improper; and therefore I may justly say, that both I and the Question were equally mistaken; for I do own, I had rather read good Verses, than either blank Verse or Prose, and therefore the Author did himself injury, if he like Verse so well in Plays, to lay down Rules to raise Arguments, only unanswerable against himself.

Furthermore Howard insisted that Dryden avoided another difficulty when he quoted Seneca's beautification of a command instead of showing by an example that such beautification was possible in English.

Howard next clarified his own attitude towards the unities. In his opinion it was as absurd to make the actual time of a play's performance represent twelve hours as ten years; if a dramatist was to have any freedom from actuality it might as well be complete freedom and not some senseless compromise. The same reasoning applied to the unity of place: whether the stage be one or twenty places other than the actual stage was to split hairs. Let those advocates of the unities take this advice, he concluded:

...if all those Poets that have so fervently labour'd to give Rules as Maximes, would but be pleased to abbreviate, or endure to hear their Reasons reduc'd
into one strict definition, it must be, that there are degrees in impossibilities, and that many things which are not possible, may yet be more or less impossible; and from this proceed to give Rules to observe the least absurdity in things which are not at all.

Howard ended his reprimand of Dryden with good humour. While mildly chiding his brother-in-law for losing his temper as well as his sense of logic in the dedication to An Essay, he explained that his purpose in writing this rejoinder was not to ridicule Dryden, with whose writing he was "extreamly well pleas'd" in general, but to maintain the dignity of reason and "have no spurious Issue Father'd upon her."

With these words Howard withdrew from what he called "the Civil War of Censures." Unlike most of the other controversialists of the time, he was not eager to win at all costs. He refused to forego sense for slander. Having made his point, he retired from the field of battle, for, after all, he could gain nothing from publicly arguing with a professional writer except, of course, the disdain of his fellow courtiers. After 1668, Sir Robert devoted all his talents to politics.

Although Howard fell silent, Dryden had a great deal more to say. In the "Defence of An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," published with the second edition of The Indian Emperor in 1668, he angrily replied to The Duke of Lerma preface. He mocked Howard's fear of losing the credit for having written
The Duke by stating that the play's mawkish poetry unmistakably revealed Howard to be its author. He censured Howard's prose for obscurity caused by a feeble grasp of diction and grammar. He wondered at the many errors in translation and even more at Howard's blaming them on the printer. Of Howard's fond farewell to the muses, Dryden wrote sardonically:

But he has taken his last farewell of the muses, and he has done it civilly, by honouring them with the name of 'his long acquaintances,' which is a compliment they have scarce deserved from him. For my own part, I bear a share in the public loss; and how emulous soever I may be of his fame and reputation, I cannot but give this testimony of his style, that it is extremely poetical, even in oratory; his thoughts elevated sometimes above common apprehension; his notions poetic and grave, and tending to the instruction of princes, and reformation of states; that they are abundantly interlaced with variety of fancies, tropes, and figures, which the critics have enviously branded with the name of obscurity and false grammar.

Tossing all pretences to respect aside, Dryden then satirized Howard's learning in terms that strongly suggest Shadwell's devastating portrait of Sir Positive-at-all:

For my own concernment in the controversy, it is so small, that I can easily be contented to be driven from a few notions of dramatic poesy; especially by one, who has the reputation of understanding all things; and I might justly make that excuse for my yielding to him, which the philosopher made to the emperor; why should I offer to contend with him, who is master of more than twenty legions of arts and sciences? But I am forced to fight, and therefore it will be no shame to be overcome.

What particularly provoked Dryden was Howard's charge that Dryden magisterially dictated the laws of poetry. An Essay
was nothing more than a skeptical piece of speculation that had drawn no positive conclusions, Dryden explained; and he then threw the same charge back at Howard:

The truth is, if I had been naturally guilty of so much vanity as to dictate my opinions, yet I do not find that the character of a positive or self-conceited person is of such advantage to any in this age, that I should labour to be publicly admitted of that order....For this gentleman, who accuses me of arrogance, has taken a course not to be taxed with the other extreme of modesty.

After such a sweeping devaluation of Howard's writing and person, Dryden's honoring of his "person and parts" at the end of the essay becomes mere mockery.

For Dryden, or for anyone, to lose his temper during a literary dispute is not unusual. As we study the various disputes of the Restoration we find acrimony to be a much used verbal weapon; certainly Dryden was not the only one to employ it. What is of interest here, however, is the fact that, at this early date, a professional writer felt free to ridicule a courtier whom he had lauded a few years before. We must realize, in other words, that by this time Dryden had become a successful dramatist whose five dramas had gained for him a rung on the ladder of court favor. This rise in fortune permitted him to publicize his own opinions of his art and at the same time to controvert opposing opinions, especially those of a courtier like Sir Robert Howard who had numerous enemies at court. In fact, by
ridiculing Howard, Dryden could hope to prosper at Whitehall in the same way that Shadwell had. Furthermore, Dryden employed acrimony because he most anxiously sought to avoid any reputation as a literary dictator -- that role was reserved for courtiers. Dryden apparently realized the danger of antagonizing literary courtiers. Howard himself had lately fallen foul of some court wits for having meddled in political affairs. The cryptic allegory of "The Duel of the Stags," which seemed to defend Buckingham's political actions, had elicited the scatological burlesque "The Duel of the Crabs" from the pens of Dorset and Savile.  

"The Defence" was Dryden's fullest statement of his dramatic theory. He began by dismissing Howard's refutation of his own argument for rhyme and by flatly denying that he had misinterpreted the problem:

...he ought to have proved that I mistook it; for it is yet but gratis dictum; I still shall think I have gained my point, if I can prove that rhyme is best, or more natural for a serious subject. As for the question as he states it, whether rhyme be nearest the nature of what it represents, I wonder he should think me so ridiculous as to dispute, whether prose or verse be nearest to ordinary conversation.

In order to clarify his argument, Dryden made a completely new start. He first laid down the premise that the primary end of all drama was to delight the audience; instruction, for Dryden, was a secondary and not really necessary end. He then pointed out that even Howard had granted rhyme to
be more delightful than blank verse. With these two premises established, he concluded that rhyme helped to fulfill the end of drama better than blank verse.

It is true, that to imitate well is a poet's work; but to affect the soul, and excite the passions, and above all, to move admiration (which is the delight of serious plays), a bare imitation will not serve. The converse, therefore, which a poet is to imitate, must be heightened with all the arts and ornaments of poesy; and must be such as, strictly considered, could never be supposed spoken by any without premeditation.

Dryden still refused to define tragedy in terms of actual life; for him it remained something elevated above life, something artistically created and not painstakingly copied. In his own terms, therefore, he was perfectly consistent when he declared that, to a lesser degree, blank verse was as improper as prose for tragedy, and "one great reason why prose is not to be used in serious plays, is, because it is too near the nature of converse." To this he added that even Jonson, whose plays Howard had cited for being natural in most respects, did not reproduce the actual language of the rustics in Bartholomew Fair; rather he elevated it to a more artistic prose.

To this lucid restatement of his dramatic theory, Dryden grafted a more specious historical argument by claiming that the classical poets supported his point of view in that they used verse and never prose in their tragedies. Furthermore, modern foreign dramatists chose rhyme rather
than blank verse in the belief that they were thereby con-
tinuing and perfecting the classical dramatic practices.

Taking up Howard's criticism of the use of Seneca, Dryden became evasive, first fulminating against Howard's errors in translation and then offering a patently vague reply:

...all he can charge me with is only this, that if Seneca could make an ordinary thing sound well in Latin by the choice of words, the same, with like care, might be performed in English; If it cannot, I have committed an error on the right hand, by commending too much the copiousness and well-sounding of our language, which I hope my countrymen will pardon me.

In spite of this patriotic smoke-screen, we must remark that Dryden still did not provide the example that Howard had called for.

Turning to Howard's criticism of the unities of time and space, Dryden accused him of confusing the means with the end of drama: the unities, like all so-called rules, were useful only in so far as they promoted delight. In addition to this elementary confusion, Howard had failed to make the obvious distinction between real and imaginary place and time: "The real place is that theatre, or piece of ground, on which the play is acted. The imaginary, that house, town, or country, where the action of the drama is supposed to be, or, more plainly, where the scene of the play is laid." Dryden again implicitly appealed to his
definition of natural according to which a play was removed from actual life; a play, he wrote, delighted the imagination of audiences as much as the reason.

'Tis impossible, he says, for one stage to present two rooms or houses: I answer, 'tis neither impossible nor improper, for one real place to represent two or more imaginary places, so it be done successively; which in other words, is no more than this, that the imagination of the audience, aided by the words of the poet, and painted scenes, may suppose the stage to be sometimes one place, sometimes another; now a garden, or wood, and immediately a camp; which, I appeal to every man's imagination, if it be not true.

Besides, Dryden continued, man's reason cannot suffer too gross violations of credibility, and the unities had the added value of serving as reins on the poet's fancy. Like rhyme, the unities allowed the judgment of the poet to retain control:

Reason, therefore, can sooner be led by imagination to step from one room into another, than to walk to two distant houses, and yet rather to go thither, than to fly like a witch through the air, and be hurried from one region to another. Fancy and Reason go hand in hand; the first cannot leave the last behind: And though Fancy, when it sees the wide gulf, would venture over, as the nimbler, yet it is withheld by Reason, which will refuse to take the leap, when the distance over it appears too large.

So both Howard and Dryden opposed a strict adherence to the unities. But Dryden, besides finding them useful when fancy was given enough freedom to range in search of the delightful, justified the poet's breaking them on the aesthetic ground that the world of the play was not the actual world.
As usual he fortified his position with the precedents of earlier writers, and pointed out smugly that Howard, in scorning the unities, scorned the opinions of most of the dramatic authorities from Aristotle to Jonson. Finally he added maliciously that the improbabilities of *The Duke of Lerma* necessitated Howard's opposition to the unities.

"The Defence of An Essay of Dramatic Poesy" was Dryden's last full answer to Howard. Before examining how Dryden begins to modify his earlier opinions in this essay, it might be appropriate to notice once more some of the observations made by other writers of these critical exchanges between Dryden and Sir Robert.

"The Session of the Poets to the Tune of *Cook Laurel*" declared Dryden the winner and satirically depicted Howard complaining to Apollo that Dryden had unfairly robbed him of his muse:

Sir Robert Howard, call'd for over and over,
At length sent in Teague with a Packet of News,
Wherein the said Knight, to his Grief, did discover
How Dryden had lately rob'd him of his Muse.

Each Man in the Court was pleas'd with the Theft,
Which made the whole Family swear and rant,
Desiring their Obin i'th' lump being left,
The Thief might be fined for the wild Gallant.

Medbourne, in the prologue to *Tartuffe* (c. May, 1670), hoped ironically that his play would measure up to Dryden's high standards:
Within the year Dryden struck back at Medbourne, among others, when he wrote in the prologue to the first part of The Conquest of Granada (c. December, 1670):

And may those drudges of the stage, whose fate is damned dull farce more dully to translate, Fall under that excise the state thinks fit To set on all French wares, whose worst is wit. French farce, worn out at home, is sent abroad; And, patched up here, is made our English mode.

Alexander Radcliff, while satirizing numerous prominent writers in "News From Hell" (c. 1676?) may have had Howard in mind when he drew this portrait of a literary coward:

A Seventh, because he'd rather chuse To spoil his Verse than tire his Muse. Nor will he let Heroicks chime; Fancy (he quoth) is lost by Rhime. And he that's us'd to clashing Swords Should not delight in sounds of Words. Mars with Mercury should not mingle; Great Warriors shou'd speak big, not mingle.

Dryden celebrated his victory over Howard in "Of Heroic Plays" (1672) in which, after observing that heroic verse was now accepted as a necessary part of all serious plays, he dismissed blank verse as an inartistic compromise with actual life:
You have lost that which you call natural, and have not acquired the last perfection of art. But it was only custom which cozened us so long; we thought, because Shakespeare and Fletcher went no further, that there the pillars of poetry were to be erected; that, because they excellently described passion without rhyme, therefore rhyme was not capable of describing it. But time has now convinced most men of that error. It is indeed so difficult to write verse, that the adversaries of it have a good plea against many, who undertook that task, without being formed by art or nature for it. Yet, even they who have writ worst in it, would have written worse without it: they have cozened many with their sound, who never took the pains to examine their sense.

Such confidence in the future of rhymed heroic drama suggests that Dryden did not fear the effect of The Rehearsal on audience tastes.

Within a few years, Dryden, profiting from his own problems in writing plays and reacting to the growing antipathy to heroic plays, began to concede the validity of several of Howard's arguments. For example, in the prologue to Aureng-Zebe (November, 1675), he confessed that rhyme made judgment too tyrannical a master of fancy:

Passion's too fierce to be in fetters bound,
And nature flies him like enchanted ground:
What verse can do, he has performed in this,
Which he presumes the most correct of his;
But spite of all his pride, a secret shame
Invades his breast at Shakespeare's sacred name.
Awed when he hears his god-like Romans rage,
He, in a just despair, would quit the stage;
And to an age less polished, more unskilled,
Does, with disdain, the foremost honours yield.

In the "Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence" (1677) Dryden went still further and denounced all trammels to expression. He cited Longinus who "...likens the mediocrity
of wit to one of mean fortune, who manages his store with extreme frugality, or rather parsimony; but who, with fear of running into profuseness, never arrives to the magnificence of living. This kind of genius writes indeed correctly." But Dryden wanted sublimity not correctness. The preface to All for Love (1676) conceded more ground to Howard as Dryden explained why he dropped rhyme in this play: "Not that I condemn my former way, but that this is more proper to my present purpose." From this time on, rhyme found no place in his plays. By 1679 he was willing to make this admission in the preface to Troilus and Cressida: "In what I have already done, I doubt not but I have contradicted some of my former opinions, in my loose essays of the like nature; but of this, I dare affirm, that it is the fruit of my riper age and experience, and that self-love, or envy have no part in it." One of the "fruits" was the conclusion that tragedy and comedy did not mix well in the same play, an opinion Howard had offered ten years earlier:

The natural reason of this rule is plain; for two different independent actions distract the attention and concernment of the audience, and consequently destroy the intention of the poet; if his business be to move terror and pity, and one of his actions be comical, the other tragical, the former will divert the people, and utterly make void his greater purpose.

However, not till 1692, in Cleomenes, did Dryden implement the idea of unity of tone, for, as he remarked in the preface
to Don Sebastian (1690), ",...the English will not bear a thorough tragedy; but are pleased that it should be lighten­
ed with underparts of mirth."

Compared to other Restoration controversies, the Dryden-
Howard controversy was well-mannered; scurrility and innuendo
had little place in it. In this respect it was unique, for,
as we examine other controversies, we shall find abuse to
be a favorite weapon. I have already suggested that one
reason for these good manners, other than kinship and friend­
ship, was Howard's position at court, a position upon which
Dryden for a time relied. Once he found the support of other
courtiers, Dryden distinctly lowered the tone of his writing
when dealing with his brother-in-law. Nevertheless, sin­
cerity governed the critical writing of these two thoughtful
dramatists and critics, both of whom were profoundly inter­
ested in the future of English drama. Writing in an age when
English drama was seeking to recover its identity after
eighteen years of almost complete inactivity, they clashed
over fundamental issues: the relation of drama to life,
the proper verse form for tragedy, and the efficacy of
the unities. Although Dryden drove Howard into a disdainful
silence, many of Howard's critical opinions were eventually
redeemed by time.

...
The Honorable Edward Howard, the eldest of the four Howard brothers, has scarcely any reputation today in spite of the fact that during the Restoration he wrote part of an epic, six plays, three long critical prefaces, and numerous short poems and essays. What reputation he does have has resulted largely from the verbal drubbings that he took from many of his contemporaries who found risible both his writing and his personality. His personality, in fact, seems to have invited satire, so much so that he no doubt would have gained a prominent place in the Restoration gallery of fops even had he not written. But he did write, and, to his further misfortune, he wrote in a most independent manner on subjects of particular interest to the court wits.

The first satire on the Honorable Edward was in many ways the most destructive to his literary reputation, for it fixed permanently on him the opprobrious nickname of "Poet Ninny." Shadwell, who created "Ninny" in his first play The Sullen Lovers (May, 1668), was not so much attacking Howard the dramatist (though by that date three of Howard's plays had been staged) as Howard the man. In the dramatis personae Shadwell described the humor of Ninny as "A conceited Poet, always troubling men with impertinent Discourses of Poetry, and the repetition of his own Verses; in all his Discourses he uses such affected Words, that 'tis
bad as the Canting of a Gypsie." With this portrait Shadwell no doubt sought to engage the favor of the court wits, none of whom approved of Howard's literary aspirations. However, besides seeking court favor, Shadwell had a more personal reason for ridiculing Howard since Howard, in the epistle to The Usurper (1668), had adumbrated a critical position based on the practices of Jonson, a position that was altogether too similar to Shadwell's own. Howard was a rival who threatened to steal Shadwell's thunder in the theatre. Clearly, then, Shadwell had two good reasons for ridiculing Edward Howard publicly.

Ninny had a less important role in The Sullen Lovers than Sir Positive-at-all, but the implicit satire of the Ninny portrait had as much bite. At one point, for example, Ninny compelled a group to listen to a reading of one of his love lyrics, on the incomprehensibility of which piece the two true wits in the play passed withering comments, one calling it, among other things, "...but a Jingling of Words." As we shall shortly see, the senselessness of Howard's poetry proved a source of constant amusement for the court wits. Howard's worst characteristic, at least in the opinion of his court enemies, was his incorrigible belief in his own achievements as a writer in every poetic field. Therefore, at another point in the play, Ninny, after having effusively lauded heroic poem he had recently
written, complained of the stupidity of his bookseller in refusing to publish it when such stupidity meant a literary loss to the whole nation. Possibly Howard's ill-fated heroic poem *The British Princes* (1668), of which he was inordinately proud, had fallen into the hands of Shadwell and his friends while circulating in manuscript. Certainly the wits were well prepared to greet the truncated epic when it did appear publicly. Ninny went on to make impossible claims such as "...betwixt you and I, he has got some hundreds of pounds by some Plays and Poems of mine which he has Printed. And let me tell you, some under the Names of Beaumont and Fletcher, and Ben Johnson too." Here Shadwell aimed not only to label Howard a plagiarist and a liar but to undermine the critical position of his most vociferous rival to the succession of Jonson.

Lack of evidence prevents us from being able to judge the validity of the Ninny portrait, much of which dealt with personal foibles. Of Howard's literary accomplishments, however, we can say something. His dramas, at least those that are extant, reveal at most a mediocre talent in both tragedy and comedy. His heroic poetry reads dully, and his shorter poems seldom rise above the ordinary. The best that can be said of his writing is that his criticism, though rarely original, does show an independent and inquiring mind.
Howard made no reply to Shadwell's public censure in the lengthy preface to The British Princes. Rather he chose to concern himself strictly with the problems of writing an English epic. Though clumsy in style, this essay contained one or two worthwhile observations on epic writing. Certainly Howard's measured admiration for Spenser showed some originality of judgment, for, while praising Spenser as the best English epic poet, Howard regrets the archaic diction of The Fairie Queen.

Howard knew the reception that his own epic would receive; no doubt he realized his unpopularity among the court wits. So at the end of his preface he wrote:

Yet, I am not so fond, as to believe, there is much got, from entertaining the World in Print; it being too much good Fortune, to hope, that any thing can pass so currant, as not to meet with Detraction, Mistake, or Envy (which never wants darts to wound a Merit farr Superior than I pretend to) there being few who are Candid, and truely discerning, whose judgments have any sway, or not desory'd by the prevalency of Malevolent, or weaker apprehensions.

Howard had anticipated correctly. No fewer than nine scathing satires written by the court wits followed fast upon the publication of The British Princes. Probably because of the force of this rude reception, (which even he seems to have underestimated), Howard gave up his plan to write ten more books to complete the epic, despite his having received the commendatory blessings of Hobbes, Orrery,
and "N.D." Nor can we blame him for doing so, for seldom
has any one poem been greeted with such concerted derision.

The authorship of the satires cannot be assigned with
absolute certainty; some were unsigned and all were similar
in tone. It is very likely that they came out a kind of
convention of the court wits.\textsuperscript{17} Butler's poem, which has
been erroneously attributed to Waller, exemplifies the tone
of the whole group with its mockery of Howard's obscure
diction and distorted historical events:

\begin{verbatim}
For no Man's fit to read what you have writ,
That holds not some Proportion with your Wit.
As Light can no way but by Light appear,
He must bring Sense, that understands it here.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{verbatim}

Sprat repeated the same charges, while Clifford concentrated
on Howard's lack of grammar. A coarser piece, generally
thought to be by Buckhurst though in one source labelled
anonymous, described Howard as the new king of the dunces:

\begin{verbatim}
Thou damn'd Antipodes to Common Sense,
Thou Foil to Fleckno, prithee tell from whence
Does all this mighty Stock of Dullness spring?
\end{verbatim}

Flecknoe had already incurred the contempt of the wits for
having defended the Howards against Dryden in 1668.\textsuperscript{19}

Rochester chose to tender his pity to Howard, while
Vaughan ridiculed his poetic pretensions:

\begin{verbatim}
It is so great a Prodigy of Wit
That Art and Nature both fall short of it:
For leaving Art; and left of Nature too,
Your Poem has no other Muse than You.
\end{verbatim}
Buckingham played with two lines from Howard's poem and triumphantly concluded a mock defence of them in this way:

Thus, Critick vile, thus I have struck thee dumb:
And thus subscribe my self, with Heart, and Hand,
The Author's Friend, most humble Servant, and
Buckingham.

Shadwell derided Howard's misuse of words by citing specific improprieties:

For there is nothing that can faint their might
For they in bloody mingled fight by night
This he relates, and such warlike dress,
None but an hero can such Flame express;
Creating actions by his glorious skill
That never can be done, nor never will.

There is no evidence that Howard made any direct reply to this onslaught, nor that anyone took up cudgels for him against his enemies. It has been suggested, however, that Howard did reply in a lost manuscript work and that this reply provoked some of the wits to pen more barbs. However, Rochester's "On Poet Ninny" and Butler's "Palinodie" could just as well have been written on the spur of some later satiric moment, especially since after 1669 Howard became a whipping boy for the wits. More plausible is the suggestion that Denham's commendatory poem published with The British Princes really constituted a piece of irony that Howard accepted foolishly as genuine praise. Unfortunately these and other circumstances surrounding the attack on Howard remain in the realm of the unknown.

In the epilogue to The Women's Conquest (c. November,
1670] Howard made a veiled reply to his foes which was more a gesture of defiance than of defence:

Our Poet needs not apprehend what right
You Wits will do him, or your factions spite,
That's their concern who do for Money write.

Not having to depend on the stage for a living, Howard could afford to persist in his unpopular critical opinions. So in the prologue to the same play he had the ghost of Jonson denounce farces and suggest that many recent plays belonged in that lowest of dramatic categories.

Did I instruct you (well ne're half an Age)
To understand the Grandeur of the Stage,
With the exactest Rules of Comedy,
Yet now y'are pleased with Wits low frippery,
Admitting Farce, the trifling mode of France,
T'infect you with fantastick ignorance,
Forgetting 'twas your glory to behold,
Plays wisely form'd, such as I made of old.

A few months later, in the epilogue of the stage failure The Six Days Adventure (c. March, 1670-71), Howard renewed his criticism of the comedies of the day, particularly for their reliance on superfluous spectacle. He blasted Dryden's popular prologue to the first part of The Conquest of Granada which Nell Gwyn had delivered so drolly in an outrageous broad hat:

Then let them pass with their Heroick guilt,
An Prologue borrow'd from a Hat and Belt.
Farce may be us'd in the Romantick way,
Like Pudding Jack turn'd Hector in a Play.
Rather than have a significant moral, as a serious play
should have, *The Conquest*, in Howard's opinion, consisted
of nothing but a fatuous jest. Probably Howard spoke so
harshly out of sincere critical conviction, for Dryden,
although he may have had a hand in the attack on *The British
Princes*, had never mentioned Howard in his own criticism. Clumsy and obdurate though he was in his criticism, Howard
seems to have had a genuine concern for the state of the
English drama.

Apparently *The Women's Conquest* escaped the censure of
the court wits. However, *The Six Days Adventure* stimulated
Buckhurst to try his skill at satire once more, and he
produced a mock prologue for Howard's latest failure which
included these lines:

> Thy stile's the same whatever be the Theme,
> So bad digestion turns all meat to Phlegm.
> As Skilful Divers to the bottom fall
> Sooner ye than they who cannot swim at all:
> Thy stile in thy'way of writing without thinking
> Hast got a strange agility in sinking.22

About this time Shadwell made this remark in a verse letter
to Wycherley:

> What Poet now with Plays or Farces:
> To whipping Criticks, turn up Arses;
> Criticks that Damn with little Wit
> As Ned, or Fleckno ever writ.

After *The Rehearsal*, however, the court wits wearied of
whipping Howard, and found new victims for their lampoons.

Howard returned to the critical wars in 1671 when two
of his plays, accompanied with long prefaces, appeared in print. The preface to *The Women's Conquest* contained several astute literary judgments. One judgment on Restoration drama particularly merits quotation:

> I make some doubt whether the best Rhyme, or Reason, that the Stage is now beholding to, will establish us as great in the judgment of those who shall succeed us; which, as I am far from assuming it to my self, in behalf of any undertaking of mine, so I shall as unwillingly allow it to the boldest of Pretenders; besides this, we are obliged in so great a measure to those great Artificers of Invention, and Wit, by which they raised our Stage to its former glory, as also in a high degree for those excellent rules and observations, which (if well heeded) cannot but improve our endeavors in this kind...

To cure these dramatic doldrums, Howard advocated that dramatists follow English rather than foreign models. He acknowledged that the writers of the previous age had faults, but he nevertheless maintained that, in certain instances, they still provided unequalled examples of good drama. In his opinion too many of his contemporaries preferred to look abroad rather than to look back for their inspiration.

Howard devoted considerable space in this preface to a defence of the use of blank verse instead of rhyme in drama. Countering Dryden's argument in favor of rhyme, he offered four reasons for the superiority of blank verse: it had been used by the best English writers of the previous age; it permitted the poet to rise poetically to the great occasions in a play; it made for a more natural conversation;
and it prevented poetasters from disguising their nonsense. Turning again to his touchstone of good dramatic practices, Howard pointed out that Jonson illustrated the comparative advantages of blank verse and rhyme in his plays:

I cannot but observe his Art and Nature together, in not confining the periods of sense and Rhime together (as is too much use'd now) but most commonly by carrying the sense of one verse into part of another, which elevates the stile of Verse (as is to be seen in Virgil) and without which it will never show so like prose, and proper for Dialogue, as it ought to do; an example to be worthily imitated by such as will write in Verse, to whose consideration I presume to commend it.

Howard admitted that rhyme had its place in poetry, but in the epic not in the drama. Probably for Dryden's edification, he noted shrewdly that the rhymed plays of Davenant and Orrery were properly operas and not dramas at all.

One of Howard's most unorthodox opinions was that comedy surpassed tragedy as a significant literary form. He compared the two forms and concluded, in contrast to the view of almost every other critic, that comedy, not being restricted to the education of the highest class, surpassed tragedy "in that it is of a more universal nature." Probing deeper into the nature of comedy he defined its end not as the provoking of laughter but as the improving of manners:

As the chief end of Comedy is improvement of manners, so the mirth arising thence, is to entertain our passions, and affections with delight proper thereunto; wherefore to make laughter the chiefest end of Comedy, is to impair
its more superiour esteem, since what is ridiculous, is not therefore Comedy.

This led Howard into the heart of this preface -- farce and its popularity among Restoration playwrights. He rejected the term "low comedy" as a feeble euphemism and described farce as made up of "Mimikry and other ridiculous Gestures mingled together, for which it may properly enough bear the denomination, though it is more of kin to a Play, then a Mule is to a Horse, in having somewhat longer ears..." The reason for so many farces being written was that too many aspiring dramatists, lacking wit, had to find cheaper ways to amuse the audience:

...though here I cannot chuse but censure the un-poetical, and no less offensive license in particularly designing the persons of any, an abuse that deserves to be severely resented, since (if permitted) no man can be secured, but that he may give his money to observe his alliance, friend, or himself, made his injurious entertainment on a publick Stage; besides, Plays ought more to reflect on manners, then men, as being their moral use, and when they do otherwise, they are Libels rather then Plays, and nauseate the ear of a modest Audience.

If the success of The Sullen Lovers is any indication, the audience of the Restoration had little modesty. In Howard's opinion, the success of Shadwell and his like depended not upon any vein of wit nor upon the judgment of wise men but upon the easily satisfied tastes of a scandal-loving audience. For dramatists to plume themselves on such hollow triumphs showed no less folly" then the Fly
had in the Fable, that sitting upon a Wheel, most ingeniously boasted of the dust that was rais'd by it." But Howard disdained to reply to his libellers, for he claimed to have more sense than to "willingly imploy so frivously my Pen, as to entertain a Polemick discourse of Plays, that to the prudent can signifie little more then to controvert which is the best way of performing a trifle."

The Six Days Adventure was published with four commendatory poems before it, once again showing that Howard had his allies or at least his hirelings. Each of the poems either saluted Howard as another Jonson or belittled his critics. In the preface itself Howard continued his attack on the ruling dramatic standards by which good plays were ignored while "obscene, ridiculous and indigested Plays, have their numerous Audiences; as if it were their due to receive a superior allowance, though they deserve not the name of good foils, to set off the beauties of the other...."

He traced the trouble to the fact that the theatres were practically controlled by a confederacy of so-called wits who were, in actuality, "the most deprav'd, and ignorant of men." These pretenders magisterially decided whether or not a play succeeded in the theatre, and, by so doing, moulded the dramatic tastes, tastes which Howard described in this way:
The humour of the age is so much inclin’d to favour low, and farcelike Mimikry, together with common place wit (not less undervaluing the Stage than the other) frequently observ’d from discourse in Taverns, French-houses, Coffee-houses, together with the loose and debauch’d carriages of men and women put together, not considering that the wit and beauty of Poesy consist rather in manners feign’d than in such of vulgar observation amongst men, that this Comedy, the humours of which are more remote and Satyrical, could not in reason meet with an applause equal to the former....

In spite of his plays, however, Howard found consolation in believing that they would receive their proper due in a less perverse age than the Restoration. In fact, he reflect-ed, it was probably better in the long run to fail in this tasteless age:

And though the ear be the principal sense to receive satisfaction from the Stage, yet we find, that of seeing had not seldome a greater predominancy, whilst Scenes, habits, dances, or perhaps an Actress take more with Spectators, than the best Dramatick wit, or contrivance of the Age, from whence we may prognosticate, that the enterlude of Punchinello, (having some resemblance of the same entertainment) may be as long frequented as either Theatre.

Thus consoling himself, Howard temporarily withdrew from playwriting.

It has been remarked already that Howard wrote a number of essays. Most of these, however, being vague and reflec-tive, have no bearing on his critical writing. But one piece, "Criticism and Censure," published in 1673 in a collection entitled Poems and Essays, seems to have some relevance. In it Howard distinguished between the true and
the false critic, setting up Cowley as the true critic because he dwelt more on the merits than on the defects of a piece of writing and deplored the fact that most present day critics preferred to do the reverse. He spoke from bitter experience about the false critic:

But we have many of our contemporaries that will make it their malice or mirth to do otherwise; nay, will not be contented to dislike, but they must nauseously character mens persons on the Stage, scatter or otherwise publish their scurrilous reproaches: insomuch that I have known some (and of no ordinary quality) that have more gloryed in a pitiful Lampoon, or Libel, than if they had been able to compose a good Poem. But how much more despicable they render their parts by such a mean discovery of themselves, than any mens Wit they can pretend to quarrel with, would deserve a serious inspection of their thoughts.

In 1678 Howard had another comedy on the stage. This time he knew what kind of a reception to expect from his critics, and, in the induction to The Man from Newmarket, he stressed the fact that, unlike most dramatists, he was a bold individualist in the theatre who did not submit his plays to the literary dictators for approval. He described this dictatorship in which dramatists were ruled by "men of Pudder call'd Wits" who read their plays in manuscript, made any alterations they saw fit, and then generously condescended to applaud their own efforts on the stage. As a result of this tyranny, the struggling professionals became "in effect one common Zany to some Grand Wit-monger." But Howard had little sympathy for poets who thus sold their souls:
There is a Poet, shall be nameless, that can scribble such kinde of Mungril Intrigues almost as fast as he can by plain speech tell his five Fingers; whilst others are more than six moneths knitting together their French and English Collections...

This was Howard's parting shot at Shadwell and others. Finding that individualism had no place in the Restoration theatre, he devoted his talents to the writing of non-dramatic and less controversial poetry.

iv

Although the Howard family had already felt the satirical sting of the court wits, they, along with many other heroic dramatists, found themselves mocked in public by the wits' major satirical undertaking, The Rehearsal, staged successfully at the Theatre Royal on December 7, 1671. Probably this celebrated burlesque was first written as early as 1665, at which time it chiefly ridiculed the works of Sir Robert Howard. However, the closing of the theatres because of the plague delayed its production so long that the thrusts against Howard and others had lost much of their point by the time the theatres reopened. Besides, in the interval Sir Robert had come forward as a useful defender of Buckingham's political activities, and the Duke therefore thought it politic to let the play remain unacted. But when Dryden rose to fame with his heroic plays, The Rehearsal was rapidly revised and staged. Because it was only partly revised,
however, it remained a sweeping criticism of most of the dramatists who wrote in the first decade of the Restoration.

Just as the precise date of the writing of the original version of The Rehearsal cannot be definitely fixed, although 1665 seems to be likely, so the exact authorship of the play remains uncertain. It is clear, however, that it had several authors and that George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham, had the largest share in its writing. As we shall see, Dryden, who must have had good reason for doing so, placed most of the blame for the play on the Duke. It is likely that at least three of Buckingham's friends, Butler, Sprat, and Clifford also had a hand in writing the play. Several manuscript lampoons said as much; for example, these lines from "The Session of the Poets, to the Tune of Cook Laurel:"

Intelligence was brought, the Court being set,
That a Play Tripartite was very near made,
Where malicious Matt Clifford, and spiritual Spratt
Were join'd with their Duke, a Peer of the Trade.

That other members of the court wit circle contributed to the play, either in its original or revised form, seems probable since they were all friends of the Duke and had recently joined with him in the attack on Edward Howard's The British Princes. In all likelihood Buckingham first conceived the idea of burlesquing heroic drama and then enlisted the willing aid of his court friends especially
in the revising of the play. 26

The Rehearsal had the serious purpose of laughing the heroic play off the stage and initiating a return to plays of common sense. 27 In denouncing the fatuous rhyme and incredible action of heroic plays, Buckingham advocated implicitly a return to nature, and by nature he meant a world of seeming actuality in which the actions of dramatic characters did not differ markedly from those of people in real life. Like most of the court wits, Buckingham regarded the plays of Ben Jonson as ready-made models for contemporary dramatists to imitate. This critical idea emerged in the very opening scene of The Rehearsal when Johnson, the city dweller who despaired of the current theatre fare, complained to his country friend Smith about "the new Kind of Wits" who were "your Virtuosi, your civil persons, your Drolls: fellows that scorn to imitate Nature; but are given altogether to elevate and surprise." 28 He then went on to define what he meant by "surprise: ...'tis Fighting, Loving, Sleeping, Rhyming, Dying, Dancing, Singing, Crying; and every thing, but thinking and Sense." Hard upon these words entered Bayes, who represented this new kind of wit and who declared at a later point, while defending one of the many absurdities in his heroic play The Lady in the Lobster: "I despise your Johnson and Beaumont, that borrow'd all they writ from Nature: I am for fetching it purely out
of my own fancy, I." Against the proponents of such un­
natural ideas Buckingham directed the satire of The Rehearsal.

The Rehearsal had another purpose that its authors never
made explicit: to keep the many professional dramatists
eager for court favor from becoming so overpresumptuous as
to forget their proper places in the static social hierarchy
of the Restoration. Buckingham had already shown his dislike
for such ambition, for in the epilogue to The Chances
(February, 1666-67) he wrote:

Besides the Author dreads the strut and mien
Of new prais'd Poets, having often seen
Some of his Fellows who have writ before,
When Nel has danc'd her Jig, steal to the Door,
Hear the Pit clap, and with conceit of that
Swell, and believe themselves the Lord knows what.
Most Writers now adays are grown so vain,
That once approv'd, they write, and write again,
Till they have writ away the Fame they got.

As we shall see, this same attitude towards aspiring writers
of the lower ranks emerged again in Rochester's dealings
with Dryden, Settle, and Crowne, and it seems to have been
the prevailing court attitude.

The Rehearsal satirized over seventy plays written by
most of the dramatists of the period 1660-70, especially
those of Dryden, the Howards, Davenant, Porter, Fanshawe,
and William Killigrew. Summers has already traced down most
of the allusions to plays, and D.F. Smith has dealt with the
specific criticisms brought against the heroic play. Since
I can add nothing to what these scholars have written in
these respects, I shall restrict myself to discussing the satire of those characteristics of heroic drama that Dryden defended.

Let us first look at the satire of the general nature of heroic drama, some of which we have previously touched on. For Bayes the end of all poetry, including drama, was "...to elevate your expectation, and then bring you off some extraordinary way." He explained that he brought off his audience extraordinarily by means of "...guilded Truncheons, forc'd concept, smooth Verse, and a Rant." Within a few years, probably in answer to this misrepresentation, Dryden offered his own definition of dramatic ends and means in his "Of Heroic Plays." Buckingham had absolutely no patience with the sheer spectacle that dominated Restoration heroic dramas; he considered it to be a cheap substitute for solid plot. To ridicule those who relied on spectacle, therefore, Buckingham had Bayes exclaim indignantly to Smith, "...why, what the Devil is the Plot good for but to bring in fine things?" and had him lard The Lady in the Lobster with senseless songs, incongruous dances, and eye-filling but irrelevant "allegories." In introducing Bayes' hero Drawcansir, Buckingham mocked not only Dryden's Almanzor but all such hopelessly "heroic" heroes with their bombastic boasts and incredible feats. Bayes proudly described this type of hero as one "...that frights his Mistress, snubs up
Kings, baffles Armies, and does what he will, without regard to numbers, good manners, or justice." To set forth in clear relief the superhuman qualities of such creatures, Bayes used the familiar formula of a conflict between love and honor in the equally familiar background of war and strife, a formula which, in Buckingham's opinion, had been used ad nauseam. Even worse, however, were the ludicrous attempts of the heroic dramatists to work variety into this dead formula, as Fayes did when he had a battle scene acted out by only two warriors who, instead of fighting, sing. Bayes marveled at his own ingenuity in producing this variation:

I make 'em, Sir, play the battel in Recitativo. And here's the conceipt. Just at the very instant that one sings, the other, Sir, recovers you his Sword, and puts himself in a warlike posture: so that you have at once your ear entertained with Music and good Language; and your eye satisfied with the garb, and accoutrements of war.

Here, indeed, was complete aesthetic satisfaction.

Buckingham felt that the poetry had no more sense than the rest of an heroic play, fancy raging out of the control of judgment. Smith voiced Buckingham's opinion that heroic poetry lacked sense and lucidity, and to him Bayes retorted heatedly:

...did you ever hear any people in Clouds speak plain? They must be all for flight of fancie, at its full range, without the least check, or controul upon it. When once you tye up spirits, and people in Clouds to speak plain, you spoil all.
Obviously Buckingham, having no use for plays laid in cloud cuckoo land, had no use for the theory of heroic drama that Dryden had advanced in his controversy with Sir Robert Howard.

Most of the preceding criticism was of the shotgun variety, and, although hitting Dryden, it managed to strike many of the other popular dramatists of the day. However, The Rehearsal also had a good deal of criticism aimed more directly at the opinions and the practices of the newly-crowned poet laureate. Dryden's censure of Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher in the preface to An Evening's Love (1671) and elsewhere seems to have especially infuriated Buckingham and his friends. In Buckingham's opinion Dryden censured the Jacobean authors for precisely what he himself most lacked in his plays: naturalness. Buckingham, therefore, ridiculed Dryden's mixture of tragedy and comedy and his attempts to get variety in his plays. We find Bayes boasting: "Gentlemen, because I would not have any two things alike in this Play, the last Act beginning with a witty Scene of Mirth, I make this begin with a Funeral."

The allusion was presumably to Colonel Henry Howard's lost play, but the criticism applied equally well to Dryden's tragi-comedies. As for Dryden's argument that rhyme promoted the primary end of tragedy better than any other verse form, Buckingham regarded this to be nothing more than an excuse for the writing of high-sounding but senseless
fustian. However, Wycherley put this same bit of criticism of heroic drama more bluntly in *The Plain Dealer* (December, 1676) when Novel remarked that "...rhyme, you know, often makes mystical nonsense pass with the critics of wit, and a double-meaning saying with the ladies, for soft, tender, and moving passion." (II,ii) Nor could Buckingham endure Dryden's predilection for similes in his plays; consequently we find Bayes describing this as one of his many rules for dramatists: "...you must ever make a simile, when you are surpris'd; 'tis the new way of writing." Buckingham felt that Dryden did not understand the nature of real repartee despite his repeated declarations of its value in drama. So Bayes boasted in *The Rehearsal* that "...you shall see 'em come in upon one another snip snap, hit for hit, as fast as can be," and could not contain himself for pleasure at his own appallingly unpointed witticisms. As for Dryden's claim that to be a good poet one must be able to argue well, Buckingham judged it a ridiculous assertion to come from one whose plays eschewed all logic. Furthermore Buckingham believed that Dryden was a plagiarist, and so he had Bayes employ the method of "transversing" to disguise thefts from other writers rather than think of original ideas. Bayes explained this method in these words:

*Why, Sir, when I have any thing to invent, I never trouble my head about it, as other men do; but*
presently turn over this Book, and there I have, at one view, all that Perseus, Montaigne, Seneca's Tragedies, Horace, Juvenal, Claudian, Pliny, Plutarch's Lives, and the rest, have ever thought upon this subject; and so, in a trice, by leaving out a few words, or putting in others of my own, the business is done.

Most of these criticisms discussed so far hit Dryden for ideas and practices that were not necessarily as foolish as The Rehearsal made them out to be; in fact, before long, Dryden had defended himself on almost every score. However, The Rehearsal also hit a number of Dryden's obvious and indefensible weaknesses such as the improprieties and irrelevance of many of his prologues and epilogues, the unnecessary length of The Conquest of Granada, the obsequiousness of his dedications, the vanity of his claim that only true wits could appreciate his dramas, and the need of an explanatory sheet for the audiences of The Indian Emperor.

Of the Howards, only Edward replied to The Rehearsal; Sir Robert may have felt that Buckingham had not intended to ridicule him. Dryden, however, although careful not to name Buckingham at first, defended himself against the critical charges. Undoubtedly these charges did disturb him, for he significantly chose to write his next two plays in the comic vein and did not return to serious drama until Amboyna (June, 1673), a play noticeably more securely ballasted by historical fact than The Conquest. It is also significant that until the prodigious success of Settle's The Empress
of Morocco in July, 1673, no new heroic dramas were produced.

In his "Defence of the Epilogue" (1672) Dryden went to
great lengths to justify his criticism of the Jacobeans that
had so annoyed the court wits, and this time he cited
specific instances of their faults. Perhaps in order not
to antagonize the courtiers further, he advanced this reason
for the Jacobeans having been so satisfied with bad writing:

They had many who admired them, and few who blamed
them; and certainly a severe critic is the greatest
help to a good wit: he does the office of a friend,
while he designs that of an enemy; and his malice
keeps a poet within those bounds, which the
luxuriancy of his fancy would tempt him to overleap.

A most generous statement coming from one so recently chas­
tised by the court critics, but a statement no more sur­
prising than Dryden's high praise--elsewhere in this essay--
for Buckingham's revision of the last two acts of Fletcher's
The Chances. At this time Dryden clearly did not wish to
dispute in public with a powerful courtier like Buckingham.

When Buckingham fell from favor at court, however,
Dryden deemed it somewhat safer to reply to The Rehearsal,
at least in those circles that read manuscript poems. For
example, in his epistle to Etherege (c.1677) he made light
of the burlesque, declaring it to be beneath the notice of
intelligent men:

If Gallic wit convince you scarce,
His Grace of Bucks has made a farce,
And you, whose comic wit is terse all,
Can hardly fall below Rehearsal.
When finish what you have began,
But scribble faster if you can;
For yet no George, to our discerning,
Has writ without a ten years' warning.

Another such squib of the same period, "On the Duke of Bucks," though not written by Dryden, ridiculed The Rehearsal and its author. It contained a number of the charges that Dryden made later; for example, it asserted that Buckingham created Bayes out of his own character:

But when his Poet John Bayes did appear,
'Twas known to more than half that were there,
That the greatest part was his Grace's Character.

After having listed the Duke's various fopperies, the poem, as was the fashion of the day, linked him with the renowned representatives of dulness:

But his Grace tormented the Players more
Than the Howards or Flocknoes, or all the Score
Of damned dull Rogues that e'er plagu'd them before.

In the meantime Dryden had begun to acknowledge a number of the stylistic faults that Buckingham and others had pointed out. In the preface to Troilus and Cressida (1679), for example, he admitted that he had often misused simile in his earlier plays:

Yet there is another obstacle to be removed, which is,--pointed wit, and sentences affected out of season; these are nothing of kin to the violence of passion: no man is at leisure to make sentences and similes when his soul is in agony.

In the dedication to The Spanish Friar (1681) he confessed that he had often used bombast in these early plays:
...and I have indignation enough to burn
D'Ambois annually, to the memory of Jonson. But
now, my lord, I am sensible, perhaps too late,
that I have gone too far; for, I remember some
verses of my own Maximin and Almanzor, which cry
vengeance upon me for their extravagance, and
which I wish heartily in the same fire with Statius
and Chapman.

By 1681 Buckingham had fallen from royal favor for the
last time, and so in that year Dryden felt free to wreak
his revenge for The Rehearsal to the full. He did it in
the nicely savage portrait of Buckingham as the giddy vir­
tuoso Zimri in Absalom and Achitophel. The lines which,
rightly or not, have fixed Buckingham's character for all
time are too familiar to bear quotation at any length. Let
these suffice:

Blest madman, who could every hour employ,
With something new to wish, or to enjoy!
Railing and praising were his usual themes;
And both (to show his judgment) in extremes:
So over-violent, or over-civil,
That every man, with him, was God or Devil.

Here was revenge with interest.

Buckingham published no rejoinder to what he must have
recognized as a mortal blow to his reputation. The disfavor
into which he had fallen at court forced him to lick his
wounds in private. Lick them he did in his own fantastic
way, for in his personal Commonplace Book he wrote this
bitter poem under the title "To Dryden:"

As witches images of wax invent
To torture those theyr bid to represent
And as the true live substance do's decay
Whilst that slight idoll melts in flames away
Such, and no lesser witchcraft wounds my name,
So thy ill made Resemblance wasts my fame
So as the charmed brand consumes itsh'fire
So did Meleagers vital heat expire.
Poore name! wt medicine for thee can I finde,
But thus with stronger charms, thy charme t'unbinde. 32

In 1683 in "The Vindication of The Duke of Guise"

Dryden again dealt briefly with The Rehearsal. Reflecting the political temper of that time, he scorned with Tory pride a Whig's attempt to malign his name:

Much less am I concerned at the noble name of Bayes; that is a brat so like his own father, that he cannot be mistaken from any other body. They might as reasonably have called Tom Sternhold, Virgil, and the resemblance would have held as well.

Finally in 1693 Dryden dismissed The Rehearsal. In his Essay on Satire he gave three reasons for not having replied to the charges that Buckingham had made: first, Dryden declared that Buckingham had unconsciously described himself in the person of Bayes; second, the satire was directed, not at Dryden, but at Sir Robert Howard and Davenant; and third, the so-called critics in the play, Smith and Johnson, represented the views of a faction completely unqualified to judge drama:

...Mr. Smith and Mr. Johnson, the main pillars of it, were two such languishing gentlemen in their conversation, that I could liken them to nothing but to their own relations, those noble characters of men of wit and pleasure about the town. The like considerations have hindered me from dealing with the lamentable companions of their prose and doggerel. I am so far from defending my poetry against them, that I will not so much as expose theirs.
So Dryden washed his hands of the criticism not only of Buckingham but of Rochester, whose brief but bitter controversy with Dryden we shall examine next.

v.

The dictatorial attitude of the court wits, already seen in The Rehearsal controversy, also lay behind the Earl of Rochester's clash with Dryden. A young friend of Buckingham, a member of the court circle, and one of the contributors to the satirical barrage against the Honourable Edward Howard, Rochester claimed both social and literary superiority more openly than the other court wits. In an epistolary essay to Mulgrave in 1669, he scorned public popularity and described himself as the only critic qualified to judge his poetry:

Thus I resolve of my own Poetry,
That 'tis the best, and there's a Fame for me.
If then I'm happy, what does it advance,
Whither to merit due, or Arrogance?
Oh! but the World will take offence hereby,
Why then the World shall suffer for 't, not I.
Did e're this sawcy World, and I agree
To let it have its beastly Will on me?

By this creed Rochester lived and wrote, making the slight concession of allowing the validity of the judgments of the other court wits. In "An Allusion to Horace" (c.1675) he concluded:
I loathe the Rabble, 'tis enough for me, 
If S[edley], S[hadwell], S[hephard], W[ycherley], 
G[odojphin], B[utler], B[uckhurst], B[uckingham], 
And some few more, whom I omit to name, 
Approve my sense, I count their censure Fame.

In Rochester's opinion a courtier's peers constituted his only legitimate judges. What the professionals wrote had no real importance, for they wrote for undeveloped public tastes. Nevertheless, if a professional ignored the advice of a condescending "superior," then it was proper for him to be struck down, figuratively and sometimes literally.

Therefore, Dryden, in ignoring the censures of The Rehearsal, invited a reprimand from the court wits. Furthermore, in squabbling jealously with another professional whom Rochester favored briefly, Dryden invited a special reprimand from Rochester.

Keenly interested in the stage, Rochester seems to have been especially influential in the selection of plays performed at court in the private theatre at Whitehall. In 1672, for example, he had helped promote Dryden's Marriage a la Mode at court, and, in the play's dedication, the laureate had effusively thanked him not only for promoting the play and for correcting parts of it but for offering in his person a model of true wit from which the dramatist could copy his witty characters. Dryden also extolled Rochester as a critic and added:
But, my Lord, I ought to have considered, that you are as great a judge, as you are a patron; and that in praising you ill, I should incur a higher note of ingratitude, than that I thought to have avoided. I stand in need of all your accustomed goodness for the dedication of this play; which, though perhaps it be the best of my comedies, is yet so faulty, that I should have feared you for my critic, if I had not, with some policy, given you the trouble of being my protector.

No doubt Dryden knew of Rochester's superior attitude, for he offered this piece of advice:

Your Lordship has but another step to make, and from the patron of wit, you may become its tyrant; and oppress our little reputations with more ease than you now protect them. But these, my Lord, are designs, which I am sure you harbour not, any more than the French king is contriving the conquest of the Swissers. It is a barren triumph, which is not worth your pains....

In less than a year's time, Rochester, at least for Dryden, had assumed this role of the literary tyrant. Before doing so, however, apparently Rochester thanked Dryden for the dedication and praised his poetry. Dryden, in a letter to the Earl, returned the compliment with interest:

And now the shame of seeing myself overpay'd so much for an ill Dedication, has made me almost repent of my address. I find, it is not for me to contend any way with your Lordship, who can write better on the meanest subject, than I can on the best.

In "Timon" (1673) Rochester exercised his scornful wit on what he thought to be a very mean subject: Dryden himself.

By 1673 Dryden's success in the theatre had reached its full stream. The Conquest of Granada (December-January 1670-71) had packed the public theatre and had gained court performance.
In the epilogue to the second part of the play Dryden had felt secure enough in court favor to publish his opinion that the dramas that he and his contemporaries wrote surpassed those of the preceding age. He declared that the proper form of tragedy, the heroic form, had been found and perfected not only by the dramatists but by the age itself:

If love and honour now are higher raised,
'Tis not the poet, but the age is praised.
Wit's now arrived to a more high degree;
Our native language more refined and free,
Our ladies and our men now speak more wit
In conversation, than those poets writ.

In spite of the flattery, this passage annoyed the court wits who held the poets of the former age in the highest esteem. They hurriedly revised *The Rehearsal* which ridiculed Dryden as a dramatist and as a critic. However, instead of withdrawing his opinions, Dryden sought to justify them with proof; as he explained in "A Defence of the Epilogue" (1672):

"...it was necessary for me either not to print it, or to show that I could defend it." In this essay he in no way changed his views; on the contrary he cited numerous improprieties of language and plot in the plays of Fletcher, Shakespeare, and Jonson, and blamed them not so much on the writers themselves as on the rude and unpolished age in which they lived. For one thing, these writers lacked wise critics. Dryden still had the highest regard for the courtly critics, for, in speaking of the Jacobean dramatists, he wrote:
They had many who admired them, and few who blamed them; and certainly a severe critic is the greatest help to a good wit: he does the office of a friend, while he designs that of an enemy; and his malice keeps a poet within those bounds, which the luxuriancy of his fancy would tempt him to overleap. He also averred that "In the age wherein those poets lived, there was less of gallantry than in ours; neither did they keep the best company of theirs." However, Dryden was about to part with some of the best company of his own age.

Indications of this parting appeared when Martin Clifford, at the time Buckingham's secretary and later Master of Charterhouse, circulated four letters addressed to Dryden expressing opinions about the laureate with which most of the court wits probably concurred. Although the letters were not published till 1687 under the title Notes upon Mr. Dryden's Poems in Four Letters, the last letter bore the date July 1, 1672. Clifford began by explaining why he wrote these pieces:

Sir, I had pass'd by the gross Scurrility of your last Prologue with the same Contempt that I have always had for the rest of your Scribling, had not some of my Acquaintance suggested to me, that it was unfit to suffer you any longer to go on without Reproof.

We may safely assume the acquaintances to be the court wits, but to what prologue Clifford referred to we cannot be as certain. He may have meant the prologue to the second part of The Conquest (January, 1670-71) which began with this comment on drama critics:
They, who write ill, and they, who ne'er durst write,
Turn critics, out of mere revenge and spite:
A playhouse gives them fame; and up there starts,
From a mean fifth-rate wit, a man of parts.

This may have alluded to the authors of The Rehearsal, one
of whom seems to have been Clifford. However, it may have
been the prologue to Marriage a la Mode (c. April, 1672)
which aroused Clifford and his friends. This piece, in
which Dryden complained of the popularity of bawdy farce,
ended with these lines:

We'll follow the new mode which they begin,
And treat 'em with a room, and couch within;
For that's one way, howe'er the play fall short,
T'oblige the town, the city, and the court.

The wits may have considered this a slur on their own taste
in comedy.

Clifford set himself two tasks in these letters: to
expose Dryden's worst faults and to unmask him as a
plagiarist. By performing these tasks Clifford hoped to
justify the court wits' opinion that Dryden was "the dullest
Plant-Animal that ever the Earth produced."

Having outlined his aims, Clifford proceeded to examine
The Conquest in the remaining three letters. The second
letter concentrated on Dryden's vanity in regarding his play
so highly. Clifford, after remarking that "you care not a
Rush with what Contempt and Nauseousness the Judicious speak
of your Bauble," ridiculed Dryden's assertion that Almanzor
possessed Homeric qualities: "For this Character might as
well have been borrowed from some of the Stalls in Bedlam, or any of your own hair-brain'd Coxcombs, which you call Heroes, and Persons of Honour." Furthermore, Almanzor was actually another Indian Emperor or Maximin in disguise, and this similarity of heroes prompted Clifford to observe that "You are therefore a strange unconscionable Thief, that art not content to steal from others, but do'st rob thy poor wretched Self too." In the third letter Clifford, after citing numerous lines from The Conquest as nonsensical, arrived at this conclusion:

You must not take it ill, Mr. Dryden, if I suspect both verses to have a strong Tincture of Nonsense, but if you'll defend 'em, of all loves I beg of thee that thou would'st construe them, and put them into sense: for to me, as Parson Hugh says in Shakespear, they seemed Lunacies, it is mad as a mad Dog, it is affectations.

In the same letter Clifford rapped Dryden for his disrespect towards the poets of the previous age, especially towards Shakespeare. In the final letter, besides noting Dryden's failure to defend himself, he continued to expose the nonsense of Dryden's verse and the meanness of his wit. Finally Clifford summed up his estimation of Dryden's talents in these words:

I vow to thee, I cannot perceive either Art, Flame, or the least Spark of fire in thy Poetry. I must acknowledge it has all the qualities of another Element, I mean the Earth, 'tis cold, dry, and so heavy, that at the hearing of it, the judicious part of thy company fall asleep, and one would have thought, thou had'st done so too, at the writing.
Dryden seems to have ignored Clifford's attack, probably because he had no desire to stir the court wits up so soon after *The Rehearsal*. In spite of his caution, however, he soon felt their verbal barbs again.

In 1673 Rochester wrote "Timon: A Satyr" which set forth the literary creed he followed. The poem related the painful experiences of Timor, a man of grace and learning like Rochester himself, in the company of some boorish pretenders to gentility. At one point the company expressed literary opinions, each of which represented some popular lapse in good taste: Orrery's heroic romances, Etherege's plotting and grammar, Settle's rhetoric, and Crowne's heroes were lauded. Finally one of the company, speaking of a simile in Dryden's *The Indian Emperor*, ecstatically burst out:

As if our Old World, modestly withdrew,  
And here in private had brought forth a New.  
There are Two Lines! who but he durst presume  
To make the old World, a new withdrawing Room,  
Where another World she's brought to Bed!  
What a brave Midwife is a Laureate head!

Then the company fell into a violent political argument which allowed the disgusted Timon to escape.

In 1674 there began a dispute over court favor involving Settle, Dryden, Shadwell, Crowne, and others, the details of which will be more fully described elsewhere in this study. Sufficient for the moment is the fact that Rochester played
a part in it, for, by helping to promote the career of the young and inexperienced Elkanah Settle by having *The Empress of Morocco* performed at Whitehall, Rochester seems to have infuriated the older dramatists who had had to wait several years before gaining such a chance to curry court favor. Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne joined forces to try to pluck the feathers from this upstart crow, feathers that the vainglorious Settle did not hesitate to wave in his colleagues' faces.

As a result the professionals treated the court to what amounted to a literary brawl. Rochester, as if to fan the flames, dropped Settle as quickly as he had picked him out of nowhere, and interested himself briefly in the fortunes of John Crowne by helping to promote him at court just as he had helped promote Settle. Crowne had only three plays to his name, and Settle had dismissed him in 1674 as "so little a Reptile in Poetry" that he had to rely on scurrility to gain public attention. Nevertheless, in spite of Crowne's notoriety, he was chosen (perhaps because of Rochester's influence) to write an elaborate court masque instead of Dryden, to whom the honor rightfully belonged as the poet laureate. It may have been that Crowne was commissioned to write a masque after Dryden submitted an unacceptable piece. Though the circumstances are vague, Dryden seems to have had a masque ready for presentation at court
around 1675, the year of Crowne's *Calisto*. He had written *The State of Innocence* by 1674 and, when it was finally published in 1677, he dedicated it to Mary of Modena, the Duke of York's second wife. Although he may have written this masque for York's wedding festivities of November 21, 1673, Dryden more probably prepared it for performance some time after the Duchess's arrival in England in 1674. At any rate the authorities rejected *The State of Innocence* for court presentation because it had too pronounced a Puritan bias for the pleasure of the Catholic Duchess, and in its place they approved *Calisto*. Apparently, then, Rochester had little to do with the rejection of Dryden's play. Why, then, was Dryden angry at Rochester, and why did he turn to Rochester's enemy Mulgrave for patronage? Dryden may have disliked the haste with which Rochester promoted Crowne in his stead. He may have expected Rochester to lend more support for the selection of *The State of Innocence* than he did. Certainly Dryden had tried to please Rochester and the other court wits. He had temporarily stopped writing heroic dramas, and he had diligently dedicated his plays to the right people: *Marriage a la Mode* to Rochester himself whom he had saluted as the great protector of poets; *The Assignation* to Sedley, another of the court wits; *Amboyna* to Clifford, a political play to a politician; and *The State of Innocence* to the Duchess of York. There was nothing disrespectful in
such dedicating, nor in any of Dryden's other actions, except perhaps for his persistent critical opinions. Dryden probably felt that Rochester had simply toyed with him and his rival professionals.

Like Buckingham, Rochester condemned the spectacular elements in the currently popular plays. He did not tolerate spectacle even when used by one of the intimates of the court wit circle, Shadwell; he had Psyche in mind when he declared in the epilogue to Sir Francis Fane's Love in the Dark (May, 1675):

As Charms are Nonsense, Nonsense seems a Charm,
Which hearers of all Judgment does disarm;
For Songs and Scenes, a double Audience bring,
And Doggerel takes, which Smiths in Sattin sing.
Now to Machines, and a dull Mask you run,
We find that Wit's the Monster you would shun,
And by my troth, 'tis most discreetly done.
For since, with Vice and Folly, Wit is fed,
Through Mercy 'tis, most of you are not dead.
Players turn Puppets now at your desire,
In their Mouth's Nonsense, in their Tales a Wire,
They fly through Clouds of Clouts, and showers of Fire.
A kind of loosing Loadum is their Game,
Where the worst Writer has the greatest Fame.
To get vile Plays like theirs, shall be our care;
But of such awkard Actors we despair.

But even more revealing were these lines in "Satyr," a poem of about the same period:

For Witts are treated just like common Whores,
First they're enjowy'd, and then kickt out of Doores:
The pleasure past, a threatening doubt remains,
That frights th'enjoyer, with succeeding pains:
Women and Men of Wit, are dang'rous Tools,
And ever fatal to admiring Fools.

Not wishing to be thought an "admiring Fool," Rochester seems
to have treated the professional poets "just like common Whores."

Rochester renewed his criticism of the professionals in "An Allusion to Horace." This time he made no effort to hide the fact that Dryden was his principal target, for the poem began:

Well Sir, 'tis granted, I said Dryden's Rhymes,
Were stol'n, unequal, nay dull many times:
What foolish Patron, is there found of his,
So blindly partial, to deny me this?

The "foolish Patron" happened to be John Sheffield, the Earl of Mulgrave, with whom Rochester had recently had a bitter falling out. "An Allusion" went on to censure Dryden for pandering to popular tastes. Once again Rochester's main point was that popularity with the untutored mob indicated that a writer had turned his back on the cultivated tastes of his literary superiors:

'Tis therefore not enough, when your false sense,
Hits the false Judgment, of an Audience:
Of clapping Fools, assembled a vast Crowd,
Till the throng'd Play-house, crack with the dull load;
That can divert the Rabble, and the Court.

Rochester conceded that Dryden's poetic efforts surpassed those of the other professionals, but he maintained that they still fell below those of Shadwell and Wycherley in comedy, both of whom had profited from the examples of Shakespeare and Jonson and from the criticism of the court wits. In Rochester's opinion Dryden possessed only limited talents; Waller in panegyrics, Buckhurst in satire, and Sedley in
love lyrics, all outstripped Dryden in the non-dramatic poetic forms. Significantly, all three belonged to the court wit group. Rochester concluded, therefore, that Dryden's poetic laurels were strictly professional and that, because he ignored the opinions of the wits, he followed false lights. As for Dryden's criticism, Rochester deplored its arrogance, particularly in regard to those writers of the previous age whom the court wits valued so highly:

But does not Dryden, find ev'n Johnson dull? 
Fletcher and Beaumont, uncorrect, and full, 
Of lewd Lines, as he calls 'em? Shake-spears stile 
Stiff and affected; to his own the while, 
Allowing all the justness that his Pride, 
So Arrogantly had to these deny'd? 
And may not I, have leave impartially, 
To search, and censure Dryden's Works, and try, 
If those gross faults, his choice Pen does commit, 
Proceed from want of Judgment, or of Wit? 
Or if his lumpish fancy, does refuse, 
Spirit and Grace, to his loose slattern Muse? 
Five Hundred Verses, ev'ry Morning writ, 
Proves you no more a Poet, than a Wit.

Believing that Dryden had to learn to criticize himself more severely and to ignore the cheap applause of the theatre mob, Rochester offered him this advice:

Compare each Phrase, examine ev'ry Line, 
Weigh ev'ry Word, and ev'ry Thought refine; 
Scorn all applause, the vile Rout can bestow, 
And be content to please those few who know. 
Canst thou be such a vain mistaken Thing, 
To wish thy Works might make a Play-house ring. 
With the unthinking Laughter, and poor praise, 
Of Fops, and Ladies, factious for thy Plays?

This supercilious criticism apparently led Dryden to speak angrily of Rochester in the coffee-houses, for, in a letter
to his friend Savile, Rochester remarked in April, 1676:

You write me word, That I'm out of favour with a certain Poet, whom I have ever admir'd for the disproportion of him and his Attributes: He is a Rarity which I cannot but be fond of, as one would be of a Hog that could fiddle, or a singing Owl. If he falls upon me at the Blunt, which is his very good Weapon in Wit, I will forgive him, if you please, and leave the Repartee to Black Will, with a Cudgel.41

But Dryden had wearied of the court critics who treated him like a puppet to be manipulated according to their whims. Besides, by now he had achieved a public reputation and had found new patrons at court. The affront of being shoved aside in favor of Settle and Crowne and the attacks in The Rehearsal, "Timon," and "An Allusion to Horace" led Dryden to dedicate his next acted play, Aureng-Zebe (1676), to the Earl of Mulgrave, Rochester's bitter enemy. In that dedication Dryden mentioned those courtiers "who make it their business to ruin wit," and he described the humiliation of the professional dramatists who had to deal with them:

It is true, that nauseousness of such company is enough to disgust a reasonable man; when he sees, he can hardly approach greatness, but as a moated castle; he must first pass through the mud and filth with which it is encompassed.

Rochester's final attack on Dryden came in "A Session of the Poets" (c. 1676) in the writing of which Buckingham and perhaps other court wits had a hand.42 While taking most of the practicing dramatists to task, this satire rather summarily dismissed Dryden with these lines:
In the Head of the Gang J[ohn]D[ryden], appear'd,
That Antient grave Wit, so long lov'd, and fear'd;
But Apollo, had heard a Story 'ith'Town,
Of his quitting the Muses, to wear the black Gown;
And so gave him leave now his Poetry's done,
To let him turn Priest, now R[eeve], is turn'd Nun.

The rest of the poem had more bite than this piece of rather stale town gossip. By this time, however, Rochester apparently tired of trying to discipline Dryden. Recent scholarship has shown that he had no part in the Rose Alley ambuscade of the laureate. Perhaps Rochester's interest in poetry was flagging, for soon he was to give over the role of the literary critic and busy himself with the condition of his soul.

Dryden continued to defend his manner of writing plays against the criticism of the wits. In his "Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence," an essay appended to the unacted State of Innocence (1677), Dryden questioned the reason for the court wits' negative attitude towards heroic drama:

I do not dispute the preference of Tragedy; let every man enjoy his taste: but 'tis unjust that they, who have not the least notion of heroic writing, should therefore condemn the pleasure which others receive from it, because they cannot comprehend it. Let them please their appetites in eating what they like; but let them not force their dish on all the table. They, who would combat general authority with particular opinion, must first establish themselves a reputation of understanding better than other men.

In brief, Dryden argued that the court wits' ignorance bred their contempt. One year later in the preface to All for
Love (1678), Dryden put aside his foil and, without naming him, hit Rochester for arrogance, not literary arrogance so much as social arrogance: an unjust wielding of the power accorded to him by his position at court to intimidate the professional writers:

A poet is not pleased, because he is not rich; and the rich are discontented, because the poets will not admit them of their numbers. Thus the case is hard with writers: If they succeed not, they must starve; and if they do, some malicious satire is prepared to level them, for daring to please without their leave. But while they are so eager to destroy the fame of others, their ambition is manifest in their concernment; some poem of their own is to be produced, and the slaves are to be laid flat with their faces on the ground, that the monarch may appear in the greater majesty.

Thus Dryden boldly declared that envy lay behind the critical attacks of the court wits. What made it still worse for the professional, however, was the fact that none of the courtiers wrote well enough to merit honest praise. Though not naming it, Dryden took Rochester's "Allusion to Horace" and declared that it must have been the work of some hired hack because it was such a clumsy and perverted poem and so full of errors and false judgments. Then Dryden fell upon Rochester with these words:

For my part, I would wish no other revenge, either for myself, or the rest of the poets, from this rhyming judge of the twelvpenny gallery, this legitimate son of Sternhold, than that he would subscribe his name to his censure, or (not to tax him beyond his learning) set his mark: For, should he own himself publicly, and come from behind the lion's skin, they whom he condemns would be thankful...
to him, they whom he praises would choose to be condemned; and the magistrates, whom he has elected, would modestly withdraw from their employment, to avoid the scandal of his nomination. The sharpness of his satire, next to himself, falls most heavily on his friends, and they ought never to forgive him for commending them perpetually the wrong way, and sometimes by contraries.

Not only was Rochester a bad poet and a worse critic, but, in hiding behind a cloak of anonymity, he was a coward.

With this withering denunciation, Dryden ended the controversy with Rochester.

vi.

This chapter has examined the earlier Restoration controversies. As we shall see, these dealt much more with problems of the nature of art than did the controversies that occurred later in the period. Two facts explain this shift in interest. By 1675 the forms that post-1660 drama was to take had become more or less established; consequently the issues that most concerned the disputants of the 1660's were settled. Furthermore, by 1675 the number of professionals had so increased that rivalry became intense. As a result the issues that the dramatists fought over became noticeably more personal.
For those who have heard of it, the name Elkanah Settle is synonymous with the worst kind of English literature. When mentioned at all, and since the eighteenth century that has been seldom, it has been for the sake of ridicule. Just one hundred years after Settle enjoyed a brief moment of fame, John Wilkes expressed an opinion to Dr. Johnson that has prevailed until today:

There is something in names which one cannot help feeling. Now Elkanah Settle sounds so queer, who can expect much from that name? We should have no hesitation to give it for John Dryden, in preference to Elkanah Settle, from the name only, without knowing their different merit.

Wilkes' reaction to such a "queer" name was the right one, for Settle was no Dryden, a fact that Settle had to find out for himself. It is no doubt right that only one study of Settle's life and writings has been published since his death. Yet the facts remain that Dryden and many of his contemporaries once regarded Settle as an imposing writer and that Dryden himself spent considerable time and effort trying to deflate Settle's reputation as a dramatist. The struggle between Settle and Dryden was clearly a mismatch, though for a time Dryden came off second best. Dr. Johnson
was shocked at Dryden's even bothering with Settle; however, he did put his finger on the chief reason for Dryden's doing so:

To see the highest minds thus levelled with the meanest may produce some solace to the consciousness of weakness, and some mortification to the pride of wisdom. But let it be remembered, that minds are not levelled in their powers but when they are first levelled in their desires. Dryden and Settle had both placed their happiness in the claps of the multitudes.  

This controversy between two professionals began on a literary basis but ended, as we shall see, deeply tinged with politics. It was one of the most complex controversies of this or of any other period; for it was an amalgam of literary, personal, and political feelings, and it involved numerous supporting actors during its progress.

Settle was a child of fortune. It is quite possible that, except for a series of unusual circumstances, both he and his "queer" name would not have emerged from the tranquillity of the unknown. But Settle had the misfortune to be lucky. Like most ambitious youths of the time he wrote plays in the hope that one might be staged at a city theatre and so bring him to the attention of the court. Unlike most youthful aspirants, however, Settle had his first drama, a
tragi-comedy called Cambyses, staged successfully by the Duke's company early in 1671. This piece of good luck catapulted him into the forefront of the horde of professional writers competing for court favor. It also brought him to the attention of Rochester, who always seems to have been willing to help some ambitious young writer if only for a short time. Rochester helped to secure court performances for Settle's second play, The Empress of Morocco, in 1673. In so succeeding, however, Settle incurred the anger of the other professionals, jealous of any success but their own. To make matters worse, the wine of such sudden success turned Settle's head and led him to flaunt his popularity at court before his envious fellow dramatists. Of this success F.C. Browne declares:

It won for Settle the most enthusiastic applause of a brilliant court, the approval of many in the kingdom, and the undying jealousy and enmity of some of the contemporary playwrights. This mediocre production, on account of the favor of the court, the special effort of the printer, and a chance attack in the Dedication upon Dryden, was destined to become a factor in changing the taste for heroic plays, in causing Dryden to use a different poetic medium, and in promoting the use of the spectacular in drama.

The opening paragraph of the dedication of The Empress deserves full quotation, for it contains the allusions that vexed Dryden and annoyed most of the professionals.

The Impudence of Scriblers in this Age, has so corrupted the Original Designes of Dedications, that before I dare tell you, this trifle begs your
Lordships Protection, I ought first to Examine on what grounds I make the Attack; for now every thing that e're saw the Stage, how modest soever it has been there, without daring to shew its Face above three Dayes, has yet the Arrogance to thrust itself into the World in Print with a Great Name before it; where the fawning Scribler shall compendiously say, the factions of Critiques, the Ill time of the Year, and the worse Acting of the Players, has prejudic'd his Play, but he doubts not but his Grace, or his Honour's more impartial Judgment will find that pardonable which the World has so Maliciously Censur'd; that is as much as to say: Sir, You are the only Person at Court whose blind side I dare venture on, not doubting but your good Nature will excuse what all the World (except the Author) has justly condemned. Thus they esteem their Plays, as the Fanaticks do their Religion, the better for suffering Persecution; and to disguise their Shame, and prop their Feeble Writings, they make Deductions when their Plays are Damn'd, as the Dutch do Bonfires, when their Navies are beaten; be their Success never so bad, they still write themselves Conquerors: And thus a Dedication which was formerly a Present to a Person of Quality, is now made a Libel on him, whilst the Poet either supposes his Patron to be so great a Sot, to defend that in Print, which he hist off the Stage: Or else makes himself a greater, in asking a Favour from him which he ne're expects to obtain. However, that which is an abuse to the Patron, is a Complement to the Bookseller, who whispers the Poet, and tells him, Sir, Your Play had misfortune, and all that--but if you'd but write a Dedication, or Preface--the Poet takes the hint, picks out a person of Honour, tells him he has a great deal of Wit, gives us an account who writ sense in the last Age, supposing we cannot be Ignorant who writes it in This; Disputes the nature of Verse, Answers a Cavil or two, Quibles upon the Court, Huffs the Critiques, and the work's done. 'Tis not to be imagin'd how far a Sheet of this goes to make a Book-seller Rich, and a Poet Famous.

It is not hard to see how Dryden regarded this as a none too well veiled satire of his practices. By 1673 he had published thirteen plays, eight of them with dedications
and seven with prefaces or essays. In his most recent essay, the lengthy "Defence of the Epilogue" (1672), he had examined the writers of the previous age and at the same time had replied to a number of his critics. In his most recent dedication, that of The Assignation to Sedley in 1673, he had admitted that the play had failed on the stage but had asserted that the best judges of the age had approved of it. In the same piece Dryden had boldly declared that what his critics called faults were really poetic beauties beyond their comprehension. It seems almost certain, then, that Settle aimed his aspersions at Dryden. There are several reasons for Settle's doing so. To begin with, Dryden had become the most successful dramatist of the day with the success of The Conquest, which made him the most obvious figure for an ambitious newcomer to belittle. Furthermore, the fact that The Conquest had packed the Theatre Royal would have raised Settle's professional ire, since he wrote for the rival Duke's company. At the same time, however, Settle's satire remained sufficiently general to include others, notably Shadwell, who had five plays, four dedications, and four prefaces to his credit at the time. Macdonald advances another possible cause for Settle's making free with Dryden's reputation:

After The Empress of Morocco had been given at Court, Settle was anxious to have it acted at the Theatre Royal, although he was under an agreement with the
Duke’s Company. This, he explains in his _Narrative_, written ten years later when he had decided to part company “with that troublesome companion Whiggism,” could not be effected. It may be that Dryden made no very strenuous effort to retain the play at Drury Lane, or possibly Settle was anxious to revenge Ravenscroft, with whom he was on friendly terms, for Dryden’s attack on Mamamouchi, or it may simply be that Settle, who was never very level-headed, felt in an excess of vanity a desire to chastise a rival.

There can be little doubt that Settle also suffered from an acute attack of _hubris_ when he wrote the dedication to _The Empress_ and that the sudden success of his play led him to bear Dryden. However, in spite of his youth and inexperience, Settle was considered a worthy rival for Dryden by many of his contemporaries. Although R.G. Ham presses his point too far, he reminds us wisely that Dryden’s reputation in 1673 was not thought to be beyond the reach of any of his rivals even though he was the leading dramatist of the day:

_The truth of the matter is that steadily from 1673, when Dryden sent his first blow against_ The Empress _of Morocco, until 1682, when the second part of_ Absalom and Achitophel _delivered the final coup de grâce, Settle was by all odds the most potent adversary in Dryden’s field, and one whom the witty age considered entirely worthy of his mantle._

However, Settle’s reputation had begun to diminish long before 1682; in fact, shortly after the success of _The Empress_ his fame seems to have rested more on his political activities than on his dramatic productions. Consequently as early as 1675 such writers as Otway, Behn, Lee, Crowne,
and Banks were at least as potent rivals of Dryden in the field of serious drama as Settle. Dryden himself ceased to worry about Settle as a literary rival soon after 1675, and, when at last he did deal with Settle in the second part of "Absalom and Achitophel" in 1682, his motives were more political than aesthetic.

Along with Settle’s sneering remarks in the dedication, the attention lavished on the production and publication of The Empress infuriated Dryden. Not only did members of the court perform the play at Whitehall, but Mulgrave and Rochester honored the occasion by penning special prologues for the play. To make matters still worse for Dryden, when the play appeared in print in 1673 it was embellished with six "sculptures" or illustrations and sold for two shillings, twice the normal price for plays. As Browne has remarked: "Nothing seemed to have worried Dryden more than the fact that Settle's play had been thought worthy of 'sculptures'." Apparently Dryden had good reason to worry, for, even though today we recognize in The Empress some of the worst extravagances of heroic drama, John Dennis, writing in 1718, could clearly remember the fame the play once brought to Settle:

It was Acted for a Month together; and was in such high Esteem, both with the Court and Town, that it was Acted at Whitehall before the KING, by the Gentleman and Ladies of the Court; and the Prologue, which was spoke by the Lady BETTY HOWARD, was writ by the Famous Lord ROCHESTER. The Booksellers, who printed it, depending upon the prepossession of the
Town, ventur'd to distinguish it from all the Plays that had been ever published before. For it was the First Play that ever was sold in England for Two Shillings, and the First that ever was printed with Cuts.\textsuperscript{12}

Finally, of course, we must remember that at the time of the success of The Empress, Dryden, along with the whole Theatre Royal company, was experiencing a particularly difficult time competing with Dorset Garden, while Shadwell had found several of his own recent efforts ill-received.\textsuperscript{13} The unknown author of The Woman turn'd Eully (c. May, 1675) placed much of the blame for the actions of Dryden and Shadwell on the fickleness of the audience:

\begin{quote}
So ill success have Poets now adaiies,  
That shortly none will dare to write you Plays.  
Dramatick Wit is ominous of late;  
The little Flash does still prognosticate  
A Paper-war, or more scurvie Fate.  
And (like a graceless Child) Heroick Rattle  
Is realiz'd, and turn'd the Poets Battle.
\end{quote}

iii

Early in 1674, Dryden, with the assistance of Shadwell and Crowne, wrote and published anonymously Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco. Or, Some Few Errata's to be Printed instead of the Sculptures with the Second Edition of that Play. This vituperative essay consisted of four sections: a Preface which attacked the character of Settle and the quality of his play; some
general criticism of the faults of the play; seventy-one pages of close textual criticism; and a Postscript which drew conclusions about Settle's merits as an artist. Despite the violence and the perverseness of much of the criticism, Notes and Observations was amusing in its use of the reductio ad absurdum method of ridicule.

Settle believed that Dryden was chiefly responsible for the writing of Notes and Observations. In his rejoinder he assigned the responsibility with these biting words:

And thereupon with very little Conjuration, By those three remarkable Qualities of Railing, Boasting, and Thieving I found a Dryden in the Frontispiece. Then going through the Preface, I observ'd the drawing of a Fools Picture to be the design of the whole piece, and reflecting on the Painter I consider'd, that probably his Pamphlet might be like his Plays, not to be written without help. And according to expectation I discovered the Author of Epsome-Wells, and the Author of Pandion and Amphigenia lent their assistance. How! Three to one thought I? and Three Gentlemen of such disagreeing Qualifications in one Club: the First a Man that has had wit, but is past it; the Second that has it, if he can keep it, and the Third that neither has, nor is ever like to have it. Then boldly on I went, and fortified with patience (as I found it requir'd) for a full perusal, I wonder'd the less at the Deformity of the piece, when such different hands went to the composure. The first of these is the only person that pretends an injury receiv'd from a satirick Line or two in the Epistle to Morocco: Such as the Author never design'd for a particular reflection, and such as I can say Elkanah would have thank'd him for, provided like them, as they had been true, they had been harmless too. And consequently I conclude him the promoter of so ill-manner'd, and so scurrilous retort. The Second I suppose only putting his Comical hand to the work, to help forward with the mirth of so ridiculous a Libel; and the Third
perhaps out of a Vain Glory of being in Print, knowing himself to be so little a Peptile in Poetry, that hee's beholding to a Lampoon for giving the World to know, that there is such a writer in being.

No doubt Settle knew what he was talking about; at any rate we must assume that he did, for it is almost impossible today to determine on the basis of style precisely who wrote any particular section of Notes and Observations. Probably Dryden outlined the attack and set its general tone; it also appears likely that he wrote the scathing preface and postscript. Settle, in the preface to Ibrahim, assigned some of the textual criticism to Shadwell:

Having made some little reflexions in an Epistle before my Morocco, which I have declared were very innocently intended. This Gentleman, who of all Mankind could not pretend to have been meant by them, was more malicious in his examinations of the fourth Act of Morocco than both the other Commentatours.

A reference to Settle as "Poet Ninny" in Notes and Observations (p.66) suggests the work of Shadwell who had dubbed Edward Howard with the same title a few years before. However, in 1698 Crowne remarked in the epistle to Caligula: "In my notes on a Play call'd the Empress of Morocco (I call 'em mine because above three parts of four were written by me) I gave vent to more ill-nature than I will do again."

A.P. White, Crowne's most recent critic, treats this statement with extreme caution:
It may be that this remark, like Wycherley's statement to Pope concerning the dates at which his comedies were written, is only a reminiscent half-truth, but Crowne would scarcely have penned it if he had not had a considerable share in the abusive pamphlet.\(^1\)

The problem of the shares of the three contributors must remain in doubt.

**Notes and Observations** pretended to have the lofty purpose of unblinding those many courtiers who had so foolishly lionized Settle. It was to prevent the courtiers' future embarrassment when they realized their folly that the three critics laid bare the faults of *The Empress of Morocco*:

So the favours of persons of Honour and Generosity cast on ingenious Men, encourage them to produce excellent things, and are bestowed for the advantage of the World; but thrown away on such unimprovable Dunces as this, only produce such things as they say are bred of Sun and Slime in **Aegypt**, things half Mud and half Monster, and such another thing is this Play, a thing made up of Fustian and non-sense, which with much ado, after two years painful hatching, crawl'd out of the muddy head where it was engendered.

This introductory statement exemplifies the Billingsgate level to which the pamphlet often descended. However, it was not just for the sake of the patrons of the theatre that **Notes and Observations** was written: behind this altruistic purpose lay a more practical one, one much closer to the interests of the authors themselves. In the Preface we find these angry words:

This upstart illiterate Scribler, who lies more open to censure than any writer of the Age, comes
amongst the Poets, like one of the Earth-born Brethren, and his first business in the World, is to Attack and Murder all his Fellows.

Again later in the pamphlet we find:

Other Scriblers for ought he knows may be fuddled with Favour, and sawcy in their Drink as well as he; and then why must they be jerked and he be stroked: What equity is there in that? This it is to give a Baboon Brandy, twenty to one but he sawcily Attacks you.

What motivated the writing of Notes and Observations, then, was the disrespect that Settle showed his fellow professionals and (an even worse crime) the remarkable popularity he had quickly gained with the patrons of the court on whom all the professionals so much depended.

Notes and Observations set out to prove that The Empress was a "Rhapsody of non-sense":

Never did I see such a confus'd heap of false Grammar, improper English, strain'd Hyperboles, and downright Bulls. His Plot is incoherent and full of absurdities; and the Characters of his Persons so ill chosen, that they are all either knaves or Fools; only his knaves are Fools into the Bargain: and so must be of necessity while they are in his Management. They all speake alike, and without distinction of Character: That is, every one Rants and Swaggers, and talks Non-sense abundantly. He steals notoriously from his Contemporaries; but he so alters the property, by disguising his Theft in ill English, and bad Applications, that he makes the Child his own by deforming it ....In short, he's an Animal of a most deplor'd understanding, without Reading & Conversation: his being is in a twilight of Sence, and some glimmering of thought, which he can never fashion either into Wit or English. His Stile is Boisterous and Rough Hewen: his Rhyme incorrigibly lewd, and his numbers perpetually harsh and ill-sounding. That little Talent which he has is Fancy. He sometimes labours with a thought, but with the
Pudder he makes to bring it into the World, 'tis commonly Still-born: so that for want of Learning and Elocution, he will never be able to express any thing either naturally or justly.

In the section entitled "Errata's in the Epistle" the critics offered evidence from Settle's play to prove these charges.

Starting with the play's poetry, the critics decided that it was nothing more than ugly fustian.

For whereas the design of Verse is to please the Ear with the Chime and Musick of it; and of Tragedy to move Admiration and Passion; he by his blundering hobling Verse, disagreeing and (to imitate his nonsense) almost never-riming rime, has made all Verse ridiculous; and by his foolish, barbarous, and unnatural Characters, impossible Designs, childish Turns, and Tricks; and these clothed with intolerable Fustian, nauseous and senseless Huffing, endless Tautology, and palpable Non-sense, has debased Tragedy to farce, and accordingly upon the ridiculous mirth of it, depends the sole success this merry Tragedy has had among Fools. So that by all his Wincing and Floundring to dash out the Teeth of others, he has but bemired and bogged himself.

Furthermore, grammatical blunders abounded amidst the fustian:

This Poet sure never learnt his Accidence, no ten lines pass him without false English; but he does by Tenses as he does by Words and Sentences, put 'em together Higglety Pigglety, first that come into his head first served, and what stuff they make when they come together he is unconcerned at.

The critics took numerous lines from context and examined them for sense and grammar. All were found wanting in both respects. Here is an example of such criticism:

And the same jealousie that made his breath
Decree your Chains, made him pronounce your death.
This Poet has so perverse a fancy, that he inverts the whole order of nature; he will make people see with their Ears, and hear with their Noses: Here he makes the old Emperour pronounce with no body knows what, and contrive and decree with his Breath. It is frequent with him to put one faculty upon the employment which belongs to another. If he tells you a man sees a thing, it is indifferent to him whether he tells you he sees with his Eyes or his Nose. But he is not so large in his Commission to any thing as Breath. Here he makes Breath decree. In the next Page he makes it Paint, Write, Print, Build, or something of that kind.

The critics had a great deal of fun at the expense of Settle's repeated use of the image of a smile. In his epilogue to Cambyses, Settle had asked the smiles of fortune to aid him in writing his play; in the epistle to The Empress, he had begged his patron's smiles to help preserve his play; and in the epilogue to the same play, he had sued for the smiles of the critics. All of which provoked the three critics to comment sardonically:

Oh: Witty Smiles, what cannot Smiles do? write Plays, preserve Plays, and advance Playmaking! sure Smiles cannot but be very proud of themselves. But I doubt our Poet means he will write the Plays, and Smiles shall have the credit of them; and excellent Whedle! Truly if Smiles get no more credit by their Plays, then they get by Morocco, Smiles will give over Smiling, or Smile upon the Brow; which is worse.

In the opinion of the critics Settle's characters, besides mouthing nonsense, deported themselves like freaks. Mulybas, the hero of The Empress, for example, acted so unnaturally as to become a typical farce character:
Here his great Sorrow for his fathers death, 
allays his Joy for Morena. Like a Scaramouche, 
he laughs on side of his Face, and cries on the 
other. His Passions are a Leap-frog within him; 
Joy jumps over Grief and Grief jumps over Joy, 
and keep such a tumbling within him, that in great 
disorder he breaks out into the most unintelligible 
piece of non-sense that ever he spoke yet.

In brief, Settle had broken every rule of drama; he had 
ignored the three unities, drawn preposterous characters, 
and written senseless verse. However, the critics conceded 
that such blunders must be expected from one who confessed 
that he had no use for learning:

Mr Settle haveing never studied any sort of Learning 
but Poetry, and that but slenderly as you may find 
by his Writeings, and haveing besides no other 
advantages, must make but very lame work on't; He 
himself declares he neither reads, nor cares for 
Conversation, so that he would perswade us he is a 
kind of Phanatick in Poetry, and has a light within 
him... .

Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne concluded, therefore, 
that Settle was a literary fraud, at most a freak to be 
wondered at like the unfortunates in Bedlam but certainly 
not to be honored as a literary prodigy. With the cunning 
of a lunatic and the assurance of a religious fanatic, Settle 
had managed to palm off his nonsense on an audience sadly 
prone to admire anything out of the ordinary or newfangled. 
The critics hoped that this essay would destroy any belief 
that Settle had genuine literary talent.

Nay, both the Play-houses contended for him, as if 
he had found out some new way of eating fire. No 
doubt their design was to entertain the Town with a
rarity. People had been long weary of good-sense that lookt like non-sense, and now they would treat 'um with non-sense which yet lookt very like sense. But as he that pretended he would shew a Beast, which was very like a Horse, and was no Horse, set people much admiring what strange Animal it should be; but when they came in, and found it was nothing but a plain Grey Mare, laught a while at the conceit, but were ready after to stone the Fellow for his Impudence.

Unfortunately Settle was not even an interesting freak. Rather he was simply a wretched poet, a "Poet Ninny," an ignorant, impudent youth trying to succeed without talent or training.

Within a few months Settle replied to his three attackers in Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco Revised. With Some few Errata's to be Printed instead of the Postscript, with the next Edition of the Conquest of Granada. This hastily written and badly printed anonymous essay took the indignant attitude of a defender of an un-fairly maligned Settle, and, without quite sinking to the abusive depths of the original Notes and Observations, effectively met venom with venom. Settle followed the general plan of attack of the original piece, but concentrated his criticism on Dryden's The Conquest of Granada, which, by being a heroic drama like The Empress, displayed similar characteristics. However, besides making a spirited
self-defence, Settle described himself in the Preface as a defender of many other worthy persons of quality—the admirers of The Empress—whom Dryden had called ignorant. As Settle said: "Now the calling all Mankind Fools, one would think were the boldest Drydenism that e're came in Print." The assertion that all mankind admired The Empress constituted an almost equally bold Settleism.

Having explained why he wrote this pamphlet, Settle began ninety-four pages of textual criticism of The Conquest and of rebuttal of the charges made against him. He started by ridiculing Dryden's age of forty-three and by questioning the talents of a man who had written for so many years but who had only achieved the ignominious position of being regarded as "that Kind Great Master to the Minor Poets." He granted to Dryden only one accomplishment during all these years of effort:

Had not his darling Conquest of Granada had the start of the Mamamouchi the World would have suspected he had stolen his Almahide from Mr. Jordans German Princess, who just at this rate runs away from Mr. Jordan to fly to the protection of the worthy Knight Sir Simon Softhead.

This was a barb nicely calculated to irritate Dryden, always a severe critic of farces.

Having disposed of Dryden's literary reputation, Settle turned to The Conquest. He found it full of erroneous learning fatuously paraded before the reader; for example, Dryden distorted historical fact when he had Almahide arrange
arrange for the performance of a Zambra dance:

Next for her *Zambra*, which in a Marginal Note is a Dance. Here he makes a Company of Moores Dance, and make adoration to a Statue of Jupiter. How agreeing Images are to have Mahumetan Worship, and League Jupiter and Mahomet can have, I leave to the judicious to censure.

He concluded that Dryden possessed "the Learning of a School Boy," for he made the worst kind of factual errors and displayed his little learning in a most ostentatious manner: "You'd think the Author very affected, that he cannot name a Balcone or a Market-place but it must run in Spanish, Miralor and Vivaramble."

Settle devoted considerable space to criticizing the characters in *The Conquest*. This criticism must have vexed Dryden who had recently held up Almanzor and Almahide as models for all heroic dramas. In the essay "Of Heroic Plays," while admitting that Almanzor had certain human failings, Dryden had asserted that

...where I have designed the patterns of exact vertue, such as in this play are the parts of Almahide, of Ozmy, and Benzayda, I may safely challenge the best of theirs [i.e. the French dramatists].

Settle, however, had traced Almanzor's parentage back through Caryll's famous low comedy *Sir Salomon* to the Elizabethans:

As I take it, I have heard that Tamberlane and Bajazet at the Red Bull, the four London Frentices, and the seven Champions of England Club'd their Talents to make up an Almanzor. But I rather think he had a more modern Original, and that Sir Arthur Addles Masty Dog was his sire, for hee's very like
him, when he's let loose, he flies upon all persons without distinction and where he lays hold he worries.

Settle also observed that the "perfect" Almahide sang very bawdy songs and gave herself to Almanzor with questionable haste.

Settle's criticism of the poetry in The Conquest followed the pattern of the original Notes and Observations. Like his critics he lifted lines from context to point up their ludicrous literal sense:

And low-hung Clouds that dipt themselves in Rain,  
To shake their fleeces on the Earth agen.

Clouds that dipt themselves in Rain! I thought it had never been rain till it fell from the Clouds, This is the greatest piece of Drydenian Nonsense that I have met with yet, to call the exhalation of watry vapours which makes rain, Rain before 'tis made. But Mr. Dryden is a Scholar, and can tell you it was Rain in Potentia, and that he meant it for pluvia pluvians, not pluvia pluviata, as a learnt Commentator once prated of natura naturans, and nature naturata....

As a result of this examination of Dryden's literary abilities, Settle advised Dryden to work in a form better suited to his slight talents: "Prethee dear heart set up for Operas such Knight Errantry and Romantick Turnes may pass there, but Faith thy Talent of late years does not ly in Heroicks."

Settle denied the validity of Dryden's criticism of The Empress. He accused Dryden of ignorance in calling nonsensical the line "I should meet Death with Smiles upon
my Brow," for, Settle argued, anyone knew that brow often denoted the whole of a person's face. However, in Settle's opinion, such blind criticism typified the general carping nature of the entire attack against him, and he angrily declared that "At this insipid rate the most wretched Scribler in the World, nay one that had the Soul but of a Pandion and Amphigenia, might write Volumes of Errata on a Virgil or a Cowley." Nevertheless, such carping must be expected from one so deficient in learning as Dryden, who, Settle admitted, misread lines unintentionally because he knew no better. At any rate that often seemed to be the case, for

...the greatest part of Elkanahs lines which Mr. Notes has made bold with, have met with same kindness, from him, as young Bear-cubs, they Fancy, receive from their dams. The beastly Commentator has lickt 'em into deformity.

Settle concluded his essay with a brief Postscript in which, after rapping Dryden's knuckles for abusing his position of laureate in writing such a vicious piece as Notes and Observations, he reiterated his reasons for having bothered to reply to it:

In all the faults I have mustred against Mr. Drydens Granada, or any other of his writings I declare I have not objected any thing but what I think a gross mistake, Bombast, or humble nonsense. Had I retorted like him, I might have made such an examination of a whole Play as I have done his Description of Ships in the Indian Emperor, and no doubt it might meet with the same success as his Notes upon Morocco.

On this haughty note with its suggestion that much more could
have been said had the author resorted to the underhand tactics of his foes, Settle ended his self-defence.

Because he avoided extreme abuse, Settle won this opening round. At least his reply seems to have more than offset the effect of the attack on him. Dennis, although forgetting many of the details, recalled the early outcome of this exchange:

Mr. DRYDEN, Mr. SHADWELL, and Mr. CROWN began to grow Jealous; and they Three in Confederacy wrote Remarks on the Empress of Morocco. Mr. SETTLE answer'd them, and, according to the Opinion which the Town had then of the Matter, for I have utterly forgot the Controversy, had by much the better of them all. In short, Mr. SETTLE was then a formidable Rival to Mr. DRYDEN: And I remember very well, that not only the Town, but the University of Cambridge, was very much divided in their Opinions about the Preference that ought to be given to them; and in both Places, the Younger Fry, inclin'd to ELKANAH.

Several facts explain why Settle won the early verdict. Certainly his essay was of a somewhat higher literary tone; though obviously written with bias, it managed to create an attitude of unjustified injury. Its avoidance of scurrility almost convinced the reader that its criticism of Dryden was objectively fair. Of course the immense popularity of The Empress would have made that play's admirers sympathetic to Settle's cause, especially after Dryden and his collaborators had accused them of ignorance. Settle now showed them that their admiration was not at all wrong. Settle's popularity at Cambridge, particularly among the younger men,
was inevitable. Not only had Settle recently left university to seek his fortune in London, but he had succeeded in a remarkably short time. Furthermore students always applaud the triumph of the young over the old, for it augurs well for them when they make their own bids for favor.

v.

By 1675 Settle's star had begun to sink. Rochester had withdrawn his support almost as soon as The Empress had succeeded and given it temporarily to Crowne. Mulgrave now backed Dryden solidly. Certainly by the time of Ibrahim (March, 1675-76) Settle sensed his fate, for he complained in the play's prologue:

Applause is grown a strange Coy Mrs. now;
Courted by All, and yet obtain'd by few.
'Tis true, when any Favourites Plays appear,
Then Kindness and Good-nature brings you here;
And to secure the Censures of the Town,
The Pit is fill'd with Friends in the Fore-noon;
And those five long expecting hours you stay,
Are spent in making Proselytes to th'Play.

Gone were the days when The Empress attracted such crowds and excited such defenders. Settle now had to throw himself upon the mercy of the audience:

On humble Writers let some favours fall;
Let not the Dons of Wit engross you all.

Probably Dryden and Shadwell were the "Dons of Wit" to whom Settle referred. Recently both men, with their respective plays, Aureng-Zebe (November, 1675) and Psyche (February,
1674-75), had packed the playhouses. Settle, with no such recent successes, was now so chastened a man that in the epilogue to \textit{Ibrahim} he mocked the dramatic form in which he had once claimed pre-eminence:

\begin{center}
\begin{verbatim}
How many has our Rhimer kill'd to day?
What need of Siege and Conquest in a Play,
When Love can do the work as well as they?
Yet 'tis such Love as you've scarce met before:
Such Love I'm sure as English ground ne're bore.
\end{verbatim}
\end{center}

His own failures and his rivals' successes promoted Settle to indulge in such self-mockery. Yet it proved to be ill-timed, for by now Dryden had moved away from the extreme form of heroic drama and Shadwell had made it clear from the beginning that he only dabbled in heroics as a diversion from his more serious writing of comedies. On the other hand, Settle, even though he followed the mode and gave up rhyme, never got far from heroic extravagance in any of the later tragedies that he produced.

Dryden made no reply to Settle's attack on \textit{The Conquest}; apparently by this time he had stopped worrying about Settle as a literary rival.

Meantime Settle's reputation at court rapidly vanished. In 1675 Rochester had hit him lightly in "Timon." However, in 1676 he treated Settle with utter contempt. In "An Allusion to Horace" Rochester, conveniently forgetting the success of \textit{The Empress}, referred caustically to "blundring Settle" whose plays had never pleased theatregoers; and
In "A Session of the Poets" he stated bluntly that Settle lacked learning and talent:

Poet S[ettle], his Tryal, was the next came about,  
He brought him an Ibrahim, with the Preface torn out;  
And humbly desir'd, he might give no offence;  
God damne, cries S[hadwell], he cannot write sense,  
And Ballocks cry'd Newport, I hate that dull Rogue;  
Apollo, consid'ring he was not in vogue,  
Wou'd not trust his dear Bays, with so modest a Fool,  
And bid the great Boy, shou'd be sent back to School.

Truly Settle was not in vogue with the court wits. Within a month Settle answered Rochester in the prologue to Pastor Fido (c. December, 1676). Like so many of his fellow dramatists, Settle denounced the fickleness of the court critics:

Me-thinks I hear a young brisk Critick Swear,  
Ounds, do they think we're Antiquaries here.  
Rot the dull Rhiming Fops of the last Age:  
Damne 'em, the'1 bring the Brittish Bards o' th'Stage.  
There's your Condemning Vote. Of all Man-kind,  
Unhappy Writers the lest mercy find.  
A Play, but for one fault in the Design;  
A hobling Verse, dull thought, or a flat Line,  
Is lost beyond the pow'r of a Reprieve.

Around September, 1679, The Female Prelate: Being the History of the Life and Death of Pope Joan set off a series of literary explosions that resulted in the extinction of Settle as a writer of any consequence. Before turning to that play, however, I want to dispose briefly of a remark Settle made in the dedication to the play that followed it, Fatal Love. Speaking of the coldness with which most recent plays were received, Settle blamed this state of affairs partly on poor acting and cited the treatment of Dryden's
Indian Emperor as an example: "And having named that admirable Play, methinks it has made its appearance since, so far short of its Primitive Excellence, that I fancy it has been sometimes almost as unmercifully used, as their tortured Montezuma by the Barbarous Spaniards." Although it is possible that Settle used The Indian Emperor only as an example and for the moment sank his differences with Dryden, this praise of a rival is hard to understand, especially when we remember that Dryden had made three attacks on Settle for his Whiggism by this time, attacks that Settle, with his already smouldering dislike for Dryden, would scarcely pass over lightly.19

vi.

In order to keep the several strands of the complex Settle controversy apart, we must retrace our steps for a moment and examine the activities of John Crowne. As Settle had said in Notes and Observations Revised, Crowne was an insignificant figure in the Restoration theatre in 1674. And so he remained. However, like Settle, he enjoyed a moment of glory which he did his fruitless best to recapture during the rest of his career. Rochester thrust the startled Crowne into the limelight, and Rochester left him in the dark a short time later. Crowne fully realized that, in writing the masque Calisto for the court in 1675, he was
hurting his friend Dryden, perhaps just as Rochester intended; nevertheless, he could not afford to turn his back on such a rare opportunity to gain patronage. In the epistle to Calisto (1675) he humbly acknowledged Dryden's superior dramatic powers:

I must confess it was great pity, that in Entertainment where the Sense was so deliciously feasted, the Understanding should be so slenderly treated; and had it been written by him, to whom by the double right of place and merit, the honour of the employment belonged, the pleasure had been in all kinds complete.

Apparently after the rejection of his masque Dryden wrote an epilogue for Calisto, but that too was turned down. Perhaps intentionally, this epilogue began with these ironic lines:

As Jupiter I made my court in vain; I'll now assume my native shape again. I'm weary to be so unkindly us'd. And would not be a god, to be refus'd.

Crowne's moment of glory proved even briefer than Settle's, for within a few months Thomas Otway had become the favored protege of Rochester and his friends. Crowne exposed his wounded pride in the dedication to The Country Wit (late 1675) in which he complained of the fickleness of other poets: "...not only, vast populous Provinces of effeminate understanding, who often defeat with their numbers; but Bold, Barbarous, Hardy, and invincible Fools, who will dye upon the Turfe, rather than yield: nay, and his friends too often break their League, and send secret
supplies to his Enemies. All Reputations look on themselves as invaded, and every one pretends to Reputation." Crowne's meaning in this passage is vague, but he may have had Settle in mind as a poet who persisted in his errors and Rochester as the traitorous friend. Whether or not Crowne intended to hit Rochester in these lines, Rochester dismissed Crowne's poetry as dull in both "An Allusion to Horace" and "A Session of the Poets." In the preface to The Ambitious Statesman (1679) Crowne continued to complain of the hard lot of the professional poet. Like Otway in "The Poet's Complaint", Crowne saw the poet as a victim of the whims of the courtiers, and he concluded that "Nothing is gotten but a little Reputation, and that some envious Enemies of ours will rather fling to the Doggs than let us have it...."

After his own bad luck, Crowne seems to have refrained from censuring the equally unfortunate Settle. Even when the political storm of the late 1670's led him to attack the Whig poets, Crowne kept his satire so general that it struck no one writer. Crowne's chief contribution to the Tory cause was the comedy City Politiques (January, 1682-83) which included the satirical character of "Craffy." In the dramatis personae Crowne described Craffy as "an impudent, amorous, pragmatical Fopp, that pretends to Wit and Poetry, in love with his Fathers Wife." Craffy especially admired his own political writings, and at one point in the play
stated proudly that "There's ne're a man o'Wit of our Party, but my self, and my things are discommended. I know several People don't like my Hushai: that I intend to call my Poem, The Medal Revers'ût. Written by him who was not the Author of Hushai, nor of any Pen writ of our side." (IV,i). Samuel Pordage and not Settle seems to have been intended victim of this clumsily expressed barb. Other than the general satire of all Whig writers that City Politiques expressed, Crowne ignored Settle after Notes and Observations, perhaps because he saw that Settle's misfortunes closely resembled his own.

vii.

Before describing Dryden's final demolition of Settle, let us trace the progress of Shadwell's feud and subsequent uneasy alliance with Settle. As we have seen, Shadwell had a hand in the writing of Notes and Observations, but we need to determine whether he had any personal reason for joining with Dryden or whether, like Crowne, he did so simply in order to injure the reputation of a dangerously popular professional rival. It seems that Shadwell had reasons for disliking Settle even before the success of The Empress of Morocco. For one thing, Settle had let this remark slip in the prologue to his first play Cambyses:

None but great Ben, Shakespear, or whom this Age Had made their Heirs, succeed now on the Stage.
He had gone on to suggest that newcomers like himself unfortunately had to conform to the outmoded practices of these dramatists of a former age, or fail. To Shadwell, who regarded himself as the only legitimate son on Ben, such a suggestion not only belittled his idol but called into question his own dramatic practices. The same prologue provided Shadwell with still another reason for disliking this newcomer, for Settle had complained that the established dramatists had foisted their ideas upon the audience which now would accept nothing but what would conform to them:

You no more Mercy to Young Writers show,  
You damn and blast 'em e'r e they've time to grow.  
Thus you have learnt the Turkish Cruelty,  
When Elder Brothers Reign, the Younger dye.

In the epilogue to the same play, Settle had reiterated the charge but put most of the blame on the established dramatists who feared anything new:

Amongst you Wits such monstrous factions rage,  
Such various censures, that 'tis thought the Stage  
Breeds more Opinions, and produces far  
More Heresies than the late Civil War.  
Nay, Poets to themselves, of late, they say,  
The greatest Hectors are that e' re huff'd play.  
Like the Issue of the Dragons teeth, one brother  
In a poetick fury falls on t'other.

Here Settle probably alluded to the opening skirmishes of the Dryden-Shadwell controversy over the merits of Jonson. As has already been suggested, Settle may have had Shadwell as well as Dryden in mind when he denounced those who misused dedications, for by 1673 four of Shadwell's five published plays had either dedications or prefaces or both.
Even if Settle did not provoke Shadwell, the latter would have had good reason for joining Dryden and Crowne because of the disrespect that Settle had shown towards the more experienced playwrights.

It is generally thought that Shadwell first replied to Settle's sneers in Notes and Observations. However, Shadwell added a curious note to the printed text of Epsom-wells in 1673 in which he explained two lines in his special court prologue:

These two Lines, were writ in answer to the calumny of some impotent and envious Scriblers, and some industrious Enemies of mine, who would have made the Town and Court believe, though I am sure they themselves did not, that I did not write the Play, but at lest it was found to be so frivolous a piece of malice, it left an impression upon few or none.

We do not know the identity of these caluminators; however, it is possible that one of the "envious Scriblers" was Settle, who having just established a foothold at court, was not above conducting a campaign of slander against a rival.

We know nothing certain of Shadwell's contribution to Notes and Observations: he himself made no reference to that piece in any of his subsequent works. However, as we have seen, Settle blamed him for the criticism of the fourth act of The Empress, part of which criticism, dealing with the breaking of the unities of time and place, suggested the critical opinions of Shadwell. But Settle, in Notes
and Observations Revised, perhaps not wishing to antagonize a poet with powerful court connections, treated Shadwell lightly: Shadwell had wit now, but he should take care not to ruin it by writing dull libels.

Later in 1674, Shadwell, in his revision of Newcastle's The Triumphant Widow, added a scene in which he ridiculed Crambo, a foolish heroic poet. Throughout the play Crambo proved himself inept, and the climax of his stupidity came when he penned a simpering love dialogue for a friend to use upon his lady that had unexpectedly disastrous results. Settle took this particular scene to be a satire of his manner of writing and concluded that Crambo was a lampoon of himself.22

In 1674 Shadwell, noting the popularity of spectacular plays, fitted out the Davenant-Dryden version of The Tempest with operatic songs and mechanical scenes. His efforts were rewarded with a sensational long and profitable run at Dorset Garden. Less than a year later, he followed up this initial success with the even more elaborate opera Psyche (February, 1674-75), if not one of the most remunerative at least one of the most spectacular plays of the period. Downes remembered Psyche as one of the great moments in the Restoration theatre: "The long expected Opera of Psyche, came forth in all her Ornaments; new Scenes, new Machines, new Cloaths, new French dances: This Opera was
Splendidly set out, especially in Scenes; the Charge of which amounted to above 800 L. It had a Continuance of Performance about 8 Days together it prov'd very Beneficial to the Company; yet the Tempest got them more Money.²³

Here, then, were two triumphs for Shadwell in a dramatic form that he was neither used to nor very fond of, and, as we could expect, Settle was not at all happy. Nor was Shadwell's friend Rochester, though for other reasons: he and the court wits regarded opera as an even worse corruption of drama than heroics. Rochester expressed his feelings about the success of Psyche in the epilogue to Fane's Love in the Dark (May, 1675):

Oh how the merry Citizen's in love
With—-
Psyche, the Goddess of each Field and Grove,
He cryes i'faith, methinks 'tis well enough,
But you roar out and cry, 'Tis all damn'd stuff.
So to their House, the graver Fops repair,
While Men of Wit, find one another here.

Because of such adverse criticism from the wits with whom he had been intimate for some time, Shadwell announced in the preface to Psyche (1675) that he would never again waste his time on such worthless stuff as heroics and operas, the writing of which, he observed, demanded little skill and less intelligence.

...and I doubt not but the Candid Reader will forgive the faults, when he considers, that the great Design was to entertain the Town with variety of Musick, curious Dancing, splendid Scenes and Machines; And that I do not, nor ever did, intend to value my self
upon the writing of this Play. For I had rather be Author of one Scene of Comedy, like some of Ben Johnson's, then of all the best Plays of this kind that have been, or ever shall be written; Good Comedy requiring much more Wit and Judgment in the Writer, than any Rhyming unnatural Plays can do....

No doubt this remark annoyed not only Dryden, at whom it was aimed, but Settle, whose fame for writing heroics was rapidly waning.

Settle did not let the triumph of Psyche pass without comment. Nor did he let the fact that it brought money to the Luke's company to which he was contracted bother him. In the prologue to Love and Revenge (November, 1674) he sneered at plays that succeeded by spectacle rather than by wit:

Yet still, 'tis Object has a pow'r most strong:
Nature 'tis true delights you, but not long.
'Tis fine Plays draw an everlasting throng.

When Love and Revenge was published in the following Spring, a short time after Shadwell's attack on heroic drama in the Psyche preface, Settle added a Postscript in which he denounced one of Shadwell's favorite practices, that of blaming the faults in a play on forces beyond his control:

I could make Excuses for putting an ill Head upon Worse Shoulders; Or tell you as some of our Impertinent Tribe do, that 'twas Written in three Weeks, or a Months time, if I thought any Reasonable Man, would be more Favourable to the Defects of the Play for such an Apology. But as I am Sensible, that that Excuse to a Play, would be much like that of a Builder, that after the Fall of a House, shall tell you, truly he built slightly, and chose an ill Foundation; I will not urge that Plea for the Plays
Defence; which in the best Interpretation must render an Author Lazy, if not Dull: In the first of which, he shews himself Impudent, when he dares to be so Disrespectful of an Audience, as to obtrude such incorrect Stuff upon 'em, as he is, or ought to be ashamed of: or else proves himself a Blockhead, and makes that Excuse, when really he wanted Abilities, not Leisure to write better.

Because he did not allude to Shadwell's slurs on heroic drama, Settle probably wrote and submitted this Postscript to his publisher before he saw the preface to *Psyche*, even though the Postscript seems to have appeared after *Psyche*.² Settle referred here to this remark that Shadwell had made in the epistle to *The Miser* (1672):

> And I think I may say without vanity, that Molieres part of it has not suffer'd in my hands, nor did I ever know a French Comedy made use of by the worst of our Poets, that was not better'd by 'em. 'Tis not barrenness of wit or invention, that makes us borrow from the French, but laziness; and this was the occasion of my making use of *L'Avare*. This Play, as it was wrote in less than a moneth, and was the last Play that was Acted at the King's Theater in Covent-Garden, before the fatal fire there; the great hast I made in writing it, that made me very doubtful of the success of it, which was the reason that at first I did not own it, but conceal'd my Name.

Shadwell so often excused a play's blemishes because of haste that Rochester aptly called him "hasty Shadwell" in "An Allusion to Horace." However, he was not the only Restoration dramatist to use this excuse. Dryden claimed that *Tyrannic Love* took him only seven weeks to write; Payne boasted that *The Morning Ramble* cost him only nine days time; and Settle accounted for the faults in his revision
of Fordage's Herod and Mariamne by saying he had too short a time to look the play over. Nevertheless Shadwell used the excuse with noticeable regularity.

Settle's rebuke had no effect, of course, other than prompting Shadwell to assail Settle in the preface to his next play The Libertine. (1676). Until this preface, except for Notes and Observations and the figure of Crambo in The Triumphant Widow, Shadwell had satirized heroic poets in general and not ridiculed Settle specifically. Now, after defiantly asserting that this play took him a short time to write, he turned to the Postscript to Love and Revenge:

I have no reason to complain of the success of this Play since it pleased those, whom of all the World, I would please most. Nor was the Town unkind to it, for which reason I must applaud my good Fortune, to have pleased with so little pains. There being no Act in it, which cost me above Five days writing, and the last Two, (the Play-house having great occasion for a Play) were both written in four days, as several can testify, and this I dare declare, notwithstanding the foul, coarse, and ill-mannered censure passed upon them, (who write Plays in three, four, or five Weeks time) by a rough, hobbling Rhimer, in his Postscript to another Man's Play, which he spoil'd, and call'd Love and Revenge, I having before publickly owned the writing two Plays in so short a time. He ought not to have measured any Man's Abilities, who writes for the Stage, with his own: For some may write that in three weeks, which he cannot in three years. But he is angry, that any man should write sense so easily, when he finds it so laborious a thing to write, even Fustian, that he is believed to have been three years drudging upon the Conquest of China. But he ought not to be called a Poet, who cannot write ten times a better in three weeks.
Shadwell referred here to a claim Settle had recently made in the dedication to *The Conquest of China* that he belonged to a brotherhood of poets:

> For to deviate from the general Style of my Brethren, without imputing its ill success to Malice, I acknowledge it Faulty. However, though it be so, I venture to persecute your Lordship with it: For, indeed Impudence in Poets, is a Frailty that most of us cannot Resist.

Although he failed to notice that Settle was guilty of the same impudence that he himself had deplored in the dedication to *The Empress of Morocco* some years before, Shadwell found much else to ridicule. For one thing he accused Settle of disrespect for his profession, a charge that *Notes and Observations* had already made:

> But I wonder (after all his railing) he will call these Poets his Brethren; if they were, me-thinks he might have more natural affection than to abuse his Brethren....

He went on to remind Settle that the qualified judges of poetry denied him the title of poet:

> ...but he might have spared that Title, for we can find no manner of Relation betwixt him and them; for they are all Gentlemen, that will not own him, or keep him company; and that perhaps, is the cause which makes him so angry with them, to tax them, in his ill-manner'd Epistle, with Impudence, which he (having a particular affection for his own vice) calls by the name of Frailty.

By publicly denying Settle membership in the writing fraternity, Shadwell hoped that he would relieve his fellow professionals of having to suffer from Settle's notoriety.
Shadwell claimed that this hope led him to reply to Settle at this time:

For which reason I shall never trouble my self to take notice of him hereafter, since all men of Wit will think, that he can do the Poets no greater injury, than pretending to be one. Nor had I said so much in answer to his coarse railing, but to reprehend his Arrogance, and lead him to a little better knowledge of himself; nor does his base Language in his Postscript deserve a better return.

One of Shadwell's charges against Settle in this preface has been recently found false. While mocking Settle's pretensions as a poet, Shadwell wrote that "...he is no more a Poet than a Servant to his Majesty, as he presumes to write himself; which I wonder he will do, since Protections are taken off; I know not what Place he is Sworn into in Extraordinary, but I am sure there is no such thing as Poet in Extraordinary." Eleanore Boswell has shown that Settle was appointed to the curious position of "sewer in ordinary" in 1671. She does not describe the functions of the appointee but speculates that "...doubtless the place was a sinecure, obtained for Settle by his friends as a means of subsistence while he wrote for the Court."25

True to his word, Shadwell seems to have ignored Settle after 1676. But he had to exercise his self-control to do so, for Settle had a counterblast in print shortly after The Libertine preface had appeared. The circumstances surrounding the publication of Settle's preface to Ibrahim remain obscure. We do know that Settle tried to suppress the
preface with the result that it appeared with only part of the issue of the first edition of the play in 1677 and with none of the later editions. As we have seen, the court wits ridiculed what they called Settle's "modesty" in half-suppressing his essay. One possible explanation of the abortive suppression is that Settle, suddenly finding himself in the Whig camp along with Shadwell, did not wish to antagonize his new political ally. This would also help to explain why Shadwell failed to continue his attack on Settle.

Settle had good reason to fear the effect of the preface to Ibrahim on Shadwell, for in it he spoke as sharply and wrote as incisively as he had in Notes and Observations revised. As he had done in that earlier pamphlet, Settle cited examples from Shadwell's plays to support his criticisms while steering clear of pure abuse. He offered two reasons for writing against Shadwell at this time. One was that Shadwell had slandered him by misinterpreting some of his remarks. For instance, Settle denied that he had hit Shadwell in the preface to The Empress; on the contrary, he pointed out how lightly he had let Shadwell off for his part in writing Notes and Observations. Furthermore he denied that he had referred to Shadwell in the Postscript to Love and Revenge. In other words Settle once again assumed the attitude of an unfairly maligned person, an innocent victim of someone else's oversensitivity. He declared that
this preface constituted his first reply to all the slanders that Shadwell had thrown at him during the last two years.

Probably the second reason that Settle gave for writing against Shadwell had more truth in it. It concerned a matter close to the hearts of all professionals:

...he had not laboured only to blast my Plays, but made it his study by all interest and subtilty, and with all the scandalous Aspersions he could invent, to ruin me in the esteem of that Honourable Family, whose smiles, though with more zeal than merit, above all my other interest in the World I study to preserve. Yet methinks he might have had so much wit in his anger, or at least so much good manners as not to have thought so meantly of Persons of such worth and honour as to imagine their favours could be alienated by malice, or their judgements by ass'd by Villany.

The patron for whose favor both dramatists competed was William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, to whom four of Shadwell's and one of Settle's plays, Love and Revenge (1675), had been dedicated by this date. Just as Shadwell had struck out at those persons who were undermining his reputation at court in the note to the prologue to Epsom-wells, so Settle sought here to protect his interests with his latest and most promising patron. As has already been pointed out, such vigorous self-defences were inevitable in an age when few plays proved successful enough to merit a third day of acting and when the professional dramatist had to rely on a patron's financial assistance. Generous patrons were not easily found. There were a few like
Newcastle and Dorset who seemed to enjoy helping a struggling poet, but the vast majority of the courtiers had little use for professional writers. Newcastle almost always had some poet under his protection; Jonson, Davenant, and now Shadwell and Settle found in him a sympathetic supporter of their efforts. So apparently when Shadwell tried to turn Newcastle against Settle for trying to get a share of his patron's generosity, it was little wonder that Settle wrote a vigorous self-defence. He was not so much concerned about his public reputation as his favored position with Newcastle and the remuneration that accompanied it. When Newcastle died in 1676 just after Ibrahim was published, Settle no doubt realized that his preface, besides losing its significance, could only annoy Shadwell into replying and so further disgust other courtiers who had already deplored squabbling among the professional dramatists. It is also possible that Settle had not had Newcastle's permission to dedicate and that the Newcastle family objected. For all or some of these reasons, then, Settle tried to suppress the essay.

In this preface Settle concerned himself chiefly with the faults of Shadwell's Psyche. He found the play full of faults: its rhyme was so bad that it had put heroics "quite out of countenance;" its classical learning resembled that of a "Fourth-form School-boy;" and its ideas -- "if by chance you meet with that Rarity in it call'd a Thought" --
were stolen. In fact Settle could only conclude that Shadwell had some ulterior motive for writing such a bad play:

Yet for all this, who knows but the shallowness of the Poem may be more out of Policy than Dulness; and written so feebly on design to ruine Tragedy to raise Comedy. For the Poet aiming at Monarchy, and rememb'ring, as his modest Epistle to that Play gives us to understand, that Comedy is his Province, and reflecting on the considerable Defeats he had met in his Miser, his Humourists, and his Hypocrite, consider'd, it was very hard to reign absolute o're both Provinces, when his Empire had been so often shaken, and he had found governing of one so difficult.

Settle devoted a good deal of space to answering and to returning the various charges that Shadwell had made against him. He denied that The Conquest of China took three years to write by explaining that it was written before The Empress but laid aside after its completion. As for Shadwell's statement that he was neither a gentleman nor liked by gentlemen, Settle countered effectively:

I will not be so unkind to say I think he is no Gentleman, but this I must say, he takes the worst way to prove himself one, that ever I heard of, when he puts his Gentility in Print, to let us know he hath it....

Settle went on to say that, judging from the so-called genteel men of wit in his plays, Shadwell's intimacy with gentlemen was slight. Furthermore, Settle pointed out, Shadwell's repeated claim that he created new humors when the patent truth was that his humors were neither new nor really humors at all represented deceitfulness unbecoming of a gentleman.
Settle gladly admitted that he was not a brother to the poets, at least not to the type of poets that Shadwell admired. Who would want to be related to a man like Shadwell, a man who, instead of praising his patron, "fills up almost a whole Dedication with condemning other Men's parts, and vainly and arrogantly extolling his own?" But such behavior had to be expected from Shadwell, who hated all plays but his own:

For no sooner comes a Play upon the Stage, but the first day 'tis Acted, he wallows into the Pit like a Porpoise before a Storm, with the very Prognosticks of ill luck in his Face, and uses all his interest and spight right or wrong to damn it. Yet I have a little more reason than my Fellow sufferers to complain: For he makes it his business before he sees a Line of any of my Plays, to cry 'em down; and long before they are Acted to make Factions and Cabals to damn them; and in all Companies, he cries God Damme I can't write Sense nor Grammar.

Apparently Settle believed that Shadwell had turned the court wits against him, for he quoted the same censorious remark that Rochester had attributed to Shadwell in "A Session of the Poets" in 1676. In Settle's opinion, Shadwell behaved more like a villain than a gentleman: "...I am not at all ambitious for his company; for of the two I would sooner chose his Don John for a Companion, and think I had made choice of the better natured, a civiller Gentleman."

Settle also dealt again with Shadwell's boasts of his speed in writing. He declared that this was a weak excuse
for the blemished in his plays. He raised the question of why Shadwell always had to be in such haste. What was the other pressing business that so distracted him from his writing plays? Settle thought that he had found the answer to this question. By his own admission on the title page of *Epsom-wells*, Shadwell studied law at the Middle Temple.

This provided Settle with much amusement, and he conceded that Shadwell had good reason for writing so badly:

...the proficiency in so crabb'd a study as the Law, with the Toil and Trouble of Practice and Clients might easily be prejudicial to an Author's Progress in Poetry. Poetry being a study, which we all know requires a great deal of freedom, and moves but heavily and dully, when clogg'd with such weighty Fetters. And indeed I expect very suddenly to see the Muses in mourning, for the loss of so considerable a Pillar; since he is so unkind to them, as to do that honour to the Gown, which he robs the Theater of. However, it is very much hoped that this resolution of resigning the Laurel for the Coif, is not irrevocable. For I assure him the Gentlemen of the long Robe, dreading so potent a Rival, out of meer Envy and Jealousie, do make their daily prayers for his Conversion.

However, Settle, like Shadwell, wanted to end the controversy, which had already proved costly to both in prestige and dignity.

For wrangling in Print I declare of all Mankind I least delight in, and have given as little just occasion for. And indeed, he that has the longest Weapon, and the justest Cause, hath no great reason to boast: for at best we do but make our selves Buffoons at our own Cost, and treat the Town with our Follies.

During the years 1674-77 Settle and Shadwell had certainly treated the town to an extended controversy which the court
wits had mocked in "A Session of the Poets" in 1676. But this particular poetomachia now ended. Both men had wearied of it and both realized the damage it was doing to their reputations. Furthermore, politics was becoming an increasingly critical issue of the time, and Settle and Shadwell found themselves both working for the Whigs. Strange bedfellows though they must have been, they did their best as the chief Whig pamphleteers during the crucial years of 1678-83.

Settle's chief dramatic contribution to the Whig cause was The Female Prelate, successfully staged before an enthusiastic Whig audience around September, 1679. In this extraordinarily partisan play Settle took a dubious piece of church history and turned it into a powerful political broadside against Roman Catholicism. Settle was fortunate that his play appeared in 1679 when Whiggism had so much popular sympathy that Charles dared not deny its expression. Within a year the government suppressed such anti-administration plays.

Dryden had ignored Settle since their exchange over The Empress of Morocco. Now he had grounds to wreak a full revenge on a poetaster who had once insulted him, for as
poet laureate Dryden was expected to answer the attacks of the political opposition. Therefore, The Female Prelate led Dryden to reopen the controversy with Settle and ultimately to destroy Settle as a literary figure.

Even before Settle had come forward with The Female Prelate, Dryden had hit his Whig activities in the epilogue to Oedipus (c. November, 1676):

Yet as weak states each other's power assure,  
Weak poets by conjunction are secure,  
Their treat is what your palates relish most,  
Charm! a song! and show! a murder end a ghost!  
We know not what you can desire or hope,  
To please you more, but burning of a Pope.

Besides ridicule Settle's work on the Whig pageants, Dryden probably referred here to the new alliance of Settle and Shadwell, which by 1678 must have been well established.

In his next assault on Settle in the prologue to Tate's The Loyal General (c. December, 1679), Dryden wrote more sharply. By this time The Female Prelate had caused its sensation. Dryden rebuked the audience for supporting anti-administration propaganda in plays, declaring that it surpassed spectacle in being unfit for drama:

Go back to your dear Dancing on the Rope.  
Or see what's worse the Devil and the Pope!  
The plays that take on our Corrupted Stage,  
Methinks resemble the distracted Age;  
Noise, Madness, all unreasonable Things  
That strike at Sense, as Rebels do at Kings!  
The stile of Forty One our Poets write,  
And you are grown to judge like Forty Eight.  
Such Censures our mistaking Audience make,  
That 'tis almost grown Scandalous to Take!  
They talk of Favour's that infest the Brains,  
But Non-sence is the new Disease that reigns.29
Dryden continued to play upon the same theme in his prologue to Lee's *Sophonisba* when that play was put on at Oxford in 1680; to believe in the Whig propaganda was to encourage obscurantism:

Religion, learning, wit, would be suppress'd,  
Rags of the whore, and trappings of the beast.

But by 1682 Charles had his ship of state under control. So Dryden, probably feeling that the danger he described had passed, contented himself in the prologue to Southerne's *The Loyal Brother* (February, 1681-82) with mocking the Whig writers as the "grave Penny Chroniclers" of Pope-burning pageants. Besides, he was about to deal with Settle and Shadwell more fully and more destructively in the second part of "Absalom and Achitophel."

Before Dryden all but annihilated him, however, Settle tossed one more barb at him from the stage. Around March, 1682, in the prologue to *The Heir of Morocco*, Settle cast doubt on Dryden's political integrity:

How finely would the Sparks be catch'd to Day,  
Should a Whig-Poet write a Tory-Play?  
And you, possess'd with Rage before should send  
Your random Shot abroad, and maul a Friend:  
For you, we find, too often hiss or clap,  
Just as you live, speak, think, and fight, by hap.  
And Poets, we all know, can change like you,  
And are alone to their own Interest true:  
Can write against all Sense, nay even their own;  
The Vehicle, call'd Pension makes it down.  
Nor fear of Cudgells where there's hope of Bread:  
A well-fill'd Panch forgets a broken Head.
With this sequel to *The Empress*, Settle knew that he could not expect to match his former triumph and that, with the political tide now running in favor of the Tories, a Whig dramatist had few hopes of finding support among a courtly audience. To be sure Dryden succeeded, but - like some of the courtiers - only by putting his comfort ahead of his honesty.

While it is true that Settle, writing against a political enemy, distorted the motives for Dryden's Toryism, it is possible that his accusation in these lines contained some truth. At least one pamphlet, *A modest Vindication of the Earl of Shaftesbury*, 1681, placed Dryden in the Whig camp along with Shadwell and has led Macdonald to suggest cautiously that the piece has "some value as showing that Dryden was not identified very strongly with the Tory cause at the time."30

In order to understand fully why Dryden excoriated Settle so ruthlessly, we must examine for a moment the role that Settle played in the events of the years 1681-83. His major contribution to the Whig cause, other than *The Female Prelate* and the notorious pope-burning pageant of November, 1680, was the long and abusive pamphlet *The Character of a Popish Successor* (1681) which he wrote to influence the Oxford Parliament in favor of the Exclusion Bill. However, he also undertook to reply to Dryden's
magnificent "Absalom and Achitophel" in Absalom Senior (1682). Most of this lame satire grappled impotently with the political issues that Dryden had discussed with brilliance, and the thirty-six lines that ridiculed Dryden himself dealt with his Catholic leanings.

Dryden answered Settle in the mordant section that he contributed to the second part of "Absalom and Achitophel," a piece of sustained and piquant satire that stripped Settle of any stature either as a man or a poet. Dryden began with Settle the dramatist, dubbing him Doeg and depicting him as a demented spouter of nonsense:

Doeg, though without knowing how or why, Made still a blundering kind of melody; Spurred boldly on, and dashed through thick and thin, Free from all meaning, whether good or bad, And in one word, heroically mad.
He was too warm on picking-work to dwell, But faggoted his notions as they fell, And, if they rhymed and rattled, all was well.

Following this echo of Notes and Observations, Dryden turned to Settle the satirist and concluded that he had too weak a mind to do any damage in this form:

Spiteful he is not, though he wrote a satire, For still there goes some thinking to ill-nature: He needs no more than birds and beasts to think, All his occasions are to eat and drink. If he call rogue and rascal from a garrat, He means you no more mischief than a parrot; The words for friend and foe alike were made, To fetter them in verse is all his trade.

Dryden thought that people should pity, not punish, Settle for his lies and treason, for he lacked the intelligence to
differentiate between right and wrong. Dryden recalled that in his poems Settle had once called his own mother a whore and had once mistaken Monmouth for Charles' brother:

For almonds he'll cry whore to his own mother,  
And call young Absalom king David's brother. 
Let him be gallows-free by my consent, 
And nothing suffer since he nothing meant; 
Hanging supposes human soul and reason, 
This animal's below committing treason 
Shall he be hanged who never could rebel? 
That's a preferment for Achitophel. 
The woman, that committed buggary, 
Was rightly sentenced by the law to die; 
But 'twas hard fate that to the gallows led 
The dog, that never heard the statute read.

Taking up Settle's poetic pretensions again, Dryden dismissed Absalom Senior as a piece of doggrel. But, he explained, no more than doggrel could be expected from a writer whose best work depended on spectacle and whose aim in life was to succeed on the stage of the puppet booth in Bartholomew Fair.

Railing in other men may be a crime, 
But ought to pass for mere instinct in him; 
Instinct he follows and no farther knows, 
For, to write verse with him is to transprose; 
'Twere pity treason at his door to lay, 
Who makes heaven's gate a lock to its own key. 
Let him rail on, let his invective muse 
Have four-and-twenty letters to abuse, 
Which if he jumbles to one line of sense, 
Indict him of a capital offence. 
In fireworks give him leave to vent his spite, 
Those are the only serpents he can write; 
The height of his ambition is, we know 
But to be master of a puppet-show; 
On that one stage his works may yet appear, 
And a month's harvest keeps him all the year.

Dryden's prophecy proved true, for Settle, who had already
worked for the Fair, soon depended almost entirely on his profits from the plays he wrote for the puppets.

After this comprehensive and methodical destruction of Settle's literary reputation, Dryden scarcely bothered with him again. In "The Vindication of The Duke of Guise" (1683) he used him as an example, almost as a symbol, of the wretched kind of poets that the Whigs had to reply on, and in his revision of Soame's "The Art of Poetry" (1683) he advised young writers:

Nor imitate the Settles of our times,
Those tuneful readers of their own dull rhymes.

That Settle remains today such a symbol testifies as much to the effectiveness of Dryden's satire as to the ineffectiveness of his own verse.

ix.

We said earlier in this chapter that Settle had the misfortune to be lucky, but, as we have now seen, his luck ran out on him early. It was still running out on him in the last years of his life. Had he stood by his Whig principles of 1682, he might have at least gained the shallow reward that came to Shadwell. But Settle chose (perhaps honestly) to recant his Whiggism and therefore invited the hatred of that party as well as of the Tories, who never forgave him for supporting Shaftesbury. Whatever
reasons led him to do so, Settle reaped no profits from writing The Narrative in 1683. He even lost the respect of his friend Ravenscroft who bitterly wrote in the prologue to Dame Dobson (c. June, 1683):

Do not the Whiggish Nature then pursue,
Lest like Whig-Writer, he desert you too.
Whig-Poet when he can no longer Thrive,
Turns Cat in Pan and writes his Narrative.
No Irish Witness sooner shall recant,
Nor oftener play the Devil or the Saint.

Although he re-embraced Whigism in 1689, Settle never again found favor with the theatregoers, and, as one after another of plays were hooted off the stage or never allowed to reach it, he found it necessary to eke out a livelihood from the puppet booth in the Fair and from the city pageants he occasionally wrote for the Lord Mayor of London. In the dedication to Distress'd Innocence (1691), Settle looked back on the rise and fall of his popularity and thought that he saw his mistake:

Alas, I was grown weary of my little Talent in Innocent Dramaticks, and forsooth must be rambling into Politicks: And much I have got by't, for, I thank 'em, they have undone me. And truly when impertinent Busy Fools in my little post, in the name of Frenzy must aspire to State-Champions, though their Pens are drawn even on the Right side, they deserve no better Fate.

Such repentance revealed how chastened Settle had become since the triumphant days of less than twenty years before. But repentance was not enough, for the public had judged Settle. In 1711 he lamented his wretched fate less
philosophically in the epistle to *The City Ramble*, a play
he sought to stage without revealing himself as author but
which the players put on during the profitless summer season
once they discovered its author:

This Hardship has been my Portion, when falling
under a late Coldness from the Town, at least in
their Admission of me to the Stage (for what
Disobligement I know not) it discouraged even the
Theatres from continuing their former Favours
towards me. And truly not wholly to deserve so
unhospitable a Treatment, I have sometimes thought
(and hope wit out Vanity or Self-flattery) that my
Dramatick Labours are not so utterly meritless
(as this present Essay has testified) but that
they might claim Acceptance; at least in the
present Dearth of Authors, where the most Eminent
and Worthier Sons of the Muses have been advanced
to those Publick Preferments, as to raise them a
Degree above stooping to so humble a Trifle, as
the Pen-work of a Play.

About 1718 Settle entered the Charterhouse where he died
in poverty in 1724. He continued to write plays till his
death, but he never regained the favor nor won the pity of
the public. The location of his grave is unknown; like
his work it lies in oblivion.
CHAPTER IV

DRYDEN AND SHADWELL

1.

No one lost more through engaging in controversy than Thomas Shadwell. Whereas Settle's name is all but forgotten today, Shadwell's remains a synonym for dulness largely as a result of Dryden's brilliant "MacFlecknoe." Like Settle, Shadwell fell victim to a master of satire whose exaggerated statements have been uncritically held as valid until recent times. As is often the case, the odium now linked with Shadwell's name is in great part unjustified. In the field of comedy Shadwell was a competent and interesting dramatist, much esteemed by the literary dictators of his own day, the court wits. His comedies, until recently valued more as social documents than as dramas, have rich human qualities and clearcut characterizations which, though rough-hewn, are found neither in the polished comedies of manners nor in the involved comedies of intrigue produced by his better known contemporaries.

Perhaps at the urging of the court wits, Shadwell made the mistake of challenging Dryden to a literary dispute. In doing so Shadwell overmatched himself badly, for while he was a better than average journeyman dramatist, he lacked the genius of Dryden. Shadwell's literary skills were
limited; his genius, at most, could be called prosaic. Al­
though he could observe life keenly and follow Jonson's tech­
niques well, he failed badly when he ventured into poetry.
Dryden had little trouble defending himself against Shadwell's
charges, for Shadwell was seldom original. In fact Dryden
was well aware that he compromised his own artistic prin­
ciples in his plays for the sake of popularity. However,
Dryden's patience wore thin as the controversy continued,
and finally he charged Shadwell with being a fool and a
dullard, accusations against which Shadwell found defence
impossible.

Before it became colored by politics, the Dryden-Shad­
well controversy, like the controversy between Dryden and
Sir Robert Howard, was motivated briefly by artistic differ­
ences. The fact that each dramatist wrote for a different
company, Dryden for the King's and Shadwell for the Duke's,
simply added fuel to their critical fires. An examination
of the early disputatious texts reveals that neither man
attempted to belittle the dramatic skills of his opponent
and that neither employed calumny. In fact, until
"MacFlecknoe," there existed a rather uneasy mutual respect
between the two combatants.
The Dryden-Shadwell controversy belonged within the context of the much larger ancient-modern controversy that was debated throughout the seventeenth century. Dryden's critical position, though contradictory at times (as he himself realized), was in most respects that of a modern: he was a champion of progress. This led him to expect advances in the drama. As Ker remarks: "Dryden declares for a different ideal of Comedy than that of Ben Jonson. He was aiming at something more refined; whatever his own temperament might be, however he might want that 'gaiety of humour' which is the spirit of Comedy, he saw that the old-fashioned English Comedy was played out; something more elegant must surely be within reach." By having such an attitude and by seeking a more elegant kind of comedy, Dryden inevitably clashed with a defender of the old ideals, Thomas Shadwell. Shadwell regarded the comedy of Jonson as aesthetically and structurally unsurpassed; because Jonson's best comedies of humors achieved perfection, they provided ready-made models for Restoration writers to follow.

In aesthetic terms, the controversy between Dryden and Shadwell was waged with two conflicting definitions of wit, a term that subtly changed its meaning throughout the century. Dryden represented the new kind of wit; he often called it "repartee," by which he meant that it was in large part verbal. Shadwell, on the other hand, stood for the establish-
ed definition of wit as "humor" which Jonson had defined as singular differences of character among individuals. After discussing the history of wit in the seventeenth century Spingarn concluded: "In the evolution of the term from its older to its modern meaning, the early stages of the controversy between Shadwell and Dryden represent perhaps the crisis. Humour, face to face with wit, shook off its accidental and factitious elements, and assumed the vital character which it has ever since preserved." But as we proceed in our description of this controversy, it will become evident that to speak of the issues in such general terms, while helpful in putting matters in their proper historical perspective, deprives the whole affair of its motives and its malice, both of which make it one of the liveliest controversies of the period.

Shadwell was far from being the only admirer of Jonson in the Restoration. Especially in the first two decades of the Restoration, many writers held Jonson in equally high regard: Cowley, Tatham, Wilson, Lacy, Rawlins, and Revet among others. In fact Shadwell and the Honorable Edward Howard wrangled about which of them wrote as the true son of Ben. Another devoted Jonsonian was the Duke of Newcastle, whose zeal for the comedy of humors may have first brought Jonson to Shadwell's attention. However, the admiration that the powerful court wits had for Jonson probably prompted
Shadwell to exploit the comedy of manners for to do so was an obvious way to gain their favor. The wits had already supported several revivals of Jonson plays in an effort by example to persuade Restoration playwrights to abandon the pursuit of French models and to return to the proven native tradition. In 1668 they financed an elaborate revival of Cataline, hoping to squash the growing popularity of heroic dramas, and in 1671 they produced The Rehearsal, their most ambitious attempt to promote the Jonsonian ideal of "sense that might be understood with ease." Throughout his lifetime Shadwell was a friend of the wits and a member of their circle. Like them he despised heroic drama and its related forms, and, after having written an opera, Psyche, he apologized profusely for his crime in its published preface. One of the wits, Sir Charles Sedley, not only read many of Shadwell's plays before they were passed on to the theatre, but came to Shadwell's financial rescue when the Whig playwright found the theatre temporarily closed to him in the 1680's. Another wit, Rochester, honored Shadwell by naming him as one of the few writers whose judgments he would respect. Still another of the wits, Dorset, remembered Shadwell's friendship as well as his limited poetic skills and helped him to succeed Dryden as poet laureate. And, of course, Shadwell knew the Duke of Buckingham even before they both became active Whigs. These connections
with the powerful court wit faction gave Shadwell a good deal of assurance when he defended Jonsonian comedy, for probably he was expressing not only his own opinions but the opinions of the literary dictators of the Restoration.

ii.

Shadwell's first play, The Sullen Lovers, was successfully produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields in May, 1668. In its prologue and preface Shadwell criticized Dryden and so got the poetomachia under way. However, before taking up these two pieces, we need to examine what Dryden had said prior to 1668 that had provoked Shadwell. Dryden had begun with great admiration for Jonson, but, as J. R. Smith has pointed out: "The clearest illustration of Shadwell's influence on Dryden may be seen in the marked decline of Dryden's critical estimate of Ben Jonson." In the prologue to The Wild Gallant (February, 1662-63), Dryden complained that Jonson and Fletcher had possessed such great talents that they had practically exhausted the vein of wit. Already, then, he felt that comedy needed new ideas. Dryden did not take up this problem again until November, 1667, when he passed some strictures on Jonson's art. In the prologue to The Tempest he called Jonson a "labouring" dramatist who concerned himself too often with low and unrefined characters. In An Essay of Dramatic Poesy in 1668 Dryden dilated on Jonson's
limitations. While he cited *The Silent Woman* as "the pattern of a perfect play," he nevertheless could not overlook Jonson's lack of genuine wit.

One cannot say he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it. In his works you find little to retrench or alter. Wit and language, and humour also in some measure, we had before him; but something of art was wanting to the drama, till he came. He managed his strength to more advantage than any who preceded him. You seldom find him making love in any of his scenes, or endeavouring to move the passions; his genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully, especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such an height. Humour was his proper sphere; and in that he delighted most to represent mechanic people.

Wit, then, was the new idea that comedy needed, and Jonson, while he used humor, could not use wit. Dryden concluded that Jonson, though "the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had" and a writer of exceptional judgment, lacked the essential quality of fancy and its product, wit: "as he did not want imagination, so none ever said he had much to spare."

Shadwell sprang to Jonson's defence a few months later. In the prologue to *The Sullen Lovers* he belittled the heroic dramas of such men as Dryden and Sir Robert Howard on the grounds that they lacked realism. Speaking of himself, he wrote:

He has no cautionary Song, nor Dance,
That might the treaty of his Peace advance;
No kinde Romantick Lovers in his Play,
To sigh and whine out passion, such as may
Charm Waitingwomen with Heroick Chime,
And still resolve to live and die in Rhime;
Such as your Eares with Love, and Honour feast,
And Play at Crambo for three hours at least:
That Fight, and woo, in Verse in the same breath,
And make Similitudes, and Love in Death.

If Jonson lacked fancy, Shadwell suggested, then Dryden lacked judgment in his plays. The play's preface was principally an attack on Sir Robert Howard, but Shadwell also managed to reply to Dryden's criticisms of Jonson. After touching on "positive" men and noting the difficulties in writing good comedy, Shadwell confessed: "You will pardon this digression when I tell you he [i.e. Jonson] is the man, of all the world, I most passionately admire for his Excellency in Dramatick-Poetry." Having thus unburdened himself, Shadwell took up Dryden's remarks:

Though I have known some of late so insolent to say, that Ben Johnson wrote his best Plays without Wit; imagining, that all the Wit in Plays consisted in bringing two persons upon the Stage to break Jests, and to Bob one another, which they call Repartie, not considering that there is more wit and invention requir'd in the finding out good Humour, and Matter proper for it, then in all their smart reparties.

Shadwell referred here to Dryden's statement in An Essay of Dramatic Poesy that "as for comedy, repartee is one of its chiefest graces; the greatest pleasure of the audience is a chase of wit, kept upon both sides, and swiftly managed." At the same time Shadwell was ridiculing Dryden's attempts to perfect such witty exchanges in his comedies. Shadwell denied bluntly that the essence of comedy lay in repartee:
For, in the Writing of a Humor, a Man is confin'd not to swerve from the Character, and oblig'd to say nothing but what is proper to it: But in the Playes which have been wrote of late, there is no such thing as a perfect Character, but the two chief persons are most commonly a Swearing, Drinking, Whoring, Ruffian for a Lover, and an impudent ill-bred tomENG for a Mistress, and these are the fine People of the Play; and there is that Latitude in this, that almost any thing is proper for them to say; but their chief Subject is bawdy, and profaneness, which they call brisk writing, when the most dissolute of Men, that relish those things well enough in private, are check'd at 'em in publick; and methinks, if there were nothing but the ill Manners of it, it should make Poets avoid that Indecent way of Writing.

On the contrary, Shadwell argued that character creation not repartee constituted the essence of comedy. This denunciation of lubricity on the stage revealed Shadwell's strong moral bent and partly explained his predilection for satirical comedy. Probably the "indecent" plays he had in mind included Dryden's Secret Love, Sir Martin Mar-all, and An Evening's Love. Shadwell then censured "positive" writers:

I must confess it is very ungenerous to accuse those that modestly confess their own Errors; but positive Men, that justifie all their faults, are Common Enemies, that no man ought to spare, prejudicial to all Societies they live in, destructive to all Communication, always endeavouring Magesterially to impose upon our Understandings, against the Freedome of Mankind: these ought no more to be suffer'd amongst us, then wild beasts: for no corrections that can be laid upon 'em are of power to reforme 'em: and certainly it was a positive Foole that Salomon spoke of, when he said, bray him in a Mortar, and yet he will retain his folly.

Undoubtedly Shadwell had Sir Robert Howard in mind when he wrote this; however, he may also have been thinking of
Dryden whom he had just finished rebuking for depreciating Jonson. Sir Robert had already accused Dryden of being magisterial, and Dryden denied the charge later in 1668. Certainly Shadwell would have found it amusing to bring the identical charge against both men, neither of whom, in his opinion, understood the nature of comedy.

Dryden's "A Defence of An Essay of Dramatic Poesy" appeared shortly after Shadwell's initial rebuke. While in large part criticizing the theories of Sir Robert Howard, Dryden aimed several of his remarks at Shadwell. On the whole, however, he ignored Shadwell in this essay, probably because he did not wish to bother quarreling with an obviously ambitious newcomer. In fact, Dryden expressed a disdain for all comedies, including his own: "My conversation is slow and dull, my humour saturnine and reserved; in short, I am none of those who endeavour to break jests in company, or make repartees. So that those who decry my comedies do me no injury, except it be in point of profit: reputation in them is the last thing which I shall pretend." Within a short time Shadwell scorned his own serious dramas in a similar fashion. After all, the scales of modesty had to be balanced.

In "A Defence of An Essay of Dramatic Poesy" Dryden reiterated his admiration for Jonson as a poet of judgment. But, while extolling the beauties of rhyme in drama, he
once again put limits on Jonson's dramatic powers:

You see in "Cataline" and "Sejanus", where the argument is great, he sometimes ascends to verse, which shows he thought it not unnatural in serious plays; and had his genius been as proper for rhyme as it was for honor, or had the age in which he lived attained to as much knowledge in verse as ours, it is probable he would have adorned those subjects with that kind of writing.

Here Dryden the modern spoke. Elsewhere in this essay Dryden set forth his personal dramatic creed, a creed which Shadwell promptly denounced as immoral.

I am satisfied if it cause delight; for delight is the chief, if not the only, end of poesy: Instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for poesy only instructs as it delights. It is true, that to imitate well is a poet's work; but to affect the soul and excite the passions, and, above all, to move admiration (which is the delight of serious plays), a bare imitation will not serve.

Dryden never denied the didactic end of poetry, for he said clearly that poetry "instructs as it delights," a perfectly plausible theory that distinguished between philosophical writing and literature. Nevertheless Shadwell eagerly interpreted this as a statement of artistic libertinism.

Bearing Dryden's most recent statements in mind, we find pointed significance in the prologue to The Royal Shepherdess (February, 1668-69) in which Shadwell described himself as, above all, a moral dramatist:

It is a Vertuous Play, you will confess, Where Vicious men meet their destin'd success. Not like our Modern ones, where still we find, Poets are onely to the Ruffians kind; And give them still the Lades in the Play,
But 'faith their Ladies are as bad as they.
They call 'em Ayery, Witty, brisk, and Wild,
But, with their Favours, those are terms too mild.

In the preface to the same play published later in 1669, Shadwell elaborated on this charge of the immorality of many current plays:

I shall say little more of the Play, but that the Rules of Morality and good Manners are strictly observed in it: (Vertue being exalted, and Vice depressed) and perhaps it might have been better received had neither been done in it: for I find, it pleases most to see Vice encouraged, by bringing the Characters of debauch'd people upon the Stage, and making them pass for fine Gentlemen, who openly profess Swearing, Drinking, Whoring, breaking Windows, beating Constables etc. and that is esteem'd among us, a Gentile Gayety of Humour, which is contrary to the Customs and Laws of all civilized Nations. But it is said, by some, that this pleases the people, and a Poets business is only to endeavour that: but he that debases himself to think of nothing but pleasing the Rabble, loses the dignity of a Poet, and becomes as little as a Jugler, or a Hoop-Dancer; who pleases more then he can do....

Shadwell hinted here that he voiced the opinions not only of himself but of some members of the court who believed that the theatre and therefore the comic fare that it provided should appeal not to the rabble but to the men of judgment. The court wits despised farce almost as much as heroic drama.

By 1669 the issues between Dryden and Shadwell had been defined. First and foremost were the critical estimate of Jonson and the meaning of wit. However, Shadwell had introduced another issue: the end of poetry, especially the end of drama. In order to introduce this issue Shadwell
had to distort Dryden's original position in order to make him out a libertine. Yet for a time Dryden defended libertinism, even though later on he stressed the moral end of all poetry.

iii.

Up to 1671 Dryden had practically ignored Shadwell who had been the aggressor in the early stages of the controversy. Nor did Dryden reply specifically to Shadwell in his next pieces, the prologue and the epilogue to the two parts of The Conquest of Granada (c. December 1670 and January, 1670-71). Nevertheless he must have had Shadwell in mind when he reproached the playwrights of the Duke's company for their dull dramas:

See now what charity it was to save!
They thought you liked, what only you forgave;
And brought you more dull sense, dull sense much worse
Than brisk gay nonsense, and the heavier curse.

Having thus mocked the dramatic products of judgment, Dryden proceeded to assert that the ruling curse of the Restoration stage was the endless translation of French farces:

And may those drudges of the stage, whose fate
Is damned dull farce more dully to translate,
Fall under that excise the state thinks fit
To set on all French wares, whose worst is wit.
French farce, worn out at home, is sent abroad;
And, patched up here, is made our English mode.

Although Flecknoe, Lacy, and Medbourne, among others, had adapted French comedies to the English stage in the last two
years, probably Dryden had *The Sullen Lovers* in mind, much of which Shadwell had taken from Molière as he himself had admitted in the play's preface. This suggestion that he wrote farces particularly annoyed Shadwell, and he denied the charge more than once in his later writings. In the epilogue to the second part of *The Conquest*, Dryden again declared that the Jacobean dramatists could not have satisfied a critical Restoration audience:

> But, were they now to write, when critics weigh
> Each line, and every word, throughout a play,
> None of them, no, not Jonson in his height,
> Could pass, without allowing grains for weight.

Dryden stood for the new forms of drama: the heroic drama and the comedy of wit.

Dryden finally dealt directly with Shadwell in the early spring of 1671. In the preface to *An Evening's Love* he refuted Shadwell's defence of Jonson and at the same time attacked the kind of comedy that he wrote. Dryden began by restating the classical notion that comedy belonged among the lower forms of literature. He observed also that comedy, by its very nature, lacked refinement: "Low comedy especially requires, on the writer's part, much of conversation with the vulgar, and much of ill nature in the observation of their follies." He noted that farce in particular needed this observation of vulgarities, and he added that farces had become altogether too predominant on the English stage because of the numerous translations from
the French:

After all, it is to be acknowledged, that most of those comedies, which have been lately written, must of necessity fall out, till we forbear the translation of French plays: For their poets, wanting judgment to make or maintain true characters, strive to cover their defects with ridiculous figures and grimaces. While I say this, I accuse myself as well as others....

Having achieved pre-eminence in heroic drama, Dryden could well afford to include his own comedies in the category of bad drama; besides he still had no affection for the comic vein.

After identifying English comedy with farce, Dryden turned once more to Jonson. He repeated his opinion that Jonson lacked imagination, and he deplored the fact that so many playwrights set themselves up as his progeny:

As I pretend not that I can write humour, so none of them can reasonably pretend to have written it as they ought. Jonson was the only man, of all ages and nations, who has performed it well; and that but in three or four of his comedies: The rest are but crambe bis cocta; the same humours a little varied and written worse.

He assailed the blind idolatry of the sons of Ben, particularly when such idolatry refused to acknowledge the imperfections in Jonson's plays. He asked: "For why should he only be exempted from those frailties, from which Homer and Virgil are not free?" Then he launched his full scale attack on the Jonsonians. With Shadwell in mind, he questioned the motives of the writers who defended Jonson so zealously:
I admire and applaud him where I ought: Those, who do more, do but value themselves in their admiration of him; and, by telling you they extol Ben Jonson's way, would insinuate to you that they practise it. For my part, I declare that I want judgment to imitate him; and should think it a great impudence in myself to attempt it.

Dryden then considered Jonson's powers of wit. He repeated that Jonson was more a poet of judgment than of wit, but this time he clarified what he meant by linking wit with the play of words:

For the characters and representations of folly are only the effects of observation; and observation is an effect of judgment. Some ingenious men, for whom I have a particular esteem, have thought I have much injured Ben Jonson, when I have not allowed his wit to be extraordinary: But they confound the notion of what is witty, with what is pleasant. That Ben Jonson's plays were pleasant, he must want reason who denies: But that pleasantness was not properly wit, or the sharpness of conceit; but the natural imitation of folly: Which I confess to be excellent in its kind, but not to be of that kind which they pretend.

Dryden regarded wit as "sharpness of conceit," and he went on to explain even more precisely what he meant: wit meant repartee, which was not easier to write than humors as Shadwell had claimed:

Some enemies of repartee have observed to us, that there is a great latitude in their characters, which are made to speak it: and that it is easier to write wit than humour; because in the characters of humour, the poet is confined to make the person speak what is only proper to it; whereas, all kind of wit is proper in the character of a witty person. But, by their favour, there are as different characters in wit as in folly. Neither is all kind of wit proper in the mouth of every ingenious person. A witty coward, and a witty brave, must speak differently.
Dryden added that the only character in all of Jonson's plays who approximated repartee was Truewit in *The Silent Woman* and the fact that most of his wit came out of Ovid and Juvenal proved further that Jonson himself could not write wit.

Dryden then carried the issues over into the realm of aesthetics. First he took up Shadwell's accusation that his plays were immoral:

> It is charged upon me that I make debauched persons (such as, they say, my Astrologer and Gamester are) my protagonists, or the chief persons of the drama; and that I make them happy in the conclusion of my play; against the law of comedy, which is to reward virtue, and punish vice. I answer, first, that I know no such law to have been constantly observed in comedy, either by the ancient or modern poets.

He cited Plautus and Terence, and, as if to dumbfound Shadwell, he pointed out that Jonson's Truewit had played the pimp in *The Silent Woman*. Having adopted Shadwell's method of argument by precedent, Dryden declared that "...as I defend myself by their example, so that example I defend by reason, and the end of all dramatic poesy." He distinguished between the ends of comedy and tragedy:

> Thus tragedy fulfils one great part of its institution; which is, by example, to instruct. But in comedy it is not so; for the chief end of it is diverteisement and delight: and that so much, that it is disputed, I think by Heinsius, before Horace's 'Art of Poetry,' whether instruction be any part of its employment. At least I am sure it can be but its secondary end: for the business of the poet is to make you laugh: when he writes humour, he makes folly ridiculous; when wit, he moves you, if not always to laughter, yet to a pleasure that is more noble.
And if he works a cure on folly, and the small imperfections in mankind, by exposing them to public view, that cure is not performed by an immediate operation. For it works first on the ill-nature of the audience; they are moved to laugh by the representation of deformity; and the shame of that laughter teaches us to amend what is ridiculous in our manners. This being then established, that the first end of comedy is delight, and instruction only the second; it may reasonably be inferred, that comedy is not so much obliged to the punishment of faults which it represents, as tragedy.

The end of comedy was delight, and Dryden considered the morality of such an end:

But, lest any man should think that I write this to make libertinism amiable, or that I cared not to debase the end and institution of comedy, so I might thereby maintain my own errors, and those of better poets, I must further declare, both for them and for myself, that we make not vicious persons happy, but only as Heaven makes sinners so; that is, by reclaiming them first from vice. For so it is to be supposed they are, when they resolve to marry; for then, enjoying what they desire in one, they cease to pursue the love of many.

Dryden dismissed the charge of plagiarism that Shadwell had brought against him as meaningless since almost all dramatists, including Shadwell, had seen fit to take the foundations of their plays from any handy source. Dryden acknowledged that Jonson worked out his own plots, "...but no man has borrowed so much from the ancients as he has done: and he did well in it, for he has thereby beautified our language." Nor did the charge of plagiarism in comedy mean much to Dryden who thought so little of comedy that he freely confessed that "...I have a worse opinion of my own
comedies than any of my enemies can have." Nevertheless he reminded Shadwell that the essence of comic writing lay in qualities that fancy not judgment provided and that the humor writer was really the greatest of all plagiarists since he stole his characters from mankind.

Dryden closed his defence by accusing his critics of envy and by warning them that he would punish those who sought to increase their reputation by ruining his, a warning he carried out later in "MacFlecknoe." Little did Shadwell realize the ominous threat that these words carried: "I shall but laugh at them hereafter, who accuse me with so little reason; and withal contemn their dulness, who, if they could ruin that little reputation I have got, and which I value not, yet would want both wit and learning to establish their own; or to be remembered in after ages for anything, but only that which makes them ridiculous in this."

In the preface to The Humorists (c. June, 1671) Shadwell soon had in circulation an answer to the preface to An Evening's Love. Taking up Druden's arguments almost point by point, he began by offering his own definition of the end of drama, a definition that had a distinctly Horatian flavor:

Here I must take leave to dissent from those, who seem to insinuate that the ultimate end of a Poet is to delight, without correction or instruction:
Methinks a Poet should never acknowledge this, for it makes him of as little use to Mankind as a Fidler, or Dancing-Master, who delights the fancy only, without improving the Judgement.

Shadwell agreed that delight had its place in drama: "I confess, a Poet ought to do all that he can, decently to please, that so he may instruct." However, whereas both Dryden and Shadwell believed that instruction and delight were necessary in drama, they differed on the relative importance of the two ends. Although Shadwell granted the necessity of "decent" delight, Dryden had gone so far as to question the necessity of instruction. To be sure, Dryden soon abandoned this extreme position and admitted that drama, like all poetry, ought to instruct delightfully; nevertheless, at this time, perhaps for the sake of the comedies that he had already written, he emphasized the pleasure principle.

Shadwell's definition of the end of drama implied a utilitarian conception of art; in his opinion, the dramatist had a profound usefulness in life and was much more than a mere entertainer. This conception led him to oppose Dryden and to rank comedy higher among the art forms than tragedy:

...I think Comedy more useful than Tragedy; because the Vices and Follies in Courts (as they are too tender to be touch'd) so they concern but a few; whereas the Cheats, Villanies, and troublesome Follies, in the common conversation of the World, are of concernment to all the Body of Mankind.

Since drama had social utility, Shadwell believed that it
should be judged in terms of how well it served its didactic end. Therefore tragedy, especially in its heroic form, did not instruct men as well or as vividly as comedy because it was cast in an unreal and romantic world several removes from the life of the average man. Edward Howard advanced the same idea in the same year. Since both The Women's Conquest and The Humorists were entered in the Term Catalogues in May, 1671, we can only conclude that Edward Howard and Shadwell arrived at this idea as well as several others independently.

Having established the superiority of comedy to tragedy, Shadwell asked, how did comedy instruct men? He answered that it did so by teaching men to avoid unnaturalness: "...the affected vanities, and the artificial fopperies of men, which, (sometimes even contrary to their natures) they take pains to acquire, are the proper subject of a Satyr." It followed, then, that the comedy of humors, by being satirical, surpassed all other forms of comedy in usefulness. Shadwell took particular pains at this point to differentiate between comedy and farce. Apparently he felt that Dryden had falsely related the two forms and thereby had obliquely damned comedy. He returned the compliment by suggesting subtly that Dryden's comedies of repartee closely resembled farce:
The rabble of little People, are more pleas'd with Jack-Puddings being soundly kick'd, or having a Custard handsomely thrown in his face, than with all the wit in Plays: and the higher sort of Rabble (as there may be rabble of very fine people in this illiterate Age) are more pleased with the extravagant and unnatural actions, the trifles, and fripperies of a Play, or the trappings and ornaments of Nonsense, than with all the wit in the world.

In other words, Shadwell felt that dramatists like Dryden who boasted of wanting above all to please audiences might very well produce vulgar comedy simply because vulgarity had many admirers.

After denying that he had slandered particular persons in The Sullen Lovers, Shadwell lauded Jonson and declared modestly that he hoped sometimes to catch his genius in his plays. At this point he considered another of Dryden's opinions with which he did not agree. Before doing so, however, he adopted an attitude of friendliness and admiration: "...I must make a little digression, and take liberty to dissent from my particular friend, for whom I have a very great respect, and whose Writings I extreamly admire; and though I will not say his is the best way of Writing, yet I am sure, his manner of Writing it is much the best that ever was.... His Verse is smoother and deeper, his thoughts more quick and surprising, his raptures more mettled and higher...." Shadwell may have admired Dryden the man and not Dryden the dramatist, but one cannot help but suspect that his praise of Dryden's verse contained some irony.
With this flattery out of the way, he addressed himself to Dryden's most recent disparagement of Jonson:

Yet (after all this) I cannot think it impudent in him or any Man to endeavour to imitate Mr. Johnson, whom he confesses to have fewer failings than all the English Poets, which implies he was the most perfect and best Poet; and why should not we endeavour to imitate him? because we cannot arrive to his excellence? .... If Mr. Johnson be the most faultless Poet, I am so far from thinking it impudence to endeavour to imitate him, that it would rather (in my opinion) seem impudence in me not to do it.

Jonson's plays still represented inspiring models for Shadwell; for Dryden, they were exhausted veins. The ancient and the modern notions clashed again. Nor did Jonson lack wit as Dryden had asserted, for, by Shadwell's definition (a definition that emphasized judgment rather than fancy) Jonson displayed more wit than any other poet:

Nor can I think, to the writing of his humors (which were not only the follies, but vices and subtilties of men) that wit was not required, but judgment; where by the way, they speak as if judgment were a less thing than wit. But certainly it was meant otherwise by nature, who subjected wit to the government of judgment, which is the noblest faculty of the mind. Fancy rough-draws, but judgment smooths and finishes; nay judgment does indeed comprehend wit, for no man can have that who has not wit.

The disagreement between Dryden and Shadwell over the meaning of wit was clearly a semantic one. Dryden conceived wit as chiefly an operation of the fancy; Shadwell, on the other hand, saw it as an operation of the judgment. Therefore, it was perfectly logical for Dryden to reason that
repartee was the most important element in comedy, just as he argued elsewhere that fanciful embellishments were the glories of a heroic poem. Similarly it was perfectly logical for Shadwell to declare that character delineation was the most significant element in comedy "...because humor is the effect of observation, and observation the effect of judgment." Shadwell even went so far as to argue for Jonson's perfection in Dryden's own terms; he boldly wrote that "...wit in the Writer (I think, without any Authority for it) may be said to be the invention of remote and pleasant thoughts of what kind soever; and there is as much occasion for such imaginations in the writing of a Curious Coxcomb's part, as in writing the greatest Hero's."

The controversy had reached an obvious dead end. Both men had their critical beliefs, and neither wished to give up any of them at this time. The dead end resulted largely from the fact that each man, probably unconsciously, took different sides in the ancient-modern controversy that preoccupied so many seventeenth century writers and that was, in reality, a stage in the gradual movement towards the neo-classical canon of art that achieved its final form in the next century. Both Dryden and Shadwell apparently realized that they had reached an impasse in their controversy, for, beginning with Shadwell's epilogue to The Miser (c. January, 1671-72), new issues were
introduced, issues somewhat less aesthetic in nature.

iv.

Late in 1670 and early in 1671 Dryden gained enormous success and fame with *The Conquest of Granada*. His rival poets and court critics rewarded him with a barrage of censure and venom. Shadwell, who had always disliked heroic drama, took the earliest opportunity to ridicule *The Conquest*. His reasons for doing so were in part aesthetic: like the court wits and others he disapproved of the new dramatic mode. But also he had a more personal motive. Up to 1672 all of Shadwell's plays had been performed by the Duke's company in the old Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre, whereas Dryden wrote for the rival King's company at that time established at the Theatre Royal in Bridges Street. When a success at one house meant lean days for the other, it was inevitable that Shadwell should ridicule *The Conquest*. He had an admirable chance to ridicule it because, for some inexplicable reason, *The Miser* was performed around January, 1672, at Dryden's own theatre where on December 7, 1671, *The Rehearsal* had burlesqued heroic drama and Dryden in particular. It is possible that Buckingham and the other court wits had a hand in *The Miser's* being performed at the Theatre Royal. At any rate Shadwell's play was anti-heroic in nature, a fact that Shadwell
When Sieges now by Poets are prepar'd,
And Love and War 'gainst Nations is declar'd;
When Africa and Asia are not spar'd,
By some who in Rime will all the World o'erun,
Who in their Conquests will no Country shun,
Not scaping the Mogul, nor Prester John,
No American Prince is in his Throne secure,
Not Totty Potty May himself is sure:
But may the fury of their Rhime Endure,
Nay in time each Prince in Guinny will be fought,
And under these Poetick Fetters brought;
And we shall see how the black Rogues lov'd and sought.
When such great things are for the Stage design'd,
We fear this trifle will no favour find.

In these lines Shadwell's aesthetic and professional opposition to Dryden combined.

The Conquest met a wave of adverse criticism; not only did its success distress Dryden's professional rivals and the champions of the Elizabethan mode of drama, to both of which factions Shadwell belonged, but the censorious tone that Dryden took towards the Elizabethan and Jacobean writers in the epilogue to the second part particularly antagonized the court wits and prompted them to rebuke Dryden verbally. In the face of all this hostility, Dryden quickly wrote "A Defence of the Epilogue," published around 1672, in which he explained and sought to justify his censure. In this essay Dryden handled Jonson roughly. After pointing out Jonson's solecisms of grammar and sense, Dryden reiterated his belief that Jonson's wit had obvious limits:
For Ben Jonson, the most judicious of poets, he always writ properly, and as the character required; and I will not contest farther with my friends, who call that wit: it being very certain, that even folly itself, well represented, is wit in a larger signification; and that there is fancy, as well as judgment in it, though not so much or noble: because all poetry being imitation, that of folly is a lower exercise of fancy, though perhaps as difficult as the other; for it is a kind of looking downward in the poet, and representing that part of mankind which is below him.

Dryden argued that "Wit in the stricter sense, that is, sharpness of conceit," lay beyond Jonson's poetic limits; he either had to steal such wit from the ancients or to resort to "...the lowest and most grovelling kind of wit, which we call clenches." Dryden's estimation of Jonson reached its nadir in this essay.

Nevertheless Dryden wished to end this argument with Shadwell. Although he expressed fear that their friendship might be jeopardized by continued bickering, Dryden realized Shadwell's intimacy and influence with the court wits:

Let us ascribe to Jonson, the height and accuracy of judgment in the ordering of his plots, his choice of characters, and maintaining what he had chosen to the end: But let us not think him a perfect pattern of imitation, except it be in humour; for love, which is the foundation of all comedies in other languages, is scarcely mentioned in any of his plays: And for humour itself, the poets of this age will be more wary than to imitate the meanness of his persons.

We might notice at this point that in 1672 a prologue to a revival of Julius Caesar appeared in the Covent Garden Drollery, which scholars regard as the work of Dryden
because it compared the merits of Shakespeare and Jonson in a way similar to An Essay of Dramatic Poesy. For example, these lines expressed an idea that Neander had earlier elaborated on:

In Imitation Johnson's wit was shown,  
Heaven made his men, but Shakespeare made his own,  
Wise Johnson's Talent in observing lay,  
But others Follies still made up his play.  
He drew the like, in each elaborate line,  
But Shakespeare, like a Master, did design.

After hitting the meaness of Jonson's characters, the author of the prologue repeated an idea Dryden had advanced in the preface to An Evening's Love:

Both are so great, that he boldly dare  
Who both of them does judge, and both compare:  
If amongst poets one more bold there be,  
The man that dare attempt in either way is he.

Dryden may have been bold in comparing Jonson and Shakespeare, but Shadwell was foolhardy in imitating Jonson.

At this juncture both Dryden and Shadwell seemed anxious for some respite, and, during the next few years, their references to one another became less frequent. It is a mistake, however, to think that the debate ended altogether; it continued in a more restrained manner with new issues being considered. We must trace the continuance of the controversy so that we can see "MacFlecknoe" in its proper light.
In the dedication to *The Assignation* (1673), Dryden repeated his intention to avoid literary disputes whenever possible, especially disputes about the merits of Jonson. He wrote: "I know I honour Ben Jonson more than my little critics, because, without vanity I may own, I understand him better." Thus he refused to be drawn into an argument with Richard Leigh who had recently satirized *The Conquest* and defended Jonson and the other Elizabethans whom Dryden had disparaged. Dryden also may have had Shadwell in mind when he wrote this: certainly it implied a full stop to their critical exchange over Jonson.

The controversy flared up again in 1674 when Shadwell's operatic version of *The Tempest* proved an unusual success. This spectacular play must have been in rehearsal in March, for, in the prologue to the opening of the new Theatre Royal in Drury Lane on March 26, 1674, Dryden ridiculed Shadwell's reliance on machines rather than wit:

Mark, when they play, how our fine fops advance  
The mighty merits of their men of France,  
Keep time, cry Ben! and humour the cadence.  
Well, please yourselves; but sure 'tis understood,  
The French machines have ne'er done England good.  
I would not prophesy our house's fate;  
But while vain shows and scenes you overrate,  
'Tis to be fear'd----  
That, as a fire the former house o'erthrew,  
Machines and tempests will destroy the new.

A Restoration playwright could not afford to let a rival's
success pass without disparagement.

Aside from this necessary professional rivalry, however, Dryden and Shadwell seem to have remained friends. At least they forgot their differences momentarily when a common enemy appeared. Later in 1674 they joined forces in an effort to squash the public fame and court favor that Settle gained with The Empress of Morocco. 19

The success of The Tempest opera proved even greater than Dryden had feared. In fact it inspired Shadwell to try his hand at an original opera, Psyche, which also fared well on the stage of Dorset Garden in February, 1674-75. But, despite its popularity, Psyche received so much adverse criticism from the court wits that Shadwell, who above all wished to preserve his court favor, thought it judicious to repent his bad taste. In the preface to the play he gladly agreed with his court critics and declared:

For I had rather by Author of one Scene of Comedy, like some of Ben Johnson's, then of all the best Plays of this kind that have been, or ever shall be written: Good Comedy requiring much more Wit and Judgment in the Writer, than any Rhyming unnatural Plays can do....

There followed three years in which Dryden and Shadwell traded concessions. First Dryden admitted that the dramatists of the previous age surpassed those of the Restoration in tragedy. Speaking bitterly of his own misfortunes in the theatre, he wrote in the prologue to Aureng-Zebe (November, 1675):
He, in a just despair, would quit the stage;  
And to an age less polished, more unskilled,  
Does, with disdain, the foremost honours yield.  
As with the greater dead he dares not strive,  
He would not match his verse with those who live:  
Let him retire, betwixt two ages cast,  
The first of this, the hindmost of the last.

In the epilogue to the same play, however, Dryden was considerably less humble. He denounced the influence of French drama, and attacked the present age for tolerating inferior writing:

Our Poet writes a hundred years too soon.  
This age comes on too slow, or he too fast;  
And early springs are subject to a blast!  
Who would excel, when few can make a test  
Betwixt indifferent writing and the best?  
For favours, cheap and common, who would strive  
Which, like abandoned prostitutes, you give?

The adverse criticism caused by his recent remarks on the writers of the earlier age, the financial difficulties that the Theatre Royal was experiencing, and the cold reception that his latest plays had received had engendered this bitter melancholy. Although he blamed himself in the prologue, he felt in the epilogue that the low tastes of the audience accounted for his unpopularity and the concomitant popularity of such a superficial trifle as Psyche.

Shadwell also made a slight concession now that the heat of the controversy with Dryden had passed. In the prologue to The Virtuoso (May, 1676), he admitted that few of Jonson's plays were perfect. But in the play's dedication he made it quite clear that he would go no
further, for he renewed his attack on those who misconstrued the nature of humor comedy:

Nor do I count those Humours which a great many do, that is to say, such as consist in using one or two By words; or in having a fantastick, extravagant Dress, as many pretended Humours have; nor in the affectation of some French words, which several plays have shown us, I say nothing of impossible, unnatural Farce Fools, which some intend for Comical, who think it the easiest thing in the World to write a Comedy, and yet will sooner grow rich upon their ill Plays, than write a good one....

The allusion was general, but Dryden had declared recently that humors were easier to write than repartee and had been twitted by others for using foreign words in his plays.

In the same dedication Shadwell wrote indignantly that "...the same people, to my great comfort, damn all Mr. Johnson's Plays, who was incomparably the best Drammatick Poet that ever was, or, I believe, ever will be; and I had rather be Authour of one Scene in his best Comedies, than of any Play this Age has produced." Shadwell seemed more than eager to continue the controversy with Dryden; unlike Dryden, at any rate, he refused to back down on his argument. In the epilogue to The Virtuoso he taunted Dryden by lashing out at the extravagances of heroic drama, perhaps in the knowledge that Dryden had modified his own position on serious drama. Shadwell roundly asserted that heroic dramas exercised the feminine fancy rather than the manly wit:
But of those Ladies he despairs to day,
Who love a dull Romantick whining Play;
Where poor frail Woman's made a Deity,
With sensless amorous Idolatry;
And sniveling Heroes sigh, and pine, and cry.
Though singly they beat Armies, and huff Kings,
Rant at the Gods, and do impossible things;
Though they can laugh at danger, blood, and wounds;
Yet if the Dame once chides, the milk-sop Hero swoons.
These doughty things, nor Manners have nor Wit,
We ne'er saw Hero fit to drink with yet.

Shadwell was beating a dying horse, however, for by 1676 heroic drama had begun to decline, hastened, no doubt, by Dryden's renunciation of it.

In the dedication to Aureng-Zebe, published in 1676, Dryden explained, why he had given up heroic drama. He said that he had simply tired of the form, meaning probably that he had tired of the attacks of the numerous opponents of heroic drama. Again he said that he wearied of writing plays, and he went so far as to concede that humors were more successful than repartee in comedy: "I never thought myself very fit for an employment, where many of my predecessors have excelled me in all kinds; and some of my contemporaries, even in my own partial judgment, have outdone me in Comedy."

Nevertheless Dryden did not dismiss his heroic dramas as worthless. In 1677 he published a vigorous defence of them in "The Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence." It should be noted, however, that in this essay Dryden defended heroic poems more than heroic dramas; he
acknowledged that heroic drama had little justification nowadays since its potential had already been exhausted. Consequently he wrote in the preface to his first neo-Shakespearian tragedy All for Love (1678): "Not that I condemn my former way, but that this is more proper to my present purpose."

vi.

Dryden's virulent criticism on Rochester in the preface to All for Love (1678) ended all pretence to peace between him and Shadwell. In the Restoration it was a hazardous undertaking for a commoner to attack a courtier in print, and, fully aware of the risk he ran, Dryden carefully veiled his satirical thrusts. Nevertheless, those thrusts must have enraged Rochester. Perhaps Shadwell knew of Rochester's anger and saw a chance to improve his own fortunes by exploiting it at Dryden's expense. At any rate his subsequent references to Dryden increased suddenly in animosity. In dedicating Timon of Athens to another of the court wits, Buckingham, in 1678, Shadwell praised the criticism of the most celebrated attack on Dryden by saying that "...no man who has perfectly understood the Rehearsal, and some other of your Writings, if he has any Genius at all, can write ill after it." This brief remark was Shadwell's downfall,
for it led Dryden to release all of his heretofore restrained feelings against Shadwell and to write "MacFlecknoe." Dryden had never forgiven Buckingham for The Rehearsal, and, despite the fact that the burlesque was first played in 1671, he had not had his revenge by 1678. Therefore, with The Rehearsal satire still rankling him, Dryden found Shadwell's praise of it intolerable.

Dates become important at this juncture. Shadwell's Timon was published in the spring of 1678, and, since it was entered in the Stationer's Register on February 23, 1677-78, probably it appeared in print in June. Yet around the following December, Dryden provided a prologue for Shadwell's The True Widow. If Shadwell's remark in the Timon dedication had incensed Dryden, as I believe it did, how can this gesture by Dryden be explained? Although Dryden may have sold the prologue to Shadwell just as he sold numerous such pieces to rival poets, I believe that McKeithon has offered a better explanation when he suggests that Dryden gave the prologue to Shadwell before he read the Timon dedication. The fact that Dryden wrote now for the same theatre as Shadwell simply made the giving of the prologue easier. Once he had read the dedication, Dryden's feelings toward Shadwell changed completely and he wrote "MacFlecknoe."

Around April, 1679, Dryden's Troilus and Cressida was performed at Dorset Garden. Both the prologue and
epilogue to this play reflected the sharp shift in Dryden's attitude towards Shadwell. In the prologue to *Aureng-Zebe* in 1675 Dryden had lamented the low tastes of the age, but, whereas he had previously accepted this state of affairs with world-weary passivity, he now denounced it with satirical fury. Introducing the ghost of Shakespeare as his speaker, Dryden wrote:

Now, where are the successors to my name?
What bring they to fill out a poet's fame?
Weak, short-lived issues of a feeble age;
Scarce living to be Christened on the stage!
For humour, farce, for love they rhyme dispense,
That tolls the knell for their departed sense.
Dulness might thrive in any age but this:
'Twould recommend to some fat benefice.
Dulness, that in the play-house meets disgrace,
Might meet with reverence, in its proper place.
The fulsome clench, that nauseates the town,
Would from a judge or alderman go down.
Such virtue is there in a robe and gown.
And that insipid stuff which here you hate,
Might somewhere else be called a grave debate;
Dulness is decent in the church and state.

Before examining these lines more closely, let me cite part of the epilogue to *Troilus and Cressida*, another piece of excoriation delivered by the character Thersites:

As we strew rat's-bane when we vermin fear,
'Twere worth our cost to scatter fool-bane here;
And, after all our judging fops were served
Dull poets, too, should have a dose reserved;
Such reprobates, as, past all sense of shaming,
Write on, and ne'er are satisfied with damning:
Next, those, to whom the stage does not belong,
Such as whose vocation only is -- to song;
At most to prologue, when for want of time,
Poets take in for journey-work in rhyme.
The theme of dulness that these two passages reiterated suggests strongly that Dryden had already written "MacFlecknoe." In fact a kind of reversed parallel appears: in the prologue, Shakespeare, whom Dryden now regarded as the best of all English poets, looked for but could not find a worthy successor; in "MacFlecknoe" Flecknoe, whom Dryden regarded as one of the worst of English poets, looked for and found a worthy successor in Shadwell. Dryden went on in the prologue to observe that comedy of humors had degenerated into farce, a notion that Shadwell had already denied several times, and that romantic drama had been debauched by such senseless plays as Psyche. When he referred to the success of dulness among judges and aldermen, Dryden may have intended to taunt Shadwell's growing popularity with the Whigs who controlled the law courts at this time. The mention of the dulness of the church reminds us that Flecknoe was a priest. In the epilogue Dryden may have had Settle in mind when he spoke of reprobates "past all sense of shaming." However, the concluding lines in the quoted section again alluded to Shadwell who prided himself on his musical skills and who never tired of boasting of the speed with which he wrote his dramas.

Scholars have already assembled considerable evidence to show that "MacFlecknoe" was written in 1678. A fragmentary manuscript of the poem bearing the date 1678,
the absence of any allusions in the poem to Shadwell's Whiggism, and the satirical portrait of Herringman constitute the main pieces of evidence in favor of the year 1678. However, I believe that, because of their similarity in tone and ideas to "MacFlecknoe," the prologue and epilogue to Troilus and Cressida present additional striking evidence in favor of 1678.

"MacFlecknoe" is Dryden's most delightful satire. It is not his greatest, for that honor goes to "Absalom and Achitophel." Yet, for sheer delight, "MacFlecknoe," with its devastating defamation of Shadwell, takes the prize. In writing "MacFlecknoe," however, Dryden could neither claim that he fulfilled the "true end of satire," which he defined himself in the epistle to "Absalom and Achitophel" as "the amendment of vices by correction," nor that he was "no more an enemy to the offender, than the physician to the patient, when he prescribes harsh remedies to an inveterate disease." Dryden was motivated to write "MacFlecknoe" by a desire for personal revenge on a poet who had not only carried on a running controversy with him for ten years but who had betrayed a professional friendship by praising The Rehearsal. As Dryden himself confessed later, "MacFlecknoe" was a Varronian satire, the purpose of
which was not so much to correct vices as to divert by ridicule. In satisfying this aim, "MacFlecknoe" was an unequalled success.

In the poem itself Dryden restated many of the critical positions that he had taken earlier in his exchanges with Shadwell, but, whereas he formerly had allowed for differences in opinion on some points and had even given ground to Shadwell on others, he now spoke with an inflexible certainty. He was right and Shadwell wrong. In thus finally taking a firm stand, Dryden revealed the greatness of his genius, particularly in comparison to that of Shadwell, for, instead of dwelling on minor foibles and public gossip as Shadwell did, Dryden levelled the practically unanswerable charge that his enemy was an insignificant fool and dullard.

As the basic fiction or "thought" of "MacFlecknoe," Dryden conceived a laureateship of dulness which might be thought of as the antithesis not only of the actual laureateship that Dryden held but of the laurel of Apollo that so many poets competed for in the numerous "Session of the Poets" poems of the period. Dryden depicted Flecknoe as the current ruler of the realm of dulness who, growing old, anxiously sought some poet well qualified in writing bad poetry to succeed him and to continue to "wage immortal war with wit."
With this pseudo-historical situation established, Dryden began the action of the poem at the moment when Flecknoe had finally discovered a worthwhile successor -- Shadwell:

Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dulness from his tender years;
Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he,
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.

Dryden believed that the state of letters was in a bad way. In recent years especially, he had found more and more poetastrers scribbling nonsense for the theatre, a trend that he and others often struck out against. But of all these poetastrers, Dryden thought that Shadwell was the worst. This marked a distinct change in Dryden's estimate of Shadwell, for, although he had criticized Shadwell before, he had never denied that Shadwell's comedies had some merit. He had always felt that, like Jonson's comedies, Shadwell's plays lacked fancy, but he had always granted them the qualities produced by sound judgment. Now, however, both Shadwell and his plays had not a glimmer of wit:

But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,
His rising fogs prevail upon the day.
Besides, his goodly fabric fills the eye,
And seems design'd for thoughtless majesty;
Thoughtless as monarch oaks, that shade the plain,
And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.

Dryden considered that Shadwell was the "last great prophet of tautology," an ignominious rank that Settle had earlier
So overwhelming was Flecknoe's joy at finding such a well qualified successor that he could not continue his eulogy of Shadwell's talents. At this point Dryden himself interposed and, as if to substantiate Flecknoe's opinions of Shadwell, continued:

All arguments, but most his plays, persuade, That for anointed dulness he was made.

He then digressed to describe the kingdom of dulness, one of the chief buildings of which was the Nursery theatre, "this monument of vanish'd minds," where aspiring actors and actresses practiced their skills in inferior plays. Here Shadwell's plays could reign without challenge, and here Flecknoe, aware of his successor's dramatic talents, erected a throne. Dryden commented that the Nursery was a fitting place in which to crown a poet like Shadwell:

Born for a scourge of wit, and flail of sense; To whom true dulness should some Psyches owe, But worlds of Misers from his pen should flow; Humorists, and Hypocrites, it should produce, Whole Raymond families, and tribes of Bruce.

Such unwitty men of wit as those from The Virtuoso would be at home in the Nursery.

Dryden next described the coronation ceremony. As the procession moved towards the Nursery, all the devotees of dulness, including Herringman, Dryden's former publisher who still published Shadwell's works, crowded into the street to hail their new ruler. The ceremony over, Shadwell vowed to remain true to dulness as long as he lived.
Flecknoe then started his valedictory speech by begging Shadwell to shun all advice from others and to ignore the examples set by such genuine wits as Etherege who could only lead him into sense. Flecknoe urged Shadwell always to be true to his own dull self:

Let Cully, Cockwood, Fopling, charm the pit,
And in their folly show the writer’s wit;
Yet still thy fools shall stand in thy defense,
And justify their author’s want of sense.
Let them be all by thy own model made
Of dulness, and desire no foreign aid;
That they to future ages may be known,
Not copies drawn, but issue of thy own;

Above all, Flecknoe urged Shadwell not to claim kinship with writers like Jonson who had shown himself to be a sworn enemy to dulness and, therefore, to Shadwell:

Thou art my blood, where Jonson has no part:
What share have we in nature, or in art?
Where did his wit on learning fix a brand,
And rail at arts he did not understand?
Where made he love in Prince Nicander’s vein,
Or swept the dust in Psyche’s humble strain?
Where sold he bargains, ’whip-stitch, kiss my arse,’
Promised a play and dwindled to a farce?
When did his muse from Fletcher scenes purloin,
As thou whole Etherege dost transfuse to thine?
But so transfused, as oil on waters flow,
His always floats above, thine sinks below.

Dryden made Shadwell out to be Jonson’s opposite: one wrote sense, while the other, at best, wrote “a tympany of sense.” Flecknoe advised Shadwell not to pretend to wit; on the contrary he should simply follow his own nature and be — like Flecknoe himself — dull. Finally, just before the trap opened beneath him, Flecknoe offered this counsel to his successor:
Leave writing plays, and choose for thy command
Some peaceful province in Acrostic land.
There thou may'st wings display and altars raise,
And torture one poor word ten thousand ways;
Or, if thou would'st thy different talents suit,
Set thy own songs, and sing them to thy lute.

The themes of "MacFlecknoe" were those which had dominated the earlier exchanges between Dryden and Shadwell: wit, Jonson, and originality. Several other ideas were introduced of which one perhaps merits mention since it had appeared as an issue in another controversy. Dryden ridiculed Shadwell's "northern dedications" to the Duke of Newcastle. Numerous dramatists including Dryden sought the favor of the Duke, but apparently Shadwell succeeded best. Dryden had dedicated An Evening's Love to Newcastle in 1671, and he may have suspected that Shadwell had something to do with the loss of Newcastle's patronage. At any rate Dryden must have envied Shadwell's long intimacy with the Duke and thought that he could nettle Shadwell by reminding him of the good fortune he enjoyed while the Duke lived.

When seen in its proper context "MacFlecknoe" presents fewer problems than scholars once believed it did. Recent scholarship has proved that the poem belongs not to the political literature of the 1670's but to the preceding decade, and I believe that I have helped narrow the date of its writing still further, from 1678-61 to 1678-79. I have tried also to show that Dryden wrote "MacFlecknoe"
as a specific reply to an action by Shadwell and that he intended it to be a coup de grace to a rival poet and critic. Although "MacFlecknoe" was not the last word in the controversy, I believe it marked the end of the first part of the controversy. Henceforth, the exchanges between Dryden and Shadwell were motivated by their conflicting political opinions.

viii.

In November, 1661, a packed jury in London released the Earl of Shaftesbury, leader of the Whig opposition to Charles, and to celebrate this momentous occasion the Whigs struck a medal. Such a public gesture of dissension called for a Tory denunciation, and in March, 1662, Dryden published "The Medal." To the poem he added "An Epistle to the Whigs" in which he boldly challenged the Whig poets to answer his satire of their party in "The Medal." He declared he did not fear such an answer because he knew of the shortage of wit that existed among the Whig writers. So little respect had he for the witless Whigs, in fact, that he offered to help them: "If God has not blessed you with the talent of rhyming, make use of my poor stock, and welcome; let your verses run upon my feet; and for the utmost refuge of notorious blockheads, reduced to the last extremity of sense, turn my own lines upon me; and in utter despair of
your own satire, make me satirise myself."

Shadwell quickly took Dryden's advice, and in his "Lenten Prologue refus'd by the Players" he combined lines from The Rehearsal and "The Medal" to vilify the laureate. Apparently Dryden's political beliefs had been somewhat uncertain prior to "The medal," for Shadwell found his motives for writing against the Whigs ignoble:

What an enlightningrace is want of Bread?
How can it change a Libeller's Heart, and clear a Laureat's Head?

Within a few months Shadwell published a more detailed reply to "The Medal." In "The Medal of John Bayes" he launched a full scale attack on Dryden's character by presenting a veritable catalogue of anti-Dryden libels. For example, in the prefatory "Epistle to the Tories," he dilated on such subjects as Dryden's poetic diet, his limited conversational abilities, his perversion of his classical learning for the sake of plagiarism, and his affair with Mrs. Reeves. However, Shadwell granted that Dryden had one small talent in spite of all his crudeness of thought and behavior: "He has an easiness in Rime, and a knack of Versifying, and can make a slight thing seem pretty and clinquant; and his Fort is, that he is an indifferent good Versificator." In the poem itself Shadwell not only repeated most of these charges but added that Dryden wrote libels not satires, that he indulged in unnatural sexual practices, and that his political beliefs
varied with the tide of events. Shadwell even exhumed Dryden's old feud with Sir Robert Howard in order to illustrate Dryden's ingratitude and impudence:

Then by th'assistance of a Noble Knight,
Th'hadst plenty, ease, and liberty to write.
First like a Gentleman he made thee live;
And on his Bounty thou didst amply thrive.
But soon thy Native swelling Venom rose,
And thou didst him, who gave thee Bread, expose.
'Gainst him a scandalous Preface didst thou write,
Which thou didst soon expunge, rather than fight.

Shadwell ended with a final jibe at Dryden's insincerity in writing for the Tories:

Farewel, abandon'd Rascal! only fit
To be abus'd by thy own scurrilous Wit.
Which thou wouldst do, and for a Moderate sum,
Answer thy Medal and thy Absolom.

In the summer of 1682 Shadwell joined with Settle and the lawyer Thomas Hunt in writing a pamphlet entitled Some Reflections on the Duke of Guise which attempted to prove that Dryden and Lee's play had dangerous political implications. The pamphlet succeeded in delaying the play's production for several months, and, when it was published in the following March, Dryden appended to it "The Vindication of The Duke of Guise" in which he refuted the charges of sedition that had been brought against the play and against himself. In this essay Dryden again assumed a supercilious tone and wrote as if the efforts of his enemies did not really merit his attention. With "MacFlecknoe" in mind, he ridiculed the abilities of Shadwell and Settle:
They decry the play, but in such a manner, that it has the effect of a recommendation. They call it 'a dull entertainment;' and that is a dangerous word, I must confess, from one of the greatest masters in human nature, of that faculty. Now I can forgive them this reproach too, after all the rest; for this play does openly discover the original and root of the practices and principles, both of their party and cause; and they are so well acquainted with all the trains and mazes of rebellion, that there is nothing new to them in the whole history. Or what if it were a little insipid, there was no conjuring that I remember in "Pope Joan;" and "The Lancashire Witches" were without doubt the most insipid jades that ever flew upon a stage; and yet even these, by the favour of a party, made a shift to hold up their heads. Now, if we have outdone these plays in their own dull way, their authors have some sort of privilege to throw the first stone; but we shall rather choose to yield the point of dulness, than contend for it, against so indisputable claim.

Elsewhere in the essay Dryden described Shadwell as a kind of living farce character:

Og may write against the King, if he pleases, so long as he drinks for him, and his writings will never do the government so much harm as his drinking does it good; for true subjects will not be perverted by his libels; but the wine-duties rise considerably by his claret. He has often called me an atheist in print; I would believe more charitably of him, and that he only goes the broad way, because the other is too narrow for him. He may see, by this, I do not delight to meddle with the course of his life, and his immorality, though I have a long bead-roll of them. I have hitherto contented myself with the ridiculous part of him, which is enough, in all conscience, to employ one man; even without the story of his late fall at the Old Devil, where he broke no ribs, because the hardness of the stairs could reach no bones; and, for my part, I do not wonder how he came to fall, for I have always known him heavy: the miracle is, how he got up again.
Steadfastly refusing to match the viciousness of his enemies' abuse, Dryden said that he no longer would bother with such a hapless drunkard as Shadwell: "But to leave him, who is not worth any further consideration, now I have done laughing at him, - would every man knew his own talent, and that they, who are only born for drinking, would let both poetry and prose alone!"

Shadwell may have replied to Dryden's anti-Whig satires in two other poems; however, the authorship of both of these pieces remains a literary mystery. Around July, 1682, a dull and libellous catalogue of Dryden's public and private vices was published in the anonymous "Satyr to his Muse." In September of the same year "The Tory Poets," sometimes attributed to Shadwell, appeared. This vituperative poem has some aesthetic merit and certainly provides some interest to the literary scholar, for it not only repeated the stock charges against Dryden but undertook a depreciation of his poetry. The critical method of "The Tory Poets" suggests the work of Shadwell, but there are several difficulties in regarding him as the author. Dryden's heroic dramas were judged to be little above farces:

If he dull Ravenscroft by chance excel,
Thanks to old Nokes that humours it so well;
Thanks to the Scenes and Musick for his Wit
Thanks to the Whores lie squeaking in the Pit,
That Bullies cannot hear, yet praise the Fact
And bravely Clap the Actor not the Act.
Furthermore Dryden's lubricious prologues and the high
 sounding but meaningless fustian of his plays deceived the
 fops in the pit into thinking Dryden witty:

_{Shadwel and Settle are both Fools to Bay_s,
They have no bawdy Prologues to their Plays;
These silly Villains under a pretence
Of wit, deceive us and like men write sense._

This reference to Shadwell makes it difficult to regard him
as the poem's author, even though it is a cunning piece of
praise. The poem added that Dryden's plays were good only
when judged in Dryden's own terms:

_{But though I have no Plot, and Verse be rough,
I say 'tis Wit, that sure is enough._

Finally, after having castigated Dryden for helping Mulgrave
and for stealing from Corneille, the poem defamed Otway and
Durfey, two other Tory poets. It may be significant that
Shadwell had good reason for despising both of these
writers: Otway had recently ridiculed his vices in "The
Poet's Complaint to his Muse" (1680), and Durfey had
lampooned him as Sir Barnaby Whigg in 1681. The abuse on
these particular poets and the extended attack on Dryden
in the poem suggest that perhaps Shadwell had at least a
share in the writing of "The Tory Poets."

The foulness of these Whig attacks on him prompted
Dryden to add some lines against Shadwell and Settle to
the continuation of Absalom and Achitophel" that Lee
produced in November, 1682. However, once again Dryden
refused to match filth with filth, and, whereas Shadwell and Settle had exploited the vocabulary of Billingsgate in their railing, Dryden produced incisive satire in his counterblast. He did not avoid Shadwell's personal, only his private vices; as he himself said in the poem: "I will not rake the dunghill of your crimes." Dubbing his enemy "Og," Dryden mocked Shadwell's size and his well-known fondness for liquor. He described Shadwell as he left a tavern "Round as a globe and liquored every chink;" and, after dwelling at some length on this proclivity, he took up Shadwell's poetic pretensions. His lines here echoed "MacFlecknoe:"

He never was a poet of God's making;  
The midwife laid her hand on his thick skull,  
With this prophetick blessing -- Be thou dull;  
Drink, swear, and roar; forbear no lewd delight  
Fit for thy bulk; do anything but write.

Unfortunately, Dryden went on, Shadwell did not heed this warning and had recently added treason to his poetic crimes. Yet, as a political poet, Shadwell had proved himself an even worse failure than the inept Settle:

Darest thou presume in verse to meet thy foes,  
Thou, whom the penny pamphlet foiled in prose?  
Doeg, whom for mankind's mirth had made  
O'ertops thy talent in thy very trade;  
Doeg to thee, thy paintings are so coarse,  
A poet is, though he's the poet's horse.

Dryden concluded that Shadwell deserved to be hanged for writing treason and for being so dull, and, though the first crime was understandable, "...to be hanged for nonsense is the devil."
By 1683 the political tide had definitely turned against the Whigs, and consequently their writers fell upon hard times. Between 1681 and 1688 Shadwell found himself denied the stage and therefore forced to rely on the generosity of his old court wit friends Dorset and Sedley. Dryden mildly mocked Shadwell's difficult straits in he contributed to Soame's version of "The Art of Poetry" (1683). He warned aspiring poets not to overrate their talents nor to ignore the advice of the critics as Shadwell had done:

A hundred authors' fates have been foretold,  
And Shadwell's works are printed, but not sold.  
Hear all the world; consider every thought;  
A fool by chance may stumble on a fault.

Denied the stage, Shadwell took to translation, and in 1687 published "The Tenth Satyr of Juvenal" to which he added a dedication to his benefactor Sedley in which he replied to "MacFlecknoe." Perhaps Shadwell realized the futility of trying to offset the devastating charge of dulness that Dryden had brought against him. At any rate his rebuttal was weak. He explained that his whole purpose in making this translation was to disprove the allegation made in "MacFlecknoe" that he did not know Latin and Greek. To prove his competence he published the Latin text with his translation. But he had another purpose. Above all, he wanted to prevent the epithet dull from becoming permanently fixed on his works and reputation:
After all this I may think I hope without vanity, that the Author of Mack-Fleckno reflects more upon himself than me; where he makes Fleckno commend Dulness, and chuse me for the Dullest that ever writ; and repeats dull, dull, etc. over and over: indeed he gives his own dullness a civeller term, and calls it being Saturnine. But sure he goes a little too far in calling me dullest, and has no more reason for that, than for giving me the Irish name of Mack, when he knows I never saw Ireland till I was three and twenty years old, and was there but four Months.

To prove that he did not deserve being called dull, Shadwell reiterated that more than any other poet he had supplied the stage with new and original humors, and he defied Dryden to name one of his own comedies that could match Epsom-wells. However, Shadwell had no desire to reopen the controversy with the now even more powerful laureate; his only humble desire was to defend his reputation:

However my Dullness admits of an excuse, because I endeavour to avoid it all I can. But had I been base or dishonest, I could have made none, yet if he pleases to let my Reputation alone, I shall not envy the Fame he has.

In his current disfavor Shadwell could not afford to antagonize Dryden; so he carefully avoided criticizing any of the laureate's works.\(^{30}\) When his fortunes suddenly changed in 1669, however, Shadwell quickly cast off this humility and made some efforts to ruin Dryden.

In 1669, with Dorset the new Lord Chamberlain under William and Mary, Shadwell replaced Dryden as poet-laureate. As a result of this sudden reversal of positions, Dryden now had to support himself by his writing and to undertake
the profitable but painful job of translating. Shadwell derided Dryden's fall from favor in "The Address of John Dryden, Laureat to His Highness the Prince of Orange," a poem of little merit or interest in which he crudely raked over Dryden's political activities. Although he had the upper hand, however, Shadwell actually could do little against Dryden. He may have been instrumental in having Dryden's prologue for a revival of Fletcher's The Prophetess cut out for political reasons, and he seems to have been behind the considerable delay in the production of Cleomenes (April, 1692).

Shadwell died in November, 1692, and his death inspired a number of writers like Tom Brown to break into scurrilous song. Dryden remained silent. In fact Dryden made only one passing reference to Shadwell after their reversal of fortunes. In 1694, writing in praise of The Double Dealer, he lamented the fact that writers like Shadwell were honored instead of Congreve.

ix.

The Dryden-Shadwell controversy illustrates the pattern of many literary and non-literary relationships in the Restoration. It began with a difference of critical opinions: the talents of Jonson, the meaning of wit, and the
end of comedy. However, professional rivalry between two dramatists who for the most part wrote for different theatres added animosity, especially after the successes of *The Conquest* and *The Tempest*. Of course, as the argument continued, tempers became frayed so that when Shadwell touched a particularly tender wound Dryden wrote a destructive satire. Finally, political differences killed any respect that one man had for the other, for abuse and libels replaced criticism and satires. Even after the political storm had passed, neither Dryden or Shadwell could return to the impersonality of literary criticism. To vary one of Dryden's sentences, the corruption of a literary controversy by politics resulted in the generation of a lasting hostility.
Besides the major controversies already described, numerous minor controversies occurred throughout the Restoration. Since many of these were waged on non-aesthetic grounds, they need not concern us here. For example, Mulgrave and Rochester engaged in a heated exchange of barbs over a matter of personal honor. Otway, drunk with the wine of a short-lived success at court, traduced Dryden in print, but, since Dryden did not reply, the matter ended. Again Otway, in less fortunate times, attacked almost the whole world of letters in "The Poet's Complaint to his Muse." There remain, however, several controversies that, in spite of their brevity, involved critical differences. Most of these minor controversies have been ignored by scholars, either because of their insignificance or because of the confusion that surrounds them. But no picture of the Restoration dramatic world could be complete without some attention to them.

We have observed in several of the major controversies that a dramatist who wrote for one playhouse regarded a success at the rival house as a threat to his own livelihood. Even within the same company, writers begrudged
their fellow' successes because of the professional's precarious position at the time. This state of affairs became more strained after 1670 when, as Downes pointed out, the supply of dramatists was plentiful. At a time when any new play had trouble enough gaining the stage, let alone enjoying a third day, it was small wonder that the success of one playwright distressed the other professionals.

Still other factors increased the discomfort of those dramatists contracted to the Theatre Royal. In 1671 the Duke's Company, at an expense of £9000, built a new playhouse at Dorset Garden especially fitted out with the mechanical devices necessary for the latest dramatic favorite, the opera. To make matters worse the King's Company lost their own house by fire on January 25, 1671-72, and were forced to perform in the old Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre which their rivals had recently vacated as inadequate. Dryden bitterly complained of the hard lot of the Theatre Royal dramatists at this time when he wrote in a prologue for a revival of Arviragus, staged shortly after the retreat to Lincoln's Inn Fields:

> With sickly actors and an old house too,
> We're match'd with glorious theatres, and new;
> And with our alehouse scenes, and clothes bare worn,
> Can neither raise old plays, nor new adorn.

Added to the disastrous fire and the new rival playhouse were the internal troubles that seemed to ferment constantly among the members of the King's company. As Nicoll has said:
Apart from their lack of money and the accumulated debts that weighed upon them, two particular troubles afflicted the actors. The first was that Thomas Killigrew seems to have been hopeless as a manager, and the players were restive under his control. Even after the King's company opened their new Drury Lane Theatre on March 26, 1673-74, at, it might be added, a building cost of £4400, this restiveness continued. Dryden found matters so intolerable, in fact, that in 1677-78 he broke his contract and began to give his plays to the Duke's players. As could be expected with this state of affairs, therefore, the writers for the Theatre Royal, already facing such difficult circumstances at home, enviously attacked the playwrights of the rival company for their comparative good fortunes.

Instead of collecting all of the sneering remarks that the rival dramatists made about one another's plays, I shall concentrate on the work of one man who practically built his career upon the inter-theatre rivalry of the 1670's, Thomas Duffett. A crude but vigorous satirist, Duffett wrote two comedies and three burlesques for the Theatre Royal during his short career. How he became a playwright remains a mystery, for all that seems to be known of his earlier life is that he was once a milliner in the New Exchange. Suddenly around March, 1672-73, his play The Spanish Rogue appeared on the Lincoln's Inn Fields' stage and gave evidence of a unique
talent. This play, like Duffett's better known burlesques, mocked the heroic mode of tragedy not only by certain absurd situations but simply by being a comedy written in rhyme. The complicated plot in which some comic "heroes" wage the war of love turned upon the common devices of disguise and mistaken identity. However, in the play, Duffett's criticism of heroic drama was neither explicit nor written with any specific play in mind. Duffett just seems to have scorned heroic drama, especially the kind put on at Dorset Garden. The prologue expressed his scorn:

After the good old English way we treat,  
Though it be plain, we give you Wholesom Meat.  
Our Friends of th'other house, do often take ye  
With such Ragousts as nasty French Cooks make ye.  
With garnish'd Dishes they delight your Eyes,  
And give you naught but Vermine in disguise.

The scorn also appeared in the epilogue, in which Duffett placed some of the blame for outrageous heroic drama on the audience's endless demand for something new in drama:

Poets saw this, and brought their Stages Crimes,  
Chang'd Comedy to Farce, and Sense to Rimes.

Worst of all, however, was the further perversion that the Duke's company had forced on drama:

No Play without a new Machine will do,  
Shortly, Your Miss must act with Engine to:  
For brisk, and pretty, you will cry at last,  
Can she Curvet? And is she Thorough-pac't?

These barbs probably did not bother Betterton and his writers, especially since The Spanish Rogue seems to have had a brief
Nevertheless, it is possible that Betterton persuaded an untried newcomer, Joseph Arrowsmith, to write a counterblast against the Theatre Royal, for around September, 1673, The Reformation, a play generally attributed to Arrowsmith, continued the tradition of The Rehearsal by ridiculing the dramatic methods and theories of John Dryden, the rival company's leading writer. As in Duffett's maiden effort, Arrowsmith made the satire in The Reformation ancillary to the comic plot, but there could be no mistaking the play's satirical victim. Arrowsmith made plain his general purpose in the prologue in which an actor complained of the lack of spectacle in the play itself and feared for the life of the play:

He ha's not left us Room for Gaudy Scene,
Which used to amuse you for a time,
Whil'sat Non-sense safely glides away in Rime.
I'le swear I had advis'd him for the best,
To lard it with fat Song or bawdy jest
Or write in Verse and huffe the Gods at least.
But he was humoursome and bid me say,
He was for plodding the Antient way:
Yet he would if this did not please our Friends,
In Rime and Non sense strive to make amends,
If we procur'd Noise, Clothes, Scenes, Songs and Dance,
His Siege, or Conquest he can have from France.

Thus Arrowsmith threw Duffett's charges back at the Theatre Royal by claiming that Duffett's sneers applied just as fairly to that company's dramatists. Arrowsmith, since he never denied the presence of nonsense at Dorset Garden, seems to have disapproved of nonsense no matter where performed.
In The Reformation itself, Arrowsmith concentrated his satire on the dramatic practices of one man by introducing the character of The Tutor. The title itself suggested the magisterial attitude that some had found offensive in Dryden's critical utterances. The Tutor taught English manners to Italians, and, at one point in the play, while advising a youth on the behavior befitting a theatre critic, he digressed to dilate on the relative merits of English dramatists in a way similar to Dryden in his "Defence of the Epilogue:"

...we have some three or four, as Fletcher, Johnson, Shakespeare, Davenant, that have scribbled themselves into the bulk of the follies and are admired to, but ne're knew the laws of heroick or dramatick poesy, nor faith to write true English neither." Pressed by some amused listeners, The Tutor expatiated on his own theories of the drama, theories that echo those that Dryden had propounded and that The Rehearsal had ridiculed:

...I take a subject, as suppose the Siege of Candy, or the conquest of Flanders, and by the way Sir let it always be some warlike action; you can't imagine what a grace a Drum and Trumpet give a Play. Then Sir I take you some three or four or half a dozen Kings, but most commonly two or three serve my turn, not a farthing matter whether they lived within a hundred years of one another, not a farthing Gentlemen, I have tryed it; and let the Play be what it will, the Characters are still the same.

...As Sir you must always have two Ladies in Love with one man, or two men in love with one woman; if you make them the Father and Son, or two Brothers, or two Friends, 'twill do the better. There you know is opportunity for love and honour and Fighting, and all that.
...Then Sir you must have a Hero that shall fight with all the world; yes i'gad, and beat them too, and half the gods into the bargain if occasion serves.

And just in case the audience should have missed the parallels to Dryden's critical theories, Arrowsmith had The Tutor, while admitting that his genius did not lead him to write it, say much on the subject of comedy:

But your true English and my way, is to write your Plays with double sense and brisk meaning Songs. Take me, you shall have the Ladies laugh at a little bawdy jest as if they would bepiss themselves, and the young Mounsiers clap as if they meant to wear their hands out in the service; and if you consider, this easy and a large subject, especially to one that will be at the charge to keep a wench that understands her trade, you can't imagine what hints and pretty things she will pick up. Now Sir, if you can but maintain two or three of those Characters, no matter what your plot is, your love and honour will do here agen, and 'tis but saving alive and marrying those that you would kill in Tragedy, and you have done.

The Tutor, in case all this pandering to public tastes should fail, had a method to assure a play's success: he sent his manuscript to some lady of the court in order to secure her favor. "This she takes for so much a favour--- and raises her esteem so much--- she talks of nothing else but Mr. such a ones new Play, and picks out the best on't to repeat, so half the town by this means is engag'd to clap before they come." As a friend precaution against failure, The Tutor tried to buy favor for his play by peddling his prestige as a wit:
...I take some half a dozen youngsters of the town, People that pride themselves in one of my nods or a shaking by the hand at the Coffeehouse, and let them have a copy of a Song or two, or promise of the Prologue, which does so much oblige, that I have all the faction of the town that makes a noise of my side.

There seems little doubt that Arrowsmith had Dryden chiefly in mind when he created The Tutor. This adds significance to the portrait of the magisterial drama critic of the coffee-house that appeared in the epilogue:

He looks about him with a scornful frown, Then picks his Favourite out and sits him down. Take me how is't? a half Crown thrown away, Pox on't he cries, I Droll'd and Slept it out; 'Twas some Raw Fop: Then proudly stares about; Then shrugs and whispers, laughs, then swears aloud. The whilst there's silence kept by all the Croud. At length he nods and cocks, is heard to say, D--m me 'tis true, and thus i.e damns the Play, Rises, looks big and combs, then goes his Way.

Arrowsmith added that such critics, if they may be so called, were "Poes unto every thing that's not their own."

In the spring of 1673 there was anonymously published at Oxford a twenty-one page pamphlet which, in the form of a discussion, reiterated once again many of the criticisms of The Rehearsal. The Censure of the Rota, now thought to be the work of Richard Leigh, a graduate of Oxford and later a physician, dwelt on the absurdities of Dryden's The Conquest of Granada. Since the satire is not original, it need not concern us here. More pertinent is the question of what prompted Leigh to join the ranks of Dryden's critics. Unfortunately no certain answer can be given. However, in
his rejoinder, in the epistle to *The Asignation* (1673), Dryden seems to have given a hint at the answer when he wrote: "I am, ridiculously enough, accused to be a contemner of universities; that is, in other words, an enemy of learning; without the foundation of which, I am sure, no man can pretend to be a poet. And if this be not enough, I am made a detractor from my predecessors, whom I confess to have been my masters in the art." Like Dryden, we wonder at the charge of his having belittled the universities. It is possible, however, that some sensitive scholars considered that his censure of the Jacobean dramatists, especially of Jonson, whose works were much esteemed at the universities as well as at the court, reflected on the dramatic standards of the schools. Colley Cibber, for example, had this to say of the preference for the older dramatists at Oxford: "Shakespeare and Jonson had there a sort of classical authority; for whose masterly scenes they seemed to have as implicit a reverence as formerly for the *Ethics* of Aristotle." Though Cibber spoke of the preferences of the early eighteenth century, we may safely assume the same preferences existed during the Restoration. At any rate, Dryden seems to have created enemies at the universities, which fact may help explain why he sent two placating prologues to Oxford in 1673.

Certainly 1673 was not a happy year for Dryden. He al-
ready had to contend with the contemptuous court wits, the outraged Shadwell, and the ambitious Ravenscroft among others. Nevertheless he still found time to reply to both Arrowsmith and Leigh. Late in 1673 he wrote scornfully in the dedication to *The Assignation*:

> But I have neither concernment enough upon me to write anything in my own defence, neither will I gratify the ambition of two wretched scribblers, who desire nothing more than to be answered. I have not wanted friends, even among strangers, who have defended me more strongly than my contemptible pedant could attack me. For the other, he is only like Fungoso in the play, who follows the fashion at a distance, and adores the Fastidious Brisk of Oxford. You can bear me witness, that I have not consideration enough for either of them to be angry. Let Maevius and Bavius admire each other; I wish to be hated by them and their fellows, by the same reason for which I desire to be loved by you.

Scholars have long puzzles over the identity of Brisk and Fungoso. The once promising identification of Brisk as Martin Clifford has been dismissed because Clifford did not attend Oxford. I believe that Dryden meant Brisk to stand for Leigh who fits all of the requirements. Furthermore I believe that Fungoso stood for Arrowsmith who, like the character of the same name in Jonson's *Every Man out of his Humour*, imitated the criticism of Leigh and Buckingham and who, writing some months after Leigh and two whole years after Buckingham, therefore "followed fashion at a distance."

The Duke's company reached new heights of popularity in
July, 1673, when Settle's *The Empress of Morocco* took full advantage of the resources that the new Lorset Garden theatre offered and so achieved a success that distressed dramatists of both companies. In an effort to curb this popularity, the King's company, newly settled into their Drury Lane house, staged Duffett's full scale burlesque of Settle's play around December, 1673.

Duffett's version of *The Empress* set out to prove that, divested of its ornamental trappings, Settle's play had nothing to recommend it. As Duffett said in the prologue:

> So when this Plot quite purg'd of Ale is,
> In naked Truth but a plain Tale is;
> And in such dress we mean to shew it,
> In spight of our damn'd Fustian Poet,
> Who has disguis'd it with dull Hist'ri's,
> Worse than his Brethren e're did Mistress.

Duffett threw the shallowness of Settle's plot into sharp relief by having draymen, corn-cutters, and chimney sweepers play the parts of Settle's emperors and generals. Like Settle, Duffett larded a series of banishments and battles with dilemmas of love and honor, songs, and dances. But, instead of Settle's inflated heroic verse, Duffett employed an octosyllabic couplet to achieve such Hudibrastic effects as this:

> Great Sir, your Hector Hamet's coming,
> From Car-men and stout Butchers Thrumming.
> At the Bear-garden, he is crossing
> From Bank-side on billows tossing:
> River bright does change complexion
> With his tatter'd Flags reflexion:
> Boat does move as men does pull her,
> In greater State you ne're saw Sculler:
Drum does rattle and Boys do bellow
Hamet up, for a pretty Fellow.

The bathetic reply to this momentous announcement was:

This matter that you are relating
Does not merit half this prating.

In this sometimes amusing manner Duffet's play proceeded, filled with nonsensical poetry and bawdy situations. Various of the favorite devices of the heroic dramatist were burlesqued. For example, the thin plots of the typical heroic play met with Duffet's ridicule in one scene in which Morena, an apple-woman, yielded to the temptations of liquor. Torn with the doubts and fears that afflicted all heroic heroines, she murmured to herself:

Revenge says go, honour does no say,
Truly I do not know what to say.

By having a sudden brawl save her virtue, Duffett ridiculed the well-timed arrival of such fortuitous events in heroic plays. After a good measure of such noisy nonsense, the play comes to an abrupt ending.

Duffett added to the play a curious epilogue which bore the title: "Being a new Fancy after the old, and most surprising way of Macbeth, Perform'd with new and costly Machines, Which were invented and managed by the most ingenious Operator Mr. Henry Wright. P.G.O." This piece burlesqued the mechanical devices first used effectively at Dorset Garden in the production of Davenant's Macbeth, February, 1672-73, while at the same time it continued to
ridicule the plot and characters of *The Empress*. Whirling onto the stage amidst thunder and lightning, three witches sang some vulgar songs and performed some wild dances. After several spectacular feats these creatures left the stage and, at last, Duffett's epilogue was read:

*Farce and Heroick tale use but one fashion,*

*Love and affection Layes the first foundation*

*Then Gyant noyse and show set cheating Glass on.*

If they wanted to witness such "Gyant noyse," Duffett's audience could go to Dorset Garden where spectacle, not sense, ruled:

*Those that adore the Ghosts and Devils yonder,*

*The Powder Lightning and the Mustard Thunder;*

*Who though they can't of Plot and Language prattle,*

*Can mew like Cats, and roar like Drum in battle.*

Apparently Duffett's first burlesque had some success, for, when the Duke's company staged another spectacle, this time Shadwell's operatic version of *The Tempest*, Duffett wrote *The Mock-Tempest*, which was performed at Drury Lane in November of 1674. Instead of Shadwell's corruption of Shakespeare's romantic setting, Duffett offered the harsh reality of low-life London. He turned the enchanted castle into Bridewell jail and made Prospero its headkeeper. Once again Duffett mixed noisy confusion and bawdiness. For instance, the first act described the descent of an angry mob on a brothel. After considerable brawling, the watch sought a peace on the condition that "all their Vessels shall have free trade into and out of all your Ports without paying any Custom." The condition was rejected, and the rabble, the
whores, the watch and the proprietors battled on amidst a barrage of nuts and apples until the act ended. The rest of the play took place in Bridewell, where, in the main plot, Prospero gained revenge on his brother Alonzo, now in jail for having been found in the brothel. With the aid of Ariel and some remarkable singing devils, Prospero succeeded, by the end of the play, in regaining the post of "Duke of My Lord Mayors Dogg Kennel" of which Alonzo had deprived him. Despite the obvious thinness of the plot and the heaviness of the humor, The Mock-Tempest had a strong Rabelaisian appeal in both its action and its language. At least the play enjoyed enough popularity for Soame and Dryden to recall ten years later in "The Art of Poetry:"

The dullest scribblers some admirers found,  
And the "Mock Tempest" was a while renowned.  
But this low stuff the town at last despised,  
And scorned the folly that they once had prised.

A few months later, in February, 1674-75, Dorset Garden had still another spectacular play delighting the town, Shadwell's Psyche. Again Duffett tried to meet the challenge to the Theatre Royal by penning a burlesque Psyche Debauch'd. As Langbaine said, Duffett wrote "on purpose to Ridicule Mr. Shadwell's Psyche, and to spoil the Duke's House, which, as has been before observ'd, was then more frequented than the King's." In the play, which was produced in May, 1675, Duffett used the technique of his earlier burlesques: the
noble personages and the glorious spectacle of Shadwell's play appearing as low-life characters and preposterous tricks. Because he showed considerably more restraint in this play, one modern critic declares that in *Psyche Debauch'd* Duffett produced "the most elaborate and most intelligible of the three shows." Duffett's purpose remained the same, for he wrote in the prologue:

> Let our Rich Neighbours mock our Farce; we know (Already, th'utmost) of their Puppet-show. Since they 'gainst Nature go, they Heav'n offend, If Natures purpose then cross Natures end; Unnat'ral Nature is not Natures friend.

When, in July, 1675, Duffett wrote a prologue for a revival of *Every Man out of his Humour*, he seemed ready to give up the battle and to admit that the Theatre Royal faced financial defeat:

> O Novelty, who can thy pow'r oppose! Polony Bear or strange Grimace out-goes Our finest language and our greatest shows.

Despite his three burlesques, Duffett had been unable to stem the tide of public favor for the Dorset Garden productions. The age desired spectacular nonsense, and Dorset Garden, equipped to cater to that desire, continued to profit at the expense of the Theatre Royal. Dryden, realizing the hopelessness of the Theatre Royal's situation, declared to his audience in the prologue to *Aureng-Zebe* (November, 1675):

> We and our neighbours, to speak proudly, are, Like monarchs, ruined with expensive war,
While, like wise English, unconcerned you sit,  
And see us play the tragedy of wit.

The Duke's company did not let Duffett's ridicule pass without a reply. However, they paid him scant notice, probably because his burlesques in no way jeopardized the popularity of their own playhouse. Otway no doubt had others besides Duffett in mind when he wrote in the prologue to *Alcibiades* (September, 1675):

> Both houses too too long a Fast have known,  
> That coarsest Non-sence goes most glibly down.  
> Thus though this Trifler, never wrote before,  
> Yet faith he ventur'd on the common score:  
> Since Nonsense is so generally allow'd,  
> He hopes that his may pass amongst the Crowd.

Settle, repaying Duffett for the mockery of his burlesque *Empress*, disparaged his plays for their lack of poetry but nevertheless pondered the fickleness of audiences that preferred burlesque to genuine serious drama. No doubt reflecting on his own misfortunes, Settle wrote in the epilogue to *Pastor Fido* (c. December, 1676):

> Who would not Damn a silly Rhiming Pop,  
> When there is scarce a Fore-man of a Shop,  
> With sense of Animal, and face of Stoick,  
> But Courts poor Tawdry Sempstress in Heroick;  
> Will make ye Rhimes on Cakes and Ale; Reherse  
> A Holy-days Treat, at Islington, in Verse?  
> Rhiming, which once had got so much your passion,  
> When it became the Lumber of the Nation,  
> Like Vests, your seven years Love, grew out of fashion.  
> Great Subjects, and Grave Poets please no more:  
> Their high strains now to humble Farce must lower.

Shadwell showed even more contempt for Duffett, not referring to him until the epistle to *A True Widow* in 1679, and then
but vaguely. He probably had Duffett among others in mind when he wrote of "the little Poetasters of the fourth rate, who condemn me; such as hold, that Wit signifies nothing in a Comedy; but the putting out of Candles, kicking down of Tables, falling over Joynt-stools; impossible accidents, and unnatural mistakes, (which they absurdly call Plot) are the poor things they rely upon...." Dryden, who by this time had thrown in his lot with the Duke's players, found ominous the success not only of Duffett but of those whom he burlesqued. While assessing the recent past in the theatre, Dryden wrote in the prologue to Mr. Limberham (March, 1677-78):

True wit has seen its best days long ago;  
It ne'er looked up, since we were dipt in show;  
When sense in doggrel rhymes and clouds was lost,  
And dulness flourished at the actor's cost.

At this point this war of the theatres ended. The political troubles that plagued the whole country after the Popish Plot proved fatal to the operation of two playhouses, and, with financial problems growing more serious on both sides, a union of the two companies was signed on May 4, 1682, a union that left only one outlet for dramatic talents. If a winner had to be declared, it was the Duke's company led by the shrewd Thomas Betterton, for, as Nicoll says of the union of the two companies, "it might almost be said that the one incorporated the other."
Dryden and Ravenscroft engaged in a brief but bitter controversy over the value of farce. Although farcical elements had long been present in English comedy, it was not until the invasion of first French and then Italian touring companies almost immediately after 1660 that farce became popular in England. Ravenscroft no doubt learned his craft from the plays of Moliere and from the commedia dell'arte. Although he borrowed many of his plots from these two sources, however, Ravenscroft cannot be dismissed as simply another plagiarist, for what he borrowed he modified shrewdly to suit distinctly English tastes. Nicoll assesses Ravenscroft's unique talents in these words: "In general, I believe, no writer had more of an influence on the usual fare of the theatre than had Ravenscroft. A third-rate dramatist, he yet divined what was desired by the public, and in meeting that desire he set a fashion which many others were only too happy to follow."  

By 1672 Dryden had assumed a pre-eminence among the professional dramatists and critics, and he had made it quite clear that he regarded farce as a bastard form that endangered the purity of English drama. He suggested that it had been imported into the country in an effort to destroy English moral fibre by corrupting the stage. In the prologue to the first part of The Conquest of Granada
(c. December, 1670) he expressed his intense dislike for farce:

And may those drudges of the stage, whose fate
Is damned dull farce more dully to translate,
Fall under that excise the state thinks fit
To set on all French wares, whose worst is wit.
French farce, worn out at home, is sent abroad;
And, patched up here, is made our English mode.

In the preface to *An Evening’s Love* (1671), Dryden antagonized Shadwell by suggesting that the Jonsonian plays of which Shadwell was so proud were really farces. In this same essay, Dryden distinguished between comedy and farce in this way:

Comedy consists, though of low persons, yet of natural actions and characters; I mean such humours, adventures, and designs, as are to be found and met with in the world. Farce, on the other side, consists of forced humours, and unnatural events. Comedy presents us with the imperfections of human nature: Farce entertains us with what is monstrous and chimerical. The one causes laughter in those who can judge of men and manners, by the lively representation of their folly or corruption: The other produces the same effect in those who can judge of neither, and that only by its extravagancies. The first works on the judgment and fancy; the latter on the fancy only: There is more of satisfaction in the former kind of laughter, and in the latter more of scorn.

Dryden admitted that farces often proved more popular than comedy and, therefore, that "...a true poet often misses of applause, because he cannot debase himself to write so ill as to please his audience." Apparently Dryden's low opinion of farce never changed, for as late as 1692 in the preface to *Cleomenes* he disdainfully dismissed farce
as "the extremity of bad poetry."

We have little evidence of Ravenscroft's critical views of the dramatic form he practiced. Several years before any of his own plays reached the stage, he seems to have gladly followed the predominant critical mode and censured farces. His commendatory poem for Edward Howard's The Six Days Adventure agreed ostensibly with Dryden's views:

But this age disesteems true Comedy
'Cause 'tis the mirror of the times
That doth reflect mens follies and their Crimes:
So some affected Lady 'cause her glass
Shows her how ill she manages her face,
is out of humour with't and throws it by.

Now Comedy to Farce gives place,
Which but its Zany is, and pleases more

With its Grimace,
Than all the Arts of Comedy before:
Yet is but Comedy turn'd Ridicule,
Or humours shown in Masquerade
An antick playing of the fool,
Which does so fast advance
Comedy is laugh'd out of Countenance.

Apparently Ravenscroft, in 1671 still a young man eager to gain access to the stage, felt no compunction in sacrificing his own ideas on comedy in favor of those of Edward Howard, who, in spite of his notoriety as a writer, had a court position and a brother with a voice in the affairs of the Theatre Royal. Once he had gained the Dorset Garden stage, however, Ravenscroft did not hesitate to express his own ideas. These ideas brought about the short-lived dispute with Dryden. Unfortunately Ravenscroft had few aspirations as a critic, and consequently he did not
offer his own definition of farce until 1698 in the epistle to The Italian Husband:

A Play is not call'd a Farce from any number of Acts, but from the lowness of the Subject and Characters; which are not true Characters in Nature, nor just representations of human actions (as Comedy is or should be) but from the oddness and extravagancy of the Characters and Subject: Which, tho not natural, yet not always against Nature; and tho not true, yet diverting, and foolishly delightful. A Farce is like a Dutch piece of Painting, or a Grotesque Figure, extravagant and pleasant.

Except for the word "pleasant," this definition did not greatly differ from the one Dryden had offered in 1671.

Ravenscroft opened the series of exchanges with Dryden in the prologue to his first acted play The Citizen Turn'd Gentleman (July, 1672). In this piece he attacked the senselessness of the current comedies and heroic tragedies and, in passing, mentioned one of Dryden's comic characters by name:

Then shall the Knight that had a knock in's Cradle, Such as Sir Martin, or Sir Arthur Addle, Be flock'd unto, as the great heroes now, In Playes of Rhyme and Noyse, with wond'rous show. Then shall the House (to see these Vectors kill and slay, That bravely fight out the whole plot of th'Play,) Be for at least six months full ev'ry day.

Ravenscroft treated Dryden lightly here; he intended primarily to warn his audience that its demand for variety would eventually so drain poets of original ideas that bad plays, just because they had some touch of originality, would soon fill a playhouse for weeks. At the same time, of course,
Havenscroft made quite plain his antipathy towards the kind of serious drama that Dryden championed at the time.

Why did Dryden bother to reply to Havenscroft, whose remarks, after all, were not particularly vicious? No doubt one of his reasons was his utter contempt for farce, which form had achieved its most notable success to date with Havenhoff's *The Citizen*. Dryden probably thought it wise to strike down as soon as possible what he considered a menace to genuine drama. But an even stronger reason must have been the rivalry between the two playhouses, a rivalry which, as we have already observed, had reached its boiling point at this time. For Dryden and the rest of the King's company, *The Citizen*'s success at Dorset Garden meant decreased audiences at the Theatre Royal. Ravenscroft's farce had achieved remarkable popularity. The playwright himself proudly boasted in the dedication that *The Citizen* was acted "thirty times," truly an unusually great number of performances for a play of the period. Furthermore the play had succeeded despite organized opposition by some critical factions, for Havenscroft sneered at these groups for trying futilely to deny him his success. Dryden probably belonged to one of these factions.

What most distressed Dryden about Ravenscroft's success was the threat that it represented to the members of the Theatre Royal. In the closing lines of a special epilogue
to *Secret Love* (1672), for example, he wrote that the players, particularly the actresses, would rather suffer poverty with the Theatre Royal "Then to be made a Mamamouchi" at Dorset Garden. However, in the prologue to *Marriage a la Mode* (c. April, 1672), Dryden shifted his tack and promised that, if the audience desired low comedy, the Theatre Royal could provide it as well as their rivals:

Our city friends so far will hardly come,  
They can take up with pleasures nearer home;  
And see gay shows and raudy scenes elsewhere;  
For we presume they seldom come to hear.  
But they have now ta'en up a glorious trade,  
And cutting Morecraft struts in masquerade.  
There is all our hope, for we shall show to-day  
A masking ball, to recommend our play;  
Way, to endear them more, and let them see  
We scorn to come behind in courtesy,  
We'll follow the new mode which they begin,  
And treat them with a room, and couch within:  
For that's one way, however the play fall short,  
To oblige the town, the city, and the court.

whereas the proximity of Dorset Garden to the centre of London must have affected the size of the audiences at the more suburban Theatre Royal playhouse in Lincoln's Inn Fields, certainly the presence of such a popular play as *The Citizen* did, and, although Dryden referred here to Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Scornful Lady*, a character very similar to Morecraft appeared in Ravenscroft's play. Within the same year Dryden had a third and more direct attack on *The Citizen* in circulation. The prologue to *The Assignation* (c. November, 1672) satirized the tastes of the theatre fop,
tastes that included an admiration for The Citizen:

Pardon our poet, if he speaks his mind;
You come to plays with your own follies lined:
Small fools fall on you, like small showers, in vain;
Your own oiled coats keep out all common rain.
You must have Mamamouchi, such a fop
As would appear a monster in a shop;
He'll fill your pit and boxes to the brim,
Where, rammed in crowds, you see yourselves in him.
Sure there's some spell, our poet never know,
In Hullibabilah de, and Chu, chu, chu;
But Marababah sahem most did touch you;
That is, Oh now we love the Mamamouchi!
Grimace and habit sent you pleased away;
You damned the poet, and cried up the play.

Because it enjoyed such a prodigious success and because it
was a farce, therefore, Dryden blasted Ravenscroft's first
play.

Ravenscroft did not hesitate in replying to the laureate.
In the prologue and the epistle to his next play The Careless
Lovers, which was both acted and published early in 1673,
he dealt with Dryden in blunt terms. He sought to destroy
Dryden's criticism of farce by asserting in the prologue
that heroic drama and farce were actually closely related
dramatic forms, so closely related, in fact, that it often
became difficult to distinguish between them:

They that observe the Humors of the Stage,
Find Fools and Heroes best do please this Age,
but both grown so extravagant, I scarce
Can tell, if Fool or Hero makes the better Farce:
As for Example, take our Mamamouchi,
And then Almansor, that so much did touch ye;
That Bully Hero that did kill and slay,
And conquer ye Ten Armies in one day:
He that from side to side play'd Runnegade,
That Fought and Lov'd as if he had been mad.
He that rain'd Victory at ev'ry Stroke,
And made Kings tremble at each Word he spoke;
He that could Kill and Damne you with a Look.

Such as the Heroes, that with you are taking,
But such as never were of heavens making:
Thus, whether Grave or Comick Scenes we write,
All's turn'd to Farce, by hero, or by Knight.
Without one of these two it is decree'd
by all of you, that no Play shall succeed.

Havenscroft pretended he could not comprehend Dryden's hostility towards farce. Dryden himself admitted that Restoration audiences demanded exaggeration on the stage; yet he rated heroic drama best and farce worst on the grounds that the one raised and the other lowered its heroes. Havenscroft asserted quite the contrary, for, while both were equally unrealistic and nonsensical, farce was so intentionally.

Undoubtedly Havenscroft irked Dryden by linking heroic drama and farce and by ridiculing Almanzor; at least Settle thought the device of linking the two forms effective enough to include it in his Notes and Observations Revis'd in 1674. 19

In the concluding lines of the same prologue Havenscroft derided the failure of Dryden's latest attempts to write comedy:

An Author did to please you, let his Wit run
Of late, much on a Serving-man and Cittern,
And yet you would not like the Cerenade,
Nay, and you Damn'd his Nunns in Masquerade.
You did his Spanish Sing-Song too abhor,
Ayeque locura con tanto rigor.
In fine, the whole by you so much was blam'd,
To act their Parts, the Players were asham'd; Ah, how severe your malice was that Day,
To Damne at once, the Poet and his Play;
But why, was your Rage just at that time shown,
When what the Poet writ, was all his own?
Till then he borrow'd from Romance, and did Translate,
And those Plays found a more Indulgent Fate.

Ravenscroft was correct in saying that An Evening's Love and
The Assignation had failed on the stage, but he flatly lied
about the success of The Conquest of Granada which had a
long and remunerative run at the Theatre Royal.

In the epistle to The Careless Lovers, Ravenscroft
attacked Dryden's personality more than his plays. He ex­
plained why he criticized Dryden in these words: "But,
Reader, lest by the ensuing Prologue, thou should'st think
me one of that Envious Tribe; know it was Written in
Requital to the Prologue, before the Assignation, or Love
in a Nunnery, and not without Provocation, Lasit prius:
but Devils of Wit are not very dangerous, and so we both
sleep in whole Skins." He then went on to deplore the way
in which Dryden misused the dedication; in Dryden's hands a
dedication became "...a scurvy Compliment, like that of
desiring a Man to be God-Father to every Child that is Born,
though their Neighbours perhaps Club'd to the getting
them." However, Ravenscroft observed ironically, some
professional poets needed money so that they could keep the
company of the great wits and thereby pick up material
for plays. Such scavengers Ravenscroft dubbed "Wit-
Collectors." Dryden, as we have seen, had a few years
before stated that, in being able to keep company with
the wits of the court, the Restoration poets enjoyed a
great advantage over their predecessors. This pressing need for money in order to gain the wit of others explained, at least for Ravenscroft, why some dramatists begrudged so much the successes of rivals and spoke against all new plays but their own. Ravenscroft satirically described such a writer in the act of destroying a rival's reputation:

Dam me! How can he Write! He's a Raw Young Fellow, newly come from the University; How can he understand Humour or Character that is just come from a College? Of another they Cry, S'death, he's no Scholler; he can't Write true Grammar: Then strutting and looking Big: S'blood, says he, I understand Greek, as you may see by the Quotations in my Preface, and at the Front of my last New Play: But if they can neither Talk, nor Write a Young Poet out of the Humour of Making Plays, they give him o're for a peremptory Fop, and so fall to writing Sledges and Opera's —

This portrait chiefly hit Dryden whose fondness for sprinkling his essays with Latin and Greek quotations had already been ridiculed by The Rehearsal. The prefatory essay to The Conquest, for example, had quotations from Latin, Greek, Italian, and Spanish. Settle treated Dryden's pedantry with similar scorn in 1674.

The Dryden-Ravenscroft controversy suddenly ended after this series of brisk exchanges. Neither man gave in and changed his views on the drama, but henceforth each seemed willingly to tolerate the practices and the successes of the other. Ravenscroft continued to write farces and occasionally to defend the form, but his critical remarks were few in number and general in nature. He may have had
Dryden in mind when he wrote these lines in the prologue to the farce Scaramasch (May, 1677):

Great Wits refrain this writing, 'cause 'tis low,
They oftner write to please themselves than you.
Like but the Play, let others have the name,
Let both French and Italians share the fame,
But if't be bad, let them too bear the blame.

Ravenscroft had few pretensions. Again, Ravenscroft may have had Dryden in mind when he celebrated the passing of heroic drama in his prologue to King Edgar and Alfreda (c. October, 1677):

But Humane Actions now in Playes allow,
And business such as does from Nature flow,
Let not what's natural be counted Low;
We have no Rant, no Rapture, nor high flight,
The Poet makes us Men and Women all to Night.

Dryden's giving up of the heroic mode, made public in the prologue to Aureng-Zebe (November, 1675), probably had something to do with this celebration of the return to nature in drama. Nevertheless, it must be noticed that Ravenscroft in no way fully exploited this chance to mock his erstwhile foe.

It has been suggested that Dryden and Ravenscroft clashed again almost fifteen years later as a result of some remarks that Ravenscroft made in the prologue and preface to his adaptation of Titus Andronicus, performed in 1678 or 1679 and published in 1687. Ravenscroft, always willing to do anything to please the theatre audiences, freely adapted Shakespeare's melodrama, even
adding to the already numerous killings in the original. Of his adaptation, he was inordinately proud, stating boldly in the prologue:

Like other poets, he'll not proudly scorn
To own, that he but winnowed Shakespeare's corn:
So far was he from robbing him of his treasure,
That he did add his own to make full measure.

in the preface he was bold enough to claim to be the most daring and the most successful of Shakespeare's adaptors:

"That if the reader will compare the old play with his copy, he will find none of all that author's works ever received greater alterations or additions, the language not only refined, but many scenes entirely new, besides most of the principal characters heightened, and the plot much increased."

Such boastful remarks should have annoyed Dryden, who regarded Shakespeare as the best of all English dramatists and who himself had adapted two Shakespearean plays. However, Dryden seems to have let Ravenscroft's remarks pass without notice.

The controversy between Dryden and Ravenscroft, therefore, seems to have ended in 1673. It was, as Ravenscroft himself admitted, a squabble between two professional dramatists both anxious to protect their precarious positions in the Restoration theatre world. What Ravenscroft said of his controversy with Dryden in the epistle to The Careless Lovers applied to many other Restoration controversies:
"If you are Inquisitive to know why there are such continual Picques amongst the Poets, I can give you no other reason than what one Whore told the other— Two of a Trade can seldom agree."\(^{23}\)

iii.

Why Dryden chose Flecknoe to be the ruler of the realm of Dulness in "MacFlecknoe" has never been satisfactorily explained, and I have little new light to cast on the problem. However, it is quite possible that certain censorious remarks that Flecknoe may have made prompted Dryden to choose him. In the next few pages I shall bring together what seem to be the pertinent facts and explicate them as best I can in the hope that they may help to explain Dryden's choice.

Richard Flecknoe, a Roman Catholic priest reportedly of Irish birth, spent most of the Interregnum years in foreign travels that took him as far from England as Brazil. After Cromwell's death, Flecknoe settled in England where he became acquainted with a number of noble Catholic families although he himself never attained any great social position. Throughout his life he had a lively interest in the theatre, and wrote several plays, of which, however, only two, Loves Kingdom (c. March 1663-64) and Demoiselles a la Mode, (September, 1668) gained the stage. Presumably because
of his personal foibles and literary pretensions, Flecknoe became the butt of numerous writers besides Dryden during the Restoration. Andrew Marvell was the first to satirize him; he found ridiculous Flecknoe's leanness, squalidness, and fondness for reciting his own poetry. The author or authors of "The Session of the Poets, to the Tune of Cook Laurel" (1665-69) disdainfully dismissed Flecknoe as a "small poet." The court wits often used Flecknoe's name in their lampoons to represent the worst kind of writing. Dorset, for example, wrote this in his satire of Edward Howard:

Thou damn'd Antipodes to Common Sense,
Thou Foil to Fleckno, prithee tell from whence
Does all this mighty Stock of Dullness spring?

Snadwell made the same association of Flecknoe and dulness in his verse letter to Wycherley:

Criticks, that Damn with little Wit
As Hed, or Fleckno ever writ.

Oldham, in his imitation of Horace's "Art of Poetry" (c. 1670?), regarded Flecknoe's poetry as the nadir of the art:

But Verse alone does of no mean admit,
Who'er will please, must please us to the height:
He must a Cowley or a Fleckno be;
For ther's no second rate in Poetry.

In the anonymous squib "On the Duke of Bucks" (c. 1677), Flecknoe was listed along with the Howards among "The Store/Of damned dull Rogues" who tormented the theatre
companies with bad plays. Therefore, long before 1678, Flecknoe's name had been associated with dulness; Dryden was not original in using it as such a symbol. In fact Dryden himself pointed out how widely used the association was in the dedication to Mr. Limberham, published in 1678 perhaps a short time after he had written "MacFlecknoe": "...and you may please to take notice by the way how natural the connection of thoug t is betwixt a bad poet and Flecknoe." However, it has been argued that Dryden had personal reasons for pillorying Flecknoe. We shall test the validity of this theory.

In 1664 Flecknoe published as the dedication to Loves Kingdom "A Short Discourse of the English Stage" in which he expressed several opinions with which Dryden later disagreed. Perhaps the most important of these opinions concerned the purpose of drama: "Its chiefest and is to render Folly ridiculous, Vice odious, and Vertue and Noblenesse so amiable and lovely, as every one shu'd be delighted and enamour'd with it; from which when it deflects, as corruptio optimi pessima, of the best of it becomes the worst of Recreations." Such a moral attitude towards drama clashed with Dryden's early belief that comedy should simply delight an audience. Flecknoe also declared that the improvement of the playhouse since 1660 brought with it a decline in the quality of the writing and actings of plays. He pre-
ferred the less elaborate stage of the previous age:

Now, for the difference betwixt our Theatres and those of former times, they were but plain and simple, with no other Scenes nor Decorations of the Stage, but only old Tapestry, and the Stage strew'd with Rushes, with their Habits accordingly, whereas ours now for the cost and ornament are arriv'd to the height of Magnificence; but that which makes our Stage the better makes our Plays the worse perhaps, they striving now to make them more for sight then hearing, whence that solid joy of the interior is lost, and that benefit which men formerly receiv'd from Playes, from which they seldom or never went away but far better and wiser then they came.

Probably such criticism of recent advances in stage machinery annoyed a modern like the young Dryden. Furthermore Flecknoe's opinion that only Jonson wrote perfect plays (and then but seldom) must have irked Dryden, particularly after his controversy with Shadwell over Jonson's merits as a playwright.27 Of course, not everything in this brief essay conflicted with ideas that Dryden was soon to advocate. Flecknoe's definition of wit, for example, emphasized the verbal, for he defined wit as "the spirit and quintessence of speech." Nevertheless there was enough in this piece to have irritated Dryden and to account for the beginning of his dislike for Flecknoe. This dislike must have been increased after the publication of the preface to The Demoiselles a la Mode (Summer, 1667) in which Flecknoe expressed his disgust for the latest dramatic modes like heroic drama and farce and offered advice to the theatre managers: "...they shou'd wear their old Playes Thred-bare,
ere they shou'd have any New, till they better under stood
their own Interest, and how to distinguish betwixt good
and bad." Flecknoe, smarting from the continual rejection
of his plays, attacked publicly the bad dramatic taste of
Thomas Killigrew in the same year.28

It is possible that Dryden referred to Flecknoe in an
obscure passage in An Essay of Dramatic Poesy in 1668.29

Crites, while deploring the number of untalented writers in
the early years of the Restoration, attacked two specific
kinds of bad writing, the second of which he described in
these terms:

His style and matter are every where alike; he is
the most calm, peaceable writer you ever read; he
never disquiets your passions with the least con­
cernment, but still leaves you in as even a temper
as he found you; he is a very leveller in poetry:
he creeps along with ten little words in every
line, and helps out his numbers with For to, and
Unto, and all the pretty expletives he can find,
till he drags them to the end of another line; while
the sense is left tired half-way behind it; he
doubly starves all his verses, first, for want of
thought, and then of expression. His poetry neither
has wit in it, nor seems to have it....

Flecknoe seems to have regarded himself as a friend of
Sir Robert Howard, for shortly after the publication of
Dryden's "Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy" in 1668
there appeared in reply to Dryden's criticisms a defence
of Sir Robert that bore the title A Letter from a Gentle­
man To the Honourable Ed. Howard Esq; Occasioned By a
Civiliz'd Epistle of Mr. Dryden's Before his Second Edition
of his Indian Emperour. This fourteen page essay was signed by "R.F." whom one scholar has identified as Flecknoe on the slight grounds that it helps to explain Dryden's attack on him in "MacFlecknoe." In support of such wishful thinking, I can add one new and significant fact. The title page of a 1673 volume known to be the work of Flecknoe reads A Collection of the choicest Epigrams and Characters of R.F. The fact that Flecknoe was known as "R.F." suggests that a reader of the period would have recognized him as the author of A Letter from a Gentleman.

A Letter from a Gentleman began by explaining that, since Sir Robert seemed to be too polite to return Dryden's abuse, another writer had to do so out of a respect for that knight and a love for justice and good manners. "R.F." then proceeded to match abuse with abuse. Dubbing Dryden "The Squire," he accused him of plagiarism: "But the Squire perhaps is justly angry to see any one use the least thing of another Writer, and enter into his Jurisdiction, claiming the right of Theft perhaps by continual Custome." He pointed out that Dryden contradicted himself when he denied the superiority of prose to verse, since he had written earlier that the best poetic medium for drama was the one closest to nature. "R.F." added that Dryden preferred hypocrisy to honesty: "...I think there needs no more to be sayd, only adding this small observation, that the Squire cannot endure
to be thought ridiculous, though he deserves it." Since Dryden had ridiculed some of Sir Robert's verse, "R.F." selected a few examples of Dryden's weaker lines. After reiterating Sir Robert's explanation that the printer's carelessness caused some of his errors, "R.F." went on: "But in one Case of the Squires I cannot tell, whether I may assume the Liberty to Chide the Printer for a mistake he committed in the first edition of his Indian Emperor, in this Excellent Verse--

---And follow Fate, that does too fast pursue.

Which in the second edition is thus Corrected--

---And follow rate, that would too fast Pursue."

"R.F." found numerous other faults that in no way could be blamed on a careless printer. One of these was the celebrated line from "Astraea Redux;"

Am horrid stillness first invades the Ear.
I have not heard of the like Expression unless in a Tale of an Officer, that Commanded a Centinel not to stirr a Foot, but walk up and down and see what he could hear. Now whether this first Non-sence be Rectified by the Printer, or by the Squires Encrease of Understanding, or, where the fault the last is, I dare not Determine.

Then "R.F." left literary criticism for a moment to lament Dryden's failure to take religious orders as he had once intended and to chide him for once having had political dealings with the Puritans: "...the corruption of a Statesman is the generation of a Poet Laureat." This remark,
made two years before Dryden became laureate in August, 1670, though it may reflect on the means laureates used to gain their office, not only revealed considerable foresight but indicated that Dryden had a good start over his rivals for the post. Returning to his literary criticism "R.F." attacked Dryden's distinction between the real and the imaginary stages: "But the Squire says it may represent two Rooms successively, so it may two Kingdoms. This Fog he labours to get out of, and I appeal to the Reader, whether he sticks or no." Then, after denouncing Dryden's praise of Sir Robert at the end of his "Defence of the Essay of Dramatic Poesy" as the grossest kind of hypocrisy, "R.F." concluded: "Thus, Sir, I have Travelled through this foul way, and have Preserved myself as clean as possibly I could; yet it was so dirty, that some Testimony of such a Passage must needs stick to any that goes thorow it."

So much for the contents of A Letter from a Gentleman which was probably the earliest attack and which became a model for all later attacks on Dryden. Apparently it gained little attention in the literary world of the Restoration. Although most of its criticisms made no lasting impressions, however, one of its barbs, the ridicule of the line from "Astraea Redux," became so permanent a part of anti-Dryden scurrility that Dr. Johnson, in his life of Dryden, felt called upon to defend the sense of the line.
Flecknoe published several collections of epigrams, the second of which appeared in 1670 with the title *Epigrams of All Sorts, Made at Divers Times on Several Occasions*. It contained a short poem "To Mr. John Dreyden," the flattering tone of which constitutes the chief argument against Flecknoe's having written *A Letter from a Gentleman*. In this poem Flecknoe described the efforts of all other poets as insignificant compared to those of Dryden. The closing lines of the poem exemplify the high praise that Flecknoe bestowed on Dryden:

> Whilst thou, with thine, dost seem to have mounted higher THAN HE WHO FETCHED FROM HEAVEN CELESTIAL FIRE; AND DOEST AS FAR SURPASS ALL OTHERS, AS FIRE DOES ALL OTHER ELEMENTS SURPASS.

In 1673, when the poem was republished in another collection, Flecknoe, in spite of the fact that Dryden had since 1670 sharply rebuked "R.F.", added two lines that increased the flattery:

> NOR EVER ANY'S MUSE, SO HIGH DID SORIE ABOVE TH' POETS EMPIRIUM BEFORE.

The poem's tone makes it difficult to regard Flecknoe as "R.F." There is no suggestion of irony. Nor can we assume that Flecknoe wrote the poem before *A Letter from a Gentleman* and that it therefore represented his earlier views, for the fact that he revised the poem after Dryden had replied to "R.F." indicates that he did not think Dryden's rebuke concerned him. Certainly the existence of the two
versions of this poem seems to cast doubt on the hypothesis that Flecknoe was "R.F."[^31] It might be added that Langbaine, who was in a position to know, did not identify Flecknoe with "R.F." He could not account for Dryden's pillory of Flecknoe, especially after Flecknoe's flattering poem.[^32] Only one other explanation seems possible: Flecknoe was an unscrupulous currier of favor who first attacked Dryden in an effort to gain the favor of the Howards but who reversed himself when Dryden became poet laureate and could conceivably do Flecknoe some good at court.

As far as I can determine nobody has yet noticed that the paragraph that Dryden added to the second edition of his preface to *Tyrannic Love* in 1672 answered one of the criticisms made by "R.F." After denouncing the critics of his play's prologue, he went on:

> Some fool before them had charged me in "The Indian Emperor" with nonsense in these words,
> And follow fate, which does too fast pursue;
> which was borrowed from Virgil, in the eleventh of his *Aeneids*.
> Eludit gyro interior, sequiturque sequentem.

I quote not these to prove that I never writ nonsense; but only to show, that they are so unfortunate as not to have found it.

Unfortunately Dryden did not describe this "fool" more fully so that we could identify him.

At this point the trail ends, and we have to wait until "MacFlecknoe" for the careers of Dryden and Flecknoe to cross again. So vague is our evidence in the mystery that
we cannot even be certain about the date of Flecknoe's death, except that in "MacFlecknoe" Dryden implied that it was a recent event. At any rate from 1672 until 1678 neither Dryden nor Flecknoe referred to one another. In fact Dryden, until "MacFlecknoe," never mentioned Flecknoe by name in any of his works. Yet for some reason he chose Flecknoe as Shadwell's predecessor as the ruler of the realm of Dulness, and in several of his subsequent works used the name of Flecknoe as a symbol of bad writing.

I am afraid that I have not cast much new light on the problem of why Dryden chose to abuse Flecknoe. It would indeed be pleasant to be able to state that Flecknoe was "R.F." and that Dryden was only having his revenge in "MacFlecknoe." We know that Dryden disliked criticism and that sooner or later he got his revenge on most of his critics. In this case, perhaps Flecknoe's flattering poem proved useless or came too late. But such an explanation lacks evidence. As an alternative, we have to conclude that Dryden, needing some well known literary scapegoat to whom he could link Shadwell, chose Flecknoe for no other reason than Flecknoe's already established notoriety as a bad poet.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The foregoing description of the controversies among Restoration dramatists substantiates much of what was said in the first chapter of this study. It throws light on certain conditions in the literary world with which the dramatists had to contend and on the motives that lay behind many of their acts. As a result we may now determine the relative importance of those conditions and motives and the extent to which they governed the dramatists' acts.

Practically all the major professional dramatists between 1660-85 engaged in controversy at one time or another. Dryden (22 performed plays), Shadwell (15 plays), and Settle (9 plays) were continually defending themselves or attacking others. In fact Dryden seems to have seldom been at peace with his fellow dramatists. The other prolific dramatists such as behn (17 plays), Crowne (12 plays), Durfey (11 plays), Otway (10 plays), and Ravenscroft (9 plays) published squibs from time to time, often as commentaries on a major controversy. Nat Lee (12 plays) was the principal exception to the general practice of railing at others. At the other extreme, Duffett, Leigh, and Arrowsmith wrote little else but satirical plays for particular occasions. Although the
mischievous Buckingham led some of the court wits to pool their satirical talents in *The Rehearsal*, they preferred anonymous poetry to drama. Etherege, Sedley, and Congreve, all members of the court circle, generally avoided controversy in their plays. Except for Buckingham and his cohorts, the only nobles who disputed literary opinions in public were Sir Robert and the Honourable Edward Howard.

In stating the relative importance of the factors that incited the dramatists to argue with one another, I may be criticized for overlooking the fact that dramatists are primarily artists. However, I believe that no matter what period may be in question dramatists always have to please their audience as much as themselves. Poets and even novelists (to a lesser extent) may write to satisfy only themselves or a small section of the public, but dramatists who write for the stage cannot afford to ignore their audience's desires. This fact was especially true of the Restoration when, as I have pointed out in Chapter One, dramatists so greatly depended on the stage for a living that they had no opportunity for experimentation. Consequently heroic drama and wit comedy did not result from the unique talents of one man so much as from the gradual shaping of new dramatic forms during a series of empirical tests of audience desires. When those desires changed, the professionals immediately produced plays with the appropriate
modifications.

Unlike the professionals, the members of the court who dabbled in drama could afford to ignore the audience's desires. That they did not greatly exercise this liberty can be explained by the fact that, in the précieuse court world where literary success was regarded as a mark of distinction, the ability to write wittily for the public swelled the number of a courtier's admirers. Therefore, even though they often reprehended the audience's tastes, the court dramatists did not break away from the ruling dramatic forms and invariably blamed the professionals and not themselves for the low quality of popular plays.

The court dramatists had another liberty they did exercise. They could engage in controversy and then retreat when advantageous or necessary to a social eminence that professionals seldom dared to attack. Because he did not depend on the theatre for a living, Sir Robert Howard peremptorily cut short his controversy with Dryden when he felt that his dignity was in jeopardy. Similarly Edward Howard, after stubbornly writing on despite a storm of vituperations, retired from the theatre with a final supercilious depreciation of ruling tastes. Until he fell from power, after which he became fair game, Buckingham censured most of the professionals freely and got a belated rejoinder from only one.
With the professionals matters stood quite differently. They had to defend themselves at all times. Unable to retire from the field of critical battle because their living was at stake, they engaged in long and bitter controversies. A rebuke necessitated a reply that usually carried with it a counter-charge. Why most dramatists rebuked one another and never allowed a rebuke of themselves to pass unnoticed can be explained by five conditions in the Restoration literary world: 1. rivalry for court favor; 2. rivalry between the theatrical companies; 3. artistic differences; 4. personality clashes; and 5. politics. With the exception of politics, these conditions entered into almost every controversy between 1660-85, and I believe that they may be considered in the order of importance that I have listed them.

1. In Chapter One I pointed out that a wide gap existed between the court class and the rising middle class to which the professional dramatists belonged. This gap engendered the servility of the professionals who aspired after advancement into the circles of high society. With every play the professionals wrote, they anticipated the favor of some courtier, favor that included generally a gift of money and, perhaps, the patron's company. Dryden's assertion that he wrote *The Indian Emperor* with no such anticipation scarcely can be accepted as true. While he wrote that—"... I have so great an aversion from soliciting court-favours, that I am
ready to look on those as very bold, who dare grow rich there without desert," he admitted in the same dedication that he wrote heroic plays because they pleased the court.

Although the hope of gaining court favor motivated the efforts of all the professionals, it became most evident on three occasions. After Shadwell had acquired the patronage of the Duke of Newcastle, he had to repulse two determined attempts to deprive him of it. Because Dryden dedicated An Evening's Love to Newcastle in 1671, Shadwell increased his invective against Dryden in the debate over Jonson's merits. To belittle Jonson was bad enough, but to compete for Newcastle's favor was worse. Not long after Dryden had backed off, Shadwell discovered another rival in Settle, who in 1675 published Love and Revenge with a fulsome dedication to Newcastle that included such egregious flattery as "In a Duke of Newcastle Wit has found a Pillar, Valour a Pattern, Loyalty a Standard, and England a Patriot." Apparently Shadwell poured enough invective on Settle to convince Newcastle of Settle's ineptness. A less obvious instance of patron-seeking was "R.F."'s defence of Sir Robert Howard against Dryden's censures. If "R.F." was Flecknoe, the defence may have well been an attempt by the frustrated Flecknoe to secure the favor of a powerful shareholder in the Theatre Royal.

Probably the most popular way of soliciting a courtier's
favor was the dedicating of plays. Though many dramatists deplored this practice, all of them sought to insinuate themselves into favor by means of eulogistic dedications some time during their careers. Even such an independent professional as Otway eventually found it expedient to flatter the gentry. As the number of professionals increased, so did the flattery. But few topped Behn who, in the dedication to *The Feign'd Curtezans* (1679), almost deified Nell Gwyn for being "so Excellent and perfect a Creature." The flattering dedication quickly became so accepted a part of Restoration literature that when Settle, in the dedication to his second play, *The Empress of Morocco* (1673), rashly condemned its use as impudence, he antagonized such veteran dedicatiors as Dryden and Shadwell, both of whom had been already discomfited by the prodigious success of *The Empress*.

Performances at court provided another way for a professional to gain favor. Although such performances did not bring additional remuneration to the dramatist, they did provide him with excellent opportunities for catching some courtier's eye, and a courtier sometimes gladly paid to have his name appear before a play that had met the approval of the King and the nobility. Consequently the professionals regarded jealously the performance of a rival's play at court. This jealousy resulted in the vilification
of Settle by Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne after *The Empress of Morocco* had proved a success in the public theatre and at court in 1673. How much a dramatist desired a court performance may be seen not only in the vituperations that Settle and his foes exchanged but in Dryden's bitterness towards Rochester after Crowne's *Calisto* had been chosen for performance at Whitehall instead of Dryden's masque.

The professionals bent every effort to attract and secure the favor of some courtier. Friendships, artistic ideas, and the welfare of their company ran second to the dramatists' primary goal: the social and monetary benefits of having a patron. In attaining this goal Dryden and Shadwell had the greatest success. Being poet laureate Dryden had an advantage over his rivals in the fight for favor. Shadwell, however, had an even greater success than Dryden, for from the very outset of his career he enjoyed the generosity and company of the court wits. This was an intimacy that Shadwell nourished constantly by advocating the wits' critical views. Regardless of the consequences, Shadwell satirized Sir Robert Howard, derided Edward Howard, praised *The Rehearsal's* censure of Dryden, and followed Buckingham into the Whig party. Shadwell cannot be judged too harshly for his sycophancy, for it was a predominant factor in the Restoration literary world. Any other professional would have acted in the same way, and - with the possible exception
of Dryden - with a considerably worse show of servility.

2. As should be clear by now, the first concern of the professional dramatist of the Restoration was his own welfare. There were no aesthetes among the professionals because, having chosen the career of playwright, a man had to live by his wit. To perform this difficult feat, he had to write plays that satisfied the audience so well that his theatrical company profited and he was provided with a third day's receipts. Therefore he watched the reactions of his audiences closely and shifted his sail with any passing whim. In Chapter One I have discussed the relation of the dramatist to the audience during the Restoration; however, one of Settle's remarks in the dedication to Pastor Fido (1677) might serve to recall the professional's subservience: "...Plays are so strictly tied up to Fashion, that like costly Habits, they are not Beautiful without it."

Such subservience was unavoidable because the receipts from plays were usually so low that both theatrical companies faced financial difficulties throughout the Restoration. An audience drawn from one relatively small class meant that new plays had to be constantly presented, so that only rarely did a play run for more than two or three days at a time. When a play did run for more than a few days, the rival theatre was practically empty. Consequently a social condition bred animosity among the dramatists. As Ravens-
croft observed in the prologue to *The London Cuckolds* (November, 1681):

The Theatres are up, and, to their cost,
Must strive, by Victory, to please you most:
both he's and she's must stretch, in hopes to gain,
Like your New-market Racers on the Strain.

The professionals seldom permitted the success of a rival, especially a rival writing for the other company, to pass without some derogatory comment.

Dramatists like Duffett and Arrowsmith made brief literary careers out of this rivalry between the theatres. The fact that Dryden wrote his early plays for The Theatre Royal explains why he inveighed against the more prosperous Duke's company during the 1670's. It also helps to explain his willingness to admonish Shadwell and to castigate Settle, both of whom wrote for Dorset Garden.

It would be wrong, however, to think that the dramatists of each company presented united fronts. On the contrary, within each company the dramatists wrangled. After all, the long run of one play proved as disastrous for them as for the dramatists of the rival company, for it meant that their plays could not be performed. Therefore they too attacked the author of a popular play. So we find Shadwell joining with Dryden to ridicule Settle, even though *The Empress* was a hit at Dorset Garden. Nor did Settle hesitate to ridicule Shadwell's plays. Restoration dramatists
feared the success of rivals. Their own careers depended on the failure of rivals, and they did everything in their power to hasten such failure.

3. Because the dramatists of the Restoration were primarily entertainers rather than artists, they did not concern themselves too greatly with artistic problems. They sometimes wrote ambitious critical essays, but in most cases these were little more than defences of their own dramatic manners. Whereas Dryden had a genuine critical interest in the drama, we must also remember that he made himself a slave to popular tastes, so much so, in fact, that in his work the duties of the entertainer and the artist often conflicted. Even Dryden was an exception in his critical interest. Most of the other professionals agreed with Behn when she wrote in the epistle to The Dutch Lover (1673):

"...really methinks they that disturb their heads with any other rule of Plays besides the making them pleasant, and avoiding of scurrility, might much better be employed in studying how to improve men's too imperfect knowledge of that ancient English Game which hight long Laurence."

"Long Laurence" meant wasting time, and Behn, being a professional entertainer, regarded critical debate as wasting time. As a result of this uncritical attitude among dramatists, The Rehearsal's censures had no profound effect. They represented the opinions of only a small
faction in the theatre audience.

A few dramatists had a genuine critical interest in the drama. Dryden, Shadwell, Sir Robert and Edward Howard, Buckingham and the court wits, and even Flecknoe might be included among the exceptions to the general rule. Perhaps the fact that one of them was poet laureate and all of them (except Flecknoe) belonged to or had connections at the court explains why they could sometimes write against popular opinion.

There were five issues that occupied most of the attention of these critics:

1. The relative merits of tragedy and comedy. At the beginning of the Restoration period dramatists took for granted the classical notion that tragedy ranked second only to the epic among the major literary forms. Sir Robert Howard and Dryden, for example, both agreed to limit their debate to the best way to write tragedy. However, Shadwell and Edward Howard later broke with this notion and asserted boldly that comedy surpassed tragedy because it dealt with and appealed to the moral sense of more people. Shadwell in particular belittled the merits of tragedy, and his criticism of its social limitations had a strong utilitarian ring to it that reflected a gradual stirring of the middle classes. But Shadwell and Edward Howard stood practically alone, for most of the Restoration dramatists continued to
accept the superiority of tragedy. Even Rochester, when he turned his hand to drama, chose to write in the form he had most severely criticized—heroic drama.

Among those who accepted the classical notion of the superiority of tragedy, there was a division of opinion over the precise form tragedy should take. In their criticism the court wits sought to continue the Jacobean tradition, and in *The Rehearsal* and various squibs stated that heroic drama was a perversion of that tradition. Nevertheless Dryden continued to write and defend heroic drama in spite of their strong opposition, and, when he decided finally that the heroic vein had been exhausted and that some modification of the Shakespearean formula was necessary, he did so more because he had detected a shift in audience desires than because the court wits had overwhelmed him.

b. The meaning of *wit*. Wit had been a controversial term since the Renaissance. Most critics avoided defining it or accepted some established definition in order to circumvent argument. However, Shadwell, breaking with the majority, maintained that wit consisted in the control of the rational over the imaginative faculty of the mind. By doing this, he was able to argue more forcefully with Dryden that comedy surpassed tragedy. Shadwell, employing his definition of wit, defended realistic prose drama, while
Dryden advocated imaginative poetic drama. For Shadwell wit consisted chiefly in creating likelike humor characters, while for Dryden it consisted chiefly in dazzling but disciplined verbal skills.

c. The usefulness of the dramatists of the previous age as models. This issue was related to the controversy over wit, and like it belonged to the "ancients versus moderns" controversy that raged throughout the century. When the playhouses reopened in 1660 there were scarcely any new plays available, and both acting companies had to rely on the favorites of Elizabethan and Jacobean times. Even after numerous contemporaries had come forward with plays, the companies continued to stage more revivals because the old plays (properly altered) were less trouble and more consistently successful.

Dryden realized that revivals could ultimately stifle the professionals' chances, and so he advocated, along with Sir Robert Howard, a new kind of drama that (he claimed) fitted better the spirit of the age. Despite the popularity of heroic drama, its champions met strong opposition. The court wits, who had no need to concern themselves with pleasing the audience, detested heroic drama. Buckingham, Rochester, and Clifford accused Dryden and others of corrupting tragedy and of breaking away from the English tradition. Many of the professionals joined the derisory
chorus, even though they themselves were often the worst sinners in the form. Among the professionals, Shadwell was the most outspoken critic of heroics, perhaps as a result of his intimacy with the court wits.

Dryden and Shadwell also disagreed violently over the best kind of comedy. Dryden argued that the age required a new, more polished comedy of wit, and he rejected humors and farce as too uncouth. Shadwell, however, asserted that Jonsonian comedy of humor was unexcelled and that, therefore, it provided an ideal model for contemporary writers. Of course, he was defending his own comedies at the same time as those of Jonson.

d. The usefulness of translations. Whether the Restoration dramatists should use translations was more than an artistic issue. Because of the hostility towards Louis XIV, several writers condemned translations from the French as unpatriotic. Dryden, for example, drew a strong line; while he approved of classical translations and sanctioned word borrowing from foreign languages including French, he scorned farce as an insidious importation capable of contaminating English minds. He taunted Shadwell and Ravenscroft by suggesting that they wrote farces. While Shadwell denied the charge angrily, Ravenscroft admitted it but counterattacked by pointing out that his plays were
no more alien than Dryden's heroic plays. To a certain extent Havenscroft was correct, as Dryden himself half-admitted when he later gave up heroics and turned to a modified form of Shakespearean drama.

e. The necessity of rhyme and the unities. These two artistic problems interested few of the dramatists. Dryden and Sir Robert Howard debated them with some objectivity until Dryden's self-control weakened and he began to use abuse rather than criticism. Dryden eventually realized that blank verse permitted the dramatist to vary the emotional pitch of his poetry with the dramatic situation at hand. In this respect, then, Dryden acknowledged the validity of Howard's argument. During his debate with Sir Robert, Dryden chose to ignore (at least temporarily) the intrusions of Edward Howard and Flecknoe; however, in "MacFlecknoe" he may have remembered Flecknoe's meddling.

4. It is difficult to determine precisely to what extent personality clashes entered into the controversies. However, in certain instances the presence of such clashes was particularly evident. Settle's impudence in ridiculing the more experienced professionals in his second play, for example, incited Dryden and Shadwell to lash him publicly. Probably Dryden pilloried Flecknoe because he found Flecknoe's obsequiousness insufferable. Dryden also must have been disgusted by some of Shadwell's foibles: his fondness for
liquor, his lack of piety, and especially his almost flippant attitude towards drama. Of course, Dryden's own personality was the favorite target for numerous writers. The court wits in particular took great delight in ridiculing his manners, so much so, in fact, that ever Dryden's eating habits were repeatedly lampooned.

5. Politics. Between 1678 and 1685 politics became so predominant an element in literature that scarcely any new plays could be described as non-political. Even old plays were refurbished with new political prologues and epilogues during those turbulent years. Politics entered into every controversy that began or continued after 1678, and we need only examine the decay of the Shadwell-Dryden controversy from literary debate to political vilification to see the adverse effects.

Most Restoration dramatists were too deeply immersed in the destructive element to carry on for any length of time calm, objective debates about their art. Their lives depended too much on the whims of a petulant public. They had to fight too hard for their own survival. Nevertheless, beneath the mud they threw at one another, we can occasionally detect critical intellects, and we may fairly speculate that, had they written in an age when literary fortunes lay in the hands of a larger public than the court, the Restoration dramatists would have produced less invective and more criticism.
FOOTNOTES

With the exception of the following modern editions, I have cited from editions the dates of which I have given in the text:


Chapter I


3. Arthur Bryant, King Charles II (New York, 1935), p. 82.

5. The Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn, ed. W. Bray (London, 1906), II, 139.


7. John Wilson, in the epistle to The Cheats (dated November 16, 1663), described the purpose of comedy to be "...the true Picture of Virtue, or Vice; yet so drawn, as to shew a man how to follow one, and avoid the other; in doing which, if I had fram'd any thing that was not, I had not onely bel'y'd the Town, but wrong'd my self." The attitudes towards comedy in the Restoration are best discussed in Kathleen M. Lynch, The Social Mode of Restoration Comedy, U. of Michigan Publications Language and Literature, III (New York, 1926); Joseph Wood Krutch, Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration (New York, 1949); and Thomas H. Fujimura, The Restoration Comedy of Wit (Princeton, 1952).

9. This term appears in Settle's epilogue to *The Conquest of China* (May, 1675-76), and was often used during the period.

10. See Wilson, *Court Wits*, pp. 142-173.


13. Beljame discusses the financial problems of the professionals; however, his work should be supplemented by Summers' *The Restoration Theatre* and by Leslie Hotson's *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage* (Cambridge, Mass., 1928).


Chapter II

1. A history of the Howard family, Ethel M. Richardson's *The Lion and the Rose*, 2 vols. (London, 1922), and briefer monograph, F. R. Scott's *The Life and Works of Sir Robert Howard* (New York, 1946), both fail to give details about the literary careers of the four brothers. Dennis D. Arundell has edited with very little commentary the material pertinent to the controversy in *Dryden and Howard 1664-68* (Cambridge, 1929).


7. In the "Defence of An Essay of Dramatic Poesy" Dryden asserted that "...I gave not the first occasion of this difference in opinions."

8. In "Of Heroic Plays" (1672) Dryden wrote that "...I have modelled my heroic plays by the rules of an heroic poem."
9. Neander spoke of plays "...made these seven years... since his majesty's return." Therefore, it appears that Dryden was still writing this essay in 1667.


11. W.P.Ker, in his introduction to The Essays of John Dryden (Oxford, 1926), I, xxiv, xxv, noting that nature was a vague term during the Restoration, states: "Nature'means whatever the author thinks right; sometimes it is the reality that is copied by the artist; sometimes, and much more commonly, it is the principles of sound reason in poetry; and sometimes it is the Ideal."


13. For details of the life of Buckingham, see Lady Winifred Burghclere, George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham 1628-1687 (New York, 1903), and John Harold Wilson, A Rake and His Times (New York, 1954).


15. For example, Howard had written in the epistle to The Usurper (1668): "...that which far more debases the Dignity of the Stage, is that of Farce or Scornmatick Plays, which has so tickled some late Audiences, with I know not what
kind of Jollity, that true Comedy is fool'd out of Countenance, and instead of Humor and wit, (the Stages most Legitimate issue) leaves it to the inheritance of Changlings."

16. "The three late Marriages" (1688), an anonymous manu-
script poem, lampooned Howard's mistaken confidence in the success of The Six Days Adventure:

Ned Howard thus put off a play
Scorning to take a poet's day
He for three Hundred pounds contracted
To have the six first days 'twas acted
From whence the play received it's name
To the dull Authors endless shame.
Hoping to be a gainer by't
Had it kept up the second Night
But suddenly Utopia fell
Damn'd to the lowest pit of Hell.

The poem may be found in Harleian MS.7317,ff.170-171.

17. Wilson, Court Wits, p. 178.

18. All but one of the satires are in Dryden's Miscellany Poems, III, 67-75. Shadwell's satire is printed by A.J.Bull, "Thomas Shadwell's Satire on Edward Howard," RES,VI (1930), 312-315.

19. For details of Flecknoe's activities in this regard, see pp. 232-242.

20. Wilson, Court Wits, p. 179, suggests this or the alterna-
tive that the preface to The Womens Conquest replied to the wits.

1940), pp. 45-46, both suggest this. G. Thorn-Drury, "Some Notes on Dryden," RES, I (1925), 327-330, believes that Howard may have been the author of "Poetical Reflections on Absalom and Achitophel" (1682). There seems little evidence for either suggestion.

22. This squib may have been part of The British Princes group with a new title. F. S. Boas, in the introduction to The Change of Crownes (Oxford, 1949), pp. 15-16, quotes part of the poem and lists its source as Add. Ms. 4455. f. 42b. However, in Dryden's Miscellany Poems, III, 69-70, the same poem is attributed to Buckhurst, while the poem generally attributed to him is anonymous except for a pencilled note "Dorset." Internal evidence, though scant, indicates that the mock prologue was written at a later occasion. Another difficulty should be noted: the title "To Mr Howard on his Incomparable, Incomprehensible Poem...," given to Buckhurst's poem by Harris and by Wilson, is given to Butler's poem in Dryden's Miscellany Poems, III, 68-69. Clearly, confusion reigns in this area.

23. Boas, pp. 3-17, is one of the very few scholars who has said anything about Howard's criticism.

24. Pepys, on May 8, 1668, remarked how much talked about Shadwell's play was.

25. Summers, introduction to The Rehearsal, pp. ix-x.

26. Wilson, Court Wits, p. 158.

28. I have used Summers’ edition of The Rehearsal which he based on the sixth edition of the play, 1675.

29. Summers, introduction and notes to The Rehearsal, and Dane F. Smith, Plays about the Theatre in England from "The Rehearsal" in 1671 to the Licensing Act in 1737... (New York, 1936).

30. See pp. 49-50.

31. Summers, notes to The Rehearsal, p. 120.


33. Boswell, pp. 101-102, says: "...we may, I think, assume that the plays were selected by the King himself. Charles certainly knew his own mind in such matters, and in the early days, when Tom Killigrew was always at his elbow, and he had intimate interests in both theatres, there can have been no need for formalities....At times, the choice of plays must have been very largely dependent on what author was in favour at the moment, or was, for various motives, being backed by Rochester, Castlemaine, or other Person of Influence."

34. If Rochester did this by letter, as is most likely, that letter is not extant.

36. See pp. 98-118 for fuller details.

37. Notes and Observations Revised preface (no pagination).

38. The date 1674 seems likely because Dryden had visited Milton in the winter of 1673-74, "...if not a little before," to get permission to adapt Paradise Lost; see David Masson, The Life of John Milton (New York, 1880), VI, 708-712.

Marvell, according to his preface to the second edition of Paradise Lost (1674), saw Dryden's adaptation, probably in a pirated copy, a short time after. Finally, the play itself was entered in the Stationer's Register on April 17, 1674.


40. Wilson, Court Wits, pp. 117-119, discusses this feud.


44. Frank L. Huntley, "Dryden, Rochester, and the Eighth Satire of Juvenal," PQ, XVIII (1939), 269-284, discusses the indirect method of satire that Dryden used in the preface to All for Love.
Chapter III


2. Frank C. Browne, Elkanah Settle: His Life and Works (Chicago, 1910).


4. Malcolm Elwin, The Playgoer's Handbook to Restoration Drama (New York, 1928), p. 97, dismisses the controversy as a fraud: "...it is probable that the much discussed enmity between them [i.e. Shadwell and Settle] and the more famous writer [i.e. Dryden] was nothing more than a sustained journalistic controversy which served to supply them all with a livelihood."

5. See pp. 87-88.


7. See p. 76.


10. Summers, The Playhouse of Pepys (New York, 1935), p. 299, disputes this. However, probably the originally intended
price listed in The Term Catalogues was raised after the play proved such a success at the theatre.


14. See pp. 53-54.

15. John Crowne, His Life and Dramatic Works, Western Reserve Studies, no. 1 (Cleveland, 1922), pp. 33-34.


17. Dennis, II, 118.


21. We have no record of Shadwell's sixth play written about this time, The Hypocrite, other than references to it by Settle in the preface to Ibrahim and by Dryden in "MacFlecknoe."

22. Henry Ten Eyck Perry suggests this in The First Duchess of Newcastle and Her Husband as Figures in Literary History (Boston, 1918), p. 163.

24. Browne, p. 60, especially note 5, believes that Settle may have added the Postscript at the last minute after he had read the preface to *Psyche*.
26. See p. 120.
27. Summers, in his edition of Downes' *Roscius Anglicanus*, corrects the prompter's anecdote about *The Conquest of China* by pointing out that such events must have taken place at a rehearsal of the play, probably in 1673. If Summers is correct, and he seems to be, then Settle must have written the play before *The Empress* and laid it aside as he claimed. See Downes, pp. 35 and 233.
29. This prologue raises some question about the date of the play. The "burning of a Pope" may not refer to a pageant.

Chapter IV
1. Ker, I, xxii f., examines this point.
2. Ker, I, xxii.
4. See pp. 53-55.

6. Epilogue to *The Rehearsal*. The admiration for Jonson that lay behind these lines is discussed by Summers in *The Playhouse*, pp. 280 f.

7. See p. 81.


9. See pp. 43-44.

10. J. R. Smith, p. 32, points out that this distinction served as critical support for Restoration comedy during the rest of the century.

11. In "An Account of the Ensuing Poem" prefixed to "Annus Mirabilis" (1667), Dryden had already defined the proper wit of a heroic poem as "...some lively and apt description, dressed in such colours of speech, that it sets before your eyes the absent object, as perfectly, and more delightfully than nature."

12. See pp. 67 f. and pp. 112 f.

13. In the introduction to *The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell*, I, xc, Summers says: "It was probably owing to his ill success at Lincoln's Inn Fields with *The Humorists* that Shadwell gave his next piece, to which he refrained from subscribing his name, to Killigrew's company."
14. Shadwell dedicated the play to one of the wits, Buckhurst.
15. See pp. 67f.
17. See pp. 210-212.
18. The authorship of the opera remains a matter of dispute among scholars. A good case against Shadwell has been made out by G. Thorn-Drury in "Some Notes on Dryden," *RES*, I (1925), 327-330, and by Charles E. Ward in "The Tempest: A Restoration Opera Problem," *ELH*, XII (1946), 119-130. However, most scholars seem satisfied with attributing it, or most of it, to Shadwell.
19. See pp. 98f.
20. By Settle (see p. 114) and by Clifford (see pp. 85-6).
21. See pp. 94-96.
22. See pp. 76 f.
25. See "The Original and Progress of Satire" (1693).
26. Macdonald, in the introduction to *A Journal from Parnassus* (London, 1937), discusses the history of this poetic form during the seventeenth century.
28. In Notes and Observations, Settle was called a master of tautology.

29. Ham, "Shadwell and 'The Tory Poets,'" MQ, CLII (1927), 8: "It bears the obvious impress of Shadwell from its inevitable allusion to Jonson in the choice and virulence of the attack."

30. Shadwell's friends also feared the effect that "MacFlecknoe" would have on his reputation. Gerard Langbaine, An Account of the English Dramatick Poets (1691), p. 444, wrote: "So far only give me leave to premise in our Laureate's Defence, that the Reader is not to measure his Merit by Mr. Dryden's Standard; since Socrates, never was more persecuted by the Inhumane Aristophanes, than Mr. Shadwell by Mr. Dryden's Pen; and with the same injustice; tho' I think, whoever shall peruse the Modest Defence of the former, in his Epistle to the tenth Satyr of Juvenal, will not only acquit him, but love him for his good Humour and gentle Temper...."

Chapter V

1. Otway engaged in a seemingly endless series of disputes with writers and courtiers, all of whom he seems to have excoriated in "The Poet's Complaint." Unfortunately the identities of many of his victims in this savage yet powerful poem remain unknown.

2. Downes, p. 34, remarked that in 1672 two plays by Nevil Payne were "laid aside, to make Room for others; the
Company having then plenty of new Poets."


4. This state of affairs partly explains Dryden's eagerness to squelch the success of Settle in 1674. The fact that Shadwell, who wrote for the same company as Settle, joined in the Notes and Observations attack shows that the rivalry between the theatres was only one of several factors and that professionals, even of the same company, could seldom afford the luxury of friendship.

5. No full study of Duffett exists. Summers, who has done as much on Duffett's life and works as any scholar, called him "...a writer of extraordinary interest" in Shakespeare Adaptations (Boston, 1922), p. lxix; and in The Playhouse, p. 397, he declared that his works had been vastly underrated. Dane F. Smith, pp. 43-46, dismissed Duffett as a writer of no consequence and no interest. However, more recently, V. C. Clinton-Baddeley, The Burlesque Tradition in the English Theatre after 1660 (London, 1952), pp. 38-43, has given Duffett's three burlesques a higher appraisal.


8. These prologues have caused considerable speculation among scholars. W. J. Lawrence, "Irish Players at Oxford in 1677," The Elizabethan Playhouse and Other Studies.
Second Series (Stratford-Upon-Avon, 1913), pp. 191-200, points out that the Theatre Royal reaped tidy profits from their summer visits to Oxford. Summers, The Playhouse, pp. 125-132, discusses the theatrical activity at the universities during the Restoration. Louis Bredvold, “Dryden and the University of Oxford,” MLN, XLVI (1931), 218-221, finds little evidence of ambition for academic preferment in Dryden's earlier writing; but Ham, “Dryden and the Colleges,” MLN, XLIX (1934), 324-332, disagrees with Bredvold and argues that Dryden's prologues and epilogues to Oxford were specifically aimed at securing the goodwill of the colleges for some future preferment.


10. See pp. 99-104.

11. Langbaine, pp. 177-178: "The Design of this Play was to draw the Town from the Duke's Theatre, who for a considerable time had frequented that admirable reviv'd Comedy called The Tempest."

12. Langbaine, p. 178.


15. Nicoll, I, 256.

16. See pp. 162-163; and Leo Hughes, "Attitudes of Some
Restoration Dramatists toward Farce." PQ. XIX (1940), 268-287.

17. See pp. 53 f.
19. In Notes and Observations Revis'd, p. 5, Settle asked: "Had not his darling Conquest of Granada had the start of the Mamamouchi."
20. In "Defence of the Epilogue" (1672), Dryden wrote: "And this leads me to the last and greatest advantage of our writing, which proceeds from conversation. In the age wherein these poets lived, there was less of gallantry than in ours; neither did they keep the best company of theirs."
23. Of this remark Langbaine (p. 419) wrote sardonically: "...and therefore Mr. Dryden and Mr. Ravenscroft, being profest Plagiaries, and having both laid claim to Molliere, no wonder if they fell out, like the two Travellers in Aesop about the Ass; tho'at the same time a Third Poet ran away with the prize; at least the greatest part." Probably the third poet was Shadwell.
24. Langbaine (p. 199) said that Flecknoe "...was as Famous as any in his Age, for indifferent Metre. His Acquaintance with the Nobility, was more than with the Muses; and he had
a greater propensity to Rimming, then a Genius to Poetry."


27. See Chapter IV.

28. The Life of Tomaso the Wanderer (1667).

29. Ker, I, 291, and Edmond Malone in his edition of The Critical and Miscellaneous Prose Works of John Dryden (London, 1800), I, Part II, 37 note, suggest this; Scott and Saintsbury, XV (1892), 286-287, are more cautious.

30. Cunningham, 597.

31. Macdonald, John Dryden: A Bibliography, p. 188, says that this revision “appears to contradict” the surmise that Flecknoe was “R.F.”

32. Langbaine, p. 176: “Now that Mr. Dryden may not think himself slighted in not having some Verses inserted in his Commendation; I will present the Reader with a Copy written by Mr. Flecknoe, and leave him to Judge of his Wit, and Mr. Dryden’s Gratitude, by comparing the Epistle Dedicatory to his Kind Keeper, and his Satyr call’d Mack Flecknoe, with the following Epigram.”
Chapter VI

1. After avoiding flattery in his first four dedications, Otway resorted to it in the dedication to The Orphan (1680).


I, William Howard Sellers, was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, December 3, 1926. I received most of my secondary education in the public schools of the city of Winnipeg. From 1937 to 1938 I resided and was educated in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, England. My undergraduate training was obtained at United College, from which I received the degree Bachelor of Arts in 1949. I received the degree Bachelor of Arts (Honors) from the University of Manitoba in 1950. In the fall of 1950 I became a graduate assistant in the Department of English at The Ohio State University, a position that I preserved until 1953-54 when I became an assistant instructor.